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## PREMIER STANDS TALL

Amir, Crown Prince congratulate PM after grilling ends without any motion

By B Izzak



**KUWAIT:** The first grilling against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah on Tuesday ended with no motion after the premier refused a host of charges made by MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf. During the five-hour debate of the grilling, the prime minister categorically denied the charges, saying he decided to face the grilling although it was against the constitution and rulings by the constitutional court.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad, in which he praised the democratic practice witnessed at the National Assembly session, including the overall discussions of the grilling against the premier. In his cable, HH the Amir praised the premier's performance, which he described as distinguished with high efficiency during his comprehensive responses to the grilling's topics.

HH the Amir also hailed the high spirit, competence and responsibility shown by members of the National As-

sembly within their constitutional right. HH the Amir expressed wishes of success to everyone serving the homeland, and all those who contribute in achieving progress and prosperity that we all seek. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a similar congratulatory cable to HH Sheikh Ahmad.

During the debate, HH Sheikh Ahmad said that his government has established strong cooperation with the National Assembly, and Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun once said that cooperation between the two bodies is the best in Kuwait's history. He also stressed that the timing of the grilling is not good when the Assembly is scheduled to debate a large number of crucial legislations for the benefit of the people and the country. Sheikh Ahmad said the Cabinet was formed only six months ago and during this short period, important achievements have been made.

HH the Prime Minister stated that any grilling motion submitted against the prime minister is supposed to be limited to the general policy of the government and its general framework. He touched on the political reforms undertaken by the government by cleansing the electoral process, criminalizing byelections, regulating citizens' voting process according to their civil ID address, and the government not participating in elections for the speakership of the National Assembly.

HH Sheikh Ahmad also said the Amiri pardon of some citizens came after extensive negotiations and was not a mere response to the grilling, nor was it conceived today. He added the Amiri pardon is an example of the pure will and sincere desire of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf for what is in the best interest of the country, as this move overcomes the burdens of the past and embodies the first step towards the future.

The premier cited several MPs who participated in long negotiations that ended with the approval of the amnesty, which made everyone happy, stressing on the necessity of overcoming missteps of the past and moving forward to tolerance. He reiterated his emphasis on adhering to the constitution and his desire to cooperate with the National Assembly and complete the Kuwaiti constitutional process.

At the end of the debate, Mudhaf declared his non-cooperation with the prime minister but he needed 10 MPs to sign the non-cooperation motion to become official. The letter did not secure that number and the grilling ended with no motion.

### Audit Bureau chief appointed

The National Assembly later elected in a closed session Issam Al-Roumi as the new chairman of the Audit Bureau, the state accounting watchdog. Roumi, a senior official at the bureau, replaces Faisal Al-Shaye, who was dismissed by the Assembly several months ago.

### Nod to chamber of commerce law

MPs also voted to pass in principle a historic law to place the influential Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the supervision of the ministry of commerce and industry.

Established in 1956, the chamber, which represents the country's elite businessmen and the business community in general, has remained an independent body not subjected to government monitoring. Commerce and Industry Minister Mohammad Al-Aiban said the main points of the new law is to subject the chamber to government supervision, the right to control fees and donations and the right to dismiss board members. The minister told the Assembly the law represents a qualitative shift in Kuwait's political history.

## Riyadh to host 2030 World Expo in latest success



**ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX, France:** Members of Saudi Arabia's Royal Commission for Riyadh celebrate at the Palais des Congres on Nov 28, 2023 after winning the right to host the 2030 World Expo. — AFP

**PARIS:** The Saudi capital Riyadh on Tuesday won the right to host the 2030 World Expo, defeating rival bids from Italy and South Korea to take hold of another global mega-event. With a pledge for an Expo "built by the world for the world", Saudi's bid smashed the opposition after months of intense lobbying in the run-up to the vote in Paris.

The World Expo — which traces its history back to the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris that saw the construction of the Eiffel Tower — is a months-long showcase event attracting millions of visitors that aims to respond to the specific challenges of the current time.

Hosting the Expo is of immense importance for Saudi Arabia whose bid has been spearheaded by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, as he seeks to secure the world's top events

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## Mediators seeking lasting Gaza truce

**GAZA:** A new group of Zionist captives were due to be freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners under an extended truce on Tuesday as mediators worked for a lasting halt to the devastating seven-week war. International figures hailed the pause in hostilities and releases of captives as a cause for hope. The Zionist entity and Hamas accused each other of violating the extended pause in incidents on Tuesday, though Qatari officials mediating in the conflict said this did not knock the truce off track.

As a two-day extension to the truce began Tuesday, US and Zionist intelligence chiefs were in Doha, capital of Qatar, to discuss the "next phase" of the

deal, a source briefed on their visit said. The Zionist entity and Hamas are under international pressure not to return to all-out fighting when the latest truce ends on Thursday, but instead to build on the prisoner swaps to find a solution to the conflict.

A source close to the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas told AFP that 10 hostages held in Gaza would be freed in return for 30 prisoners released from Zionist prisons on Tuesday. In addition to those releases, "some foreign workers held in Gaza" will also be freed, the source told AFP. The truce paused fighting that began on Oct 7. The Zionist entity's ground and air operation in the Gaza Strip has killed almost 15,000 people, mostly civilians.

Palestinian movements denounced what they dubbed "truce violations by the occupier", and an AFP journalist saw a Zionist tank fire three times in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City

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## All 41 trapped Indian workers freed from tunnel

**SILKYARA TUNNEL, India:** Indian workers were greeted with wild cheers and flower garlands Tuesday as rescuers safely brought out all 41 from the collapsed Himalayan road tunnel where they were trapped after a marathon 17-day engineering operation. With beaming smiles, the rescued men were welcomed as heroes after being hauled through 57m of steel pipe on stretchers specially fitted with wheels, where they were greeted by state officials before embracing their families.

"Hail mother India!" crowds outside the tunnel cheered, as news spread that all had made it safely out of the under-construction tunnel in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, where they had been incarcerated since a partial collapse on Nov 12. Relatives outside celebrated, after previous hopes of reaching the men were repeatedly dashed by falling debris and the breakdown of multiple drilling machines, in a rescue operation the government said took place in "challenging Himalayan terrain".

"We are thankful to God and the rescuers who worked hard to save them," Naiyer Ahmad told AFP, whose younger brother Sabah Ahmad was among the trapped workers, and who had been camping out



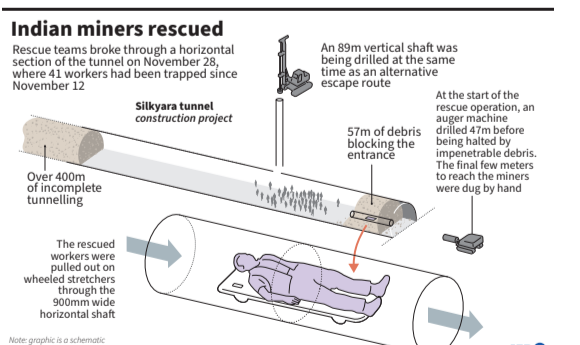
**UTTARKASHI, India:** A construction worker interacts with Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Pushkar Singh Dhami following his rescue from inside the under-construction Silkyara tunnel on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP

in bitterly cold temperatures at the site for over two weeks. "We are extremely happy, no words can explain it," said Musarrat Jahan, wife of Sabah Ahmad told AFP by phone from Bihar state, where she had been waiting desperately for news. "Not only my husband got a new life, we also got a new life. We will never forget it".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the workers in a statement that their "courage and patience is inspiring everyone". "Patience, hard work and faith won", said Uttarakhand state chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, praising the "prayers of tens of millions of countrymen and the tireless work of all the rescue teams." The



**A Palestinian child reacts after being released from a Zionist jail in the occupied West Bank on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP**



health of the workers was "fine", with a team of medics in a field hospital assessing them as soon as they were brought out, Dhami added.

Guriya Devi, wife of rescued worker Sushil Kumar, said she had been praying ever since the tunnel collapsed. "We passed through horrible times, and sometimes we lost hope — but ultimately the time has come to now celebrate". Munnihal Kishku, father of freed worker Birendar Kishku, said they had not celebrated Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, because it had happened the same time as the tunnel collapsed. "We will celebrate it when he reaches the village," he said.

After repeated setbacks in the operation, military engineers and skilled miners dug the final section by hand using a so-called "rathole" technique, a three-person team working at the rock face inside a metal pipe, just

Continued on Page 6

# Crown Prince receives invitation to Amir for upcoming GCC summit

## Sheikh Mishal receives Pakistani army chief, delegation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince receives the invitation on behalf of His Highness the Amir.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday an invitation from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to participate in the 44th GCC summit due in Doha on Dec 5. The invitation, incorporated in a letter, was handed over by the

Qatari Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud to His Highness the Crown Prince during a reception at Bayan Palace. The audience was attended by senior officials from Amiri and Crown Prince Diwans.

HH the Crown Prince received on Tuesday Chief of Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Lieu-



His Highness the Crown Prince receives Pakistan's Army Chief on Tuesday. — KUNA photos

tenant-General Syed Asim Munir and Minister for Law and Justice and Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Ahmad Irfan Aslam and the accompanying delegation.

The meeting was also attended by Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Malik Mohammad Farooq, Lieutenant General Munir and the military delegation accompany-

ing him arrived in the country on Tuesday morning on an official visit to the country that will last several days. The Ministry of Defense said in a press statement that Lieutenant General Munir was received upon his arrival in the country by the Acting Chief of the Army General Staff, Major General Engineer Dr Ghazi Al-Shammari and a number of senior army officers. — KUNA

## IICO chief pledges Kuwait's unwavering support of Palestine

KUWAIT: Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq, chairman of Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres special advisor, affirmed on Tuesday Kuwait's unwavering support to the Palestinian cause humanitarily and politically.

Dr Al-Matouq gave a statement to KUNA regarding Kuwait's support for Palestine the last 75 years, which marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to be held on November 29.

He added that the UN considered Kuwait as an International humanitarian aid center, pointing out his country has rushed to help the Palestinians in Gaza with 23 charities sending aid. This occurred under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as sending 30 relief planes containing vital things like ambulances, medical care and electricity, he revealed.

Dr Al-Matouq affirmed that Kuwait would keep on supporting Palestine through all means necessary especially in the current sorrowful situation where the Zionist occupation forces are carrying out an inhumane and brutal campaign against the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people in the West Bank. — KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly members attend a parliament session at the National Assembly in Kuwait City on November 28, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah speaks in the National Assembly.



Women attend the National Assembly session.



MPs during the National Assembly session on Tuesday.

## FM: Govt seeks discussion on harmful goods tax

KUWAIT: Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah said on Tuesday that the government requested an urgent discussion by the parliament's foreign affairs committee regarding the unified agreement on the harmful goods' tax in the GCC countries in preparation for approving the agreement.

During the regular session of the National Assembly, Al-Jarallah mentioned there would be coordination between the coordination committee and the priorities

committee to discuss the agreement. This matter is not connected to the value-added law and does not concern any commodity other than harmful goods he explained, adding that if the agreement is approved, it will determine the goods on which the tax will be imposed, which affect the health and safety of citizens and protects the environment, such as tobacco, energy drinks, and some carcinogenic substances. He underscored the importance of approving this tax for the ministry of finance, as it is part of non-oil revenues.

Members of the National Assembly during Tuesday's regular session approved assigning relevant committees to address a host of topics namely regulating trade in psychotropic medicines and irregularities in Kuwaitis' employment in the private sector and halt of visas for expatriate families. The MPs approved a number of letters: one proposes submitting a bill for amending the law on usage and trade of psychotropic drugs to the commit-

tee of internal and defense affairs and other deals with non-factual employment of citizens in the private sector.

They approved a request by the committee of improving business environment to allow examine repercussions of halting entry visas for expatriate families and visas for private sector's personnel. Moreover, the legislators approved a letter recommending the adoption of a national initiative to cope with negative impact of heavy rains, another advising that the committee of protecting public funds follow up on the case of the army fund, military bureaus affiliated to the ministry of defense and tasking the committee members to carry out field investigations in and outside Kuwait. Other topics that would be referred to the competent commissions upon their approval were the state digitization, infringements on state lands, roads repair, developing the northern region, Al-Harir city project, developing the ports and the islands. — KUNA



Chairman of Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq speaks.

## SHRM honors NBK for Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion for RISE program

DUBAI: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) received the Bronze Award for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion - 2023 by the Society for Human Resource Management Middle East & North Africa's office (SHRM). The recognition is credited to the NBK RISE program, a global initiative that aims to promote, support, and empower women leaders.

The bank was presented with the award during the Annual Human Resources Conference and Expo hosted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in Dubai. The event focused on key issues concerning human capital development, with a particular emphasis on the impacts of the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies on the future of organizations in general, with a focus on human resources management.

The Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion awards aims at recognizing organization which show a growing trend for setting transparent targets and increase organizational accountability towards the D&I initiatives. It requires organizations to encourage honest conversations between employees and their managers, inspire them to share ideas and solutions with the end goal of creating a diverse and inclusive work-

place environment where all employees can feel safe, respected, and valued.

Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on institutional initiatives that seek to empower women and provide support for female leaders. These initiatives are specifically designed to enhance crucial skills that will facilitate their career progression. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest HR professional society, representing 325,000 members in more than 165 countries and its influence extends to over 235 million workers and their families worldwide.

The NBK RISE program, introduced by Shaikha Al-Bahar in 2022, represents a concerted effort to consolidate initiatives aimed at empowering women to realize their full potential. The bank underscores its belief in the pivotal role of diversity and inclusion as crucial elements for ensuring the enduring success of institutions in the future.

The program spanned over the course of a year, featuring training sessions conducted in Kuwait and Spain at prominent business schools. It included mentorship opportunities provided by industry leaders, networking events, and comprehensive administrative support from the



bank. Additionally, the participants engaged in group workshops aimed at crystallizing ideas and proposals, involving a total of 21 trainees.

The program is an inspiring initiative, going beyond the boundaries of NBK's efforts. It extends its impact to involve several notable institutions in Kuwait. These organizations collectively demonstrated their commitment by signing a pledge focused on enhancing the representation of women in leadership roles. This shared commitment underscored their determination to collaborate seamlessly in the pursuit of the goals outlined in this global program.

In 2017, NBK Group was one of the first private sector institutions in the region to endorse UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPEs), a collaborative initiative by UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact. NBK has achieved a women participation



البنك الوطني NBK RISE

rate of 44 percent and increased the number of women in management to 29.6 percent as of 2022. Furthermore, the bank takes pride in ensuring pay equity between male and female employees in these positions.

Collaborating with leading universities and training institution around the world, NBK consistently offers specialized programs and workshops aimed at cultivating women leaders. These initiatives also focus on raising awareness about gender diversity and exploring how to leverage these distinctions to enhance productivity and foster innovation. Furthermore, the Bank is broadening its dedication to diversity and inclusion, extending to clients. It has

introduced products and services specifically designed for female clients and entrepreneurs, with a commitment to further developing these efforts as part of the ongoing commitment to enhance financial inclusion.

NBK is dedicated to promoting a culture that empowers women at all levels of the organization. This commitment includes efforts to enhance women's representation in leadership roles through the provision of guidance and appropriate career advancement opportunities.

Local

# Workshop discusses ways to strengthen transparency and integrity in journalism

## Info ministry, Nazaha hold second workshop on media integrity

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information, in cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), held a second workshop on Tuesday on "Media Integrity and Professionalism in Journalism". Assistant Undersecretary for Media Services and New Media Sector Saad Nafel Al-Azmi said the ministry of information seeks to spread awareness about the dangers of corruption and discuss ways to prevent it, enhance transparency and integrity, address relevant challenges, and how to verify the credibility of sources with the massive flow of information.

Azmi revealed the ministry of information is also keen to hold and participate in initiatives, workshops and seminars organized by government and private institutions and civil society organizations, in addition to organizing training courses and workshops specialized in promoting values and raising awareness on this matter, as well as ensuring that local media verify information before publication.

"Corruption is an integrated system, and confronting it requires shared responsibility. Integrity is a basic condition for building trust between the media and its audience. The credibility of published information increases trust and reduces the spread of incorrect news, especially with the increasing unprecedented challenges of spreading rumors, fabricated pictures and falsehoods that violate privacy and personal data," he pointed out.

Abrar Al-Hammad, Assistant Secretary-General for the Prevention Sector at Nazaha, explained the



Saad Nafel Al-Azmi



Abrar Al-Hammad

purpose of the workshop, emphasizing its goal of empowering society to actively participate in building a culture that values integrity and stands against corruption to contribute to the cultivation of ethical principles and a culture of integrity, ultimately working towards a society that is resilient against the damaging influence of corruption.

"In recent years, international and professional efforts discussed ways to combat and prevent corruption and preventive measures based on spreading awareness and changing behaviors. Here comes the role of the media and its importance in confronting and combating corruption. The media is the message that rejects the phenomenon of corruption and is the most important tool for exposing it," she said.

"Our Kuwaiti press and media have a great im-



Experts discuss integrity in journalistic work during the workshop.

pact in this field. The most prominent goals of the media in society are to achieve public interest and contribute to fostering responsible awareness. Today, we place great emphasis on the importance of awareness of the dangers of corruption and ways to become aware of it at all levels. Efforts to combat corruption are not limited to a specific party, but rather it is a participatory process in which each party carries out its role based on its ethical and

professional responsibility," Hammad stated.

The workshops delved into the realm of investigative journalism as a potent tool in the fight against corruption, shedding light on the challenges inherent in this pursuit. Participants explored the essential aspect of maintaining integrity in journalistic endeavors, emphasizing the significance of honest reporting and the impact of artificial intelligence on the integrity of journalistic work.



Children enthusiastically participate in the eighth Childhood Festival that got off on Tuesday.

## 'Childhood Festival' theme: Investing in children for society

KUWAIT: The eighth Childhood Festival, themed "Our Children are our Investment" commenced at the International Fairgrounds in Mishref on Tuesday. Organized by the Dawa Al-Yada Volunteer Center, the festival boasts participation from ministries, public benefit associations and government and private institutions, with over 1,500 children expected to attend the three-day event.

Vice Chairperson of the Center Wafaa Al-Bakr highlighted the strategic sponsorship of the ministry of education and the festival's continuity following past successes, drawing over 7,000 visitors annually. Bakr emphasized the significance of childhood, stressing that it forms the foundation of society. She acknowledged the contributions of various ministries, government and private entities in enriching the festival through active participation and support.

This year's festival theme, "Our Children are our Investment", reflects the belief that children represent the best investment for society, covering areas such as health, education, security and religion. Bakr mentioned the center's commitment to motivating children to showcase their talents and abilities through competitions. The Al-Yada Center's vision includes investing in children's health, leading to the launch of the "Future Child in Better Health" campaign this year, aimed at helping obese children and those with chronic diseases lead healthier lives.

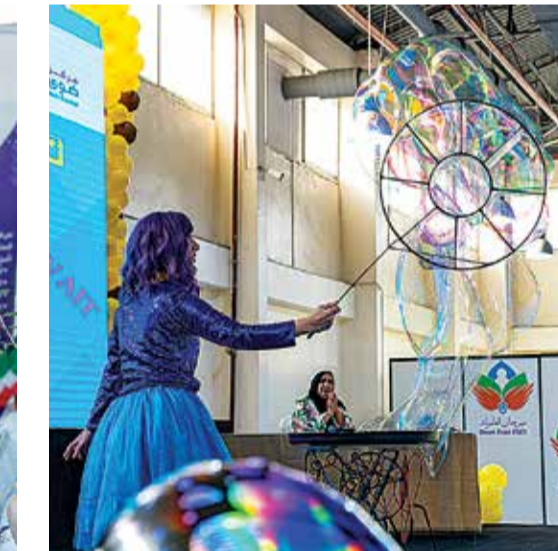
The festival's objectives extend to educating



parents about early disability cases in children, addressing issues like hyperactivity, learning difficulties and speech challenges. Bakr urged parents, ministries, and institutions to collaborate in developing long-term plans for the moral and material security of children, emphasizing their role as a valuable resource for societal development.

Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Al-Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research, highlighted Al Mabarrah's commitment to human development and scientific research. The foundation focuses on providing consultations, training programs, and organizing conferences to promote sustainable development and leadership in science.

Captain Ahmed Boushehri of the Public Relations and Media Department of Kuwait Fire



Force emphasized the department's participation in the festival to raise awareness about fire safety among children. The department aims to provide simple and easy-to-understand information to familiarize children with security measures, safety and firefighting.

Col Abdullah Bahman of the Traffic Awareness Department at the Ministry of Interior explained the ministry's commitment to community awareness, especially among children. The department's participation focuses on educating drivers about traffic rules and etiquettes while emphasizing the importance of instilling traffic awareness in children from a young age.

The collaborative efforts of various entities aim to create a positive impact on children's well-being, safety and awareness, contributing to the overall development of society. — KUNA

## The link between overtourism and social media

By Arwa Al-Sahli

Living in Kuwait may come with many luxuries; however one cannot avoid the abysmal heat and unbearable boredom. For some, to escape such conditions is to travel. However, some locations are affected by overtourism, defined as when an area receives far more visitors than it can handle. This raises a question: what could cause certain locations to be more sought after as 'tourist-spots' than others? I raise a part to such an answer: Social media.

It is natural for anyone — influencer or not — to post photographs or videos online while they are on vacation. It is human nature to share your experiences with others. It is also quite human nature to take notice of such photos, to feel jealous, envious, wanting such experiences for your own. In a way, it is advertising. If enough of your friends post that they are at an exotic resort for the weekend, surely, you would like to visit as well. This can cause problems, especially if said exotic resort is suffering from overtourism.

For years and years, Hawaii, a popular vacation destination, has been asking the public to stop visiting its beaches and resorts. Its ecosystem and infrastructure have been disrupted by littering, deforestation and the constant construction of new hotels and resorts, all feeding into the tourism industry. This issue is highlighted even further when one realizes that the severity of the Hawaii wildfires, starting in early August 2023 (primarily on the island of Maui), have been accelerated by human activity straining resources such as housing, water and electricity. Thankfully, the United States government has made disaster funding available to help affected individuals.

What this recent event highlights is how overtourism can bring down a location, affecting its land and natives, and how well such a location can respond to natural disasters. The primary cause of overtourism is not only social media — it is a multifaceted issue; however, it is a certain factor, especially in the modern, digital world. We, as people all living on the same earth, must not be so ready to allow ourselves to be affected by the need to document our lives, to do anything for the perfect photo. Perhaps preserving our planet's natural beauty is more important than a weekend vacation.

## University of Indonesia honors Kuwaiti diplomat over humanitarian work

KUALA LUMPUR: The University of Indonesia honored the Charge d'Affaires of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Jakarta Abdullah Al-Fadhli, in appreciation for the pioneering role of Kuwait in the field of charitable and humanitarian work.

According to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Indonesia on Tuesday, Al-Fadhli said that the honor came within the opening of the Middle East Week organized by the university and was attended by officials from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by the Director of the Middle East Department in the Ministry Ambassador Bagus Hendraning.

During a speech, Dean of Faculties of Humanities at the University of Indonesia Dr Bondan Kanumoyoso commended Kuwait's steadfast position in supporting the Palestinian cause, which was demonstrated to the whole world in the recent Gaza events, he added. — KUNA



KUALA LUMPUR: The University of Indonesia honoring the Charge d'Affaires of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Jakarta Abdullah Al-Fadhli.

## Increment in salaries only for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: In line with government and National Assembly directives to approve a financial increase for Kuwaiti employees, termed the "living improvement allowance", sources anticipate a salary hike ranging between KD 80-100. Recent pension increases for retirees with pensions below KD 1,000 have set the new minimum at KD 1,000. However, sources indicate that these anticipated salary increases will be exclusive to Kuwaiti employees and will not extend to expatriates in either the government or private sectors.

The distinction arises from

the fact that expatriate employees in the private sector are under the purview of private entities, and the government lacks the authority to mandate salary increases for them. The forthcoming law is expected to enhance the quality of life for citizens and will likely focus solely on their financial well-being.

The living improvement allowance, a longstanding financial benefit subject to periodic adjustments based on living conditions, rising prices and inflation, is anticipated to be funded through various budgetary allocations. These may include the imposing of taxes on items deemed harmful, such as cigarettes, soft drinks, energy drinks and luxury goods. The sources emphasize that the budget for this allowance is unlikely to cover expatriates in the government sector.

Regarding expatriate work-

ers, the sources suggest that the Public Authority of Manpower may revisit conditions related to work permits, particularly in determining the value of monthly salary increases. The authority could approve wage increases based on work permits, as demonstrated by a previous circular that eliminated the monthly salary increase cap, allowing employers to decide in alignment with their perspective.

Additionally, the authority has the flexibility to engage in discussions with private entities about the conditions of expatriate workers, potentially agreeing to adjust minimum salaries in response to changing circumstances and developments. This approach allows for a more nuanced and adaptable approach to addressing the financial concerns of expatriate workers in the private sector.

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## News in Brief

## Travel ban on officials

**KUWAIT:** Criminal court banned a senior officer at the Interior ministry from travelling as well as from MPs' secretaries in addition to a doctor involved in money laundering and bribes. The case was discovered by First Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and referred it to the public prosecution. The court postponed the trial until Jan 27, 2024. The prosecution charged three secretaries of former MPs and two expats with receiving bribes after discovering their participation in issuing suspended visas. Investigations revealed that the suspects used to receive KD 2,000 per visa.

## Wafra co-op member sacked

**KUWAIT:** The Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision No 244/2023 regarding the dismissal of a member of the Board of Directors of the Wafra Residential Cooperative Society for having committed serious financial and administrative irregularities. According to the sources of the "Affairs", the minister appointed Khaled Al-Qallaf, a member of the board of directors of the association instead of the isolated member, until the election of his replacement. The general assembly is invited to convene on Jan 17, 2024 to elect another member instead of the dismissed.

## Municipality issues warning

**KUWAIT:** Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality organized field campaigns to check safety procedures and making sure stipulation of constructions are met. The fourth campaign resulted in issuing 293 cautions and two citations for not complying with safety rules. Meanwhile, safety department in Farwaniya Municipality branch carried out field tours in all areas of the governorate, resulting in issuing 238 cautions and warnings for not having containers for construction leftovers.

## Kuwait committed to support energy research, development

## Kuwait's eighth international energy conference kicks off



Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Jassem Al-Ostad inaugurates the conference on Tuesday. — KUNA photos

**KUWAIT:** The eighth International Conference on Energy Research and Development kicked off on Tuesday under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness appointed the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Social Works Jassem Al-Ostad to attend the opening ceremony.

Al-Ostad said during the opening speech that Kuwait is keen to support research institutions, which specializes in providing energy locally and internationally. Al-Ostad praised the conference, stressing His Highness' keenness to pay attention to the vital and strategic energy sector in addition to the role of Kuwait University in providing various research and development studies as well as hosting the conference.

Acting Director of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr Mashan Al-Otaibi said in his speech that the conference discusses various

## Kuwait, San Marino to boost cooperation in aviation sector

**ROME:** Kuwait civil aviation authorities and the Republic of San Marino agreed on Tuesday on clauses of a treaty to regulate air operations between the two countries and increase cooperation in the field of civil aviation. Kuwait Embassy in Rome told KUNA on Tuesday that officials from the two countries met in the embassy late Monday and officially signed an approving terms of the agreement regulating air transport.

The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding that regulates operating rules and transport rights between the two countries, which will be signed in its final form after the completion of the internal constitutional procedures in both countries.

On this occasion, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani said that this agreement "is a step towards strengthening relations between the two countries in various fields and expanding areas of co-



The opening ceremony of the eighth International Conference on Energy Research and Development.

operation with other countries". Abdullah Al-Rajhi, an official at the department of civil transportation in Kuwait Airport, said that the outcome of the meeting are consistent with the policy of the General Administration of Civil Aviation to open the skies and encourage international airlines to increase their flights to and from Kuwait International Airport.

He added that such an agreement will help link

provides opportunities for local engineers and researchers to benefit from this field. Chairman of Kuwait Society of Engineers, Faisal Al-Atfal said that they held a two-day training workshop, in cooperation with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), affirming the society's keenness on pushing Kuwaiti engineers towards technological progress in various engineering fields. — KUNA



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani with representatives of Kuwait and Republic of San Marino's civil aviation authorities. — KUNA

operation with other countries". Abdullah Al-Rajhi, an official at the department of civil transportation in Kuwait Airport, said that the outcome of the meeting are consistent with the policy of the General Administration of Civil Aviation to open the skies and encourage international airlines to increase their flights to and from Kuwait International Airport.

He added that such an agreement will help link

Kuwait International Airport to the largest number of airports around the world through a global network of airlines, which enhances the quest to provide new and diverse options to serve the traveling public. "The constitutional procedures will be completed in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to complete the final signing of the aforementioned agreement," Al-Rajhi added. — KUNA

## Societal expectations, superficial judgments endanger marriages

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** In societies that have grown accustomed to specific and conventional relationship norms, there often exists a fear of love experiences that deviate from the expected. The comfort derived from familiarity can lead to apprehension when faced with unconventional relationships. People may fear judgment or rejection by society for embracing love in forms that challenge traditional norms. This fear can inhibit individuals from exploring unique connections that could bring fulfillment and happiness.

Breaking away from societal expectations requires courage, as well as a collective shift towards embracing diverse expressions of love. Overcoming the fear of unconventional love experiences is essential for fostering inclusivity and allowing individuals to authentically pursue connections that resonate with their true selves.

Omar Hayani, who has been married to a woman 10 years older than him, told Kuwait Times that his community was against his marriage at first. "She was 36 when I was 26; my family was against it since she had reached an age that is considered as 'alarming' in our society," he said. He explained society considers a woman above 30 not suitable for marriage, since she is considered too old to have children and raise them, in addition to taking care of her husband's needs. Moreover, marrying an older woman is considered unsuitable, as older women are more rational, difficult to "control" and financially self-sufficient.

In response to the fact that his choice, which was contrary to the decision of society and his family, was correct, Hayani said: "I'm living my best life. My wife is well-educated and takes care of my child perfectly. Also, she can manage our budget wisely, unlike younger women who only care about superficial things."

Suad Rabea, a single woman in her thirties, said that she was rejected several times because she is dark-skinned and wears glasses. "I come from a culture that believes wives must be fair-skinned to impress their husbands. Also, one of the mothers rejected me because if my eyesight is not good, my children will suffer from sight problems. The funny part is that her son wears glasses," she said.

"Unfortunately, some men still adhere to unrealistic and superficial reasons when rejecting women. Skin color bias persists, reflecting a narrow-minded emphasis on appearance over substance. In some cases, societal judgments about a woman's family background, including her siblings' status or financial situation, become unjust criteria for rejection," Rabea noted.

Unrealistic reasons for rejecting partners for mar-

riage can include trivial factors such as physical appearance, height, weight or material wealth. Sarah Ali, 27, highlighted a disheartening aspect of societal expectations on physical appearance within relationships, revealing that a potential partner rejected her due to her undergoing gastric sleeve surgery, underscoring the unrealistic standards some individuals hold.

"The rejection based on concerns about loose skin not being attractive reveals a superficial mindset that prioritizes aesthetics over a person's well-being and choices," Ali said, shedding light on the importance of embracing diversity and accepting people for who they are, beyond societal expectations and superficial judgments.

Susan, 43, shared a similar story of the unfortunate reality of facing rejection in the marriage realm due to societal expectations around physical appearance. Despite her impressive qualifications, moral standing and successful career as a pharmaceutical doctor, Susan finds herself repeatedly rejected by potential grooms on account of her thin physique.



"The emotional toll of such rejections has understandably led me to withdraw from discussions about marriage. This disheartening experience underscores the need for a shift in societal attitudes, where a person's worth extends far beyond superficial criteria," she pointed out.

In contemporary times, it's intriguing to note that some women reject potential partners based on their star signs. Ahmed Fatma, 41, affirmed that many women rejected him even before knowing his true personality because he is a Scorpio. "We have a saying in Arabic that says 'do not get near a Scorpio', and many women do. Once anyone knows I'm a Scorpio, they immediately assume things, although Scorpios are good husbands and lovers. Now I'm happily married to a woman I will always spoil," he said.

These unreasonable criteria not only undermine the potential for meaningful connections, but also contribute to perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing societal prejudices. It is essential to challenge and move beyond such shallow considerations to foster healthier relationships based on genuine compatibility and shared values.

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Elevator in South African mine plunges, killing 11

## Philippines, communist rebels agree to resume peace talks

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KHAN YUNIS: Palestinians cook outside amid the destruction caused by Zionist strikes in the village of Khuzaa, east of Khan Yunis near the border fence between the Zionist entity and the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 27, 2023. — AFP

# US to send three military planes with aid for Gaza

## US warns Zionist entity not to cause mass displacements in southern Gaza

WASHINGTON: The United States is sending three military aircraft to Egypt from Tuesday to bring vital humanitarian aid for Gaza during a truce between the Zionist entity and Hamas, senior US officials said. The relief flights carrying food, medical supplies and winter gear are the first by the US military since Oct 7.

The flights start a day after President Joe Biden said he would use an extension of the truce to get more aid into Gaza, and as international efforts continue to further prolong the pause. "We are very glad to announce we will have the first of three relief flights that are facilitated by the unique capabilities of the US military that will be arriving in North Sinai in Egypt" on Tuesday, one of the US officials said.

"This will be to bring a series of items — medical items, food aid, winter items, given that winter's coming in Gaza — for the civilian population," the official said in an embargoed call on Monday. The United Nations will then take the aid from Egypt's North Sinai region, which borders the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, into the stricken Palestinian territory itself, they said. Two further planeloads will arrive "in coming days", they said. Mediator Qatar on Monday announced a 48-hour extension of an initial four-day truce, opening the way for further releases of Zionists held captive by Hamas.

### 'Significant surge'

Eight hundred aid trucks reached southern Gaza from Egypt in the first four days of the truce, with

some aid also reaching badly-hit northern Gaza, the US officials said. "The movement over the last four or five days of assistance has been so significant in volume that a backfill ... is now needed and these planes are part of that backfill," a second US official said.

While Washington has deployed two aircraft carriers in the region to deter Iran and its allies, and ferried military assistance to key ally the Zionist entity, it has not previously used military assets during this conflict to deliver humanitarian aid. Biden, who has firmly backed the Zionist entity while calling on it to reduce civilian casualties, said on Monday that the truce had allowed a "significant surge" in aid.

The White House said on Monday however that the entity, had made it clear it would continue its war on Hamas whenever the truce ended. US officials said Biden had warned the Zionist government that it must not cause the same kind of mass displacements in southern Gaza that its offensive in the north triggered earlier this month. "From the president down we have reinforced this in a very clear way for the (Zionist) government," the first US official said.

The United Nations welcomed on Tuesday the increase in aid deliveries into Gaza afforded by the temporary truce but warned it was not enough to even start addressing the Palestinian territory's massive needs. UN children's agency UNICEF said the aid flow to the northern Gaza Strip was "the right start". "(It's) definitely the right type of aid — fuel, medicines, food, warmth," spokesman James Elder told a press

briefing in Geneva via video-link from Gaza. But, he warned, the needs in the besieged enclave of more than two million are so huge that "all this aid is triage ... It's not even enough for triage."

When there are insufficient resources to treat everyone who needs it, hospitals and aid organizations are forced to triage — that is, to prioritize the most urgent cases, or those people most likely to survive, and leave the others. "The aid needs to multiply ... Everything here is emergency care right now," Elder said. Margaret Harris of the World Health Organization agreed. "The needs are massive. The amount of aid we've been able to get in is a trickle still," the WHO spokeswoman told the briefing.

The truce "has caused a moment of respite, critically to get aid in and also for people to take the heartbreaking task of looking for loved ones", Elder said. It was vital for the pause in fighting to be prolonged and turned into a permanent ceasefire, he said. "It would be callous and cold to think we could turn around and start destroying homes and children and families' lives again." At the same time, "there is no way" to get things like desalination and sewage treatment plants on Gaza working properly again during just a temporary pause in fighting. If the hostilities resume, "mass killing of children" will continue in Gaza, at a time when civilians there are even more vulnerable than before -- many living outdoors in increasingly cold weather, malnourished, lacking clean water and with disease threatening, Elder said. — AFP

## Zionist entity not letting enough fuel into Gaza: EU

BRUSSELS: Zionist restrictions on fuel supplies to Gaza are hampering aid deliveries and humanitarian access required under an UN resolution, an EU commissioner, Janez Lenarčič, said Tuesday. Lenarčič — who is in charge of crisis management — was speaking as the EU countries and aid organizations scrambled to provide relief to Gaza's population of 2.3 million under a truce agreed by the Zionist entity and Hamas.

"We are calling for the increase of fuel supplies to the (Gaza) strip," Lenarčič told journalists in Brussels. "The humanitarian access should be based on the needs and not on some restrictions," he said. Much of Gaza's population has been displaced by the Zionist entity's military campaign, and the narrow coastal territory's health system has been brought to its knees, while water, food, medicine and power supplies have been all but exhausted.

Lenarčič said aid deliveries to Gaza were encountering two bottlenecks. One is that trucks needing to enter Gaza via the Rafah crossing with Egypt -- the only entry not giving onto Zionist territory -- had to undergo screening at a point 90 minutes' drive away.

The other is that the Zionist entity is allowing only restricted amounts of fuel to go into Gaza which are "still not sufficient for the needs" of the territory. The EU commissioner said Brussels is calling for increased truck screening capacity, and for more fuel to be allowed in.

The fuel, he noted, was essential for humanitarian operations, hospitals, water stations, desalination plants, water pumps and bakeries. "The quantities that are for the moment entering daily are not enough for all this," he said. Lenarčič stressed that a UN Security Council resolution adopted Nov 16 was binding on all parties, requiring them to allow "unimpeded access" for food, water, medicine, fuel and other necessary items to reach Gaza. He also said international humanitarian law was not being respected by Hamas or, it appeared, the Zionist entity.

Hamas's Oct 7 attack and hostage-taking was a clear violation, he said, while "I would find it difficult to argue that this criteria of military action and proportionality are being respected for 15,000-plus civilians killed in 50-plus days". But he said "ultimate judgement is up to judicial authorities," pointing to the International Criminal Court, whose prosecutor's office is gathering evidence of alleged crimes committed in Gaza and the West Bank. — AFP

## Palestinian family in Lebanon grieves for dead relatives

BEIRUT: From Lebanon, Palestinian Fatima al-Ashwah has been praying for relatives in Gaza, but received grim news that Zionist bombing killed around 12 of them days before a temporary truce between the Zionist entity and Hamas. "They bombed their house," leaving some of them "in pieces," said Ashwah, drained by weeks of anguish and days of grief.

She is among an estimated 250,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, most of them in poverty, according to the United Nations. When AFP first spoke with Ashwah, 61, earlier this month from southern Beirut's Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp, she had expressed grave fear for the safety of about 70 extended family members in the Gaza Strip whom she had visited in July.

She was later told that Zionist bombardment had killed her cousin's daughter Sanaa Abu Zeid, 30, along with Abu Zeid's daughters aged 12, eight and six, and other relatives who were in the same building. "Around a dozen people were killed," she said.

### 'Under the bombs'

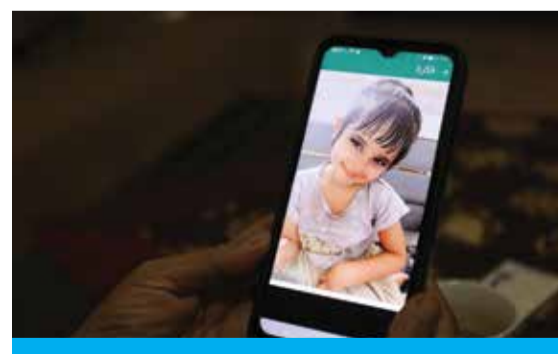
Abu Zeid and her family had taken refuge in a



BEIRUT: Palestinian refugee Fatima al-Ashwah, 61, poses for a picture at the Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp. — AFP photos

school in Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip. But they returned to their home in northern Gaza — still standing, unlike those of some other family members — because the children weren't coping at the shelter, Ashwah said. Abu Zeid's husband and their three other children survived because they had been wounded in bombing the day before, one losing a leg, and were in hospital when the house was hit, Ashwah said. "They buried them together in a mass grave," Ashwah said, with Abu Zeid's devastated mother unable to pay her final respects.

Ashwah showed photos and video taken before the bombing of smiling members of the family, including Abu Zeid's daughter Nour al-Moqayyed,



Fatima al-Ashwah shows a picture of six-year-old Nour al-Moqayyed, who was killed in Gaza together with her mother Sanaa Abu Zeid and sisters in Zionist bombing.

aged six, dancing. Abu Zeid's husband and the surviving children fled back to Rafah "under the bombs" to reunite with Abu Zeid's mother, Ashwah said, and were staying in a garage.

Beirut's Burj al-Barajneh camp and others like it in Lebanon were set up after the Nakba, or "catastrophe", when more than 760,000 Palestinians were expelled or forced to flee from their homes in 1948 to make way for the Zionist entity's creation. A fragile four-day truce between Hamas and the Zionist entity is to expire later this week. Ashwah expressed hope that it would last, saying the family "can't take it anymore." "We've seen wars, but like this? My God, not like this." — AFP

## International

# Philippines, communist rebels agree to resume peace talks

## Move to help focus military effort on territorial threats: Philippines army chief

MANILA: The Philippine government and communist rebels said Tuesday they have agreed to resume peace talks to end one of the world's longest-running Maoist insurgencies. The ongoing armed struggle, launched in 1969, grew out of the global communist movement and found fertile soil for recruitment among the Philippines' rural poor.

At its peak in the 1980s, the group boasted about 26,000 fighters, a number the military says has now dwindled to less than 2,000. Successive Philippine administrations have held peace talks with the communists through their Netherlands-based political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

This latest effort followed informal discussions in the Netherlands and Norway that began in 2022 and were facilitated by the Norwegian government, officials told reporters in Manila. "The parties agree to a principled and peaceful resolution of the armed conflict," said a joint statement issued by both sides that was signed in the Norwegian capital of Oslo on Nov. 23. "The parties acknowledge the deep-rooted socioeconomic and political grievances and agree to come up with a framework that sets the priorities for the peace negotiation."

Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner said the resumption of talks was "very good news for us". "If this conflict will finally end, your Armed Forces of the Philippines will be able to shift our focus to external or territorial defense," Brawner said. But until there was a "final agreement", he said the military would "continue our operations against the New People's Army", the armed wing of the Philippines' communist party.

The announcement comes almost a year after Jose Maria Sison, who launched the insurgency, died in



OSLOW: This handout shows Minister Antonio Lagdameo (left) and Luis Jalandoni of the Communist Movement congratulating each other after signing their joint vision for peace. — AFP

self-imposed exile in the Netherlands. At the time, the Philippines' defense ministry said his death could finally lead to an end of violence in the country, calling Sison the "greatest stumbling block" to peace.

The last time peace talks were held was during the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte — a self-declared socialist and a former student of Sison. But the talks devolved into threats and recrimination, with Duterte officially cutting them off in 2017, declaring the group a terrorist organization

and accusing them of killing police and soldiers while negotiations were underway.

### 'Light at the end of the tunnel'

Sison's widow, Julieta de Lima, told a press conference in Utrecht on Tuesday that the NDF would appoint new members to its negotiating panel, which she heads. "The quest for genuine peace has no shortcuts," said de Lima. "It is very significant that the current president, who is the son of the late dic-

tator Marcos, has acceded to the resumption of the peace negotiations, so I think that it would be to his own good that the armed conflict may be resolved during his term."

The talks would begin next year but the exact date and venue were still being discussed, the NDF said. "This is an important and timely step towards securing lasting peace in the Philippines," Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said in a statement. He added in a separate post on X that "this gives hope for the people of" the Philippines.

Georgi Engelbrecht, senior analyst for the Brussels-based peace monitor International Crisis Group, said the announcement was "a bit surprising but certainly welcome". He said it was the "light at the end of the tunnel", but cautioned that "the most hopeful initiative under Duterte failed years ago."

Tens of thousands of people have died in the insurgency launched during the first term of the late president Ferdinand Marcos, father and namesake of the current president. It was fueled by Marcos Sr's dictatorship when the legislature was shuttered, the free press muzzled and thousands of opponents tortured or killed.

In recent years, the Philippine government has claimed that hundreds of communist rebels have surrendered in exchange for financial assistance and livelihood opportunities. Deadly clashes still take place in parts of the country, which is also plagued by kidnap-for-ransom groups and Islamist secessionist movements in the southern region. A historic but fragile peace deal was reached with the country's largest Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in 2014. — AFP

## North Korea defends satellite launch as Kim watches White House

UNITED NATIONS: North Korea's ambassador made a rare appearance at the UN Security Council on Monday to defend his country's launch of a spy satellite, as leader Kim Jong Un studied images including of the White House and Pentagon. Western powers, Japan and South Korea have said North Korea violated Security Council resolutions by launching the satellite last week.

The totalitarian state has said that its new eye in the sky has already provided images of major US and South Korea military sites, as well as photos of the Italian capital Rome. On Monday it took "in detail" images of the White House and the Pentagon in Washington, according to state-run KCNA news agency, which said Kim was reviewing the photos.

He also counted some aircraft carriers at a military base and a shipyard in the neighboring state of Virginia, the report said. At the Security Council, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, Kim Song, complained that other countries faced no restrictions on satellites. "No other nation in the world is in the security environment as critical as the DPRK," said Kim, using the North's official

name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "One belligerent party, the United States, is threatening us with a nuclear weapon," he said. "It is a legitimate right for the DPRK as another belligerent party to develop, test, manufacture and possess weapons systems equivalent to those that the United States possesses or is developing."

He mocked US charges that satellite technology also helped North Korea hone its missile capacity, questioning whether the United States put satellites into orbit "with a catapult." The US ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, rejected North Korea's assertion it was acting in self-defense and said that joint US-South Korean exercises were "routine" and "defensive in nature."

"We intentionally reduce risk and pursue transparency by announcing the exercises in advance including the dates and the activities, unlike the DPRK," she said, adding that the drills did not violate Security Council resolutions.

South Korea's spy agency said that Russia, eager for assistance in Ukraine, helped North Korea on the satellite following a summit between Kim and President Vladimir Putin. The United States said last month that North Korea has delivered more than 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia.

Russia and China, North Korea's main ally, have put forward a resolution, opposed by the United States, to ease sanctions on Pyongyang as part of an effort to encourage dialogue. Chinese envoy



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on November 23, 2023 and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on November 24, 2023 shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (center) standing next to his daughter (second left) while posing with scientists who contributed to the launch of the reconnaissance satellite.

Geng Shuang accused the United States of "further aggravating tension and confrontation" through its military alliance with South Korea. "If the DPRK constantly feels threatened, and its legitimate se-

curity concerns remain unresolved, the peninsula will not be able to get out of the security dilemma and only be caught in a vicious cycle of tit-for-tat aggressive moves," he said. — AFP

## Mediators seeking lasting Gaza...

Continued from Page 1

as Palestinians attempted to return to their homes. The Zionist military described the shelling as "warning shots", saying a tank fired as suspected militants approached army positions. At least one person was hurt, the AFP reporter saw.

The Zionist military meanwhile alleged that three explosive devices were detonated near its forces in the northern Gaza strip, "violating the framework of the operational pause". "In one of the locations, terrorists also opened fire at the troops, who responded with fire. A number of soldiers were lightly injured during the incidents," the army said, adding that its troops were positioned in compliance with the truce agreement.

Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari told a news conference: "There have been some minimal breaches which have been noted by both parties but they did not harm the essence of the agreement and the agreement is still ongoing."

Zionist bombardments since Oct 7 have left buildings flattened in the Gaza Strip and residents walking through the rubble of ruined homes. "I hope this truce

will lead to a complete ceasefire, because we are fed up of sleeping outdoors in the rain, of losing our loved ones and having to flee," said Umm Mohammed, who was driven from her home in northern Gaza by the assault. "One day for sure I will return... and I hope that my house will be waiting for me," she told AFP.

The Zionist entity has vowed to stick to its war aim of destroying Hamas and rescuing all remaining captives. Qatari spokesman Ansari said that his government would use the extension to work for a "sustainable truce". The head of the CIA and the director of the Zionist Mossad spy agency were in Qatar to discuss the Gaza truce with Qatar's prime minister, a source briefed on their visit said, asking not to be named due to the talks' sensitivity. The discussions aim "to build on the progress of the extended humanitarian pause agreement and to initiate further discussions about the next phase of a potential deal," the source added.

The latest round of exchanges on Monday night brought the total number of people released under the truce to 50 Zionist captives, and 150 Palestinian prisoners, all women and children. Another 19 captives held in Gaza have been freed under separate deals since the truce began on Friday, including Thai workers and a dual Russian-Zionist citizen. The Zionist prison authority said 33 Palestinian inmates had been released in exchange on Monday. — AFP



GAZA: An aerial view shows the destruction caused by Zionist strikes in Wadi Gaza in the central Gaza Strip on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP

## Riyadh to host 2030 World Expo...

Continued from Page 1

to showcase the kingdom across the globe. The date of 2030 is also hugely symbolic as it coincides with the key milestone in the Vision 2030 program of MBS to diversify Saudi Arabia economically and also culturally.

The hosting of the Expo is regulated by the Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), whose member states voted for the winner at its general assembly. Needing only one round of voting and securing the necessary two-thirds majority of member states, Riyadh won 119 votes, South Korea's Busan 29 and Italian capital Rome 17, the BIE said. The kingdom is set to host the 2034 football World Cup after emerging as the only bidder for the event and is already welcoming a host of motor-racing, golf and combat sports events.

But Rome and Seoul had not stunted in their efforts either. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was in the French capital only last week to make a final pitch for Busan's bid, while Italy's far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni has pressed Rome's cause in Paris and elsewhere. All sides sought to sprinkle some stardust, with South Korea bringing former Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon to back its bid and Italy actor Sa-

brina Impacciatore as well as Davis Cup-winning tennis star Jannik Sinner by video.

For Saudi, football star Cristiano Ronaldo who now plays for Riyadh side Al-Nassr, popped up with a video message. "Riyadh is an amazing city and ready to welcome all of you." The Riyadh Expo is set to take place from October 2030 to March 2031 on the theme "The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow".

French President Emmanuel Macron had already given Riyadh Paris's backing when he held talks with the crown prince at the Elysee in July 2022, a move that caused some irritation in Italy, France's neighbor and European Union partner. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in his final presentation pledged an "unwavering commitment to collaborate with all nations to deliver an expo built by the world for the world". "As we work diligently to grow and transform our economy we believe the kingdom's progress, regional development and the health of the global economy will advance in lockstep."

The most recent World Expo took place in 2020 in Dubai and the next World Expo is due in 2025 in Osaka, Japan, on the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives". Other bids for 2030 came from the Russian capital, Moscow, and the Ukrainian city of Odesa. Russia withdrew its bid in May 2022, shortly after its invasion of Ukraine, while Odesa did not make the final shortlist of three announced in June. — AFP

## All 41 trapped Indian workers...

Continued from Page 1

wide enough for someone to squeeze through. Indian billionaire Anand Mahindra paid tribute to the men at the rock face who squeezed into the narrow pipe to clear the rocks by hand. "After all the sophisticated drilling equipment, it's the humble 'rathole miners' who make the vital breakthrough," Mahindra said on X, formerly Twitter. "It's a heartwarming reminder that at the end of the day, heroism is most often a case of individual effort and sacrifice."

Last week, engineers working to drive a metal pipe horizontally through the earth ran into metal girders and construction vehicles buried in the rubble, snapping a giant earth-boring machine. A separate vertical shaft was also started from the forested hill above the tunnel, as well as from the far side of the road tunnel, a much longer route estimated to be around 480 m. Before Tuesday, the workers were seen alive for the first time last week, peering into the lens of an endoscopic camera sent by rescuers down a thin pipe through which air, food, water and electricity were delivered. Arnold Dix, president of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association, who had been advising the engineers, told reporters ahead of the rescue that the men were in good spirits, and that he had heard they had been "playing cricket". — AFP

## International

# Elevator in South African mine plunges, killing 11

## Dozens of mineworkers die every year in the world's biggest producer of platinum

**JOHANNESBURG:** An elevator carrying workers at a giant South African platinum mine plunged 200 meters killing 11 miners and injuring 75, the operators said Tuesday. Impala Platinum said the "devastating accident" happened Monday at its Rustenburg mine, northwest of Johannesburg, as more than 80 employees were being taken to the surface at the end of their shift.

The alert was raised as the lift "unexpectedly started descending", according to the company. A spokesperson for the company, known as Implats, said the shaft was 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) deep and that the elevator dropped 200 meters before safety equipment arrested "its rapid descent." "This is the darkest day in the history of Implats and our hearts are heavy for the lives lost and the individuals affected by this devastating accident," Implats CEO Nico Muller said.

"We are deeply shocked and saddened by the loss of our colleagues and are in the process of ensuring all next of kin have been contacted". The company said 75 injured workers were admitted to local hospitals. Spokesman Johan Theron told AFP some workers were severely injured, most suffered from ankle and leg fractures. Others walked out with minor scratches.

### Mine kept closed

Rescue operations had been completed and all the 86 employees involved were accounted for, Implats said. But all operations at the mine were suspended on Tuesday, as an investigation went ahead, the company added. "Implats is offering ongoing support to the families and colleagues of those lost in service,"

said Muller. "We also hold our injured colleagues in our thoughts at this incredibly difficult time."

But trade unions questioned safety measures at the mine. "This incident ... raises a lot of questions about health and safety issues," the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa said in a statement.

Geoffrey Moatshe, of the National Union Of Mineworkers, said that shaft lifts need to be checked on a regular basis. "If this thing was checked and maintained, this could have been avoided," Moatshe told AFP. Mine accidents are common in the country, where hundreds of thousands work in the industry.

Industry group Minerals Council South Africa said 41 miners have died since the beginning of the year. Implats said in August that five employees had died at work in various mines in the previous 12 months. "This is a tragic accident. It serves as a stark reminder that there can never be any lapse in focus and vigilance regarding safety on mines," said Japie Fullard, chair of a Minerals Council's safety initiative.

South Africa has the world's deepest mines and is a major exporter of gold, diamonds, coal and other raw materials. It is the biggest producer of platinum. Many of the deep mines have lifts that can carry more than 100 people at a time. Dozens of mineworkers are killed each year, though numbers have been falling as safety standards have been stepped up over the past two decades. More than 430 coal miners were killed in the Coalbrook disaster in 1960. There were about 50 mining deaths in 2022, according to government statistics. At least three workers were killed in a mudslide at the Rustenburg Implats mine in 2021. — AFP



RUSTENBURG: A general view of the 11C shaft at Impala Platinum mine on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP

## New Zealand doctors warn of 'tragedy' after smoking ban scrapped

**WELLINGTON:** Doctors blasted New Zealand's conservative government on Tuesday for revoking world-leading anti-smoking laws, warning that people will die over the act of "public health vandalism". The country passed a suite of anti-smoking measures under former prime minister Jacinda Ardern, winning praise as a world leader in the global fight against Big Tobacco.

But public health experts now fear that reputation is in tatters, after incoming premier Christopher Luxon used his first day in office to consign those laws to the scrap heap. University of Otago tobacco control expert Richard Edwards told AFP a public health "tragedy" was unfolding in the country, which once envisioned becoming almost entirely smoke-free by 2025. "It was not something that we anticipated, we did not think a government could be so backwards," he said. "I

was absolutely shocked and appalled. It is one of the worst days I can remember for public health. It is public health vandalism."

Dr Samantha Murton, President of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, was also critical of the move. "We are astounded as to how you could repeal something that has been so widely supported and would prevent the deaths of so many," she said in a statement on Tuesday.

The headline reform was a "generational smoking ban", which would have effectively outlawed the sale of cigarettes to anyone born after 2008. Other measures would have forced tobacco companies to lower nicotine levels in cigarettes and slashed the number of stores authorized to sell tobacco products from 6,000 to 600.

"None of those measures have yet been implemented at a national level in any country around the world. They were highly innovative," said Edwards. "These were going to have a profound effect on reducing smoking. That will all be lost." Inspired by New Zealand, a string of countries have been mulling over similar moves to crack down on cigarettes. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak unveiled a remarkably similar "smoking ban" proposal at the Conservative Party conference in October this year.

### 'Disastrous, terrible'

Edwards said New Zealand was "squandering" a huge opportunity and had trashed its reputation as a world leader in public health. "So many people from overseas are aghast at this action because they were looking to New Zealand to lead on this." It has global implications. It is a disastrous, terrible move."

New Zealand has a relatively small number of adult smokers, but tobacco-related disease has exacted a particularly heavy toll on the country's Indigenous Maori population. Maori women have some of the highest lung cancer rates in the world, according to advocacy group Smokefree Aotearoa.

Experts are baffled at the incoming government's change of heart, with smoking barely mentioned as an issue during the recent general election campaign. Some have suggested the government wanted to boost its coffers with the tax revenue promised by cigarette sales.

Luxon has said a cigarette ban would have created a flourishing and untaxed black market. Asthma and Respiratory Foundation chief executive Letitia Harding said Luxon's reasoning defied logic. "The argument that a bigger black market could emerge is an argument that is used by big tobacco companies," she said in a statement on Tuesday. — AFP



OMDURMAN: An injured Sudanese man lies on a bed in Khartoum's twin city Omdurman, on June 6, 2023. — AFP

## Sudan forces trade fire as atrocities reported in Darfur

**PORT SUDAN:** The Sudanese army and paramilitary forces traded fire Monday across the Nile River in the capital Khartoum, witnesses said, in the eighth month of a war rights groups say has been rife with atrocities. Artillery and rocket fire crisscrossed over the river between "the army in Omdurman, on the west bank, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum North on the east bank," a witness told AFP.

The fighting was corroborated by other residents, including local activists who say the shelling landing in civilian homes has killed dozens in recent weeks. Since April, brutal urban warfare has raged between the army, led by Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary RSF, commanded by Burhan's former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Over 10,000 people have been killed, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict and Event Data Project, and the United Nations says 6.3 million more have been forced to flee their homes. Negotiations brokered by the United States and Saudi Arabia — which resumed this month — have failed to make any headway, as forces grapple for control and refuse to cede territory.

Paramilitary "forces attacked the Wadi Seidna (air) base", a strategic facility just north of Khartoum, an RSF spokesman said Monday, adding they had destroyed "a C130 military transport plane and an ammunition depot". Over 800 kilometers (around 500 miles) southwest, witnesses in the town of Muglad in West Kordofan state reported army troops withdrawing from a base after an RSF attack on the oil-rich area.

The army, which has maintained its monopoly on the skies, sent fighter jets to bomb RSF clusters in Babanusa, 35 kilometers north of Muglad, witnesses told AFP. But army retreats from bases have been reported repeatedly in recent weeks, as the RSF has gained territory across the vast western region of Darfur.

### 'Organized campaign'

Most recently, the paramilitary force claimed control of the East Darfur state capital of El Daein last week, leaving El Fasher in North Darfur as the last state capital in Darfur under army control. Experts, aid workers, and the United States have warned El Fasher will be attacked next, as rights groups have reported mass ethnic killing in RSF-controlled areas of Darfur — already scarred by decades of ethnic violence.

In a report released Sunday, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the UN Security Council must act to prevent further atrocities, after the murder of hundreds of civilians in West Darfur. "The Rapid Support Forces' latest episode of ethnically targeted killings in West Darfur has the hallmarks of an organized campaign of atrocities against Massalit civilians," said HRW's Mohamed Osman, referring to an ethnic group repeatedly targeted by the RSF and its allied militias. "The UN Security Council needs to stop ignoring the desperate need to protect Darfur civilians." In the first few days of November, attacks by the RSF on Ardamata in West Darfur killed an estimated 800 people, according to the UN, whose presence in the war-ravaged region is limited. Local rights monitors have placed the number of those killed at well over 1,000. — AFP



BUCHAREST: This photo taken on April 1, 2004 in Bucharest shows Gregorian Bivolaru (left), the spiritual leader of MISA sect evacuated from a Court, by the special police forces. — AFP

## France arrests guru, 40 others in raids on yoga sect

**PARIS:** French authorities on Tuesday arrested 41 people in raids against a controversial yoga sect, including its leader, the guru Gregorian Bivolaru, a source close to the case told AFP. The sect is accused of numerous abuses under Bivolaru, who has been repeatedly in the crosshairs of judicial authorities in Romania, Sweden and France in the last years, the source said. Bivolaru, 71, is a national of both Romania and Sweden.

The people were arrested in the Paris region and southern France and included other key members of the sect, the source added. Some 175 police officers were deployed for the operation, during which 26 women — several of whom were held against their will — were freed, the source said. They had been "kept in deplorable conditions" both in terms of space and hygiene, the source said.

### 'Spiritual mentor'

The network, called Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute (MISA), runs several yoga schools and related operations. On its official website, yogaesoteric, the group describes itself as the "largest yoga school in Romania and in Europe" and Bivolaru as its "spiritual mentor". Its success "comes from a traditional rigorous approach of the yoga system, from a great number of both theoretical and practical aspects studied and the coherent integration of the yoga values and practices in the Western cultural environment".

Its tantra yoga section meanwhile includes tips on "amorous energy control techniques", "erotic postures" and on "the way to ecstasy". The site

also contains a page dedicated to "extraterrestrial civilizations".

A French judicial source said the sect had "several hundred" members, but no precise figure was available. The arrests follow a probe into the sect launched by Paris prosecutors in July, on suspicion of kidnapping, rape and people trafficking among others. A kidnapping charge can result in prison of up to 30 years under French law.

### 'Conditioning victims'

The investigation was sparked by France's Human Rights League, a human rights NGO, which contacted the prosecutors' office after receiving statements from 12 former MISA members, a judiciary source said. MISA, which became known as ATMAN after its expansion beyond Romania, taught tantric yoga with the aim of "conditioning victims to accept sexual relations via mental manipulation techniques which sought to eliminate any notion of consent", the source said.

Several women, of different nationalities, said they had been victims of the MISA organization and its leader, the source said. Women were encouraged to accept sexual relations with the group's leader and "to agree to participate in fee-paying pornographic practices in France and abroad", the source said.

MISA was kicked out of the International Yoga Federation and the European Yoga Alliance in 2008 because its commercial practices were judged to be "illicit", the source said. The Liberation daily, which first reported the arrests, said Bivolaru was apprehended in a house in Ivry-sur-Seine near Paris. According to witnesses, the paper said, he brought female followers to the house for "sexual initiation" into tantric yoga.

The judicial source told AFP that so-called yoga workshops were paid for by women members via sex chats and by men with manual work. The workshops were "clearly exclusively dedicated to the satisfaction of the main suspect's desires," the source said. — AFP

## Teenager's killing throws spotlight on French ultra-right

**PARIS:** Galvanized by the killing of a teenager and partly inspired by riots in Ireland, French ultra-right groups are looking to win more support and cause anxiety for President Emmanuel Macron's government.

About a hundred ultra-right activists marched through the town of Romans-sur-Isere in southeastern France at the weekend after a 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death at a village dance party. They clashed with police, and several people were injured. The killing of the teenager, named only as Thomas, further inflamed political tensions in France, with the hard-right describing the assault as "anti-white racism".

Government spokesman Olivier Veran on Monday travelled to the village of Crepol where Thomas was killed, saying the ultra-right were "driven by hatred and resentment" and warning that the tragedy put France "at risk of a tipping-over of our society". French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Tuesday he would ask for the banning of three right-wing extremist groups, warning "there is a mobilization within the extreme right that would have us tip into civil war."

Such ultra-right groups take an even harder line than the far-right National Rally (RN) party of ex-presidential candidate Marine Le Pen who has sought in recent years to move to the mainstream. Their ideas chime more with hard-right figure and ex-pundit Eric Zemmour who declared on social media: "Our martyrs are innocent victims of the war of civilizations."

### 'Inspiration from alt-right'

Social tensions have also been rising elsewhere in Europe including Ireland, where a mob of an estimated 500 people rampaged through Dublin last week after three children were hospitalized after a knife attack outside a school. It was the Irish capital's worst unrest in nearly two decades.

In both countries, a chronic affordable housing shortage, a cost-of-living crisis, a rise in the number of asylum seekers, and the role of social media in amplifying disinformation have been cited as helping to fuel the popularity of right-wing populists.

Marion Jacquet-Vaillant, a researcher specializing in the far right, said the groups took inspiration from the Dublin riots and drew parallels with the Crepol affair. Romain Fargier, a specialist on the internet activities of the ultra-right, also pointed to parallels between the Dublin riots and the violence in R vvs-sur-Isere. "There are similarities in the methods used: strong mobilization on social networks, rumors about the suspects' ethnic origins," he said. "They take their inspiration from the American alt-right," said Fargier, referring to the white nationalist movement sympathetic to ex-president Donald Trump. — AFP

## Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2023

## Climate change already shaving billions off global GDP: Report

COP28 talks in Dubai a 'key event for tackling climate change'

PARIS: Climate change is already shaving billions off the world's economy, with developing countries hardest hit, according to a new report published Tuesday ahead of COP28 climate negotiations. The report by the University of Delaware estimated that impacts from human-caused climate change cut 6.3 percent from global economic output last year, when weighted across populations.

The figures reflect both direct consequences of climate change—such as disruptions to agriculture and manufacturing, and reduced productivity from high heat—as well as spill-over impacts on global trade and investments. “The world is trillions of dollars poorer because of climate change and most of that burden has fallen on poor countries,” said lead author James Rising of the University of Delaware.

“I hope that this information can clarify the challenges that many countries already face today and the support they urgently need to address them,” he added. When calculated without taking into account impacts borne by the average person, the global GDP loss was 1.8 percent of GDP—or about \$1.5 trillion dollars—in 2022. “The difference between those two numbers reflects the uneven distribution of impacts, which concentrate in low-income countries and tropical regions that typically have more population and less GDP,” the authors said in a statement.

Least developed countries experienced higher population-weighted GDP loss of 8.3 percent, with Southeast Asia and Southern Africa particularly affected—losing 14.1 percent and 11.2 percent of their GDP respectively. On the other hand, some developed countries benefited. Thanks to warmer winters Europe saw a nearly five percent net gain in GDP last year.

But such gains are “poised to erode” as hotter summers offset milder winters, warns the report. At last year's COP27 talks in Egypt, nations agreed to set up a dedicated fund to help vulnerable countries cope with “loss and damage” from climate disasters and extreme weather. While some details were recently agreed, the fund—and in particular who contributes to it and how much—will be a key point of negotiation at this year's COP28 talks in Dubai, which begin on Thursday.

Low- and middle-income countries have experienced a combined loss in capital and GDP totaling \$21 trillion, about half of the total 2023 GDP of the developing world, in the last 30 years, the report said. The authors specify that losses are “conservative estimates” because the analysis does not account for non-market losses and impacts.

After having the world's tallest tower and the biggest shopping mall, Dubai, the city of records, is gearing up to host the largest COP ever—a feat that in itself comes with an unprecedented carbon footprint. “Ensuring COP28 UAE is a sustainable and carbon neutral event will be pivotal to its success,” states the COP28 official website—without further explanation of how such carbon “neutrality” is achieved. But to dwell on COP's greenhouse gas emissions is “pure distraction” said Laurent Morel, engineer and partner at Carbone 4, a French firm specializing in energy and climate consultancy.

“What will be interesting to see is how the governance of this COP will manage its own contradictions,” he said, specifically “whether or not oil companies and oil-producing countries commit to production cuts.” At every COP, critics point to the number of flights taken by negotiators and NGOs and denounce private jets shuttling high profile attendees.

In the UN's official document on “How to COP” it acknowledges the media and NGO scrutiny regarding the “apparent irony of the emissions generated by thousands of participants flying in from all around the globe to discuss how to reduce world-wide GHG emissions”.

Since COP13 in 2007 in Bali, most host countries have “considered it part of their hospitality to offset also the travel-related carbon emissions of all registered participants,” it writes. But those offsets are thanks to highly controversial tools for “cancelling out” emissions, known as carbon credits.

During COP27 held in Egypt last year, emissions linked to the international travel of 46,000 participants accounted for 44,104 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, according to the organizers—or around one millionth of global annual emissions.

In Dubai, organizers expect more than 70,000



DUBAI: Men stand near a COP28 sign in a metro station in Dubai on November 28, 2023, ahead of the United Nations climate summit. — AFP

people in the conference's “blue zone” designated for negotiators. And just as at previous COPs, its tallied carbon footprint is not expected to include the emissions of flights related to companies, observers, activists and others participating in the climate fair-like space known as the “green zone.”

COP26 in Glasgow set a carbon footprint record at 38,000 participants emitting more than 130,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> -- but its calculations were broader in their scope, including counting parts of the green zone's emissions.

Last year, the COP27 sustainability report recommended that accounting standards for emissions be “reviewed and raised” to support “comparability” among COP events. But COP28 remains set to break records, with travel responsible for “70-80 percent

of conference emissions” said Marc Halgand from the climate consultancy group EcoAct. He recommends travelling economy class rather than business or private jets, but “scale and frequency” prevail as the key factors involved in reducing emissions—as they are for any international event, be it COP, the Olympics or a World Cup.

The COP27 sustainability report proposed reducing the number of accreditations, while extending their duration—advice already disregarded by the Emirates, which held the record for the largest delegation (1,073 people) at COP in Egypt.

COP remains a “key event for tackling climate change” said Halgand, emphasizing the essential nature of the negotiations in the face of international trade fairs organized by emitters. — AFP

## Virgin pilots first transatlantic flight with low-carbon fuel

LONDON: British airline Virgin Atlantic on Tuesday piloted the first long-haul flight powered entirely by Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), an event environmental groups labeled “greenwashing”. The Boeing 787 plane equipped with Rolls-Royce engines departed from London's Heathrow airport shortly before 1200 GMT, headed for New York's JFK minus cargo and paying passengers.

“The world will always assume something can't be done until you do it,” Virgin Atlantic founder Richard Branson said before joining the flight.

“The spirit of innovation is getting out there and trying to prove that we can do things better for everyone's benefit,” Virgin said it was the first time SAF had been used “in both engines, by a commercial airline, for long-haul flight”. SAFs are produced from renewable biomass and waste resources and can be used in jet fuel in modern aircraft to a maximum of 50 percent, having been blended with kerosene.

They are seen as the main tool for decarbonizing the aviation sector over the coming decades, but the technol-

ogy is still in its infancy and production remains very expensive.

Also, they are used in combustion engines that still generate carbon dioxide. Decarbonisation takes place further upstream by reusing plant matter instead of extracting hydrocarbons.

The UK government announced last December that it was providing up to £1 million (\$1.26 million) in support of the project, led by Virgin in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, US aircraft manufacturer Boeing and British engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce. Speaking ahead of take-off, British Transport Secretary Mark Harper said the government “will continue to support the UK's emerging SAF industry as it creates jobs, grows the economy and gets us to Jet Zero”.

Environmental group Stay Grounded described Tuesday's flight as “greenwashing”—a term used for companies that use deceptive claims to convince the public that their products or operations are environmentally friendly. “While public focus is on this one seemingly green flight, there are 100,000 daily flights using fossil fu-



LONDON: British airline Virgin Atlantic on Tuesday piloted the first long-haul flight powered entirely by Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), an event environmental groups labeled “greenwashing”.

els,” said Magdalena Heuwieser, from the Stay Grounded network.

Finlay Asher, an aerospace engineer who has worked for Rolls-Royce, quoted by Stay Grounded, said that the production process was a “technological dead-end” that “can't be sustainably scaled beyond a few percent of existing jet fuel use”. Greenpeace

also criticized the event. “The two potential sources of genuinely sustainable aviation fuel are both severely limited in scale,” warned Greenpeace chief scientist Doug Parr. “The waste used as feedstock for the bio-kerosene in this flight is not available in quantities large enough to make a big impact on aviation's emissions. — AFP

## US Fed officials encouraged by inflation ‘progress’

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is making good progress in its fight against inflation, senior bank officials said Tuesday, while voicing differing opinions on the chances of another interest rate hike. The central bank recently voted to hold its key lending rate at a 22-year high, lifting expectations that it is done hiking interest rates as it seeks to bring inflation down firmly to its long-term target of two percent.

But while Fed officials have welcomed the rapid decline in inflation from last year's post-pandemic high, they remain split on the best course of action going forward. A number of policymakers, including Fed Chair Jerome Powell, have indicated that they are prepared to hike rates again, if necessary, to bring price increases firmly down to target.

“I am encouraged by what we have learned in the past few weeks—something appears to be giv-



The US Federal Reserve Building is seen in Washington, DC. — AFP

ing, and it's the pace of the economy,” Fed Governor Christopher Waller told a conference in Washington.

Economic data from October “are consistent with the kind of moderating demand and easing price pressure that will help move inflation back to two percent,” he added. The strong economic growth of the first three quarters of the year appears to

be slowing in the final quarter of 2023, Waller said, pointing to a decline in interest rate-sensitive retail sales spending for October.

Meanwhile, inflation has moved “in the right direction in October, albeit gradually,” and the tight job market is showing some signs of cooling, he added. Speaking shortly after Waller, fellow Fed Governor Michelle Bowman told a conference in Utah that there had been “significant progress on bringing inflation down, so far without impairing the strength of the labor market and economic activity.”

In prepared remarks, Bowman said she still expects the Fed will need to raise its benchmark lending rate again in order to keep policy sufficiently restrictive and return inflation to two percent “in a timely way.” She qualified her remarks by saying she would be willing to back another hike if “the incoming data indicate that progress on inflation has stalled or is insufficient.”

This suggests a willingness to hold rates steady if the incoming data continues to align with the Fed's goals. Futures traders currently assign a probability of around 96 percent that the Fed will vote to hold interest rates steady on December 13, according to CME Group data. — AFP

## US consumer confidence up in November

WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence rose more than expected in November, reversing direction after a recent decline, with the mood lifted primarily among the over-55s, according to survey data published Tuesday. The consumer confidence rose to 102.0 this month from a revised 99.1 in October, the Conference Board announced in a statement. This was slightly higher than the median expectation of economists surveyed by MarketWatch of 101.

“Consumer confidence increased in November, following three consecutive months of decline,” the Conference Board's chief economist, Dana Peterson. “November's increase in consumer confidence was concentrated primarily among householders aged 55 and up,” she continued, adding that confidence had declined slightly among householders aged 35-54. Worryingly, the Conference Board's Expectations Index—reflecting consumers' short-term outlook—remained below the level that “historically signals a recession within the next year,” Peterson said.

Around two-thirds of respondents still expected a recession to be “somewhat” or “very likely” to occur over the next 12 months, she added. “Still-positive job growth, cooling inflation and rising incomes should be positive for households,” high Frequency Economic Chief US Economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients. But she noted that the sentiment readings “remain well below pre-pandemic levels and bear watching for signals about more caution on the part of consumers going forward.” — AFP



WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence rose more than expected in November, reversing direction after a recent decline.



Business

# Gulf Bank committed to embedding sustainability principles within society

Bank launches third sustainability report for 2022 titled 'A Year Towards ESG Progression'

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has launched its third sustainability report for 2022, titled "A Year Towards ESG Progression." This release signifies the bank's advancements in sustainability aligned with the New Kuwait Vision 2035. Adhering to global standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Standards, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), and Boursa Kuwait's Sustainability Disclosures Guidelines, the report outlines Gulf Bank's commitment to responsible practices.

The report highlights Gulf Bank's role in supporting the national sustainability agenda through strategic initiatives contributing to a sustainable community. The bank emphasizes responsible practices in environmental, social, and governance domains, coupled with delivering exceptional financial and banking services, and innovative digital solutions.

Ahmed Al-Amir, Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, expressed, "The third report showcases Gulf Bank's dedication to establishing a distinguished model in social, environmental sustainability and governance, both within and beyond the bank. Our initiatives aim to raise awareness about sustainability issues in the community."

**Gulf Bank's strategy in action**

Al-Amir highlighted the bank's commitment to transparency and sustainability performance disclosure. He revealed the ongoing efforts to develop an environmental, social, and institutional sustainability strategy, forming the foundation for the bank's sustainability framework in line with the 2025 strategy; aspiring to uphold the highest sustainability standards.

The report emphasizes Gulf Bank's contribution to sustainable economic growth and provision of diverse sustainable financial solutions, aligned with environmental and social goals. This is achieved through a digital transformation project aimed at enhancing the customer experience, streamlining operations, and promoting financial inclusion.

In line with its 2025 strategy, Gulf Bank introduced a new mobile app, facilitating quick money transfers, secure online shopping, and innovative banking features. Launched in 2022, the app is characterized by its smart design, user-friendly interface, and simplicity. Gulf Bank emphasizes its commitment to the highest ethical standards, a longstanding pillar of the financial institution. Furthermore, the third sustainability report highlights the importance of transparency and disclosure in communicating the bank's sustainability performance. Gulf Bank's approach integrates thoughtful practices, proactive sustainability, effective leadership, and



Ahmed Al-Amir

- The bank showcases a noteworthy model by incorporating sustainability principles through carefully selected initiatives
- Embracing responsible practices with a proactive approach strengthens and accelerates the national sustainability agenda



Maysoon Al-Attar

- We successfully managed the disposal of 22.3 tons of e-waste through our diverse environmental protection initiatives
- We are committed to fostering a sustainable work environment for our employees that encourages talent, supports youth, and empowers women.

governance, covering financial services, digital innovation, talent acquisition, and youth empowerment.

**Community engagement and social responsibility**

Al-Amir addressed social responsibility, expressing, "In our commitment to sustainability and social responsibility, we acknowledge the importance of organizing community events, empowering youth, enhancing social cohesion, all of which represent goals and factors crucial for achieving Kuwait's vision and sustainable development objectives." The bank continues to showcase progress in implementing the pillars of its CSR strategy by sponsoring various humanitarian, cultural, sports, and environmental events, with a specific focus on youth empowerment. This is a priority, as youth are seen as integral to the future of society.

**Environmental initiatives**

Maysoon Al-Attar, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications for sustainability and ESG, highlighted the transformative influence of digitalization on Gulf Bank's efficiency and productivity. She emphasized the substantial contribution to the environmental facets of society, in harmony with Kuwait's emerging vision, with a specific focus on the sustainable environment pillar. This effort involves addressing a variety of environmental concerns, such as climate change and the conservation of resources. Al-Attar pointed out that the bank's departments have devised clear internal plans to tackle these issues. Their substantial efforts have led to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, decreased paper consumption, environmental clean-up activities, and waste reduction.

Underlining Gulf Bank's commitment to environmental protection, Al-Attar mentioned the continued participation in the annual Environment Month initiative organized by the Scientific Center. This involvement encompasses the celebration of events like World Recycling Day, World Water Day, World Aquatic Animals Day, and World Health Day. Additionally, Gulf Bank persists in

its collaboration with an external recycling company to recycle e-waste. In the current year, the bank successfully disposed a total of 22.3 tons of e-waste, contributing to its ongoing commitment to environmental responsibility.

robust workforce foundation and elevating employee engagement by cultivating a workplace culture that values diversity, encourages growth, prioritizes overall employee well-being, and provides equal opportunities. This commitment is upheld through a diverse work environment,

training hours were increased, with around 72.04 percent of the bank's employees participating in distinguished training courses.

Notably, there was an increase in the number of women holding STEM-related professional positions in 2022. Reem Al-Saleh was appointed as the Bank's first Board member, furthering the bank's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

**Dedicated adherence to governance standards**

The report illustrates Gulf Bank's dedicated commitment to governance principles, emphasizing its steadfast adherence to elevated standards of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct. This commitment ensures that the bank's operations align with the interests of stakeholders and contribute to its sustained long-term growth.

**Supporting SMEs**

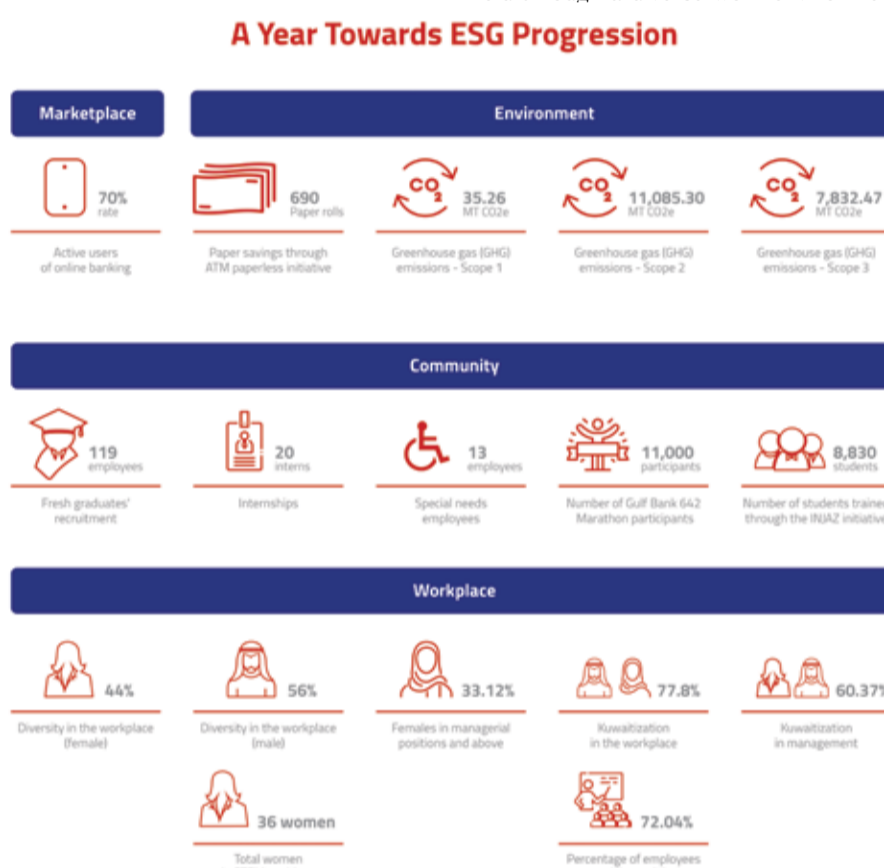
The report highlights the bank's support for SMEs, emphasizing the essential role SMEs play in driving Kuwait's economic growth. The bank maintains an unwavering commitment to providing this vital sector with the necessary resources, expertise, and financial support to foster its prosperity.

**Prioritizing customer satisfaction**

The report affirms that Gulf Bank places customer satisfaction at the forefront of its priorities. This commitment drives the bank to consistently surpass expectations by delivering high-quality and prompt services that align with customer requirements. To comprehensively understand the customer journey, Gulf Bank has established a Data and Innovation Unit to effectively utilize various data sources.

**Adhering to the highest sustainability standards**

Ahmed Al-Amir stated, "Gulf Bank continues to implement the highest standards of ESG sustainability, ensuring that our operations, initiatives, and investments, align with the optimal model of implementation, now and in the future."



**Creating a supportive working environment**

To foster a sustainable work environment, Gulf Bank has implemented a series of initiatives aimed at establishing a nurturing and thriving workplace for its employees. The focus lies on talent management, employee well-being, and women's empowerment, ensuring that everyone within the bank feels empowered, valued, and motivated to achieve their full potential.

Gulf Bank is dedicated to building a

women's empowerment, training programs, performance management, active participation, the integration of relevant technology, and, of course, a focus on occupational health and safety. In the year 2022, Kuwaiti nationals comprised approximately 77.8 percent of the total workforce in the bank. Women held 60.37 percent of senior management positions and constituted 44 percent of the overall workforce.

Throughout 2022, the bank emphasized employee training in collaboration with major academic and professional institu-

## Taiwan's Foxconn plans to invest \$1.54bn more in India

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant and key Apple supplier Foxconn is planning an additional \$1.54 billion investment in India for "operational needs", as it seeks to diversify production away from China. The firm — also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry — is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for many companies, most notably Apple's iPhones. The company said in a filing to Taiwan Stock Exchange late Monday that its Indian subsidiary plans to spend around \$128 billion rupees on "engaging others to build on owned land" for "operational needs".

The statement did not provide any details, only saying "a supplemental announcement will be made after the transaction is confirmed". Foxconn operates in more than two dozen countries but the bulk of its operations is based in China — a dependence it is looking to reduce after production was impacted by three years of strict COVID policies, a bout of industrial unrest and diplomatic tensions with the United States.



Chairman Young Liu had said during an earnings call in August that the company saw the potential to invest "several billion dollars" in India. Foxconn in May announced the purchase of a huge tract of land on the outskirts of Indian tech hub Bengaluru for \$37 million.

It currently operates about nine production campuses and has more than 30 factories in India, according to Liu. The company is planning to expand its India operations to "critical components" for consumer electronics and electric vehicles to boost its competitiveness, he said. — AFP



More Nigerian households have been turning to greener biofuels.

## Nigerians look to biofuel as cost of cooking gas soars

LAGOS, Nigeria: Hairdresser Shola Abiodun Adeyemi begins preparing lunch by pouring out a glug of bright green biofuel gel into her stove, as many Nigerians seek to reduce cooking expenses. The cost of living has skyrocketed in Nigeria since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu ended a fuel subsidy in May.

Bioethanol — a cheaper, renewable alternative to cooking gas — is becoming increasingly popular. Regular cooking gas is now unaffordable for many, with inflation in Africa's largest economy reaching more than 27 percent over the past year, according to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics.

Adeyemi is glad she can avoid paying around 1,000 naira (1.14 euros, \$1.25) per kilogram for gas. A liter of biofuel costs the equivalent of just over \$1, and users say they can get much more cooking done with it.

The biofuel gel also offers a cleaner alternative in kitchens where families are exposed to the health risks of woodsmoke and other more polluting fuels. Every year, more than 93,000 women die in Nigeria from diseases caused by domestic air pollution, according to the World Health Organization. Bioethanol gel releases far fewer harmful emissions into the

atmosphere than traditional fuels. "It doesn't darken your pot when you are using it, you feel comfortable, you don't even need to stress. Even the smell, the odor it brings out, you'll love your cooking," said 43-year-old Adeyemi. In Nigeria, carbon dioxide emissions could be reduced by over four million tons if all households used bioethanol for cooking, according to the United Nations. In the wider region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is seeking to popularize bioethanol.

Guei Kouhie, coordinator of bioenergy and clean cooking programs at ECOWAS, said the bloc wants countries to adopt "harmonized standards of bioethanol cooking and transportation and domestication."

One of the firms selling the fuel and stoves is Kike Technologies, part of the Green Energy Biofuels company. Its bioethanol is made using organic materials including food scraps, agricultural waste and even water hyacinth. The company has sold around a million cookers in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Co-founder Femi Oye, who is also the CEO of Green Energy Biofuels, said he wanted to "create products that save lives."

More Nigerian households have been turning to greener biofuels, according to the non-profit Clean Cooking Alliance — but there are limitations, especially during Nigeria's economic crisis. "With inflation, people embrace bioethanol for sure, but many others have gone back to wood and coal, (which are) even cheaper," said Abel Gaiya, a researcher at Clean Technology Hub, a renewable energy think tank in the capital Abuja. — AFP

## EasyJet returns to profit but warns of war impact

LONDON: British no-frills airline EasyJet on Tuesday announced its first annual profit since the outbreak of the COVID pandemic but warned that the Zionist entity's war on Gaza will impact its winter results. Profit after tax stood at £324 million (\$409 million) in the 12 months to the end of September on higher demand and increased fares, EasyJet said in a statement. That compared with a loss after tax of £169 million in its 2021/22 financial year. EasyJet chief executive Johan Lundgren gave an upbeat outlook, even if the group saw a negative impact from the war. "We see a positive outlook for this year with airline and holidays bookings both ahead year on year," he said in the statement.

Lundgren said "consumer research highlights that around three quarters of Britons plan to spend more on their holidays versus last year with travel continuing to be the top priority for household discretionary spending". At the same time EasyJet noted that "early winter results... will see an impact from the conflict in the Middle East".

The airline, which flies mainly across Europe, has paused flights to Zionist entity and Jordan owing to the war. Looking back at its last financial year, EasyJet said revenue surged 42 percent to £8.2 billion, "predominantly due to pricing strength, increased flown capacity, improved load factors" plus growth of its holidays business. EasyJet's share price gained 2.1 percent to £4.13 in early London trades following the earnings update. "Investors are being rewarded for their patience following a bumpy few years with the reinstating of the dividend," noted Sophie Lund-Yates, lead equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. With travel demand rebounding strongly after the pandemic grounded planes, EasyJet last month announced a deal worth close to \$20 billion for 157 Airbus planes and alterations to a previous order with the European planemaker. — AFP

# Diamond trade polishes its act as Russia sanctions loom

## Jewelry traders, brands adopting advanced tracking technology

**ANTWERP, Belgium:** As European capitals prepare to implement long-awaited sanctions on Russia's diamond exports, Belgian traders are bracing for new scrutiny of their industry. In Antwerp's renowned diamond district—which handles an estimated 86 percent of the world's rough diamonds—polishing “labs” are turning to blockchain technology to prove their gemstones come from legitimate mines in Africa, Australia or Canada, and not Russia.

With Russian stones having accounted for around a third of the global market before Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the G7's decision to ban trade in them could have broad repercussions.

Industry insiders in Belgium expect the sanctions to be phased in gradually, limiting market disruption. Meanwhile, major traders and jewelry brands have begun adopting advanced tracking technology to check and certify where their diamonds are coming from.

The industry has sought to burnish its image ever since outrage erupted two decades ago over so-called “blood diamonds” financing brutal civil wars in Africa. If traders are now seen helping Russia evade sanctions to keep financing its invasion of Ukraine, the shine may come off diamonds once again.

The European Union is drawing up bans on Russian diamonds as part of its 12th package of sanctions to tighten the vice on Moscow's war economy and cut off funds the country is using to buy munitions and drones from North Korea and Iran. But it has been difficult to agree on how best to restrict the diamond trade.

Being small and extremely valuable, gems are simple and lucrative to smuggle.

They can easily be mixed with stones from other sources. In addition, rough diamonds change weight and appearance as they are cut, polished and eventually set in jewelry.

Europe—and Belgium in particular—has another concern: Even with EU sanctions, Russian gems could still find their way to competitors in places like Dubai and India. As EU sanctions talks progressed, the G7 powers stepped in and the world's top industrialized democracies agreed a global ban.

“I think it is important that any traceability solution, or any protocol that is proposed to deal with those potential sanctions, is industry-wide and is supported by all the diamond centers,” said iTraceIT CEO Frederik Degryse. Degryse's firm is trying to provide market players with a digital way to trace their supply chain.

The European Commission has adopted a proposal that will go to member states for approval, expected in the coming days if the 27 member states are unanimous. According to a copy seen by AFP, it will ban trade in diamonds originating in, transiting, or exported from Russia, as well as Russian diamonds cut and polished in third countries.

Starting January 1, 2024, the ban would apply to “non-industrial natural and synthetic diamonds as well as diamond jewelry.” The import ban on Russian diamonds cut or polished in third countries would be phased in between March and September next year.



**ANTWERP:** CEO of iTraceIT Frederik Degryse speaks during an interview.

“This phasing-in... takes into consideration the need to deploy an appropriate traceability mechanism that enables effective enforcement measures and minimizes disruptions for market players,” the draft says. The iTraceIT firm believes its technology would ease the supply chain disruption such bans might bring. In a “lab” in Antwerp's diamond quarter, account manager Sandiah Kangoute showed AFP how miners, traders, polishers and retailers can trace their diamonds back to their source.

As miners bag stones, each is assigned a QR code linking its contents to a unique filing system using blockchain technology—a method of recording information that is difficult to hack or manipulate. Using a code reader, industry workers can access files attached to the unique codes and add new ones, such as receipts for purchase, export licenses, and certificates of authenticity. “So I see here, the starting



**ANTWERP:** Diamonds are analyzed at iTraceIT, a company that develops diamond traceability solutions that leverages blockchain technology, artificial intelligence and data analytics. — AFP photos

point was Canada, then it travelled and is coming to me in France,” Kangoute says, as she scans a QR code on a small packet of cut diamonds.

If challenged, exporters can use the iTraceIT system to provide back-up evidence to prove their diamonds are not sourced from Russia. “Every parcel or every diamond will have an internal reference, which is linked,” Degryse said. “So if there's any deviation between the actual physical diamonds that you're weighing and the numbers that are there, then it'll pop up,” he said.

“And then you have all the supporting

documentation,” Degryse added. “All the partners that we work with get audited on a frequent basis. So this is a tool that can make it easier for auditors to go in and see traceability for all the diamonds.” But will the sanctions hurt Russia? So far, it has managed to maintain its war against Ukraine through 11 previous rounds of EU measures that targeted its much larger oil and gas exports. The industry is skeptical. Russia is a major source of diamonds, but diamonds themselves account for a small part of its economy, and this might in part explain why officials took so long to get around to tackling the trade. — AFP

## Xi says China must protect foreign firms' rights

**BEIJING:** Chinese leader Xi Jinping has ordered greater protection for international firms' rights and intellectual property, state media reported on Tuesday, as Beijing works to lure in foreign companies spooked by a crackdown and an ailing economy. US and European firms in China have said that doing business is harder than ever as geopolitics, an anti-espionage law, raids on multinationals and favorable treatment for domestic competitors weigh on morale.

But Beijing has shown signs that it is now seeking to draw foreign companies back.

Xi in a written speech to an APEC summit of chief executives this month invited firms to invest, promising “heart-warming” measures “to make it easier for foreign companies to invest and operate in China”. And at a meeting on Monday of China's Communist Party Politburo -- the country's top decision-making body—he said China must ensure “comprehensive, open and transparent” legal treatment of foreign entities, state broadcaster CCTV said.

China's legal system should “strengthen protection of intellectual property rights”, he said, as well as “safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of foreign enterprises”.

Beijing must “create a market-oriented, legal and international first-class business environment”, Xi said. Foreign entrepreneurs have long complained about vague and arbitrary regulations in China, chief among them being intellectual property theft—an issue raised by US officials during visits to China this year. US and European enterprise lobbies warned in September that foreign business confidence in China had reached its lowest in years as slowing growth and geopolitical tensions hit investment prospects. But the business lobby is seeing signs that things could be improving following increased US-China engagement and a meeting between Xi and President Joe Biden this month. — AFP

## Why you should care about budget crisis Germany

**FRANKFURT:** German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will address parliament Tuesday about an escalating budget crisis triggered by a bombshell court ruling that his government breached constitutional debt limits. Here is a look at the crisis rocking Europe's biggest economy and threatening a collapse of the fractious ruling coalition:

### What are the debt rules?

When Angela Merkel was chancellor in 2009, Germany enshrined a so-called “debt brake” in its constitution. This caps a government's budget deficit at 0.35 percent of gross domestic product, and is emblematic of Germany's commitment to reaching balanced budgets—known as the “schwarze Null”, or “black zero”. The idea of strict spending limits gained traction in the early 2000s, and politicians were really spurred into action by the 2007-2008 financial crisis, when debt and the deficit soared.

The measure can be suspended in emergencies, as long as parliament backs the move. This happened from 2020 to 2022, first to cope with the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic and then the energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was supposed to come back into force this year—but due to the budget crisis, Finance Minister Christian Lindner announced last week the coalition was seeking to suspend it again.

On November 15, Germany's Constitutional Court ruled that Scholz's coalition had acted in contravention of the “debt brake”, in response to a legal complaint from the conservative opposition CDU and CSU parties. The judgment related to a 2022 decision to transfer 60 billion euros (\$65 billion) of unused borrowing capacity from a pot aimed at fighting the impacts of the pandemic to a “climate and transformation fund”. The immediate impact of the ruling was to wipe the 60 billion euros from the climate fund, which had been worth 212 billion euros.

This could affect projects aimed at speeding Germany's transition to an emissions-free economy, as well as others supposed to transform industry—such as a raft of investments in semiconductor projects announced in recent times. But the ruling is also im-



**BERLIN:** German Finance Minister Christian Lindner opens a folder with documents prior to a debate about a budget crisis at the Bundestag (lower house of parliament), on November 28, 2023 in Berlin. — AFP

acting other “off budget” funds, with the government now having to account for the extra spending in its main budget.

Projects under the climate and transformation fund were initially suspended, followed by a broader freeze on future spending commitments. Lindner has been forced to seek to suspend the debt brake again, a bitter pill for a fiscal hawk whose pro-market FDP had staunchly backed the measures.

Announcing the development last week, he omitted any mention of the word “debt brake”, instead referring cryptically to the introduction of a “supplementary budget”, and failing to give any further explanation. It was left to the finance ministry to clarify the details afterwards. Meanwhile talks on the 2024 budget have been suspended.

There has been embarrassment in a country that long prided itself on fiscal rectitude. On Wednesday, Scholz looked visibly annoyed when, during a joint press conference in Berlin alongside Giorgia Meloni, the Italian leader was asked whether she still considered Germany a reliable economic partner, given the court ruling.

The crisis has fuelled debate on whether the debt brake should be relaxed and raised questions on whether Scholz's fragile three-party coalition might implode. In the coming years, major German lender LBBW Bank believes massive extra outlays will be needed in areas ranging from defense to pensions and healthcare, likely amounting to about five percent of GDP. “If Germany is to retain its economic strength and stability, it will not be possible without easing the debt brake,” said the bank's chief economist Moritz Kraemer.

But while Scholz's SPD and the Greens are in favor of relaxing the rules, Lindner's FDP have seemed determined to keep the debt limit in place. At the same time, raising taxes is a red line for the FDP.

In a hint of the tussle within the coalition, Economy Minister Robert Habeck of the Greens dug in his heels on Monday, saying that “all projects that we conceived must be made possible.” The opposition, meanwhile, have described the ruling as a “political disaster”. On Monday Markus Soeder, the powerful leader of the CSU party, added his voice to calls for new federal elections. — AFP

## Stock markets fall further before US economy updates

**LONDON:** Major European and Asian stock markets mostly fell for a second session running Tuesday as traders booked profits before updates on the US economy this week, notably a key inflation reading. World stock markets, including in New York, made solid gains in recent weeks on hopes that the Federal Reserve had finished with hiking rates—and that the US central bank could cut borrowing costs next year as inflation cools. Looking ahead to the US open, “Wall Street futures are suggesting a slightly softer start will be seen for Tuesday's trade as investors take stock of what has been another strong month of gains”, said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

“Yesterday's miss in reported new

home sales for October underlines the fact that rising borrowing costs are taking a toll on the consumer end of the market.”

A string of recent US indicators pointing to a slowing economy—as well as a below-forecast rise in consumer prices—have fuelled optimism that the Fed will stop hiking.

Investors will Thursday pore over the closely-watched personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred guide on inflation. They will be keeping an eye also on several other US pointers this week, including consumer confidence and gross domestic product.

Additionally, a number of Fed officials were lined up to talk, including boss Jerome Powell, though they are expected to stick to their long-running line that policy decisions will be based on data, and that they see rates staying higher for longer to tame inflation completely. “The market appears to have embraced the idea that slow-

ing economic data will hasten the arrival of market-friendly rate cuts, even though the Fed has continued to telegraph otherwise,” said Chris Larkin at E\*Trade from Morgan Stanley. “This week will provide plenty of opportunities for traders to decide whether that cooling trend is intact.”

Expectations that rates will come down have weighed on the dollar in recent weeks, although the greenback was steadier on Tuesday. Elsewhere, oil prices climbed more than one percent as OPEC and its key allies gear up for a delayed meeting due Thursday.

Last week's gathering was postponed after some African countries reportedly balked at more production cuts proposed by Saudi Arabia. The Saudis and Russia are thought to be considering announcing a further reduction in output into the new year as they try to prop up prices, which have come down over recent months owing to slowing economies and softening demand. — AFP

## Fast-fashion giant Shein applies to go public in US

**WASHINGTON:** Chinese-founded fast fashion giant Shein has confidentially applied to go public in the United States, the Wall Street Journal reported Monday, calling the move potentially one of the biggest IPOs in years.

The offering could come next year, the newspaper said, citing people familiar with the matter and adding that Chinese media had also reported on the filing. Banks Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Morgan Stanley have been tasked with underwriting the offering, according to the business daily. Shein told AFP it had “no comment at this time”.

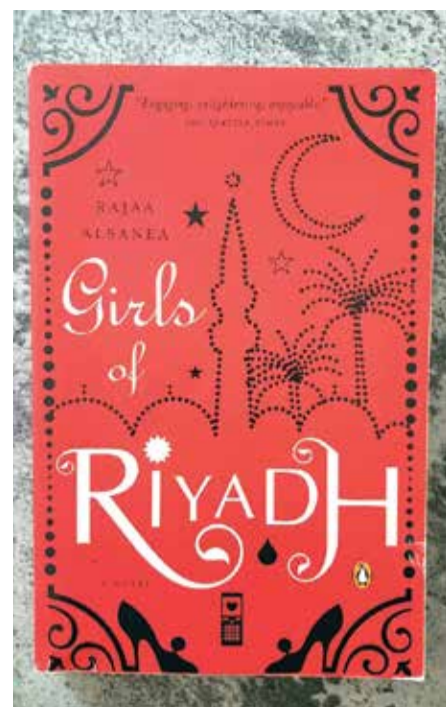
Both Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase declined to comment when contacted by AFP, while Morgan

Stanley did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Shein was valued at \$66 billion earlier this year, and a public presence in the United States could make huge waves on Wall Street. The company—known for selling enormous amounts of clothing stock for extremely low prices—recorded \$23 billion in revenue and \$800 million in net profit in 2022, the Journal said, reporting that Shein has told investors it has already posted new records in the first three quarters of 2023.

Founded in 2008 in China and based in Singapore, Shein has quickly conquered the global fast fashion market by selling its products exclusively online and catering to young customers through social media.

Shein has been accused of exploiting unpaid labor, obscuring production processes and encouraging overconsumption as it has faced the wrath of environmental and human rights activists. — AFP

Lifestyle



Book Review

# Girls of Riyadh by Rajaa Alsanea

By Ghadeer Ghloum

**R**ajaa Alsanea's powerful novel, *Girls of Riyadh*, offers an insightful portrayal of the lives of Khaleeji women, through the lens of four Saudi women, who struggle with their love lives while carrying the burden of societal expectations. In a society that views love between unmarried individuals as a sin, the book explores the themes of sinful love, the fear of social isolation, freedom and the clash between traditional norms in society and the modern world.

One of the most powerful aspects of *Girls of Riyadh* is its unapologetic honesty, as Alsanea fearlessly explores the challenges women face in conservative societies. The writer critiques the unrealistic social standards that define the perfect Khaleeji woman through her unique email-style text format, where she crafts narratives of the characters' yearning for emotional fulfillment and their desire for love, provoking readers to question the moral context by which love is judged.

Moreover, the novel challenges the stereotype that portrays women as en-

emies of one another, as it emphasizes women's solidarity by showcasing their willingness to seek advice, listen to each other and face societal pressures together.

*Girls of Riyadh* was released in 2005 in Arabic and was translated into English by the author herself alongside Marilyn Booth, an author and a translator of Arabic literature, in 2007. The book sparked a controversy and was initially banned in Saudi Arabia. However, the ban was lifted a few years later and is now legally published, sold and read in the kingdom.



Rajaa Alsanea



## An immigrant chef in Miami trots the globe to feed the needy

**K**arla Hoyos is a chef ready to hop on a plane at a moment's notice. Whenever she gets the call, she leaves her taco business in Miami to go anywhere in the world to help feed victims of natural disasters or war. She is one of dozens of chefs connected to World Central Kitchen (WCK), the non-profit group founded by renowned chef Jose Andres that provides meals at global hotspots where people face trauma.

A few days ago, Hoyos, 35, returned from the Zionist entity, where she spent two weeks teaching volunteers how to make huge pots of food for those who had to evacuate their homes after the attacks by the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas on October 7, in which 1,200 people were killed, according to the Zionist entity. Security issues forced her to return to Florida, but WCK remains in the Zionist entity and Gaza, where it delivers food to those affected by the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas.

The Zionist entity's campaign against Hamas has killed almost 15,000 people, mostly Palestinian civilians, according to Gaza's Hamas government. "It was a new experience. I've never seen missiles go off and having to go seek shelter," says Hoyos, who is Mexican and was also recently deployed to feed victims in Ukraine affected by the war with Russia.

"But at the end of the day, conflicts are conflicts, and innocent people suffer all the time and we are there to help whoever is hungry." Andres, the Spanish-American restaurateur who founded WCK in 2010, mobilizes his network quickly after any catastrophe, and they serve up to 100,000

meals a day with the help of local relief groups and markets.

In recent weeks, the organization has mustered to action in the Mexican resort of Acapulco in the aftermath of Hurricane Otis, as well as in the Middle East and Ukraine. The role of Hoyos is to set up the makeshift kitchens, manage logistics and even offer the recipes used to prepare dishes. "It doesn't matter if it's a garage, if it's a basement, if it's a warehouse, if you have running water,



Karla Hoyos, volunteer chef for World Central Kitchen (WCK) and owner of Tacotomia, cooks during an interview with AFP in Miami, Florida.

electric and air vents, I'll build a kitchen," she says.

### Vocation to feed

Hoyos speaks passionately about her trade from Tacotomia, the small restaurant she opened four months ago in a gastronomic market in downtown Miami. For her, there is little separation between her humanitarian work and what she does in her business. It's all

part of the same vocation, born at age 12 when she baked her first tray of cookies. "I want to put as much detail, as much love, in both things. It doesn't matter if it's a Michelin star restaurant or you're eating a taco or you're going to receive a free plate of rice because you haven't eaten in days."

Inspired by her grandmother and rejecting her father's wishes for her to become a lawyer, she studied at a culinary school in Mexico before traveling

to help Andres feed the population. Hoyos immediately agreed to go despite widespread power outages and scarce potable water. She initially sized up Andres as a "grumpy man," but her admiration for the Spanish chef grew, and she worked at his side for three months, eventually hiring on at his Miami restaurant.

Six years later, Hoyos sometimes wonders why she travels to dangerous places like Ukraine or the Zionist



Karla Hoyos, a volunteer chef for World Central Kitchen and owner of Tacotomia, holds a dish called "Machete", during an interview with AFP in Downtown Miami, Florida.

entity, but her vocation to help always prevails. The hardest part, she says, is returning to the normalcy of home. "When you are trying to help people, and [you have] leave, it's very hard to accept that you have to go home, to your AC, to your fridge full of food, to your job, to your comfort. And there's a lot of guilt in there."—AFP

Her collaboration with WCK began in 2017, when Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico. The catering company she worked for at the time, Bon Appetit, decid-

## Merriam-Webster crowns 'authentic' as word of the year

**I**n an age where forces from AI to Donald Trump have left Americans doubting the truth, US dictionary Merriam-Webster says that 2023's most looked-up word was "authentic." The venerable publisher, whose dictionary is especially popular online, said the trend was driven by people reading and talking about artificial intelligence, celebrity culture, identity and social media. "Authentic" beat out other contenders such as "deepfake," "rizz" (young-people speak for charisma) and "coronation" for honors as the word that most often sent people to the dictionary.



"Authentic" has several shades of meaning including "not false or imitation," and "true to one's own personality, spirit, or character," Merriam-Webster said. "Although clearly a desirable quality, authentic is hard to define and subject to debate—two reasons it sends many people to the dictionary," the publisher said in a news release. It noted that celebrities such as Taylor Swift talked this year about their interest in seeking an authentic voice or self. "What makes Swift a cultural phenomenon is not only her musical prowess and versatility but the trademark authenticity she puts on each note and verse," Forbes magazine said in an article published in October. Elon Musk is big on authenticity, too, or so the tech tycoon says. At a world government summit in Dubai in February, the outspoken owner of X, the former Twitter, said executives and government leaders should "speak authentically" on social media.—AFP

## Lost in the metro? Paris translation app aims to help visitors

**T**he Paris metro has launched an instant translation app ahead of next year's Olympic Games to help hapless foreign visitors navigate the French capital's urban transport system. The meandering metro, featuring more than 300 stations whose names can be hard to find or pronounce even for natives, easily becomes a nightmare for anybody without fluent French.

The Summer Olympics, to be held in the French capital between July 26 and August 11, will bring millions of visitors without knowledge of French or even English to the capital, most of whom will be using public transport to shuttle between sports venues. In comes Tradivia, an instant translation app able to handle 16 languages, with which metro operator RATP has equipped 6,000 of its staff across the network's stations.

The app translates spoken queries, including in English, German, Mandarin, Hindi and Arabic, into French for the benefit of RATP's agents whose responses then get translated back to the language of the visitor. "We had a real issue here, because our agents can't be expected to answer queries in all languages," said Valerie Gaidot, customer experience head at RATP.

The app has been specifically tailored to the Paris metro experience, and knows its way around station names, itineraries and the various ticket and travel pass types that can leave tourists bewildered. This, RATP said, is a decisive advantage over general translation help like Google Translate that sometimes fails to make sense of the metro's idiosyncrasies.—AFP



Karla Hoyos, volunteer chef for World Central Kitchen (WCK) and owner of Tacotomia, poses during an interview with AFP in Miami, Florida.



Karla Hoyos, volunteer chef for World Central Kitchen (WCK) and owner of Tacotomia, cooks during an interview with AFP in Miami, Florida.

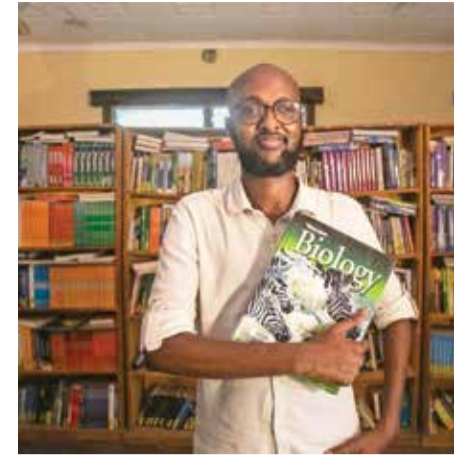
## Lifestyle



This handout picture shows Abdullahi Mire (left) the winner of the UN refugee agency's prestigious Nansen Award distributing books to refugee students in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp. - AFP photos



This handout picture shows Abdullahi Mire (center left) meeting with youth in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp.



This handout picture shows Abdullahi Mire posing for a picture in one of the libraries he established in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp.

## Somali education champion wins UN refugee prize

**A** former Somali refugee intent on bringing books and education to his compatriots languishing in sprawling camps in Kenya was on Tuesday named the winner of the UN refugee agency's prestigious Nansen Award. Abdullahi Mire, 36, was hailed for championing the right to education by putting 100,000 books in the hands of children in Kenya's crowded Dadaab refugee camps. "A book can change someone's future," Mire told AFP in an interview.

"I want every child who is displaced to get the opportunity of education." Announcing the prize, United Nations refugee chief Filippo Grandi described Mire in a statement as "living proof that transformative ideas can spring from within displaced communities".

Mire was born in Somalia, but amid unrest there his family fled to Kenya when he was a young child. He spent 23 years in Dadaab — a sprawling complex of three camps that were initially built in the 1990s to host some 90,000 refugees, but which today are home to around 370,000, according to UN figures.

### 'Monumental odds'

Against what the UNHCR described as "monumental odds", Mire not only completed his primary and secondary education in the camp, but managed to go on to complete a degree in journalism and public relations. "My case is rare, and that inspires me to give back," he said. Mire, who on occasion has worked for AFP, was resettled to Norway around a decade ago, but while he liked living there, he soon decided to return to

Kenya. "Europe is nice and safe, but it depends what you want in life," he said over the phone from Nairobi. "There was something telling me that I could have an impact here, more than in Oslo."

Back in Kenya, he was working as a journalist and reporting a story in Dadaab one day when a girl named Hodan Bashir Ali approached him and asked if he could help find her a biology book.



This handout picture shows Abdullahi Mire (left standing) speaking with UNHCR assistant education officer Dakane Ahmed Bare at one of the libraries established in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp.

She wanted to be a doctor, she said, but at her school 15 students had to share a single text book.

"That was the start of my calling," Mire said, adding that he bought the book for Hodan, who is now a registered nurse and still aspiring to become

a doctor. "That book opened a door for Hodan," he said. "She is inspiring."

### Books give opportunity

Mire decided to set up the Refugee Youth Education Hub, raising awareness about refugees' educational needs and seeking book donations. To date, the refugee-led organization has brought 100,000 books into the camps, and has

education among the refugees. "I know dozens of girls who wanted to be teachers who are teachers now," Mire said.

"Books are about giving the opportunity to dream and to think about a career, about how to be a better citizen of this world." The Nansen prize, awarded annually, is named for Norwegian polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen, who served as the first high commissioner for refugees

Merkel, who was hailed for the dedication she showed while in office to protect people displaced by conflict.

Mire, who will receive his award at a ceremony in Geneva on December 13, said the prize was "a huge honor for all refugee-led organizations". "I am not a philanthropist, I am not a rich person... but I believe anyone can make a difference," he said. "You



This handout picture shows the winner of the UN refugee agency's prestigious Nansen Award, Abdullahi Mire (center) posing for a picture between Somali refugee and librarian Mumino Ibrahim (left) and Somali refugee Hodan Bashir.

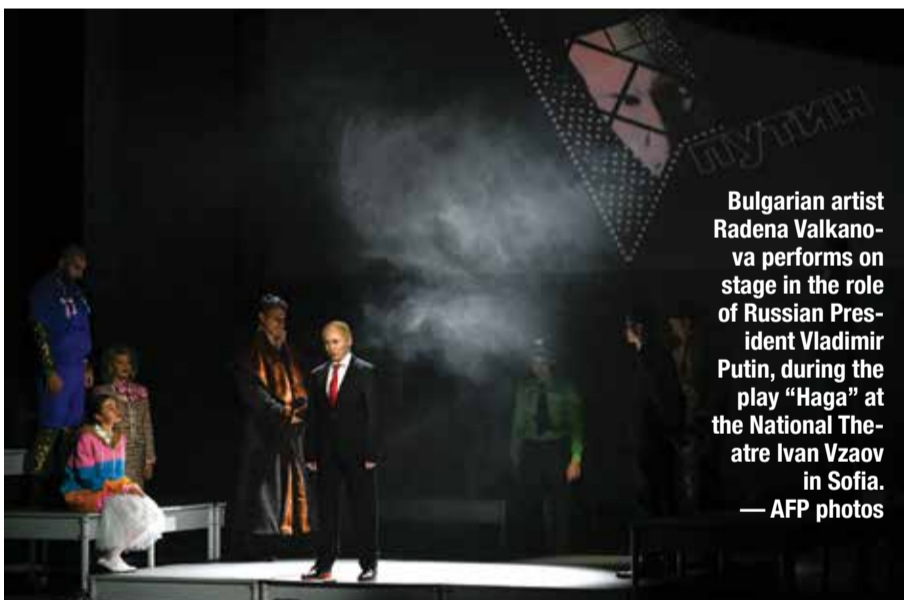
opened three libraries. "When you read a book, it is like you are travelling the world," Mire said.

And for people traumatized by the conflict and wars they have fled, "books are the best way to heal". The program has already boosted enrolment in higher

for the League of Nations — the precursor of the United Nations.

The award winner receives a commemorative medal and a monetary prize of \$100,000, to be reinvested in humanitarian initiatives. Last year's award went to former German chancellor Angela

don't need to be a politician or a celebrity or a tycoon to have an impact. Everyone can have a role to play to make people's lives better." — AFP



Bulgarian artist Radena Valkanova performs on stage in the role of Russian President Vladimir Putin, during the play "Haga" at the National Theatre Ivan Vzaov in Sofia. — AFP photos



Bulgarian artist Radena Valkanova prepares with make-up backstage ahead of her performance in the role of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the play "Haga" at the National Theatre Ivan Vzaov in Sofia.

## Satirical Putin play stirs emotions in Bulgaria

**A** highly acclaimed satirical play about President Vladimir Putin and his allies facing a war crimes tribunal is making waves in Bulgaria, a country historically close to Russia. Titled "The Hague", the play by Ukrainian author Sasha Denisova recounts the story of an orphaned teenager from Mariupol who imagines how Russia's top brass is brought to justice over its devastating war in Ukraine. After premiering in Poland and the United States earlier this year, celebrated guest director Galin Stoev adapted the play for a Bulgarian audience, seeking to challenge the Balkan country's pro-Kremlin sentiment.

In the drama currently staged at Sofia's National Theatre, Putin is portrayed by a woman — Bulgarian actor Radena Valkanova — donning a sleek black suit and red shoes. "If we can't watch the Hague trial in real life, let's watch it in the theatre," Denisova said of the scene she penned before the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Putin over the alleged unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children. In the same way as Charlie Chaplin mocked Nazi leader Adolf Hitler on screen, "Putin must be laughed at without mercy," she told AFP, stressing the power of satire.

### 'Eye-opening'

Historically close to Russia, EU and NATO member Bulgaria still has many

citizens nostalgic for what they see as the glory days of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. The nostalgia also refers to Russia as a protector for the Slavic people of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule.

Studies suggesting that 30 percent of Bulgarians are pro-Putin — despite Moscow's relentless war on Ukraine — encouraged Stoev in his determination to stage an "eye-opening" adaptation of the play in Sofia. And he seems to have hit a mark. "The audience is deeply moved and asks questions," Stoev told AFP, after the actors received another round of standing ovations from the crowd.

But the main challenge lies in constantly updating the script to reflect the current state of the war. Yulian Vergov — who plays Russian Wagner mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin — said working

with a changing script was challenging, as both the aborted mutiny and Prigozhin's death in a plane crash had to be "newly added" while leaving his fate in doubt. "The play is fiction, but after all you play a real character, who then dies during rehearsals — this is impressive," Vergov said. The troupe also has to stay on top of the latest rumors about the state of health of Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov and the Russian president.

Amid all the accolades, detractors have criticized the play as a "biased propaganda vaudeville", with one actor reportedly declining a role for ideological reasons. "With this show, we're inviting spectators to reflect on real events" and draw their own conclusions, theatre director Vasil Vasilev countered. — AFP



Bulgarian artist Radena Valkanova performs on stage in the role of Russian President Vladimir Putin, during the play "Haga" at the National Theatre Ivan Vzaov in Sofia.

## Endangered Sumatran elephant born in Indonesia, second in weeks

**A** critically endangered Sumatran elephant was born in Indonesia on Tuesday, officials said, the second rare birth in weeks that has given renewed hope to conservation efforts. Sumatran elephants are on the brink of extinction with only about 2,400-2,800 left in the world, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Weighing about 78 kilograms (172 pounds), the calf was born at Way Kambas National Park in the nation's southern Sumatra, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry said. It was born at an elephant centre inside the national park at around 10 am local time (0300 GMT), the ministry said in a statement. The gender was not given.



This handout picture shows a female Sumatran elephant calf standing between her mother's legs at the Elephant Response Unit (ERU) camp, in Margahayu, Kuala Penet, Lampung province. — AFP

The health of the calf and its mother was being monitored by park staff. A male elephant was born at the same national park this month, to a different mother and in good health, the second such birth this year. On Saturday, a critically endangered Sumatran rhino was born at the same national park. Less than 80 are estimated to be left in the world.

"Good news comes to us one after another," Indonesian environment minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar said in the statement. "This good news should encourage us Indonesians to continue the conservation efforts of protected species in the country." — AFP



Bulgarian artist Julian Vergov performs on stage in the role of Yevgeny Prigozhin, during the play "Haga" at the National Theatre Ivan Vzaov in Sofia.

Lifestyle



Jodie Bennett (left), Community and Engagement Officer at the Bristol Animal Rescue Centre, walks with her two dogs Alba and Rosie and colleague Abi Oldfield near the Bristol Animal Rescue Centre.



A painting created by former rescue dogs Alba and Rosie during a painting exercise, is displayed for a photograph at the Bristol Animal Rescue Centre.



Former rescue dogs Alba and Rosie pose with a painting they helped to create, at the Bristol Animal Rescue Centre.

# Art for bark's sake: Stray dogs take up painting for UK charity

In their studio in Bristol, western England, rescue dogs Rosie and Alba are hard at work on their canvases, redefining the essence of abstract art — one tail swish at a time. To the untrained eye, their work at Bristol Animal Rescue Centre (ARC) could be seen as boisterous, childish at times and even just plain old messy. But the two canines have a far more important job than pleasing critics.

Inflation and high interest rates across the UK plus people abandoning pets they bought during the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a surge in strays and stretched the ARC to its financial limits. "People just can't afford insurance and veterinary care and just to look after their dogs in general," Bee Lawson, an animal behavior specialist at the ARC, told AFP. "At the moment, we are just taking in strays because we are experiencing such a high level of dogs coming in."

It said it expects to see around 21,417 reports in 2023, compared to 16,118 reports in 2020.

"Many rescue centers are full to bursting, so we are facing an unprecedented winter crisis," RSPCA inspectorate commissioner Dermot Murphy said. As such, the privately funded ARC has had to come up with creative ways to bring in money.

One of the ideas conceived by staff at the centre was to hold an online "Mutt Gala" in December, an event inspired by Vogue Magazine's Met Gala in New York, where animal art would be auctioned. Armed only with their snouts, paws and a natural disregard for the rules of composition, Rosie, Alba and a pack of strays currently boarding at the centre have been more than willing to help.

**Art therapy**

Lawson said painting is used as a therapy tool for stray dogs, who often arrive at the centre traumatized after their abandonment and having to live alone and unfed on the streets. "Anything that encourages sniffing, licking and chewing is really beneficial because those are actually naturally calming behaviors for dogs," she said. "So when they're sniffing or licking, it triggers the neurotrans-

mitters in a dog's brain to release the happy chemicals."

To coax the dogs to the canvases, carers at the ARC use peanut butter and "squeezy cheese" from capsules, which encourages them to sniff, lick and get creative. "We basically get a blank canvas or something similar to that, put some non toxic paint on the canvas, cling film on top of that, and then we

put on their favourite treats," said Jodie Bennett, a community and engagement officer at the centre. "For the dogs here, it's usually squeezy cheese or peanut butter or something like that. And then the dogs will go over, lick and play with it." Sometimes some of the more energetic dogs walk on their canvasses while others will use their whole bodies to create their art.

**Up and coming**

Bennett said "Major" — a white husky rescue dog — had proved to be one of the more popular artists at the centre, with his two works "Excited I" and "Excited II" drawing keen interest from both critics and art investors. "His paintings show how he loves the feeling of excitement," she added. "So they're really big and bold and all over the place, like Major's personality, so look out for him. He is a big up and coming artist."

A yellow, orange and red highly abstract piece named "Burning Man" by a cat called "Cammie", who arrived unexpectedly during one of the painting sessions, had also drawn keen interest, she said. "Cammie did 'Burning Man' — she used her favorite colours of fire because she's a feisty lady," she added.

As for Rosie and Alba, their work is "pretty good", Bennett said. Both had managed to produce some notable pieces that had raised a few eyebrows in the local dog art community. "We've just done some really nice artwork with them," she said. "I'm very proud of them and I would hang it up on my wall, definitely." With practice and effort, they might, she said, even find their work hanging in the Tate one day. — AFP



Former rescue dogs Alba and Rosie take part in an exercise to create a painting at the Bristol Animal Rescue Centre.

## Heat, disease, air pollution: How climate change impacts health

Growing calls for the world to come to grips with the many ways that global warming affects human health have prompted the first day dedicated to the issue at crunch UN climate talks starting next week. Extreme heat, air pollution and the increasing spread of deadly infectious diseases are just some of the reasons why the World Health Organization has called climate change the single biggest health threat facing humanity.



Global warming must be limited to the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius "to avert catastrophic health impacts and prevent millions of climate change-related deaths", according to the WHO. However, under current national carbon-cutting plans, the world is on track to warm up to 2.9C this century, the UN said this week.

While no one will be completely safe from the effects of climate change, experts expect that most at risk will be children, women, the elderly, migrants and people in less developed countries which have emitted the least planet-warming greenhouse gases. On December 3, the COP28 negotiations

in Dubai will host the first "health day" ever held at the climate negotiations.

**Extreme heat**

This year is widely expected to be the hottest on record. And as the world continues to warm, even more frequent and intense heatwaves are expected to follow. Heat is believed to have caused more than 70,000 deaths in Europe during summer last year, researchers said this week, revising the previous number up from 62,000. Worldwide, people were exposed to an average of 86 days of life-threatening temperatures last year, according to the Lancet Countdown report earlier this week.

The number of people over 65 who died from heat rose by 85 percent from 1991-2000 to 2013-2022, it added. And by 2050, more than five times more people will die from the heat each year under a 2C warming scenario, the Lancet Count-

down projected. More droughts will also drive rising hunger. Under the scenario of 2C warming by the end of the century, 520 million more people will experience moderate or severe food insecurity by 2050. Meanwhile, other extreme weather events such as storms, floods and fires will continue to threaten the health of people across the world.

**Air pollution**

Almost 99 percent of the world's population breathes air that exceeds the WHO's guidelines for air pollution. Outdoor air pollution driven by fossil fuel emissions kills more than four million people every year, according to the WHO. It increases

the risk of respiratory diseases, strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, diabetes and other health problems, posing a threat that has been compared to tobacco.

The damage is caused partly by PM2.5 microparticles, which are mostly from fossil fuels. People breathe these tiny particles into their lungs, where they can then enter the bloodstream. While spikes in air pollution, such as extremes seen in India's capital New Delhi earlier this month, trigger respiratory problems and allergies, long-term exposure is believed to be even more harmful.

However it is not all bad news. The Lancet Countdown report found that deaths from air pollution due to fossil fuels have fallen 16 percent since 2005, mostly due to efforts to reduce the impact of coal burning.

**Infectious diseases**

The changing climate means that mosquitoes, birds and mammals will roam beyond their previous habitats, raising the threat that they could spread infectious diseases with them. Mosquito-borne diseases that pose a greater risk of spreading due to climate change include dengue, chikungunya, Zika, West Nile virus and malaria.

The transmission potential for dengue alone will increase by 36 percent with 2C warming, the Lancet Countdown report warned. Storms and floods create stagnant water that are breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and also increase the risk of water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea. Scientists also fear that mammals straying into new areas could share diseases with each other, potentially creating new viruses that could then jump over to humans.

**Mental health**

Worrying about the present and future of our warming planet has also provoked rising anxiety, depression and even post-traumatic stress — particularly for people already struggling with these disorders, psychologists have warned.

In the first 10 months of the year, people searched online for the term "climate anxiety" 27 times more than during the same period in 2017, according to data from Google Trends cited by the BBC this week. — AFP

## Invasive species could reap benefits from extreme weather

Extreme weather might be wreaking havoc across the globe, but some non-native plants and animals could be benefiting from the disasters, adding risk to already threatened local species, according to a new study Monday. Invasive species, often transported by human activity, are thought to be playing a major role in global extinction rates and the catastrophic declines of biodiversity threatening the well-being of people and planet.

Heatwaves, droughts, floods and other extremes accelerated by global warming might be giving the often destructive invasive species an undesirable advantage, researchers found. The harmful invaders experienced positive impacts from extreme weather almost a quarter of the time, nearly double that of natives, according to the study published in Nature Ecology & Evolution. Local species were also more likely to suffer negative consequences from the weather disasters.

"EWEs (extreme weather events) might facilitate the establishment and/or spread of non-native species and these two processes may combine together to pose high threats to biodiversity under continuing global change," lead author Xuan Liu of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, told AFP.

Invasive species were only vulnerable to heatwaves and storms, the study found. But native animals on land and in fresh water were negatively impacted across several factors — including survival rates, reproduction and body

size — from all extreme weather except cold spells in freshwater. The researchers looked at hundreds of previously-published studies on responses of 187 non-native and 1,852 native animal species to extreme weather patterns in different habitats.

They found that differences in responses to unusual weather in species could be due to the death of native species during weather extremes, leaving a gap for invasive species to exploit. Severe droughts, for example, increase the salt content of water, killing local invertebrates and fish while providing an opportunity for more salt-tolerant species to move in.

Invasive species are also known for rapid growth rates and a greater competitive edge that might allow them to recolonize faster. Only in the case of marine animals were both natives and non-natives relatively immune to extreme weather — although native molluscs and corals are vulnerable to heat waves. Invasive species are not a new problem, but they are growing one. The intergovernmental science advisory panel for the UN Convention on Biodiversity (IPBES) revealed in a landmark report in September that invasive species were increasing at an "unprecedented rate" globally, costing more than \$400 billion dollars a year in damages and lost income. Invasive species mainly spread as hitchhikers on global trade and played a significant role in 60 percent of all documented plant or animal extinctions, it said. — AFP



## Sports

# Phillips claims four as New Zealand restrict Bangladesh

## Mahmudul hit 11 boundaries for his fourth Test half-century

**SYLHET:** Spinner Glenn Phillips returned figures of 4-53 as New Zealand restricted Bangladesh to 310-9 before bad light forced an early stumps on the opening day of the first Test in Sylhet on Tuesday. Phillips, chosen ahead of Rachin Ravindra, picked the crucial wickets after opening batsman Mahmudul Hasan hit 86 off 166 balls to give Bangladesh a platform for a strong total. The hosts, who opted to bat first after winning the toss, dominated New Zealand in patches but lost wickets in important phases, with Kiwi bowlers Ajaz Patel (2-76) and Kyle Jamieson (2-52) celebrating success.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and one of his predecessors, Mominul Haque, each made 37 runs for Bangladesh. They put up 53 runs and 88 runs with Mahmudul for the second and third wicket pairs respectively, before their untimely dismissals.

Patel bowled opener Zakir Hasan for 12 to give New Zealand their first breakthrough, before Phillips made Najmul his maiden Test wicket in the morning session. Kane Williamson ran back from mid-on to complete the catch.

Ish Sodhi and Phillips struck in successive overs just before the tea break to halt Bangladesh's

progress further. Daryl Mitchell took a low catch at slip as Sodhi dismissed Mahmudul, ending his dogged innings. Mahmudul hit 11 boundaries in his fourth Test half-century.

His dismissal came within five balls of Phillips forcing Mominul to give a catch to wicketkeeper Tom Blundell. Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim fell to Patel for 12 as Williamson took his second catch of the day.

Jamieson, the only New Zealand pacer with some success, had Mehidy Hasan caught by Mitchell for 20. Wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan struck a few quick boundaries before Phillips swung momentum further New Zealand's way.

The off-spinner claimed the wicket of debutant Shahadat Hossain, who made 24 before hoisting a catch to Henry Nicholls at short midwicket. Phillips ended Nurul's innings at 29 six overs later.

Tajjul Islam, eight not out, and Shoriful Islam, 13 not out, survived the day after Jamieson made Bangladesh nine down with the wicket of Nayeem Hasan, the pacer's second of the day. The two-match series marks the beginning of a new cycle for the World Test Championship for both teams. — AFP



**SYLHET:** Bangladesh's Nayeem Hasan (L) plays a shot during the first day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet on November 28, 2023. — AFP

## News in Brief

### Bulgarian football boss quits

**SOFIA:** The president of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU), Borislav Mihaylov, under pressure because of the national team's failure to reach Euro 2024, announced his resignation on Monday after violent demonstrations by fans. "I have tendered my resignation in a spirit of appeasement," said the 60-year-old, who has been at the helm for 18 years, after a meeting of the governing body in Sofia. His resignation follows violent scenes on November 16 when thousands of supporters gathered outside the stadium where Bulgaria were playing Hungary in a Euro qualifier, calling for an end to Mihaylov's tenure. Police used water cannons and batons to disperse the crowd and several dozen fans and police were injured in the clashes that followed. — AFP

### Honda brings in Marini

**VALENCIA:** Honda announced on Monday it had signed Italian Luca Marini, the half-brother of MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi, to a two-year deal with its factory team. Marini, 26, will take over from Marc Marquez, the six-time world champion who is leaving Honda a year early to join his brother at Ducati satellite team Gresini Racing. After making his MotoGP debut in 2021, Marini earned his first two podium finishes this season - in the United States and Qatar - as he came eighth overall riding for VR46, the Ducati satellite team owned by Rossi. He also finished in the top three in four sprint races and twice took pole position. Marini will get a first outing on his new Japanese bike at the post-season tests in Valencia on Tuesday. — AFP

### Yamaha future in balance

**VALENCIA:** Former MotoGP world champion Fabio Quartararo said his future with Yamaha will be decided in the coming months after enduring "the toughest season of his career". The 24-year-old Frenchman won the world title in 2021, and was runner-up in 2022 but finished just 10th this past season which ended on Sunday at the Valencia MotoGP. "I knew it was likely to be a difficult season but I didn't think it would be this bad," said Quartararo, who failed to win a race for the first time since his debut season in 2019. "I had a very bad experience with the first part of the season because I expected much better. I didn't know how to get the most out of my bike." This season was the hardest of my career in MotoGP, without a doubt." Quartararo has one year left on his Yamaha contract, but warned he will make a decision on his future early next year. — AFP

## Cummins says players 'not robots' as Australia T20 team struggles

**SYDNEY:** Captain Pat Cummins said Tuesday that cricketers were "not robots" with Australia's Twenty20 team struggling in India straight after their 50-over World Cup triumph. Seven of the Australia squad who won the World Cup remained in India for a five-match T20 series that started four days after the November 19 final. A second-string India side won the first two matches and reports in Australia say that six of the seven are now set to return home. The third T20 is later Tuesday. Ben McDermott, Josh Philippe and Chris Green were among reinforcements being sent to relieve the flagging World Cup heroes, the reports said.

With a busy home summer of cricket looming, including Test series against Pakistan and the West Indies, Cummins acknowledged the burden on the players, some of whom have been playing in India since September.

"They're humans, they're not robots," he told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground. "Putting everything into a World Cup and then playing a couple of days later — I probably don't begrudge them if they're not at 100 percent."

The skipper added: "These are still games for Australia and it's great that these tours do provide opportunities for some of the younger guys, or guys who might not be in the first eleven. I think these are important tours and you can get a lot out of them."

Veteran opener David Warner, who was withdrawn from the T20 squad on the eve of the India



**SYDNEY:** Australian cricketers Pat Cummins (L) and Mitchell Starc walk with the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 Trophy during a media opportunity at the Sydney Cricket Ground on November 28, 2023. — AFP

series, is set to bid farewell to Test cricket after the Pakistan series. Warner's Test spot has been in doubt after a lean run of red-ball form, but the 37-year-old was Australia's leading scorer at the World Cup with 535 runs.

Cummins said Warner was "hitting the ball beautifully at the moment". "He wasn't just playing for

himself out there, he would go and take the game on, be really brave and really take it to the opposition," he said of Warner's displays in India.

The first Test against Pakistan starts on December 14 in Perth before the Boxing Day match in Melbourne. The third and final Test will be at Warner's home Sydney Cricket Ground from January 3. — AFP

## Rossi to compete in Endurance Championship

**PARIS:** Retired Italian MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi, who has switched from two wheels to four, will compete in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) next season, according to the list of participants published on Monday.

The seven-time MotoGP world champion, will race with the Belgian WRT team, driving one of 18 cars entered in the LMGT3 class, which replaces the LMGT2 class.

Rossi, 44, is notably expected to take part in the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans endurance classic on June 15-16, having got a taste by winning a support race at the iconic Sarthe circuit in western France this year behind the wheel of a BMW for the WRT team.

The Belgian outfit, co-founded by

former racing driver Vincent Vosse, will participate in the Hypercar class in 2024 with two BMW M Hybrid V8s and in LMGT3 with a second M4 GT3.

"I have already become familiar with the car after this season, but the format with three drivers from three different performance categories will be new for me," said Rossi.

The identity of his two teammates for 2024 is not yet known.

Meanwhile, Poland's Robert Kubica is on the list of participants in the premier Hypercar class.

The former Formula 1 driver, crowned 2023 world endurance champion in the lower LMP2 category, will be at the wheel of a private Ferrari.

German driver Mick Schumacher, son of former Formula One legend Michael, will make his endurance debut in his premier category with Alpine.

In total, 14 manufacturers will participate in the championship — including nine in Hypercar — a record in the history of the WEC.

Meanwhile, the RNF team, an April-

ia affiliate in MotoGP this season, has been excluded from the 2024 championship for "repeated infractions and breaches" affecting the competition's image, organizers said Monday.

"The MotoGP Selection Committee... have decided not to select the CryptoDATA MotoGP Team for the 2024 season," read a statement released the day after the season-ending race in Valencia.

"Repeated infractions and breaches of the Participation Agreement affecting the public image of MotoGP have obliged this decision."

RNF on Saturday denied rumours of financial troubles and its potential withdrawal, announcing earlier on Monday its partnership with a new sponsor. But the decision taken by MotoGP authorities appears to be final.

"The Selection Committee will be reviewing applications for a new Independent Team, using Aprilia machinery, to join the MotoGP class grid for 2024," the statement added.

The exclusion of RNF leaves its

two riders — Portugal's Miguel Oliveira and Spain's Raul Fernandez — in limbo as they wait to see which team steps in as a replacement.

RNF, founded by Malaysian Razlan Razali with the backing of state energy firm Petronas, entered MotoGP in 2019 under the name Sepang Racing Team. After losing the financial support of Petronas last year, Razali took over the team and renamed it RNF. Romanian company CryptoDATA then became its majority shareholder at the end of 2022.

Razali had announced his departure on social media at the start of the weekend in Valencia.

The team, which used Yamaha bikes until 2022, was home to world champion Fabio Quartararo for his first two years in MotoGP.

The Frenchman then made the step up to Yamaha's factory team in 2021, trading places with Italian great Valentino Rossi who brought the curtain down on his career with the Malaysian team. — AFP

## Three things we learned in the 2023 F1 season

**ABU DHABI:** A season of 21 wins in 22 races proved that Red Bull were, and will probably remain, the dominant standard-setters in Formula One following Max Verstappen's record-breaking victory in Sunday's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

His 54th career triumph left rivals comparing the task of catching him with climbing Mount Everest. AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from the 2022 season:

### Red Bull design advantage

"This car will go down in history, for a considerable period, as the most successful in Formula One history," said Red Bull team boss Christian Horner after completing Sunday's race with an avalanche of records for Verstappen and his team.

"To win 21 out of 22 is insanity and for Max to have led more than 1,000 laps, won 19 races," he added, before listing the statistical

achievements after a year of unprecedented hegemony by one marque.

But a key man was omitted from the fanfares — Red Bull's technical boss and chief designer Adrian Newey, an engineer whose feats in F1 have made him not only a 'godfather of ground effect' but a legendary guru of the sport.

His flair and excellence, as expressed in the RB19 machine, almost guarantees more sustained success with the RB20 in Verstappen's hands next year. His career speaks for itself: in the last 30 years, with Williams, McLaren and Red Bull, his cars have won 12 drivers' and 11 constructors' titles — and Red Bull have won 38 of 43 races since the return of 'ground effect' last season. With Verstappen at the wheel, Red Bull will look unbeatable again as Newey, who wrote his university thesis on ground effect aerodynamics, delivers a revised car.

### McLaren likeliest challengers

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff compared the size of the task to climbing Everest, but it could have been anyone from Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes or Aston Martin assessing the challenge of catching Red Bull.

Only Ferrari, with a Carlos Sainz victory in Singapore, were able to break the Milton Keynes team's stranglehold this year but, like the rest,

they could not mount a sustained run of form to build a challenge. A rejuvenated two-time champion Fernando Alonso brought early-season hope to Aston Martin and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton swung from despondent to dreamy in Mercedes' capricious W14.

Only McLaren, with a surge of form following a mid-season upgrade, offered real resistance though Ferrari also improved in the closing months. "Red Bull started with these regulations in 2022 with a massive advantage and were able to maintain it," said Wolff. "You have to respect their achievements on the engineering side and the driver — so beating them under these regulations is against the odds."

But he promised his team's return to the drawing board would "come up with something new". "There is a key to unlock dramatically better performance," he said in the hope that Mercedes engineers can locate both lock and key. After a first winless season for 12 years and two years after Hamilton's last victory, Mercedes finished 413 points behind Red Bull who began work on their 2024 car in August or earlier.

### Respect for cunning fox Alonso

At the age of 42, Fernando Alonso showed boyish enthusiasm on Sunday as he secured fourth place in the drivers' championship with



**MEXICO CITY:** (Files) Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez (R) crashes with Ferrari's Monégasque driver Charles Leclerc at the start of the Formula One Mexico Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez racetrack in Mexico City. — AFP

a crafty drive including a slowdown trick that left Hamilton bemused.

"Lewis obviously is very clever, understands the sport really, really good and has a lot of experience," said the Spaniard. "But I have more!" His trick earned him an advantage that carried him to seventh as Hamilton, who will be 39 in January, finished ninth. But both proved worthy of a place on a grid filled with much younger men. — AFP

Sports

# Wolves boss Gary O'Neil rages against VAR after Fulham defeat

'All four decisions to go against us is tough to take and we didn't deserve that'

**LONDON:** Furious Wolves boss Gary O'Neil said bad refereeing decisions were hurting his reputation and "people's livelihoods" after his team were on the wrong end of more VAR controversy in their 3-2 Premier League defeat at Fulham on Monday.

Willian scored two penalties — including a stoppage-time winner — while Alex Iwobi's early strike for Fulham was cancelled out by Matheus Cunha and Wolves' Hwang Hee-chan also netted from the spot. But VAR was once again the talking point after an engrossing match at Craven Cottage.

Fulham started the match brightly and took a deserved lead in the seventh minute with a nicely worked goal down the left, finished by Iwobi. The visitors were level midway through the first half when Cunha headed home after sparkling wing play on the right by Jean-Ricner Bellegarde.

Referee Michael Salisbury pointed to the penalty spot 10 minutes into the second half, ruling that Nelson Semedo had fouled Tom Cairney in the box, even though the defender appeared to have got a touch on the ball.

Following a lengthy VAR check Willian stepped forward and rolled the ball to the goalkeeper's left, adding to the pain for O'Neil, whose team have been on the wrong end of a spate of controversial penalty decisions this season.

Wolves were awarded a spot-kick of their own when Tim Ream made a clumsy challenge on Hwang and the South Korean lashed home down the middle to pull his side level in the 75th minute. But there was still time for a third penalty of the half.

Salisbury had initially waved away penalty claims when Joao Gomes and Harry Wilson came together in the dying minutes but reversed his decision after VAR officials advised him to look at the pitchside monitor. Willian made no mistake to seal the win for Fulham in the 94th minute. An emotional O'Neil said Salisbury admitted he should have been advised to check the pitchside monitor for the first spot-kick, adding a spate of big decisions had gone against his side.

"Nelson (Semedo) plays the ball and doesn't touch Tom Cairney," he told Sky Sports. "The referee says he felt that was wrong and he should have been sent to the monitor. "That doesn't help me. So that one has been pretty much admitted that it was a mistake. The Harry Wilson one we disagree. I feel it was soft. For all four decisions to go against us is tough to take and we didn't deserve that."

**VAR impact**

He said "bad refereeing decisions" were having a huge impact on teams and managers. "This is a big club," he added. "The impact that you are having on my reputation, and the club and people's livelihoods is massive."

"We should be able to talk about the game and not decisions but unfortunately we can't." He added: "I have always been for VAR but I think it is causing problems at the moment. I think VAR has cost us there... The fact that we have conceded two, for me VAR is not helping with subjective decisions. Maybe tonight has finally turned me against VAR."

Fulham boss Marco Silva said his team had



**LONDON:** Fulham's US defender #13 Tim Ream (front) fights for the ball with Wolverhampton Wanderers' Brazilian striker #12 Matheus Cunha (rear) during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Craven Cottage, in London. — AFP

showed a "good winning spirit" to take three points for the first time since early October, lifting them 10 points clear of the relegation zone. But he also questioned two of the penalty awards.

"The second (Fulham) one is a clear penalty," he added. "The first for us and the one for them were a bit more soft. I hope (VAR) can always make the right decisions because it's their job." — AFP

## Cincinnati midfielder Acosta named MLS Most Valuable Player

**NEW YORK:** FC Cincinnati midfielder Luciano Acosta, who scored 17 goals and set up 14 others this season, was named Major League Soccer's 2023 Most Valuable Player on Monday. The 29-year-old Argentine striker became the first player in league history to claim the MVP award after leading his team to its first MLS award after Cincinnati claimed the Supporters' Shield for the best regular-season record.

"I still don't feel like this trophy is mine," Acosta said. "I feel like we've done a great job with the whole team but I did dream of winning this MVP at some point. "You dream of winning individual awards but they're not the priority. The priority is always to win with the group and we did that."

Acosta became only the sixth player in MLS history with three or more seasons producing at least 10 goals and 10 assists. Cincinnati will have a prime chance to play for the MLS Cup. The club will host arch-rival Columbus Crew in the Eastern Conference playoff final on Saturday.

One of the Ohio clubs will play either Houston or defending champion Los Angeles FC in the MLS Cup final on December 9. Acosta paid tribute to countryman Lionel Messi, who led Argentina to the World Cup crown last year. Messi played only a few MLS contests for Inter Miami this season but expects to



**CINCINNATI:** (FILES) Luciano Acosta, #10 of FC Cincinnati, celebrates after scoring a goal against Inter Miami CF in the 18th minute of the first half in the 2023 US Open Cup semifinal match at TQL Stadium in Cincinnati, Ohio. — AFP

have a full campaign in 2024. "He has played very few games, otherwise he would be sitting here with the MVP," Acosta said. "I try to enjoy it because if next year it is his turn to win, which obviously he will, we will fight to win it again."

Acosta becomes the ninth South American-born player to win the MVP award, the first since Atlanta's Josef Martinez of Venezuela in 2018. He became

carried on the shoulders of two Barca players. "As a Barcelona fan he gave us first La Liga after 11 years. His impact there was incredible," Guardiola told reporters on Monday.

"He introduced something that had never been before, especially a certain type of pressing and the set pieces. I remember how many goals our central defender scored. It's a big loss to English football." Guardiola went on to captain Barca and is regarded one of their greatest managers, but the Spanish giants were not so dominant when Venables took charge in 1984.

Venables led Barcelona to their first La Liga title in 11 years in 1985 and took them to the European Cup final a year later before a shock defeat to Steaua Bucharest on penalties. Guardiola might not have played for Venables, who went on to manage Tottenham and England, but he is well aware of the charismatic coach's impact on his old club.

"I was only a ballboy but the impact in that time on the way they played. I remember talking to friends of

the fourth Argentine player to capture the honor after Portland's Diego Valeri in 2015, Guillermo Barros Schelotto of Columbus in 2008 and DC United's Christian Gomez in 2006. Acosta, who has 58 goals since his MLS debut in 2016, won with 60.37% of votes from players, club staff and a media panel. Denis Bouanga of LAFC was second on 14.97% with Atlanta's Thiago Almada third on 6.46%. — AFP

mine who played with him and their words for him not just as a manager but as a person," Guardiola said. "He was so funny, singing Frank Sinatra on Catalan shows. He was a proper, proper man."

Guardiola was speaking on the eve of City's Champions League clash with RB Leipzig at the Etihad Stadium on Tuesday. City need just one point from their last two games to be sure of finishing top of Group G, which allows them the advantage of playing their last 16 second leg at home.

The holders won their first four group matches and have already secured a place in the knockout stages, as have Leipzig. "It is important to finish first. We believe that when we play the last 16, having the second leg at home is not decisive but is a little bit of an advantage and we have to take it," Guardiola said. After winning the treble last season, successive draws against Chelsea and Liverpool have seen Arsenal knock City off the top of the Premier League, but Guardiola is happy with his players' hunger. "We are performing really well, we must continue that." — AFP

## Brazil's Santos hits four field goals as Bears upset Vikings

**WASHINGTON:** Brazilian kicker Cairo Santos made four field goals, the last a game-winner from 30 yards with 10 seconds remaining, as Chicago upset Minnesota 12-10 in an NFL game Monday. The 32-year-old from Sao Paulo, in his 10th NFL campaign, also connected from 25, 39 and 55 yards as the Bears improved to 4-8 while the stunned Vikings fell to 6-6. Chicago quarterback Justin Fields fumbled away the ball twice in the fourth quarter, the first time to set up a Minnesota go-ahead touchdown drive and the second to give the Vikings the ball back again.

But the Bears defense forced a punt and Fields drove Chicago into Vikings territory in the dying minutes. "My teammates and coaches stayed behind me and the defense did a great job of getting the offense the ball back," Fields said. "I couldn't really change the past so we were focused on the future moments."

Fields connected with D.J. Moore on a 36-yard pass over the middle to the Minnesota 13-yard line on the game's longest play with 55 seconds remaining, setting the stage for the winning Santos kick. "It got a little bit rocky on those two fumbles so I had to bounce back," Fields said. "Played good enough to get the W but there's definitely room for improvement."

Meanwhile, NFL-worst Carolina Panthers fired head coach Frank Reich on Monday after a 1-10 start to his frustrating first season guiding the club, team owner David Tepper said Monday. Tepper named Panthers special teams coordinator Chris Tabor as interim head coach for Carolina's final six games of the campaign. The change came hours after the Panthers lost 17-10 at Tennessee. "I met with Coach Reich this morning and informed him that he will not continue as head coach of the Carolina Panthers," Tepper said in a statement. — AFP



Frank Reich

## Man City boss Guardiola salutes 'incredible' Venables

**MANCHESTER:** Pep Guardiola paid tribute to "incredible" Terry Venables on Monday as the Manchester City manager responded to the death of the boss responsible for revitalizing his former club Barcelona.

After Venables died on Sunday aged 80, a picture emerged on social media showing Guardiola gazing up in admiration at him on the pitch at Barcelona's Camp Nou. Guardiola was a wide-eyed 15-year-old learning his trade in Barca's youth academy back then, with the photo capturing him during his role as a ball boy for his club's European Cup semi-final victory over Gothenburg in 1986.

Guardiola has his arms raised in celebration while Venables soaks in the acclaim of the crowd as he is

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### 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

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

**I, Sakina**, holder of passport number: L9644390, do hereby change my name to Sakina (as given name) Khedawala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known as Sakina Khedawala and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **#4567- 28-11-2023**

**I, Huzefa**, holder of passport number: M2312749, do hereby change my name to Huzefa (as given name) Khedawala (as surname) for all purposes.

I will henceforth be known as Huzefa Khedawala and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **#4567- 28-11-2023**

**I, Tubi** Kadaparambil holder of Indian Passport No- V7782765 having permanent address - S/o Baby Kadaparambil, Kadaparambil house Kodange Mundaje post, Belthangady TQ, Dakshina Karnataka, Karnataka, Indian Pin - 574228, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will

be read as (given name) Tubi Joseph and (surname) Baby Kadaparambil. **#4565-27-11-2023**

**I, Hakimuddin** Rokadia s/o Shabbir Ali Rokadiya holder of Indian Passport No. U0188194, having permanent address, Hussami Mohalla, Partapur, Banswara, Pin-327024, Rajasthan, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Hakimuddin and (surname) Rokadiya. **#4566- 27-11-2023**

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## Embiid triple double leads 76er record rout of LeBron's Lakers

Kawhi Leonard scores 31 points to lead the Clippers



PHILADELPHIA: Austin Reaves #15 of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles between Paul Reed #44 and Patrick Beverley #22 of the Philadelphia 76ers during the fourth quarter at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. — AFP

**LOS ANGELES:** Joel Embiid delivered his sixth NBA career triple double on Monday to lead Philadelphia to a 138-94 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers. The Cameroonian's 30 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists helped inflict on LeBron James the most lopsided loss of his career.

Embiid made nine-of-15 from the floor, including 2-of-3 from three-point range, and sank 10 of his 12 free throws. "You're trying to play winning basketball," Embiid said. "When my teammates are wide open, I want to get them easy shots, just make the game easy for myself."

The 29-year-old, seven-foot tall (2.13m) NBA Most Valuable Player last season notched his first triple double of the campaign in three quarters on the same night the 76ers made 22 three-pointers, one shy of the club record. Tyrese Maxey scored a game-high 31 points and added eight assists for the Sixers, who shot 47-of-93 from the floor and 22-of-46 from three-point range.

"We're playing together. We're having fun sharing the ball," Embiid said. "The ball is moving. We know

what we've got to do. It starts on defense. Once you get stops, you get in transition and get easy baskets." Four-time NBA MVP LeBron James, who led the Lakers with 18 points, suffered the heaviest defeat of his 21-year NBA career. Asked what needed to change for the Lakers, he replied: "A lot."

### 'A ton of threes'

James passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the all-time NBA minutes played in regular season and play-offs combined at more than 66,300. The scoreline eclipsed a 31-point win by the Syracuse Nationals, who moved to Philadelphia, over the then-Minneapolis Lakers in November 1951 as the biggest margin between the two franchises.

Maxey went 5-of-12 from three-point range while Patrick Beverley was 4-of-8 from beyond the arc and Marcus Morris was 4-of-5 with three-point shots for the 76ers. "We want everyone to shoot a ton of threes and it paid off today," Beverley said. "When we get on the court it's easy. In practice we give each other hell."

The Lakers, who had 17 points and 11 rebounds from Anthony Davis, hit their first four shots then missed 10 of their next 11, going more than four minutes without a basket, while the 76ers went on a 20-2 run. Embiid scored seven and Maxey had six in the spurt as the hosts seized a 32-19 lead after the first quarter and a 68-53 halftime edge.

Philadelphia improved to 12-5, one game behind Eastern Conference leader Boston, while the Lakers slid to 10-8. Depleted defending NBA champion Denver, sparked by guard Reggie Jackson and 35-year-old center DeAndre Jordan, rallied late to beat the host Los Angeles Clippers 113-104.

The shorthanded Nuggets were without two-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic due to a back injury, forward Aaron Gordon with a sore right heel and guard Jamal Murray with a right hamstring injury. Denver began the fourth quarter with a 22-6 run to grab a 99-94 lead and held off Los Angeles down the stretch. Two former Clippers powered Denver as Jackson had 35 points and 13 assists while Jordan added 21 points and 13 re-

bounds. Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points to lead the Clippers. The Nuggets improved to 12-6, moving one game behind Western Conference leader Minnesota, while the Clippers fell to 7-9. Host Utah edged New Orleans 114-112 as Keyonte George scored 19 points and Jordan Clarkson added 16 and 10 assists.

Zion Williamson scored a game-high 26 points for the Pelicans while Brandon Ingram added 25. In a matchup of the NBA's worst teams, Washington's Kyle Kuzma scored 32 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and added eight assists to spark the visiting Wizards over Detroit 126-107.

Washington improved to 3-14 while Detroit, led by Cade Cunningham's 26 points, sank to a league-worst 2-15. The Pistons' losing streak stretched to 14 games while the Wizards snapped a nine-game win drought.

Portland's Jerami Grant scored 34 points and Bahamian center Deandre Ayton contributed 22 points and 13 rebounds to lift the Trail Blazers over host Indiana 114-110. Tyrese Haliburton led the Pacers with 33 points. — AFP



Saudi Arabia's Khaleej handball team with the trophy.

## S Arabia's Khaleej wins 26th Asian Club handball title

**KUWAIT:** Saudi Arabia's Khaleej handball club defeated Qatar's Al-Arabi in the most exciting final match during which the teams ended regulation in a draw at 27-27, so they resorted to two extra times, the first ended 28-28 and the second 30-30. The teams played two more extra times the first of which ended 32-32, then Khaleej finally took the title with the score of 35-55 in the final extra time. Third place

was taken by the hosts Qadisiya from Kuwait by defeating Kuwait Club 32-31.

President of Arab and Saudi Handball Federations Fadhel Al-Nimer said Qadisiya succeeded in organizing a fantastic championship in all aspects.

Al-Nimer appreciated the role of the organizing committee for making it easy for all participating teams.

He said for Khaleej Club to win the final match indicates the development of the game in Saudi Arabia, adding fans have a major role in motivating Khaleej Club to give outstanding performance from the start of the tournament.

President of Khaleej Club Eng Alaa Al-Hamal said he cannot describe his feelings after winning the title for the first time.

## Ronaldo tells ref to overturn penalty he won in AFC League

**RIYADH:** Cristiano Ronaldo convinced the referee to change his mind after awarding him a penalty in Al Nassr's AFC Champions League 0-0 draw with Iran's Persepolis. The 38-year-old former Manchester United and Real Madrid great appeared to have been brought down by Soroush Rafiee inside the box and Chinese referee Ma Ning pointed to the spot.

Ronaldo leapt to his feet and approached the referee, wagging his finger, shaking his head and telling him there had been no foul. After consulting VAR, the referee was sent to the pitch-side monitor and reversed his decision in the Group E clash in Riyadh.

The Saudi Pro League side had to play most of the match with 10 men after Ali Lajami was given a straight red card for a shin-raking challenge in the 17th minute. They also lost Ronaldo to a neck injury with 13 minutes remaining, caused by Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand landing on the Portuguese star when claiming a high ball.

But the 2018 and 2020 Champions League runners-up from Iran were unable to capitalize, the point proving enough for Al Nassr to seal their place in the knockout stages as group winners. Ronaldo has little time to recover with Al Nassr facing Al Hilal on Friday in a top-of-the-table league clash.

Saudi Arabian champions Al Ittihad are two points clear at the top of Group C after a 2-1 win at Uzbekistan's AGMK FC. Moroccan Abderrazak Hamdallah scored twice in four first-half minutes before Martin Boakye pulled one back for the hosts with 12 minutes remaining.



RIYADH: Nassr's Portuguese forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo attempts a shot during the AFC Champions League Group E football match between Saudi's Al Nassr and Iran's Persepolis at the Al-Awwal Stadium in Riyadh. — AFP

Two-time winners Al Ittihad, under new manager Marcelo Gallardo, need to avoid defeat at home to second-placed Sepahan in the final round of matches next week to go through as group winners. The Iranian side defeated Iraq's Air Force Club 1-0 at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran, despite having two players sent off.

Sepahan's Farshad Ahmadzadeh scored the only goal from close range in the fourth minute before Mohammad Hosseinezhad was sent off just before half-time. Hadi Mohammadi was then red-carded on 90 minutes forcing Sepahan to hold out with nine men for 12 minutes of added time under an Air Force bombardment to secure the three points.

Uzbekistan's Nasaf Qarshi moved top of Group B with a 3-1 win at home to Jordan's Al Faisaly, and Qatar side Al Sadd kept their hopes alive by beating Sharjah 2-0 in the UAE. Nasaf are top on 10 points ahead of their final match against Al Sadd, who are third on seven points with Sharjah, who face a trip to Al Faisaly, second on eight. — AFP