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ADDICTED TO BLACK FRIDAY



## Kuwait welcomes Gaza pause

Truce and prisoner swap to start Friday • Zionist forces detain Al-Shifa hospital chief



GAZA: A Palestinian man carries an injured man as people flee following a Zionist strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 23, 2023. — AFP

KUWAIT/GAZA: Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs welcomed Thursday the announcement by Qatar for successful mediation in brokering a humanitarian pause agreement in Gaza Strip, in partnership with the US and Egypt. The humanitarian pause will trigger an exchange of captives and detainees, notably women and children, in Zionist occupation prisons and in the Gaza Strip, in addition to a temporary ceasefire and entry of humanitarian and relief aid into Gaza, the foreign ministry said in a statement. Kuwait praises the agreement, but calls for continuation of such efforts to ensure a permanent ceasefire and protect Palestinians in Gaza from ferocious attacks by Zionist occupation forces.

The pause in the Zionist-Hamas war in Gaza will start on Friday morning with the first captives to be released hours later, mediator Qatar said, after nearly seven weeks of fighting. Families of captives held by Hamas in Gaza and of Palestinians detained by the Zionist entity were forced to wait an extra day after the breakthrough four-day truce deal was put on hold.

Qatar said the pause would begin Friday at 7:00 am (0500 GMT) with the "first batch" of 13 civilian captives being handed over about nine hours later. The armed wing of Hamas, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, confirmed the ceasefire would

start at 7:00 am under the deal that is also intended to provide aid to Gaza's 2.4 million residents struggling to survive with shortages of food, water and fuel.

"The truce applies for four days, starting from Friday morning, accompanied by the cessation of all military actions from the Qassam Brigades and the Palestinian resistance, as well as the Zionist enemy throughout the truce period," it said. The office of Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was in contact with the families of the hostages after receiving "a first list of names" for those due to be released. It did not specify who was on the list.

Instead of a pause, fighting raged on Thursday. Explosions were heard on an AFP TV livecam and heavy grey clouds hovering over the territory's north, much of which has been reduced to rubble. Hamas and other Palestinian gunmen seized about 240 captives during unprecedented raids into the Zionist entity on Oct 7, which the Zionist entity says killed around 1,200 people. The attack prompted a relentless Zionist campaign of bombing and a ground offensive in Gaza, where the government says more than 14,100 people, mostly civilians, have been killed.

Continued on Page 6

### Film star Hend Sabri quits as WFP ambassador

CAIRO: Tunisian film star Hend Sabri has resigned as World Food Program goodwill ambassador in protest at what she called the use of starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. Sabri, a leading figure in Arab cinema, said that she had decided with "a heavy heart and deep sadness" to step down after 13 years with the United Nations agency.



Hend Sabri

In a statement published on social media platform X late Wednesday, the 44-year-old said that she had asked the WFP leadership to push for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the besieged Palestinian territory. She said that she had hoped the agency "would use its voice forcefully" as it had done in previous crises. "However, hunger and starvation have been used as weapons of war... against more than two million civilians in Gaza," Sabri said. A pause in fighting, due to take effect on Friday, was "too little too late," she added.

Sabri's most recent film, "Four Daughters," was named joint winner of a documentary film prize at this year's Cannes festival. Directed by Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania, it explores the true story of how a mother comes to terms with the decision by two of her children to flee to Libya and join the Islamic State group. Following her resignation, the WFP offered its "heartfelt gratitude" for Sabri's "unwavering support and dedication" as goodwill ambassador. — AFP

### Kuwait-made interceptor boat unveiled

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah attended on Thursday the unveiling of the first Kuwait-made coastguard interception vessel. He said bolstering the ability of the Kuwaiti coastguard is important to handle security challenges and protect the country from marine threats.

According to the interior ministry's public relations and security media department, Sheikh Talal said it is important to encourage national staff to excel, especially in the security domain. He affirmed that locally made vessels and boats would boost the security abilities

of the coastguard to better handle alarming situations and fend off those meaning harm to Kuwait.

Sheikh Talal expressed pride in the Kuwaiti cadres and local industry within the General Directorate of the Coast Guard. He indicated the new interceptor boat would significantly contribute to the localization of Kuwaiti industry, utilizing all available capabilities. He emphasized the commitment to overcoming any obstacles hindering the progress of local industry, stating, "This is the strategic goal towards achieving self-sufficiency."

The minister listened to an explanation of the technical stages involved in manufacturing the boat, along with its designated tasks. Additionally, a presentation was given on a group of boats currently undergoing equipment installation to finalize their production, after which they will be launched to fulfill their security responsibilities. Senior officials from the interior ministry attended the ceremony. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah attends the inauguration of the coastguard's first Kuwait-made interceptor boat on Nov 23, 2023. — KUNA

### Iranian FM meets Hezb chief, warns war could expand

BEIRUT: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has met with Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, which has traded deadly cross-border fire with the Zionist entity since the start of the Gaza war, the Lebanese movement said Thursday. Since the Zionist-Hamas war began on Oct 7, the border between Lebanon and the Zionist entity has witnessed escalating exchanges of fire, primarily involving the Zionist entity and the Iran-backed Hezbollah, along with Palestinian groups. The clashes have raised fears of a broader conflagration.

In a statement, Hezbollah said Amir-Abdollahian and Nasrallah "reviewed the latest developments in Palestine, Lebanon and the region, and... the efforts made to end the (Zionist) aggression against the Gaza Strip". Amir-Abdollahian, who warned on Wednesday that the war could spiral out of control, left Beirut for Doha after their meeting. Iran's Nour news agency reported.



Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah meets Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian at an undisclosed location in Lebanon on Nov 23, 2023. — AFP

"If this ceasefire starts tomorrow, if it does not continue... the conditions in the region will not remain the same as before the ceasefire and the scope of the war will expand," Amir-Abdollahian told the Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen television channel, according to Iran's Fars news agency. "We do not seek to expand the scope of the war," he added. "If the intensity of the war increases, every possibility is conceivable for the expansion of the scope of the war."

Continued on Page 6

### Islamophobe Wilders sweeps Dutch election

THE HAGUE: Far-right firebrand Geert Wilders faced an uphill struggle Thursday to woo rivals for a coalition government after a "monster victory" in Dutch elections that shook the Netherlands and Europe. His PVV (Freedom Party) won 37 seats in parliament, more than doubling his share from the last election and outstripping opponents, according to near complete results.

A left-wing bloc trailed far behind on 25 seats, with the center-right VVD on 24, a catastrophic result for the party of outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte. Wilders, 60, now has the daunting task of trying to form a working coalition, courting rivals that categorically ruled out serving in a PVV-led government before the vote. "The voters have spoken. The seats are fixed. Now it is important that we look for things we can agree on," said Wilders, toasting his election success with a glass of champagne.

Continued on Page 6



# MoH attaches top priority to medicine security: Awadhi

## First Kuwait International Gynecologic Oncology Conference kicks off



KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurates an exhibition held on the sidelines of the medical conference on Thursday. -- KUNA



Delegates attend a workshop held as part of the medical conference.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Thursday that the ministry attaches great importance to medicine security, including different cancer medicines, in the country. The ministry is keen on providing medicine, especially cancer drugs, and is making great efforts to build a new hospital to fight cancer, promote research on cancer and develop multiple programs for detecting the disease at an early stage.

Al-Awadhi was delivering a speech during the first Kuwait International Gynecologic Oncology Conference on Thursday. The three-day conference effectively contributes to exchanging expertise, medical experiences and knowledge on the latest findings in the field of diagnosing cancerous tumors and ways to treat and prevent it. An eminent group of doctors who are lecturers from inside and outside Kuwait, are participating in the conference through scientific sessions and workshops, as well as performing surgical operations for gynecological tumors, explained Al-Awadhi.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oncology Association and Head

of the Surgery Department at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center Dr Khaled Al-Khalidi said that the Surgical Oncology Department is one of the leading departments in the Center, as it has performed 8,500 surgical operations over the past five years, including a thousand operations for gynecological tumors. He said COVID-19 pandemic failed to hinder the hospital from performing these operations, he said.

Regarding gynecological tumors, Al-Khalidi indicated that the most common tumor is uterine cancer at a rate of eight percent, followed by ovarian cancer at a rate of six percent, followed by cervical cancer at a rate of two percent of all tumors that have been registered in Kuwait. He stated that this year the conference chose the topic of gynecological tumors because of its prevalence in Kuwaiti society. It is considered the most common disease after breast tumors, he said, pointing out that this conference comes within the ministry's efforts to serve cancer patients and improve health services, noting that four surgeries were performed on Tuesday using new methods.



Dr Khaled Al-Khalidi

In turn, Head of the Radiotherapy Physics Unit and Secretary General of the Kuwaiti Association for Medical Physics, Dr Shaikha Al-Obaidli said that the conference hosted a workshop specializing in treatment planning for internal radiation technology (close-up) for gynecological cancer tumors. She said internal radiation operations are one of the most important technologies used to treat uterine and cervical cancer. In this method, the radiation source is placed within the



Minister Al-Awadhi during a tour of the exhibition.

body or tissues with the aim of delivering the highest dose of radiation to the part of the body to be treated, while harming nearby healthy tissues as little as possible. She pointed out that this workshop

focuses on the scientific and practical explanation of the latest methods of internal radiotherapy, aiming to develop radiation services specialized in treating gynecological tumors in Kuwait. — KUNA

## Kuwait: Zionists challenge NPT, peace and security

VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Delegate to UN Organizations in Vienna Talal Al-Fassam said on Thursday Zionist entity has threatened to drop a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip in a loud incitement to use weapons of mass destruction.

In a statement delivered before the regular meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, currently held in Vienna, Al-Fassam reiterated Kuwait's strongest condemnation of Zionist aggression against Gaza. "Those criminal statements clearly violate international law and blatantly challenge the non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament treaty threatening peace and security," he said.

The statement by the Zionist entity minister puts an end to the policy of "nuclear ambiguity" that occupation forces have followed over the past decades and confirms once again the reality of the international community's fears regarding Zionist entity's possession of weapons of mass destruction in its military arsenal, Al-Fassam explained.

To fulfill IAEA's role in verifying and implementing the comprehensive safeguards system effectively and efficiently, the necessary steps must be taken to urge Zionist entity to immediately join NPT, he stressed. He also called for stopping crimes of genocide against the Palestinian people through a ceasefire so that humanitarian aid can be delivered to affected civilians, as well as providing protection for the defenseless Palestinian people, to hold Zionist entity accountable for the crimes committed against humanity in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. He confirmed that the Palestinian issue will be on top of Kuwait's foreign policy agenda, as it supports the rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is the establishment of an independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, he said. — KUNA



Talal Al-Fassam

## Toxic positivity: Unrealistic promotion of a positive facade

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The notion of toxic positivity has taken root, quietly poisoning our emotional well-being. It promises of eternal sunshine, which suppresses our true emotions through a plastered smile that invalidates our struggles, hence blocking our authentic healing. Counsellor and psychologist Dr Ali Al-Taresh spoke to Kuwait Times about the irony in today's promotion of relentless positivity and a seemingly bright facade.

Dr Taresh explained toxic positivity and why it can be harmful, emphasizing on the importance of acknowledging and addressing negative emotions. "Toxic positivity is the excessive and unrealistic promotion of a positive outlook to the extent that it denies or negates genuine human experiences of pain, suffering or difficult emotions. It involves an overemphasis on maintaining a positive stance,

often at the expense of acknowledging and addressing negative emotions or challenges. This mindset can be harmful because it does not encourage authentic expression of feelings and may contribute to suppressing legitimate fears or conflicts. It is important to recognize and validate a range of emotions, whether positive or negative, for a more comprehensive and healthy emotional well-being," he said.

Moreover, Dr Taresh elaborated it is important to acknowledge and express our negative emotions, because this is the steppingstone towards addressing our problem and healing it authentically. "Striking a balance between acknowledging and expressing negative emotions while advocating for overall positivity requires recognizing emotions and validating them without judgement. It is necessary to express negativity constructively, utilizing communication and mindfulness to find



Dr Ali Al-Taresh



healthy emotional outlets," he said.

Dr Taresh suggested a few ways to overcome negative feelings and embrace genuine positivity. "Positive reframing and setting achievable goals promote a more balanced perspective, avoiding unjustifiable focus on negativity. Incorporating practices such as gratitude, self-compassion and seeking support when needed contributes to achieving emotional balance. A comprehensive approach that includes a healthy lifestyle and conscious consumption of information ensures a flexible and optimistic outlook on life," he noted.

## Kuwait's Murad wins wildlife photography award

KUWAIT: Canon, one of the leading digital imaging providers and photographic equipment makers, for Europe, the Middle East and Africa has chosen Kuwait's Muhammad Murad as the first wildlife photographer from the Arab region.

As an ambassador within its initiative-Ambassador Programme—Murad told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday that his selection came through the initiative that brings together the best photographers and videographers in the world from all over Europe, the Middle East and Africa to cooperate with Canon.

Murad added that he is interested in photographing wildlife, as he has won many international awards, with a special interest in photographing birds. He noted that his works, which were photographed mainly in Kuwait and European and African countries, won prizes in high-level wildlife photography competitions.

He explained that his work is not limited to taking high-quality pictures. It not only shows natural landscapes, but it also emphasizes the importance of preserving and raising awareness of environmental issues, he said. Murad pointed out that his vision related to preserving the natural environment was compatible with Canon's mission to promote creativity and innovation in the field of photography, which was the reason for his selection for this position. — KUNA



Muhammad Murad

## KFAS publishes encyclopedia for children

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences published a new scientific encyclopedia for children entitled "Planet Earth" that presents in an interesting way everything related to the Earth in terms of terrain and landmarks, with the aim of enhancing the knowledge of children and young people.

The Foundation said in a press statement on Thursday that the encyclopedia is displayed at the 46th Kuwait International Book Fair. Its preparation and translation was supervised by Scientific Progress Publishing, the publishing arm of the Foundation. It was designed attractively with layers overlaid on the pages and large panels to look beyond to take the readers to an unparalleled journey across the planet Earth.

The encyclopedia addresses topics that cover basic information about volcanoes, mountains, icebergs, tectonic plates, types of rocks, rivers, waterfalls and caves. It stated that the encyclopedia also includes topics about deserts, oases, valleys, sand dunes, plateaus, coasts and sea currents. — KUNA

Local

# Zain ranks highly (8.4/10) in Global Child Forum's key rights categories

'The State of Children's Rights and Business 2023'

- Ranked among the top five global telecom companies and 21st across all sectors globally
- As a 'Leader', Zain more than doubled its scores in comparison to the regional average and scored higher than the sector average in key children's rights categories

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa announced the final scores of Global Child Forum's The State of Children's Rights and Business 2023, in which the company was ranked among the top five global telecom companies and 21st across all sectors amongst nearly 3,000 of the largest global companies.

Zain scored higher than the sector average and doubled the ranking of many regional corporates in key children's rights categories. Described as a 'Leader' in the benchmarking rankings, Zain scored 8.4/10 overall against an ICT sector average of 5.8/10 and a regional average of just 3.4/10. The average of all global companies benchmarked stood at 4.9/10.

Founded in 2009 by the Swedish Royal Family, Global Child Forum is a leading forum for children's rights and businesses dedicated to innovative thinking, knowledge-sharing and networking. The results are included within Global Child Forum's "The State of Children's Rights and Business 2023" report conducted in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group. Global Child Forum assessed how companies implement children's rights, and sustainability governance using publicly available data. This global study covered nine sectors and assessed companies against 25 indicators.

As a 'Leader', Zain was described in the report as a company that "has developed and implemented several policies and practices that address your organization's impact on children's rights across

several important areas. Your company has taken concrete steps to move beyond policies and have embedded children's rights into company practice, following-up through monitoring, transparent reporting and programs to create action for children's rights."

Through Zain's community-oriented and child wellbeing initiatives, the company looks to continue to improve and safeguard the livelihoods of the communities it serves and beyond. This notable benchmarking recognition helps assess Zain's progress to-date in children's rights and safety and inspires the company to do even better in the future. Child Online Safety is of great importance for Zain given that over 30 percent of all Internet users are estimated to be children and given the expansion of broadband access, this number is only set to rise over time. Zain is fully committed to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2 calling on ending all forms of violence against children by 2030.

Zain scored perfect marks in several categories in the Benchmarking exercise, including Standards & Guidelines; Board accountability; Materiality assessment; Supplier assessment; Grievance mechanisms; Collaboration; Product safety; Policies & Commitments; and Resource use and Damage to the Environment, cementing its position as a leading proponent of corporate governance, sustainability, children's rights, and sound business practices.

Following the feedback from the report, the next step advised for Zain was to address remaining gaps in its practice, strengthen and maintain performance

where it is already doing well, and embrace its leadership on children's rights issues. Zain firmly believes that children and youth are the cornerstone of any progressive society, and has made uplifting young people through digitization and protecting them from the perils of digital transformation a central theme of the company's activities. As part of its ambition to provide meaningful connectivity, the company will continue to build public awareness to draw attention to highly relevant issues such as child online safety and much more.

**Examples of some Zain focused child awareness campaigns**

With the aim to further raise awareness on children's rights and online safety, Zain expanded its partnership with Child Helpline International to support child helplines across its operational countries. This partnership aims to enhance collaboration between child helplines, Zain and key child protection stakeholders, explore new technologies and software to enhance the helplines, create awareness campaigns, and expand services to include instant messaging and social media.

Zain has been actively working on implementing child sexual abuse material blocking mechanisms across its operations. In 2020, the company assessed the regulations and existing blocking mechanisms in each market. As a result, Zain established a goal for all its markets to have CSAM blocking mechanisms in place. Currently, 5 out of 7 operations fully integrated blocking controls for child sexual abuse materials in a bid to ensure such content is never displayed in Zain's network.



Zain Group launched the second phase of its Internet Monsters campaign in 2022, showcasing the company's commitment to raise further awareness on the risks children face online with lessons being taught through the adaptation of popular fairy tales. The campaign supports the SDGs 16.2 and reinforces Zain's recent joining of the UN's Global Compact initiative, of which 10 principles include upholding human rights and protecting children in the digital and physical realms. The campaign successfully reached 7.2 million individuals across

groupwide communication channels, including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Global Child Forum believes in the power and responsibility of business, working in partnership with all parts of society, to create a prosperous, sustainable and just society for the world's children. A comprehensive view of Zain's Global Child Forum's Corporate Sector and Children's Rights Benchmark 2023 scorecard can be viewed here: Global Child Forum - Scorecard (benchmarking-framework.com).

## Kuwait dispatches 27th planeload of aid for Gazans

KUWAIT: The 27th planeload of relief supplies destined for Gaza flew to the Egyptian Al-Arish airport on Thursday as part of Kuwait's aid air bridge for people of the war-hit enclave. The flight, carrying 40 tons of food, medical supplies and tents, will be followed with other air dispatches in the coming days in line with the State of Kuwait's efforts to assist the brothers in Gaza, said Khaled Al-Zaid, Director of Public Relations and Information at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Al-Zaid has confirmed that the dispatched cargo, as part of the campaign "Relieve Palestine," contains 40 tons of food, medical supplies, 100 tents, 10,000 packages of powder milk, 2,000 blankets, five tons of rice and five tons of medical items. The aid supplies have been dispatched to alleviate the Palestinian brothers' hardship, resulting from the Zionist aggression on Gaza, and demonstrates Kuwait's humanitarian role for aiding the Gazans through the KRCS, Al-Zaid said.

The relief bridge has been launched in response to instructions by the political leadership headed by 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 and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with the participation of the ministries of health, foreign, social affairs in addition to wide-spread grass-root engagement. He also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Defense and Kuwait Air Force for their role at this level. Meanwhile, Palestinian volunteers in Gaza, affiliated to Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), on Thursday distributed wheat to thousands of relocated Palestinians including medical teams and journalists.

Ahmad Abu Diyah, the head of the team, told KUNA that they received 500 large sacks of wheat for distribution to more than 83 relocated families of more than 3,000 individuals in Dair Al-Balah, central Gaza. Quantities of the supplies have already been delivered to houses inhabited by Palestinians relocated from northern Gaza, he said, indicating that such help is quite vital and necessary amid lack of bakeries that could not function without fuel in the strip.

The aid is also given to journalists, medical personnel and workers at hospitals, he added. Each delivered sack weighs 25kg, sufficient for 25 days for a single family. — KUNA



Khaled Al-Zaid



Palestinian volunteers in Gaza affiliated to Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes wheat to relocated Gazans on Thursday.



KUWAIT: The 27th planeload of relief supplies destined for Gaza.



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi visits the KUNA pavilion at the 46th Kuwait International Book Fair on Thursday.

## Kuwait Book Fair: A favorite haunt for writers, readers

KUWAIT: Several publishers and diplomats accredited to the country said on Thursday that the Kuwait International Book Fair has become a focus of attention for publishers, readers and lovers of scientific and cognitive reading due to its distinct and remarkable impact on Arab culture.

They explained in separate statements to KUNA that the 46th edition of the fair is characterized by activities and events in addition to the broad participation of a number of writers and publishing houses from various countries across the world.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait, Dr Saleh Al-Kharusi, said that the Sultanate is keen on participating in the exhibition ever year as the exhibition enriches the cultural and intellectual arena due to the gathering of the most important local, Arab and international publishing institutions. Al-Kharousi added that the Sultanate of Oman seeks through its participation in the current edition to provide a better participation this year than previous years. "Spreading culture is an integral part of diplomatic work," he said.

Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Kuwait Osama Shaltout said that the book fair is one of the most important cultural events that provides access to the latest Arab and Western publications. Shaltout added that the book fair is an opportunity for cultural and intellectual exchange. Egypt has participated in the fair since its inception because of its scientific and cultural value as more than 46 publishing houses are participating in the exhibition with about 40,000 books being displayed. The diplomat at the Cultural Attache at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the country, Dr. Jamil Al-Hamid, said that the Kuwait International Book Fair is considered one of the important and large exhibitions at the Arab level that brings together publishers from various countries.



Dr Saleh Al-Kharusi



Muhammad Rashad

Chairman of the Arab Publishers Union Muhammad Rashad said that Kuwait has had a long history and an important impact on Arab culture since the 1960s, publishing many books, including Al-Marifa magazine and many books from various specializations. Rashad stressed that he is always keen to participate in the Kuwait International Book Fair, pointing out that the reader in Kuwait is aware and educated and is always looking for new works that stimulate the publishing movement.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has organized students' visits to the fairground of Kuwait International Book Fair. The 46th edition of the fair has attracted many book lovers including groups of students whose visits are organized by the ministry as an encouragement for the youth to develop the good habit of reading. — KUNA



School children in large numbers visit Kuwait International Book Fair. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Shadadiya industrial project to push Kuwait's non-oil growth

80% of project work completed, delivery in current fiscal year: Al-Aiban



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Mohammed Al-Aiban poses for a photo with employees at the Shadadiya Industrial Area on Thursday. — KUNA photos



Al-Aiban and Al-Adwani during the inspection tour of the Shadadiya Industrial Area.



## KUFPEC to expand exploration portfolio in Pakistan

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) signed on Thursday memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with companies operating in Pakistan in line with the company's strategic objectives to boost the value of KUFPEC's assets. KUFPEC seeks, through these MoUs, to expand its exploration portfolio in Pakistan via strategic cooperation with prominent companies, the company said in a press release.



Mohammad Al-Haimer

The MoUs have been signed with the Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MPCL), and Prime Pakistan Limited (Prime) which are leading oil companies with high success rates and remarkable technical capabilities in drilling and exploration, it added. KUFPEC Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Al-Haimer was quoted as saying in the statement: "The MoUs are not limited to strengthening strategic partnerships to expand our exploration portfolio in Pakistan, but also provide important opportunities to enhance KUFPEC's assets, independent peer reviews, knowledge exchange, and utilizing the expertise of our global partners."

KUFPEC is an international upstream company engaged in exploration, development and production of crude oil and natural gas outside Kuwait and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Aiban said that 80 percent of the work at Shadadiya Industrial Zone project has been completed and the project is expected to be delivered in the current fiscal year (2023-2024).

Minister Al-Aiban added in a press statement on Thursday after his inspection tour of the Shadadiya Industrial Area to assess the progress of the work and the latest developments of the project that the zone has the provision of an integrated industrial zone with services that would contribute mainly to providing the necessary infrastructure to prepare the business environment in Kuwait.

He explained that this project will help advance industrial development and increase the contribution of non-oil manufacturing industry to the GDP, in addition to providing productive and suitable job opportunities for national employment through the localization of small and medium industries.

Under the law, 10 percent of the industrial zone will be allocated to the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and 10 percent of the industrial zone will be allocated to the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), he said.

Minister Al-Aiban said that the percentage of work on the project exceeded the project schedule, and the infrastructure has been completed from industrial networks, sewage, electricity, fresh water and salt water, in addition to roads and lighting.

Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Mohammed Al-Adwani said in a similar statement that the project includes three main sectors: chemical with 242 vouchers, food 299 vouchers and miscellaneous 495 vouchers, all of which include about 1036 vouchers with different areas ranging from 1,000 square meters to 10,000 square meters.

Most of these services are located in the center of the area or close to the entrances, Adwani said, as these services include a fire station, a medical clinic, a security center, a mosque, administrative offices and a gas station. He explained that the completion rate in the food sector reached 100 percent and work is underway on the rest of the sectors. The project will be handed over after the electricity supply is extended from the ministry of electricity and water at the end of the current fiscal year (2023-2024).

Located in the southwest of Kuwait City, Al-Shadadiya Industrial is the largest industrial city in the country with an area of approximately five square kilometers and includes about 1,036 plots, includ-

ing chemical, food and miscellaneous, and the project will be managed using sustainable development methods during the contract period.

The project aims to achieve all the requirements of economic and industrial growth by providing the basis for the establishment of an advanced industrial zone and providing it with the latest technologies. It provides job opportunities for Kuwaitis and seeks to achieve a qualitative leap in the world of Kuwaiti industry in terms of product and definition internationally and globally, in addition to achieving the desires of industrialists in production expansion operations.

The project contains a technology park with an area of 200,000 square meters and a number of public services, including a fire station, a medical clinic, a security center, a mosque, administrative offices, a gas station and a truck service station. The project also includes 51 internal roads and infrastructure services such as rainwater drainage system, sewage and industrial system, main treatment plant, fresh water system, firefighting system, lighting network, in addition to cosmetic crops and irrigation networks. It also contains a 400 KV main power station, four other 132 KV power stations and 91 11 KV power substations. — KUNA



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ARLINGTON: A family walks past a store advertising a Black Friday sale near Pentagon City Mall in Arlington, Virginia, on November 22, 2023. — AFP

## The dark side of Black Friday shopping

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: It's that time of the year when massive crowds of shoppers eagerly gather at the front doors of stores, enticed by the irresistible sales offered by retailers. Black Friday, the most anticipated shopping event, holds a certain allure for people. While the day seems to bring joy to many shopping enthusiasts, some may not be aware of the negative impact it can have on them.

Neuropsychology reveals that events like Black Friday deceive us by inducing a temporary positive effect on our brain chemistry. This occurs as it heightens our excitement, automatically elevating our pleasure dopamine levels when we make a purchase we believe is offered at an exceptional deal.

Shaimaa Morssi, a legal secretary, shared her personal shopping experience, affirming this phenomenon. She mentioned to Kuwait Times that shopping on Black Friday initially makes her feel intensely excited, but later, she finds herself questioning why she bought a seemingly useless product.

Morssi's case is not unique, as statistics show that after the initial euphoria of a new purchase fades away, many shoppers realize that Black Friday has led them to make impulsive buying decisions. They end up purchasing products they didn't need in the first place and may even experience regret or remorse later.

Dr Gareth Harvey, a consumer psychologist studying how retailers influence customers, explained this phenomenon to BBC News, stating that

Black Friday deals primarily focus on grabbing attention with prominent signs and large discount percentages. "They want you to buy into the product and think it's worth the money. On Black Friday or during sales, the price or big discount is what you see first. But you're not concentrating on the product and whether it is what you want," he said.

Nadine Abdullah, an engineer, shared her experience. "Sometimes, Black Friday forces me to buy products that I don't usually need at the moment, but I just buy it out of the fear of needing it later and not being able to acquire it when it returns to its original price," she said. "Sometimes it even tempts me to buy products that I already have."

What Abdullah described is often part of retailers' marketing strategies, where they induce anxiety in consumers by insisting that a deal is only valid on a specific day and during a very brief period. This creates a sense of urgency for consumers, enticing them to make a purchase decision out of the fear of missing out.

However, not all consumers easily fall into this trap. Nour Elkhatib shared her approach with Kuwait Times. Before Black Friday, she assesses her essential wardrobe or household needs, lists them on paper, and searches for stores selling these products at the best prices. This is how she controls her purchasing behavior and avoids being pressured into buying unnecessary items, and she recommends others do the same.

It's advisable for consumers to reflect on their inner motives before making a purchase by asking themselves whether it's a desire for the item itself, the thrill of buying it, or a fear of missing out. Dr Melissa Norberg, an associate professor in psychology at Macquarie University with expertise in hoarding, panic buying and identifying online shopping problems, emphasized the importance of stopping and thinking before making a purchase, according to The Guardian newspaper.



2 dead in blast at US-Canada border

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KHAN YUNIS: Injured Palestinians rest near relatives in a classroom at the Ras Al-Naoura school in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, after being transferred from the Indonesian Hospital in the north, on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

# Displaced Palestinians in Gaza say they just want to go home

## Zionist entity has made it clear hostilities would resume when truce ends

**KHAN YUNIS:** Why a truce if they can't go home? At Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, war-weary displaced Palestinians remain skeptical about the Zionist-Hamas deal to exchange hostages for prisoners. Maysara Assabagh is just one of 1.7 million people from the territory's 2.4 million population forced from his home in northern Gaza by Zionist bombardment. They fled straight into the jaws of an appalling humanitarian crisis in the south.

"What truce are they talking about?" he asked on the 47th day of the Zionist bombardment of the besieged Gaza strip, demanding the displaced be allowed to go back to the north. Completely penniless, he managed to find refuge at the Nasser

hospital in Khan Yunis which now shelters some 35,000 displaced people. "We don't need a truce just so aid can come in. We want to go home," Assabagh insisted. "This entire war is one big injustice."

Early on Wednesday, the Zionist entity and Hamas said a deal had been reached to free 50 hostages held in Gaza for 150 Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails during a four-day truce. It was the first sign of respite since the escalation began on October 7. But for 55-year-old Yasser al-Huwaiti, the truce is "dust in our eyes — the war will start again afterwards."

Huwaiti used to live in Gaza City in the north, but now his house is a tent at the Nasser hospital. "Today we're suffering because of the war, and tomorrow it

will be because of our destroyed homes. Where will we live? How will we rebuild?"

Food and water are in short supply. Near the hospital, displaced people search for what they can find among market stalls. The truce will provide barely enough time "to recover our martyrs from the streets and the ruins. We don't want a truce so aid can come in. We want a full ceasefire and to go home," Huwaiti said.

**'Where will we live?'**

Salma Qassem, 55, is from Beit Hanun in the north of the densely populated territory, and she too just wants to go home. "To me the only thing that matters is when we can return to our homes," she said. "But even if we do go back, where will we

live? They've destroyed our homes. Our children are sick because of the cold and not enough food, water and medicine," Qassem said. "Sickness is increasing because of the waste everywhere and not enough clean water."

Qatar, which helped mediate the Hamas-Zionist deal, said the humanitarian pause would "be announced within the next 24 hours and last for four days, subject to extension". The Gulf emirate said the accord would include "the entry of a larger number of humanitarian convoys and relief aid, including fuel designated for humanitarian needs".

The Zionist entity has made it clear hostilities would resume when the truce is over. Despite the temporary nature

of the truce and fears the humanitarian crisis will get even worse, some people like 44-year-old Halas remain hopeful. For him, "it is good news — its acceptance by (the Zionist entity) is a victory for our people", he said. Halas believes the truce "will be extended because (the Zionist entity) met the conditions of the resistance. They will accept our return to Gaza, and we will rebuild our homes just as we did in previous wars."

The Zionist entity has nearly relentlessly bombed Gaza after a Hamas attack which left 1,200 people dead and 240 held captive. The Zionist air and ground military campaign has killed more than 14,000 people, including more than 5,800 children. — AFP



TEL AVIV: A man walks past portraits of Zionist hostages posted on a wall in Tel Aviv on Nov 21, 2023. — AFP

## Qatar burnishes negotiator role with Zionist-Hamas deal

**PARIS:** The emirate of Qatar has further boosted its status as a specialist power in resolving delicate hostage situations by using its influence to help secure the release of hostages by Palestinian militant group Hamas. Analysts say Qatar has honed a careful balancing act, allowing it to marry warm relations with Western powers while keeping ties with radical groups and states regarded as pariahs even by close allies.

Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari told AFP the breakthrough ceasefire deal on Wednesday morning had underlined the country's singular diplomatic position. "This is what we can do that nobody else can do and this is us using all of our abilities," he said. "We've geared the whole country towards this. If it doesn't work, all hell will break loose," he added.

The West is increasingly using the influence of the small but gas-rich Gulf Arab state ruled by Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in these situations, with the role of Qatar also crucial to the release in September of five Americans held by Iran.

While Egypt has traditionally in recent years served as the main mediator between the Zionist entity and Palestinian groups, and Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also made no secret of its desire to be involved, the focus was on Qatar

helping to return hostages safely. Behind the scenes, Qatar was triangulating between the Zionist entity and Hamas and Qatari ambassadors had met with the families of hostages around the world, Ansari said.

**Pitfalls**

"They know that there are children, there are women, there are families that are suffering every day, from the lack of information from the fact that they don't know what is happening with their family members right now. So, it's a renewed sense of duty on us," he said. Qatar has hosted Hamas's political office for more than 10 years but is also home to the largest US military base in the region.

"Qatar has an advantage that the other candidates for negotiation do not have: it has housed the political leadership of Hamas" for the last decade, said Hasni Abidi, director of the Geneva-based Center for Studies and Research on the Arab World and the Mediterranean.

That is the only entity authorized to negotiate on behalf of Hamas and the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamist movement, Abidi added. Qatari money has helped Hamas pay the salaries of its civil servants, while the current emir's father and predecessor Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani even visited Gaza in 2012.

But the position is not without potential pitfalls for the Gulf state. Two weeks into the conflict in Gaza, the US cautioned its ally that there could be "no more business as usual with Hamas". Last month, Qatar told the U.S. it was open to reconsidering the presence of Hamas in Qatar once the crisis is resolved. — AFP

## Aid-truck drivers hope truce ends, wait to enter Gaza

**RAFAH:** A seemingly endless row of white trucks lines the road through the desert in northern Egypt, their drivers desperate for the go-ahead to move badly needed aid into besieged Gaza. After tedious days marked by idle chitchat and dreary diets of beans and instant coffee, the men, all Egyptians, took some comfort in news that more fuel and other essentials may soon be allowed in as part of a four-day truce that could begin as soon as Friday.

But it was far from clear when they might actually move, and as they faced still more mindless waiting — separated from their families and without beds and showers — some showed clear signs of irritation and fatigue. "Before the war we used to work for just two or three days and then take a break. Today we have been for seven days in the same place without moving," said 48-year-old Alaa Moustafa, shuffling around in sandals as he mashed beans into yet another stew.

"You want me to speak about my daily life?" asked another driver who insisted on anonymity, mindful of Egyptian security forces who maintain a

heavy presence near the border with Gaza. "It's in the street — that's how we are living now. Sleeping, waking up, eating in the same place without taking a shower."

### 'See the destruction'

Amid widespread displacement, blackouts, rising malnutrition and worsening sanitation, only around 1,400 truckloads of humanitarian supplies entered Gaza via Egypt for the month ending Tuesday, according to the United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA. That was down from a pre-war monthly average of 10,000 truckloads of commercial and humanitarian commodities, OCHA said.

The Egyptian drivers told AFP they were proud to be in a position to help Palestinians, but said they were wary of what they might find if and when they do reach Gaza. "I will enter and see the whole destruction. We will see what we're watching on television — there's no more Gaza Strip," said 43-year-old Youssef Abulaziz.

As the drivers waited again in vain on Wednesday for approval to proceed, Fatima Achour, a Palestinian lawyer in her forties, approached the Rafah crossing from the Gaza side — one of the few Gazans allowed to leave because she has a foreign passport. Weighed down by three bags, she burst into tears when she reached Egypt, saying "This war must stop" over and over. — AFP



KHAN YUNIS: A boy looks at the rubble of a house after a Zionist strike in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

## International

# WHO asks China for data on respiratory illness spike

## 'Influenza-like illness', clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia reported in northern China

BEIJING: The World Health Organization has asked China for more data on respiratory illnesses spreading in the north of the country, but Beijing offered no public comment on Thursday. Northern China has reported an increase in "influenza-like illness" since mid-October when compared to the same period in the previous three years, the WHO said. "WHO has made an official request to China for detailed information on an increase in respiratory illnesses and reported clusters of pneumonia in children," the UN health body said in a statement on Wednesday.

China's National Health Commission told reporters last week that the respiratory illness spike was due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the circulation of known pathogens, namely influenza and common bacterial infections that affect children, including mycoplasma pneumoniae.

The Chinese capital of Beijing, located in the north of the country, is currently experiencing a cold snap, with temperatures expected to plummet to well below zero by Friday, state media said. The city has "entered a high incidence season of respiratory infectious diseases", Wang Quanyi, deputy director and chief epidemiological expert at the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told state media. Beijing "is currently showing a trend of multiple pathogens coexisting", he added.

The WHO gave no indication of China's response to the request for more information. China's National Health Commission did not respond to a request for comment by AFP on Thursday. And Beijing's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning referred journalists to "the competent Chinese authorities".

### 'Due to the season'

At the children's hospital of Beijing's Capital Institute of Pediatrics on Thursday, AFP journalists saw crowds of parents and children dressed in winter clothes. A parent surnamed Zhang accompanied her coughing nine-year-old son and said he had fallen ill with mycoplasma pneumoniae — a pathogen that can cause sore throats, fatigue and fever. "There are really a lot of children who have caught it recently," she said. "Of course, that worries me!"

Li Meiling, 42, had brought her eight-year-old daughter, who she said was suffering from the same type of pneumonia. "It's true that a lot of children her age are ill with this at the moment," she told AFP. But she was "not particularly worried" about the WHO announcement, she added. "It's winter, so it's normal that there are more cases of respiratory illnesses. It's due to the season."

On November 21, media and public disease surveillance system ProMED reported clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children in northern China. The WHO said it was unclear if ProMED's report was related to the authorities' press conference and that it was seeking clarification.

The agency has also "requested additional information on recent trends in the circulation of known pathogens, including influenza, SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that gives rise to COVID-19), RSV affecting infants and Mycoplasma pneumoniae, as well as on the degree of overcrowding in the health system", the statement added. It urged people to take preventative measures, including getting vaccinated, keeping distance from sick people and wearing masks.



BEIJING: Children and their parents wait at an outpatient area at a children hospital on Nov 23, 2023. — AFP

### Calls for transparency

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO repeatedly criticized Chinese authorities for their lack of transparency and cooperation. More than three years after cases were first detected in Wuhan, heated debate still rages around the origins of COVID-19. Scientists are divided between two main theories of the cause: an escape from a laboratory in the city where such viruses were being studied and an intermediate animal that infected people at a local market. Earlier this year,

WHO experts said they were sure that Beijing had far more data that could shed light on the origins of COVID and called it a moral imperative for the information to be shared.

A team of specialists led by the WHO and accompanied by Chinese colleagues investigated China in early 2021, but there has not been a team able to return since and WHO officials have repeatedly asked for additional data. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has stressed that getting to the bottom of the mystery could help avert future pandemics. — AFP

## AI in Mozambique jails spawns new hope in TB fight

MAPUTO, Mozambique: A program using artificial intelligence to test inmates in a high security Mozambican jail for tuberculosis (TB) has spawned hope that the new tech can help eradicate the disease. Teeming prisons are a hotbed of TB, the world's second deadliest communicable disease after COVID, according to the World Health Organization.

Mozambique, a country of 32 million people, recorded about 120,000 infections last year. Caused by a bacterium that most often affects the lungs, it infected more than 10 million people in 2022 and killed 1.3 million, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Almost one in four infections last year occurred in Africa. In the sprawling courtyard of the maximum-security jail in the Mozambican capital Maputo, an inmate in an orange T-shirt stood before a tripod with a wide white tablet.

Behind him, a doctor scoured a two-piece portable X-ray machine connected to an AI program that has been hailed as a breakthrough in the fight against tuberculosis. "It processes it in real time, we have the results in less than five minutes," the doctor said. The image popped on the computer of a technician sitting at a table outside a medical tent a few meters away, along with a diagnosis. "Radiological



MAPUTO: Inmates diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB) gather at an isolated cell in the maximum security prison of Maputo on Nov 6, 2023. — AFP photos

signs suggestive of tuberculosis — negative," the message said.

The program is part of a large test run of a technology to scan all inmates at three prisons in Maputo. It is being conducted by a local non-profit organization supported by the Stop TB Partnership, a UN-backed entity. Early diagnosis is key to save lives and tackle the spread of the disease.

While a chronic cough is a hallmark of infection, people can also carry TB without showing symptoms. Prisons are a perfect breeding ground due to cramped cells and airborne transmission. Traditional spit, skin or blood tests for TB involve visits to a lab

and the results can take up to three days. The quickest time for reliable results is 24 hours.

The combination of AI and portable X-ray machines is faster and eliminates the need for visits to clinics and radiologists, who can be scarce in poor rural areas, said Stop TB's deputy head Suvanand Sahu. "This is a great leap in technology," he said.

At the Maputo Provincial Penitentiary, prisoners testing positive are placed in isolation, locked in a quarantine room behind a rusty metal door. Inside, about a dozen inmates wearing face masks sit on mattresses thrown on the ground. Clothing, blankets and other belongings hang from a line strung be-

tween two discolored blue pillars. Serious cases are taken to a medical ward.

Mozambique's jails were about 50 percent over capacity in 2022, according to the UN. "It's not easy to see your friends playing and walking there but you have to accept that I am sick," Kennet Fortune, an inmate who has spent 10 years behind bars for drug-related offences, said pointing at the trees in the prison yard. He is currently undergoing treatment and the process can take months. "When the time comes, I'll be out," he said. A WHO report this month found that global deaths from tuberculosis dipped in 2022, showing progress towards eradicating the disease. — AFP



A medical staff member performs an X-ray on an inmate at the general prison in Maputo.

## Kuwait welcomes Gaza pause...

Continued from Page 1

The Zionist entity's national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi had earlier indicated the phased release of at least 50 captives in return for 150 Palestinian prisoners would still go ahead, but not before Friday. On both sides it would free mostly women and people aged 18 and under. The Palestinians are to be freed from three Zionist jails. Three Americans are among those earmarked to be freed.

Governments around the world have welcomed the deal, with some expressing hope it will lead to a lasting end to the war. "This cannot be just a pause before the massacre starts all over again," Riyadh Mansour, Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations, told the Security Council. Zionist officials, however, say the truce will be only temporary. "We are not ending the war. We will continue until we are victorious," the Zionist entity's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Herzl Halevi, told troops he visited in Gaza, according to the army. The release deal came after weeks of talks involving the Zionist entity, Palestinian groups, Qatar, Egypt and the United States. The Zionist entity's aerial bombardment continued overnight on targets in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, sending red and yellow fireballs and immense columns of black smoke into the air. Homes shook several kilometers away in Rafah, AFP journalists said. "I think there are still about 20 people under the rubble," said one Palestinian looking for survivors under a destroyed building east of Khan Yunis.

Thousands of children have been killed in Gaza, "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child", said Catherine Russell, executive director of the UN children's fund,

UNICEF. Youngsters are among the estimated 1.7 million Gazans who, according to the UN, have had to flee their homes during the fighting.

Hospital patients have also been forced to move, the latest being 190 wounded and sick, along with their companions and medical teams, from Al-Shifa hospital to other hospitals in southern Gaza on Wednesday, the Palestinian Red Crescent said. The evacuation took nearly 20 hours due to delays at the checkpoint separating northern and southern Gaza, it said on X, formerly Twitter, adding that three paramedics had been detained, two of whom were subsequently released. Zionist forces also arrested Al-Shifa's director Mohammad Abu Salmiya, another doctor and two nurses, a doctor told AFP on Thursday. In a statement, Hamas said it "strongly denounces" the arrest of Salmiya and his colleagues, calling on the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international bodies to work towards their "immediate release".

Instructions to evacuate the hospital were issued on Saturday, prompting the exodus of hundreds of patients and displaced, with Salmiya telling AFP last week that he had received the evacuation order from Zionist forces. But the Zionist army said the evacuations were carried out at the "request" of Salmiya. The military released an audio recording presented as a conversation between Salmiya and a senior Zionist officer in which the two men blame each other for the evacuation. In the Red Sea, the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner "shot down multiple one-way attack drones launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen", United States Central Command said, referring to the Iran-backed rebel group. Displaced Gazans remained skeptical about the Zionist-Hamas deal. Fatima Achour, a Palestinian lawyer in her 40s, burst into tears when she reached Egypt through the Rafah border crossing, becoming one of the few Gazans allowed to leave because she has a foreign passport. — Agencies

## Iranian FM meets Hezb chief, warns...

Continued from Page 1

Amir-Abdollahian said Iran saw two options. "First, a humanitarian ceasefire that turns into a permanent ceasefire. The second way is to threaten the Palestinian people, then the Palestinian people will decide for themselves," he said, adding that Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin "Netanyahu cannot fulfil his dream of destroying Hamas". "We support whatever decision Hamas makes," he added in the interview, according to Fars.

In his second visit to Lebanon since the Zionist-Hamas war started, Iran's top diplomat met senior Lebanese and Palestinian officials. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati emphasized the need for a total ceasefire and to "stop the (Zionist) aggression on Gaza", a statement from his office said after his meeting with Amir-Abdollahian. Mikati also urged "influential countries to pressure (the Zionist entity) to stop its attacks on south Lebanon, and stop its targeting of civilians and journalists in particular".

The Iranian diplomat also met with Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, discussing the war and "strengthening the stability and security of the region". Iran's foreign ministry said. He also met with the secretary general of the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad Ziyad Al-Nakhalah, and senior Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya. They discussed "the impending ceasefire process",

according to the Iranian ministry.

Earlier Wednesday, Hezbollah said its chief Nasrallah had met with Hamas' Hayya and Osama Hamdan, another senior official from the Palestinian group, to discuss "coordination", according to a statement. Hamas' armed wing meanwhile said that a senior leader in its military wing in Lebanon, Khalil Al-Kharraz, had been killed in south Lebanon on Tuesday. In a separate statement, Hamas said two Lebanese citizens and two Turkish nationals were also killed Tuesday in south Lebanon.

Hezbollah said on Thursday morning that it fired 48 Katyusha rockets at a military base at Ein Zeitim, near the town of Safed in the Zionist entity, about 10 km from the border. It said it also carried out at least 10 other attacks on Zionist positions near the frontier, and claimed to have caused casualties. The Zionist army shelled several locations in southern Lebanon in response, said Lebanon's National News Agency.

The violence between the Zionist entity and Hezbollah has claimed at least 108 lives in Lebanon, most of them Hezbollah fighters, but also at least 14 civilians, including three journalists, according to an AFP count. Six Zionist soldiers and three civilians have been killed on the Zionist side, according to the authorities.

The Zionist entity and Hamas on Wednesday agreed a four-day truce and a hostage and prisoner swap which was now expected to start by Friday at the earliest. In Tehran, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi argued that the Zionist entity had failed to reach its objectives in the war and that "the Palestinian people and resistance won a great victory", the official IRNA news agency reported. — Agencies

## Islamophobe Wilders sweeps...

Continued from Page 1

The unexpected landslide win prompted immediate congratulations from fellow far-right leaders in France and Hungary but will likely raise fears in Brussels — Wilders is anti-EU and wants a vote on a "Nexit" to leave the bloc. Although he softened his anti-Islam rhetoric during the campaign, the PVV program pledges a ban on the Holy Quran, mosques and Islamic headscarves and Muslim community leaders in the Netherlands were quick to voice concern. "I woke up this morning with an unpleasant feeling. Ac-

tually also in shock," Habib El-Kaddouri from the SMN association of Moroccan Dutch, told AFP. "Some people are scared, others uncertain about their future, about what the result means for their citizenship or place in Dutch society," he added. Lizette Keyzer, a 60-year-old business manager from Enschede in the east of the Netherlands, said she had "heart palpitations" when the exit poll results came out. The country "is going in a right-wing direction. We hope that this does not completely become the case", added Keyzer.

However, Burak Cen, a 40-year-old taxi driver, said he didn't vote but would have voted for Wilders. "I think he deserves a chance," he told AFP. "I honestly think he's just trying to drum up votes with his propaganda about mosques and Muslims. But otherwise what he says about the Dutch and poverty is right," added Cen.

Addressing cheering supporters in The Hague after exit polls, Wilders doubled down on his anti-immigrant rhetoric, saying the Dutch had voted to stem the "tsunami" of asylum-seekers. He later told reporters he wanted to be "prime minister for all Dutch" and would "work hard with other parties" to form a coalition. But it is not clear how he can scrape together the 76 seats he needs for a majority in the 150-seat parliament.

Former European Commissioner Frans Timmermans, whose Green/Labour bloc came in second, immediately ruled out cooperation, saying it was now their job to "defend democracy" in the country. Anti-corruption champion Pieter Omtzigt, whose New Social Contract party scored 20 seats, seems certain to play a role and indicated he was "available" for talks, admitting they wouldn't be easy. — AFP



SCHEVENINGEN, Netherlands: PVV leader Geert Wilders reacts to the results of the House of Representatives elections on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

## International

# 2 dead in blast at US-Canada border

## No sign of terrorism in vehicle explosion; cause under investigation

NIAGARA FALLS: A car erupted into a fireball at a US-Canada checkpoint near Niagara Falls on Wednesday, killing the two occupants, triggering border closures and sparking a massive security alert on the eve of a major holiday. The regional FBI field office concluded the blast, which occurred around 400 miles (640 kilometers) northwest of New York City, was not linked to terrorism.

Witnesses described seeing a car traveling at high speed before it crashed into a checkpoint barrier and exploded into flames. The blast happened at the major Rainbow Bridge crossing near Niagara Falls with nothing left of the vehicle which was incinerated except for the engine, according to New York Governor Kathy Hochul.

Confirming the two fatalities, she suggested the vehicle may have been from western New York state. The victims' identities have not yet been made public. Authorities on both sides of the border activated emergency responses and images showed access roads to the crossing swarming with emergency service workers and vehicles. The White House said President Joe Biden had been briefed and was closely following developments. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told parliament "this is obviously a very serious situation."

### 'He was flying'

"We've seen this car coming down towards the border and he was flying — over 100 miles an hour," Mike Guenther, a Canadian visiting the United States,

told CBS News. The car then swerved and "hit the fence, went flying up into the air," he said. "He went up into the air and we just seen the fireball and that's all we could see. It was just covered in smoke everywhere." The incident came on the eve of the Thanksgiving holiday, one of the busiest US travel days when millions of Americans take to the roads and skies. Rainbow Bridge — among the busiest crossings between Canada and the United States — has 16 vehicle lanes and is normally open around the clock, according to US Customs and Border Protection.

Hochul said that debris was spread across as many as 14 of the lanes following the incident. Three other nearby border crossings had been closed in the aftermath of the incident, but had since reopened, US Customs and Border Protection said.

On the US side, Niagara Falls State Park, which attracts millions of visitors every year, was closed until further notice according to the park service. Canada's Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc said "any time ... (infrastructure like) a border crossing sees this kind of violent circumstance, it's a source of concern for" US and Canadian authorities.

### 'No terrorism nexus'

Trudeau's office said he had been briefed and was in contact with US law enforcement. The regional FBI field office located in the city of Buffalo, New York said a search had revealed "no explosive materials, and no terrorism nexus was identified." It added that the matter had been turned over to local



NIAGARA FALLS: Vehicles block the Rainbow Bridge border crossing into the US in Niagara Falls, Ontario, after a car exploded at a US-Canada checkpoint on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

police as a traffic investigation. Multiple witnesses reported hearing a loud explosion and seeing a large cloud of smoke near the inspection station.

Canadian Chorkor Millionaire was accompanying friends back across the border into his home country when they heard a loud boom. There was a vehicle "caught up in flames, thick smoke all of the

lives," he said, urging citizens to "go arm yourself".

Ben-Gvir had sought to fast-track the once-lengthy licensing process before the Oct 7 attacks, which killed 1,200 people and sparked a military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which killed more than 13,000 Palestinians.

Since the attacks, the criteria has been broadened to make more Zionists eligible for permits and the process further expedited with applicants now required to undergo a phone interview instead of appearing in-person before licensing authorities. "I never saw a reason to have a weapon but after Oct 7 we said: 'Okay, we need a gun in the house,'" a lawyer in the central city of Modiin, who has applied for permits along with his wife.

The attack prompted his neighbors to invest in security upgrades amid heightened fears of large-scale attacks. His neighbor, he said, has not only purchased a gun but also built a secret bomb shelter, its entrance hidden behind a bookshelf, "just like the movies".

### State should provide security

There is a visible uptick in people publicly carrying firearms in Jerusalem and other cities — pushing prams or walking into cafes with assault rifles dangling over their shoulders, or with handguns in holsters on their hips. Many are military reservists but they also include civilians who are part of volunteer security squads set up and armed by the government since the hostilities erupted. Campaign groups such as Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT) say the proliferation of firearms in the hands of civilians could lead the entity down the same path as the United States, which is grappling with spiking gun violence and mass shootings. "We need to push the state to provide security instead of delegating it to citizens," a GFKT staff member told AFP, adding the relaxed norms do not weed out people with a history of domestic violence or substance abuse. "Guns do not make us safer," she added, requesting her name be withheld to prevent online harassment. Back in Riki Tal's home in the east Jerusalem settlement neighborhood of Armon Hanetziv, her husband sported an M-16 assault rifle that appeared incongruously large in their tiny living room. While Tal recently obtained a provisional license that allows her to get the mandatory training for a permanent one, her husband, a data engineer and reservist, got the rifle from the government after volunteering for a local security squad.—AFP



AVDIIVKA: Ukrainian tanks ride on a road outside Avdiivka, Donetsk region, on Nov 13, 2023. — AFP

## Russia throwing 'waves' of men in battle for key city

AVDIIVKA, Ukraine: Russia was throwing "waves" of soldiers towards the embattled Ukrainian city of Avdiivka, suffering massive losses in their attempt to capture strategically important territory on the eastern front lines, Ukrainian soldiers say.

Sitting in an indent — surrounded on almost three sides by Russian forces — Avdiivka has become a symbol of a grinding war in which neither side has made a decisive breakthrough in more than a year. But despite having suffered steady losses in troops and equipment, Russia was showing no signs of abandoning its attempt to capture the former coal hub in Ukraine's industrial east. "The fields are just littered with corpses," Oleksandr, a deputy of a Ukrainian battalion in the 47th mechanized brigade, told AFP. "They are trying to exhaust our lines with constant waves of attacks," he said, without providing his full name for security reasons.

The city has been destroyed by relentless Russian artillery and aerial bombardments in some of the most intense fighting of the 21-month war. But around 1,500 of the 30,000 pre-war residents have remained — mainly pensioners living in their basements and relying on special food convoys to bring in supplies.

The city briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists in 2014, and Ukraine has spent the last nine years building defenses and trenches to protect the city. Fortifications to the south lie just five kilometers (three miles) north of Donetsk, the Russian-controlled capital of one of four regions Moscow claimed to have annexed from Ukraine.

### 'Zombies'

Throwing huge numbers of soldiers towards the city marks a change in Russia's tactics in the battle for Avdiivka. In October, Moscow launched a massive attack to try to encircle Avdiivka with hundreds of armored vehicles. "Columns of tanks and armored personnel carriers were advancing," said a 29-year old drone operator who gave his call-sign as "Trauma". "But they fell into minefields, were hit by drones and anti-tank missiles."

A Western official said the Russian army lost more than 200 armored vehicles in that failed attack. Now Moscow has "switched to infantry tactics," said Oleksandr — "advancing solely at the expense of human resources." Russian soldiers typically advance at night, in groups of five to seven fighters, Trauma told AFP. "Then early in the morning, they launch their attack." Ukraine responds with a barrage of heavy weaponry — artillery, mortars, grenades, drones and cannons fired from US-supplied Bradley Fighting Vehicles. "Some die, others keep on coming. It's like a zombie movie," Trauma added.

In throwing hundreds of men at the city, Russia's latest assault on Avdiivka resembles its campaign for Bakhmut earlier this year. Some 50 kilometers to the north, that city was eventually captured by Russia in perhaps the bloodiest single battle of the war so far.

At Bakhmut, Russia deployed tens of thousands of men — mainly convicts recruited from prisons by Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group — in "storm brigades" as it tried to overrun Ukrainian positions. Prigozhin regularly described the city as a "meat grinder," and after its capture said Russia's losses exceeded 20,000. A similar story is now playing out in Avdiivka, Ukrainian soldiers say. The Russians "see many corpses, but they don't give up," Oleksandr told AFP.—AFP

## Zionist civilians arm up stoking fears of gun violence uptick

JERUSALEM: Declaring her preference for "something light and comfortable", a Zionist mother-of-four browsed through a collection of pistols in a Jerusalem gun store, which appeared to be experiencing a business boom in wartime. Applications for gun permits have soared across the Zionist entity since October 7, when Hamas attacked communities and army bases south of the entity, with many civilians having to defend themselves while waiting for the army to respond.

The worst-ever attack against the country has shattered any sense of security Zionists had, and civilians have rushed to arm themselves against future threats as the most right-wing government in the entity's history loosens gun licensing norms. "Every time my children play in the park I think 'what will I do if someone comes to attack us?'" Riki Tal, 31, told AFP, picking up an unloaded pistol from the collection at the counter. "I want something light and comfortable in my hand," the school teacher said, placing her finger on the trigger, "for self-protection". The basement store forbade photography and declined interview requests but the scrum at the counter was testament to the surging interest in weapons among ordinary civilians. A mother-daughter pair counted crisp bank notes to pay for a Glock and a man wearing a Jewish kippah yanked up his shirt to feel a Smith & Wesson tucked into his jeans.

A shelf behind the saleswoman at the counter was lined with souvenirs such as replica bullets and a grenade next to a bevy of figurines with pictures of the Zionist entity's dead enemies: Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. One was missing, Tal joked: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

### 'Gun in the house'

More than 236,000 Zionists have applied for gun permits since the current escalation, the same as all the preceding 20 years combined, firebrand National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said last week. "Guns save



DEMOSO: Children attend a class in a temporary shelter at a camp for internally displaced people in Myanmar's Kayah state. — AFP photos

## Myanmar's displaced communities pray, teach amid strikes

DEMOSO, Myanmar: A woman rings a bell outside a makeshift church of wood and tarpaulin, calling the faithful to worship and a respite from war in eastern Myanmar's Kayah state. Thousands of young people fled from Myanmar's cities to Kayah's rugged hills and jungle as the army launched a crackdown on pro-democracy protests following its 2021 coup.

Many volunteered for military training at hidden camps run by "People's Defense Force" groups, and have since fought the junta across the Christian-majority state. The junta has battered Kayah with artillery and air strikes from its Russian and Chinese-built jets, and more than 100,000 people are now displaced in the state, according to the United Nations.

A dirt path in Demoso township runs to one of the many new camps that have sprung up, where inhabitants pray, teach and eat under threat from the skies. Mar Thi Yar, 45, says he is proud of the local church, with its roof of green tarpaulin and makeshift altar decorated with tinsel that inhabitants built last summer. "It shows our togetherness," he told AFP last

month. "We only have God to rely on in our lives." Every evening the church is busy, he added.

At another camp, Daw Yit, 27, teaches at the school she helped found last December to serve 72 displaced students. Constantly listening for the sounds of jets and shells makes it hard to teach as she would like, she said. "There is no mental security for us and we can't teach well," she told AFP. "While we are teaching we have to be ready to run and hide if the jet fighters come."

Near the school, a network of trenches dug in the reddish earth provides rudimentary shelter from the military air and artillery strikes that are an ever-present threat. "My son jumps every time he hears a loud noise," Daw Yit said. "Even a one-year-old kid knows how to react — she puts her hands over her ears whenever she hears 'jet fighters are coming'."

Amnesty International said last year that the junta was likely using air strikes as "collective punishment" against civilians supporting anti-coup fighters in hotspots like Kayah. "There are no safe places nearby for all the people in the camp," said Aung Khet, a member of the committee that runs the camp where he has lived since May 2022. "Usually if there is an air strike, we run into the forest to hide." Residents also build their shelters far apart from one another, he said. "If there is an attack by the military we hope it won't hit everybody and there will be fewer casualties."

sudden," he told AFP, adding: "Everybody was terrified." New York City Mayor Eric Adams said that officers of the city's police department, the country's largest, had deployed to the border crossing to assist the investigation. Dramatic videos showed thick plumes of black smoke rising from a conflagration at the crossing. — AFP

## Washington warns India over plot to kill Sikh activist

NANTUCKET: The United States is treating an alleged plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on American soil with "utmost seriousness" and has raised the issue with New Delhi, the White House said Wednesday. The Financial Times reported that same day the US authorities had thwarted a conspiracy to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US and Canadian citizen.

The row comes two months after neighboring Canada publicly linked Indian intelligence to the killing of another Sikh separatist. "We are treating this issue with utmost seriousness, and it has been raised by the US government with the Indian government, including at the senior-most levels," US National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement. "Indian counterparts expressed surprise and concern. They stated that activity of this nature was not their policy."

Watson said the Indian government was believed to be "further investigating this issue and will have more to say about it in the coming days. We have conveyed our expectation that anyone deemed responsible should be held accountable."

Pannun is general counsel for Sikhs for Justice, a US-based group that is part of a movement calling for an independent Sikh state called Khalistan. US President Joe Biden had raised the issue with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 summit in New Delhi in September, the Financial Times reported. Canada and India had a major diplomatic row after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in September linked New Delhi to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June. New Delhi called the Canadian allegations "absurd." — AFP



Children pray with their parents in a temporary church at a camp for internally displaced people in Myanmar's Kayah state.

### 'Good citizens'

Inflation and a battered economy, meanwhile, are taxing relief groups' resources. "Last year, 300,000 kyat (\$145) was enough to feed 150 people with rice and three meat curries," Yinn Yinn of the Karenni Support Team told AFP. "But now that money is only enough for rice and one meat curry for 60 people. Even if there is one meat curry, we have to add potatoes to bulk it out. The prices have doubled since last year." "Most families can't afford" to rebuild their houses, Aung Khet said.

And he says even if people could, many would not do so until the military has been defeated. Fighting has flared in Kayah in recent days, with anti-coup fighters spurred on by an offensive launched by an alliance of ethnic minority groups hundreds of kilometers away in northern Shan state.

Analysts say that offensive has put the junta on the back foot. In Kayah state, the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) is battling the junta for control of state capital Loikaw, and earlier this month said it had shot down a military jet. The junta said the plane had crashed as a result of engine failure. As the fighting rages, Daw Yit keeps teaching and trusting in her faith. "We teach children about the Bible and worship. It's the way we cure their trauma ... I think children have got many traumas during this war," she said. "We are taking care of them to be good citizens and I wish they will become leaders who can rule our country well." — AFP

## Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2023

## Fossil fuels in the crosshairs at pivotal COP28 talks next week

Leaders face a reckoning over humanity's failure to curb emissions, fossil fuels

**PARIS:** World leaders will face a reckoning over humanity's failure to curb climate-heating emissions and polluting fossil fuels when they meet for UN climate talks next week, as the planet swelters in likely the hottest year in human history.

Pope Francis, King Charles III, political leaders, activists and lobbyists will be among the more than 70,000 visitors expected for the COP28 meeting in oil-rich United Arab Emirates, making it the largest UN climate change conference ever held. Negotiators will grapple with a host of flashpoint issues, including the future of oil, gas and coal, as well as financial solidarity between rich polluters and poorer nations most vulnerable to accelerating climate impacts. But the central focus will be a damning stocktaking of the world's limited progress on curbing global warming, which requires an official response to be crafted at the November 30 to December 12 talks.

Signals from leaders will come early, with about 140 heads of state and government due to speak during a two-day summit beginning on December 1. The stakes have never been higher, with scientists warning that the Paris Agreement's safer 1.5 degree Celsius warming limit is slipping through humanity's fingers.

"The biggest wildcard is probably is there geopolitical space for climate cooperation?" said Alden Meyer of the think tank E3G, adding there was a "corrosive lack of trust" even before the conflict between Zionist entity and Hamas. Global relations have soured in recent years over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a mounting debt crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, when developing countries struggled to access vaccines.

Campaigners have also raised concerns over the influence of fossil fuel interests at the talks, noting that COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber is both UAE climate envoy and head of state-owned oil firm ADNOC. But they say the summit could also highlight the need to transition away from the energy sources responsible for the majority of human-caused emissions.

"I think it presents us with an opportunity, but also a great challenge, to ensure that fossil fuel phase-out is front and centre at this COP," said Mitzi Jonelle Tan of Fridays for Future Philippines.

The 2015 Paris climate deal aimed to limit global warming to well below 2C since the pre-industrial era, and preferably to 1.5C. There has been some progress.

The International Energy Agency this year forecast fossil fuel demand will peak by 2030 due to the "spectacular" growth of clean energy technologies and electric cars — helped by policies in China, the United States and Europe, among others. But recent research has exposed how far off track the world still is.

This week the UN Environment Programme said the world is heading for devastating warming up to 2.9C, even with countries' climate plans, calling on G20 polluters to move faster.

The IPCC climate panel says emissions need to fall 43 percent this decade to stay under the 1.5C limit, yet they continue to rise. "Leaders can't kick the can any further," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "We're out of road."

Nearly 1.2C of warming is already trigger-



**CHENNAI:** Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, COP28 president-designate and minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, UAE, attends the 4th Environmental and climate sustainability working group meeting held in Chennai on July 27, 2023. — AFP

ing blistering heatwaves, massive wildfires, floods and ferocious storms. This year is expected to be the warmest on record, while proxy data like tree rings and ice cores suggest those temperatures could also be unprecedented in the past more than 100,000 years. In a stark reminder of the high stakes, Australia this month agreed a landmark deal with Tuvalu to offer sanctuary to the island nation's residents should their home be engulfed by rising seas, as expected this century.

For decades, global climate negotiations largely avoided mentioning fossil fuels, until Glasgow's COP26 agreed to "phasedown" unfiltered coal power

and the "phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies".

Since then, momentum has built. "This year has presented us with pretty unprecedented consensus among governments and civil society that the phase out of fossil fuels — and the phasing in of renewable energy — is the key thing to tackle in this decade," said Catherine Abreu of Destination Zero.

Even the UAE's Jaber has said he believes the phasing down of fossil fuels is "inevitable".

He has proposed tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling the annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. But the key question is whether these targets are formalized in a negotiated text or shunted into flimsier voluntary pledges, Abreu said, adding that a flurry of side deals from the UAE was "quite worrying". Finance for developing nations will also stir controversy at COP28.

Monitors say wealthy nations likely met their goal of providing \$100 billion in annual climate finance to poorer countries last year — but the achievement is two years late and insufficient to meet growing needs. A hard-fought agreement on aspects of a "loss and damage" fund to help climate-vulnerable countries was also recently secured, although details remain contentious.

One positive signal came in a recent US-China climate statement. Meyer said this signalled a "shift" from Beijing on COP28's global stocktake response, having previously resisted the idea that countries should be pushed to increase emissions-cutting ambitions. "The real question now is whether India and other big developing countries will change their stance," he said. — AFP

## Altman's return ushers in new era at OpenAI

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Sam Altman's shock return as chief executive of OpenAI late Tuesday — days after being sacked — caps a chaotic period that highlighted deep tensions at the heart of the Artificial Intelligence community. The board that fired Altman from his role as CEO of the ChatGPT creator has been almost entirely replaced following a rebellion by employees, cementing his position at the helm of the firm.

The sole survivor in the boardroom in the new Altman era is Adam D'Angelo, the CEO of question-and-answer site Quora. He will be joined by ex-Salesforce co-CEO Bret Taylor and by former US Treasury Secretary and president of Harvard University, Larry Summers.

In Summers, Altman will find a seasoned economist and well-known figure in Washington, who has spoken of both the dangers and opportunities of ChatGPT for the "cognitive classes." "ChatGPT is gonna replace what doctors do, hearing symptoms and making diagnoses, before it changes what nurses do," Summers told Bloomberg News earlier this year.

Neither Altman nor OpenAI co-founder Greg Brockman — who quit as company president following Altman's sacking — will return to the board, which could soon have as many as six additional members, the Wall Street Journal reported. "I love openai, and everything i've done over the past few days has been in service of keeping this team and its mission together," Altman wrote in a social media post late Tuesday on X, formerly Twitter.

The five-day saga began on Friday, when Altman was abruptly sacked by the board for reasons that are still unclear. The board said in a statement that it had sacked Altman because "he was not consistently candid in his communications with the board," without elaborating further. It strongly resisted attempts to bring him back, cycling through two new chief executives over the weekend, before three of its four remaining members were sacked on Tuesday to pave the way for Altman's dramatic return.

Some media outlets reported that there had been concerns that OpenAI was moving quickly away from its stated mission of "building safe and beneficial artificial general intelligence for the benefit of humanity," for commercial gain. However, OpenAI's interim CEO Emmett Shear, said in a social media post that he had been assured "The board did not remove Sam over any specific disagreement on safety," without elaborating on why Altman had been sacked.

Altman's return reaffirms his position as a leader in the rapidly-evolving field of generative-AI. But the agreement also highlights the growing power that Microsoft now wields over the future of OpenAI. During his five days in the wilderness, Altman briefly took up a position at the tech giant, which has poured billions of dollars into OpenAI and helped launch ChatGPT, whose success sparked a multi-billion-dollar global race in AI research and development. — AFP

## Turkey delivers another major interest rate hike

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's central bank on Thursday surprised the market with a larger-than-expected interest hike as it ramped up its fight against inflation and efforts to support the slumping lira. The bank lifted its policy rate by 5.0 percentage points to 40 percent on the sixth month of a belt-tightening cycle that has more than quadrupled borrowing costs.

Most analysts had expected the bank to raise its rate by 2.5 percentage points. "Really impressive move by the (central bank) ... getting well ahead of expectations," emerging markets economist Timothy Ash remarked in an emailed note. But the bank also gave a strong signal that it was reaching the limits of how high its policy rate will go.

"The current level of monetary tightness is significantly close to the level required to establish the disinflation course," the bank said in a statement.

"Accordingly, the pace of monetary tightening will slow down and the tightening cycle will be completed in a short period of time." Turkey's interest rates are now the highest of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two decades in power and above those in

## Oil prices drop further after OPEC+ delay

**LONDON:** Oil prices sank further Thursday after the shock decision by OPEC+ to delay a key policy meeting, suggesting fresh discord in the bloc.

Stock markets, meanwhile, traded mixed after two US reports dented recent euphoria over the future of interest rates. Both main crude contracts slid on news that the much-anticipated gathering of OPEC+, an alliance of major producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, would be put back by four days to November 30.

Prices declined by another one percent on Thursday, having dived by almost five percent at one point on Wednesday following the news. Reports said the decision was made after Angola and Nigeria pushed back against lower targets that were urged by others, with Saudi Arabia said to have been preparing to extend a one-million-barrel-a-day output cut into the new year.

## Sweden CB leaves rate unchanged after series of hikes

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden's central bank on Thursday left its key rate unchanged at four percent, after a year and a half of successive hikes aimed at reining in inflation.

The Riksbank joins the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank which also paused their rate hike campaigns at their latest policy meetings



**ANKARA:** This photograph taken on June 9, 2023, shows the Central Bank of Turkey, in Ankara. — AFP

almost all other emerging economies in the world. Policymakers expect them to remain elevated at least through the middle of next year.

They underscore the depths to which Turkey's economy has plunged after Erdogan decided to implement his unorthodox theory that high interest rates cause inflation into real life.

Conventional economics dictates that the exact opposite is true. Turkey's official annual inflation rate peaked at 85 percent in October 2022 and

Riyadh and Moscow unveiled massive cuts earlier this year in a bid to boost prices, which have come under pressure owing to stuttering economies in the United States, Europe and particularly China.

"Oil prices fell after OPEC reported a delay in the weekend, a meeting which hints at a growing rift among OPEC+ producers," noted SPI Asset Management analyst Stephen Innes. "With US and non-OPEC production on the rise, it should be no surprise that producers want to pump more oil, not trim production, for fear of losing even a tiny sliver of the market share." "And the ceasefire in the Zionist entity-Hamas war gives hope for some stability in the region."

Equity markets in Europe and Asia fluctuated, even after a fresh pre-Thanksgiving jump on Wall Street. Hong Kong bounced back from morning losses to edge higher in the afternoon, with developers in ascendance as it emerged China is preparing to offer the property sector more support, calling for banks to do more for the industry.

That came after Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday that authorities had drawn up a draft list of 50 firms that would be eligible for more monetary support. Elsewhere, Shanghai, Seoul, Wellington, Mumbai and Jakarta also rose but Sydney, Singapore,

inflation has slowed. The Swedish central bank said in a statement that while inflation has fallen it was "still too high", and it was "prepared to raise the policy rate further if inflation prospects deteriorate." "All in all, the Executive Board assesses that monetary policy needs to remain contractionary, but that it is appropriate now to hold the policy rate unchanged," the bank said.

Sweden's consumer price index came in at 6.5 percent in October, according to Statistics Sweden, the same as it did in September.

Adjusted for fixed interest rates (CPIF) - the figure used by the Riksbank to guide monetary policy - was 4.2 percent in October, while the bank targets inflation around two percent. "Prices for services are

climb back up to 61 percent last month. And the lira has lost more than 70 percent of its value against the dollar since Erdogan began to unleash his experiment just over two years ago.

Erdogan reversed track after surviving a runoff presidential election in May that he won after showering his supporters with giveaways and pay increases that threatened to make Turkey's inflation problem even worse. He installed a new team of market-friendly economists that had good reputations on Wall Street and were cheered on by spooked foreign investors.

Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek and central bank governor Hafize Gaye Erkan have tried to rebalance the economy with conventional prescriptions aimed at curing the cost-of-living crisis and easing the life of businesses and banks. Simsek has spent the past few months shuttling between world financial capitals and the Middle East selling his plan to big investors and sovereign wealth funds.

And Erkan has been trying to calibrate rate hikes to levels that both fight inflation and avoid infuriating Erdogan. The Turkish leader appears increasingly happy with his new team. He told a group of Turkish reporters this week that the economy could soon "enter a virtuous cycle" of disinflation and lira strength. "There is a high probability that the Turkish lira will gain value in real terms," he said. "We will gain investor confidence with our sound policies and structural reforms." — AFP



Taipei, Manila and Bangkok were in retreat.

Paris and Frankfurt stocks also gained ground but London lapsed into modest losses heading toward the half-way stage. The tepid performances came after data showed a pick-up in inflation expectations among US consumers, who now see it at 4.5 percent over the next year, against 4.4 percent previously expected, according to the University of Michigan.

Separately, US jobless claims came in far lower than forecast, showing that the labour market continues to hold up. The Federal Reserve has repeatedly said it would make its interest-rate decisions based on data, particularly inflation and jobs. — AFP

increasing at a rapid pace and contributing significantly to total inflation. In addition, the krona is still unjustifiably weak, which is holding up the rate of price increase for goods," the bank said.

The Swedish economy is struggling to recover, contracting by 0.8 percent in the second quarter compared with the previous quarter. Against this backdrop, analysts at Capital Economics noted that they "would be surprised if the Bank does in fact raise rates again," despite its insistence that it was ready to do so.

The Swedish government recently said that the country was going through "economic winter" due to persistently high inflation and an uncertain international environment. — AFP



Business

# Rising energy bills to worsen Britain's cost-of-living crisis

## Hunt warns Britons face a record drop in living standards in 2024-2025

LONDON: The price cap on energy bills for most UK households will rise this winter, regulator Ofgem said Thursday, further fuelling a cost-of-living crisis that is forecast to worsen.

Bills will climb from January on rising wholesale energy prices, which have increased due to key producer Russia's war in Ukraine, Ofgem said in a statement. The annual amount suppliers are able to charge an average household consuming electricity and gas will increase to £1,928 (\$2,418) from £1,834, it added.

"This is a difficult time for many people, and any increase in bills will be worrying," noted Ofgem chief executive Jonathan Brearley. Consumer Prices Index inflation slowed sharply to 4.6 percent last month on easing energy bills, achieving Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's target to halve the key figure. However, households and businesses continue to pay high energy bills after the government scrapped last year's costly subsidies, while food-price inflation remains in double digits.

Britons face a record drop in living standards in 2024-2025, the Office for Budget Responsibility warned on Wednesday alongside a budget update from finance minister Jeremy Hunt.

The fiscal watchdog forecast real household disposable income per person will sink by the

largest amount since records began in the 1950s. It is not expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2027-2028. Chancellor of the Exchequer Hunt admitted Thursday that many families were still suffering. "People are feeling under pressure because of all the increases in inflation and shopping baskets and filling up the tank," Hunt told BBC radio. "We need to continue on the path of bringing inflation down." Hunt launched plans Wednesday to stimulate growth and woo voters for the next general election, delivering a massive sweetener for workers but also forecasting sharply lower growth and stubbornly high inflation.

The most eye-catching tax cut was an overhaul in national insurance, a payrolls levy paid by employees and employers that will be slashed from January. But the OBR slashed economic growth forecasts to 0.7 percent in 2024 and 1.4 percent in 2025. That compared with prior guidance of 1.8 percent and 2.5 percent respectively. In further gloom, the OBR predicted inflation would not fall to the Bank of England's official two-percent target until the second quarter of 2025.

That is one year later than previously forecast and raises the prospect that interest rates will stay higher for longer, in turn hitting the cost of commercial loans for consumers and businesses. —AFP

## The economy, stupid? PM Sunak's 'only' chance of re-election

LONDON: UK leader Rishi Sunak's hopes of turning around his beleaguered Conservative party's fortunes before a likely general election next year hinge on a British economic recovery, observers say. Several resets have failed to claw back support from a resurgent Labour opposition, while the government's flagship plan to send illegal migrants to Rwanda is stalled by the courts.

"I think an improving economy is Sunak's only chance," Chris Hopkins, politics director at polling firm Savanta, told AFP. "For Sunak to win, or even stop a Labour majority, he needs basically everything to go right for him between now and an election. The most important piece of that is the economy."

Labour is streets ahead of the ruling Tories in opinion polls, largely because of a cost-of-living crisis which has eroded wages, sparked strikes and left millions struggling to pay bills. The Bank of England has battled inflation by raising interest rates to a 15-year high, which has ramped up the cost of loans for consumers and businesses. Sunak has been credited with stabilizing Britain's economy following predecessor Liz Truss's chaotic 49-day rule during which she spooked financial markets and sank the pound.

In January, Sunak announced five key pledges for this year, three of which related to the economy: halving inflation, growing the economy, and cutting debt. While his other two promises — reducing health waiting lists and stopping migrant boats — have largely failed, Sunak has been able to claim some recent success on his economic pledges. Inflation still remains the highest of the G7 world's richest nations but has come down from 10.7 percent at the end of 2022 to 4.6 percent last month, data showed last week. Sunak received a further lift on Tuesday when year-to-date borrowing undershot forecasts. On Wednesday the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) fiscal watchdog predicted that GDP would expand by 0.6 percent this year, up from the prior forecast for a contraction of 0.2 percent.

However, it forecast that economic output would grow by just 0.7 percent next year, sharply down

from a previous prediction of a solid 1.8-percent expansion. The forecasts were released as Sunak's finance minister, Jeremy Hunt, unveiled a budget designed to woo voters for the election, which must be held by January 2025. Hunt announced a two-percent cut from January to the main rate of national insurance, a payrolls tax paid by employees and employers, in a move interpreted as a pre-election pitch to woo voters.

He also made permanent a tax break for businesses and unveiled a series of changes to benefit payments, housing allowances and state pensions, while freezing alcohol duty. Several announcements were seen as drawing clear dividing lines with centre-left Labour, which is seeking a return to power after nearly 14 years in opposition. "Tax cuts won't do any harm—as long as they aren't too obviously targeted at big business or the very well-off," political scientist Tim Bale at Queen Mary University of London told AFP.

"But voters are pretty savvy. They recognize that this is a government in trouble trying to buy their vote at the last minute." Some Conservative MPs want the chancellor to go further by announcing further cuts in his spring budget, including to the main income tax.

Hunt, for his part, denied that the cuts were pre-election "crowd-pleasers" to win votes.

Instead, he told Sky News Thursday that he chose measures that would make "the biggest difference to our long-term competitiveness".


Robert Ford, a political scientist at Manchester University, said there is a risk that tax reductions "backfire." "Any upside from money in voters' pockets is offset by increased concern that public services won't be properly funded," he told AFP.

Richard Carr, politics expert at Anglian Ruskin University, thinks the Conservatives will struggle to sway voters' minds at this stage. Sunak's recent adoption of so-called culture war issues and roll-back of green energy policies have failed to move the dial. "The Tories historic reputation of being sound with the public finances has been trashed to a point where little changes are too little and too late," Carr told AFP.

Sunak also has another problem — Labour is putting fiscal responsibility at the heart of its campaign, and has so far refused to commit to major spending plans that the Tories can attack. "The government no longer has the luxury of claiming a cavalier opposition would wreck the economy, even were it in good shape anyway," added Carr. —AFP



LONDON: A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt (center) is congratulated by Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (second left) and Britain's Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride (second right) after presenting his Autumn Budget Statement at the House of Commons, in London. — AFP



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 23 NOVEMBER 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	880	879	884	870	14	12,774,167	1	0.11%	-14.38%	860	895	12.8	1.66	3.9%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	247	250	252	242	10	31,908,668	3	1.21%	-15.87%	248	252	12.1	1.15	3.8%	1.31
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	145	147	147	144	3	16,046,196	2	1.38%	-17.94%	143	147	15.2	0.55	2.5%	1.11
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	164	169	171	163	8	22,478,093	5	3.05%	-18.97%	165	176	17.7	0.64	4.5%	1.36
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	705	701	710	700	10	31,173,133	-3	-0.43%	-6.31%	689	704	17.3	1.80	2.4%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	595	598	607	592	15	7,540,028	2	0.34%	-20.57%	593	616	37.1	2.41	0.9%	1.20
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	124	127	127	123	4	4,825,210	3	2.42%	-16.45%	125	129	7.3	0.58	4.0%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	204	228	231	196	35	17,172,585	24	11.76%	-3.80%	227	232	69.6	0.99	13.0%	2.04
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	105	113	113	105	8	31,072,370	6	5.61%	0.89%	110	116	27.3	0.63	0.0%	1.01
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	184	200	200	184	16	120,822,103	16	8.70%	77.39%	186	200	28.4	1.33	2.0%	1.17
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	163	165	166	159	7	30,687,484	2	1.23%	24.06%	163	166	8.3	1.12	4.6%	1.64
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	58.6	60	61.6	57	5.1	2,794,784	2.6	4.52%	-19.76%	60.1	62.0	NM	0.38	15.1%	1.36
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	169	181	183	167	16	47,005,376	12	7.10%	72.62%	178	181	14.3	1.19	1.6%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	824	827	839	815	24	2,387,453	-13	-1.55%	3.38E-02	825	838	17.2	1.80	1.6%	1.04
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	99	102.0	104	98.2	5.8	12,083,382	2.9	2.93%	6.23%	102	104	20.2	0.62	2.9%	0.61
501	National Industries	Financial Services	194	191	195	187	8	15,152,349	-2	-1.04%	-7.58%	190	194	17.5	0.90	2.5%	1.62
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,330	1,338	1,352	1,317	35	4,025,074	18	1.36%	10.12%	1,319	1,350	14.0	1.23	4.5%	1.05
506	HEISCO	Industrials	835	878	889	835	54	11,769,405	51	6.17%	43.23%	858	889	24.5	2.23	2.3%	0.92
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	618	612	624	612	12	3,613,596	-5	-0.81%	-23.50%	604	633	11.5	1.31	9.8%	0.96
603	Agility	Industrials	544	535	545	526	19	8,687,139	-9	-1.65%	-25.69%	520	536	16.3	0.77	0.0%	1.53
605	Zain	Telecommunications	505	499	514	497	17	18,623,738	-6	-1.19%	-11.37%	487	503	10.0	1.73	7.0%	0.63
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,106	3,060	3,106	3,023	83	565,522	15	0.49%	-8.72%	3,000	3,065	9.1	3.38	12.5%	0.64
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	169	184	185	168	17	3,501,253	15	8.88%	-9.36%	178	184	NM	0.80	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,124	1,260	1,289	1,111	178	3,127,623	136	12.10%	-33.68%	1,204	1,300	21.9	8.25	6.2%	1.45
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	78.0	78	78.8	77.1	1.7	9,142,499	0.4	0.51%	2.76%	76.6	79.0	8.3	0.88	6.4%	1.37
821	Warba Bank	Banking	178	179	181	176	5	9,561,103	2	1.13%	-21.54%	169	188	24.8	0.97	1.6%	1.14
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	515	511	517	503	14	3,269,949	-6	-1.16%	30.03%	490	519	12.7	1.50	2.3%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	438	447	447	435	12	3,463,239	9	2.05%	20.81%	445	458	31.2	1.81	3.4%	0.67
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	176	176	177	174	3	1,137,131	-1	-0.56%	-6.38%	173	176	13.6	1.47	6.8%	0.43
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,732	1,740	1,765	1,712	53	581,084	9	0.52%	-15.20%	1,700	1,770	22.3	5.67	4.9%	0.90
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,089	1,070	1,105	1,070	35	2,898,787	-12	-1.11%	32.92%	1,069	1,123	11.4	3.94	6.4%	0.65

\* As of end of week closing

# Country Garden shares jump as China signals fresh support

## Beijing may prop up 50 private and state-owned developers

SHANGHAI: Shares in heavily indebted Chinese developer Country Garden soared more than 17 percent on Thursday as signs emerge that Chinese officials are planning more concrete support for the troubled sector.

One of the biggest players in China's property industry, Country Garden has racked up debts estimated in June at 1.36 trillion yuan (\$191 billion). It is just one of many companies, including Evergrande, caught up in a sector-wide crisis that has seen a string of debt-laden builders either defaulting or threatening to do so, fuelling fears of a spillover into the wider economy.

Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday that Country Garden, which is listed in Hong Kong, was on a draft list of 50 developers that would be eligible for more financial support, citing sources with knowledge of the matter. The list compiled by regulators includes private and state-owned developers and is intended as a guide to banks considering shoring up companies via a variety of mechanisms, Bloomberg said.

Sino-Ocean Group, another company reportedly on the list, soared more than 30 percent in

Hong Kong. Among other developers, China Evergrande rose almost six percent and Kaisa Group was up more than seven percent. Authorities are on edge as the creeping debt crisis fuels buyer mistrust, sends home prices plummeting and, crucially, threatens to infect other sectors in an already sluggish economy. Construction and real estate account for around a quarter of China's gross domestic product.

In another sign that the government is preparing to offer the sector more support, China's rubber-stamp parliament on Wednesday released a report calling for banks to do more for the industry.

The document, from a meeting last month with the head of the People's Bank of China, said banks should step up help for developers to enact the "guaranteed delivery of buildings".

Over recent years, companies' failure to complete projects has sparked protests and mortgage boycotts across the country. The document also called for financial institutions to "support the reasonable financing needs of real estate companies, reduce the risk of credit defaults, and alleviate the fears of residents purchasing long-term housing". — AFP



ZHENJIANG, China: This aerial photo taken on October 10, 2023 shows a logo of China's developer Country Garden Holdings on top of a building in Zhenjiang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

## Russia's Gazprom plans investment cut as exports drop

MOSCOW: Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom said Thursday it planned to cut investment spending by a fifth next year amid dwindling gas flows to Europe and a heavy tax burden. Since

Russia launched its assault on Ukraine in February 2022, European countries have sharply cut gas imports from Russia in a bid to curb Moscow's ability to fund the conflict.

The Kremlin has relied on oil and gas export revenues to fund its offensive in Ukraine, and last year announced massive tax hikes on the industry to cover its budget. While Gazprom has shifted some of its exports to China and Turkey, it slashed its gas production by a quarter in the first half of this year as it struggled to make up for lost sales. Its investment program for next year, spent on energy projects and

infrastructure, will drop about 20 percent year-on-year to 1.57 trillion rubles (\$17.8 billion), the company said. "The approved financial plan will ensure Gazprom covers its liabilities without a deficit and in full," it said in a statement.

Gazprom's losses could reach 1 trillion rubles in 2025 due in part to the heavier tax burden, ruling party lawmaker Pavel Zavalny warned earlier this month. The company posted a profit of 296 billion rubles in the first half of this year, a fraction of the 2.5 trillion rubles in profits it earned in the first half of 2022. — AFP



## NBK educates customers on data protection

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to raise customer awareness, promote financial inclusion and enhance financial literacy among all segments of society. In this regard, the bank continues supporting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

To this end, NBK intensifies awareness campaigns by publishing educational materials and awareness content including video clips and text communications, as well as awareness tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as reposting of CBK's communications. This aims to increase awareness among all segments of society and familiarize them with the various fraud schemes, and the precautions to steer clear of these attempts.

NBK highlights that protecting banking and personal information is crucial, providing customers with banking information protection tips, seeking to raise awareness on how to protect banking information and avoiding suspicious advertisements enticing people with lucrative profits.

Suspicious advertisements involve high risk, by exposing customers to download remote access applications on personal devices or asking for bank data to deposit prize amounts in personal accounts. Therefore, NBK strongly urges to avoid giving credentials to others as this may lead to stealing personal information, as well as being alert to the various schemes used by scammers to intrigue people to share confidential data or OTP. With the increasing fraud attempts using various schemes, NBK is keen to protect customers and increase their awareness of how to steer clear of fraud by following the tips provided on all its digital channels. It also affirms that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such messages representing fraud attempts to obtain their banking information to steal their money or data.

NBK harnesses its tremendous capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support CBK's endeavors to protect customers and the economy. NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses for its employees to enhance their experience in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.



KUWAIT: Adeb Ahamed inaugurates LuLu Exchange's new engagement center at Khaitan-2 in the presence of other senior management of the country operations on Thursday.

## LuLu Exchange opens 36th customer engagement center in Khaitan-2

KUWAIT: LuLu Exchange Kuwait, one of the nation's most trusted names in cross-border payments and foreign currency exchange, opened its 36th customer engagement center in Khaitan-2 on Thursday. This marks the 311th Global Customer Engagement Center under LuLu Financial Holdings, strategically aligned with the company's expansion strategy in Kuwait. The new engagement center at Khaitan-2 was inaugurated by Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, in the

presence of other senior management of the country operations.

Speaking on the occasion, Adeb Ahamed said, "The opening of our latest customer engagement center in Khaitan-2, brings us great joy and inspiration. This new center will serve as a connection point for our varied financial services, streamlining the integration of our digital payment solutions for customers. Kuwait holds a strategic position in our operations, and we extend our gratitude to the government, regulators, and partners for their support in contributing to our ongoing expansion."

Established in 2011, LuLu Exchange Kuwait is one of the country's leading financial services providers. It has been at the forefront of dig-

## Musk says fallout from Sweden strike 'insane'

STOCKHOLM: Tesla chief executive Elon Musk broke his silence Thursday on a strike against his company in Sweden, saying it was "insane" that it may block new car deliveries. Swedish postal workers began halting deliveries to Tesla offices and repair shops on Monday, in support of a strike launched by the metal workers' union IF Metall over the electric carmaker's refusal to sign a collective wage agreement.

Financial newspaper Dagens In-

dustri later reported that this in effect could block new Tesla's from hitting the road as license plates for new cars issued by the Swedish Transport Agency are only delivered via mail carrier Postnord.

Replying to a user posting about the issue on X, formerly Twitter, Musk, who had not publicly reacted to the strike previously, said simply: "This is insane." Mikael Andersson, head of press at the Swedish Transport Agency, confirmed in an email to AFP that new number plates are delivered through Postnord. Andersson explained that the agency was bound to use the carrier under a procurement contract for all government agencies negotiated by the

Swedish Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency.

Some 130 mechanics at 10 Tesla repair shops in seven cities across Sweden first walked off the job on October 27, according to trade union IF Metall.

The strike has since expanded to include other repair shops that service Tesla among other auto brands, and dock workers have stopped unloading Tesla cars at all Swedish ports. In addition to IF Metall, nine other unions have announced "sympathy measures," including the Swedish Union for Service and Communications Employees (Seko) -- which represents postal workers -- and the Swedish Building Workers'

Union. Despite these moves, several Swedish media have reported that their impacts have so far been limited, and IF Metall has accused the electric carmaker of systematically using strike breakers to circumvent the labor action. Tesla has also found other ways to deliver new cars to Sweden, notably by road. Negotiated sector-by-sector, collective agreements are the basis of the Swedish labor market model, covering almost 90 percent of all employees and guaranteeing standard wages and working conditions. According to IF Metall, Tesla had told them it would not sign a collective bargaining agreement because they "don't do that anywhere in the world." — AFP

## Kenya plans to privatize 35 state firms

NAIROBI: Kenya's President William Ruto said Thursday that his government was ready to privatize 35 state companies "trapped in government bureaucracy" in a bid to boost productivity fol-

lowing a change to laws.

His government last month signed a revised privatization bill into law that makes it easier to sell state enterprises to private companies. The revised law aims to push up the private sector's participation in the economy, the presidency said at the time of the signing.

"We have identified the first 35 companies that we are going to offer to the private sector," Ruto told a gathering of African stock market officials in Nairobi.

He added that the government was also exploring

options regarding some 100 state-owned firms, saying that many "would-be lucrative companies... are trapped in government bureaucracy, when the services they are offering can be better offered by the private sector."

"We will make this opportunity available," East Africa's economic powerhouse is facing a host of challenges, including depleted government coffers, skyrocketing inflation and a plunging currency that has sent its debt repayment costs soaring. The International Monetary Fund said this month that it had agreed a \$938-million loan for Kenya, which also has

a \$2-billion eurobond repayment due next year.

The IMF also urged Ruto's government to reform public sector firms, particularly the national electricity supplier Kenya Power and the national carrier Kenya Airways, which suffered record losses in 2022. The World Bank said on Monday that it expects to provide the country of 53 million people with \$12 billion in support over the next three years.

Kenya had accumulated more than 10.1 trillion shillings (\$66 billion) in debt by the end of June, according to Treasury figures, equivalent to around two-thirds of gross domestic product. — AFP



'Caminando' - a group of bronze sculptures - the centrepiece of the show of Magdalena Abakanowicz is seen in Desa Unicum auction house in Warsaw, Poland. - AFP photos



A girl is seen as she watches 'Abakans' - woven pieces which is a part of Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.



People are seen watching Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.

# HEADLESS SCULPTURES BY FAMED POLISH ARTIST GO ON AUCTION



A woman is seen as she watches 'Abakans' - woven pieces which is a part of Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.

**W**orks by the celebrated Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz, including haunting headless sculptures, enigmatic tapestries and mask-like portraits, will go on auction Thursday. Abakanowicz, who died in 2017, was best known for the crowds of dozens or even hundreds of towering anonymous headless figures that have previously sold for millions. Much of her work was born out of the trauma and helplessness she experienced as a child during World War II.

More than 30 pieces from various periods of Abakanowicz's life will be auctioned off in Warsaw. The centrepiece of the auction — Caminando, or "walking" in Spanish — is a crowd of 20 life-sized, hollow bronze figures without heads or arms or gender, each taking a step forward. "Abakanowicz doesn't impose a narrative. This has a therapeutic effect as it enables you to confront the artwork yourself," said Wiktor Komorowski, curator at the Desa Unicum auction house.

"Which is very topical today, when we're waiting for change and a resolution of certain situations... like the war in Ukraine or the difficult situation in



One of the sculptures of Magdalena Abakanowicz is seen on her exhibition.

Gaza," he told AFP. The Caminando sculptures, which previously sold for more than 8 million zloty (\$2 million), were once owned by the late comedian Robin Williams and stood in his garden. Abakanowicz once said that her im-

posing headless statues stemmed from the "belief that art is not a decoration but a confession, confrontation, warning." "The terrifying awareness of the crowd who, like a headless organism, destroys or worships on command,"

she said. The artist spoke from personal experience, having lived through Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland, the bombing of Warsaw and Stalinism. She was just nine years old when she saw her mother lose a hand to German fire. For Renata Blazniak-Kuczynska, an Abakanowicz fan who went to see the pieces before the auction, the marching headless figures are disquieting but ultimately optimistic.

"To me, they're saying: I'm a witness of history, I'm going forward," the 49-year-old interior designer told AFP. "No matter what happens, you have to pick yourself up and focus on what comes next, right? What I can do, what I have control over." Abakanowicz created more than 1,000 of the striking headless sculptures, including in other mediums like burlap and concrete. Desa Unicum is also auctioning off rarer works from the artist. These include paintings and several woven sculptures known as "Abakans", a few of which have never been shown before. — AFP



People are seen watching Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.



People are seen watching Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.



People are seen watching Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.



Aniela (11 years old) is seen while she mimics one of the sculptures on Magdalena Abakanowicz's exhibition.

## Ay Karumba: 'Smelly' rats plague Australian fishing towns

**P**lagues of "bold as hell" rats have overrun tropical fishing towns in northern Australia, where residents are clearing piles of "smelly" dead rodents off the beach every morning. The native long-haired rats have been steadily marching towards the coast after a bumper wet season in inland Australia, spreading hundreds of kilometres in their hunt for new crops to nibble on. Now they have reached the gulf towns of Karumba and Normanton in the state of Queensland, harassing

pets, clambering over boats and stripping cars of their wiring.

"Mate, there's rats everywhere," said Normanton local Derek Lord, 49, who runs a vehicle hire business. "They're that bold they're coming out during the day," he told AFP. "We have hire vehicles and they literally destroyed a car overnight, taking all of the wiring out of the engine bay."

Lord said his pet ducks had been "going mad" as rats broke into their cages and stole their eggs. "Last night, the ducks were going mad and I went downstairs to see what was going on thinking maybe there's a cat in there or something."

"And there's bloody lots of rats running through the cages, through the pens chasing ducks. They're just like, bold as hell." Rats have also infested the nearby town of Karumba, better known as the barramundi "fishing hub" of Australia. Fishing charter owner Jemma Probert

told AFP piles of drowned rodents had been washing up on the shore front every morning. "It's pretty bad here. The last week we've had them all over the beaches, some alive, some dead," she said.

"It's not very nice down there, it's a bit smelly." The council has been cleaning up the beaches every morning, just to try and keep that at bay." Boom-and-bust weather cycles dominate much of inland Australia, where heavy rains can fuel rapid crop growth after years of crippling drought.

These patterns are often accompanied by booming populations of pests such as locusts, rats, and mice. With more wet weather likely for Queensland, Probert said she had been told the worst was yet to come. "We've heard there are still more that are coming," she said. "It's not a good thing to leave Karumba remembering." — AFP



This frame grab taken from video footage by Derek Lord via AFPTV shows native long-haired rats trapped in a rubbish bin in the Queensland town of Normanton, after a bumper wet season in inland Australia. - AFP

Lifestyle



**Mickey Mouse (1982)**  
Mickey Mouse is seen here as a giant inflatable balloon in 1982.



**Superman (1960s)**  
The Man of Steel has made many an appearance as a giant inflatable balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade over the years. Superman mega-fans have cataloged and categorized the character's various body shapes in balloons over the years. This particular puffy-chest edition of Clark Kent dates from the late 1960s.



**Donald Duck (1984)**  
Disney's irascible fowl made his Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade debut way back during the event's first decade, in 1935, with a balloon figure that bears little resemblance to the character that Donald Duck would become. Donald Duck was a regular in the parade through the "Mad Men" years — 1962 to 1972 — and returned again in 1984.



**Woody Woodpecker (1982)**  
Walter Lantz's hyperactive cartoon woodpecker character dates back to the 1930s, but Woody Woodpecker only made his Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade debut in 1982, as shown here. The character was a regular at the event through 1996, thanks to a 10-year sponsorship from Universal Studios.



**Kermit the Frog (1977)**  
The beloved leader of the Muppets has delighted fans with multiple Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade appearances as a giant inflatable from the 1970s until the 2012. Kermit has also been featured as a performer with other Muppets in the parade in 1979, 2008 and in 2016 for the 90th edition, per Macys-ThanksgivingFandom.com. Kermit is shown here in his first parade appearance in 1977.

# Macy's Thanksgiving Parade: Big Bird, The Smurfs and Superman take flight

For millions of viewers, NBC's telecast of Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is as much part of the holiday tradition as roast turkey, pumpkin pie and cranberry sauce. The parade that begins on Manhattan's Upper West Side and culminates two and a half miles later outside the famed department store in Herald Square will mark its 95th edition this year. It's returning to its traditional form after being scaled down in 2020 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be available as a live stream on Peacock for the first time, airing November 25 from 9 am-12 pm in all time zones. Last year, the parade known for its mix of inflatable balloons, floats, marching band, clowns and performance moments was staged only for television cameras in the plaza area outside the famously ornate Beaux Arts retail hub on 34th Street.

Macy's has been staging the mother of all retail promotional events in one form or another since 1924. NBC has telecast the parade nationally since 1953, making it a shared holiday tradition for generations. It's also a prime showcase for family-friendly entertainment content. NBC's telecast alone draws about 24 million-25 million viewers live on Thanksgiving morning every year. Per Macy's, the 2021 production includes "15 giant character balloons,

28 floats, 36 novelty and heritage inflatables, more than 800 clowns, 10 marching bands and 9 performance groups" and, of course, Santa Claus. As the 95th annual edition steps off from 77th Street and Central Park West, here's a look at vintage shots of Hollywood and entertainment figures on display in the parade from the 1960s, 70s and 80s.



**The Smurfs (1980s)**  
The Smurfs have had a periodic presence in the parade since the Belgian-born characters took off in the US in the early 1980s. Here they're seen in an undated photo from around that time.



**Tom Turkey (1970s)**  
Tom Turkey is the oldest and most frequently recurring float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Here is in an undated photo of the bird from the 1970s.



**'The Bugaloos' (1970)**  
The Bugaloos was a natural for a spotlight in the 1970 Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. Here, young stars John Philpott, John McIndoe, Wayne Laryea and Caroline Ellis are seen in the show's signature wheels, the "Bugaloo Buggy," built for the Kroffts by famed auto designer George Barris.



One of five mummies is pictured at the Huaca La Florida archaeological site, in Lima, Peru.



One of five mummies is pictured at the Huaca La Florida archaeological site, in Lima, Peru.



An archaeologist works on one of five mummies which were found in Lima, Peru.



People stand around the Huaca La Florida archaeological site where five mummies were found, in Lima, Peru.



The remains of a mummy, that according to archaeologists belongs to the pre-Inca Ychsma culture that inhabited the central coast of Peru from approximately 900 to 1450 AD, is pictured at the Huaca La Florida archaeological site, in Lima, Peru.

## Peru archaeologists unearth 1,000-year-old mummies of children in Lima

Archaeologists in Peru have unearthed four mummies of children believed to be at least 1,000 years old from what was once a sacred ceremonial space that is now in one of the oldest neighborhoods of modern-day Lima. Researchers believe the children, discovered on Monday alongside the remains of an adult, come from the Ychs-

ma culture that developed on Peru's central coast before the Inca Empire rose to span swathes of the Andean region. Some remains were found at the foot of a staircase on a small hill which is believed to have once hidden a temple. Luis Takuda, an archaeologist in Lima's Rimac district, said the temple was likely built 3,500 years ago. "This whole area

is a very important ceremonial chamber," Takuda said. "The people who lived here during the Ychsma period still considered it a sacred space and therefore buried their dead here." Takuda said the mummies' skulls still had hair on them. The remains were found alongside ceramics. With a population of about 10 million, the Peruvian

capital is home to some 400 archaeological ruins. Peru's largest archaeological sites are located outside Lima in places such as Cusco, which was the capital of the Inca Empire and fell to Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century.

Lifestyle



Members of South Korean girl band BLACKPINK attend the State Banquet during the South Korean President state visit, at Buckingham Palace in London, Britain.



Lisa (Lalisa Manoban), Jennie Kim, President of South Korea Yoon Suk Yeol, Britain's King Charles, First Lady of South Korea Kim Keon Hee, Rose (Roseanne Park), and Jisoo Kim following a special investiture ceremony to present the members of the K-Pop band BLACKPINK with Honorary MBEs (Member of the Order of the British Empire), conducted by King Charles in the presence of the President and his wife at Buckingham Palace, London, Britain.

# K-POP STARS BLACKPINK GET UK HONORS FOR CLIMATE ADVOCACY

The four megastar members of K-pop girl group BLACKPINK were given one of Britain's most prestigious honors Wednesday by King Charles III, recognizing their work as environmental advocates. The South Korean sensations received honorary MBEs (Members of the Order of the British Empire) from the British monarch, which reward outstanding achievement or service to the community.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and First Lady Kim Keon Hee—on a state visit to Britain—looked on as Roseanne Park (Rosé), Jennie Kim, Jisoo Kim and Lalisa Manoban (Lisa) were handed the honors at a Buckingham Palace ceremony. The K-pop quartet—and first couple of South Korea—were back at the palace just hours after attending a lavish state

banquet held there for Yoon and Kim on Tuesday night.

Announcing the MBEs, the palace said BLACKPINK were honored for its members' work as advocates for the COP26 climate summit in 2021. "Through this role, the band encouraged millions of young people to engage with the global UN climate change conference, held in Glasgow, and the topic of climate action," the palace said in a statement. "The MBEs, awarded on the recommendation of the UK Government, were presented at an Investiture this morning in the 1844 Room at Buckingham Palace," it added.

The band, whose four members have tens of millions of followers on social media, released a series of videos in 2021 aimed at encouraging young people to learn more about climate

change. Organizers say it resulted in significantly increased engagement with the UK-hosted summit by young audiences.

Charles is a lifelong environmentalist, who spoke at COP26 and will deliver a speech at the opening of the COP28 climate conference in the United Arab Emirates starting next week. Following their COP26 roles, BLACKPINK, who first emerged out of South Korea's wildly popular K-pop scene in 2016, were appointed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as ambassadors for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.—AFP

BLACKPINK was honored by King Charles at Buckingham Palace.



Dr Who fan Tony Jordan poses for a photograph with his TARDIS in the garden of his home in Cannock, central England.—AFP

## UK sci-fi hit 'Doctor Who' celebrates 60th anniversary

Britain celebrates the 60th anniversary of science-fiction series "Doctor Who" Saturday as fans hail a program that has enthralled generations since it was first broadcast. Six million people watched the first episode when it was aired at teatime on November 23, 1963, following the adventures of "The Doctor", a fugitive Time Lord with two hearts from the planet Gallifrey. The enduring series—the longest-running of its genre in the world—is expected to release a new season next year.

In the beginning, not everyone was immediately won over, particularly by the TARDIS, his hybrid spacecraft/time machine mostly in the form of an old-fashioned British police call box that is bigger on the inside. "A police box with flashing beacon travelling through interstellar space—what claptrap!" said one viewer surveyed by the BBC.

A more prophetic view came from parents who said it promised to be "very entertaining" and accurately predicted their children "would love it". Life-long fan Tony Jordan, 64, has a full-sized TARDIS replica in his garden. He said some of his first memories were of being petrified by foes of the doctor as he watched with his mother as a young boy. "It was the monsters—the Daleks, the Cybermen, the Ice Warriors—that just really got my imagination," said Jordan, from Heath Hayes, central England.

Jordan said financial constraints were a big part of Doctor Who's success. "When people are under budget pressure it does force them to be more creative than maybe they might have been," he said "Especially in the early days, they couldn't just CGI everything because that technology simply didn't exist so it forced them to come up with something that captures people's imaginations." The anniversary will be marked with three television specials with the first—"Star Beast"—due to go out on the BBC and Disney+ on Saturday.

1963/4 that introduced the extraterrestrial race of xenophobic mutants with their chant of "Exterminate! Exterminate!"

The program quickly established itself as a cultural landmark in the UK. Its longevity was assured by a decision to "regenerate" the lead character when first Doctor, played by actor William Hartnell, left the show in 1966. The humanoid Time Lords can cheat death by changing their entire appearance—a cornerstone of the show which has now featured more than a dozen actors in the title role.

"It was born out of production demands but they took the idea and ran with it to reboot the show every few years when they need," said Jordan. He recalls being "a little bit confused" at seeing one of the early switches. "I didn't know why The Doctor was now a man in a leather jacket rather than a 1960s gentleman character, but I got over that quite quickly," he said.

**Global appeal**

Doctor Who's journey to world-wide popularity began when the US sci-fi community embraced it after the series was bought by PBS. Fans—of all ages, and from all over the world—now regularly meet at huge arena-sized events to meet their idols and fellow enthusiasts. The 50th anniversary special episode a decade ago was shown in 94 countries.

Although the BBC shelved Doctor Who in 1989, it was revived in 2005 under the stewardship of screenwriter and producer Russell T. Davies. The show is now a BBC co-production with Disney and the three specials are due to be broadcast on successive Saturdays from this week. After that, 15th doctor Ncuti Gatwa—the first actor of color to play the part—will take over from Jodie Whittaker, the first woman in the role. "It seems like it's going to be bigger than ever," said Jordan.

But while the new series will undoubtedly be slicker, he said it would remain true to the vision of the early program makers. "It's that cliché of children hiding behind the sofa while their parents watch it, it's an opportunity for people to get together and be swept away by a magical sci-fi adventure," he said. "That will always be the core of Doctor Who."—AFP

## 'Lost diamonds': Rare Russian books stolen from European libraries

A spate of thefts of rare Russian classics worth millions of euros from libraries across Eastern Europe has left a trail that points all the way to auctions in Russia. Shelves of 19th century Russian literature have been ransacked over the past two years in Poland and the Baltic states, with originals replaced by fakes. The University of Warsaw library only found out last month about the thefts, including first editions of works by Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol.

A university employee with knowledge of the matter estimated the value of the stolen books at "around a million euros". "It was like gouging out the crown jewels," Hieronim Grala, a former diplomat, an expert in Russia policy and professor at the University of Warsaw told AFP. "Fortunately, not everything was picked out, but a few emeralds, diamonds and rubies are lost," said Grala, who has helped the university assess the damages.

The theft in Warsaw was not an isolated event. Libraries in the three Baltic countries have also fallen prey to thieves, and in each case Russian literature was targeted. Experts believe the stolen works have found their way to Russia, with at least some sold off at hasty auctions in Moscow.



A fake copy of a 1813 book as the thief left the original library binding of the book where he pasted a digital copy of the book prepared earlier, while the original copy was taken away, at the University of Warsaw library.

**'Industrial scale'**

The first known case of what turned out to be a series of similar raids was detected at the National Library of Latvia last year, when three books were stolen. A Georgian citizen was later found guilty of stealing them and sentenced to six months in prison, but his accomplice remained at large. In the same month, two men claiming to be studying censorship and printing policy in early 19th-century Russia showed up at the university library in the Estonian city of Tartu and asked for the nearly 200-year-old works of Pushkin and Gogol.

It was only four months later that the library realized they had left behind eight convincing-looking copies, not the books that were later estimated to be worth a

**'Organized from Russia'**

Sources close to the Warsaw library's investigation have shown AFP screenshots of auctions held by Russia's Litfond auction house with books carrying stamps and catalogue numbers of Warsaw University. "It is clear to me that the whole action was centrally organized from Russia," Grala told AFP. AFP contacted the Litfond auction house but its general director Sergei Burmistrov did not explicitly deny nor confirm any wrongdoing.

"The Litfond auction house works within the framework of the current legislation of the Russian Federation, and we do not accept for sale nor do we sell any books with stamps from existing state libraries", Burmistrov said. To Grala, there is a clear Russian link connecting the thefts in Poland and the Baltic countries which is hardly a surprise or coincidence. "The first three strikes hit those countries that the Russians accuse of fighting the Russian language and Russian culture," he told AFP.

"They recognized quite well that the Rossica (items related to Russian culture) are guarded less strictly in our region... and less guarded means more accessible." Poland's relations with Russia have long been strained, with Warsaw being an ardent critic of the Kremlin and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Both sides frequently trade barbs about protecting each other's cultural heritage. Grala could barely hide his emotion as he spoke of how he was "devastated" by the "irreversible" losses of Russian books that survived two national uprisings and two world wars on Polish soil.

"The librarians of the University of Warsaw, risking their lives during the war, secretly built a double ceiling and hid the books so that they wouldn't disappear or burn down," Grala told AFP. "And we couldn't protect them from looting."—AFP



A university employee presents a fake copy of a first edition of the 1822 book 'Kavkazskiy plennik: povest' by Alexander Pushkin at the University of Warsaw library in Warsaw, Poland.—AFP photos



A university employee presents a fake copy of a 1813 book at the University of Warsaw library.



A university employee presents a fake copy of a 1833 book, edition of 1822 book 'Kavkazskiy plennik: povest' by Alexander Pushkin at the University of Warsaw library.

## Sports

# Jet-lagged F1 circus ready for final showdown at Abu Dhabi

## For the teams, the finishing positions are worth millions in prize money

PARIS: Just five days after winning in Las Vegas, Max Verstappen will climb into his Red Bull for the final time this year on Friday when he begins his bid for another record-extending triumph at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Like the rest of a weary Formula One circus, the three-time world champion will be fatigued and probably struggling with jet lag following a 12-hour time difference switch after four consecutive races in the Americas.

Verstappen's win on 'Sin City's' neon-lit street circuit was his 18th in 21 races this season and the 53rd of his career. It brought him level with four-time champion Sebastian Vettel in the record books and only Michael Schumacher on 91 wins and Lewis Hamilton on 103 lie ahead.

With team-mate Sergio Perez finishing third, behind Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, the outcome in Nevada confirmed Red Bull's first one-two finish in the drivers' championship ahead of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, the team having won the constructors' title by more than 400 points to claim a memorable double. It is the first time since 2015 that the top three places in the drivers' title race have been settled before the season finale.

### Fighting for scraps

The fact that no other team has yet claimed 400 points – compared to Red Bull's current total of 822 – expresses clearly that advantage they have built this year. As a result, most attention at the Yas Marina circuit will be on the

scraps among the also-rans with Mercedes defending second place in the teams' title race on 392 points against Ferrari on 388, with McLaren in a similar fight with Aston Martin for fourth.

For the teams, the finishing positions are worth millions in prize money while, in the drivers' contest, it is all about personal ambition and pride with Formula One's two Spanish drivers, Carlos Sainz of Ferrari, and his compatriot two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin, locked together on 200 points.

Sainz has the decisive advantage of one race win this season, but both could be vulnerable to the efforts of McLaren's Lando Norris, sixth on 195, and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, seventh on 188, if they fail to perform or finish. For Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff, it is a critical race weekend.

"Ferrari have closed the gap in the constructors' to just four points and we're ready to give it our all in Abu Dhabi to come out on top," he said, having noted that his team's inconsistency and bad luck with incidents undid them in Las Vegas.

"They have shown good form recently, but we know we haven't maximized our performance in the past few races. It will be a close fight and hopefully we can finish the season with a strong performance and on the front foot."

On form, Sunday's race under lights will see Verstappen start as favourite at a circuit where he has won each race since 2020 when his maiden Yas



ABU DHABI: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc and Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen attend a press conference ahead of the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix at the Yas Marina Circuit in the Emirati city of Abu Dhabi on November 23, 2023. — AFP

Marina triumph ended six consecutive victories by Mercedes, four of them by Hamilton who may relish this weekend's action. The seven-time champion

will miss opening practice on Friday, however, when the team give junior driver Frederik Vesti his car, a second appearance in practice for the Dane

having replaced George Russell in Mexico's F1 as part of the mandatory obligation of teams to give rookies an opportunity. — AFP

## Samuels banned from cricket for six years

NEW DELHI: Former West Indies star Marlon Samuels has been banned from all cricket for six years for breaching an anti-corruption code, the sport's world body said on Thursday. The charges relate to the 42-year-old's stint in a T10 league in the United Arab Emirates in 2019. He has since retired from all cricket.

The former top-order batsman — who was also

banned in 2008 — was found by an independent tribunal to have made four breaches of the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code. "Though he is retired now, Mr Samuels was a participant when the offences were committed," said Alex Marshall, general manager of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"The ban of six years will act as a strong deterrent to any participant who intends to break the rules." Samuels played a key role in the West Indies' two T20 World Cup triumphs, in 2012 and 2016. He played 71 Tests, 207 one-day internationals and 67 T20s for the West Indies between 2000 and 2018.

One of the charges was that he failed to disclose "the receipt of any gift, payment, hospitality or other benefit" that "could bring the participant or the sport of cricket into disrepute", said the ICC.

The ban took effect on November 11. "Samuels played international cricket for close to two decades, during which he participated in numerous anti-corruption sessions and knew exactly what his obligations were under the anti-corruption codes," said Marshall.

Other offences included failing to disclose "receipt of hospitality with a value of \$750 or more" and failing to cooperate with the investigation. He scored over 11,000 international runs and also took more than 150 wickets in a career marred by several controversies.

He was banned for two years in 2008 after being caught on tape passing on match-related information to an Indian bookmaker during the West Indies' ODI tour of India in 2007. — AFP



ORLANDO: (FILES) US golfer Tiger Woods and his son, Charlie, high five on the 1st hole during the final round of the PNC Championship at Ritz-Carlton Golf Club on December 18, 2022 in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

## Tiger and son to play in parent-child event

MIAMI: Tiger Woods, set to make his return to competition next week following ankle surgery in April, said Wednesday he will partner with son Charlie in a parent-child tournament next month. Woods will make his comeback at the Hero World Challenge invitational event he hosts in the Bahamas on November 30-December 3, then pair with 14-year-old Charlie at the PNC Championship on December 16-17 at Ritz-Carlton Golf Club in Orlando, Florida.

"It's an amazing gift to be able to share my love of golf with Charlie and we genuinely do look forward to playing in the PNC Championship all year," Woods said. "Competing together against a field of so many golfing greats and their families is so special."

The 15-time major winner has not played since the Masters last April. He withdrew in the third round due to plantar fasciitis and had the surgery shortly thereafter on an ankle that suffered severe injuries in a 2021 car crash.

Woods, who turns 48 on December 30, and his son will compete in the parent-child event for the fourth consecutive year. While Woods will have to walk 72 holes in the Bahamas, carts are permitted in the 36-hole PNC event.

Woods caddied for his son at a junior event earlier this month and Charlie's high school team won a Florida state title earlier this month. Tiger and Charlie Woods, who finished second in 2021, are among 20 pairs who will compete in a scramble format handicapped by tees based on age. — AFP

## Rashid Khan out of Australia's BBL

ADELAIDE: Star Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan pulled out of Australia's Big Bash League Thursday with a back injury that requires minor surgery, his team said. The world's top-ranked Twenty20 bowler was due to play for the Adelaide Strikers for a seventh year at the tournament starting next month.

"Rashid is a beloved member of the Strikers and a fan favourite who has been with us for seven years, so he will be extremely missed this summer," club general manager Tim Nielson said in a statement. "Rashid loves Adelaide and the Strikers, and we know how much he loves playing in the BBL, and we support him as he has treatment for this injury to ensure his long-term involvement in the game."

Khan has played every season with the Strikers since bursting on the scene as a 19-year-old in 2017, bagging 98 wickets in 69 matches with best figures of 6-17. His withdrawal is another blow for the BBL after hard-hitting England batter Harry Brook last week opted out of playing for the Melbourne Stars because of workload concerns. — AFP

## Australian openers vie for attention in Pakistan warm-up

SYDNEY: Aspiring Test openers Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris and Matt Renshaw were all included in a strong Australian side Thursday for a warm-up match against Pakistan as they audition to replace the retiring David Warner.

They were among six players with Test experience in the Prime Minister's XI for a four-day red-ball encounter with the visitors in Canberra next month to open the Australian summer. The two sides meet in three Tests — in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney — from December 14 with veteran opener Warner indicating he would quit the longer format afterwards.

That would leave a vacancy to open alongside Usman Khawaja in the following two Tests in mid-January against the West Indies. All-rounder Cameron Green was also named in the PM's XI as he works to reclaim his Test spot after falling out of favor in all three formats over the past few months.

"We're pleased to reward some of our leading first-class performers over multiple seasons with an opportunity to face quality international opposition," said chairman of selectors George Bailey. "With a heavy workload of Test cricket coming this summer, this match provides an opportunity to continue to



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's head coach Mohammad Hafeez (3R) speaks with cricket players during a practice session, ahead of their Australia tour to play three Test match series at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on November 23, 2023. — AFP

build depth around our national red-ball squad." PM's XI: Nathan McSweeney (capt), Cameron Bancroft, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris,

Nathan McAndrew, Todd Murphy, Michael Neser, Jimmy Peirson, Matthew Renshaw, Mark Steketee, Beau Webster. — AFP

## LIV unveils 2024 schedule with 12 events in 8 nations

MIAMI: The LIV Golf League released its 2024 regular-season schedule on Wednesday even as merger talks continue between LIV's Saudi backers and the US PGA Tour over a framework agreement. The campaign runs from February to August with 12 events in eight nations and is to be followed by LIV's individual and team championship tournaments, details of which were not announced.

Some of LIV's events are opposite US PGA Tour signature events, a signal that golf's civil war could heat up next year if no merger deal is finalized. The fracture began in 2022 when several top PGA names departed for LIV and were banned from PGA events.

The PGA Tour Policy Board must approve any deal by the end of the year for a merger to be completed under a deal with the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund (PIF) that PGA of-

officials announced in June. Since then, other groups have sought equity deals with the PGA Tour.

LIV's 2024 campaign is set to open February 2-4 at Mayakoba in Mexico — opposite a PGA signature event at Pebble Beach — with the next event in Las Vegas on February 8-10 just ahead of the Super Bowl being played in the Nevada gambling showplace.

LIV will play in Saudi Arabia on March 1-3 and at the Hong Kong Golf Club on March 8-10 — opposite a US PGA signature stop at Bay Hill — with another event at an unspecified US layout on April 5-7 on the week before the Masters. Adelaide will play host to LIV Golf on April 26-28 with a Singapore stop on May 3-5.

LIV will play in Houston on June 7-9 — opposite the Jack Nicklaus-hosted PGA signature event The Memorial — on the week before



the US Open at Pinehurst and LIV talent will tee off in Nashville on June 21-23 opposite a PGA signature event, the Travelers Championship.

A Spanish tournament will be played July 12-14 at Valderrama ahead of the British Open at Royal Troon with a LIV event at the JCB Golf and Country Club in Staffordshire, England, on July 26-28.

The regular-season finale, an-

other US event, will be contested at Greenbrier in West Virginia on August 16-18 — opposite the first weekend of the US PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoffs. "We're thrilled to announce an exciting slate of events that reflects our commitment to bringing world-class players and premier competition to new and repeat markets every year," LIV Golf commissioner Greg Norman said. — AFP

Sports

# Venezuela in diplomatic row with Peru after controversial soccer match

## Maduro accuses Peru's authorities of 'xenophobia' against its national team

CARACAS: Venezuela's government lambasted Peru on Wednesday following a contentious football match between their teams in Lima, after which Venezuelan players accused Peruvian police of beating them as they went to greet fans. The diplomatic spat began after a 1-1 draw between the countries' national teams in a 2026 World Cup qualifier on Tuesday, with Venezuelan officials alleging xenophobia on the part of Peruvian authorities.

After the Venezuelan team's flight home was delayed on Wednesday, a claim disputed by the airport operator. "A complicated trip, but thank God we're home and we're fine," said Venezuelan footballer Miguel Navarro after landing Wednesday night in Caracas, where players were greeted by dozens of fans with applause and music.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro accused Peru's authorities of "xenophobia" against the national team and its fans. "The xenophobia of that racist oligarchy of Peru has been unleashed against our noble team. Venezuela has raised its voice to protest against xenophobia, violence and aggression," Maduro said.

Venezuela's relations with Peru have been strained, especially since the ouster of leftist President Pedro Castillo in 2022 and the inauguration of successor Dina Boluarte. Tuesday's game marked a tumultuous night for the South American qualifiers, following a match between Brazil and Argentina in

Rio de Janeiro which saw ugly clashes between fans.

### 'They hit me twice'

Venezuelan footballer Nahuel Ferraresi earlier showed bandages on his right hand, saying Peruvian police "beat me." "These are things which should not happen. The match was over and we went to thank our Venezuelan supporters," he said.

Ferraresi said another player had handed his jersey over to fans, and he was about to throw his to the crowd when the police blocked him. "Then others got angry. I don't know what happened, and (the police) took out their batons to hit us. They hit me twice... but it's not a serious injury."

Videos of the incident, which show Peruvian police officers brandishing their batons against the players, have gone viral on social media. Venezuela's football federation condemned "acts of discrimination and xenophobia" against the team and their fans, including the injuring of Ferraresi by a police officer.

The country's sports ministry said it was "embarrassing that a football event of such importance has been used as a battlefield to expose the basest passions of anti-Venezuelan xenophobia." Sports minister Mervin Maldonado said the football federation had communicated to world football governing body FIFA about the match's aftermath.

Upon his return to Venezuela, Navarro called the



LIMA: Peru's midfielder Yoshimar Yotun (Top) fights for the ball with Venezuela's midfielder Yangel Herrera during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualification football match between Peru and Venezuela at the National Stadium in Lima. — AFP

played in three of his country's four games at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

played in three of his country's four games at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"Now we have only one wish for Christmas," German great Klinsmann told reporters after landing in South Korea following Tuesday's 3-0 World Cup qualifying win away in China. "That is to get Son Jun-ho released because until today, they have not proven anything that he did wrong. So we hope that the Chinese government will release him, hopefully before Christmas, to see his family," Klinsmann added. In a show of support, Klinsmann included Son in his squad for two friendlies in June despite his detention.

The Korea Football Association told AFP at the time that it had sent officials to China to seek Son's release, but the player's lawyer was "reluctant" to speak to them. Asked about Son's case on Thursday, Beijing's foreign ministry said China was a "country



Jurgen Klinsmann

under the rule of law". China "handles cases strictly according to law and protects the legitimate rights and interests of the parties involved," spokeswoman Mao Ning said. — AFP

iard attached all the blame to being given a dodgy rear tyre. "It's a pity that in a championship like this, after such a great season, working hard, I feel like they stole it from me," said Martin.

"Because I think I could've done it before this race - now it's really difficult." The 25-year-old has indeed been the coming man in the second-half of the season, eating into Bagnaia's 62 point lead. His sense of grievance, though, knows no bounds and his team will hope he can channel that this weekend into righting what he palpably perceives as a wrong.

"I was the only rider in all the grid, in all categories, that this happened to," he said. "So for sure there was something wrong with the tyre. It's a pity that this happened to us. For sure I think they need to improve. — AFP



NEW YORK: Tony Estanguet (R), President of the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and Thomas Bach, President of International Olympic Committee (IOC), speak at the UN General Assembly, in New York. — AFP

progress but we are not quite there," she said.

Meanwhile, more than 400,000 Paris Olympics tickets will go on sale at the end of November in what organisers said on Wednesday would be one of the last chances to buy them. The sale of the tickets, some of which were kept back for commercial reasons and some of which have become available due to the configuration of sites, will begin at 0900 GMT on November 30 on the paris2024.org website and

reasons related to fuel supply," the company that operates Jorge Chavez International Airport in Lima said, denying it was a result of "security controls." Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil described the delayed flight as a "kidnapping." — AFP

## Kuwait's Sheikh Talal Fahad wins Al-Maktoum Creative Sports award

ABU DHABI: The 12th Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum for Creative Sports Award choose Kuwait's Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Arab sports personality of the year. The media office of the award said that Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad, who was head of the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) in 2010-2016 and held other positions, was chosen for his immense contribution to sports.



Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Other honorees included FIFA President Gianni Infantino who was selected for his role in introducing new technologies in football and also for tightening drug testing process globally. The list also had Crown Prince of the Emirate of Ajman Sheikh Amer bin Hamid Al-Nuaimi as the UAE sports personality of the year. The 12th Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum for Creative Sports Award is one of the premier sports prizes given to individuals that contribute and promote various sports disciplines. — KUNA

can be bought from anywhere in the world. "This is without doubt one of the last opportunities to buy tickets for the Olympics. These tickets are becoming rarer and rarer," organisers said. They will encompass the entire range of sports and sessions, including for sports that organisers have previously said are sold out, such as swimming.

Nearly 6,000 tickets will be for the swimming, 30,000 will be for athletics, 24,000 for the tennis, 14,000 for the equestrian events and 25,000 for the beach volleyball, which will have a spectacular setting at the foot of the Eiffel Tower.

Organisers said nearly 70,000 of these newly released tickets would cost 24 euros (\$26), the lowest price category of any of the tickets sold for the Games, which run from July 26 to August 11. The tickets will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

Much lower numbers of tickets will be released in the next few months and it will also be possible to purchase tickets on the re-selling site that will open next year. Around 7.2 million tickets have already been sold for the Paris Games but some of the prices of tickets currently available have drawn criticism in France. For example, the tickets currently available for the athletics at the Stade de France are priced at between 295 euros (for people with handicaps and their companions) and 980 euros. — AFP

## Klinsmann urges China to free detained South Korean player

SEOUL: South Korea coach Jurgen Klinsmann has called on the Chinese government to release World Cup midfielder Son Jun-ho in time for Christmas. Beijing's foreign ministry said in May that the 31-year-old had been detained "on suspicion of accepting bribes by non-state employees", without giving details. South Korean media reported that Son was being held in the northeastern province of Liaoning but there has been no news of his fate since. Son had been with Chinese Super League side Shandong Taishan since 2021 and

## Martin cries foul as MotoGP race goes to the wire

VALENCIA: Francesco Bagnaia goes into the final weekend of a thrilling MotoGP season in Valencia with the defence of his crown still in the balance though sole rival Jorge Martin appears to have given up hope, claiming "they stole it (title) from me."

The 'they' Martin is referring to is tyre supplier Michelin who he claims cost him valuable points in last Sunday's Qatar MotoGP—the Ducati-Prima-

extended a low-key official trip to a French Pacific territory in October with a two-week private visit in the holiday paradise.

Critics have dubbed the controversy as "Tahiti-gate" and accused the mayor of seeking to disguise her absence by posting archive images on social media channels of her in Paris, including a video of her cycling along the Seine. Hidalgo has vehemently denied any wrongdoing. Transport Minister Clement Beaune, a close ally of centrist President Emmanuel Macron, accused Hidalgo of not being present at committee meetings aimed at discussing transport infrastructure.

"Mrs Hidalgo is not there, does not participate in work meetings but has an opinion for others. What respect she has for our public officials and for Parisians!", he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "We will be ready," wrote Valerie Pecesse, the head of the Ile-de-France region that includes Paris, thanking transport staff for their efforts. "It is an immense collective work which should not be tarnished by an absent mayor," she added.

On the situation of the homeless, Hidalgo said she wanted to use the Olympics as a chance to find a long-term solution to the issue of people sleeping on streets and inside metro stations in Paris. "Everyone agrees on the need to make progress. We must make

## Paris transport 'will not be ready' for Olympics

PARIS: The transport system in Paris will not be ready in time for the 2024 Olympic Games in the French capital, its mayor said, sparking anger Thursday from political opponents. With less than a year before the event kicks off, the transport infrastructure in Paris is already under huge pressure, with commuters and tourists alike complaining of poor frequency, overcrowding and uncleanliness.

Speaking on the Quotidien talk show on TMCTV, Hidalgo said that while the Games infrastructure will be ready "there are two things for which we will not be ready" namely transport and also the problem of homelessness. On transport, "we still have problems in daily transport issues and we are still not reaching the comfort and punctuality needed for Parisians."

"There are places where the transport will not be ready and there will not be enough trains." Political opponents lashed out at the Socialist mayor, who has been under pressure this month after it emerged she

extended a low-key official trip to a French Pacific territory in October with a two-week private visit in the holiday paradise.

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# 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	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

### Change of Name

**I, Hakimuddin** holder of Indian Passport No. V6127603 having permanent Address 118 Bahadar Pura, Bakhal, Ujjain, Pin:456001, Madhya Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given Name Hakimuddin and surname Lightwala. **#4563 - 24-11-2023**

**I, Husain** holder of Indian Passport No. M5457327 having permanent address 78 Ibrahim Pura Bhakal, Kharakuwa, Ujjain, Pin: 456006, Madhya Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will

be read as : given name Husain and surname Ajabshawala. **#4564 - 24-11-2023**

**I, Harvinder Singh** S/o Baldev Singh, Holder of Indian Passport No. W4660240, Permanent Address is Ward Number 7, Patti Nissoki, Mudki, Tehsil & Dist. Ferozpur (Pb.), India, now residing in Kuwait hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Harwinder Singh. **#4562 - 22-11-2023**

**I, Mahaboob Basha Shaik**, holder of Indian Passport No L8616981, issue at Kuwait, Indian permanent address 5/46 Guntikdada Palli, Pulikunta, Galiveedu,

Cuddapah, Andhra Pradesh, 516267, India, present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be reads as under Given name Minuddin and Surname Shaik.) **#4561 - 22-11-2023**

**I, Deva Lenil**, Holder of Indian Passport No. T8278498, Issue at Kuwait Indian permanent address 100, 1 Palavesa Muthan Thattu Naduvakurichi Vill, Thayyarmadam- Post, Sathankulam Taluk, Thoothukudi-Pin- 628653 Tamilnadu, India present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Deva Lenil and surname Antony Jeganraja. **#4560 - 22-11-2023**

## Aussies clinch Davis Cup semis spot

**MALAGA:** Australia produced a stunning comeback to beat the Czech Republic 2-1 on Wednesday and set up a Davis Cup semi-final clash with Finland. Last year's runners-up almost crashed out in the last eight but Alex de Minaur pulled Australia back from the brink by beating Jiri Lehecka 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 in the second singles rubber.

The world number 12 levelled the tie after Tomas Machac defeated Jordan Thompson 6-4, 7-5 in the opening battle and forced a deciding rubber, won by Wimbledon 2022 doubles champions Matthew Ebden and Max Purcell.

They defeated the returning Lehecka and Adam Pavlasek 6-4, 7-5 on a rollercoaster night for the team with the second most Davis Cup wins in the competition's history, 28, behind only the United States. Despite their rich history Australia have not won the competition since 2003 and looked set for elimination with Lehecka serving for the tie against De Minaur, who dug deep to find a new level to keep his country's dream alive.

"I just told myself to keep fighting, keep playing till the last point, you never know, sometimes you get your chances," said De Minaur. "I got a little sniff, I was able to roll with it. I think my reputation kind of is quite strong when it comes to these types of situations, it

kind of precedes me—maybe I won that match because of that today." The only time the Czech Republic have beaten Australia in 10 clashes was in 1975, but the three-time champions came extremely close in Malaga. "We were one game from going home, for him to fight back and win that match is one of the



Alex De Minaur

best comebacks I've ever seen," said Ebden.

Australia captain Lleyton Hewitt has been one of the most critical of the controversial updated Davis Cup format which began in 2019, and Green and Gold fans were outnumbered by Czech supporters at the Martin Carpena arena.

Over two-thirds of seats were filled, although the atmosphere could not match surprise package Finland's win over reigning champions Canada on Tuesday, willed to life by a few thousand noisy Nordic fans.

Machac, 23, slapped a forehand winner down-the-line to break Thompson in the first game and

it was enough to secure him the first set. The second was just as tight and when Machac broke for 5-4, Thompson immediately battled back to pull level, breaking the Czech for the first time in the match.

Machac broke again though with a passing shot and clinched the match with another forehand winner. "I only got one break and it was an absolute battle to get it," said a disappointed Thompson. His defeat left the pressure on De Minaur's shoulders to keep the Green and Gold in the hunt for their 200th tie victory.

### Stunning comeback

Lehecka broke for a 3-2 lead in the first set and held off De Minaur in the epic final game, surviving five break points and eventually converting his fourth set point. The Czech, ranked 31st in the world, broke again for a 2-1 lead in the second set, which he held on to, surviving three more break points for a 5-3 lead.

However Lehecka froze when serving for the tie, going long repeatedly and broken to love by a De Minaur who suddenly found another gear, winning 10 consecutive points and dominating the tie-break to force a decider. De Minaur broke Lehecka to start the third set and consolidated it, but the Czech broke back for 2-2. The Australian took a 6-5 lead when he broke again and wrapped up the set to love to complete his superb comeback. "It's great to have such amazing support, this is an Australian Davis Cup team, we fight until the end and we're never dead," said De Minaur.

The consistent Ebden and Purcell pairing only dropped two points on their serves in the first set and broke in the seventh game to take it. They pressed the Czech duo on their serves in the second set and eventually found a way through to move 6-5 ahead, serving it out to send Australia through to face Finland on Friday.

On Thursday Novak Djokovic's Serbia face Great Britain and Jannik Sinner's Italy play the Netherlands in the remaining last eight matches. — AFP

## Nick Kyrgios takes inspiration from Zverev for comeback

**SYDNEY:** Fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios said he is doing everything he can to get back on court and is taking inspiration from Alexander Zverev in his recovery from serious injury. Kyrgios, the one-time world number 13, had knee surgery in January and then aborted comeback plans at Wimbledon after tearing a ligament in his wrist.

He is yet to set a date for his return, and told the Tennis Channel "the stars have to align a little bit". "After last year, I had such a great year, and I'm so hungry to get back out there," he told the broadcaster late Wednesday on the sidelines of the ATP Finals in Turin, where he made his debut in the commentary box.

"So I'm doing everything I can to get back out there. Obviously, you know how injuries are every day, just doing the rehab, doing the gym work." Kyrgios made his debut in the commentary box during the clash between Zverev and Daniil Medvedev, and he cited the German as inspiration in his battle to regain fitness.

"With Zverev, he's an incredibly hard worker. That's his reputation," he said. "He ticks all the boxes and, if someone like that can come back from an injury like that, I think that's what I have to draw inspiration from for sure."

Zverev suffered a serious ankle injury in last year's French Open semi-final against Rafael Nadal. He needed surgery and subsequent complications derailed the rest of his 2022 season, but he has fought back and is once again inside the top 10.

Kyrgios told Australia's Nine Network earlier this month that winning a Grand Slam remained his driving force, having come closest at Wimbledon in 2022 when he lost to Novak Djokovic in the final. "I want to just be able to say I won one Grand Slam, singles, before I retire," he said, pointing to Wimbledon as his number one target.

"That's the one I want to win and I was really close and I said I've still got that taste in my mouth of unfinished business. So I'm gonna try my best to get back there." — AFP

## Celtics bounce back to beat Bucks, Lakers comeback falls short

**LOS ANGELES:** The Boston Celtics got back to winning ways with a 119-116 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks in their top-of-the-table NBA Eastern Conference clash on Wednesday as the Dallas Mavericks thwarted an incredible LeBron James-inspired comeback to beat the Los Angeles Lakers 104-101.

The Celtics kissed goodbye to a six-game winning streak on Monday after crashing to an upset defeat against the lowly ranked Charlotte Hornets. But Boston ensured there was no chance of a repeat against Giannis Antetokounmpo and the visiting Bucks in Wednesday's showdown at the TD Garden, taking control of the contest in the first quarter to clinch a wire-to-wire win.

The Celtics were in charge after jumping out to an early 10-0 lead, and although the Bucks rallied in the fourth quarter to get within single digits, Boston regrouped and closed out victory. Boston's Jaylen Brown scored 26 points with support from Jayson Tatum, who finished with 23 points, 11 rebounds and four assists.

Kristaps Porzingis added 21 points on a night when no fewer than seven Boston players posted double-digit points totals as the Celtics preserved their unbeaten home record to improve to 12-3. "Just a team effort. We bounced back and regrouped from the last game," Tatum told ESPN after the win. "Sometimes you need to lose a game to regroup and regain focus. I love the way we started the game. They made a run late, they're a good team—but I liked the way we responded in the fourth quarter."

In other games on Wednesday, the Lakers fell just short of completing a remarkable comeback from a 20-point deficit against Dallas in Los Angeles. The Lakers appeared to be dead and buried trailing 91-71 at the start of the fourth quarter.

But James spearheaded a superb rally with 16 fourth-quarter points which helped the Lakers sneak into a 101-99 lead with just over a minute remaining. Yet James's former Cleveland teammate Kyrie Irving rescued the Mavs with a clutch three-pointer to put Dallas back ahead 102-101, and then added two late free throws to seal victory.

Irving finished with 28 points while Luka Doncic added 30 for Dallas. James, who missed a last-gasp three-point effort that would have forced overtime, finished with 26 points.

### Paul ejected in Suns loss

In Phoenix, Golden State's Chris Paul was ejected against his former club as the Suns won



PHOENIX: Moses Moody #4 of the Golden State Warriors lays up a shot past Drew Eubanks #14, Keita Bates-Diop #21 and Josh Okogie #2 of the Phoenix Suns during the second half of the NBA game at Footprint Center in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

a roller-coaster battle with the Warriors 123-115. After trailing by five in the first quarter, the Suns cut loose in the second, outscoring Golden State 37-16 to lay the foundations for victory. Paul was tossed in the closing moments of the first half after a tirade at game official Scott Foster.

Phoenix star Kevin Durant scored 32 points against his former club to set up the win, with Devin Booker adding 25. Klay Thompson led the Golden State scoring with 23 points, including six three-pointers.

In Florida, meanwhile, the in-form Orlando Magic took down the reigning NBA champion Denver Nuggets 124-119. Franz Wagner (27) and Paolo Banchero (23) combined for 50 points as Orlando overcame a nine-point deficit early in the fourth quarter to outscore Denver 42-31 in the final frame to seal victory. Nikola Jokic led the Denver scoring with a 30-point triple double that included 13 rebounds and 12 assists.

In Minneapolis, the Minnesota Timberwolves maintained their recent run of good form with a 112-99 defeat of the Philadelphia 76ers. Antho-

ny Edwards led Minnesota with 31 points while Karl-Anthony Towns added 23 points with 11 rebounds and three assists.

In Atlanta, Trae Young poured in 43 points for the Hawks in a 147-145 overtime thriller against the Brooklyn Nets. Mikal Bridges finished with a career-high 45 points, 10 rebounds and four assists for Brooklyn, but Young rattled in 14 points in overtime to seal Atlanta's win.

In San Antonio, the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard scored 26 points in a triumphant 109-102 return to his former club. French star Victor Wembanyama led San Antonio's scorers with 22 points. The game featured an unusual incident in the second quarter, with San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich grabbing a courtside microphone to appeal to Spurs fans to stop booing former player Leonard.

"Excuse me for a second—please stop all the booing, let these guys play, and show a little class," Popovich barked at the crowd as Leonard lined up a free throw. "It's not who we are—knock off the booing." — AFP

## Mercedes, Ferrari team bosses called to see race stewards

**ABU DHABI:** Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff and Ferrari's Fred Vasseur were summoned to see the Formula One race stewards at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Thursday for comments made during a news conference at last weekend's Las Vegas Grand Prix.

Wolff and Vasseur clashed in their views about the event in Nevada where Carlos Sainz's Ferrari car was damaged by a loose drain cover, leading to the abandonment of first practice. They were summoned by the race stewards in Abu Dhabi to determine if they had breached the sporting code of the ruling body, the International Motoring Federation (FIA).

Both Vasseur and Wolff were outspoken on the condition of the Las Vegas circuit and the event, allegedly using "certain language" that may have breached the code. The track repairs required by the damaged drain cover led to opening practice being reduced to nine minutes and a delay of more than two hours before second practice took place.

Sainz's car was extensively damaged by the drain cover and had to be rebuilt, resulting in the Spanish driver being handed a grid penalty. Mercedes were reported to be poised to protest if Ferrari had not been penalised for taking new components which exceeded the limit for Sainz.

Wolff objected to comments by Vasseur which were critical of the Las Vegas event and claimed it was a premature reaction after only half a day's action on the new track. The FIA's code states that "any words, deeds or writings that have caused moral injury or loss to the FIA, its bodies, its members or its executive officers, and more generally on the interest of motor sport and on the values defended by the FIA" would be considered a breach.

The stewards in Abu Dhabi have been delegated the authority to investigate by the stewards in Las Vegas because there was insufficient time to hold a hearing last weekend following the race on Saturday night. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: (File) Alfa Romeo's Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas races during the second practice session. — AFP