

**4** Kuwait third largest aid donor to Gaza, most supplies reach Strip



**6** Despair in Gaza hospitals encircled by fighting



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## Crown Prince: Halt the bloodshed

Arab, Muslim leaders slam Zionist entity at Saudi-hosted summit on Gaza

OP-ED

### Double standards!



History's first UN-sanctioned genocide!  
One child killed every 10 minutes!

By Dr Ziad Al-Alyan

I stand guilty of being one of the many silent spectators of the genocide and ethnic cleansing taking place in Palestine. I was criticized by many of my friends and family for doing so. My lack of participation was based on a historical hopelessness. Initially, the events taking place were not new to Palestinians. Nothing ever changes. This is not the first time Gaza has been bombed.

However, the recent rapid escalation was absolutely unbearable. I am no longer talking as an Arab or a Muslim; my stance is that of a human being. The atrocities taking place in Gaza are probably the worst seen by "modern" humanity. It is astonishing how anyone can pretend to justify the actions taken by the Zionist entity as an act of self defense. I do admit the Zionist entity continues to make it more and more difficult to defend their stance by continuing to take human rights violations to different heights on a daily basis.

Verified images from the recent annihilation of the hospital in Palestine can't even be conceived by the darkest of Hollywood writers. As a doctor, I can confirm that the hardest task is to stand in front of the corpse of a child. The press conference that took place by physicians in the middle of the wreckage while surrounded by hundreds of bodies is a testament that humanity has indeed failed. What is more astonishing is the response of the US president upon his arrival to the Zionist entity, when he concluded that the hospital bombing "appears to be done by the other team!"

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RIYADH: (Left) HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses the emergency summit of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Nov 11, 2023. (Right) Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi during the summit. — KUNA/AFP



RIYADH: Arab and Muslim leaders meeting in the Saudi capital Saturday roundly condemned the Zionist entity's actions in its war against Hamas in Gaza. Indescribable crimes are being committed against our Palestinian brothers in Gaza while we are convening at the moment, said Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Saturday, addressing the extraordinary Islamic-Arab summit in Riyadh.

The Zionist occupation is leading an unjustified collective punishment enveloped by dual standards, going counter to all relevant inter-

national and humanitarian resolutions, noted HH Sheikh Mishal, calling on the international community, specially the UN Security Council to enact its role in immediately halting the bloodshed and provide international protection for the Palestinian people, welcoming at the same time the UN General Assembly's decision to call for a humanitarian truce; reflective of the magnitude of the crisis in Gaza.

Kuwait, HH Sheikh Mishal stressed, is all for a sustainable peace in the region, starting with a final and just solution for the Palestinian cause according to the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international

references, reiterating that the cause will always be Kuwait's top foreign policy priorities.

The emergency meeting of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) comes after Hamas' Oct 7 attacks that Zionist officials say left about 1,200 people dead and 239 taken captive. The Zionist entity's subsequent aerial and ground offensive has killed more than 11,000 people, mostly civilians and many of them children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. The Arab and Muslim leaders on Saturday said they rejected any proposal that would keep Gaza separate

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### Preemies die as Zionists target Gaza hospitals

GAZA: Gaza hospitals reported being under constant fire and running on nearly exhausted supplies Saturday as the Zionist entity rejected key allies' condemnation of a rising civilian death toll in the Hamas-controlled territory. The director of the besieged Palestinian territory's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, said on Saturday the compound was struck repeatedly overnight and lost power for hours after its generator was hit.

"We received calls about dozens of dead and hundreds wounded in air and artillery strikes, but our ambulances weren't able to go out because of gunfire," said hospital director Mohammad Abu Salmiya. The Gaza health ministry said dozens of premature babies at Al-Shifa compound were at risk of dying because the lack of generator fuel meant their incubators could be shut down on Saturday as fighting raged. They added one of the babies had died, and one person was killed and several others wounded in a strike on Al-Shifa early Saturday.

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GAZA: People remove the body of a child killed in Zionist bombing on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 11, 2023. — AFP

### 300,000 stage pro-Palestinian rally in London

LONDON: About 300,000 people marched through the British capital on Saturday, as pro-Palestinian supporters made a new call for a Gaza war ceasefire. Authorities had feared trouble as the "National March for Palestine" was scheduled for Armistice Day, Britain's annual commemoration of its war dead. Dozens of arrests were reported. The march set off after a two-minute silence was observed at The Cenotaph war memorial in central London. A police spokesman said about 300,000 were estimated to be taking part.

Protesters waved black, red, white and green Palestinian flags and held aloft placards proclaiming "Stop

Bombing Gaza". There have been nearly weekly rallies in London since Oct 7. Shouts of "free Palestine", "ceasefire now" and "(the Zionist entity) is a terror state" rang out from the London protest. "Forget the political stance, forget everything else, you can't stand around while people are getting killed," Shiraz Bobra, 41, who travelled from Leicester, central England, told AFP. He added that he would come every week until a ceasefire was enforced.

Gavin Searle, a 58-year-old television director from Hastings in south England, said he had come "to show solidarity with the Palestinians when there's a massive injustice taking place". Roman Catholic priest Father John McGowan added: "I feel for the Palestinians because their land is occupied and their occupiers can be cruel" and said he hoped for a two-state solution.

Continued on Page 6



LONDON: Former Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn joins protesters with placards and flags taking part in the 'National March For Palestine' on Nov 11, 2023. — AFP

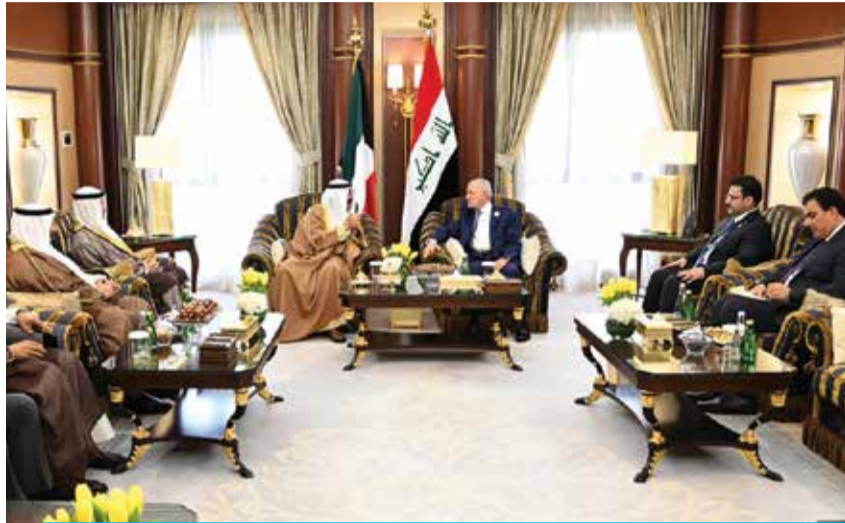


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## Local

# Crown Prince meets Iraq's President, UAE VP and Pakistan's PM in Riyadh

## Bilateral issues and regional developments figure in discussions



RIYADH: 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, meets Iraqi President Abdul Jamal Latif Rashid (left), UAE Vice-President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (center) and Pakistani Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar (right) on Saturday. — KUNA photos

RIYADH: 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, met with Iraqi President Abdul Jamal Latif Rashid on the sidelines of the joint Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh on Saturday. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with UAE's Vice-President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on Saturday. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Pakistani Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the summit on Saturday.

During the reception, HH Sheikh Mishal conveyed His Highness the Amir's greetings to the Iraqi president. They discussed firm fraternal

relations between both countries and ways of promoting them for the common interest of both nations and their people, along with the latest regional and international developments.

HH the Crown Prince wished the Iraqi president good health and Iraq's leadership and people further development and prosperity, with the Iraqi leader inviting HH Sheikh Mishal to visit Iraq.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Chief Jamal Mohammad Al-Thiab, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs in His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Mazen Issa Al-Issa, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Iraqi Prime Minister's Advisor Dr Hazim Watan and the Iraqi Presidency's Media Chief Abdulmir Hamoud were also present at the meeting.

During the meeting with Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, HH the Crown Prince conveyed His Highness the Amir's greetings to UAE President Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Chief Jamal Mohammad Al-Thiab, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs in His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Mazen Issa Al-Issa, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

UAE's Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed

Al-Nahyan, the President's Diplomatic Advisor Dr Anwar bin Mohammad Gargash, Minister of State Sheikh Shakhboot bin Nahyan Al-Nahyan and UAE's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Nahyan bin Saif Al-Nahyan were also present at the reception.

During the meeting with Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, HH the Crown Prince discussed firm bilateral relations and ways of promoting them on all levels, along with latest regional and international developments. The reception was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Director Jamal Al-Thiab and Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs in His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Mazen Issa Al-Issa. — KUNA



MADRID: Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi presents his credentials to Co-Prince of Andorra Bishop Joan Enric Vives Sicilia as a non-resident envoy. — KUNA

## Kuwait envoy to Spain presents credentials

MADRID: Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi presented his credentials to Co-Prince of Andorra Bishop Joan Enric Vives Sicilia as a non-resident envoy on Friday. Al-Kharafi, according to an embassy statement, conveyed to Bishop Sicilia greetings of His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as those of Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Both the Ambassador and the Bishop went on to review bilateral relations and international developments, including the Palestinian issue. Investment, economic and touristic cooperation was a key topic discussed as well, especially after the Kuwait Airways recently-launched direct route to Barcelona, neighboring the small principality. Yesterday, Ambassador Al-Kharafi presented his credentials to Foreign Minister Emma Torre Vos. — KUNA

## GCC supports Kuwait's draft resolution at APA

BAGHDAD: The third coordinative meeting of the GCC member states held on Thursday supported a Kuwaiti resolution on respecting international conventions and treaties ahead of discussing it at the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's (APA) permanent political affairs committee's gathering in Baghdad, said a Kuwaiti lawmaker.

Speaking to KUNA, Dr MP Hamad Al-Matar, head of Kuwait's delegation to the meeting, said the GCC member states expressed support to the Kuwaiti draft resolution to be presented to the committee's meeting on Friday to approve it and refer it to the APA executive board due in Turkey on Nov 26. The draft resolution calls for respecting international conventions and treaties signed among countries, including the Khor Abdullah agreement inked between Kuwait and Iraq, he elaborated.

He stressed that Kuwait respects all international treaties, urging all parties to do the same. He indicated that the coordinative meeting touched upon another Kuwaiti draft resolution calling for upgrading the APA charter. — KUNA



BAGHDAD: The GCC coordinating meeting ahead of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's (APA) permanent political affairs committee session in Baghdad. — KUNA

## MoH to reinstate leaves of expat employees

KUWAIT: Starting this week, the ministry of health will reinstate "leave deduction" for non-Kuwaiti employees, previously withheld for sale until the completion of the sale of leave balances for Kuwaiti employees. The Civil Service Council clarified that disbursement is exclusive to Kuwaiti employees. Expatriate workers in the ministry, comprising doctors, pharmacists, nurses and technicians, had submitted requests to sell their vacations under the new law.

However, the limited budget and prioritization for Kuwaiti employees resulted in the cancellation of expatriate requests. The law's application will officially exclude expatriates, who can now take leave based on their balance without resorting to the leave sale option. The ministry will communicate this through circulars on Sunday or Monday.

### Excellent bonus

Meanwhile, the financial and economic committee of the Cabinet recommended a decision to grant excellent bonuses exclusively to Kuwaiti employees across government agencies, discontinuing the provision for expatriate employees. This proposal stems from the strain these bonuses impose on government agency budgets. The committee urged a reevaluation of expatriate employment mechanisms, suggesting that their roles be limited to salary payments.

Non-Kuwaitis may receive bonuses based on job performance in specific disciplines but not the exceptional bonuses not stipulated in their contracts. The ministerial economic committee proposed implementing this change in the upcoming fiscal year starting in April. If approved, expatriate employees will not receive exceptional rewards for their work in the current year.

## Algerian President praises Suad Al-Sabah's initiative

KUWAIT: The President of the Algerian Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune sent on Friday a cable of congratulations to the Algerian writer and activist Dr Zohour Wanissi on the occasion of honoring her by Dr Suad Al-Sabah with the "Loyalty Day Award", which is periodically presented by the Kuwaiti poet to a number of surviving Arab thinkers and scientists who have made pioneering scientific and intellectual achievements. According to a statement by the Presidency of the Republic of Algeria published by the Algerian Press Agency, President Abdelmad-

jid Tebboune said: "I am pleased on the occasion of honoring you by the Kuwaiti Foundation "Suad Al-Sabah" with the "Loyalty Award" and to be the honored symbol of Arab culture for the year 2023, to extend to you my warmest congratulations and deep appreciation, on this well-deserved honor, which represents an appreciation for your career full of writing and creativity. And in gratitude and gratitude for your pioneering scientific, intellectual, professional and social role, which characterized your busy and lofty career."

Dr Suad Al-Sabah launched the initiative in the nineties of the last century by honoring the man of enlightenment in Kuwait, Abdulaziz Hussein, and then a number of other names in a number of Arab countries, including: Bahrain's great poet Ibrahim Al-Arrayed, poet Nizar Qabbani in Syria, Dr Tharwat Okasha in Egypt, Prince Abdullah

## Fire Force calls on campers to adhere to rules

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti General Fire Force called on those wishing to set up spring camps to adhere to the safety and fire prevention requirements attached to the Kuwait Municipality license in order to avoid the occurrence of accidents.

The director of the Department of Public Relations and Media at the Force, Brigadier General Muhammad Ibrahim, said in a press statement that there is no need to review any of the departments of the prevention sector to obtain licenses for individual spring camps with special independence, in which the area of one tent does not exceed 100 square meters. This is in accordance with what was approved regarding the requirements for camps in order to facilitate citizens and residents wishing to camp.

He explained that the General Fire Force has stipulated some guidelines. As such, electrical installations should not be exposed but rather extended in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy. They should not use any source of heat inside or next to the tent and not use wooden floors inside the tent. Similarly, the campers must leave a distance of no less than six meters between the tents, a distance of ten meters between the electric generator and the tents, and also a distance of ten meters between the kitchen and the tents.

Brigadier Gen Ibrahim said that the license applicant must check the departments of the prevention sector according to the governorate to which the camp belongs to in order to obtain the necessary approval for camping. He stated that the fire force has an integrated plan to secure camping sites through fire stations and rapid intervention points to be enforced in accordance with camp locations. There are also awareness campaigns that will be launched coinciding with the opening of the Fire Force Awareness Camp at the beginning of the camping season. — KUNA



Abdelmadjid Tebboune



Suad Al-Sabah

Al-Faisal in Saudi Arabia, Dr Abdelkrim Ghallab in Morocco, Ghassan Tuani in Lebanon, Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi in Kuwait, Dr Habib Janhani in Tunisia and writer Ibrahim Al-Koni in Libya.

## Interior arrests 282 for residency law violations

KUWAIT: Various departments under the General Directorate of Residence Affairs Investigations launched intensive search and raid operations in Khaitan, Hawally, Dhajeej, Kabb, Barayeh Salem, Salhiya, Mahboula, Fahaeel and Farwaniya markets and arrested 282 people for violating residency and labor laws. They also detained people who ran two illegal offices of domestic workers and a massage parlor. Legal action is being taken against them and referred to the competent authorities. Meanwhile, the General Administration for Drug Control seized 20 people of different nationalities in 16 cases who were in possession of about 13 kilos of various narcotic substances - methamphetamine, hashish, synthetic marijuana and cocaine - as well as 29,100 tablets of various psychotropic substances such as Lyrica and Captagon. Moreover, a bundle of currency and unlicensed ammunition were found in the possession of one of the culprits.

Local

# Kuwait marks constitution's 61st anniversary

## Nov 11, 1962, a defining moment in nation's political history

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait marked on Saturday the 61st anniversary of its constitution, which specified the ruling system, and organized relationship between legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Kuwaiti people are proud of their constitution which contributed to democracy in the Gulf nation, highlighted civil rights of citizens and their right of speech, as well as guaranteeing justice and equality.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the State of Kuwait's 11th Amir, ratified the constitution on November 11, 1962, a defining moment in the political history of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti people remember with pride the historic democratic stages that Kuwait went through, beginning with the constitutional document in 1938 until the birth of the constitution in 1962, the "most important document" of Kuwait.

The late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem had expressed desire to build a solid parliamentary system based on democratic principles and see contributions of the public to the constitution. He signed a law on August 26, 1961 regarding the bylaw of the transitional period and holding elections for the Constituent Assembly with a mandate of wording the constitution. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem inaugurated the Constituent Assembly in January 1962 and told the members that they have a daunting task of placing foundation of the ruling system of the nation.

Members of the Assembly elected Abdullahatif Mohammad Al-Ghanem as Speaker and Dr Ahmad Al-Khateeb as deputy speaker. The sixth session saw election of the Constitution Committee,



Late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives a copy of Kuwait's first constitution.

tee, consisting of speaker Al-Ghanem, late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah who was Interior Minister and also served as committee chairman, MP Humoud Al-Zaid Al-Khaled who was also Minister of Justice, Yaqoub Yusuf Al-Humaidhi and Saud Abdulaziz Al-Abdulrazzaq.

The committee tabled the final draft of the constitution and was unanimously approved on November 3, 1962. The Assembly then referred the

draft constitution to Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem who ratified it on November 11, 1962. The constitution consists of 183 Articles over five Chapters: the First about the State and System of Government, Second about Fundamental Constituents of Kuwait Society, Third about Public Rights and Duties, Fourth about Authorities and Fifth about General and Transitional Provisions. The first parliamentary elections were held in January 1963

and were the beginning of the real political practices under the constitution.

The democratic march in Kuwait was marred with some crises. The parliament was suspended twice in 1976 and 1986. However, the constitution was the shield against domestic and external challenges, foremost the Iraqi invasion and occupation in 1990-91. During the seven-month Iraqi occupation, Kuwaitis united behind their legitimate leadership. In April 1991, late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah formed a new government with a mandate of reconstruction, and in October 1992, the parliamentary life resumed. The leaders of the State of Kuwait have always reaffirmed respect to the constitution. Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had always reaffirmed commitment to the constitution, saying at a parliamentary session on October 26, 2010 that the constitution was the haven of democracy.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah reiterated this pledge and said the constitution protected the country from crises. His Highness the Amir, at a special parliamentary session to take constitutional oath as head of state on September 30, 2020, said "we reaffirm our commitment with our democracy and are proud that Kuwait is a state of law and institutions ..."

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at a special session to take constitutional oath as Crown Prince, said he would champion the participation of the public amidst an atmosphere of tolerance and unity. —KUNA

In my view

## The impact of repression on mental health: A silent crisis



By Hala Bader Al-Humaidhi

In the intricate web of modern society, repression emerges as a silent but potent force, casting a shadow on the mental well-being of individuals. The suppression of thoughts, emotions and authentic self-expression has become a pervasive issue, contributing significantly to a range of psychological challenges.

As we navigate the complexities of daily life, societal expectations, and cultural norms can exert a subtle yet profound influence on our behavior. The pressure to conform, meet unrealistic standards or adhere to rigid societal roles often leads individuals to repress their true thoughts and emotions. This repression, left unaddressed, can manifest as anxiety, depression and a host of other psychological difficulties.

The digital age, with its constant connectivity and comparison culture, exacerbates these challenges. The curated personas presented on social media platforms sometimes serve as a mask, further deepening the divide between one's authentic self and the projected image. The fear of judgment and rejection can drive individuals to repress genuine emotions, creating a breeding ground for mental health issues.

Recognizing the gravity of this issue is the first step toward fostering a more supportive and empathetic society. It is imperative to break the silence surrounding mental health, encouraging open conversations that destigmatize seeking help. Educational initiatives and awareness campaigns can play a crucial role in dismantling the societal structures that contribute to repression.

Furthermore, creating spaces that promote emotional expression and authenticity can mitigate the adverse effects of repression. Cultivating resilience and coping mechanisms empowers individuals to navigate societal pressures without compromising their mental well-being.

In addressing the silent crisis of repression, both on a personal and societal level, we pave the way for a healthier, more compassionate future. By acknowledging the impact of societal expectations on mental health, we can work towards building a world where individuals feel free to embrace their true selves without fear of judgment or repression.



KUWAIT: Photographs from the walkathon at the Boulevard Complex on Saturday.



## CAN holds walkathon to raise awareness on prostate cancer

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Cancer Awareness Campaign (CAN) Dr Khalid Al-Saleh highlighted that prostate cancer ranks as the leading cancer in Kuwait among men. He emphasized that the chances of recovery are significantly higher when the disease is detected early. Speaking at the opening of a sports walkathon at the Boulevard Complex, part of the activities of the Kuwait campaign to raise awareness of prostate cancer in collaboration with the Patients Helping Fund Society, Urology Association and Kuwaiti Oncology Association, Dr Saleh expressed that the event's purpose is to convey a crucial message to every man, particularly those aged over 50, emphasizing that the cure rate is promising with early detection.

He underscored the simplicity of early detection, involving a straightforward blood sample, and cautioned against waiting for symptoms such as increased urine levels or bone pain to manifest. Dr



Jamal Al-Fawzan

Saleh commended the collaboration with the Patients Helping Fund Society, highlighting their joint efforts not only in sports events but also in delivering medical aid and medicines to the people of Gaza affected by the Zionist occupation.

Dr Saleh renewed the call to spread the awareness message not only in Kuwait but also beyond, stressing that many lives can be saved through early detection. He pointed out that the walkathon establishes a connection between sports and immunity in human health. The National Cancer Awareness Campaign, through its active participation in awareness campaigns, aims to reduce cancer incidence in Kuwait by a third through lifestyle modifications like exercise and healthy eating.



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Emphasizing the campaign's commitment to the principle of awareness in all its initiatives, Dr Saleh stated that their goal is to raise health awareness and reduce cancer rates. Jamal Al-Fawzan, Director General of the Patients Helping Fund Society, expressed their honor in participating with CAN and the Prostate Cancer Association in the walkathon.

He highlighted the society's 44-year commitment to serving society, particularly in health and sports awareness, aligning with the vision of New Kuwait 2035. The association's mission includes providing top-notch medical relief, advancing individual and societal well-being, offering health services locally and globally and aiding patients unable to seek livelihood due to illness or disasters. —KUNA

## KEPS arm holds workshop on climate change

**KUWAIT:** The Sabah Al-Ahmad Environment Training Center and Green Schools Program, affiliated with the Kuwait Environment Protection Society, recently organized an expert workshop in collaboration with the ministry of education. The workshop aimed to address key issues related to climate change in preparation for the upcoming climate summit COP28 in the UAE. A total of 170 teachers, representing both genders, actively participated in the event.

KEPS outlined the workshop commenced with an introductory session on climate change. Subsequently, a survey was distributed to gather opinions on the climate change issue and the role of teachers in tackling related challenges. The workshop featured seven lectures delivered by a select group of Kuwaiti experts.

Dr Ghanem Al-Sulaimani discussed "the role of the education ministry in supporting educational and cultural activities to raise awareness in renewable environmental and scientific subjects, such as climate change". Dr Hassan Dashti delivered a lecture on climate change, covering its aspects, challenges and potential solutions. Dr Hamed Aidan addressed water resources in dry areas under climate change, focusing on adaptation and solutions.

The lectures continued with Dr Zahraa Al-Ali providing insights into recognizing high-risk flood areas in the context of global climate change. Dr Nawaf Al-Mutairi discussed the environmental and economic effects of rising sea levels on Kuwait, along with the impact of seasonal changes on



KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Environment Training Center and Green Schools Program, affiliated with the Kuwait Environment Protection Society, recently organized an expert workshop in collaboration with the ministry of education.

bird migration patterns. Dr Nasser Al-Deen Asadullah explored the biological aspect, followed by a question-and-answer session.

KEPS General Secretary Jenan Behzad emphasized the workshop's focus on the interconnectedness of climate change and education. "Climate change and education are two connected fields," she said, emphasizing the importance of integrating education into efforts to combat climate change and preserve the planet for future generations.

Behzad highlighted the significance of environmental education as a learning process to increase awareness and understanding of environmental is-

ssues, strengthen sustainable behaviors, and develop practical environmental techniques. She stressed that schools and universities play a crucial role in raising awareness of climate change and its impact on the environment and society.

Despite the global concern about environmental and climate effects, Behzad noted that interest in climate change issues within national curricula plans in Kuwait is currently insufficient. She concluded by advocating for an increased emphasis on climate change and sustainability in educational curricula to equip individuals with the skills necessary to address these pressing challenges.

## Education minister urges disbursement of financial rewards

**KUWAIT:** Education Minister Dr Adel Al-Mane has instructed relevant departments to expedite the distribution of financial rewards to eligible employees within the ministry of education. Matrouk Al-Mutairi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs, clarified that ongoing coordination with the ministry of finance is in progress to finalize the approval processes for disbursing outstanding performance bonuses to deserving individuals in the Hawally and Jahra educational zones.

"The bonuses for outstanding performance were disbursed to those meeting the criteria, including some schools and names inadvertently omitted from the lists in all educational zones," he said. Mutairi emphasized that the remaining outstanding bonuses will be deposited and transferred to recipients' accounts in the coming week, pending approval from the financial supervisory authority.

"The grievance process will be initiated in collaboration with the administrative sector shortly, specifically after the completion of bonus deposits for all individuals meeting the eligibility criteria for outstanding performance," he added.

Al-Mutairi expressed gratitude for the collective efforts of the financial sector, the ministry of finance, the administrative sector and educational zones. Their dedication during this period ensured the timely completion of financial disbursements to ministry of education employees.

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ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

## 45th Kuwait ENT conference begins Nov 14

**KUWAIT:** The 45th Kuwait Ear, Nose and Throat Conference, set to commence on Nov 14 under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, will spotlight the latest advancements in ear surgeries and implants, specifically focusing on cochlear implants and implantable hearing devices.

Dr Mutlaq Al-Sihan, consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon, chairman of the council of ear, nose, and throat departments, and conference chairman, revealed to KUNA that the three-day conference will delve into various specialized topics, including nasal surgeries, sleep disorders, snoring and sleep surgeries.

On the sidelines of the conference, numerous workshops will take place, covering reconstructive and cosmetic surgeries for the head, neck and face, hearing disorders and treatment methods, rehabilitation of cochlear implant patients and a workshop on speech pathology. Additionally, the Zain Center laboratory will host a workshop for training Kuwaiti board doctors in microscopic ear surgeries.

The conference will feature a distinguished assembly of consultants and experts from countries worldwide, such as the United States, Britain, Canada, Austria, Italy, Turkey and India. Arab consultants from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman and Bahrain will also participate, along with notable lecturers from Kuwait.

Dr Sihan emphasized the conference's goal of disseminating knowledge about the latest surgical techniques from international medical schools, aligning with the ministry of health's objectives to enhance local expertise and elevate the scientific and surgical proficiency of ear and nose doctors across various health sectors. This year's conference offers participants 24 continuing medical education points, anticipating robust participation from ear, nose, and throat doctors, audiologists, balance doctors and speech-language pathologists from both the ministry of health and the private sector.

# Kuwait third largest aid donor to Gaza: Egyptian Red Crescent

## Most Kuwaiti relief aid, seven more ambulances reached Gaza



17th planeload of humanitarian aid from Kuwait for Gaza arrives in Egypt. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti humanitarian aid entering Gaza.



**CAIRO:** Kuwait ranks the third among the countries that sent humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip since the start of the Zionist aggression on the Strip on October 7, according to statistics released by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society on Friday.

The Egyptian Red Crescent stated that the total humanitarian aid which arrived at the Egyptian city of Al-Arish before entering the Gaza Strip had crossed 9,262 tons. Egypt is at the top of the list of countries that provided aid with of 6,900 tons. Libya came second with 546.9 tons, while Kuwait came third with 412 tons. Qatar came fourth with 286 tons, according to the Egyptian society. The statistics also showed that the total volume of aid provided by Arab countries to the people of Gaza amounted to 8,495 tons compared with 767 tons provided by non-Arab countries.

Kuwait has established a continuous air bridge since the beginning of the Zionist aggression on the Gaza Strip to transport urgent humanitarian aid to Al-Arish Airport via 17 flights. The Kuwaiti aid to Gaza included food, clothes, tents, blankets, solar panels, drilling equipment, bulldozers, trucks, medical supplies, and 19 equipped ambulances.

Meanwhile, ninety percent of Kuwait's air bridge humanitarian and relief aid has entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt's Rafah Crossing Point, according to Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS). Kuwait's relief aid has already been handed out directly to Palestinian hospitals and people affected by the Zionist aggressions on the enclave, KRCS' Voluntary Team Chief Ahmad Abudiya said in a statement to KUNA.

Seven more Kuwaiti ambulances have reached the Gaza Strip from Egypt's Rafah Crossing Point

as part of Kuwait's relief and humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, said Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on Friday. PRCS' Media Chief said in a press statement that the charity has taken delivery of seven more ambulances from Kuwait as a sign of solidarity with the Palestinian people amid the continued aggression on Gaza. Thus, the Palestinian charity has received a total of 12 ambulances, he said, speaking highly of the efforts of Kuwaiti people and charities in aiding the health sector. He added that the State of Kuwait has contributed to answering the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people since the beginning of the Zionist aggression on the Palestinian enclave.

Zionist forces have destroyed 51 ambulances, killed 195 Palestinian medics, and targeted 130 clinics and health centers. — KUNA



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The new pediatric ICU at Amiri Hospital.



## Amiri Hospital opens new pediatric ICU

**KUWAIT:** Within the framework of providing specialized health services to citizens and improving their quality, the Amiri Hospital inaugurated the new Pediatric Intensive Care Unit to provide curative care services for critically ill children. The new service is a qualitative addition to the pediatric department at the hospital which is provided by a medical team specialized in pediatric intensive care.

For her part, the Head of the Pediatrics Department at the Amiri Hospital, Dr Wafaa Al-Ateeqi, announced that the unit has received about 20 children so far with critical cases that require admission to intensive care, including cases suffering from difficulty breathing such as asthma allergy, severe infections,

and some other diseases. "Work is underway to raise the capacity of the unit, during the second operational phase," Dr Al-Ateeqi said praising the level of equipment that includes the latest medical devices and equipment.

Dr Al-Ateeqi also hailed the support of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and the management of Al-Amiri Hospital to start operating the unit, expressing her full confidence in the medical team in the unit, which is at a high level of qualification, including specialized doctors, nursing staff, pharmacists, technicians, and other colleagues from the allied medical professions, wishing all patients good health and safety.

Dr Wafaa Al-Ateeqi

## DDI mobile clinic in Ishbiliya School

**KUWAIT:** Dasman Diabetes Institute, founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, recently organized an awareness outreach at Ishbiliya Girls Primary School, to conduct basic and preventive medical testing such as blood glucose and vital signs. The initiative comes within the Institute's belief in generating awareness about the importance of conducting early checkups to prevent diabetes and its related health complications.





Chinese vessels in high-seas chase of Philippine boat

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## Moscow targets Kyiv region after a long period of calm

Ukraine is bracing for a renewed Russian aerial onslaught this winter

**KYIV:** A missile targeted Kyiv on Saturday without causing casualties but ending nearly two months of relative calm in the Ukrainian capital, while frontline regions fended off waves of drone attacks overnight.

Ukrainian officials also hailed the anniversary of the recapture of Kherson city, the regional capital liberated a year ago in the last major frontline shift. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky praised Kherson as a "city of hope" while regretting "revenge" daily shelling by Russia.

"Just between yesterday evening and this morning, (Russia launched) almost 40 drones and rockets... Ballistic attacks against Kyiv, drones, and rockets against Odesa, the Kharkiv region," he said. Ukraine has been bracing for a renewed aerial onslaught this winter, after systematic strikes on the country's energy grid left thousands without heating or electricity in freezing temperatures last winter.

A missile targeted Kyiv "after a long pause of 52 days," said the head of the Kyiv city military administration Sergiy Popko. AFP journalists in central Kyiv had heard two strong explosions and saw trails in the sky at dawn. Air sirens had sounded soon after that.

The air force said it destroyed a missile approaching Kyiv - either an Iskander ballistic missile or an S-400 anti-aircraft missile - without reporting casualties. Air defences last downed a missile in Kyiv on September 21. The falling debris wounded seven people, including a child.

### Drone attacks

Two missiles hit a field between two settlements in the wider Kyiv region, damaging five private homes, said regional military administration chief Ruslan Kravchenko said. The air force said it downed 19 of the 31 attack drones launched by Moscow between Friday evening and Saturday 03:00 am (0100 GMT).

"The Russian occupants sent most of the attack UAVs to the frontline areas," it said. It added Russia fired several missiles overnight, but did not specify if any were downed. Two missiles hit Odesa, wounding three people including a 96-year-old woman who was hospitalised.

Ukrainians have worried that Russia may pick up its campaign of strikes on energy infrastructures, and warned Kyiv would strike back on Russian oil and gas infrastructure. Energy Minister German Galushchenko said it "would be fair" to target Russia's oil and gas infrastructure if Ukraine's power grid came under sustained attacks, in an interview with Politico.

To prepare for the possible attacks on energy facilities - for a second winter - Zelensky said Tuesday Ukraine had deployed more defence systems.

### 'City of hope'

Zelensky also praised his country's resilience in a message congratulating residents and soldiers for the liberation of Kherson, the capital of the region of the same name. "Ukraine always comes back - always!" Zel-



KYIV: Women react as they look at boards depicting Kievans - Ukrainian servicemen killed during battles with Russian troops - on display in the centre of Kyiv, amid Russian invasion in Ukraine. — AFP

ensky said, adding, "when we are united. And when we unite others." Ukrainian forces liberated the southern city of Kherson last November, routing Russian troops in an embarrassing defeat for the Kremlin. Russian forces based across the river from Kherson city still control swathes of territory and shell towns and villages they retreated from.

Two people died in Kherson and eight

others were wounded over the past day, governor Oleksandr Prokudin said. Russian troops also struck the central part of Kherson in the afternoon, wounding two people, the regional administration said.

On the ground, Ukrainian forces are facing assaults from Russian troops around the eastern frontline town of Avdiivka. "Our servicemen and women are steadfastly holding the line in the Avdiivka sector,"

Ukrainian army commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy said.

Ukrainian officials said earlier this week they were bracing for a third wave of attacks from Russian forces, which began storming Avdiivka about a month ago. Further north in the city of Toretsk, two elderly people died "probably as a result of artillery fire", according to Ukraine's Prosecutor General. — AFP

## Pope dismisses US bishop who was prominent critic

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis on Saturday dismissed US bishop Joseph Strickland, a prominent conservative who has repeatedly criticized his papacy, the Vatican announced. The rare decision to remove a senior Catholic figure from his post came after Francis sent two US bishops to visit Strickland's Texas diocese in June. "The Holy Father has relieved from the pastoral governance of the diocese of Tyler (US) Joseph E. Strickland," the Vatican said in a statement. It said the bishop of Austin, Joe Vasquez, had been named as apostolic administrator of the diocese, but gave no further details.

Commentators say it is extremely rare for a bishop to be directly relieved of his responsibilities, rather than encouraged - or told - to resign. In a blog posted on his website in September, Strickland addressed rumours that he was being encouraged by the Vatican to step down. "I cannot resign as bishop of Tyler because that would be me abandoning the flock" under his care, he wrote. "I have also said that I will respect the authority of Pope Francis if he removes me from office as Bishop of Tyler."

He made no immediate comment on his dismissal, which was announced while it was still early on Saturday morning in the United States. In his blog posting in September, he wrote: "I love Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church which He established. My only desire is to speak His Truth and live God's Will to the best of my ability."

The Vatican has not said what sparked the apostolic visitation this summer or what conclusions

were reached. Strickland wrote that the two bishops had spent a week conducting interviews - including with him - about the condition of the diocese.

The Texas bishop, appointed by former pope Benedict XVI in 2012, was one of the most prominent critics of Pope Francis. The Argentine pope, 86, has sought to forge a more compassionate Church, open to different views. But he has faced intense opposition from critics - particularly in the United States - who accuse him of causing confusion and failing to uphold key Catholic beliefs. In a message earlier this year on X, formerly Twitter, Strickland accused the pope of "undermining the deposit of faith".

Many of his critics complain Francis is not outspoken enough on abortion and too compassionate towards homosexuals and divorcees. While speaking to a meeting of Jesuits in Lisbon, Francis lamented the "strong reactionary attitude" of some Catholics in the US. He said looking backwards "is useless and we need to understand that there is an appropriate evolution in the understanding of matters of faith and morals". The decision to dismiss Strickland was also announced by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, although their statement provided no more details than the Vatican.

There are more than 120,000 Catholics in the diocese of Tyler, out of a total population of more than 1.4 million people, according to the conference. The diocese published a statement on its website confirming the news from the Vatican, adding: "Our work as the Catholic Church in northeast Texas continues."

Pope Francis dismissed a bishop in Puerto Rico, Daniel Fernandez Torres, in similar fashion in March 2022. Again, the Vatican gave no reason. Torres himself claimed he had been told he had not been "obedient" to the pope and did not have sufficiently good relationships with fellow bishops. Media reports at the time noted he had supported those who refused compulsory coronavirus vaccinations. — AFP



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis blesses objects presented to him at the end of an audience to the participants of the International Meeting for Shrine Rectors and Shrine Workers on November 11, 2023 at Paul-VI hall in The Vatican. — AFP

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## International

# Despair in Gaza hospitals encircled by fighting

## 'Zionist tanks are besieging us from all sides'

GAZA CITY: At Gaza's largest hospital, a sheltering Palestinian said Friday he felt "under siege" as the facility was encircled by fighting between Zionist soldiers and Hamas militants.

"We need help from the international community, people are dying here due to lack of treatment," said Atef, who has taken refuge at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, surrounded by patients on trolleys. The hospital was hit earlier on Friday by an Zionist strike, the facility's director and Gaza's Hamas government said, with the latter giving a death toll of 13.

The Zionist military has denied bombing hospitals. Gaza resident Hanane, whose wounded daughter is being treated at Shifa, said that with each explosion his "daughter starts shaking".

The girl "was wounded in the bombing of a queue outside a bakery", Hanane said, wondering aloud about how join the rest of her family who have fled to the south where the fighting is less intense. In the courtyard of Shifa hospital, the boom of explosions echoed around Mohammed Rihane as he walked on crutches for his injured leg. "People are dying, torn to shreds in the streets and we can't go and look for them," he said, while moving around the city remains incredibly dangerous.

The Zionist military says its troops are in the heart of Gaza City, battling Hamas, which it says uses hospitals "as command and control centres and hideouts", a tactic denied by the group.

### Seeking refuge

Faced with the advance of Zionist troops and bombardments, tens of thousands of residents in Gaza have

sought refuge in hospitals across the city, which was home to nearly 600,000 people before the war.

The fighting is also encroaching on other Gaza City hospitals, witnesses and Hamas government officials told AFP. At Al-Rantisi hospital, a distraught young girl said "Zionist tanks are besieging us from all sides". "We were asked to immediately leave the hospital, but there's neither the Red Cross nor anyone who can guarantee the safe exit of civilians," she said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said Israeli snipers fired on Al-Quds hospital on Friday, killing one person and wounding 28 others, the majority children. The Zionist military told AFP it would not comment on the attack because it could "compromise the troops". Zionist's campaign has killed over 11,000 people across the Gaza Strip, the majority of them civilians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

The war erupted when Hamas gunmen stormed across the border from Gaza into southern Zionist entity in an unprecedented attack that killed around 1,200 people, according to an updated toll from Zionist officials.

### 'Can't evacuate

After five weeks of war, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned Friday that Gaza's health system had "reached a point of no return", putting the lives of thousands of patients and medics at risk.

Rantisi hospital had been forced to cease operations, the ICRC said, while Al-Nasser hospital was among those heavily damaged.

"The rules of war are clear. Hospi-



GAZA STRIP: This picture taken from the Zionist entity side of the border with the Gaza Strip on November 11, 2023, shows smoke rising over buildings during a Zionist strike on the Palestinian enclave, amid ongoing battles between Zionist entity and the Hamas movement. — AFP

tals are specially protected facilities under international humanitarian law," the organization said in a statement.

Hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to remain in northern parts of the Palestinian territory, including Gaza

City, while overall the United Nations says almost 1.6 million people have been displaced by the war. At Shifa, director Mohammad Abu Salmiya said "all the hospitals of Gaza City were targeted" by the Zionist military. "We didn't expect to see hospi-

tals bombed in 2023. We can't evacuate, because we have more than 60 patients in intensive care, more than 50 babies in incubators, more than 500 patients on dialysis," he said, looking visibly exhausted in his blue scrubs. — AFP

## Yemen's Houthi rebels seek legitimacy with Zionist entity attacks

DUBAI: Drone and missile attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen have barely troubled Zionist entity but the Iran-backed group's overriding target is strategic rather than military, analysts say. A series of launches over most of the Arabian Peninsula targeting Zionist entity from war-torn, impoverished Yemen have either been shot down by missile defences or fallen short. However, experts say the Houthis, who seized the capital Sanaa in 2014 and control much of country, have a different goal in mind: Regional and domestic legitimacy.

"The group seeks strategic objectives through their involvement in a regional conflict, including securing political influence in Yemen and the broader region," Mohammed Albasha, a senior Middle East analyst for the US-based Navanti Group, told AFP.

They are "seeking recognition and legitimacy as a significant player", he said, adding that such attacks "also aim to rejuvenate and mobilize their support base" at home. The attacks, triggered by Zionist's war on Hamas, follow more than eight years of

fighting a Saudi-led coalition at home. The Houthis have declared themselves part of Iran's "axis of resistance" which includes Shiite groups in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Similar attacks on Zionist entity have been launched from Syria and Lebanon.

Zionist entity vowed to root out and destroy Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, after the Palestinian militants killed 1,400 people and took 240 hostages, according to Zionist authorities, in a major attack on October 7. Over 11,000 people have since died in retaliatory strikes in Gaza by Zionist entity, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

The Houthis have previously launched attacks on Saudi Arabia, Yemen's northern neighbor, and the United Arab Emirates, both key foreign players in the civil war. But the surprise launches at Zionist entity are their most significant military action since a six-month ceasefire last year heralded a period of calm for a country brought to its knees by years of fighting.

To inflict any damage on Zionist entity, the Houthi projectiles must travel at least 1,600 kilometres to hit its southernmost tip.

The rebels have ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones capable of traversing that distance, according to Fabian Hinz of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. But given their inaccuracy, "there is no major threat to the Zionist mainland from the Houthis", Hinz told AFP. — AFP



SANAA: Yemenis chant slogans and wave flags during a march in solidarity with the people of Gaza in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa, amid ongoing battles between Zionist entity and the militant group Hamas. — AFP

## Double standards!...

### Continued from Page 1

The sheer speed of reaching that conclusion and sharing it with the rest of the world is mindboggling. In retrospect, the Bush administration at least made an effort to convince the world they did some research before announcing there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. I can only assume that Joe needed to lock in the Zionist support for the elections early. On the other hand, Rishi Sunak announced to the Commons that his investigation led to the conclusion that the hospital bombing was as a result of a missile fired from inside Gaza. I am not sure why the UK government spent any time or money investigating that when the majority of the Arab world knew that would be the only possible conclusion!

To date, more than 11,000 people have lost their lives after the commencement of the genocide campaign by the IDF.

### International law down the drain

Almost every human rights organization and law expert has announced that the continued bombardment of Gaza is a clear violation of international law. The collective punishment of civilians in Gaza is a clear violation of international law. But the American,

British and French leaders are still ignoring these claims. I hope it's clear to all now — that international law is only upheld when it suits the interest of a handful of countries. The sheer inhumanity of not voting for a ceasefire is mindboggling.

### "No benefit in a ceasefire at this time"

The above statement was reiterated in different ways by the likes of Hillary Clinton, Rishi Sunak, the Biden administration and the French leadership is nothing short of criminal. The justification that this would only allow Hamas to regroup is a pathetic excuse to condone genocide.

I can't help but wonder what fear was instilled in the hearts and minds of these leaders by the Zionists to allow them to utter these ideas in public. I am convinced that politicians of the likes of Sunak and Co are not convinced of what they are saying, but feel they must for the sake of their continued existence in their current roles.

There is no clear end date to the ongoing genocide. The will of good humans around the world is still no match to the very few Western leaders who want to pursue their campaign of ethnic cleansing. I make it a point to emphasize leaders, and not nations. I am convinced that the majority of everyday Americans and Europeans are innocent of what their Zionist-backed leaders are responsible for. I hope the humane majority can overthrow the corrupt few and make amends to the torn fabric of humanity.

containing the most significant memorials, and an exclusion zone created, with police able to arrest any marchers who try to breach it. Thousands of people wearing red poppies — the symbol of remembrance — stood heads bowed at The Cenotaph on Whitehall for a solemn ceremony of reflection, with other services held up and down the country.

Minor scuffles broke out near the memorial as counter-protesters — many dressed in black with their faces covered, and some waving England's St George's flag and the Union Jack — tried to break through police lines. Missiles were later thrown at officers in the nearby Chinatown area, the Metropolitan Police said. Police later said that they had arrested 82 counter-protesters in order to "prevent a breach of the peace", saying they tried to reach the main protest march. — AFP

## Crown Prince: Halt the...

### Continued from Page 1

from the West Bank in a future Palestinian state. The final statement from the summit stressed the importance of "the unity of Gaza and the West Bank as the territory of the Palestinian State", with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Host Saudi Arabia "confirms that it holds the occupation (Zionist) authorities responsible for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said as Saturday's summit began. "We are certain that the only way to guarantee security, peace and stability in the region is to end the occupation, siege and the settlements," he said of the Zionist entity's actions in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first trip to Saudi Arabia since the two countries mended ties in March, said Islamic countries should designate the Zionist army a "terrorist organization" for its conduct in Gaza. The Arab League and the OIC, a 57-member bloc that

includes Iran, were originally meant to meet separately.

Arab diplomats told AFP the decision to merge the meetings came after Arab League delegations failed to reach an agreement on a final statement.

Some countries, including Algeria and Lebanon, proposed responding to the devastation in Gaza by threatening to disrupt oil supplies to the Zionist entity and its allies as well as severing the economic and diplomatic ties that some Arab League nations have with Israel, the diplomats said. However, at least three countries — including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which normalized ties with the Zionist entity in 2020 — rejected the proposal, according to the diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad said a lack of concrete punitive measures against the Zionist entity would render the summit toothless. "If we do not have real tools for pressure, then any step we take or speech we give will have no meaning," said Assad, who was welcomed back into the Arab fold this year after an extended rift over his country's civil war. He said no Middle Eastern country should engage in any "political process" with the Zionist entity, including developing economic relations, until a lasting ceasefire is reached. — Agencies

## Preemies die as Zionists target...

### Continued from Page 1

Later Saturday, Physicians for Human Rights said, citing doctors there, that two premature babies have died due to power cuts at Gaza's largest hospital as fighting rages around the Al-Shifa complex. "As a result of the lack of electricity, we can report that the neonatal intensive care unit has stopped working. Two premature infants have died, and there is a real risk to the lives of 37 other premature infants" at Al-Shifa hospital, the Zionist doctors' group said in a statement.

No fuel has entered Gaza in more than five weeks of war, prompting multiple hospitals and clinics relying on generators to shut down. "The hospital is besieged, with no option to bring in the corpses and injured people sprawled outside. There is no movement in or out of the hospital," Physicians for Human Rights said. "The picture

we are now seeing at Shifa is no longer of a humanitarian catastrophe — it is a collective death sentence," Physicians for Human Rights said.

The suffering in Gaza has prompted growing calls for a halt in five weeks of fighting in order to protect civilian lives and allow humanitarian aid into the densely populated territory. French President Emmanuel Macron said the Zionist entity had the right to defend itself but urged it to stop strikes on civilians in Gaza: "These babies, these ladies, these old people are bombed and killed."

Islamic Jihad, another Palestinian armed group present in Gaza, said on Saturday its "fighters are engaged in fierce clashes in the vicinity of Al-Shifa hospital complex" and other areas of Gaza City, claiming to have caused "casualties in the ranks of the (Zionist) enemy forces". Concern over the civilian toll has also come from staunch Zionist ally Washington, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying Friday: "Far too many Palestinians have been killed." In northern Gaza, the director of the Indonesian hospital said lack of fuel forced the facility to cut power to think like their desalination plant, scanners and lifts. — AFP

## 300,000 stage pro-Palestinian...

### Continued from Page 1

London police have made nearly 100 arrests at previous pro-Palestinian marches, including for supporting Hamas, which is considered a "terrorist" group in the UK. Amidst the public order fears, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made a late plea for calm late on Friday, calling for protesters to act "respectfully and peacefully". March organizers had changed the route from Hyde Park to the US Embassy in south London to ensure it will not pass any landmark memorials.

Metal barriers have been placed around the area

## International

# Chinese vessels in high-seas chase of Philippine boat with media

## Philippines accuse Chinese coast guard of 'dangerous harassment' of Filipino boats

**SOUTH CHINA SEA, UNDEFINED:** As a Philippine Coast Guard rubber boat carrying journalists sped towards Filipino troops on a grounded navy vessel in the disputed South China Sea, three Chinese speed boats gave chase. The high-seas pursuit near Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands on Friday ended when Philippine Navy inflatable speed boats deployed from the crumbling BRP Sierra Madre and blocked the approaching Chinese vessels.

Moments later, the Philippine Coast Guard craft carrying AFP and a local media outlet slipped into the shallow waters of the shoal. It floated about 180 metres (200 yards) from the World War II-era BRP Sierra Madre where a handful of marines are stationed — one of nine Philippine outposts in the hotly contested Spratlys. The rusty hulk has been a flashpoint for Manila and Beijing since the Philippine Navy ran it aground in 1999 to check China's advance in the waters. China claims almost the entire South China Sea and has ignored an international ruling that its stance has no legal basis.

It deploys steel-hulled ships and speed boats to patrol the waters and reefs in the sea and has built artificial islands that it has militarized to reinforce its claims. Tensions have escalated under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, whose administration has been increasingly vocal in criticizing Chinese actions in the sea.

Resupply and rotation missions to the BRP Sierra Madre have become a frequent trigger of diplomatic spats between the countries. Manila accuses Chinese vessels of harassing and blocking Philippine boats delivering food, water and materials for badly

needed repairs. Beijing, which has urged Manila to remove the ship, insists the Philippine vessels are infringing China's territorial sovereignty. Second Thomas Shoal is about 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan, and more than 1,000 kilometres from China's nearest major landmass, Hainan island.

On Friday, the Philippines accused the Chinese coast guard of "dangerous harassment" of Filipino boats near the reef, including firing a water cannon and blocking vessels. The incident happened nearly three weeks after two collisions between Chinese and Philippine vessels during another resupply mission, with the countries trading blame.

### 'Shoulder-to-shoulder'

China's actions have sparked international concern and fuelled fears for a potential accident or miscalculation serious enough to ignite a military conflict. Manila's longtime ally Washington reiterated Friday that its mutual defence pact with the Philippines "extends to armed attacks on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft — including those of its Coast Guard — anywhere in the South China Sea."

"The United States stands shoulder-to-shoulder with our Philippine ally in the face of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) repeated harassment in the South China Sea," US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

As the journalists sat in the rubber boat under a cloudy sky observing the dilapidated state of the BRP Sierra Madre on Friday, a US maritime patrol plane circled overhead. The Philippine Coast Guard



**AT SEA, UNDEFINED:** This photo taken on November 10, 2023 shows Philippine coast guard personnel and journalists sailing onboard a rigid inflatable boat (L) as they head back after filming the BRP Sierra Madre docked at Second Thomas Shoal in the disputed South China Sea.—AFP

identified five Chinese coast guard, 28 "maritime militia" and five navy vessels floating nearby. The Philippines was vastly outnumbered, with three coast guard vessels escorting two small wooden supply boats chartered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines to deliver provisions to the troops. The Philippine coast guard and navy also deployed three rigid-hulled inflatable boats each to assist in the mis-

sion, which was completed Friday. Philippine Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan told reporters Saturday that they remained "unflinching" in performing resupply missions to outposts. "The Philippine Coast Guard will not be deterred from implementing the president's explicit guidance for the Philippines to exercise our legal rights over our maritime zones," Gavan said.—AFP



Joseph Boakai

## Joseph Boakai: Political veteran with plan to 'rescue' Liberia

**MONROVIA:** Liberia's main opposition contender for president Joseph Boakai has four decades of political experience behind him but at the age of 78, he faces the challenge of winning over a largely young population. He was vice president from 2006 to 2018 to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, who rebuilt a ravaged Liberia after a civil war left an estimated 250,000 dead. It is Boakai's second and likely last run for the top job — he already lost to President George Weah in a 2017 run-off.

The two face off again in a second round vote on Tuesday, following last month's hard-fought first ballot, in which neither secured an outright win. Boakai has castigated the record of his opponent, a former international star footballer, and emphasized his own experience in office, proposing a "rescue plan" for the West African country. He has pledged to improve infrastructure, invest in agriculture, attract investment, open the country to tourism and restore Liberia's reputation. "His motivation is to rescue Liberia from the current state it is in," Mohammed Ali, Boakai's Unity Party spokesman told AFP.

He highlighted an "influx of illicit drugs, the increase in the poverty rate (and) the image of the country being so low" as problems that have worsened under Weah's presidency. His strategy seems to be working. While six years ago Boakai won 28.8 percent in the first round and 38.5 percent in the second, he pulled level with Weah in this year's first round, with both receiving about 43 percent of the vote.

### Alliances

Boakai has promised an inclusive government, reflecting the country's political, ethnic, regional, religious and gender diversity. Some of the 18 other candidates who are now out of the race, such as Tiawan Gongloe, have endorsed him.

In the first round, he skillfully built alliances with local political leaders, such as the former warlord Prince Johnson, who supported Weah in 2017 and still enjoys strong support in his native Nimba County. An ally of Johnson — now a member of the Liberian Senate who is under US sanctions for corruption and was seen in a 1990 video sipping beer while his soldiers torture and kill president Samuel Doe — is Boakai's running mate. Their ticket won easily in the heavily populated northeastern region. Like 57-year-old Weah, Boakai is from the Indigenous population and not the US-Liberian elite, who founded the free nation and were descended from slaves. He was born in a remote village in Lofa County near the borders with Guinea and Sierra Leone, often called Liberia's "breadbasket". He was agriculture minister from 1983 to 1985 under Doe. Boakai portrays himself as a simple man who rose from humble origins through hard work. He is married with four children.

Throughout the campaign, his team has presented Boakai as a man of integrity whose credentials make him the only candidate able to tackle corruption — one of Weah's key 2017 promises and one on which some voters say he has failed. "He believes in perfection, he takes note of everything," his senior advisor Augustin Konneh told AFP.—AFP

## Tight security as three Nigerian states go to polls

**ABUJA:** Nigerian police deployed helicopters and gunboats as polling began in three states to elect governors amid fears political rivalries could spill over into violence. State elections are fiercely contested in Nigeria where governors are powerful figures and clashes, killings and voter intimidation are common. Police have issued sweeping travel restrictions for Bayelsa state in the south, Imo in the south-east and Kogi in the centre of the country.

Officers said they had beefed up forces to tackle electoral violence, while a military spokesman said the army was sending troops to "reinforce security". The fairness of the ballot is also under scrutiny

and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) warned it would not count votes from polling stations where clashes broke out.

On Friday it said an INEC official was "abducted while waiting to board a boat" in Bayelsa, while another boat carrying election documents capsized, affecting more than 5,000 voters in the state. Observers are watching the electoral commission closely after the presidential election earlier this year, when critics and the opposition said delays in uploading results and technical problems created opportunities for rigging votes.

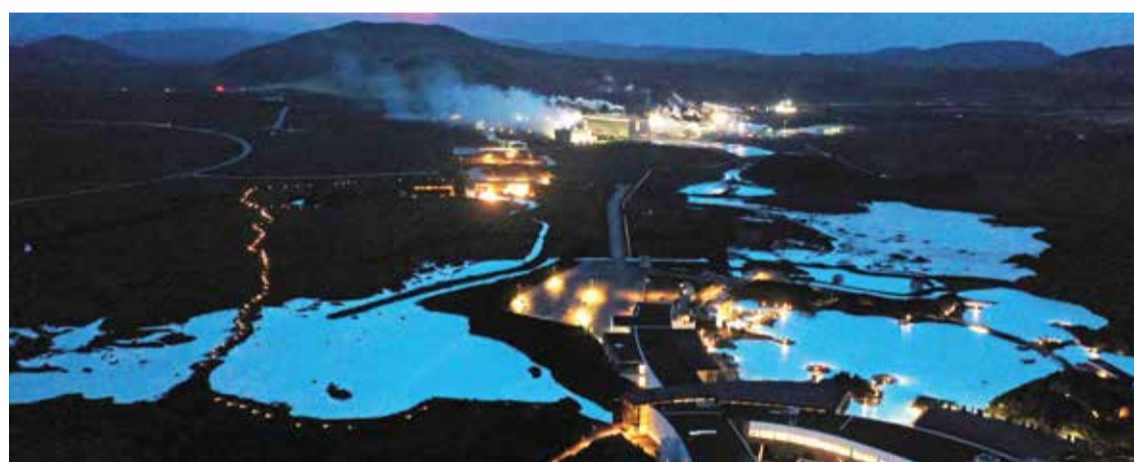
INEC said it had learnt lessons from the presidential poll and "done everything possible to guarantee that the weekend's election is free, fair, and credible." Bayelsa is seeking to avoid a repeat of 2019 polls which saw sporadic violence and abuses including killings, abductions, vote-buying and intimidation.

Gift Meeting, a caterer in the state capital Yenagoa, hopes this year's vote will be peaceful. "It's not worth anyone dying for," she told AFP. She believes the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in power in the

state, but in opposition nationally, will win comfortably. The 2019 vote in Kogi state, led by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), also saw deadly violence and electoral malpractice.

In one incident police said three people were killed while voting materials were snatched and election officials harassed by gangs loyal to the rival parties. Southeastern Imo state faces major security challenges, including from separatists from the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group that agitates for a state of the ethnic Igbo people.

IPOB has warned against vote rigging and corruption in Saturday's poll, but the group has been blamed in the past for attacks on police patrols and election offices. The APC state governor also faces intense criticism from Nigeria's main labour union, which has threatened to call a strike after claiming Imo authorities were behind an attack on its leader last week. Nigeria has a long history of electoral violence since the country emerged from military rule in 1999 and many vote results end up challenged in the courts.—AFP



**GRINDAVIK:** In this file photo the red shimmer from magma is seen coming out from the erupting Fagradalsfjall volcano behind the tourist land mark Blue Lagoon, near the town of Grindavik some 40 km west of the Icelandic capital Reykjavik, on March 20, 2021. A swarm of earthquakes, brought about by a magma intrusion signalling a potential volcanic eruption, prompted a temporary closure of Iceland's famed Blue Lagoon geothermal spa on November 9, 2023, the operator said.—AFP

## Quakes rock south Iceland as volcanic eruption looms

**REYKJAVIK:** Iceland declared a state of emergency on Friday after a series of powerful earthquakes rocked the country's southwestern Reykjanes peninsula, in what could be a precursor to a volcanic eruption. "The National police chief ... declares a state of emergency for civil defence due to the intense earthquake (activity) at Sundhnjukagigar, north of Grindavik," the Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management said in a statement. "Earthquakes can become larger than those that have occurred and this series of events could lead to an eruption," the administration warned.

The Icelandic Met Office (IMO) said an eruption could take place "in several days". The village of Grindavik, home to around 4,000 people, is located some three kilometres (1.86 miles) southwest of the area where Friday's earthquake swarm was registered. It has evacuation plans in place in case of an eruption. Around 1730 GMT, two strong earthquakes were felt as far away as the capital Reykjavik some 40 kilometres away, and along much of the country's southern coast, rattling windows and household objects. According to preliminary IMO figures, the biggest tremor had a magnitude of 5.2, north of Grindavik.

Police closed a road running north-south to Grindavik on Friday after it was damaged by the tremors. Some 24,000 tremors have been registered on the peninsula since late October, according to the IMO, with "a dense swarm" of nearly 800 quakes registered between midnight and 1400 GMT Friday.

The IMO noted an accumulation of magma underground at a depth of about five kilometres (3.1

miles). Should it start moving towards the surface it could lead to a volcanic eruption. "The most likely scenario is that it will take several days rather than hours for magma to reach the surface," it said. "If a fissure were to appear where the seismic activity is at its highest now, lava would flow to the southeast and to the west, but not towards Grindavik."

### New active era

Nonetheless, the Department of Civil Protection said it was sending the patrol vessel Thor to Grindavik "for security purposes". Emergency shelters and help centres were to open in Grindavik later Friday, as well as three other locations in southern Iceland, for information purposes and to assist people on the move. On Thursday, the Blue Lagoon, a popular tourist destination located near Grindavik famed for its geothermal spas and luxury hotels, closed as a precaution following another earthquake swarm. Also nearby is the Svartsengi geothermal plant, the main supplier of electricity and water to 30,000 residents on the Reykjanes peninsula.

It has contingency plans in place to protect the plant and its workers in the event of an eruption. Since 2021, three eruptions have taken place on the Reykjanes peninsula, in March 2021, August 2022 and July 2023. Those three were located far from any infrastructure or populated areas. Iceland has 33 active volcanic systems, the highest number in Europe. The North Atlantic island straddles the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a crack in the ocean floor separating the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. Prior to the March 2021 eruption in an uninhabited area around Mount Fagradalsfjall, the Reykjanes volcanic system had remained dormant for eight centuries. Volcanologists believe the new cycle of increased activity could last for several decades or centuries. An April 2010 massive eruption at another Iceland volcano, the Eyjafjallajökull in the south of the island, forced the cancellation of some 100,000 flights, leaving more than 10 million travellers stranded.—AFP

## Australia responds to 'cyber incident' affecting ports

**SYDNEY:** The Australian government said Saturday it was responding to a "significant cyber security incident" affecting several ports operated by DP World Australia that could last a number of days. Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said on social media platform X the government was coordinating a response to the incident and that authorities were working with DP World Australia "to understand the impacts".

O'Neil said the national crisis management framework employed during the COVID-19 pandemic was being used in response to the incident. DP World Australia did not respond immediately to a request for comment from AFP. However, the ports operator said in a statement quoted by The Sydney Morning Herald it had "restricted landslide access to our Australian port operations while we continue our investigation" to safeguard employees, customers and its networks.

National Cyber Security Coordinator Darren Goldie said on X, formerly Twitter, that the "interruption is likely to continue for a number of days and will impact the movement of goods into and out of the country". "DP World Australia has advised it has restricted access to its Australian port operations in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle while it investigates the incident," he said.

The Australian Cyber Security Centre, which leads the government's digital security responses, was advising the port operator and "providing technical advice and assistance", he said. The National Emergency Management Agency and National Coordination Mechanism, which streamlines a crisis response, will meet together on Sunday, Goldie said, adding that federal police have launched an investigation.

Goldie, an air marshal in the Royal Australian Air Force, was appointed the inaugural national coordinator last July in response to a number of key cyber attacks. Cybersecurity experts have said inadequate safeguards and the stockpiling of sensitive customer information have made Australia a lucrative target in the eyes of hackers.

Medibank, Australia's largest private health insurer, said in November 2022 that hackers had accessed the data of 9.7 million current and former customers, including medical records related to drug abuse and pregnancy terminations. Just two months earlier, telecom company Optus fell prey to a data breach of similar scale in which the personal details of up to 9.8 million people were accessed. Those two incidents were among the largest data breaches in Australian history.—AFP

## Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2023

# Poverty soars in conflict-hit Gaza, West Bank, says UN

## Socioeconomic 'shock' to force thousands of Palestinians into poverty

**UNITED NATIONS:** The socioeconomic "shock" of the Zionist entity's war on Gaza will force hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into poverty, a UN report on the conflict's possible long-term impacts on Gaza and the West Bank warned on Thursday. After a month of intense Zionist entity bombardment of the Gaza Strip, the poverty rate in the Palestinian territories is expected to soar from 26.7 percent to 31.9 percent, according to estimates from the UN Development Program (UNDP). That represents about 285,000 people added to the impoverished pre-war population of almost 1.5 million.

The poverty rate could reach 35.8 percent if the conflict lasts another month, according to the report, and rise further to 38.8 percent if it lasts two months. The war, which claimed at least 1,400 people in Zionist entity, has generated a severe "shock to Palestinian economic activity," the UNDP report says.

Projected GDP growth in the Palestinian territories could fall 4.2 to 12.2 percent from pre-war estimates, depending on how long the fighting lasts — or losses of between \$857 million and \$2.5 billion. Unemployment is also expected to increase between five and 13 percentage points, from a pre-war level of 24.7 percent, the world body said.

An estimated 182,000 jobs have already been lost in the Gaza Strip, and an additional 208,000 jobs have been eliminated in the West Bank, due to restricted movement of goods and the inability of Palestinians to cross into Zionist entity to work. "We have to recognize that the consequence of what is happening right now is literally a development crisis for years to come," UNDP administrator Achim Steiner told AFP.

In the Gaza Strip, at least 45 percent of homes have been destroyed or damaged, but businesses and agricultural lands have also been hit. Satellite images show that in the governorates of North Gaza and Gaza City, more than 36 percent of greenhouses were destroyed or damaged, and more than 1,000 fields have been damaged, the report says.

"In our most conservative scenario, this conflict is likely to setback development (in the Palestinian territories)



GAZA: People salvage some belongings from a damaged building following Zionist bombing on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 11, 2023. — AFP

by well over a decade," Steiner said. In the most pessimistic outlook, the human development index — which measures life expectancy, education and standard of living — could roll back to 2007 levels. Steiner says the international community must therefore start looking not just at humanitarian aid, but also redevelopment concerns — taking to heart past lessons in terms of slow reconstruction in Gaza and its resulting dependence on outside help, especially from Zionist entity.

In the May 2021 conflict between Zionist entity

and Hamas, 1,700 homes were destroyed. A year later, only 200 had been rebuilt, the report says. "We need to look at how we can accelerate both the clearance of rubble and the ability of bringing in materials," Steiner said. He also called for the installation of solar panels and water desalination plants of varying size "in order to allow a group of people who essentially are confined to the Gaza Strip to be able not only to survive, but also to maintain a functional economy, in what could still be years of tension." — AFP

## British economy stagnates in Q3

**LONDON:** Britain's economy stagnated in the third quarter, official data showed Friday, weighed down by elevated inflation and interest-rate hikes. Gross domestic product showed no growth in the July-September period, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That beat market expectations for a contraction of 0.2 percent, but followed 0.2-percent expansion in the second quarter. The data comes one week after the Bank of England froze interest rates at a 15-year high of 5.25 percent to tackle high inflation, and forecast the economy would flatline next year.

Reacting to Friday's data, UK finance minister Jeremy Hunt warned that "high inflation was the single greatest barrier to economic growth". Hunt added that his budget statement on November 22, would "focus on how we get the economy growing healthily again". "UK economy woes continue," noted KPMG economist Yael Selfin. "Economic activity is continuing to slow as high interest rates are weighing in on consumer sentiment and disposable incomes.

"While real incomes have started to grow as inflation eases, this is being offset by higher mortgage rates feeding through into housing costs." The ONS added Friday that activity grew 0.2 percent in September after downwardly-revised expansion of 0.1 percent in August and zero growth in July.

"The economy is estimated to have shown no growth in the third quarter," said ONS economic statistics director Darren Morgan. "Services dropped a little with falls in health, management consultancy and commercial property rentals. These were par-



LONDON: A customer uses a ten pound note to pay for goods at a market in east London. — AFP

tially offset by growth in engineering, car sales and machinery leasing." There was also a boost from manufacturing, led by cars and metal products while construction also expanded.

Output has been slammed by soaring inflation, which has sparked a cost-of-living crisis, and the BoE's aggressive hikes since late 2021, when rates stood at just 0.10 percent. Rate hikes have worsened Britain's cost-of-living squeeze because retail lenders follow suit by hiking the cost of repayments on mortgages and other loans.

Economists said after the latest figures that the UK may avoid recession, defined as two successive

quarters of contraction. "The economy narrowly avoided contracting in the third quarter, and we continue to think that it can maintain this resilient performance in the fourth quarter," said Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at research consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics. "We continue to think that the chances of a recession look low." UK inflation remained elevated in September, holding at 6.7 percent and stoking fear that interest rates could stay higher for longer. It has slowed dramatically since hitting a 41-year peak of 11.1 percent in October 2022, when energy bills rocketed after key producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Powell: Fed could hike rates again if 'appropriate'

**WASHINGTON:** The US Federal Reserve is prepared, if needed, to hike interest rates further in order to bring inflation down to its long-term two percent target, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said Thursday. "We know that ongoing progress toward our two percent goal is not assured: Inflation has given us a few headfakes," Powell told a conference in Washington.

"If it becomes appropriate to tighten policy further, we will not hesitate to do so," he added, in remarks that were briefly disrupted by climate protesters. Powell's comments come just over a week after the US central bank voted to hold interest rates steady at a 22-year high for a second consecutive meeting, fueling expectations that it was done with rate hikes.

While the Fed's rate-setting committee is "committed" to achieving a sufficiently tight stance of monetary policy, "we are not confident that we have achieved such a stance," Powell said. The Fed chair's comments suggest the US central bank is still concerned about the prospect of a re-acceleration of inflation, which has more than halved since peaking last year, according to the Fed's favored yardstick.

However, Powell later indicated that he felt the Fed was "probably" at a point where its monetary policy was "significantly restrictive," suggesting that the Fed felt confident in its current stance.

"We're watching the effect carefully on the economy," he said. Despite the Fed's aggressive monetary tightening, which brought rates to a level between 5.25-5.50 percent, economic growth remains strong and the labor market remains fairly buoyant — although it has shown some recent signs of slowing.

The strong recent economic data has increased the likelihood of a so-called "soft landing," whereby the Fed succeeds in tackling inflation without plunging the United States into recession.

Most Fed policymakers indicated back in Septem-

ber that they expect one more interest rate hike before the year is out, although many of them have since indicated they think the Fed could be done tightening monetary policy. "While I see us on the path of taming inflation and protecting our economic underpinnings, I would also caution that a decrease in the policy rate is not something that is likely to happen in the short term," Philadelphia Fed President Patrick Harker said earlier this week.

But not all voting members of the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee have expressed this view. Fed Governor Michelle Bowman recently told a conference in Ohio that she continued to expect the Fed will need to raise rates further "to bring inflation down to our two percent target in a timely way."

"I see a continued risk that core services inflation remains stubbornly persistent," she added, referring to a measure of inflation that strips out volatile components like food and energy. At Thursday's conference at the International Monetary Fund, Powell indicated the Fed would proceed cautiously, "allowing us to address both the risk of being misled by a few good months of data, and the risk of over-tightening." — AFP

## Moody's downgrades US debt rating outlook to negative

**WASHINGTON:** Moody's on Friday downgraded its outlook on US debt to negative from stable, one week before crucial budget negotiations in Congress. For now, the agency has maintained its Aaa rating on US government debt. "In the context of higher interest rates, without effective fiscal policy measures to reduce government spending or increase revenues, Moody's expects that the US's fiscal deficits will remain very large, significantly weakening debt affordability," the agency said.

The US Treasury immediately voiced its disagreement with Moody's decision. "The American economy remains strong, and Treasury securities are the world's preeminent safe and liquid asset," Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo in a statement.

"The Biden Administration has demonstrated its commitment to fiscal sustainability, including through the more than \$1 trillion in deficit reduction included in the June debt limit deal as well as President Biden's budget proposals that would reduce the deficit by nearly \$2.5 trillion over the next decade."

The US budget deficit, published last month for the 2023 fiscal year ending September 30, has widened to \$1.7 trillion. Due to interest rate hikes by the US central bank to curb inflation, the cost of debt for the United States has ballooned, with Washington paying \$162 billion more for interest in the last fiscal year compared to 2022. Moody's is the only major agency to maintain its rating for US sovereign debt at its highest level — underscoring the potential economic danger to the United States of failing to reach an agreement to keep the government funded in one week's time.

Neither the Democratic-controlled Senate nor the Republican-led House of Representatives has passed a bill to extend government funding, which expires at midnight next Friday into Saturday. Without an agreement by November 17, the world's largest economy would enter a so-called government shutdown. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell (right) speaks with International Monetary Fund (IMF) First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath during the 24th Jacques Polak Annual Research Conference on Global Interdependence at IMF headquarters in Washington, DC, on November 9, 2023. — AFP



## Business

# ABK-Egypt records EGP 2.3bn net profit for first 9 months of 2023

## Marafi: The results reflect ABK-Egypt's strong financial performance

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt), one of the fastest-growing banks in the Egyptian market, announced strong financial results for the nine-month period of 2023. Net profit reached EGP 2.32 billion, demonstrating an 84 percent increase compared to EGP 1.26 billion in the same period last year. Net interest income reached EGP 2.86 billion, reflecting a 45.9 percent increase compared to EGP 1.96 billion in September 2022.



Ali Marafi

Khaled El Salawy

Total assets stood at EGP 90.40 billion, representing a 19.6 percent year-to-date growth compared to EGP 75.60 billion in December 2022. Customer deposits recorded an 11.5 percent increase to reach EGP 73.78 billion compared to EGP 66.15 billion, and the total gross loans portfolio grew by 28.6 percent to reach EGP 45.80 billion compared to EGP 35.61 billion in 2022.

Expressing his satisfaction, Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, said, "The results reflect ABK-Egypt's resilience, where our performance during the nine-month period has exceeded the Group's expectations since

entering the Egyptian market." He expressed his optimism about positive developments in the upcoming period, thanks to the various measures taken by the Egyptian government and the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) to enhance economic growth in the country.

He reaffirmed that ABK-Egypt has succeeded in implementing its strategy, focusing on supporting Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), endorsing financial inclusion, enhancing geographical presence, embracing digital transformation, and adopting sustainable finance principles and practices, in line with CBE's directives and Egypt Vision 2030.

Marafi emphasized that ABK-Egypt is keen on keeping up with developments in the banking sector and introducing more banking services and solutions that meet the needs of all customer segments within the Egyptian market. It aims to enhance its market share among individual and corporate customers, contributing to strengthening its competitive position in Egypt. As a reflection of this, ABK-Egypt was recently successful in winning the 'Fastest Growing Bank in Egypt' award from International Business Magazine in recognition of its achievements and growth since the Group's acquisition of Piraeus Bank Egypt in 2015. This award highlights the continuous support the Bank receives from all regulatory authorities, particularly CBE, revealing its commitment to meeting all requirements aimed at elevating the success of the Egyptian banking sector.

On his part, Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, said, "Our financial performance demonstrates the success of our vision to become one of the fastest-growing banks in the Egyptian Market. This is in addition to the agility of our growth strate-

gy and business model over the past eight years that allowed us to seize market opportunities and drive scalable growth on all financial indicators. We remain committed to supporting all national efforts towards driving economic stability and growth as we navigate the challenging local and global economic conditions." He added that over the course of the year, ABK-Egypt managed to increase the ratio of its SME sector credit portfolio to reach 25 percent of the Bank's total loans portfolio, which aligns with CBE's requirements.

**We continue to prioritize endorsing financial inclusion, enhancing geographical presence, and embracing digital transformation in Egypt**

El Salawy added that ABK-Egypt always strives to achieve its expansion goals in various fields through the collaboration of all employees and senior management. He pointed out that the bank has a record filled with achievements in terms of revenues and profitability over the past years. He revealed that it continues to develop its strategy, enabling it to gain the trust of customers in the retail and corporate banking sectors. It also aims to form numerous partnerships that contribute to meeting their needs at all levels.

### Strategic planning

It is worth mentioning that ABK-Egypt has taken steady steps to implement its digital transformation

strategy, with a focus on upgrading its technology infrastructure, accelerating customer growth, and maximizing value through targeted segmentation. The Bank has also prioritized financial inclusion in 2023, with clear pillars to support national directions and the plans of CBE to avail simplified banking services with appealing benefits to attract unbanked segments. In the same context, the Bank has succeeded in launching several community development initiatives throughout the year to support various sectors, with a focus on providing education and medical support to underprivileged segments. Additionally, there are further initiatives to empower women, youth, and individuals with disabilities.

ABK-Egypt's strategy will continue to focus on realizing sustainable growth through the diversification of banking products and services to achieve a competitive advantage. This includes expanding the customer loans portfolio for both individuals and companies, supporting SMEs, further strengthening the relationship with customers, and adhering to sustainable development principles.

Furthermore, as part of its ambitious strategy to expand its banking services, increase its customer base, and enhance its geographical presence in Egypt, the Bank recently opened its latest branch in Agora Mall in Fifth Settlement, New Cairo. This brings its branch network up to 45 branches in 18 governorates across the country. As an essential part of its digital transformation strategy, ABK-Egypt continues to invest in technology and innovation to serve its customers. It has made several enhancements to its digital banking channels, driven by its continuous efforts to keep up with advancements and place them in the hands of its customers.

## Gulf Bank rewards Rose Gold cardholders with 25% cashback

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is excited to announce a special promotion tailored for female Mastercard Rose Gold credit cardholders. This unique offer allows cardholders to enjoy a generous 25 percent cashback on all their transactions at restaurants and cafes in Kuwait, as well as online food deliveries. This limited-time offer, valid until 30 November 2023, is part of Gulf Bank's commitment to rewarding its valued customers, especially women using the Rose Gold card.

To qualify for the 25 percent cashback, minimum purchase value required is KD 100 accumulated throughout the promotional period. Each customer is eligible for a maximum cashback of KD 40, which will be credited to their Rose Gold card by Dec 21, 2023, and informed via SMS notification.

The Mastercard Rose Gold Ladies Card not only provides cashback benefits, but also offers a range of discounts at over 1,000 stores catering to the modern woman's lifestyle. Cardholders also participate in the Gulf Points program, an efficient rewards system in Kuwait, allowing them to accumulate points for every transaction. For every Kuwaiti Dinar spent, Rose Gold credit cardholders earn 20 points on spas, salons, and gyms, seven points on dining, five points on international online transactions, and two points for every Kuwaiti dinar spent locally or internationally. These accumulated points are redeemable for flights, hotel stays, and exclusive seasonal travel packages, ensuring a seamless and delightful travel experience. Additionally, the Rose Gold card enhances the shopping experience with Easy Pay, an exclusive Gulf Bank service allowing customers the choice to pay their bills between 2 to 12 months at 0 percent interest, when using their Gulf Bank credit card at participating outlets.

The Rose Gold credit card from Gulf Bank offers more than just cashback and reward points. It provides exclusive travel offers, including discounts on hotel, flight, and car rental bookings. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary airport lounge access in five Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, Gulf Bank provides travel insurance for visa applications, simplifying the process for cardholders and their families. With these benefits, the Rose Gold Credit Card offers a comprehensive solution tailored to the diverse needs of modern, empowered women.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Najla Al-Eisa

## China's 'Singles Day' shopping bonanza loses its luster

BEIJING: China's annual "Singles Day" sales bonanza wraps up at midnight on Saturday, but consumers this year appear largely unswayed by its flashy deals and discounts as the world's second-largest economy slows. Conceived by tech giant Alibaba, "Singles Day" — which this year spanned well over a week — was launched in 2009 and has since ballooned into a yearly blockbuster retail period.

Sales for last year's Singles Day reached 1.1 trillion yuan (\$153 billion), according to a recent report by consultancy firm Bain. But among consumers surveyed by Bain this year, 77 percent said they did not plan to spend more than usual during the sales event. "These days people are consuming less, people don't really have much of a desire to buy lots of things," recent graduate Zhang Chuwen, 23, told AFP.

She said her friends were instead using the sales to buy "everyday necessity products".

Others say that this year's Singles Day deals aren't as good as in the past, and that some websites had raised prices beforehand, only to cut them for the holiday. "The prices are not that different compared to other days," Guan Yonghao, 21, told AFP. "So I didn't buy anything," he added. "We will save a little because we are making less money."

For the second year running, Singles Day sales should still exceed 1 trillion yuan, said Vincent Marion, co-founder of VO2 Asia Pacific, a consultancy specializing in the digital economy. "However, sales are stagnating due to the change in Chinese consumer habits, which now favor savings. Consumers have become better educated, more demanding and more thoughtful in their spending," he told AFP.

According to his firm, sales since Singles Day promotions began on October 24 were down 7.5 percent year-on-year. Noting consumers' more conservative purchasing, Marion said 42 percent of Singles shoppers this year ordered everyday consumer goods, and there were fewer luxury sector purchases.

Jacob Cooke, co-founder and CEO of Beijing-based e-commerce consulting firm WPIC Marketing + Technologies, told AFP that Singles Day had "lost its luster" thanks to a combination of trends.

"The proliferation of livestreaming and secondary

shopping festivals... means that the relative attraction of Singles Day as a time to load up on discounted goods has been reduced," he said. Livestreamers — who draw in millions for e-commerce giants in China with marathon online sales pitches — also say they are noticing a downturn compared to previous iterations of the shopping event.

"This year's Singles Day online sales are not as good as last year or two years ago," Liu Kai, an e-commerce livestreamer, told AFP. The name of the event riffs on a tongue-in-cheek celebration of singlehood inspired by the four ones in its date — November 11, or "11/11".

But this year's sales began on some platforms as early as late October. Alibaba, like its main rival JD.com, withheld full sales figures for the shopping bonanza for the first time ever last year, saying instead that sales were flat from the year before. The slowing sales follow an announcement this week that China slipped back into deflation in October, underscoring the work remaining for officials seeking to jumpstart demand. Beijing has moved to shore up its ailing economy in recent months, unveiling a series of measures — particularly aimed at the ailing property sector — and announcing a huge infrastructure spending plan. — AFP



ZOUPING, China: Workers sort packages for delivery ahead of the Singles' Day shopping festival at a logistics center in Zouping, in China's eastern Shandong province on November 10, 2023. — AFP

## Nigeria's president seeks to attract Saudi investment

LAGOS: Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu took part in a Saudi-Africa summit in Riyadh on Friday, inviting Saudi investors to his country and insisting on the "good returns" generated by Africa's largest economy. The two OPEC oil producers also signed a preliminary agreement, showing the political will to strengthen relations although the economic impact remains unclear.

In Riyadh, Tinubu said he wanted to "assure all potential Saudi investors of the safety of their investments" in Nigeria, according to his office. Tinubu came to power in May and quickly introduced economic reforms aimed at restoring public finances and attracting more foreign investment.

His administration has ended a fuel subsidy and floated the naira currency — but in the short-term, Nigerians are struggling with a tripling of fuel prices and higher food costs. Foreign direct investment into Nigeria's economy dropped from \$2.2 billion in 2014 to \$470 million in 2022, according to the

Institute for Security Studies think tank. On the eve of the summit, Nigeria's oil minister Heineken Lokpobiri announced he had signed a memorandum of understanding with his Saudi counterpart Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman on "strengthening our partnership in the oil and gas sector."

"We can anticipate enhanced technological exchange, investment inflow and a strengthened strategic partnership," he said on social media. Saudi Arabia's relations with African countries, especially those with large Muslim populations, began to grow in the 1970s.

Nigeria, Africa's leading oil producer, and Saudi Arabia are both members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). While Saudi Arabia's diplomatic presence in Africa has risen considerably in recent years, its economic involvement remains limited, despite the creation a year ago of a Nigeria-Saudi Chamber of Commerce. "Energy cooperation between the two countries only exists through discussions at summits and meetings of OPEC... But no significant investment by Saudi Arabia in the Nigerian oil sector has materialized," said Benjamin Auge, a researcher at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). He said the energy agreement signed between Abuja and Riyadh "will probably remain more in the realm of good intentions". — AFP

## Stocks diverge after Powell says rate hike possible

NEW YORK: Wall Street closed higher but European stock markets nudged down Friday as investors digested warnings by central bank chiefs that the battle against inflation was not over. US stocks ended the day with the Dow up 1.2 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq up 2.1 percent after falling the previous day on the back of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell saying that the US central bank "will not hesitate" to raise interest rates again if necessary. But European markets were sluggish and ended in the red after European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde forecast a "resurgence" of inflation after it slowed sharply last month.

Speaking at a Financial Times event, Lagarde also said that the ECB will not start cutting rates for at least "the next couple of quarters." Data showing the UK economy stalled in the third quarter also weighed on London's FTSE 100 index, which ended off 1.3 percent while Frankfurt and Paris lost almost one percent. Both the Fed and ECB paused their rate-hike campaigns at their last meetings as consumer price rises have slowed, but they have suggested they would stay higher for longer as inflation remains above their two-percent targets. — AFP

## Business

# NBK 'Market Leader' and 'Best Service Provider' of cash management in Kuwait

## Euromoney cash management survey for non-financial institutions 2023

KUWAIT: Recognizing its keen endeavors to adopt the most advanced banking services and solutions, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was named as "Market Leader" and "Best Service Provider" of Cash Management in Kuwait in Euro-money Cash Management Survey for Non-Financial Institutions 2023, which is considered a benchmark survey for the global cash management industry.

The Cash Management survey examines client feedback around financial services provided by banks to evaluate best cash management service providers and rank them based on the survey results across financial and banking markets.

The survey collects data from multiple qualitative and quantitative sources, including institutions and customers to build an objective assessment. The magazine's team of editors then evaluate the data based on specific criteria and ranking across multiple categories and markets as a global benchmark for leading providers of cash management products and services across the banking and financial industry. This year, the survey collected responses from over 29,000 clients across different markets around the world.

NBK ranked first in 4 categories in the survey as to the quality of service provided to clients in Kuwait, maintaining its leading position as the best cash management service provider.

The results of this survey are the fruit of close cooperation with all the bank's clients on a daily basis, and a testimony to the hard work and dedication of Group Treasury's team, which exerts ongoing efforts towards implementing initiatives to improve operational efficiency and providing the best service to clients.

NBK Group Treasury continues to play a crucial role in ensuring to manage the bank's financial resources in a highly effective and efficient manner, as well as helping to mitigate risk, maximize returns, and serve the bank's future growth. Group Treasury also strives continuously to develop its technologies and infrastructure to offer high-quality services and ensure utmost customer satisfaction. In addition, it works on developing cash management solutions to expedite cash flows, increase liquidity and mitigate credit risk. This is coupled with its consistent endeavors to grow its global customer base, develop FX electronic trading platforms to meet all the



needs of its clientele.

Euromoney, which has been a leading global finance and business magazine for over 50 years, conducts an annual sur-

vey asking cash managers, treasurers, and financial officers worldwide to rank and assess their top providers of cash management services, both in financial



and non-financial institutions. This survey complements Euromoney's annual "Awards for NExcellence" recognizing top performers in the banking sector.

### NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

## Egypt economy: A paradigm shift in 2024 is crucial

KUWAIT: Policymaking faces a paradigm shift next year that will be key in delivering an economic recovery starting FY24/25. Presidential elections are scheduled for mid-December, and following this we expect to see signs that the government is committed to orthodox economic policies that address existing vulnerabilities and put growth back on track. A shift to a more freely floating exchange rate regime is at the top of the agenda, followed by stronger momentum on the privatization program that offers the private sector scope to take more of the lead on growth, and finally a clear commitment to the December 2022 IMF program in general in order to unlock program financing tranches as well as indirect funds from the GCC and multilateral institutions. Early signals of the government not delivering this paradigm shift would push the recovery story out further.

GDP growth slowed to 3.8 percent in FY22/23 from 6.2 percent in FY21/22, with this figure revised down from an earlier estimate of 4.2 percent. The Ministry of Planning expects growth at 4.2 percent for FY23/24, slightly above our forecast of 4.0 percent. The sharp slowdown in growth recently comes as inflation has spiraled to an all-time high of 40 percent y/y, interest rates have

doubled, and the Egyptian pound is trading at a 35 percent discount to the official rate on the unofficial market. We expect the economic environment to remain tough in the remainder of FY23/24 as major macro-economic reform measures take place following the elections, including a devaluation of the EGP, fiscal austerity measures, and possible interest rate hikes.

We expect growth to remain little changed at 4.2 percent in FY23/24 (well below par for Egypt's development level) with a recovery in FY24/25 conditional on implementation of the above reform measures. Although there has been some progress with regards to the privatization program (total of \$1.9bn of government asset sales), momentum remains slow and insufficient to cover external debt obligations in FY23/24 which we estimate at \$22 billion, assuming that GCC deposits are renewed. Amid slow progress on asset sales, the government has tapped unconventional financing channels such as guaranteed bonds (JPY and CNY bonds), through which it raised \$1.5 billion over October-November.

An import compression strategy has worked so far in cutting Egypt's import bill, which was down by 30 percent y/y in FY22/23 but also clearly had its toll on export growth as the majority of Egyptian exports depend on imported machinery and raw materials. The current account deficit narrowed to 1.6 percent of GDP in FY22/23 from 3.6 percent in the previous year - but temporarily in our view, and will widen once again to 2.6 percent in the current fiscal year. This is driven by an assumption that US dollar availability allows for a pickup in consumption and investment and thus higher imports.

One key upside risk is a possible external debt negotiation and/or multilaterals re-financing ma-

turing loans. We have started to see early signs of this with Egypt signing an MoU with China to swap part of its upcoming maturing loans into development projects. Further similar agreements could be forthcoming, and we also expect faster progress on the government's asset sale program.

### Inflation will moderate

Inflation had accelerated to 38 percent y/y in September on the back of the spiraling unofficial exchange rate, product shortages and rising global energy prices. While unfavorable year-on-year base effects have also contributed, monthly price rises have been in the 1-2 percent range. Next year, key cost-push inflationary pressures would kick in following a possible currency devaluation and subsidy cuts, though inflation could be capped at around 25 percent y/y helped by the favorable base effect. Despite the moderation in inflation from current levels, some degree of further monetary tightening is expected by the central bank (policy rates up by 2-3 percent) next year to re-establish progress in getting inflation back towards the bank's 7 percent +/- 2 percent target.

Over the longer term, Egypt will need to follow-through with wider economic structural reforms to bring its growth, sustainably, to 7-8 percent. Like the infrastructure transformation that took place over the past 10 years, authorities should put human infrastructure (health & education) as key priorities over the next decade. Health & education expenditures are at 6 percent of GDP, half of the world average. Meanwhile, the government needs to dismantle existing inefficient regulations and red tape to boost investment, both local and foreign. Egypt is ranked 114th in the ease of doing business, unchanged from its rank 20 years ago.

## ECB's Lagarde signals no rate cuts soon

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is not set to cut interest rates for the "next couple of quarters", president Christine Lagarde signaled Friday, while also warning of a potential resurgence in inflation. The central bank hiked rates 10 times in a row to tame runaway consumer prices but held them steady for the first time in over a year at its October meeting.

With eurozone inflation falling to 2.9 percent last month and higher borrowing costs weighing on the single currency area, speculation has intensified about when the ECB may start cutting rates. Speaking at a Financial Times event, Lagarde sought to douse hopes this could happen any time soon.

If rates were held at their current levels for "long enough", then it will "make a significant contribution to bringing inflation back to our two-percent target in the medium term", she said. Pressed on how long this might be, she said: "Long enough is long enough. It's not something that (means) in the next couple of quarters we'll be seeing a change." Last month's slowdown in inflation brought the indicator to the lowest level since July 2021.

Consumer price rises in the 20 countries that use the euro had peaked at 10.6 percent in October last year, driven mainly by surging energy costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Lagarde acknowledged that "inflation has come down massively", adding that "one could argue... monetary policy has done its job". But she added that heavy falls in energy prices in particular had helped drive the fall, and suggested another energy shock could prompt the figure to jump again.

"We should not assume that this respectable 2.9 headline number is something that should be taken for granted," she said. "There will be a resurgence of probably (a) higher number going forwards and we should be expecting that." —AFP

## Working on 'healthy' relations with China, says US Treasury

SAN FRANCISCO: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen insisted on Friday that Washington and Beijing had to reestablish "healthy economic relations" after a period of strained ties between the world's two biggest economies.

But, she said, the United States would not shy away from taking unilateral action against Chinese firms supplying defense equipment to Russia for its invasion of Ukraine if Beijing failed to take preventative action. "We do not seek to decouple our economy from China's," Yellen told reporters after a two-day meeting with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in San Francisco.

"This would be damaging to both the US and China and destabilizing to the world." The meeting came just ahead of a sit-down between US President Joe Biden and Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, who will be in the California city next week for an APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit of leaders from around the Pacific. Ties between Washington and Beijing became particularly troubled under former US president Donald Trump, who used China as a domestic foil, imposing populist tariffs on Chinese imports as part of his drive to shore up US manufacturing.

The rhetoric did not improve under Biden, and relations have been further strained as Beijing boosts cooperation with Russia, part of an effort to counterbalance US global heft. But in recent months the Biden administration has made a number of small steps to take the heat off things, with visits to China by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as well as by Yellen and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

"Over the past two days, Vice Premier He and I have built on this foundation, with candid, direct and productive engagements," Yellen said. "There is no substitute for in-person diplomacy," she said, adding the two had agreed she would return to China next year.



SAN FRANCISCO: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks during a news conference following her second day of meetings with China's Vice Premier He Lifeng, ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), in San Francisco, California, on November 10, 2023. — AFP

Yellen however cautioned her counterpart that Washington was aware that Chinese companies were aiding Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "We are concerned that in spite of a sanctions programs that we've put in place, that equipment that is critical to Russia's military effort is nevertheless evading sanctions and being delivered to Russia," she said. Yellen said she was not accusing the Chinese government of complicity, but noted "some Chinese private firms... as well as some financial institutions" were involved in "facilitating that flow."

"I stressed in our conversations... we would like to see China crack down," she said, adding that in the absence of action Washington was "prepared to put in place further sanctions."

Yellen opened talks with Chinese counterpart He Lifeng ahead of a key Asia-Pacific leaders' summit, seeking to limit tensions despite looming national security concerns. The two days of bilateral meetings kicked off in San Francisco, where the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit is set to begin this weekend. The gather-

ing is due to be the backdrop for a long-anticipated meeting between US President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, expected to take place on November 15, sources have told AFP.

On the agenda for the Treasury secretary and He, Beijing's lead for US-China economic and trade affairs, are concerns about a level playing field for businesses, cooperation on climate change and debt distress, alongside "the use of economic tools for national security purposes," Yellen said in opening remarks. He expressed hopes for in-depth discussions on economic issues involving both countries, and the global economy, adding he also planned to communicate China's "key economic concerns."

While the governments of both countries have not yet publicly confirmed the Xi-Biden meeting, they have given wide indications that they expect it to take place. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on October 31 that Washington hoped for a "constructive conversation in San Francisco" between the two presidents. — AFP

## US nears govt funding deadline, risking shutdown

WASHINGTON: Less than two months since the US federal government narrowly avoided running out of funding, the deeply divided Congress once again faces a tight deadline to approve a new budget — just one week. Neither the Democratic-controlled Senate or the Republican-led House of Representatives has passed a bill to extend government funding, which expires at midnight next Friday into Saturday. Without an agreement by November 17, the world's largest economy will instantly begin pumping the brakes: 1.5 million government employees will go without pay, most federal facilities including national parks will be closed, and sectors such as air travel could be forced to slow down.

Most elected officials on either side of the aisle hope to avoid this extremely unpopular outcome — the so-called "government shutdown." The last time Congress faced a funding deadline, at the end of September, it was plunged into chaos. Republican allies of former president Donald Trump, furious that their leadership reached a deal with Democratic President Joe Biden to extend funding, successfully moved to oust House speaker Kevin McCarthy.

McCarthy's unprecedented removal left the lower chamber paralyzed for almost three weeks while Republicans struggled to find a new leader, even as global events such as the deadly Hamas attack on Israel and war in Ukraine spurred calls for quick congressional action.

The party eventually chose as its new speaker Mike Johnson, a little-known representative from Louisiana with only limited leadership experience. He has not yet explicitly stated how he intends to avoid a shutdown. Like his predecessor, Johnson will face a delicate juggling act, balancing the demands of a small but influential group of hardline Republicans who want strict fiscal tightening, with Democrats who control both the Senate and White House. — AFP

# ACTORS UNION EXPLAINS AI GUARDRAILS IN STRIKE DEAL

## Hollywood celebrates strike end as actors get back to work

From computer-generated "extras" to AI "zombies," new restrictions against the use of artificial intelligence in Hollywood were set out by the actors' union Friday. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) reached a deal with studios like Disney and Netflix last week to end its nearly four-month strike. Its board members on Friday voted 86 percent in favor of ratifying the agreement.



Drescher is embraced following the press conference.

Besides a seven percent minimum pay increase, and a new \$40-million-per-year fund to transfer a portion of revenues for hit shows from studios to actors, AI guardrails were a key part of talks. The deal "allows the industry to go forward - it does not block AI," SAG-AFTRA negotiator Duncan Crabtree-Ireland told a press conference. "But it makes sure that performers are protected. Their rights to consent are protected. Their rights to fair compensation and their rights to employment are protected."

Studios have been experimenting with AI in recent years, from bringing deceased movie stars back using realistic "digital replicas", to using computer-generated background figures to reduce the number of actors needed for battle scenes. Many cost-cutting producers want a growing role for AI, and have begun requiring some performers to take part in high-tech 3D "body scans" on set, often without explaining how or when the images will be used.

But now, an actor must be paid the same rate for any use of their digital replica as they would have earned doing the same "amount of work" on set themselves in real life, Crabtree-Ireland said. Amid fears that background workers - or "extras" - could be the first to lose their jobs to AI, strict curbs have been put in place. "No use of a digital replica can be used to evade engagement and payment of a background actor under this contract," he said.

Studios must gain consent from an actor - or their estate - every time their digital replica is used in any film or TV episode. They cannot present actors with boilerplate contracts entitling them to use a replica in perpetuity, but must instead provide a "reasonably specific description" of how it will be used each time.

### 'Zombies'

AI technology is advancing at breakneck speed, but has never previously been part of the discussions when SAG-AFTRA renegotiates its contract with studios roughly every three years. SAG-AFTRA president Fran Drescher said it was vital to nail down rules this time, because "in the world of AI, three months is equivalent to a year". "So if we didn't get those barricades. What would it be in three years?... It would be so far out of our grasp, we would always be chasing something, but never quite get it."

The very final, contentious detail to be thrashed out with studios on Tuesday night concerned use of AI to create "synthetic fake performers". Referred to by Variety as "zombies", or "digital Frankensteins", these are constructed using the various body parts of different real actors. "If you're using Brad Pitt's smile and Jennifer Aniston's eyes, both would have a right of consent," Crabtree-Ireland told the trade website.

He elaborated at Friday's press conference, explaining that studios are now required to obtain permission from every actor whose features are used. They also have to inform SAG-AFTRA each time a "synthetic fake performer" is created. The union will have the right to bargain for compensation on behalf of the actors involved.

### 'Deal breaker'

Drescher said AI was a "deal breaker" in the talks, and that the guardrails will not just help actors, but many other entertainment industry professions down the line. "In a synthetic world, you don't need hair and makeup people. You don't need drivers. You don't need set builders," she said. "And so for us to keep holding out for the best AI package that we could get was also going to spill over into what their futures were going to look like."

ies still penciled in for next summer's blockbuster season, and some television shows can even be completed in time for spring.

"WE DID IT!!!" wrote actor Noah Schnapp, posting on Instagram an image of a screenplay for the final season of hit Netflix show "Stranger Things," which had to delay filming earlier this year. "Oh, We're very back," wrote Quinta Brunson, star of "Abbott Elementary," on Instagram. While some movies, including Tom Cruise's next

And the timing of the agreement will also reinvigorate Hollywood's imminent awards season. The Oscars are set to be held in March, and nominations for precursor events such as the Golden Globes and Critics Choice Awards will be announced as soon as next month.

Already by Thursday morning, invitations to star-studded Los Angeles premieres were being dispatched to awards group voters, including a gala featuring Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore for Netflix movie "May Decem-



Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, SAG-AFTRA's executive director and chief negotiator, speaks, flanked by SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher and union members, during a press conference following the end of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) strike in Los Angeles on Nov 10, 2023. — AFP photos

Crabtree-Ireland urged politicians to do more to "make AI protections a priority". "Our members will be advocating for legislative efforts and will remain actively involved in the movement to protect all individuals' rights to their likeness," he said.

While the deal needs to be ratified, and details of the contract have not yet been released, actors can return to making - and promoting - films right away. "Effective immediately, all SAG-AFTRA members should fulfill their contractual obligations and return to work," the union said in a message to members Thursday. The deal comes just in time for studios to finish mov-

"Mission Impossible", had already abandoned release dates next summer, the timing of the deal will raise hopes that other big titles can be delivered on schedule.

Filming on Ryan Reynolds' and Hugh Jackman's eagerly awaited superhero sequel "Deadpool 3", which was forced to pause for four months, will resume before Thanksgiving (Nov 23), Variety reported. "There will be a summer movie season next year - which was in great peril if this deal hadn't gotten done before the holidays," said entertainment lawyer Jonathan Handel. "We would have seen a complete exodus."

ber" at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Upcoming world premieres for eagerly awaited movies such as "Wonka," starring Timothee Chalamet, and "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," starring Jason Momoa, will be able to wheel out their A-list talent, to boost publicity.

The deal was hailed by politicians including US President Joe Biden, who said in a statement: "Collective bargaining works." "There is power in a union. Congratulations @sagaftra!" wrote Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a prominent progressive Democrat. — AFP



This photo taken on Nov 7, 2023 shows artist Mean Tithpheap preparing to fix a King Kong statue using old motorbike and bicycle tyres at his house in Kandal province. — AFP photos



A worker fixes a cobra statue made with old tyres at artist Tithpheap's house.

## Cambodian artist turns tyres into giant King Kong

A giant, snarling gorilla rears from the peaceful paddy fields on the outskirts of the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, made entirely from old tyres by a Cambodian artist keen to encourage others to reuse materials in their work. Mean Tithpheap used 500 bicycle and motorbike tyres to create the 2.5-m King Kong over five weeks with two helpers.

The 37-year-old artist, who studied at fine art school in Phnom Penh, has been turning tyres into sculptures for four years. He has made around 40 statues for clients, including King Kongs, elephants, lions, cobras and garudas - a

mythical man-bird creature. Tithpheap said he hoped others would follow his example and put discarded rubber and plastic to creative use so that it does not pollute the environment.

"I have used old tyres of bicycles and motorbikes to make such animals because these tyres are waste and if we can recycle them, it will help the environment some," Tithpheap told AFP. Cambodia faces a huge and growing challenge in waste management, despite some government efforts. The population is growing, income and consumption rising, and urbanization spreading, but waste collection and treatment are not keeping up.

Effective recycling of plastic waste is nearly impossible in Cambodia, where plastic consumption is widespread and waste management infrastructure is lacking, so waterways and some green sites have become burgeoning heaps of garbage. Tithpheap charges clients between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for a King Kong statue - his most popular model - depending on the size. He is also working on a Captain America statue for a cafe, while the entrance to his workshop is guarded by a giant cobra, also made of tyres. — AFP



Tithpheap explains methods to his worker while making a garuda statue using old tyres.



Tithpheap makes a Captain America statue using old tyres.

## Monet painting fetches \$74m at auction in NY

A painting of water lilies by French impressionist Claude Monet has sold for \$74 million, as part of a lively fall art auction season. "Le bassin aux nymphéas" topped the projected sale price of \$65 million when it went under the hammer at Christie's auction house in New York on Thursday night. Other notable sales included 20th century expressionist painter Richard Diebenkorn's "Recollections of a Visit to Leningrad" which sold for \$46 million, while fellow American Joan Mitchell's "Untitled" went for \$29 million.

Three paintings by Paul Cezanne were sold, including "Fruits et pot de gingembre" for nearly \$39 million. On

Wednesday, Pablo Picasso's "Woman with a Watch," fetched \$139.3 million, the second-highest price ever achieved for the artist. "Femme à la montre," the 1932 painting depicting one of the Spanish artist's companions and muses, French painter Marie-Therese Walter, had been valued at over \$120 million before going on the block at Sotheby's.

The fall auction season, which started Tuesday and ends next Wednesday, has so far seen \$748 million in sales at Christie's and more than \$400 million at Sotheby's. — AFP

## New Moschino designer Renne dies 10 days in job

Italian luxury label Moschino's new creative director, Davide Renne, died Friday aged 46, after less than two weeks in the role, the fashion house said. The Tuscan-born designer, who had two decades of experience designing women's collections at Gucci before moving to Moschino, died in Milan after "a sudden illness", Moschino said in a statement.

Renne, who began overseeing women's and men's collections and accessories for Moschino on November 1, had been due to present his debut collection for the house at Milan Fashion Week in February. "There are no words to describe the pain we are experiencing at this dramatic time," said Massimo Ferretti, head of Moschino parent company Gruppo Aeffe. — AFP



## Greek 'Rambo' actor Spiros Focas dies at 86

Greek actor Spiros Focas, who starred in a string of Italian and Hollywood films including "Rambo 3" and "Jewel of the Nile", died Friday at the age of 86, his family said. Focas died in a rehabilitation center near Athens, his wife said in a Facebook post. Greek Culture Minister Lina Mendoni paid tribute, saying Focas was one of the country's "best known and most loved" actors.

Born Spyros Androutsopoulos in the port city of Patras in 1937, Focas began his movie career in 1959 before relocating to Italy for a four-decade career in film and television. A lookalike of Egyptian star Omar Sharif, Focas worked for prominent directors Vincente Minnelli and Luchino Visconti, starting in the latter's 1960 classic "Rocco and his Brothers". — AFP



Davide Renne

## Lifestyle



This picture taken on Nov 1, 2023 shows rescued cats gathering at an animal shelter in Taicang, Jiangsu province. - AFP photos



Rescued cats gather to eat at the animal shelter.



Gu Min, an animal rescuer, looks at rescued cats at the animal shelter.

## China's animal lovers fight illegal cat meat trade

When Han Jiali's beloved cat Dabai was taken from her Shanghai home last year, she embarked on a hunt for her pet that took her deep into the bowels of China's underground feline meat trade. Most people in China do not eat cat meat, but an estimated four million furry friends are slaughtered for food each year in an illegal market that includes areas of Guangdong province, neighboring Guangxi and beyond, according to Humane Society International.

Han, who has spent thousands of dollars and weeks at a time tracking cat meat traders through China, has uncovered a supply chain preying on urban strays and outdoor pets in the region surrounding Shanghai. Her quest to find Dabai led her to grimy processing plants in Guangdong, where she saw skinned cat carcasses piled in crates and sacks of fur.

She found village restaurants that openly advertised cat meat and unscrupulous sellers who passed it off as mutton or rabbit. "I had to admit then that my cat was gone," an emotional Han told AFP. "She had been eaten." Now she is determined to save other cats from the same fate and has spent the past year filing police reports, tracking down thieves and sending petitions to the Guangdong government.

It's a dangerous mission that she says has resulted in death threats from

cat meat traders and an incident in December where a man deliberately drove into her car at a highway rest stop. "I've gotten scared and thought about turning away and pretending I never saw all this," she said. "But if I disappear, and stay silent, who will save (the cats) from this miserable situation?"



### Underground industry

The 33-year-old Han is one of a small but dedicated number of people in China fighting the abuse of pet cats and dogs in the absence of broader institutional protections for domestic animals. The capture of a free-roaming family pet outdoors is not considered theft in China. And while the law prohibits the consumption of cats, violators are fined on food safety grounds rather than punished for animal cruelty.

Activists and even state media commentators have increasingly called for legislators to adopt an animal cruelty law

to close a loophole not covered by existing wild animal and livestock rules. "I'm just an ordinary person, my abilities are limited," Han said. Last month, she and other animal rescuers, with the help of local police, intercepted a truck carrying hundreds of cats out of Zhangjiagang, near Shanghai.



Rescued cats at the animal shelter.

"They were collecting (trapped) cats inside a cemetery," she told AFP. "Observing them, we quickly learned that they planned to illegally sell the captured kitties." Han said she and the other activists spent a sleepless night staking out the cemetery before a truck appeared in the morning to take away dozens of tiny bamboo crates crammed with around 800 cats. Police and the animal rescuers stopped the truck, and the cats were rushed to a shelter in the town of Taicang, an hour away from Shanghai.

### Cat island

There the animals were taken in by Mengtaiqi Cat and Dog Manor, a small family-run shelter in a marshy area popular with anglers. Gu Ming, a 45-year-old former pharmaceutical industry professional who lives at the shelter with his wife, told AFP that many of the cats rescued in Zhangjiagang had their limbs crushed under the weight of hundreds of animals. Dozens have died so far from injuries and viral infections that spread rapidly among the closely packed, distressed animals, he said. Volunteers at the shelter isolated sick animals in makeshift quarantine cages and called in vets to vaccinate and sterilize the healthier cats.

Eventually, after weeks of treatment and isolation, a first batch of rescues was moved to a large outdoor enclosure with trees and rows of blanket-lined beds. Gu covers the shelter's expenses out of his own pocket and only accepts non-cash donations such as equipment and kibble, seeking to avoid the public distrust that fundraisers often attract in China. He plans to move all the cats onto a small island near a local temple, which is currently dotted with tiny huts and home to a few dozen felines previously rescued by the shelter.

The island's four-legged residents flocked to greet Gu this month as he crossed the gated bridge that keeps the



cats in. At midday, the animals lolled on the grass and napped under trees — an idyllic existence a far cry from the cramped meat truck crates. Gu said he was moved by the many animal lovers who had offered help after seeing state media reports about the Zhangjiagang cats. But still, he said: "We have to push for national legislation, because depending on individuals or a few groups is not realistic". — AFP



This handout image taken with a camera trap on July 22, 2023 and released on Nov 9, 2023 shows Attenborough's long-beaked echidna on the Cyclops mountains of Indonesia's Papua Province. - AFP

## Elusive Attenborough echidna rediscovered in Indonesia

An elusive echidna feared extinct after disappearing for six decades has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia, on an expedition that also found a new kind of tree-dwelling shrimp. The Zaglossus attenboroughi, a kind of long-beaked echidna named for famed British naturalist David Attenborough, had last been seen in 1961.

Echidnas are nocturnal and shy, making them difficult to find at the best of times, and the Attenborough long-beaked echidna has never been recorded outside the extremely remote Cyclops Mountains of Indonesia's Papua region. They are the last vestiges of an ancient animal line, explained James Kempton, a biologist from the University of Oxford who led the expedition.

"The reason it appears so unlike other mammals is because it is a member of the monotremes — an egg-laying group that separated from the rest of the mammal tree-of-life about 200 million years ago." It took a team of scientists and experts from Britain and Indonesia four weeks and 80 camera traps to find the echidna, and it was only on the last day, and the final memory card of the trip, that the creature made an appearance.

Just a few seconds of black and white footage shows the slightly ungainly creature ambling through the undergrowth, apparently unaware of the excitement its very existence is likely to elicit. "The discovery is the result of a lot of hard work and over three-and-a-half years of planning," said Kempton. The team relied heavily on guidance from the local community, who helped them navigate difficult terrain and granted them access to areas regarded as sacred. — AFP

## In a pickle: Baltic herring threatened by warming sea

Even aged 84, Holger Sjogren nimblely untangles the knots in his herring net as it was lowered into the murky depths of the Baltic Sea. "When the trawl bag comes up, the seagulls give us a concert," he said. Sjogren, a fifth-generation herring fisherman, has been trawling from the waters near Kotka in south-eastern Finland for more than five decades. In the harbor, dozens of customers eagerly await his return to buy his catch straight off the boat.

However, the Baltic, which is enveloped by some of Europe's most industrialized nations, is one of the most heavily polluted marine ecosystems on the planet. Fishermen in Finland now fear that their trawlers might be mothballed for good. "Many people are scared that they will have to quit," said Sjogren.

While some experts have called for a reduction in fishing quotas to safeguard the fragile ecosystem, others fear that a halt to fishing could have more adverse effects than positive ones. In October, the European Union reduced Baltic herring quotas by up to 43 percent for 2024 — well short of the total ban initially proposed by the European Commission in August.

But with Baltic herring making up approximately 80 percent of Finland's annual catch, fishermen believe they are being punished for a problem they did not cause. "We take so little herring that it makes no difference to the stock, on the contrary, it revitalizes the stock more than it consumes," Sjogren argued.

### Sea turning into a lake

With stocks plummeting since the



Fisherman Matti Kukkola sells fish from the boat at the fish market.

1970s, Baltic herring could face the same fate as many other species that all but disappeared from the region. The Baltic Sea is remarkably shallow. In size it is comparable to the Black Sea, but holds 20 times less water. That means it is more vulnerable to climate change and human activities. Rising temperatures and falling salinity due to more rainfall and less inflow from the Atlantic, are threatening numerous species as they strive to adapt.

"The more the Baltic Sea becomes a lake, the worse it will be for marine species," said Jukka Ponni, a research scientist at the Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE). Excessive nutrients from agricultural runoff have caused vegetation to proliferate, resulting in areas with low oxygen levels and harmful algae blooms that blanket the sea during summer.

As the Baltic becomes less of a sea, larger saltwater species such as Baltic cod have been among the earliest casualties. As recently as the 1980s its population reached record levels, but catches have steadily declined to such an extent that the EU had to slap an emergency ban on cod fishing in 2020. The immense Atlantic sturgeon, once abundant in the Baltic, vanished due to pollution and the obstruction of its migratory rivers.

### 'Ban may not help'

While some advocate for significant reductions in fishing quotas to safeguard the remaining populations, others differ. "It wouldn't have helped the stock even if there had been a total ban. It would even have had the opposite effect," scientist Ponni said. He believes climate and environmental prob-



Sjogren empties a net full of fish into a metal container on his boat off Kotka.

lems threaten the populations more than fishing. With the disappearance of Baltic cod, herring have very few natural predators.

This means that without the fishermen thinning out stocks, the populations could become "too dense and the growth of individuals would be reduced as a result" due to food scarcity. But Matti Ovaska, fisheries officer at the World Wide Fund (WWF), dismissed that argument. If herring stocks are further depleted due to intensive fishing, there is a risk that other species, such as sprat, may take over and hinder the recovery of herring populations, he said. "It will be necessary to cut fishing on all herring stocks," Ovaska said.

### Last herring market?

For almost three centuries, the market square in the center of Helsinki has bustled every autumn with locals buying herring directly from fishing vessels

during the annual herring market. "I eat herring every week," customer Markku Karjalainen told AFP.

From pickled herring with onion and bay leaves to whole smoked herring, "silakka" - herring in Finnish - has been an important part of Nordic culinary tradition for centuries. But as restrictions mount, Ponni fears for the very future of fishing. "There is a risk that fishing will cease altogether. No one will invest anymore," Ponni said.

This would be regrettable, Ponni argued, as recent innovations have positioned herring as a substitute for canned tuna. Despite the restrictions, Sjogren wants to continue fishing as long as he can. "The EU fisheries policy dictated from Brussels should be completely overhauled and the identity of the fishermen respected," he said. — AFP



Herrings are checked directly on the boat in case some other fish end up in the net in Kotka, southern Finland, Oct 10, 2023.



Herring fisherman Holger Sjogren sells herring products on his boat at the fish market in Helsinki on Oct 6, 2023. - AFP photos

Lifestyle



US singer SZA



US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift



US singer/songwriter Billie Eilish



US indie group boygenius

# WOMEN DOMINATE MUSIC'S GRAMMY NOMINATIONS, SZA TOPS WITH NINE

It will be a woman's world at the upcoming Grammys, with SZA scooping the most chances for gold ahead of the star-studded music gala with nine, as pop's superstars including Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish dominated across the categories. Olivia Rodrigo, Phoebe Bridgers and the indie rock supergroup boygenius also will strong contenders at the February 4 event in Los Angeles, where music from the blockbuster film "Barbie" will almost certainly clean up, according to the nominations list released Friday.

SZA - the acerbic, R&B risk-taker whose layered tales of romance earned her acclaim with her debut "Ctrl" in 2017 and saw her top the charts again with 2022's "SOS" - is poised to rule the night, with nominations spanning the categories. And Bridgers, one-third of the supergroup boygenius with Julien Baker and Lucy Dacus, earned seven nominations while the collective group earned six, both in the top fields as well as in the rock categories.

The already decorated Eilish has six chances for a Grammy thanks to her work on Greta Gerwig's summer smash "Barbie" film. The soundtrack,

which also features Dua Lipa, earned a total of 11 nominations in the major categories and the visual media fields. Rodrigo, who already has three Grammy wins under her belt including Best New Artist, earned six nods this time around and will vie for the night's top awards.

In-demand producer Jack Antonoff scored six nominations for his work, notably with Swift and Lana Del Rey, the baroque pop singer whose album "Did you know there's a tunnel under Ocean Blvd" earned her five nominations. If Swift's "Midnights" wins Album of the Year, it would be a record-breaking fourth win of the prize for the 33-year-old, who's already the toast of the music world as she continues her monumental Eras tour. She is currently tied as the top winner of the most prestigious Grammy with Frank Sinatra, Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder.

### Women on top

Jazz polymath Jon Batiste is the sole man up for Record and Album of the Year, two years after he beat out pop's royalty to dominate the 2022 gala. He earned six nominations this

go-around, as did Miley Cyrus and country singer-songwriter Brandy Clark. Coveted engineer Serban Ghenea - who mixed Swift's "Midnights" - meanwhile earned seven nods. Rising R&B star Victoria Monet also finished with seven nominations, including for the prestigious Record of the Year and Best New Artist prizes.

Industry watchers predict Ice Spice will win the latter category, after a banner year that saw the bubbly Bronx rapper go viral on loop and collaborate with Swift. And pop futurist Janelle Monae earned her second Album of the Year nomination for "The Age of Pleasure". Rihanna picked up a nomination for the song she worked on for the "Black Panther" sequel, but the best visual media category will likely go to one of four songs from the "Barbie" movie. That award is for songwriters, and includes tracks performed by Eilish, Nicki Minaj and Ice Spice, Dua Lipa and Ryan Gosling, who plays Ken in the film.

Bernie Sanders - yes, that Bernie Sanders - has a second chance to win a Grammy in the audiobook and narration category. The leftist senator's reading of "It's Ok to Be Angry About



US singer Olivia Rodrigo

Capitalism" is up against efforts by Michelle Obama, Meryl Streep, William Shatner and Rick Rubin in one of the night's quirkier categories. The Rolling Stones earned a nomination for Best Rock Song for "Angry", while Grammy catnip Foo Fighters is poised to take home prizes in the rock fields, where boygenius could also be a factor.

### 'Dang good music'

The banner year for music's women is a long time coming for many critics of the Recording Academy - the in-

stitution behind the Grammys - which for many years has faced flak that it overwhelmingly honors white, male acts. "Women had dang good music - some of the biggest records of the year and the biggest songs," Recording Academy chief executive Harvey Mason Jr told The Los Angeles Times. "And our voters were obviously moved by a lot of it."

The sea change comes as scandal continues to brew within the ranks of the Academy. In 2019, the former chief of the powerful institution, Neil Portnow, left his post after saying that women artists should "step up" if they want more recognition, comments he delivered at the #MeToo movement's peak. This week, Portnow was sued in Manhattan for allegedly drugging and raping an unnamed woman artist in 2018. The suit also accuses the Academy of negligence, saying it protected Portnow and dismissed accounts of his abuse. Both the organization and Portnow vehemently deny the allegations. - AFP



This photo taken on June 30, 1966 shows The Beatles' (from left) Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison and John Lennon performing during their concert at the Budokan in Tokyo. - AFP

## The Beatles score first UK number one in 54 years

The Beatles' latest release "Now And Then" on Friday became the legendary band's first UK number one single in 54 years, with Paul McCartney calling it "a very emotional moment". Artificial intelligence helped isolate late member John Lennon's vocals from a tape he recorded in 1978, two years before he was murdered. They were combined with old session tracks, including parts by late guitarist George Harrison, and new lines from remaining members McCartney and drummer Ringo Starr to "reunite" the band for a final time.

The Official Charts Company announced Friday that "Now and Then" had climbed to number one following its release last week, making it the band's first chart-topper since "The Ballad of John and Yoko" in 1969. The Liverpool group now claims the record for the longest gap between number one hits, and also the longest time span between an artist's first and last chart-topper. The Beatles' first number one single was "From Me to You" in 1963, more than 60 years ago, and they have 18 in total.

"Now And Then" is the fastest selling single of the year so far and has accumulated the highest number of one-week physical sales in almost a decade. Celebrating the news, McCartney, 81, told Official Charts: "It's mind boggling. It's blown my socks off. It's also a very emotional moment for me. I love it!" Despite being highly anticipated, "Now

and Then", which comes more than four decades after Lennon recorded it as a demo, received lukewarm reviews from music critics.

"Now and Then" is not terrible... But ultimately, it's kind of mundane," wrote Geoff Edgers in the Washington Post. The Times daily in the UK said the song showed AI at its best. Parts of it also conjured up "that classic, bitersweet, Beatles-esque flavor," wrote reviewer Will Hodgkinson. "Unfortunately, none of this can mask the fact that the Last Beatles Song is far from a lost masterpiece," he added. But Martin Talbot, chief executive officer of the Official Charts Company, said the sales proved that "Beatlemania has returned." "If there were ever any doubts that The Beatles are the greatest band of all time, they have surely consigned them to history this week," he added.

The demo tape was given to McCartney by Lennon's widow Yoko Ono in 1994. Two other songs, "Free As A Bird" and "Real Love", were cleaned up by the producer Jeff Lynne, worked on by the other former Beatles, and released in 1995 and 1996. An attempt was made to do the same with "Now And Then" but the project was abandoned due to technical obstacles, unsurmountable at the time. The two surviving Beatles finished "Now And Then" last year, including Harrison's electric and acoustic guitar parts recorded in 1995. - AFP

## Argentine Swifties shake off election bad blood at 'Eras Tour'

Decked out in friendship bracelets and glitter, fans lined up ahead of the first Argentina show of Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour" Thursday ready to shake off the bad blood of the upcoming presidential election - until they were met with posters warning: "Swiftie, don't vote Milei." Thousands of young people queued for hours outside Buenos Aires's Estadio Monumental stadium in the springtime sun, singing, trading beaded jewelry and showing off outfits representing eras from the pop sensation's discography.

But for 21-year-old Sofia Ranui, seeing the political messaging at a concert just weeks ahead of the Nov 19 second-round vote wasn't surprising. "You realize when you see the posters of (candidates Sergio) Massa and (Javier) Milei, that they take advantage of what's in fashion," she said. "Being so close to the elections, they're going to see where the focus of attention is, and they're going to sink their teeth into it," she said, drawing a parallel with the relationship between Argentine football and politics - and pointing to her own jersey with Swift's lucky number 13 on the back. "I betrayed Messi for just a little bit," Ranui joked.

For days leading up to the show, a post from a group of anti-Milei Swifties began making the rounds on social media, blasting the right-wing ultra-libertarian who is taking on economy minister Massa. Milei "is the representative of the anti-democratic right that is coming to take away all of our rights," cautioned the account, which was later suspended for unknown reasons. Activists had plastered "Eras Tour" posters in the area around the stadium, replacing Swift's picture with an image of Massa and text

reading "Massa, the presidential tour".

Some of the "Swiftie, don't vote for Milei" posters had the word "don't" crossed out, reflecting Argentina's deep political polarization. Other signs carried the hashtag "MileiTrump." "She is against Trump and everything represented by Trump, who is sexist," 31-year-old fan Miriam Monllau said. "Taylor's ideas go against what Milei would be."



### 'So make the friendship bracelets'

The three dates in Buenos Aires are the second Latin American stop on Swift's latest tour, after she visited Mexico and before she heads to Brazil. Fans traveled from Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela to the Monumental stadium to watch the "Anti-Hero" singer on Thursday. "It's incredible what she does as an activist - so much with women's rights...children's rights," concertgoer Milena Nunez said of the 33-year-old American mega-star, who only recently began commenting on politics despite a nearly two-decade-long career.

"I want to be on the right side of history," Swift said in her 2020 documentary "Miss Americana", around the time she

endorsed Joe Biden for president over Donald Trump. But her love for Swift isn't about politics, Nunez said. "Her songs represent everything to us. If you're sad, if you've lost someone, if you've met someone, if you're happy or sad: Taylor has a song for that," the 23-year-old added.

Thursday was the culmination of months of waiting for Swift fans in Argentina - some of them waited outside the stadium that can hold 30,000 people for a chance to be among the first inside, including 24-year-old Julieta Zavala. She and 30 others took turns waiting at the front of the line starting in late May, before dates for this leg of the tour - which began in the United States in March and is set to finish in Canada next December - were even confirmed.

"They're with me, but I don't know they're political ideologies, because we don't talk about that," Zavala explained of her fellow line-holders. "We're talking about how we're going to see Taylor and we're going to have a good time," she told AFP before heading inside.

For Ranui, the chance to sing and dance with other Swifties is the perfect opportunity to escape the tense political environment. "Maybe the country isn't at its best at the moment, or maybe it never is," she said. "So we're going to make (friendship) bracelets, we're not going to think about the elections, we're going to put on glitter, we're going to wear pink, and we're going to be with other young people, and we're going to feel super happy, because after these three days are over, the cloud that always hangs over Argentines will return again." - AFP



Fans of US singer Taylor Swift queue outside the Mas Monumental stadium before Swift's concert "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" in Buenos Aires on Nov 9, 2023. - AFP photos



## Sports

# Marsh's 'scary' hundred ensures Australia cruise past Bangladesh

## New Zealand into World Cup semi-finals

PUNE: Mitchell Marsh's career-best 177 not out was labelled "scary" by skipper Pat Cummins as Australia headed into next week's World Cup semi-finals with a convincing eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in Pune on Saturday.

Marsh's second hundred of the World Cup ensured Australia, already guaranteed a last-four clash with South Africa, made light of their target of 307 to win with 32 balls remaining. This was just Marsh's third hundred in 87 one-day internationals and surpassed his 121 against Pakistan earlier in the tournament as the 32-year-old's highest score.

The all-rounder, strong on the drive and square of the wicket, faced 132 balls including 17 fours and nine sixes, having briefly returned to Australia following the death of his grandfather before rejoining the squad. Cummins praised Marsh's "outstanding" innings, with the fast bowler adding: "He is a scary prospect to have in the next week."

Marsh also shared a stand of 120 with David Warner (53) and put on an unbroken 175 with Steve Smith, the star batsman hitting the winning boundary in a morale-boosting 63 not out after returning from vertigo. Victory meant Australia ended the group stage with a seventh successive win after their campaign for a record-extending sixth men's World Cup title started with two defeats.

Marsh joked his innings had offset a bowling figures of 0-48 in four overs. "Not every day that you get player of the match after you concede 50-odd in four overs," he said. "Started off with -50 when I began batting. But good to get stuck in."

### 'Everything is clicking'

Cummins, reflecting on Australia's progress in India, said: "Seven games in a row, even when we were

not at our best in some of those games, we came away with a win. "Chasing 300-plus was something we did not do earlier. It feels like everything is clicking together."

Bangladesh's 306-8, their highest total of the tournament, left Australia needing to surpass their record World Cup-winning chase of 292 against Afghanistan in Mumbai on Tuesday — a match where Glenn Maxwell's stunning unbeaten 201 sealed an astounding three-wicket following a collapse to 91-7. Maxwell was rested on Saturday, but Australia had no need of his heroics as they overpowered a Bangladesh attack missing captain Shakib Al Hasan after the all-rounder was ruled out with a broken finger.

"We did not play our best at the World Cup as a team, in both bowling and batting," said stand-in Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto. Nasum Ahmed's 10 wicketless overs cost 85 runs, with this defeat leaving Bangladesh dependent on other results for a top-eight finish that would qualify them for the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

Australia lost Travis Head (10) early in their chase when he played on trying to slog Taskin Ahmed. Warner plundered runs on an excellent batting pitch before the left-handed opener, following a 52-ball fifty, surprisingly chipped Mustafizur Rahman to Najmul at mid-off. The powerful Marsh however, pressed on, pounding spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz for a six and a four before suffering cramp, although nothing as severe as the attack that afflicted Maxwell against Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, New Zealand wrapped up their place in the Cricket World Cup semi-finals on Saturday after Pakistan failed to overhaul them during their



PUNE: Australia's Josh Inglis runs out Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto (back) during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Australia and Bangladesh at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on November 11, 2023. — AFP

concluding group game against England. Pakistan, the 1992 champions, needed to beat England by 287 runs in Kolkata to squeeze into the semi-finals at the Kiwis' expense on net run rate. However, England batted first, closing off that avenue, and Pakistan's fate was then sealed when they were faced with the impossible task of scoring over 300 runs by the 40th

ball of their reply to the champions' 337-9. New Zealand will face undefeated hosts India in the first semi-final in Mumbai on Wednesday with Australia and South Africa clashing in Kolkata 24 hours later. The Kiwis, runners-up at the last two World Cups, finished fourth in the 10-team table with 10 points after five wins and four losses. — AFP

## Martin closes gap on Bagnaia as Alex Marquez wins Malaysian MotoGP

SEPANG: Alex Marquez won the Malaysian MotoGP sprint race at Sepang on Saturday ahead of championship rival duo Jorge Martin and Francesco Bagnaia, who saw his lead at the top cut to 11 points. Spain's Marquez romped home on his Ducati nearly 1.6 seconds ahead of compatriot Martin, who gained two points on Italy's Bagnaia in their championship tussle with three races left.

It was a disappointing afternoon for title-holder Bagnaia, who started on pole on his factory Ducati and led for half of the 10 laps before slipping into a distant third. Bagnaia is on 396 points heading into Sunday's race and Martin is on 385, their title duel set to go right down to the wire.

"We did the maximum and the maximum was not enough today to win," said the 26-year-old Bagnaia, who was at a loss to explain exactly where his race had gone wrong. "This race will help us understand something for tomorrow. My feeling wasn't the best, absolutely." The Italian, who smashed the Sepang lap record in qualifying to snatch pole from rival Martin for the sprint and Sunday's race, made a clean start to retain his lead at the first corner.

Martin, also on a Ducati, slipped to fourth early on. The Prima Pramac rider recovered and then engaged Marquez in a battle for second as Bagnaia maintained his advantage at the front in mostly serene fashion.

But Gresini Racing's Marquez — who started fourth on the grid — saw off Martin and then seized his moment to snatch the lead from Bagnaia with five laps to go. Martin soon darted past Bagnaia as well, relegating the championship leader to third in a flash.

Marquez stormed away from there, establishing a lead on Martin of more than a second for the remainder of the sprint. "Today I was on a mission," said Marquez. "I did everything to perfection."

Bagnaia's factory Ducati team-mate Enea Bastianini was fourth. Marquez's older brother Marc, the six-time MotoGP world champion, has had a weekend to forget so far, qualifying a lowly 20th and coming 21st in the sprint.

Ducati bikes had dominated the qualifying, with Bagnaia snatching pole position from Martin late in a dramatic session. Martin came off his bike late in qualifying when pushing hard to beat the Italian but was unhurt. The top six places on the grid were all Ducatis. After the 20-lap race at Sepang the season goes to Qatar and then the last grand prix of the campaign in Valencia, in what looks set to be a thrilling conclusion to the championship. Alex Marquez is not in contention for the title — and that makes him dangerous, said Bagnaia. "He's got nothing to lose and today he demonstrated that," said the Italian. — AFP

## Dravid hails 'captain fantastic' Rohit in India's WCup odyssey

BENGALURU: Rohit Sharma was hailed on Saturday as a "fantastic" captain for leading India to a perfect eight wins from eight matches and a place in the World Cup semi-finals. India play their last league match against the Netherlands in Bengaluru on Sunday before they move on to the semi-finals.

The hosts have remained unbeaten with impressive wins over arch-rivals Pakistan, defending champions England and most recently South Africa.

The 36-year-old Rohit, who may be in his last World Cup alongside 35-year-old Virat Kohli, has scored 442 runs including one century at a strike-rate of 122.77.

"Rohit has certainly been a leader without a doubt," coach Rahul Dravid said on Saturday. "He's led by example both on and off the field. There have been some games where it could have been tricky for us, but the fact that he's been able to get us to those kinds of starts has literally cracked open the game."

Dravid added: "He's been fantastic in his batting, the leadership that he's shown and taking on the game, in leading from the front." Rohit's 131 against Afghanistan led the way and he followed it up with an 86 in the crushing win over Pakistan. The captain's 87 remained key in a low-scoring game against England. Rohit took over the captaincy from Kohli, who was removed from the job in 2021 without a world title under his leadership belt. India have travelled an exhausting 12,000km (7,500 miles) on their World Cup journey and Dravid said the team has played good cricket across all venues.

### 'Represented India'

"We've travelled the length and breadth of this country and played in eight venues. This is our ninth," said Dravid. "I think what this team has done really well is it has represented India fantastically. It's played a really good brand of cricket. "We know we have nine boxes to tick, and we've ticked eight." The cricket-mad nation of 1.4 billion people has been rooting for the hosts to end their world title drought stretching back to the 2013 Champions Trophy. India last won the World Cup at home in 2011.

The Netherlands have made an impact in the 10-team tournament after they stunned a high-flying South Africa. They also beat Bangladesh. "I think the performances of teams like the Netherlands certainly go a long way in boosting the morale of a lot of the other associate nations. They can certainly compete, they've got some very good players," said Dravid.

"And it's quite inspiring to see that in spite of the challenges they face they're able to compete at this level to play at this level."

Asked to weigh on the Angelo Mathews "timed out" dismissal — a first ever in the 146-year history of international cricket — Dravid said there were no winners. "You might not do it yourself. We might not do it, but you can't blame somebody for following it because you put that in place and you have to give scope for that level of understanding of somebody," said Dravid. "Whether you choose to do it or not is completely your decision." — AFP



SEPANG: Gresini Racing MotoGP's Spanish rider Alex Marquez (C) celebrates winning the Tissot Sprint race next to second place Prima Pramac's Spanish rider Jorge Martin (L) and third place Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia (R) at the Sepang International Circuit in Sepang on November 11, 2023. — AFP

## Colombia detains 4 in kidnapping of footballer's father

BOGOTA: Police in Colombia have detained four people suspected in the kidnapping of the father of Liverpool footballer Luis Diaz, who was held hostage for nearly two weeks by members of the ELN guerrilla group, officials said Saturday.

Luis Manuel Diaz was freed Thursday. He had been

abducted by armed men on motorcycles at a gas station in the town of Barrancas near the Venezuelan border. The ELN, which is in peace negotiations with the government and is party to a six-month ceasefire that took effect in August, described the kidnapping by one of its units as a "mistake."

"We have detained four people allegedly responsible for the kidnapping of Luis Manuel Diaz," the National Police of Colombia said in a statement on social media platform X. The suspects were captured in the northern department of La Guajira, where the kidnapping took place, police said. They had two firearms on them. The police did not release the suspects' names, but said they belonged to a criminal group known as

Los Primos. They did not say how the group was connected to ELN. The elder Diaz's wife Cilenis Marulanda was kidnapped together with him on October 28, but was rescued hours later.

Luis Manuel Diaz was the founder and amateur coach of the only football academy in Barrancas, where his son showed promise from a very young age. Known locally as "Mane," Diaz Sr. is credited with aiding the meteoric rise of the Liverpool and Colombia striker.

On Friday he said he had been held by two different groups during the kidnapping. "I felt a change after three days, when it seemed that I was already in the hands of the ELN. They spoke to me differently and treated me differently," he told reporters. — AFP



COLOMBO: President of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) Shammi Silva speaks during a press conference at the Sri Lanka Cricket Board office in Colombo on November 11, 2023. — AFP

## S Lanka appeals ICC ban over political meddling

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's sports minister said Saturday he would appeal the country's suspension from the International Cricket Council (ICC) over alleged political interference in the local board. Roshan Ranasinghe said the world governing body's action on Friday night against his country was "illegal" and would appeal to the ICC's Dispute Resolution Committee.

"The ICC suspension of Sri Lanka is illegal. We have been maliciously suspended without giving us an opportunity to respond to the allegation," Ranasinghe told reporters in the capital Colombo. He said the ICC had referred to "political interference" in Sri Lanka Cricket, the elected body that governs cricket in the country, but had not specified the charges.

"First, we must have the charges and then an opportunity to respond," Ranasinghe said. "If we fail to get redress from the DRC, we will go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland." The ICC said on Friday that Sri Lanka Cricket was "in serious breach of its obligations as a member", highlighting "the requirement to manage its affairs autonomously and to ensure that there is no government interference".

The suspension came a day after Sri Lanka's parliament asked the board to resign over allegations by Ranasinghe that it had siphoned off millions of dollars. The ICC board will decide the suspension conditions later, it said in a brief statement.

It was not immediately clear if the indefinite suspension would affect Sri Lanka hosting the Under 19 World Cup in January. The local board said Sri Lanka stands to lose a \$2.4 million grant from the ICC to develop local venues if the 16-nation Under-19 tournament was scuttled due to the suspension.

The crisis involving the cricket board — the richest sporting organization in the bankrupt island country — came to a head after Sri Lanka's humiliating World Cup defeat by India last week. Parliament unanimously asked Sri Lanka Cricket's elected board members to resign on Thursday, accusing them of unprecedented corruption.

The board is now locked in litigation after it was sacked by the sports minister on Monday, only to be restored the following day by the Court of Appeal pending a hearing in two weeks. The ICC has rules against political interference and has suspended Sri Lanka before. — AFP

Sports

# French skater Siao Him Fa beats Uno in Cup of China

## Hana Yoshida leapt to gold in only her second senior competition

**CHONGQING:** Frenchman Adam Siao Him Fa edged Japanese double world figure skating champion Shoma Uno to win the Cup of China Grand Prix event in Chongqing on Saturday.

Uno led after the short programme but Siao Him Fa, who won in France in the previous round, took Saturday's free skate.

"I am really happy about my performance today. This week was really hard, not because of the training, but all around. I had skate issues, food poisoning, it was quite catastrophic, but I managed pretty well, stayed strong mentally," said Siao Him Fa.

Kazakhstan's Mikhail Shaidorov was third for his first Grand Prix podium finish.

With two events left, the victory lifted the French skater to the top of the Grand Prix standings, two points ahead of American teenager Ilya Malinin who skipped the event. "It feels great because it was a goal for this season to qualify for the Grand Prix Final," said Siao Him Fa. "Last year I missed that opportunity. I feel glad to achieve it this season."

The finals are in Beijing on December 7-10. The top six in each discipline qualify automatically. Uno, after his first points of the season, is sixth in the standings. "I think I have got very good programmes for this season. I know what to improve and what I have to do. I think I will get better as the season progresses," Uno said.

In the women's competition, Hana Yoshida leapt to gold in only her second senior competition at a

Grand Prix. She overtook Japanese compatriot Rinka Watanabe and Belgian Loena Hendrickx, who had led after the short programme.

"I'm really surprised that I won today," the 18-year-old Yoshida said. "I have lots of things to work on. I want to be able to aim for higher points." Yoshida started her routine by stepping out of a triple Axel but recovered to land seven triple jumps.

"After my triple Axel I was a little bit disappointed. I wanted to land it clean but after that I was able to concentrate on the elements after and forget about the Axel. That was good," she said.

Hendrickx climbed to second in the standings, two points behind American Isabeau Levito, who was absent. "I feel disappointed about my skate today," the Belgian said. "I didn't feel well for the past five days. I don't want to use it as an excuse. I didn't eat well here, I wasn't hungry. I tried to eat but it was pretty hard."

"I didn't feel ready and confident. I had less energy. It was enough for the short, but not for the free."

Canadians Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier came from second to win the ice dance, overtaking compatriots Marjorie Lajoie and Zachary Lagha. Americans Caroline Green and Michael Parsons were third.

"We are really proud of what we accomplished today," said Poirier. "It is always hard to come back after a not so strong performance and put it behind you, just clear your mind and allow yourself to skate like you know how to do." — AFP



ANGERS: File photo shows France's Adam Siao Him Fa performs in the Men's Short Program at the ISU 2023 figure skating Grand Prix de France in Angers. — AFP

## Vlhova dominates WCup slalom opener, Shiffrin fourth

**LEVI:** Olympic slalom champion Petra Vlhova got her World Cup slalom campaign off to a perfect start with a dominant display in the season-opener in Levi on Saturday with US star Mikaela Shiffrin finishing fourth. The Slovak's blistering risk-taking performance gave her the best times in both runs to crush the opposition. Germany's Lena Duerr was second at 1.41sec with Austrian Katharina Liensberger 1.55sec off the pace to move up to third after the second run at the expense of Shiffrin.

Shiffrin, the most successful skier in the history of the World Cup with five overall World Cup trophies and a record 88 victories, had been third after the first run but was tenth-best in the second, to finish just off the podium at 1.70sec.

"I am quite surprised, but of course I am happy because both runs were perfect," said Vlhova, 28, after her 29th World Cup victory and sixth in Levi. "Honestly, I didn't expect so much of a gap between me and Lena and Katharina but I feel good. I am enjoying skiing and I feel confident too."

She confirmed her good form at the start of the season, two weeks after her third place in the opening giant slalom in Soelden, Austria. "Of course, before the race I was a little bit under stress because you don't know where you are but in the end I won again here and it's amazing."



LEVI: Winner Slovakia's Petra Vlhova (C), second placed Germany's Lena Duerr (L) and third placed Austria's Katharina Liensberger celebrate on the podium after the women's slalom competition of the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Levi, Sirkka, Kittilä municipality, Finland, on November 11, 2023. — AFP

Shiffrin, seemingly hampered by bruising to her left knee after a training run fall, lost time with several small mistakes on her second run. The 28-year-old American won both slaloms in Levi last season on her way to the crystal globe in the discipline. But her start

to the season has been less impressive than expected, with a sixth-place in Soelden last month. Not since 2014 has a skier other than Shiffrin or Vlhova won in Levi, a city in the far north of Finland which will host a second women's slalom on Sunday. — AFP

## Barca are in a dip, not a crisis: Coach Xavi

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez insisted Saturday his club were in a dip but not falling into crisis and said president Joan Laporta had full confidence in his project. The Spanish champions have played poorly in recent weeks and fell to an embarrassing 1-0 defeat by Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Tuesday in Hamburg. Despite the loss, Barcelona are still joint group leaders and expected to qualify for the knockout phases, and are third in La Liga. The Catalans lost at home to Real Madrid in the Clasico on October 28 and scraped a 1-0 win at Real Sociedad last weekend, despite a drab performance.

"I don't think this is (my worst moment) at all, my worst moment as a coach came last year," Xavi told a news conference, referring to his team's Champions League group stage elimination. "I have lived through terrible crises here, this doesn't go that far, it's a dip ... we haven't played well, we have to recover our game. "Getting that back is key — as a coach, I feel good, this is nothing to do with the situation we had last year." Spanish media singled out Xavi for criticism after the Shakhtar loss, but the coach said Laporta was 'calm'. "After each game we speak with the president," explained Xavi. "We are very united, he's a very positive person, more than me even, and he is very calm. "He has maximum confidence in us, as staff and as a group." — AFP

## Italy beat Slovenia to clinch BJK final spot

**SEVILLE:** Four-time champions Italy reached the Billie Jean King Cup final on Saturday with a 2-0 triumph over Slovenia in Seville. Italy, who last won the competition 10 years ago, triumphed in both semi-final singles rubbers to wrap up victory before the doubles.

Martina Trevisan eased past Kaja Juvan 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 before Jasmine Paolini sealed the win with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 triumph over Tamara Zidansek. "I'm really happy and really proud of my team, it was a really tough match today, a little bit of a rollercoaster," said Paolini.

"I'm so happy for my country, my team and everybody who is cheering for us and working for us to make the week better." Paolini said regardless of whether Italy face Canada or the Czech Republic in the final, who play later Saturday in the second semi-final, it would be a difficult clash.

"We'll try to do our best, it's gonna be tough for sure, Canada and the Czech Republic are really strong teams," she added. "We'll go on court and give 100 per cent and we'll see what happens."

Trevisan saved a set point in the tie-break at the end of the first set, and then converted her fourth match point to take the first rubber. Zidansek double faulted on break point to hand Paolini a 5-3 lead in the decisive third set and she served out



SEVILLE: Italy's Jasmine Paolini (R) celebrates with Italy's coach Tathiana Garbin after winning the semifinals tennis match against Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek on the day 5 of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals 2023 in La Cartuja stadium in Seville on November 11, 2023. — AFP

to clinch the match and the tie. "I cannot ask for more, I am more than happy for them and more than proud, I'm a lucky captain," said Italian captain Tathiana Garbin. — AFP

## Girona extend Liga lead with comeback win over Rayo

**BARCELONA:** Shock La Liga leaders Girona came from behind to beat Rayo Vallecano 2-1 on Saturday and extend their advantage over Spain's traditional giants. Artem Dovbyk and Savinho fired the Catalan minnows to an impressive victory in the capital which leaves them five points clear of Real Madrid in second, and seven points above Barcelona, third.

Girona, only in the top flight for the fourth season in their history, have played the best football in La Liga this season and gave another example of it against Rayo. "We knew we were coming to a very difficult ground and we were going to suffer," Girona captain and playmaker Aleix Garcia told Movistar.

"The team does not give up, when we're behind on the scoreboard we play even better. I'm happy to keep going, up there at the top." The hosts took the lead after five minutes when a Girona clearance struck Rayo's Isi Palazon and fell into Alvaro Garcia's path in the area, and he fired into the far corner.

Michel's side dominated the coach's former team after that and it was no surprise when Dovbyk levelled just before half-time. The target man received Ukrainian compatriot Viktor Tsygankov's low cut-back in the box and smashed home.

The striker climbed to seven league goals for the



MADRID: Rayo Vallecano's Spanish forward #19 Jorge De Frutos vies with Girona's Spanish defender #11 Valery Fernandez during the Spanish league football match between Rayo Vallecano de Madrid and Girona FC at the Valdebezas stadium in Madrid on November 11, 2023. — AFP

season, level with three other players and behind only Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, who has 10. Girona winger Savinho sent the visitors ahead in the 65th minute, netting the rebound after Rayo goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski brilliantly blocked Dovbyk's effort.

Rayo, ninth, had big chances to level in the final stages but Girona clung on to secure victory at Valdebezas and extend their remarkable start to the season. The team started the season with the objective of surviving in La Liga, but have raised their ambitions after 11 wins from 13 games and only one defeat. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456532
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

### Change of Name

I, **ALI ASGHAR** holder of Indian Passport No. - Z4826769, having permanent address-14, Street G, Kharol Colony, Dewali (Rural), Udaipur, Rajasthan, India-313001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **ALI ASGHAR** (Given Name) and **HITA** (Surname). #4554 - 10-11-2023

I, **ABIDAH RAJU** holder of Indian Passport No. V3747806 having permanent address Atchanta Peddapet, West Godavari, Pin: 534123, Andhra Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **ABIDAH RAJU** and (surname) **PATHAGOLUSU**.

## Man Utd ease pressure on Ten Hag

Spurs mauled by Wolves late show



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's English striker #10 Marcus Rashford collides with Luton Town's Welsh defender #04 Tom Lockyer as they fight for the ball during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Luton Town at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on November 11, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester United eased the pressure on under-fire boss Erik ten Hag with a nervy 1-0 win against Luton, while Premier League title challengers Tottenham crashed to an agonising 2-1 defeat at Wolves on Saturday. Rocked by Wednesday's devastating Champions League group stage loss in Copenhagen — the latest embarrassment in a season of low moments — United gave Ten Hag some much-needed breathing space thanks to Victor Lindelof's second-half winner.

United had suffered five defeats in their previous 10 home games this season, their worst start to a campaign at Old Trafford since 1930-31 when they also lost five of 10 and were relegated from the top flight. They were also reeling from three losses in their last four games in all competitions as the heat was turned up on Ten Hag.

Against that depressing backdrop, and with the latest 'Glazers out' protests from fans outside Old Trafford before kick-off, struggling Luton's first visit to United since 1991 was well-timed for Ten Hag and

his troubled team. United made their pressure count in the 59th minute as Bruno Fernandes' corner was cleared to Marcus Rashford, whose cross fell kindly for Lindelof to lash home.

That was enough to lift United to sixth place, while Luton remain one place above the relegation zone. Wolves' stunning late show denied Tottenham the chance to return to the top of the table as a pair of stoppage-time goals sealed a dramatic win at Molineux. Brennan Johnson's first goal for Tottenham since his move from Nottingham Forest put Ange Postecoglou's side ahead in the third minute. Johnson converted Pedro Porro's cross with a clinical close-range strike.

But Wolves dominated after that and earned a memorable victory thanks to the incredible finale. Pablo Sarabia finally bagged the equalizer in the first minute of stoppage time when he smashed past Guglielmo Vicario from Matheus Cunha's pass.

Missing injured stars James Maddison and Micky van de Ven, Tottenham were well below

their best and Mario Lemina made them pay in the 97th minute, meeting Sarabia's cross with a cool finish from 12 yards.

'We ran out of legs'

After starting the season on a 10-game unbeaten run, it was Tottenham's second successive defeat after Monday's 4-1 loss against Chelsea when they had two players sent off. "Wolves are always going to come on strong and we ran out of legs at the end," Postecoglou said. "It is understandable, a lot of those guys haven't played. They scored a couple of good goals. It's a hard one to take." Arsenal took advantage of Tottenham's stumble as they beat Burnley 3-1 to move one point above their north London rivals into second place.

Mikel Arteta's team, beaten at Newcastle last weekend, took the lead on the stroke of half-time. Bukayo Saka headed across goal for Leandro Trossard to bundle home Arsenal's 1,000th goal at the Emirates Stadium since their move from Highbury in 2006. Burnley levelled in the 54th minute when Josh

Brownhill fired home via a deflection off Arsenal defender Gabriel. But William Saliba's close-range header three minutes later put Arsenal back in control and Oleksandr Zinchenko volleyed the Gunners' third in the 74th minute.

Arsenal were reduced to 10 men in the 83rd minute when Fabio Vieira was shown a straight red card after catching Brownhill on the knee. Everton climbed away from the relegation zone with a 3-2 win at Crystal Palace.

Sean Dyche's side took the lead in the first minute when Vitaliy Mykolenko thumped a header past Sam Johnstone from Jack Harrison's cross. Palace equalized four minutes later when Eberechi Eze was fouled by Jarrad Branthwaite, conceding a penalty that the forward took himself and dispatched with ease.

Abdoulaye Doucoure restored Everton's advantage in the 49th minute and although Odsonne Edouard levelled in the 73rd minute, Idrissa Gueye surged clear to win it for the visitors with five minutes left. Newcastle face Bournemouth in Saturday's late game. — AFP

## England send Pakistan crashing out of WCup with thumping win

KOLKATA: England sent Pakistan crashing out of the World Cup with a convincing 93-run win as Ben Stokes and David Willey helped their team end their miserable title defence on a high in Kolkata on Saturday. Stokes, who came out of ODI retirement for the World Cup, scored 84 while Joe Root hit 60 to lift England to an impressive 337-9 in their 50 overs before Pakistan folded on 244 in 43.3 overs. Willey, who already announced he will retire from international cricket after the World Cup, removed Pakistan openers Abdullah Shafique (mough) and Fakhar Zaman (one) before dismissing Agha Salman for 51 to finish with 3-56.

With Salman's wicket, Willey also completed 100 wickets in his 73rd ODI. Fellow fast bowler Gus Atkinson (2-45) had Babar Azam for 38, caught at short mid-wicket off a miscued pull to end the Pakistan skipper's below-par tournament on 320 runs with four fifties but without a century. Spinners Moeen Ali (2-60) and Adil Rashid (2-55) took care of the middle-order as only Salman defied the bowling with a fighting 45-ball knock studded with six boundaries and a six. Tail-enders Shaheen Shah Afridi scored 27 and Harris Rauf made 35 to at least take Pakistan past the 200-mark.

Ali removed Mohammad Rizwan for a 51-ball 36 and Iftikhar Ahmed for three while Rashid had Saud Shakeel bowled round his legs for 29 before bowling Shadab Khan for four with a googly. Pakistan started the day needing to beat England by 287 runs in order to squeeze into the semi-finals on net run-rate but that escape route was immediately closed when Jos Buttler won the toss and chose to bat first.

As a result, New Zealand became the fourth team into the semi-finals and will face undefeated India in Mumbai on November 15. A day later, Australia and South Africa will meet in the other semi-final in Kolk-



KOLKATA: Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (R) plays a shot as England's wicketkeeper captain Jos Buttler watches during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between England and Pakistan at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on November 11, 2023. — AFP

ata. Stokes — dropped on 10 by Shaheen off his own bowling — rode his luck during a 76-ball innings.

Wayward bowling

Root added a 72-ball 60 after England won the toss and batted. Stokes and Root built on a solid opening stand of 82 between Jonny Bairstow (59) and Dawid Malan (31), taking full advantage of a slow Eden Gardens pitch and some wayward bowling.

Bairstow hit seven boundaries and a six in his 61-ball knock — his second fifty in an otherwise lacklustre performance in the tournament. Malan was the first to go, miscuing a reverse sweep off spinner Iftikhar Ahmed while Bairstow was caught in the covers off Rauf, Pakistan's best bowler with 3-64.

Once Stokes, who came out of ODI retirement for the World Cup, got a life he continued to bat like he did during his century against the Netherlands in Pune three days ago, cracking 11 boundaries and two sixes. He was finally yorked by Shaheen in the 41st over after adding 132 for the third wicket with Root. Root hit four boundaries in his third half century of the World Cup before he was caught off a leading edge against Shaheen who finished with 2-72. Harry Brook made 30, with two sixes and as many fours, and Buttler hit 27 with a six and three boundaries as the pair added a quick 45 with England scoring 97 runs in the last ten overs. Pakistan finished in fifth place in the 10-nation table while England are a further two places down, but still able to qualify for the 2025 Champions Trophy. — AFP

## Kane scores brace as Bayern go top, Dortmund lose

BERLIN: Harry Kane scored two first-half goals as Bayern Munich beat promoted Heidenheim 4-2 on Saturday, sending the Bavarians to the top of the table. Heidenheim replied with two goals in three second-half minutes to equalize and Bayern needed late goals from Raphael Guerreiro and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting to secure victory. Bayern finish Saturday atop the table but Bayer Leverkusen can return to the top with a win on Sunday over Union Berlin. Kane, who came into the match with 10 goals in his last five matches, wasted no time, collecting the ball with his back to goal and scoring on the turn for the opener after 14 minutes.

Kane doubled up shortly before half-time, heading in unmarked from a corner. With Bayern cruising, manager Thomas Tuchel made three changes shortly after half-time and within ten minutes the visitors were level.

Tim Kleindienst and Jan-Niklas Beste scored in a three-minute period, the latter after a mistake from Kim Min-Jae, bringing the score to 2-2 with 20 minutes remaining. With Bayern wobbling, former Dortmund defender Guerreiro struck his first goal for the German champions, before Choupo-Moting scored with five minutes remaining to seal the win. Kane now has 17 goals in 11 league games since joining the German champions from boyhood club Tottenham in the summer. Borussia Dortmund lost 2-1 at Stuttgart, the returning Serhou Guirassy giving the home side victory with a late penalty, his 15th goal of the season to stay hot on Kane's heels. Dortmund manager Edin Terzic selected the same XI who managed a hard-fought 2-0 against Newcastle in the Champions League on Tuesday and it showed, with the lethargic visitors struggling to contain the home side. Visiting 'keeper Gregor Kobel gave away an early but stopped Chris Fuehrich's tame effort, becoming the first Dortmund goalie in a decade to save a penalty in the league. — AFP