

HIGH-STAKES VISIT TO KSA

Xi heralds 'new era' in ties

Beijing, Riyadh sign 34 deals; US wary of China's growing influence in Middle East

REUTERS, Riyadh

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received President Xi Jinping yesterday as the Chinese leader heralded "a new era" in Arab relations, with a lavish welcome signalling Riyadh's interest in deepening ties with Beijing despite US wariness.

Members of the Saudi Royal Guard riding Arabian horses and carrying Chinese and Saudi flags escorted Xi's car as it entered the royal palace in Riyadh, where Prince Mohammed, de facto ruler of the oil giant, greeted him with a warm smile.

The two leaders held an official meeting with the crown prince "wishing him, his delegation a pleas-

ant stay" in Saudi Arabia, Saudi state news SPA reported.

It stood in stark contrast to the low-key welcome extended in July to US President Joe Biden, with whom ties have been strained by Saudi energy policy and the 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi that had overshadowed the awkward visit.

The United States, warily watching China's growing sway and with its ties to Riyadh at a nadir, said on Wednesday the visit was an example of Chinese attempts to exert influence around the world and would not change US policy towards the Middle East.

Chinese and Saudi firms signed 34 deals for investment in green en-

ergy, information technology, cloud services, transport, construction and other sectors, state news agency SPA reported. It gave no figures, but had earlier said the two countries would seal initial agreements worth \$30 billion.

In an op-ed published in Saudi media, Xi said he was on a "pioneering trip" to "open a new era of China's relations with the Arab world, the Arab countries of the Gulf, and Saudi Arabia".

China and Arab countries would "continue to hold high the banner of non-interference in internal affairs, firmly support each other in safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity", he wrote.



PHOTO: AFP

Members of the Sri Lanka Health union shout slogans during a protest demanding the price reduction of drugs and petrol in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday. Crisis-hit Sri Lanka's parliament yesterday approved President Ranil Wickremesinghe's 2023 budget, vital to raising government revenue and securing a twice-delayed IMF bailout.

Fitting stage finally set for eternal rivalry

FROM PAGE 1 coming into this game on the back of a swashbuckling 4-1 win over South Korea, a performance reminiscent of the Jogo Bonito of the World Cup winning side of 1970 or that 1982 side, which has been dubbed as arguably the greatest side not to have won the World Cup. They've so far done justice to the hype that surrounds them every time, despite suffering a minor blip in a fairly inconsequential match against Cameroon in their last group stage game.

There was enough evidence from the body language and overall attitude of both coach Tite and right-back Danilo at the pre-match press conference that they were enjoying their time in Qatar, while staying focused on their job. Tite, lovingly called 'the professor' by the people of Brazil for his philosophical views on football and other aspects of life, was in a chirpy mood, like you would expect from a man who knows his house is in

order and there is no need for any unwarranted alert. Having praised his opponents, last edition's runners-up Croatia for their 'individual and collective technical ability and resilience', Tite was more inclined to talk about his own team and their mental state. The 61-year-old, who will step down after the World Cup no matter the result, once again defended his team's celebration against South Korea and his taking part in it, hinting he might do

the same again as 'it is the culture of his country'. Argentina coach, Lionel Scaloni, meanwhile was more serious about his upcoming challenge against the Netherlands, whom the Albiceleste beat the last time they met at the World Cup, in the semifinals of the 2014 edition. "Tomorrow's game is going to be a nice game to watch because there are two teams that propose to attack without neglecting their defense," said Scaloni,

Official tender notice from Bangladesh government regarding road construction projects. Includes details on e-Tender Notice No. 32/2022-23 (OTM) and a list of project packages.

Official notice from Bangladesh government regarding the 2022-23 fiscal year budget. Includes details on the 2022-23 Budget and a list of projects.