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Solar eclipse wows stargazers

Worshippers perform special prayers • Schools closed to protect children



KUWAIT: Kuwait's skies witnessed on Tuesday a partial solar eclipse - a celestial phenomenon deemed the most significant in the country this year. Director of space sciences at the Scientific Club Issa Al-Nasrallah told KUNA the partial solar eclipse is the first recorded in Kuwait since June 21, 2020, when Kuwaiti skies witnessed a partial eclipse at a rate of 60 percent. On Dec 26, 2019, another partial eclipse was witnessed when the sun appeared blurred at its rise. The phenomenon will recur in Kuwait on Aug 2, 2027, and there will be another eclipse on March 20, 2034, he added.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah Cultural Center said the shape of the eclipse varied from one region to another. The concealed side of the Sun was larger in northern regions. Khaled Al-Ajman, the museum's curator, told KUNA the partial eclipse lasted for two hours and 24 minutes. At 1:30 pm, citizens and residents performed the eclipse prayer, as it is an obligatory sunnah whenever there is an eclipse. Classes at government and private schools were suspended on Tuesday to protect the eyesight of children.

The rare spectacle began over Iceland on Tuesday and made its way east across a swathe of the Northern Hemisphere. The partial eclipse began at 0858 GMT and ended off the coast of India at 1302 GMT, crossing parts of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East on its way, according to the IMCCE institute of France's Paris Observatory.

Solar eclipses occur when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, casting its shadow down onto our planet. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon completely blocks the Sun's disk, momentarily plunging a portion of the Earth into complete darkness. However Tuesday's eclipse was only partial, and the "Moon's shadow did not touch the surface of the Earth at any point," the Paris Observatory said in a statement.

The Moon covered a maximum of 82 percent of the Sun over Kazakhstan, but not enough to darken the daylight, Paris Observatory astronomer Florent Deleflie said. At least 95 percent of the Sun needs to be obscured to get a "sense of darkness", Deleflie told AFP. — Agencies



KUWAIT: People wearing protective glasses and equipment take a glimpse of a partial solar eclipse on Oct 25, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

Teacher accused of molesting kids

KUWAIT: The Criminal Investigation Department launched investigations after a man claimed another person had attempted to molest his son, the interior ministry said Tuesday. The public prosecution charged the suspect, an Arab Islamic studies teacher, with six counts of sexual assault of children in Farwaniya and Khaitan and remanded him in custody.

Qatar Amir slams attacks

DOHA: Qatar's ruler on Tuesday hit out at "double standards" unleashed in an "unprecedented campaign" of criticism over his country's rights record ahead of this year's football World Cup. "Since we won the honor of hosting the World Cup, Qatar has been subjected to an unprecedented campaign that no host country has faced," Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani told Qatar's legislative council. —AFP

Saudi blasts release of oil reserves

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's energy minister on Tuesday blasted the release of emergency oil stocks as an attempt to "manipulate markets", the latest apparent salvo in a spat with Washington over oil production. "People are depleting their emergency stocks, had depleted it, used it as a mechanism to manipulate markets while its profound purpose was to mitigate shortage of supply," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told an investor conference. Asked about getting the decades-old partnership between Riyadh and Washington back on track, he said: "I think we as Saudi Arabia decided to be the maturer guys and let the dice fall." — AFP

Assembly delays budget approval till next week

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly on Tuesday decided to postpone the debate over the state

budget for the 2022/2023 fiscal year after the government withdrew the reports following strong objections from MPs. Head of the Assembly budgets committee MP Adel Al-Damkhi said he will meet Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid to discuss remarks and comments made by lawmakers during the session. During the debate, Damkhi asked MPs to send written remarks over the budget in the next two days.

Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said all comments made in the session will be sent to the budgets committee, and adjourned the session until next

Tuesday. The budget was studied by the previous Assembly before it was resolved on the basis of reports provided by the previous government, which was changed following the general polls in September.

MP Hasan Jowhar said that he cannot accept that the new government should inherit the legacy of the previous government, especially in the budget, adding that this budget led to the fall of the previous government. MP Hamad Al-Obaid said the budget should not be approved hastily and should

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New UK PM Sunak unveils top team

LONDON: Rishi Sunak on Tuesday became Britain's third prime minister this year and the first person of color to lead the former imperial power, vowing to overcome economic crisis provoked by the "mistakes" of Liz Truss's calamitous 49-day tenure. In his first order of business, Sunak retained Jeremy Hunt as chancellor of the exchequer, bidding to keep financial markets on side after Truss's budget plans shocked investors, and also retained her foreign and defense ministers.

Sunak, a practicing Hindu who at 42 is Britain's

youngest leader since 1812, became the ruling Conservatives' new leader on Monday after a prior stint as chancellor himself. Addressing the nation in Downing Street Tuesday shortly after his appointment by King Charles III, Sunak said the country faced "profound economic crisis". "I will unite our country - not with words, but with action," Sunak said, capping the latest extraordinary twist in UK politics following Boris Johnson's demise in July.

Departing shortly before, Truss wished him "every success" - and said she remained "more convinced than ever" that Britain needed to be "bold" in confronting the challenges it faced. Sunak countered that though she was motivated by a well-intentioned desire to kick-start growth, her tax-cutting measures were "mistakes nonetheless". "And I have been

Continued on Page 6



LONDON: Britain's King Charles III greets incoming Prime Minister Rishi Sunak during an audience at Buckingham Palace on Oct 25, 2022. — AFP

Zionists kill 6 Palestinians in West Bank

NABLUS: Major Zionist raids Tuesday in the occupied West Bank targeting nascent resistance group "the Lions' Den" killed six Palestinians, whose deaths brought thousands of mourners onto the streets in mass funerals. The Palestinian health min-

istry said five people were killed in Nablus in the northern West Bank, where the Zionist entity confirmed an overnight operation targeted the group, which it blames for multiple recent attacks.

Another Palestinian died from a gunshot wound to the chest during overnight clashes with Zionist forces in Nabi Saleh, north of Ramallah, the health ministry said. Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid said in a statement that Wadi Al-Houh, whom he described as "the head" of the Lions' Den, was among those killed in Nablus. The army said it had carried out a major operation with police and intelligence officers targeting a location "used by the main operatives" of the group, describing the site as

a "headquarters and a workshop for making weapons".

"The forces detonated the explosive manufacturing site," added the army statement, which did not provide a death toll. "During the activity, multiple armed suspects were hit." Later Tuesday, a Zionist civilian was stabbed by an attacker who fled the scene to Al-Funduq, a Palestinian village west of Nablus, the army said, adding that troops were searching the area. Medics from Magen David Adom, the Zionist entity's equivalent of the Red Cross, identified the victim as a 55-year-old man in moderate condition.

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Crown Prince hosts former ministers

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday former deputy prime minister, minister of oil and state minister for cabinet affairs Dr. Mohammad Abdulatif Al-Fares. He also hosted the former minister of foreign affairs, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, ex-minister of municipal affairs, minister of state for communications and information technology Dr. Rana Al-Fares, former minister of justice, minister of state for boosting nazaha and minister of awqaf and Islamic affairs Jamal Al-Jalawi, former minister of public works, minister of electricity, water and renewable energy Ali Hussein Al-Moussa as well as ex-minister of commerce and industry and minister of social affairs and community development Fahad Al-Shuraiaan. His Highness the Crown Prince lauded the former ministers for their devotion in the service. — KUNA



MP tours DHAMAN Hospital in Ahmadi

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced that the National Assembly member Majid Al-Mutairi visited DHAMAN Hospital in Ahmadi Governorate, following the delivery of electric current to its hospitals in the Ahmadi and Jahra governorates, in a step that would speed up the work in the health facilities and prepare the integrated healthcare network.

MP Majid Al-Mutairi was welcomed by DHAMAN CEO, Thamer Arab who accompanied him on a tour around the hospital and briefed him on the developments and the company's operational plans for the next stage. The company added in a statement that delivering electricity to the hospitals is part of a series of important steps it has achieved recently. This reflects its strategy in project development and operations, through building and equipping two hospitals and operating five primary healthcare centers for the company.

DHAMAN hospitals in the Ahmadi and Jahra governorates are expected to be operational in the

first quarter of next year, as work is being done diligently to obtain and install modern medical devices and equipment. The hospitals will provide many medical services in various specialties, mainly family medicine, dentistry, pediatrics, surgery, emergency, gynecology and internal medicine, orthopedics, physiotherapy, and intensive care, in addition to pharmacy, radiology, diagnostic imaging and laboratories services.

Each hospital consists of five floors and a basement with a capacity of 330 beds, 14 operating rooms, 21 intensive care units for adults and newborns, laboratories, a radiology department and an emergency department linked to an air ambulance helipad, outpatient clinics, in addition to a pharmacy department. Each hospital also has a car parking facility with a capacity of more than 550 cars.

At the moment, DHAMAN operates four primary healthcare centers in the areas of Hawally, Farwaniya, Dhajeej and Jahra, which are currently operating as private centers that receive all healthcare seekers in preparation for the opening of the DHAMAN healthcare network and receiving the beneficiary segment of its services. The company also plans to open a new primary healthcare center in Ahmadi Governorate soon.



National Assembly member Majid Al-Mutairi visited DHAMAN Hospital in Ahmadi Governorate.



Creativity index: Kuwait's ranking dropped to 4th

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Over the years, Kuwait has supported and developed the youth's creativity in various fields. In 2019, Kuwaitis were in second place among Arab countries in the invention and creativity index. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, Kuwait's rank dropped to fourth for the second year in a row, which raised concerns about the country's future and its innovation and creative environment.

A study conducted by Arab Gulf Center for Studies and Research addressed the reasons behind the decline in the innovation index, which may reflect the country on many levels. The study revealed that the Kuwaiti work environment is not conducive to innovation, which may have negative effects on the future of non-oil development in the country.

The study says: "This decline in the innovation and creativity index, especially among young people, is attributed to various direct and indirect factors." As for the direct factors, the report mentioned that there is a lack of encouragement for scientific research and it continues to be limited despite the availability of the capabilities of young people, as well as poor quality education.

As for indirect factors, it noted that Kuwait does

not work to shift towards economic diversification and focus on innovation and creative people, affirming that the Kuwaiti economy does not sufficiently attract Kuwaiti talents, some of whom choose to continue research and education abroad in order to achieve stability, their aspirations and innovations.

The report emphasized that the lack of a clear future vision due to the unstable political climate and frequent government resignations impacted innovation and creativity. This resulted in a decline in Kuwaiti innovations and the possibility of capitalizing on them in an institutional, purposeful and sustainable way.

Kuwait is capable of being innovative, but the country lacks a strong advanced technology infrastructure that fosters innovation and develops talent. The negative impacts of bureaucracy, corruption and nepotism harm Kuwait's ambitious and creative youth by making it difficult for them to succeed with their efforts and ideas or get access to positions of power. This calls for a political consensus to stimulate human development and increase the consistency of education outcomes with an innovation-based economy.

The study mentioned that there was another secondary factor that had a negative impact on the quality of education and scientific research and innovation, such as social media addiction whose rates increased among Kuwaiti youth, affecting intelligence and concentration. It also showed that creativity and innovation were directly affected by climatic changes, which calls on the Kuwaiti government to take serious steps to mitigate the effects of exposure to climate change.

Petrochemical industry plays vital role

KUWAIT: The petrochemical industry plays a vital role in implementing sustainable development plans in many Arab countries, said OIAPEC's Secretary-General, Ali Bin Sabt. In a speech during a symposium organized online by OIAPEC General Secretariat, Tuesday, on the role of the petrochemical industry in the development of small and medium enterprises, Bin Sabt said that petrochemicals are one of the most important sources of income for oil-producing countries. He also stressed the importance of small and medium industries

projects due to their pivotal and important role in economic and social development in many countries.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Bader Al-Mulla has stressed commitment to harnessing all potential to help achieve strategic oil plans and future projects in the oil sector. The minister made the remark in a press statement while touring the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), according to a press release by the company. He underlined the significance of coordination with state agencies in order to wipe out any obstacles that could impede oil projects. He said he looks forward to cooperation with all oil leaderships to achieve more accomplishments in the oil sector. The minister highly commended the great efforts exerted by the KPC for more than eight decades, calling for training and developing the oil sector's staff. —KUNA



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Local

Cabinet intensifies efforts to meet hopes and aspirations of Kuwaitis

Crown Prince lauds citizens for democratic achievement

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Cabinet has affirmed full commitment to working hard to translate the instructions of the speech of His Highness the Amir and implement them. This came in the Cabinet meeting held under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace.

The directives focus on intensifying efforts to make accomplishments and reforms, and meet popular hopes and aspirations for the interest of Kuwaitis. The Cabinet expressed its delight as His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned to the homeland after undergoing his regular medical checkups in Italy that were successful, wishing him everlasting good health.

The Cabinet reviewed the contents of the speech of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince in the opening of the first regular session of the 17th legislative term on October 18. The speech was described as a document of the new

era, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah lauded efforts of all the country's bodies and personnel as well as civilians who contributed to the success of this democratic achievement.

The Cabinet further reviewed the speech's contents, which included directives to the government to translate its act programs, in line with the requirements of the next period, stressing positive cooperation with the legislative authority, in accordance with the Constitution's provisions mainly the Article 50.

On the other hand, the cabinet accepted the contribution made by the sons of the late Khaled Youssef Al-Marzouq for the establishment of an integrated medical center in the city of Sabah Al-Ahmad Maritime, at a value of five million Kuwaiti dinars. The Cabinet expresses gratitude and appreciation for the contribution. During the meeting, Kuwait's Cabinet also touched on latest political developments regionally and globally, where the cabinet voiced vehement con-

demnation and denunciation of a terrorist attack by Houthi militia on Al-Daba oil port in Hadramaut Governorate, where a crude oil ship was docking.

Moreover, the cabinet expressed its unequivocal and complete solidarity with Saudi Arabia regarding criticism received after recent decision by OPEC+ to reduce oil production. It also applauded Australia's decision to rescind its recognition of West Jerusalem as "capital of the Zionist entity," saying that this decision would constitute support for international endeavors, adherence to international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, and a tributary to achieving a just peace.

The Cabinet congratulated Chinese President Xi Jinping on the successful 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and his reelection as chairman of the Party Central Committee for a third term in office. It also congratulated Giorgia Meloni on becoming Italy's new Prime Minister, wishing her success in her new post and her country further prosperity. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

Kuwait devotes 'special concern' on cyber security

NEW YORK: Kuwait devotes paramount concern to cyber security for it constitutes a shield in the face of threats against national security. Kuwait launched the security cyber strategy 2017-2020 for bolstering the cyber security culture and safe usage of the electronic networks in the country, said Ahmad Salmin, Kuwait Diplomatic Attache in front of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

The strategy aims to protect vital informatics'

infrastructure and enhance information swap among local and international parties in the realm of cyber security, Salmin said. Kuwait has also set up the national center for cyber security in line with the political leadership's awareness of the great volume of challenges posed by the cyber realm and its commitment to digital transformation for executing the New Kuwait 2035 development strategy.

He expressed concern that arms manufacturing technology might become accessible by terrorist and organized crime groups. The Kuwaiti diplomat called on states to work out an international accord for regulating the cyber realms, in addition to setting up a mechanism for swapping information in line with international laws. He condemned employment of drones for attacking civilians and states' infrastructures. —KUNA



Kuwait diplomat Ahmad Salmin

UN-Habitat launches 4th tree-planting campaign in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) has launched the fourth edition of its tree-planting campaign in Kuwait. Head of the UN-Habitat in Kuwait and GCC Dr Ameera Al-Hasan said in a statement to KUNA that the campaign aims at highlighting the problem of growing inequality and challenges in cities and human settlements.

The campaign marks the World Habitat Day (WHD 2022) held under the theme "Mind the Gap. Leave No One and Place Behind", she said. She remarked that



Dr Ameera Al-Hasan

the World Habitat Day 2022 seeks to draw attention to the growing inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been exacerbated by the triple crises: COVID-19, climate and conflict. She added that cities and local governments play a front-line role in responding to crises and emergencies, as well as in planning for an inclusive, resilient and green future.

Al-Hasan noted that many activities, meetings and discussions have been held in Kuwait this month to look into how to draw attention to urban issues and sustainable development. In this regard, she cited the fourth edition of the tree-

planting campaign: "Kuwait Plants", aiming at encouraging individuals and communities to plant trees and pay attention to environment and climate issues. For his part, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi said, also in a statement to KUNA, that cooperation between Kuwait and the UN in general and UN-Habitat in particular, is of paramount significance.

He added that these activities are an opportunity to demonstrate progress made by the State of Kuwait in the implementation of UN Development Goals, based on its 2035 vision. The United Nations designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of habitats, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. The Day is also intended to remind the world that everyone has the power and the responsibility to shape the future of cities and towns. —KUNA

Ministry weighs in on exchanging vacations for cash

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance and Minister of Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahhab Al-Rushaid pledged to open a supplementary appropriation regarding a decree to exchange cash for government employees for the balance of periodic leaves during the service period,

after the approval of the state's general budget.

In an intervention during the special session of the National Assembly on Tuesday, Al-Rushaid said that the Ministry of Finance will set the appropriate regulations with the Civil Service Commission regarding (selling vacations). Regarding the disbursement of the front liners' financial support, for those who were fighting COVID-19, Al-Rushaid explained that it was paid out to 55 government authorities at an amount of KD 409 million, stressing that the ministry is waiting for eight authorities to send their statements for approval and disbursement. — KUNA



Minister of Finance and Minister of Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahhab Al-Rushaid

UN official touts Kuwait part in global security

KUWAIT: UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh said Tuesday Kuwait has been in permanent partnership with the UN for international security, peace and prosperity. Interviewed by KUNA to mark the UN Day, which falls on October 24, Al-Sheikh commended Kuwait's great and significant contributions to UN development goals in various aspects, including political and development support.

He said that the fact that Kuwait's policies at both regional and international levels are in tandem with the UN principles and charter is of paramount significance, citing its role in the UN even before having joined it in 1963. In this regard, he recalled the speech delivered by the late Amir Sheikh Şabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the then foreign minister, at the UN when Kuwait's membership bid was accepted, having supported UN polices at all levels for sustainable development goals.

He pointed out Kuwait's clear-cut and unequivocal policies in various international affairs, including political ones, especially its backing for non-alignment and resolution of conflicts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He cited the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), which extends aid to more than hundred countries, as evidence of Kuwait's support for development efforts worldwide.

The UN official also spoke highly of Kuwait's humanitarian efforts through different UN agencies with a view to helping conflict-hit people, the last of which was contributions to anti-COVID-19 vaccination efforts. In addition, Kuwait has provided aid to the Syrian people since 2014 and hosted three conferences aiming at alleviating the humanitarian agony in Syria, he added. Kuwait, further, participated in similar conferences held in Geneva and Brussels, which were mainly intended to offer humanitarian aid to Syria and to find a solution to this Arab country's crisis, Al-Sheikh remarked.

Kuwait also offered Yemen medical aid, including the equipping of 114 health units, during the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), not to mention contributions to the World Food Program to provide food to Yemeni refugees and displaced persons, he added. The UN official underlined Kuwait-UN development partnership programs and projects, including a recent one that helped over 26 young Kuwaitis have jobs at UN bodies.

He also spoke highly of cooperation between Kuwait and the UN for backing climate change efforts and highlighting the role of ambitious Kuwaiti young people through relevant individual and societal initiatives. In this context, he pointed out the fruitful cooperation between the UN and the Kuwaiti private sector, based on a set of initiatives and projects, particularly waste recycling and reducing food consumption.

Regarding women's role, the UN official stated that the UN, based on cooperation with Kuwaiti state bodies, seeks to highlight the leading, pioneering and historic role of Kuwaiti women in development, educational, political and economic domains. He concluded by voicing happiness that two Kuwaiti women had recently joined the National Assembly (parliament). — KUNA



Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh

Kuwaitis and residents perform eclipse prayer



KUWAIT: Kuwait's citizens and residents performed eclipse prayer on Tuesday as it is an obligatory sunna whenever there is an eclipse of the sun. Kuwait's skies witnessed at 1:20 pm partial solar eclipse, due to remain visible until 3.44 pm - a space phenomenon deemed the most significant in the country this year. — KUNA

News in brief

Arab League Secretary Gen
Abulghait congratulates FM

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a telephone call from the Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abulghait congratulating him on his appointment at the head of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Abulghait expressed good wishes to Sheikh Salem in his new endeavor and hoped for stronger ties between the Arab organization and the member states, namely Kuwait. Sheikh Salem was named foreign minister in the recently formed Kuwaiti Cabinet.

Digital transformation 'main'
pillar of Kuwait's 2035 vision

KUWAIT: Kuwait has made great strides towards digital transformation, a main pillar of its 2035 development vision, said Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Mazen Al-Nahedh. Speaking at the Ninth e-Government Forum launched with the participation of several government and private agencies, Al-Nahedh, also minister of commerce and industry, said that development and digital transformation are closely linked. There is no sustainable development without smart digital transformation, he affirmed. He argued that digital transformation of government transactions save a lot of time, effort and money to the country. "We see that technology should be used to boost transparency and limit human intervention in government transactions in a way that enhances anti-corruption efforts", he said. He stressed the importance of having highly-qualified Kuwaiti cadres in information technology to help materialize the digital transformation goals. — From KUNA

Ministry of health honors Chinese medical team

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: To honor the outgoing batch of the Chinese medical team in Kuwait, the ministry of health held on Tuesday a farewell ceremony in the presence of Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei, Rehab Al-Watian, Director of International Health Relations Department of the Ministry of Health, Dr Salah Al-Shayji, Director of Natural Medicine and Rehabilitation Hospital, a medical team and a number of officials.

Zhang said in his speech during the ceremony that Kuwait is the first among Gulf countries to establish diplomatic relations with China, and also the only Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state where a Chinese medical team is stationed. "Over the past four decades and more, China has dispatched 222 medical workers in total who have diagnosed and treated around 800,000 patients in Kuwait. It is meaningful to look back at this episode of history, as it marked the shared journey our two nations have traveled and witnessed the development of our special, friendly ties," he said.

"The program of sending a Chinese medical team to Kuwait is merely an epitome of our health cooperation and strategic partnership at large. Facing the challenge imposed by COVID-19, our two countries have pulled together and looked out for each other. Kuwait provided assistance of medical supplies to China, while China dispatched a medical expert group to help with Kuwait's response to the virus," Zhang pointed out. "On international cooperation on humanitarian and health assistance, our two countries always keep it in mind that the entire humanity is bonded by the same future," he said.

"Kuwait also has given many developing countries long-term assistance with hospitals and schools. In 2014, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the late Amir of Kuwait, was awarded the honor of 'Humanitarian Leader' by the United Nations. After the pandemic broke out, both China and Kuwait



KUWAIT: Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei and top officials take a group photo with the outgoing batch of the Chinese medical team in Kuwait.

financed and engaged in global cooperation against the pandemic and supported the WHO's COVAX initiative. This gives a vivid expression to President Xi Jinping's vision of building a global community of health for all. There are more examples of our sincere friendship and win-win cooperation like these. All in all, China and Kuwait are close friends and good partners that share the same goals and join hands," Zhang said.

Watian expressed her gratitude to the Chinese medical team for the services provided throughout their work in the hospitals of the ministry of health. "The medical team was a model of excellence at work and providing the required service. According to the contract between China and the Kuwaiti ministry of health, the team was a living example of healthy diplomacy and a confirmation of friendly relations between the two countries that Kuwait is proud of," she said.

"Kuwait is looking forward to strengthening the relationship with China and exchanging experiences and initiatives in order to meet the challenges facing our health system and development plans, which requires joint work and strengthening trust among friendly countries," Watian added.

Dr Shayji thanked the medical team for their help to the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) Hospital. "They were committed to the hospital's rules and regulations, and respecting our culture and regulations of the ministry of health, in addition to their great role in relieving the pain of our patients with professional medical skills and meticulous modalities, so that the patients who see the doctor get proper treatment," he said. "They popularize the Chinese medicine culture and Chinese medicine technology, providing the hospital with more diversified medical services for visiting patients, which has been widely praised by our patients."

Suad Al-Sabah to honor Libyan writer Ibrahim Al-Kouni in Bern

KUWAIT: Dr Suad Al-Sabah has organized a special event to honor Libyan writer and thinker Ibrahim Al-Kouni as part of celebrations of 'Loyalty Day' to fele creative Arab icons on Oct 31 and Nov 1 in Bern, Switzerland. Arabic and international literary giants will speak at the event. During the event, a two-part book will be announced to shed light on the life of Kouni. It will highlight the most important events and development phases in his life with regards to his thoughts and writing.

Dr Suad began holding 'Loyalty Day' more than

a quarter century ago to recognize living leaders of Arab culture in the Arab world. It is considered the first of its kind in the Arab world, which usually honors its thinkers after their death. The start was during the early 90s after Dr Suad Al-Sabah questioned why thinkers are honored after they depart our world, believing we should honor them while they are still alive so they can feel and acknowledge the love from the people and hear kind appreciative words.

Dr Suad presented her idea to her dear late husband Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, may he rest in peace, that thinkers should feel that there are those who appreciate their efforts and that their hard work did not go to waste. The response of the late Abdullah Al-Mubarak was positive, as he appreciated the initiative by saying: "This is how we should work. Our mission is to spread happiness, uphold the truth, appreciate talent, and recognize giving."

Dr Suad Al-Sabah launched the 'Loyalty Day' initiative' in 1995, in a creative hope to honor living leaders of Arab culture. Since then, and throughout her long career, she embodied the initiative in the value of loyalty as a symbol of the highest regard of humility and appreciation, the symbols of achievement, knowledge and modern Arab culture, who have worked hard to present their creativity to guide future generations into the future.

The initiative has previously honored many leaders, including Abdulaziz Hasan, Ibrahim Al-Areedh, Nizar Qabbani, Dr Tharwat Ukasha, Abdullah Al-Faisal, Abdelkarim Ghallab, Ghassan Twaini, Saleh Al-Ojairi and Al-Habib Al-Janhani, whose books Dar Suad Al-Sabah has published.

Today, the initiative travels to sisterly country Libya to honor an icon of Arab creativity, Ibrahim Al-Kouni, who has published more than a 100 books until now including novels and literary, linguistic, critical, historical and political studies. He has excelled as a literato, anthropologist and historian covering many subjects ranging from the relationship between humans and relationship between humans and animals, as well as love, freedom, isolation and travel. His books have been translated into around 40 languages and are being studied in many international colleges.

Dar Suad Al-Sabah has announced its appreciation of Kouni by inviting many cultural individuals who will speak about his career, accompanied by the two-part book which will shed light on his life and his cultural impact, as well as his development as a writer and thinker, and his personal thoughts and beliefs.

Editor of the book Abdelkarim Al-Miqdad writes in his words about the personality of the writer who



Suad Al-Sabah



Ibrahim Al-Kouni (right)

has forged a creative path by himself since the '70s and excelled as a legend wherever he went, with one success after another. Miqdad has identified the most important subject of Kouni, which is the desert. The first part of the book includes many articles that capture his career and shed light on many personal aspects of his life.

Dr Zahra Saadallawi writes about his start in Libya and his cultural achievements to his travel to Moscow for studies, as well as his media work, then finally residing in Switzerland to make time for his literature. Mustapha Salim points out his knowledge of eight languages including Tamazight, Arabic, Russian, English, Polish, German, Spanish and Latin.

Kuwait, Years From Now Student Art Competition 2022

10 October - 13 November 2022

We are excited to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition 2022. We hope everyone is ready to showcase and create beautiful artworks of Kuwait in the future. We're searching for great art – so get your paintbrushes, color pencils and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years under the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artworks must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at art@kuwaittimes.com in PDF format only.
- Kuwait Times reserves the right to retain the drawings for future use.
- Participants should include on the bottom of the artworks the following: Name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad attended the display of a fire engine that was modified at the KFF workshop to be used in fighting fires in front of buildings and other places, in the presence of Deputy Chief for Engineering and IT Maj Gen Mousa Hussein. The KFF workshop modifies machines and equipment to help firemen in their duties. The workshop modified a water transport truck into a fire engine by fitting it with a vertical water blower that is 6m long and can be controlled remotely. The water can reach a height of six storeys.



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ROME: Italy's new Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (C) is applauded by her cabinet members after her first address to parliament ahead of a confidence vote at Montecitorio palace in Rome. — AFP

Meloni says Italy committed to Europe

'To continue to be a reliable partner of NATO in supporting Ukraine'

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni confirmed her government's support for the European Union, NATO and Ukraine on Tuesday in her first address to parliament, one month after her far-right party won a historic election victory.

The 45-year-old, who was sworn in as Italy's first woman premier on Saturday, also rejected any links with her country's fascist past, saying she had "never felt sympathy or closeness to undemocratic regimes... including fascism".

The prospect of a Eurosceptic, populist government leading the eurozone's third largest economy has sparked concern among Italy's allies, particularly in the European Union. "Italy is fully part of Europe and the Western world," Meloni told the lower house of parliament, adding that it would "continue to be a reliable partner of NATO in supporting Ukraine".

The last government under Mario Draghi was one of the strongest EU supporters of sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, and also sent weapons to Kyiv. Meloni supported that policy, despite being in opposition-and despite Italy's heavy dependence at the time on Russian gas.

But one of her coalition partners, former premier

Silvio Berlusconi, was recorded last week defending his old friend, Russian President Vladimir Putin. Meloni said she would not give in to "Putin's blackmail on energy".



Opportunity to make a real change

Like much of Europe, Italy is battling soaring inflation, fuelled by sky-high energy bills, which risks pushing the country into recession next year. Meloni said she would strengthen existing measures to help businesses and households cope with rising prices, but warned this would have an effect on spending elsewhere.

After her speech, lawmakers will on Tuesday evening hold a vote of confidence in Meloni's government, the most right-wing in Rome since World War II. The vote, followed by another in the Senate Wednesday, is largely procedural, as her coalition has a comfortable majority in parliament.

Before the election Meloni's coalition, which also includes Matteo Salvini's far-right League, agreed an expensive programme of tax cuts and spending promises. But she has emphasised fiscal prudence, wary of Italy's mammoth debt worth 150 percent of gross domestic product.

She named as economy minister Giancarlo Giorgetti, a relatively moderate member of the League who was economic development minister under Draghi. Roberto Cingolani, who served as energy minister in the last government, will also stay on as an adviser as Italy weans itself off Russian gas and seeks to boost the use of renewables.

However, even before she spoke to Salvini-her new deputy prime minister and minister for infrastructure-he set out his own costly plan for government. In a series of tweets late Monday, the League leader vowed action to lower the pension age, extend a flat tax and finally build a long discussed

bridge between mainland Italy and Sicily, which he said would create 100,000 jobs.

Key to Italy's future growth is almost 200 billion euros (\$197 billion) in grants and loans from the EU's post-pandemic recovery fund, which depend on Rome implementing major reforms from criminal justice to public administration.

Meloni said it was an opportunity to make a "real change" but said she would seek "adjustments" to the plan to take into account the rising cost of energy and raw materials. Analysts say there is little room for manoeuvre, with the funds already being disbursed and Brussels unwilling to re-open negotiations.

Meloni had what she called a "fruitful" first meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday in Rome, and spoke on the telephone Saturday with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Meloni's Brothers of Italy party won a historic 26 percent of the vote in September 25 elections, with a promise to defend Italy's borders, traditional values and national interests abroad. Salvini's League party won nine percent in the elections while Berlusconi's right-wing Forza Italia won eight percent. — AFP

Moscow theatre siege survivors haunted two decades on

MOSCOW: Twenty years after Chechen separatists seized a crowded theatre in Moscow, spurring a hostage standoff that ended with more than one hundred dead, the survivors are haunted by the memories and plagued by unanswered questions.

On October 23, 2002 — as the second Chechen war was raging in southern Russia-armed militants burst into Moscow's Dubrovka theatre during a sold-out performance of the musical "Nord-Ost." Demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya, a predominantly Muslim republic in the North Caucasus, the attackers held 900 people for three nights until Russian forces stormed the theatre in the early hours of October 26, 2002. Two decades on, Svetlana Gubareva, 65, can't stop thinking about the ordeal that turned out to be her final outing with her 13-year-old daughter Sasha and American fiance Sandy Alan Booker. "Sandy understood better than me what was going on and told us to lie down on the floor between the rows of seats," she told AFP, recounting the moment the gunmen rushed the stage.

She had met Booker, a 49-year-old engineer from Oklahoma, on a dating site and on that day they were celebrating after she submitted her application for a US visa at the embassy. They had bought the last three tickets to see the show.

It all started at the beginning of the second act when the audience was waiting for a highly-anticipated moment in the performance that would see a large prop

plane make a landing on stage. Instead, camouflage-clad men in masks stormed onto the stage.

"A lot of the people sitting near me thought this was some sort of artistic decision or part of the show," she said. "They didn't believe it was a takeover-until one of the Chechens fired a burst of bullets at the ceiling."

What followed was a 57-hour siege that Gubareva constantly relives: Hundreds of hostages paralysed by fear; female militants wearing belts with explosives; the stench from the orchestra pit used as a lavatory.

Together with Booker, Gubareva and her daughter-both citizens of Kazakhstan-were part of a group of foreigners that the militants promised to release after an intervention from several embassies. On the last night of the takeover, the three of them fell asleep thinking ahead to their promised release at 8:00 am the next day.

But in the early hours of October 26, Russian forces dispersed an unknown gas into the ventilation systems knocking out both hostages and attackers before storming the building.

By the time it was over, 125 people, including 10 children were dead, and five more people were executed by the attackers. Gubareva woke in a hospital hours later to hear on the radio that her daughter and fiance were among the dead. "For me, it was all over," she told AFP.

The three-day horror was a national tragedy and sparked a moment of reckoning in Russia with questions still plaguing some of the survivors. Why were so many killed? Why did doctors run out of the antidote? Why were ambulances stuck in traffic?

And these are questions the Russian authorities have never been held accountable for. In 2007, investigators dropped a years-long probe into the tragedy.

Russian courts also repeatedly rejected complaints filed by the families with the European Court of Human Rights in 2011, pressing Moscow to hold those responsible for the deaths to account. — AFP

Sunak's roots a point of pride for Indians

NEW DELHI: Many Indians are delighting in the elevation of Rishi Sunak-a practising Hindu with Punjabi roots-as British prime minister, in a milestone year for the subcontinental country's relationship with its former colonial ruler.

Sunak took charge Tuesday as Britain's third premier this year with his Conservative Party floundering in the polls and daunting challenges ahead. The 42-year-old was born and raised in Southampton, but his appointment as his country's first prime minister of colour has been cheered by Indians who still consider him a son of the soil.

"I am extremely happy," Krishna Kumar, an Indian IT worker, told AFP in the capital New Delhi. "Great Britain is a country which ruled India for more than 300 years-now a person of Indian origin is going to rule UK."

Sunak's parents were born into the Indian diaspora in east Africa, and trace their heritage back to pre-independence Punjab in northern British India. He is married to Indian-born Akshata Murty, whose father co-founded IT giant Infosys. India celebrated 75 years since the end of British rule in August, just weeks before becoming the world's fifth-largest economy when its GDP overtook the United Kingdom's, according to IMF figures.

Colonial subjects would never have imagined such a "big development" as a man of Indian heritage tak-

ing charge of Britain, said Basavaraj Bommai, the chief minister of southern Karnataka state. "The wheel of fortune has turned completely," he told reporters on Monday.

Sunak's ascent has been the subject of wall-to-wall television coverage in India, animating discussion during the usually lethargic Diwali holiday season. "Indian son rises over the Empire-History comes full circle in Britain," read a news banner splashed on broadcaster NDTV.

Sunak takes charge of the UK as his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, is accelerating efforts to scrap symbolic vestiges of the colonial years. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) espouses a muscular Hindu nationalism that champions historical figures who opposed foreign domination and influence. In September, Modi inaugurated a statue of Subhas Chandra Bose, an independence hero venerated for taking up arms against the British, but controversial for his collaboration with Nazi Germany's war machine.

The unveiling ceremony took place just hours before Britain announced the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the statue itself replaces one of Britain's King George V torn down nearly half a century ago. The same month, Modi unveiled a new naval ensign that removed the prominent St George's cross-the national emblem of England-from the existing flag.

Modi congratulated Sunak on Monday and said he looked forward to the opportunity to "transform our historic ties into a modern partnership". Sunak's first order of business with India will be to finalise a delayed free trade deal, a pact that both countries had hoped to sign before Monday's Diwali festivities. — AFP

International

Sudan protesters defy crackdown to mark first 'versary of coup

'No partnership, no negotiation with the putschists'

KHARTOUM, Sudan: Thousands of Sudanese pro-democracy protesters defied security forces Tuesday to mark the first anniversary of a coup that derailed the restoration of the transition to civilian rule and sent hunger and inflation soaring.

Waving Sudanese flags, thousands of protesters in Khartoum and its suburbs demanded that "soldiers go back to the barracks," as security forces—who have carried out deadly crackdowns on past rallies—deployed across the capital.

"No partnership, no negotiation with the putschists," protesters chanted, calling out what has become a pro-democracy rallying cry. A year ago to the day, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan seized power and arrested the civilian leaders with whom he had agreed to share power in 2019, when mass protests compelled the army to depose one of its own, long-time autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

Protesters, calling out that the "revolution continues", have demanded the creation of "a civil democratic Sudan." In Albara, north of the capital Khartoum, "hundreds of students" also took to the streets, resident Adel Mohamed said.

In a bid to stem protests, authorities restricted internet access across the country, online monitor NetBlocks said. The authorities in Khartoum ordered all public institutions, schools, and busi-

nesses shut Tuesday, as security forces blocked roads and bridges.

For a year, near weekly anti-coup protests have been met with force, most recently on Sunday when a protester was killed by a bullet fired by security forces, according to pro-democracy medics. At least 118 people have been killed while demanding a return to civilian rule, a condition for Western governments to resume crucial aid they had halted in response to the coup.

Cut off from such aid, Sudan—already one of the world's poorest countries—has plunged into a worsening economic crisis. Between three-digit inflation and chronic food shortages, a third of Sudan's 45 million inhabitants suffer from hunger, a 50 percent increase compared to 2021, according to the World Food Programme (WFP).

The cost of food staples has jumped 137 percent in one year, which WFP says has forced Sudanese to spend "more than two-thirds of their income on food alone, leaving little money to cover other needs".

Many worry that three years after the 2019 uprising that toppled Bashir, signs point to a reversal of their revolution. Since the coup, several Bashir-era loyalists have been appointed to official positions, including in the judiciary, which is currently trying the former dictator. — AFP



SUDAN, Omdourman: A Sudanese protester carries a placard during a march in Omdourman the capital Khartoum's twin city on October 21, 2022. Thousands of Sudanese took to the streets to renew protests nearly a year after a military coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan derailed the country's transition to democracy. — AFP

Lebanon drifts towards extended power vacuum

BEIRUT: Already reeling from three years of economic meltdown, Lebanon faces the prospect of its multi-faceted crisis deepening further when President Michel Aoun's mandate expires in a week from now. The deadline looms as the country is headed by a caretaker administration, since key parties have been unable to agree on a proper government to replace one whose mandate expired in May.

Parliament has held four rounds of voting since last month, with no candidate garnering enough support from parties to succeed Aoun, prompting fears of a protracted power vacuum. It's something that Lebanon — whose currency has effectively lost more than 90 percent of its dollar value in the last three years and whose citizens have seen their bank deposits evaporate — can ill-afford.

Basic political cooperation is required to unlock billions of dollars in rescue funds from wary donors. "The most likely scenario after the end of Aoun's mandate is a protracted presidential vacuum until Lebanon's major political parties agree on a candidate," said Lina Khatib, head of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House.

Lawmaker Michel Moawad won the most votes in parliament, garnering Monday the support of 39 lawmakers opposed to the powerful Shiite organisation Hezbollah in Lebanon's 128-seat parliament. But that was



BEIRUT: File photo shows Lebanese protesters chanting national songs during an anti-government demonstration in downtown Beirut. When Michel Aoun became president in 2016, putting an end to a two-year power vacuum due to political wrangling, he vowed to be the "strong" president Lebanon so desperately needed. — AFP

still far from securing the 86 votes needed to win the presidency.

Other frontrunners include former minister and parliamentarian Sleiman Frangieh, the scion of a political dynasty who is close to Hezbollah and a personal friend of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

"Hezbollah will insist on imposing a candidate," Khatib said. The Iran-backed group has not officially endorsed a candidate but Frangieh was always considered one of the group's preferred choices — though its Christian ally, Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), will not back him.

Gebran Bassil, Aoun's son-in-law who heads the FPM, is also vying for the presidency. Iran's arch-enemy Saudi Arabia will not back Frangieh, a source close to Hezbollah told AFP, because of his close ties to Syria, a country shunned by Riyadh.

Moawad's supporters in parliament accused Hezbollah and its allies of obstructing the vote for weeks to negotiate with other blocs. They had adopted a similar tactic in the last election by boycotting the vote in parliament — a move that left Lebanon without a president for more than two years, until Aoun's 2016 win. — AFP

Iran students protest after girls beaten in raid: Activists

PARIS, France: Iranian students heckled a top official and chanted anti-government slogans Tuesday, videos showed, a day after security forces were accused of beating schoolgirls amid a crackdown on protests over Mahsa Amini's death.

Security forces were seen firing tear gas after massing outside the Shahid Sadr girls vocational school in Tehran on Monday, in the footage shared by activists on social media.

Young women and schoolgirls have been at the forefront of protests sparked by Amini's death last month, after her arrest for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

"Students of the Sadr high school in Tehran have been attacked, strip searched, and beaten up," said the 1500tasvir social media channel.

At least one student, 16 year-old Sana Soleimani, had been hospitalised, said 1500tasvir, which chronicles rights violations by the Iranian security forces. "Parents later protested in front of the school. Security forces attacked the neighbourhood and shot at people's houses," it added. Iran's education ministry said a dispute occurred between schoolgirls and their parents and school staff, after the principal demanded they comply with rules over the use of mobile phones.

"The death of a student in this confrontation is strongly denied," a ministry spokesman said, quoted by Iran's ISNA news agency.

Families could be seen clamouring for information outside the school in the Tehran neighbourhood of Salsabil, in an online video verified by AFP.

Later on at night protesters took to the streets in the same district, shouting anti-government slogans and burning dumpster bins, in other footage that AFP was unable to immediately verify.

Despite a crackdown by the security forces that rights groups say has killed at least 122 protesters, young women and men were again seen protesting in online videos on Tuesday. "Death to the dictator" and "Death to the Revolutionary Guards", women chanted as they rode escalators in Tehran metro stations, in videos widely shared on Twitter.

Students heckled presidential spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi as he spoke at Tehran's Khaje Nasir University, in a video published by the reformist paper Hammihan. "Spokesman, get lost!" and "We don't want a corrupt system, we don't want a murderer", they shouted. Teachers observed a strike around the country on Sunday and Monday over the crackdown, and another strike was said to be underway in Amini's home province of Kurdistan on Tuesday. — AFP

Assembly delays budget approval...

Continued from Page 1

be debated in a professional way, adding the Assembly cannot be held responsible for mistakes made in the past and many of the budget's provisions should be amended.

MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi said the Assembly is discussing the state budget, but the same structural defects of the past decade still exist. MP Jenan Bushehri said this budget was presented by the previous government, and accordingly is not a reflection of this government's program. Under Kuwaiti

law, the fiscal year starts on April 1 and ends on March 31 the following year. This year's budget has been delayed for several months as a result of dissolving the Assembly and holding elections.

MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa said the budget would have projected a deficit of KD 4 billion if oil prices remained low, because government promises to increase revenue from non-oil sources remain largely unfulfilled. The budget projects a surplus of around KD 300 million, the first since the 2015/2016 fiscal year, as revenues are estimated at KD 23.4 billion and expenditures are projected at KD 23.1 billion.

Oil income is estimated at KD 21.3 billion, while non-oil income is estimated at KD 2.1 billion. The finance minister said the government has spent some KD 490 million on frontline workers in 50 departments during the coronavirus pandemic, while around eight more remain.

Just days after she was forced out of Truss' cabinet, hardline right-winger Suella Braverman was re-appointed as interior minister, in charge of policing and immigration control. Grant Shapps, who had briefly replaced Braverman at the Home Office, was named business secretary with partial oversight of climate policy, instead of Johnson loyalist Jacob Rees-Mogg. Sunak brought close ally Dominic Raab back as deputy prime minister and justice secretary.

In his Downing Street speech, Sunak pledged unstinting support for Ukraine even while warning of "difficult" budget choices ahead. US President Joe Biden called the appointment of the first British-Indian prime minister "groundbreaking" and "pretty outstanding". "Together, I look forward to enhancing our cooperation on issues critical to global security and prosperity, including continuing our strong support for Ukraine," Biden said in a tweet. European leaders offered their own congratulations, while Irish premier Micheal Martin reminded Sunak of their "shared responsibility" to safeguard peace in Northern Ireland following tensions under Johnson and Truss.

Labour leader Keir Starmer praised Sunak on "making history as the first British-Asian PM". But he added: "The Tories have crashed the economy, with low wages, high prices and a cost-of-living crisis. The public needs a fresh start and a say on Britain's future." Sunak has rebuffed opposition calls for a snap general election after becoming the latest leader who lacks a direct mandate from the electorate, but he promised to govern on the basis of the 2019 manifesto. — AFP

Zionists kill 6 Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

A Zionist military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that "after trying to let the Palestinian Authority contain the group and them failing to do so, and with the rise in attacks... we embarked on an intelligence-based operation to halt the Lions' Den terror attacks". "The region has been thoroughly reinforced, we're prepared for an escalation," the official added. On the death reported at Nabi Saleh, the army said it had "spotted a suspect throwing an explosive device" at soldiers, who opened fire.

In a statement posted to Telegram, the militant group was defiant. "Surrender is the path of humiliation," it said. "It's time for the lions to come out of their den." A sea of mourners carried bodies through the streets of Nablus ahead of the burials as gunman fired into the air. Violence has surged in recent months in the north of the West Bank - the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 by the Zionist entity - especially in the areas of Nablus and Jenin.

More than 100 Palestinian fighters and civilians have been killed since the start of the year, the heaviest toll in the West Bank for nearly seven years, according to the United Nations. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is making "urgent contacts in order to stop this aggression against our people" in Nablus, his spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeinah said in a statement.

The chief of Islamist armed group Hamas, Ismail Haniya, warned in a statement that the violence would "plunge Palestine into escalation". Palestinian factions in the Zionist-blockaded Gaza strip announced a general strike. Khaled Al-Batsh, a leader in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, urged "confrontation" with the Zionist entity on all "fronts". Islamic Jihad reported its fighters were involved in "violent clashes" with Zionist forces in Nablus, and threatened the Zionist with reprisals "for its crimes".

In recent weeks, a group of young Palestinian fighters - some affiliated with groups such as Fatah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad—have launched militant attacks from Nablus. The Lions' Den claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a Zionist soldier two weeks ago in the West Bank. Late leader Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, nicknamed "The Lion of Nablus", was known for galvanizing the youth before he was shot dead by Zionist forces in August. He has since become a folk hero to Palestinians on social media. — AFP



NABLUS: Mourners attend the funeral of Palestinians killed in an overnight Zionist raid in this occupied West Bank city on Oct 25, 2022. — AFP

New UK PM Sunak unveils...

Continued from Page 1

elected as leader of my party and your prime minister in part to fix them," he said. "And that work begins immediately. I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda," he added, helping to drive the pound more than one percent higher against the dollar. Sunak's appointment followed rival contender Penny Mordaunt failing to secure enough nominations from Tory MPs, and Johnson dramatically aborting a comeback attempt late on Sunday. Breaking his silence, Johnson offered his "full and wholehearted support" to Sunak - having privately blamed his ex-minister for toppling him in July. Sunak in turn praised Johnson, and vowed to build on the election-winning promises that earned the Conservatives a big victory in 2019, despite their dismal standing in polling today against the opposition Labour party.

But Sunak also issued a coded reminder of the many scandals that brought Johnson down, vowing his own premiership would offer "integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level". In other cabinet designations, Sunak retained James Cleverly as foreign secretary and Ben Wallace in the defense brief, underscoring stability along with Hunt's re-appointment.

International

16 dead, million seek shelter as Cyclone Sitrang hits Bangladesh

Around 10 million people were without power in districts along the coast

KUAKATA, Bangladesh: At least 16 people died after Cyclone Sitrang slammed into Bangladesh, forcing the evacuation of about a million people from their homes, officials said Tuesday. Cyclones—the equivalent of hurricanes in the Atlantic or typhoons in the Pacific—are a regular menace but scientists say climate change is likely making them more intense and frequent.

Sitrang made landfall in southern Bangladesh late Monday but authorities managed to get about a million people to safety before the monster weather system hit. Around 10 million people were without power in districts along the coast on Tuesday, while schools were shut across much of the country's south.



Snakes entered many homes

Government official Jebun Nahar said 16 people died, mostly after they were hit by falling trees, with two killed when their boat sank in squally weather in the Jamuna River in the north. "We still have not got all the reports of damages," she told AFP. Eight people are missing from a dredging boat that sank during the storm late Monday night in the Bay of Bengal, near the country's largest industrial park at Mirsarai, regional fire department chief Abdullah Pasha said.

"Strong wind flipped the dredger and it sank instantly in the Bay of Bengal," he told AFP, adding that divers were searching for survivors. People evacuated

from low-lying regions such as remote islands and river banks were moved to thousands of multi-storey cyclone shelters, Disaster Management Ministry secretary Kamrul Ahsan told AFP.

"They spent the night in cyclone shelters. And this morning many are heading back to their homes," he said. Ahsan said nearly 10,000 homes were either "destroyed or damaged" in the storm and around 1,000 shrimp farms had been washed away in floods.

In some cases police had to cajole villagers who were reluctant to abandon their homes, officials said. Trees were uprooted as far away as the capital Dhaka, hundreds of kilometres from the storm's centre. Heavy rains lashed much of the country, flooding cities such as Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal—which took on 324 millimetres (13 inches) of rainfall on Monday.

About 33,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, controversially relocated from the mainland to a storm-prone island in the Bay of Bengal, were ordered to stay indoors but there were no reports of casualties or damage, officials said.

Panic and snakes

The cyclone uprooted trees and brought widespread panic to the southern island of Maheshkhali after power and telecoms were cut. "Such was the power of the wind we could not sleep in the night because of the fear that our homes will be destroyed. Snakes entered many homes. Water also inundated many homes," said Tahmidul Islam, 25, a resident of Maheshkhali.

In the worst-affected Barisal region, teeming rains and heavy winds wreaked havoc on vegetable farms, district administrator Aminul Ahsan told AFP. In the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal, thousands of people were evacuated Monday to more than 100



CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh: Residents search for their belongings amid the debris of their collapsed huts after the cyclone Sitrang hits in Chittagong on October 25, 2022. At least nine people have died after a cyclone slammed into Bangladesh, forcing the evacuation of around a million people from their homes, officials said. — AFP

relief centres, officials said, but there were no reports of damage and people were returning home on Tuesday.

Last year, more than a million people were evacuated along India's east coast before Cyclone Yaas battered the area with winds gusting up to 155 kilometres (96 miles) an hour-equivalent to a Category 2 hurricane.

Cyclone Amphan, the second "super cyclone" recorded over the Bay of Bengal, killed more than 100 people in Bangladesh and India and affected millions when it hit in 2020. In recent years, better forecasting and more effective evacuation planning have dramatically reduced the death toll from such storms. The worst recorded, in 1970, killed hundreds of thousands of people. — AFP



NEW DELHI, India: People walk along a road near India Gate amid smoggy conditions in New Delhi on October 25, 2022. New Delhi woke up to toxic smog after Diwali revellers defied a firecracker ban and risked facing jail term to celebrate the annual Hindu festival. — AFP

Post-Diwali Delhi wakes to toxic firecracker smog

NEW DELHI: New Delhi woke to toxic smog on Tuesday after Diwali revellers defied a firecracker ban and risked jail to celebrate the annual Hindu festival. According to international monitoring company IQAir, harmful PM 2.5 particles surged to 350 on the air quality index—more than three times the reading a day earlier.

The reading for the particulates—so tiny they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream—is more than 23 times the recommended daily maximum set by the World Health Organization.

The PM 2.5 reading had eased to around 145 by mid-morning, still nearly 10 times the WHO limit. A report by IQAir in 2020 found that 22 of the world's 30 most polluted cities were in India. New Delhi imposed a ban on the sale and use of firecrackers last

month and announced that those flouting the ban could face up to six months in jail.

Many of the Indian capital's roughly 20 million residents were still able to get hold of firecrackers, setting them alight into the early hours. However, broadcaster NDTV reported that Delhi's pollution levels after Monday's Diwali celebrations year were the lowest in four years. The festival fell relatively early this year in mild weather.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said residents were "working hard" and that there had been encouraging results. "But there is still a long way to go," he tweeted early Tuesday. Diwali is celebrated at roughly the same time when farmers in neighbouring states burn stubble after their harvest.

Firecracker smoke combines in winter with farm fires and industrial and vehicular emissions to form a toxic cocktail that is blamed for huge numbers of premature deaths. A Lancet report in 2020 said almost 17,500 people died in Delhi in 2019 because of air pollution. Across South Asia, the average person would live five years longer if levels of fine particulate matter met WHO standards, according to a June study from the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute. — AFP

Communist Party's all-powerful general secretary on Sunday, Wray avoided any specific link. "We bring cases when they're ready. And that's probably the simplest answer and most straightforward answer to that, as far as what signal they send," the FBI chief said.

"If the Chinese government, the Chinese Communist Party, continues to violate our laws, they are going to keep encountering the FBI," he said.

Huawei case interference

In a case cited Monday but unveiled last week, seven Chinese nationals allegedly tried to force a US resident to go back to China. Two people were arrested, but five others—all allegedly employees of Chinese intelligence agencies—remain at large, likely in China.

In the second case, two Chinese intelligence officials working from China tried to recruit a US government employee to provide them inside information on the Justice Department's prosecution of Huawei.

In 2019 Huawei was charged with a systematic campaign to steal US trade secrets, sanctions evasion and other counts. The two agents believed they had recruited a US government official to work for them and paid the person \$61,000 worth of bitcoin to supply internal documents related to the case against Huawei. But the informant was in fact a double agent who worked with the FBI on the case. The third case involved Chinese intelligence operatives who worked for the Ministry of State Security posing as academics to recruit operatives in the United States. From 2008 to at least 2018, they targeted professors, former security officials and others with access to sensitive information and technology for recruitment. "In all three of these cases, and frankly, in thousands of others, we found the Chinese government threatening established democratic norms and the rule of law as they work to undermine US economic security and fundamental human rights," said Wray. — AFP

Taiwan hosts global activists from HK, Iran

TAIPEI, Taiwan: The threat posed by authoritarian regimes is a "wake-up call for democrats worldwide", Taiwan's leader said Tuesday, as she opened a meeting of global activists that included fugitive Hong Kong dissident Nathan Law.

About 200 political and civic leaders from 70 countries, including Iran, Russia and Ukraine, were attending the assembly in Taipei. It began just two days after Chinese President Xi Jinping tightened his grip on power by securing a third term and elevating a group of loyalists to top jobs at a choreographed Communist Party gathering. Democratic Taiwan lives under constant threat of an invasion by authoritarian China, which views the island as part of its territory, to be taken one day. President Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan's people "have never shied away from the challenges of authoritarian interference... and fought against forces looking to undermine" its democracy.

"The challenge posed by authoritarian regimes is an important wake-up call for democrats worldwide," she said in a summit speech that cited Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Law, one of Hong Kong's best-known democ-

racy activists, said he believed Xi's third term would make the world less secure.

"It's very clear that Xi Jinping is amassing power, centralising more power, and I think it has very bad implications for the world," he told AFP on the sidelines of the summit. It is the first time Law has returned to Asia since fleeing Hong Kong in 2020 for Britain. He faces national security charges that have jailed many of the city's democracy activists.

Law said he believed Xi's "one-man dictatorship" would be increasingly hard to predict and that the Chinese leader was becoming like Russian President Vladimir Putin. "They will value their personal ambition more than the stability of the country. So it means that they could have more reckless moves in terms of really threatening Taiwan and threatening the world," he said.

China is a key ally of Russia and has not condemned its February invasion of Ukraine. That war has deepened fears that Beijing might attempt to annex the island. There has been an outpouring of public support for Kyiv in Taiwan, which has sent money and vowed to uphold Western sanctions.

Ukrainian politician Kira Rudik was also in Taipei on Tuesday, meeting local legislators—the first time in 15 years that a lawmaker from Ukraine has visited. "We know your support, we hear it, we see it, we feel it," she told reporters while visiting Taiwan's parliament.

"We know about the sanctions that you put against Russia so that they cannot manufacture their weapons." — AFP



CHIURE, Mozambique: Displaced people from the region of Chiure gather on October 24, 2022 around a flat bed truck carrying mattresses and other household items salvaged by fleeing residents after a recent wave of incursions by armed groups. — AFP

Jihadist raids spark new exodus in Mozambique

CHIURE, Mozambique: Even the exhaustion from walking 40 kilometres, fleeing jihadists who had attacked her village, could not mask the trauma on Maria Lourenço's face. An indelible image was imprinted on her mind. "They beheaded two men and put their heads in a basin," she told AFP. "Then they handed over the heads to the wife of one of the victims to present to the authorities," she said. "I saw their heads."

Her village in the Katapua area in Cabo Delgado province, the epicentre of a five-year-old jihadist insurgency in northern Mozambique, came under attack last weekend. The 60-year-old grandmother fled on foot to the town of Chiure, 25 miles away, with her eight daughters and grandchildren. Wearing blue flip-flops and clutching an improvised walking stick, she was standing in the town square waiting for her daughter-in-law to take her to the provincial capital Pemba. The family's

terrifying experience underscores how Mozambique's jihadist nightmare remains very far from over, despite military gains last year. The insurgency erupted in October 2017 when fighters — since proclaimed to be affiliated to the Islamic State group — attacked coastal areas in northern Cabo Delgado, close to the Tanzanian border. Bloody assaults on villages were followed in 2020 with the capture of the port of Mocimboa da Praia — a key part of a huge scheme to develop liquefied natural gas in the region.

In 2021, as Mozambique's military floundered, Rwanda and the country's neighbours deployed more than 3,000 troops, helping to push the militants out of their strongholds. But the jihadists are now making incursions into the previously untouched south of Cabo Delgado and spilling over into neighbouring Nampula and Niassa provinces. The insurgency has so far claimed more than 4,300 lives, and around a million people have fled their homes. An AFP correspondent in Chiure, a town with a population of around 100,000, saw around 500 people who had been uprooted from Katapua since the weekend. They congregated in front of the town's main square. Many had slept rough in the open. Others sheltered on shop verandahs watching over a few belongings tied in large sheets, and foam mattresses that they had managed to carry. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022

Business

Germany suggests reduced China stake in Hamburg port to end row

Cosco had sought a 35% stake in container terminal

BERLIN: Germany's government is eyeing a compromise that would allow a Chinese firm to take a smaller-than-planned stake in a Hamburg container terminal, after Chancellor Olaf Scholz rejected banning the sale outright. Chinese shipping giant Cosco had sought a 35-percent stake and the deal would have automatically gone ahead despite opposition from several German ministries if an "emergency solution" was not found this week, a government source told AFP.

Under the proposed compromise, the government would greenlight a 24.9-percent sale, a big enough reduction to deprive China's state-owned Cosco of any voting rights. The fate of the Tollerort terminal at Hamburg's port, Europe's third busiest, has sparked fierce debate in Germany.

Badly burnt by its over-reliance on Russian energy, Germany has become increasingly wary of allowing foreign powers to gain hold of critical infrastructure. Six German ministries, including the economy, defense and foreign offices, wanted to veto the Cosco deal, while former Hamburg mayor Scholz supported the sale. "The emergency solution would prevent a strategic participation and reduce it to a purely financial participation," the source said. "Of course, this does not solve the actual concerns," the source said, adding that the six ministries would still have preferred an outright ban.

The port controversy is the latest dispute to rattle Scholz's three-way coalition government between his Social Democrats, the left-leaning Greens and the liberal FDP. A standoff between the Greens and the FDP on whether to keep Germany's

nuclear plants operational for longer in Europe's powerhouse economy only ended when Scholz stepped in earlier this month and pulled rank.

Scholz ordered all three remaining plants to stay online until mid-April to help counter a shortfall in Russian energy imports-including the Emsland plant the Greens had wanted to see decommissioned. The FDP meanwhile had hoped to keep all three plants running until 2024.

EU concerns

The Greens and the FDP were united however in their opposition to Cosco's participation in Hamburg's port. "This is neither good for our economy nor for our security," Green party co-leader Omid Nouripour told German media last week. Michael Kruse, head of the FDP in Hamburg, called the project "dangerous".

The proposed sale has sent alarm bells ringing in Brussels too. The European Commission warned Germany months ago against Chinese investment in Hamburg, a source close to the matter told AFP at the weekend. The commission was worried that sensitive information about activity in the port could be relayed to China's government, the source said.

Chinese firms already hold stakes in other European ports but the EU's stance against Beijing has hardened since then. Germany too has in recent years taken a closer look at Chinese investment in sensitive technologies and other areas, and reserves the right to veto acquisitions.

Scholz is due to visit China in early November, the first European Union leader to make the trip



HAMBURG: Chinese shipping giant Cosco is seeking a 35-percent stake in Hamburg container terminal.

since November 2019. Despite growing concerns at home and abroad about economic dependence on China, Scholz has repeatedly insisted that Germany should maintain strong business relations with the Asian giant. "We do not have to decouple ourselves

from some countries, we must continue doing business with individual countries-and I will say explicitly, also with China," Scholz recently said. China is a top trading partner for Germany, especially for its flagship automotive industry. —AFP

HSBC profits fall in Q3 on bank impairment charges

HONG KONG: Global bank giant HSBC on Tuesday announced tumbling profits for the third quarter on impairment charges linked to a weak economic outlook and its upcoming sale of French retail operations. The London-headquartered bank's share price was down nearly seven percent in early afternoon deals, making it the biggest faller on the British capital's FTSE 100 index.

HSBC also announced a boardroom shake-up with the appointment of a new chief financial officer, as the Asia-focused lender faces headwinds in China and global recession prospects. Net profit slumped 46 percent to \$1.91 billion in June-September compared with the third quarter last year. Pre-tax profit slumped 40 percent, HSBC added in a statement. The bank was hit by a \$2.4-billion write-off from the planned disposal of its French business next year, offsetting gains made by soaring interest rates.

HSBC has meanwhile set aside provisions totalling \$1.1 billion for loans expected to sour.

"Macroeconomic headwinds, including higher inflation and a weaker outlook, continue to weigh on the global economy," it said. The bank specifically cited global uncertainty sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the fall of the British pound and China's troubled real estate sector.

Stripping out the one-off hits, adjusted pre-tax profit jumped 18 percent to \$6.5 billion, beating analyst expectations. The bank's net interest income, measuring what it makes from lending minus interest paid on deposits, came in at \$8.6 billion-its best third quarter in more than eight years.

China strains

"We retained a tight grip on costs, despite inflationary pressures, and remain on track to achieve our cost targets for 2022 and 2023," said chief executive Noel Quinn. In a call with media, he wel-



HONG KONG: In this file photo taken on October 25, 2021, people commute on a tram past the HSBC bank headquarters in Hong Kong. — AFP

comed stability returning to UK markets as former finance chief Rishi Sunak replaced Liz Truss as prime minister. "It's been a challenging few weeks. I am glad to see the market has stabilized."

The bank announced its own shake-up, with HSBC senior executive Georges Elhedery next year stepping up as chief financial officer, replacing Ewen Stevenson who departs the group. Senior HSBC executives are next week expected in Hong Kong for a bank summit after the city recently lifted mandatory quarantine for all international arrivals.

It comes after Chinese leader Xi Jinping tightened his grip on power by securing a third five-year term in office, handing top jobs to a number of loyalists who back his strict zero-COVID strategy. The policy of lockdowns and other strict measures have been a major cause of the country's economic woes and the prospect of more upheaval has sent chills through trading floors. HSBC has vowed to accelerate a multi-year pivot to Asia and the Middle East, with ambitions to lead Asia's wealth management market.

But the lender is under pressure from Chinese financial giant and major shareholder Ping An to spin off its Asian operations to unlock shareholder value amid tensions between China and Western powers. — AFP

of them already in reverse," he said.

Chalmers said that thanks to high employment and commodity prices, the fiscal deficit for 2022-23 was now forecast to be Aus\$37 billion (US\$23 billion), an improvement of Aus\$41.1 billion. "But while the temporary revenue boosts we are getting from higher employment and higher commodity prices will fade and fall, the profound and permanent spending pressures on the budget are forecast to grow and grow," he warned.

The Labor Party was elected to office in May and used its budget to deliver on its social welfare program, promising cheaper child care, an expansion of paid parental leave and up to 20,000 affordable homes to address the soaring cost of housing. Defence spending is set to rise eight percent this fiscal year, but with a new Defence Strategic Review being prepared, the government has deferred any major defense initiatives until next year.

Australia is weighing the purchase of stealthy nuclear-powered submarines and more long-range strike capabilities to deter the rising might of China. —AFP

Iraqi farmers watch drought kill 90% of wheat crops

BAGHDAD: About 25 per cent of Iraq's farmers have seen almost all their wheat crops fail this year due to drought, a report has found. Farmers surveyed said they witnessed up to 90 per cent of their wheat crop fail this year as a direct result of water shortages, affecting thousands of lives, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said on Monday.

Due to severe drought conditions across Iraq, farming communities have seen their wheat, vegetable and fruit harvests decline for the second year in a row. A combination of bad ownership by local investors, government neglect, corruption and climate change has affected Iraq's agricultural sector, the report said. NRC surveyed a quarter of the 1,341 households across five governorates in Iraq this year and said it estimated more than "90 per cent of wheat failure this season as a direct result of water shortages across those interviewed". "We are seeing the continued damage from Iraq's climate and water crisis," NRC's Iraq country director James Munn said in a statement.

"People are witnessing their fertile land and crops vanishing year after year," Munn said. "The lands that have fed a nation are drying up fast." The report warned that if conditions continued to cause drastic damage to crops and harvests, the country's "farming communities will be forced from their lands to urban areas in search of alternative sources of income".

One in three families living in areas of Iraq hardest-hit by drought had to reduce the area of land in



SULAIMANIYAH: Iraq's northeastern city of Sulaimaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan region has been experiencing bouts of drought due to a mix of factors including lower rainfall and diversion of inflowing rivers from Iran. — AFP

which they plant, resulting in heavy loss of crops and income. Iraq's northeastern city of Sulaimaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan region has been experiencing bouts of drought due to a mix of factors including lower rainfall and diversion of inflowing rivers from Iran.

Four out of 10 said they had harvested less wheat, barley, fruit and vegetables this year compared with last year, said the report. One of the main problems stems from Iran and Turkey building large dams to solve their own lack of water, diverting it from Iraq in the process. Iraq has attempted to talk to both neighbors about this issue but co-operation has been patchy. Iraqi villagers say they have felt the effects of reduced volumes from Iran for years, complaining that it has had a punishing effect on communities downstream, especially during increasingly frequent years of drought. —Agencies

US consumer confidence falls in October

WASHINGTON: Consumer confidence in the United States weakened more than anticipated in October, as upbeat sentiment on jobs and falling gas prices were overtaken by growing inflation jitters, a closely-watched survey showed Tuesday. The consumer confidence index ticked down to 102.5 in October from a revised 107.8 reading last month, declining for the first time in three months as concerns about costs of living intensified, according to The Conference Board.

Gas and food prices both served as "main drivers" behind consumer worries, said Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board. Although intentions to buy homes, automobiles and big-ticket appliances still rose, Franco said inflationary pressures will continue to weigh on spending. This "could result in a challenging holiday season for retailers," she cautioned, adding that if demand falls short, this could result in steep discounting that could slash retailers' profit margins.

The US Federal Reserve has raised borrowing costs aggressively this year as it battles surging



A customer shops in a grocery store, July 15, 2022, in Houston.

inflation in the world's biggest economy, but progress has been slow while consumers continued to spend and support economic activity. Persistently high prices are fuelling expectations of a further rate hike at officials' policy meeting next week. Consumers' expectations on the near-term outlook remains "dismal", with an index tracking sentiment on income, business and labor market conditions lingering at a level associated with recession, the latest survey said. —AFP

Australian economy set to slow as global crises bite

SYDNEY: Australia faces sharply lower growth next year as the global economy is ravaged by war, inflation and a persistent energy crisis, the country's treasurer said Tuesday, unveiling a cautious first budget for the new centre-left government. Solid 3.25 percent growth this year is expected to slump to 1.5 percent in 2023-24 — a full percentage point lower than previously predicted-according to budget forecasts.

Labor Treasurer Jim Chalmers said restraint was the name of the game as Australia confronted the prospect of a third global downturn in the last decade and a half. "The global economy teeters again, on the edge with a war that isn't ending, a global energy crisis that is escalating, inflationary pressures persisting, and economies slowing, some

Business

EU stresses Brexit treaty in congrats to UK PM Sunak

Commission official eyes positive EU-UK relationship

BRUSSELS: The European Union stressed Tuesday that it remained committed to seeing the full Brexit agreement with Britain upheld—especially on Northern Ireland—as it congratulated Rishi Sunak on becoming its new prime minister. “A positive EU-UK relationship is of strategic importance,” the EU’s pointman on post-Brexit ties, European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic, tweeted.

“I remain committed to working intensively and constructively to foster such a partnership, in full respect of our agreements. “This includes our work on joint solutions under the Protocol on IE/NI,” he said, referring to the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, who also tweeted congratulations, underlined that, “in these testing times for our continent, we count on a strong relationship with the UK to defend our common values, in full respect of our agreements”. Under the Brexit agreement, London conceded that the UK territory of Northern Ireland would remain under EU customs rules, effectively drawing a border for EU goods along the Irish Sea, between it and the rest of the United Kingdom.

That was designed to preserve peace in Northern Ireland as set out in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement,

which ended three decades of conflict and which has the backing of the United States.

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin, in his own statement congratulating Sunak, said “our shared responsibility” upholding the Good Friday Agreement, “is vital to support peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland”.

He said the EU and Britain had an opportunity “to find jointly agreed solutions” on the dispute and urged Sunak “to move quickly to substantive engagement with the EU on that basis”. Under Sunak’s two predecessors, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, Britain had sought to unilaterally override the Northern Ireland Protocol and bring it back under customs rules set by London. That has created great friction between Brussels and London, risking a confrontation that, if left unresolved, could lead to litigation and EU trade restrictions.

Sunak, who was finance minister under Johnson, has not yet set out publicly his direction on the Northern Ireland Protocol. EU diplomats hope he will strike a more conciliatory stance than his two predecessors, underlining that the bloc and Britain need to cooperate on issues such as energy and Russia’s war in Ukraine. — AFP



LONDON: Britain’s former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Conservative Party leadership candidate, Rishi Sunak leaves his home in London on October 24, 2022. — AFP



Climate change is already playing a role, as floods, droughts and heatwaves batter harvests from Europe to Asia and threaten famine in the Horn of Africa.

Crop-battering disasters highlight climate threat

PARIS: Rolling crises linked to war, weather disasters and the pandemic have shaken global food systems and tipped millions into hunger and poverty. Climate change is already playing a role, as floods, droughts and heatwaves batter harvests from Europe to Asia and threaten famine in the Horn of Africa. And experts warn this could be just the beginning. “If we don’t act now, this is just a sample of what may happen in the coming years,” said Mamadou Goita, an expert with sustainability group IPES-Food, which works with farmers’ organizations in Africa and around the world.

This issue will be in focus as never before at high-stakes UN climate negotiations, to be held in Egypt next month. Food production is both a key source of planet-warming emissions and highly exposed to the effects of climate change. Some risks are slow-burning—falling yields, warming oceans, seasonal mismatches between pollinators and plants, and heat threats to farm workers.

Others, like floods, can cause sudden “devastation of livelihoods and infrastructure”, said Rachel Bezner Kerr, professor at Cornell University and a lead author of the UN’s landmark IPCC report on climate impacts. These can reverberate through interwoven global supply chains, intersecting with other crises. Climate extremes and Covid-19 had already pushed food costs close to record highs early this year, when Russia invaded Ukraine—a key grain and sunflower oil exporter.

Since then, record temperatures withered crops across South Asia, the worst drought in 500 years savaged Europe’s maize and olive crops, heat scorched cabbages in South Korea sparking a “kimchi crisis”, and floods swamped Nigeria’s rice fields.

In China, as a punishing dry spell parched the Yangtze river basin where a third of its crops are grown, authorities sent up cloud-seeding drones to try and coax rain.

‘Persistent peril’

Those most vulnerable are hit hardest. The UN’s World Food Programme has said some 22 million people are at risk of starvation across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, after an unprecedented four failed rainy seasons. Globally, one person is estimated to starve to death every four seconds, nearly 200 aid groups reported in September, while a record 345 million people are suffering from acute hunger.

“It does feel like our report is being lived out in real time,” said Bezner Kerr.

Fifty countries are severely affected by the global food crisis, according to the International Monetary Fund. Among them is flood-hit Pakistan, where deadly monsoon inundations engulfed vast swathes of farmland, ravaging staple crops such as rice, tomatoes and onion. Two percent of the country’s livestock perished.

In Mirpur Khas district of agricultural powerhouse Sindh province, water swallowed Akbar Rajar’s cotton crop and pooled for weeks on his fields.

“We are in persistent peril,” the heavily indebted farmer told AFP, preparing to plant wheat in sodden

ground. Up to nine million people could be dragged into poverty by the disaster, the World Bank says.

‘Betting frenzy’

The world grows plenty of food for everyone, but lack of access and affordability prevent its distribution, experts say. “Once there is any problem, like Covid-19, they have been closing doors to everybody,” Goita told AFP. Changes to global food systems in recent decades mean countries rely less on stocks of staple crops, with about a third of food and agricultural production now traded internationally.

That is cost-effective when things go well, but is “highly vulnerable” to major shocks, said Elizabeth Robinson, who leads the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics.

“Who gets harmed? You’re looking at countries where people spend a lot of money on food, where countries are highly dependent on imports.”

Shocks can lead to export restrictions, like those imposed by India this year when its wheat harvest was hit by the heat wave. Importers have also been hammered by surging energy and transport costs and a strong US dollar, while the UNCTAD trade and development agency has warned of “betting frenzies” in commodities markets. Fertiliser prices have surged, raising concerns for future harvests.

The last time the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s food price index was this high was in 2008, when a global food crisis drove riots and instability in countries across the world.

So what should be on the table at the Egypt climate talks? One answer is money, particularly for smallholder farmers on the climate change and food insecurity “frontlines”, said Claire McConnell of think tank E3G. Just two percent of climate finance reaches them, she said, adding that in Africa and the Middle East alone there is a \$1.7 billion funding gap for the support and technology needed.

Strength in diversity

Another is emissions cuts. Food production will become “impossible” in some regions, and both hunger and malnutrition will deepen if warming continues its current trajectory, the IPCC has said. Redirecting billions of dollars of agricultural subsidies that incentivize environmental harm would also make a big difference, said Bezner Kerr. People in richer nations could cut their meat consumption to reduce the grain needed to feed livestock, while nations everywhere could consider broadening their taste for staples beyond rice, maize, wheat and potatoes.

That may resonate in COP host Egypt, where most of the wheat for cheap state-subsidized flatbread—a lifeline for around 70 percent of the population—is ordinarily imported from Ukraine and Russia.

Facing surging inflation, the government has ramped up purchases from domestic farmers, and is even running a trial adding sweet potato to bread flour. Diversifying crops and using more drought- or flood-resilient strains could also help farmers improve soils and spread risk.

But such solutions have limits. Pakistan’s floods tore over fields, ripping plants up by the root, said Nabeel Munir, the country’s ambassador to Seoul and chair of the largest negotiating bloc of developing nations at the climate talks. “How can you produce a crop that, even after being blown away and submerged in water for a few days, is still resistant?” he said. — AFP

Credit Suisse banking plans restructuring

GENEVA: New Credit Suisse chief executive Ulrich Koerner, faced with trying to turn around the beleaguered bank following multiple scandals, is set to unveil his strategic roadmap on Thursday.

The pressure is on for Switzerland’s second-biggest bank after investors saw their money go up in smoke due to the collapse in share prices. And the fragile economic outlook, recent market turbulence and rising interest rates could further complicate Koerner’s task as he reveals his restructuring plan.

Pillar of Swiss banking

With a turnover of nearly 22.7 billion Swiss francs (\$22.65 billion) in 2021, Credit Suisse is second only to UBS in Swiss banking. But unlike its competitor which earned a net profit of \$7.4 billion, Credit Suisse suffered a loss of 1.6 billion francs.

Founded in 1856 by Alfred Escher, the pioneer of Swiss railways, the bank then called Schweizerische Kreditanstalt grew to be a pillar of Swiss finance. It financed the construction of the Gotthard tunnel, the development of large industrial companies and also insurance giants, including Swiss Life and the reinsurer

Swiss Re. The Zurich-based bank is a force on the international stage, especially since it took over the US investment bank First Boston in 1990. Present in some 40 countries, it employs 51,410 people worldwide.

Too big to fail?

Credit Suisse is one of 30 banks globally deemed too big to fail, forcing it to set aside more cash to weather a crisis. At the end of June, its CET1 ratio—which compares a bank’s capital to its risk-weighted assets—stood at 13.5 percent: slightly less than HSBC Holdings but bigger than BNP Paribas, the two largest banks in Europe for which regulatory requirements are even higher.

Banking experts are therefore dismissing social media rumours earlier this month of a “Lehman Brothers moment”, referencing the US bank which collapsed, triggering the 2008 financial crisis.

“The bank will go through difficult times,” Carlo Lombardini, a lawyer and professor of banking law at the University of Lausanne, told AFP, but “not because of a solvency risk or liquidity”. Credit Suisse already went through a major restructuring under Tidjane Thiam, its chief executive from 2015 to early 2020. The objective was to relieve the investment bank of its most volatile activities and to strengthen wealth management, through capital increases of six billion and then four billion Swiss francs.

In November 2021, another reorganization was launched after a series of scandals that tarnished its reputation.—AFP



BASEL, Switzerland: A picture taken on October 25, 2022 shows a sign of Switzerland’s second-biggest bank Credit Suisse on a branch in Basel. —AFP

GM confirms profit forecast despite challenges

NEW YORK: General Motors confirmed its full-year financial forecast Tuesday, lifting shares as it reported strong consumer demand in spite of a “challenging” environment with grinding inflation.

The big US automaker scored a 37 percent jump in third-quarter profits to \$3.3 billion, bolstered by strong vehicle pricing in a market with historically low auto inventories. Revenues jumped 56 percent to \$41.9 billion, a quarterly record. GM Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson acknowledged rising worries about the drag from inflation on economic growth, but said the company was still seeing robust demand for its products.

“We haven’t seen any direct impact on our products. Pricing remains strong, demand remains strong for our product,” Jacobson said on a conference call with reporters. “I think we can’t ignore what others are saying out there and what others are seeing out there,” he said. “So we’re going to continue to be agile, with both our cost investments as well as our production. “But we continue to see that strong demand so the best we can do is be prepared for it.” GM benefited from increased auto deliveries worldwide, including in North America where it shipped around 75 percent of the partially-built autos from the prior quarter that had been suspended due to shortages of key materials.

Like other automakers, GM’s operations have been constrained by limits on components, especially semiconductors. The Detroit-based company pointed to “improvements” in the supply chain and semi-

conductor availability, but said it still faced “commodity and logistic challenges,” according to its earnings presentation.

“I wouldn’t say we’re completely out of it yet,” GM Chief Executive Officer Mary Barra said of the semi-conductor issue. “It’s more volatile than I would expect at this point. But we’re continuing to work through the different challenges and quarter by quarter, we’re seeing it improve.”



In an interview with CNBC, Barra said GM was better positioned for a potential recession than in the past because inventories—while elevated compared with a few months ago—remain lower than historical averages. “We have the ability right now because inventories are so low to really monitor the situation,” Barra said, adding that “we’re much better prepared to manage if we do move into a recession or have challenges from a demand-side perspective.”

The results translated into higher-than-expected profits per share, but revenues slightly lagged analyst expectations. Shares rose 3.1 percent to \$37.04 in pre-market trading. — AFP

Business

We don't eat lithium: S America longs for benefits of metal boon

Chile contributes 26% of global production in 2021

SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA, Chile: The turquoise glimmer of open-air pools contrasts sharply with the dazzling white of salt flats in Latin America's "lithium triangle," where hope resides for a better life fueled by a metal bonanza. A key component of batteries used in electric cars, demand has exploded for lithium—the "white gold" found in Chile, Argentina and Bolivia in quantities larger than anywhere else in the world.

And as the world seeks to move away from fossil fuels, lithium production—and prices—have skyrocketed, as have the expectations of communities near lithium plants, many of whom live in poverty. But there are growing concerns about the impact on groundwater sources in regions already prone to extended droughts, with recent evidence of tree and flamingo die-offs. And there are scant signs to date of benefits trickling down.

"We don't eat lithium, nor batteries. We do drink water," said Veronica Chavez, 48, president of the Santuario de Tres Pozos Indigenous community near the town of Salinas Grandes in Argentina's lithium heartland. A poster that meets visitors to Salinas Grandes reads: "No to lithium, yes to water and life." Lithium extraction requires millions of liters of water per plant per day.

Unlike in Australia—the world's top lithium producer that extracts the metal from rock—in South America it is derived from salars, or salt flats, where saltwater containing the metal is brought from underground briny lakes to the surface to evaporate.

Soaring prices

About 56 percent of the world's 89 million tons of identified lithium resources are found in the South American triangle, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). The world average price rose from \$5,700 per ton in November 2020 to \$60,500 in September this year.

Chile hosts the westernmost corner of the lithium

triangle in its Atacama desert, which contributed 26 percent of global production in 2021, according to the USGS. The country started lithium extraction in 1984 and has been a leader in the field partly because of low rainfall levels and high solar radiation that speeds up the evaporation process.

But Chilean law has made it difficult for companies to gain concessions from the government since the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet declared the metal a "strategic resource" for its potential use in nuclear bombs. Only two companies have permits to exploit the metal—Chile's SQM and American Albemarle, which pay up to 40 percent of their sales in tax. In the first quarter of this year, lithium's contribution to the public coffers surpassed those of Chile's mainstay metal, copper, for the first time, according to government records.

Yet, the environmental costs are starting to stack up, and locals fear there is worse to come. This year, a study in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B found a link between lithium mining and a decline in two flamingo species in the Salar de Atacama. "The development of technologies to slow climate change has been identified as a global imperative. Nonetheless, such 'green' technologies can potentially have negative impacts on biodiversity," said the study.

In 2013, an inspection at the SQM site—which reported using nearly 400,000 liters of water per hour in 2022—found that a third of carob trees in the area had died. A later study pointed to water scarcity as a possible cause. "We want to know, for sure, what has been the real impact of the extraction of groundwater," said Claudia Perez, 49, a resident of the nearby San Pedro river valley. She was not against lithium, said Perez, provided there are measures to "minimize the negative impact on people."

'Leave us alone'

Across the Andes in Argentina, the salt lakes of



CALAMA, Chile: Aerial view of brine ponds and processing areas of the lithium mine of the Chilean company SQM (Sociedad Quimica Minera) in the Atacama Desert, Calama, Chile, on September 12, 2022. — AFP

Jujuy host the world's second-largest lithium resources along with the neighboring provinces of Salta and Catamarca.

With few restrictions on extraction and a low tax of only 3.0 percent, Argentina has become the world's fourth-biggest lithium producer from two mines. With dozens of new projects in the works with the involvement of US, Chinese, French, South Korean and local companies, Argentina has said it hopes to exceed Chilean production by 2030. But not everyone is sold on the idea.

"It is not, as they say, that they (lithium companies) are going to save the planet... Rather it is us who have to give our lives to save the planet," said Chavez, of Santuario de Tres Pozos in Jujuy

province. A neighbor, 47-year-old street food seller Barbara Quipildor added fiercely: "I want them to leave us alone, in peace. I don't want lithium... My concern is the future of my children's children."

About 300 kilometers (190 miles) north of Jujuy, the salar of Uyuni in Bolivia holds more lithium than anywhere else—a quarter of global resources, according to the USGS.

Half of the residents in the region—which is also rich in silver and tin—live in poverty, household surveys show. The country's former leftist president Evo Morales nationalized hydrocarbons and other resources such as lithium towards the start of his 2006-2019 mandate and vowed Bolivia would set the metal's global price. —AFP

Clean energy and dependence on critical minerals

PARIS: After nearly a century of geopolitical tension over access to oil, experts worry that the global transition to clean energy is creating new dependencies on the critical minerals needed for solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicle batteries. Control over most of these essential elements is concentrated in a handful of countries, none more than China, they note.

Which metals are key for the energy transition?

Cobalt, nickel, manganese and lithium are critical to making electric vehicle batteries. Rare earths such as neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium are used in computer memory and magnets in wind turbines. Copper and aluminium are used in electricity networks, and platinum is a catalyst for hydrogen. These materials "will be at the centre of decarbonisation efforts and electrification of the economy, as we move from fossil fuels to wind and solar power generation, battery- and fuel-cell-based electric vehicles (EVs) and hydrogen production", consulting firm McKinsey reported earlier this year.

How much demand is there?

Global demand for these critical metals may quadruple by 2040 if the world is to meet its pledges under the Paris climate pact, according to estimates by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

French researcher Olivier Vidal has calculated that more of the metals will need to be manufactured by 2050 than humanity has produced



TRES POZOS, Argentina: Street food seller Barbara Quipildor poses as she makes empanadas (stuffed pastry) at her stall in the Kolla indigenous community of Santuario de Tres Pozos, which in 2019 expelled two mining companies from the nearby Salinas Grandes salt flat, in the northern province of Jujuy, Argentina. —AFP

throughout history. While many predict shortages, some believe technology improvements and recycling will keep up with increased production needs.

But some regions are more vulnerable than others. According to a study by Belgium's Louvain university, Europe faces critical shortages of metals for the next 15 years, particularly lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper and rare earths. The European Raw Materials Alliance (ERMA) says Europe will only be able to cover between five and 55 percent of its key metals needs by 2030.

While Europe does have untapped resources of cobalt, gallium, germanium and lithium, it will need to issue mining permits to get to them, noted senior ERMA official Bernd Schaefer.

On Monday, industrial minerals manufacturer Imerys announced plans for a major lithium mine in

central France. The United States is opening its first cobalt mine in decades, in Idaho.

Automakers such as Tesla have announced their intention to enter directly into the capital of mining firms.

Which countries produce these metals?

Cobalt mining is dominated by the Democratic Republic of Congo, which accounts for 70 percent of the world total. But in terms of processing, China is the leader, at 50 percent. South Africa accounts for 37 percent of global manganese output. China and Guinea account for more than half of the global production of bauxite, which is used to make aluminium. Argentina, Australia and Chile are major lithium producers, while Bolivia has considerable untapped resources. —AFP

Will Africa's metals boom suffer the same curse as oil?

MOANDA, Gabon: Mechanical diggers are hard at work in the bleak landscape of the Moanda open-cast mine in Gabon, using giant jaws to rip out manganese and then dump the ore into trucks with a crash.

"We're lucky here in Moanda. We find it about five to six meters (about 18 feet) below the surface," said manager Olivier Kassibi, whose mine yields 36 tons of manganese each day. Element number 25 on the periodic table, manganese has traditionally been perceived as a useful if humdrum material widely employed in steel and alloys.

More recently, though, the silvery metal has gained star status thanks to its emerging role in rechargeable car batteries, helping to wean the world off carbon-spewing fossil fuels. Decarbonisation of the world economy will take centre stage at the UN's COP27 climate talks in Egypt next month.

And as the great transition goes into higher gear, eyes are turning to Africa. Its soil is rich in manganese, cobalt, nickel and lithium—crucial ingredients in cleaner technology for generating or storing power. The Moanda region alone contains as much as a quarter of known global reserves of manganese, according to the Compagnie Minière de l'Ogooué (Comilog), a subsidiary of the French group Eramet which operates the site.

Curse of oil

But hopes that the mineral boom will translate into



Soaring demand for cobalt has sparked a rush by unlicensed miners in DR Congo.

a new dawn of prosperity in the world's poorest continent are clouded by memories of what happened with oil. In Africa's oil-producing countries, black gold meant a gush of wealth for a well-connected few—but only drops for the needy majority.

Corruption sucked the dollars out of plans for roads, hospitals and schools, and environmental damage was often all that remained. Africa's potential in new-age minerals is "huge", said the former chief economist of the African Development Bank, Rabah Arezki, who pointed out that reserves are not even known because so little exploration has been done.

But, he said, "there is very little reason to think that this windfall will benefit the people of Africa, particularly because of governance concerns." New metals deposits are following one another at a giddy

pace. In one example, Firefinch Ltd of Australia was looking for gold at Goulamina in southern Mali when it came across lithium, said Seydou Semega, geologist and local director of the firm.

Firefinch then created a local offshoot, Leo Lithium, and inaugurated the mine in early 2022 — a facility that it says could create 1,200 jobs and generate more than \$100 million a year for Mali in taxes and dividends. "Could Africa be the main source of lithium in the world?" asked Simon Hay, director of Leo Lithium. "Absolutely." Comilog, which has operated the Moanda mine since 1960, claims the creation of 3,400 direct and 6,000 indirect jobs, a contribution of around \$345 million per year to the national economy in various forms, plus millions of dollars in health and education provisions for the population. —AFP

Will climate change doom US truck habit? Detroit says no

NEW YORK: The US consumer's love for enormous vehicles has been seen by outsiders as a curiosity and sometimes a sign of profligacy. Either way, rising concerns about climate change seemed to create a reckoning for the behemoth-sized pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles that recently have sustained US automaker profits.

Not so, according to Detroit auto giants, who have responded to the climate crisis by launching all-electric versions of the Ford F-150 pickup, the Chevrolet Blazer SUV and other best-selling giants that seemingly promise the possibility that consumers can have it all: address global warming without sacrificing the appeal of larger autos. Leading US environmentalists, along with the Biden administration, have praised announcements of the electric vehicle (EV) rollouts as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Absent has been any discussion of the environmental toll of large EV trucks, which require more energy to recharge and more critical materials than do smaller EVs. In showcasing trucks, Detroit automakers are setting the groundwork for an EV era that mirrors the current profile of US roadways and distinct from Europe, where sedans dominate. Industry insiders like Alan Amici, president of the Center for Automotive Research, see little appetite among American consumers to go small.

"People are still clamoring for big pickups and SUVs," Amici said. "I don't expect a return to sedans." The trucks, often marketed in advertisements navigating rugged landscapes, provide lucrative profit margins to automakers and have become so ubiquitous on US roads that some consumers avoid smaller vehicles out of fear of how it would handle a crash with a much bigger auto.

Ford and General Motors, both of which report earnings this week, are positioning the vehicles as environmentally friendly based on how they contrast with gas-guzzling equivalents.

Luke Tonachel, who heads the clean vehicles program at environmental group NRDC, said electric pickups and SUVs represent a critical step in addressing climate change.

"It's incredibly important that we eliminate tailpipe pollution from all cars as soon as possible," Tonachel told AFP. "We need broad acceptance and adoption of EVs across the market. And that's why it's encouraging to see automakers starting to make EVs on all types of car segments, including the most popular ones." —AFP



DEARBORN, US: In this file photo taken on September 24, 2022 the truck cab is lowered on the frame of Ford Motor Co. battery powered F-150 Lightning trucks under production at their Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, Michigan. — AFP

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In this file photo taken on Dec 28, 2018, Amou Haji (Uncle Haji) is seen on the outskirts of the village of Dezhgah in the Dehram district of southwestern Iranian Fars province. — AFP photos

'World's dirtiest man' dies in Iran at 94

An Iranian man nicknamed the "dirtiest man in the world" for not taking a shower for decades has died at the age of 94, state media reported on Tuesday. Amou Haji, who did not

wash for more than half a century and was single, died on Sunday in the village of Dejgah in the southern province of Fars, IRNA news agency reported. Haji had avoided showering over fears of

"getting sick", the agency quoted a local official as saying. But "for the first time a few months ago, villagers had taken him to a bathroom to wash," IRNA reported. A short documentary film titled "The

Strange Life of Amou Haji" was made about his life in 2013, according to Iranian media outlets. — AFP

Video games could improve kids' brains

Parents often worry about the harmful impacts of video games on their children, from mental health and social problems to missing out on exercise. But a large new US study published in JAMA Network Open on Monday indicates there may also be cognitive benefits associated with the popular pastime. Lead author Bader Chaarani, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Vermont, told AFP he was naturally drawn to the topic as a keen gamer himself with expertise in neuroimaging.

Prior research had focused on detrimental effects, linking gaming with depression and increased aggression. These studies were however limited by their relatively small number of participants, particularly those involving brain imaging, said Chaarani. For the new research, Chaarani and colleagues analyzed data from the large and ongoing Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health.

They looked at survey answers, cognitive test results, and brain images from around 2,000 nine- and ten-year-olds, who were separated into two groups: those who never played games, and those who played for three hours or more a day. This threshold was chosen as it exceeds the American Academy of Pediatrics screen time guidelines of one or two hours of video games for older children.

Impulses and memory

Each group was assessed in two

tasks. The first involved seeing arrows pointing left or right, with the children asked to press left or right as fast as they could. They were also told to not press anything if they saw a "stop" signal, to measure how well they could control their impulses. In the second task, they were shown people's faces, and then asked if a subsequent picture shown later on matched or not, in a test of their working memory.

After using statistical methods to control for variables that could skew results, such as parental income, IQ, and mental health symptoms, the team found the video gamers performed consistently better on both tasks. As they performed the tasks, the children's brains were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Video gamers' brains showed more activity in regions associated with attention and memory.

"The results raise the intriguing possibility that video gaming may provide a cognitive training experience with measur-

able neurocognitive effects," the authors concluded in their paper. Right now it's not possible to know whether better cognitive performance drives more gaming, or is its result, said Chaarani. The team hope to get a more clear answer as the study continues and they look again at the same children at older ages.

This will also help exclude other potential factors at play such as the children's home environment, exercise and sleep quality. Future studies could also benefit from knowing what genres of games the children were playing - though at age 10 children tend to favor action games like Fortnite or Assassin's Creed. "Of course, excessive use of screen time is bad for overall mental health and physical activity," said Chaarani. But he said the results showed video games might be a better use of screen time than watching videos on YouTube, which has no discernible cognitive effects. — AFP

Adidas cuts ties with Kanye West

German sportswear giant Adidas said Tuesday it was ending its partnership with Kanye West after a series of anti-Semitic outbursts by the controversial rapper. Recent comments by West - known formally as Ye - were "unacceptable, hateful and dangerous", Adidas said in a statement. "After a thorough review, the company has taken the decision to terminate the partnership with Ye immediately."



Kanye West

Adidas said it would "end production" of the highly-successful "Yeezy" line designed together with West and "stop all payments to Ye and his companies". The abrupt end to the collaboration between the sportswear brand and rapper would slash Adidas's net income in 2022 by "up to €250 million (\$246 million)", it estimated.

Adidas is the latest brand to part ways with West following his recent outbursts. Paris-based fashion house Balenciaga ended ties with the rapper last week, saying it "no longer (has) any relationship nor any plans for future projects related to this artist". On Monday, one of Hollywood's biggest talent agencies, CAA, also said it was dropping West, while film and TV producer MRC said it was shelving an already-finished documentary about the artist.

T-shirt statement

Adidas began a review of its relationship with West earlier this month after he appeared at a fashion show in Paris wearing a shirt with the slogan "White Lives Matter". The phrase is a dog whistle to right-wing groups in the United States and a reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement. Days later he was locked out of Twitter and Instagram for threatening to "Go death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE."

Comments made by West "violate the company's values of diversity and inclusion, mutual respect and fairness", Adidas said Tuesday. The artist was associated with Nike for years but broke away in 2013, lending his name to Adidas as they launched their first Yeezy shoe together in 2015 - a partnership that went on to make him a billionaire. Along with Beyonce, Stella McCartney and Pharrell Williams, West's has been one of the top names used by Adidas to boost sales, especially online.

Inflammatory remarks

Adidas had come under increasing pressure from rights campaigners and entertainment world figures to stop working with West. Ari Emanuel, CEO of entertainment agency Endeavor, called on all companies to cut ties with West. "Those who continue to do business with West are giving his misguided hate an audience," Emanuel wrote in the Financial Times. "There should be no tolerance anywhere for West's anti-Semitism." West's ex-wife Kim Kardashian appeared to be joining the pile-on, though her tweet did not mention the father of her children by name. "Hate speech is never OK or excusable," she wrote on Twitter and Instagram on Monday. "I stand together with the Jewish community and call on the terrible violence and hateful rhetoric towards them to come to an immediate end." — AFP

Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto in custody

Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto was taken into custody on Monday evening, following several complaints filed against him for public statements he made about using cannabis, a judicial source said. The Casablanca-born rapper, who is a massive star in the Arabic-speaking music world, had in late September told reporters who gathered after one of his concerts, "I smoke hash - so what?... It does not mean I set a bad example."

His comments sparked an outcry in Morocco, and the 26-year-old was on Thursday forbidden from leaving the territory by authorities and was also summoned by the police in Casablanca. A prosecutor of a Casablanca court on late Monday decided to place Taha Fahssi - ElGrande Toto's real name - in custody after complaints were filed by "three artists, a journalist, and a policeman", a judicial source told AFP on condition of anonymity.



ElGrande Toto

According to daily newspaper Le Matin, the rapper is the subject of a preliminary investigation that would focus on all his publications, digital content and statements "likely to contain elements punishable by law". He was taken into custody a day after he made a public apology for his off-the-cuff comments. "I offer my apologies to anyone offended by my words, starting with the authorities and my public," ElGrande Toto told a packed press conference Sunday in Rabat. "This controversy was not planned - it just got too big, and it's a good lesson for me."

After ElGrande Toto made his comments on Sept 23, a Belgium-based journalist lodged a complaint accusing him of "incitement to consume drugs", said the journalist's lawyer, Mohamed Karrou. The rapper was the most in demand Arab artist in the Maghreb in 2021 on Spotify, with more than 50 million downloads. — AFP



Leslie Jordan

'Will & Grace' star Jordan dies at 67

Leslie Jordan, an award-winning American actor and writer best known for his role in the sitcom "Will & Grace," died Monday at age 67, one of his agents said. Jordan was involved in a single-car road accident as he drove in Hollywood, Don LeClair said, without specifying the exact cause of death. News reports said he may have suffered a medical emergency at the wheel. "The world is definitely a much darker place today without the love and light of Leslie Jordan," LeClair said in a statement sent to AFP.

Jordan enjoyed a successful and career over the course of three decades as he appeared in TV shows that included "American Horror Story", "Murphy Brown" and "Ugly Betty". In "Will & Grace" he played the pugna-cious Beverley Leslie, a frenemy of the character Karen Walker, and in 2006 he won an Emmy Award for outstanding guest actor in the comedy series. Jordan was a versatile artist with movie credits including "The Help", and a Gospel record released last year.

In 2020 Jordan became wildly popular on Instagram by posting videos of how he tried to entertain himself during the coronavirus pandemic, such as doing silly exercises or impressions of famous singers. His follower count shot up from 100,000 to 5.8 million. Fans lamented his death online. "Thank you for all the smiles you have given us. You will be missed," one of them wrote.

On Sunday Jordan, who grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, posted one last video in which he sang with the producer Danny Myrick. "Leslie Jordan was a Chattanooga legend and national treasure who brought joy and hope to millions," the city's mayor Tim Kelly wrote on Twitter. — AFP

Weinstein used Hollywood power to rape, court hears

Harvey Weinstein used his power and influence in Hollywood to rape women, leaving them terrified for their careers if they stood up to him, a court in Los Angeles heard Monday. The movie mogul exploited both his physical size and his position as "king" of the film industry to attack his victims in hotel rooms, the prosecution said, as a two-month trial began to hear evidence. "They feared that he could crush their careers if they reported what he had done," Deputy District Attorney Paul Thompson told the packed courtroom.



Harvey Weinstein

Thompson said jurors would hear from eight women who were sexually assaulted by the "Pulp Fiction" producer, who is credited with making the careers of some of the movie industry's biggest names, including Quentin Tarantino, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon and Gwyneth Paltrow. "Each of these women came forward independent of each other, and none of them knew one another," he said. The jury will hear testimony from these women, he said. Weinstein, who produced "The English Patient" and "Good Will Hunting", is already serving 23 years in jail in New York after being convicted there of a series of sex crimes.

He now faces 11 more charges, including sexual battery by restraint, forcible rape and forcible oral copulation against women in Beverly Hills and Los Angeles hotels between 2004 and 2013. If convicted, Weinstein - who has pleaded not guilty to all counts - could be sentenced to more than 100 additional years behind bars. Thompson played jurors a series of quotes from the alleged victims, describing Weinstein as "the most powerful person in the industry," and "the king."

"Part of me was thinking should I just make a run for it, but he's a big guy," one of the women told investigators. "He's big. He's broad. He's overweight. He's domineering," one said. "I still wanted to

work in Hollywood so I was afraid to do anything because of that," one woman said. "I was scared that if I didn't play nice something could happen in the room or out of the room because of his power in the industry," another woman said.

In common with most victims of sexual assault, the women in the case are being referred to as "Jane Doe," in order to preserve their anonymity, but one has been publicly identified as Jennifer Siebel Newsom, the wife of California governor Gavin Newsom.

#MeToo

Defending, Mark Werksman said the prosecution's case was one of quantity, not quality, and driven by emotion, not reason. He said sex in Hollywood was a commodity, and that this was all exploded by the advent of the #MeToo movement. "It was transactional sex. It may have been unpleasant, and embarrassing... but it was consensual. It was the casting couch. Everyone did it. He did it. They did it. Because each wanted something from another," Werksman said.

"Look at him. He's not Brad Pitt or George Clooney. Do you think those beautiful women had sex with him because he's hot? No. They did it because he was powerful. An asteroid called the #MeToo movement hit earth with such ferocity that everything changed overnight. And Mr Weinstein became the epicenter. The accusers in this case, women who willingly played the game by the rules that applied back then, they will come into this courtroom now... and claim they were raped and sexually assaulted," Werksman said.

Widespread sexual abuse and harassment allegations against Weinstein exploded in Oct 2017, and his conviction in New York in 2020 was a landmark in the #MeToo movement. In June, he lost a bid to have that sex crimes conviction overturned. He has been separately charged by British prosecutors with the 1996 indecent assault of a woman in London. In total, nearly 90 women, including Angelina Jolie, Paltrow and Salma Hayek, have accused Weinstein of harassment or assault.

Before the allegations emerged, he and his brother Bob were Hollywood's ultimate power players. Their hits included 1998's "Shakespeare in Love," for which Weinstein shared a best picture Oscar. Over the years, Weinstein's films received more than 300 Oscar nominations and 81 statuettes. "She Said", a film about the 2017 newspaper investigation into Weinstein that sparked the demise of his movie empire, is set for wide release on Nov 18 in the United States. — AFP

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Vasily Lakoba, director of research at Meadowview Research Farms, poses in a grove of trees at the American Chestnut Foundation's Meadowview Research Farm Oct 4, 2022, in Meadowview, Virginia. — AFP photos

For blighted American chestnut tree, rebirth may be in offing

The American chestnut tree, once a regal pillar of forests across the eastern United States, is on life support, struggling to survive. "These look like death," said Vasily Lakoba, research director for the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF), which has been working since the 1980s to resurrect the species. He pointed to a patch of stunted shrubs, chestnut trees that were a far cry from the noble, erect chestnut trees of yesteryear.

Workers use a crane to harvest the burrs, or spiny prickly shells that cover the nuts, then take them to a shed to be studied and used for future planting. "It's like picking apples, but with pricks," laughed Jim Tolton, a technician on the farm, during a chestnut harvest day in early October.

Before the disease, the American chestnut tree "grew tall and straight through the forest, fighting for light," Lakoba said. But the blight causes

as possible. The current hybrid has 15/16ths of the genetic makeup of an American chestnut tree - while ideally acquiring the resistance of the Chinese chestnut tree. One of the main drawbacks with these hybrids, explained Lakoba, "is that blight resistance and susceptibility have turned out to be a genetically much more complex phenomenon than previously thought."

ACF researchers have not abandoned their crossbreeding efforts. But a second avenue of research has opened up: genetic modification. Working on a transgenic version of the American chestnut tree, researchers at the State University of New York at Syracuse have developed a specimen that shows very promising early results of disease resistance, according to Lakoba, who is collaborating with the researchers. Combining crossbreeding with genetic modification might yield better results, he said.

'Keep chipping away'

Once a resistant specimen has been developed, the time will come for the Herculean task of reintroducing the tree to an American landscape deeply altered by more than a century of development. "So much has changed in terms of climate, in terms of invasive species, in terms of pollution, habitat change, land use, change, soil loss and erosion, that it really isn't the same world from 100 years ago," Lakoba said.

Not only has the landscape been altered, Lakoba said, climate change adds another wildcard to whether the American chestnut can ever prosper again. "Overall, there will be more pests, there will be more diseases," he said. Any revival of the American chestnut may be decades - or centuries - away. "This is definitely at least a couple centuries of a mission going forward. And from there, I think we just keep chipping away at it," Lakoba said. But he is hopeful that scientific advances are on the side of the American chestnut. "We see it really as a matter of time." — AFP



Cassie Stark, lab manager, counts chestnuts after harvesting at the American Chestnut Foundation's Meadowview Research Farm.

cankers to appear on the branches and stems of the American chestnut tree. Blighted trees grow other branches here and there, giving them a bushy appearance, instead of maintaining a tall, straight shape. No cure has yet been found to stop the spread.

Hybrids and GMOs

Finding a way to fight the blight is precisely the mission of ACF. To do this, two main research avenues are under investigation: The first, which has been in place for years, consists of crossing an American chestnut tree with other species that already show some resistance to the fungus, such as the Chinese chestnut tree.

A first specimen is produced from this hybridization, before it is crossbred again with an American chestnut tree, then once again - all in order to preserve as much of the original genetic characteris-

extent Russia, Mongolia and China.

The video published last year showed farmhands beating and prodding horses with sticks, dogs sometimes biting horses, and the horses weakened after giving blood. Some of the horses could be seen collapsing from exhaustion after struggling against the restraints in their boxes. The video caused a shockwave, both abroad and in Iceland.

Lucrative business

At the farm near Selfoss, the mares stand in single file in a special wooden structure, waiting patiently for their turn to enter a box. Planks are placed around



A veterinarian gives a local anesthetic to a mare before inserting the cannula for bleeding at 'blood farm' near Selfoss, Iceland on Sept 30, 2022. — AFP photos

Activists see red over Iceland's blood mares

On an autumn day on a lush green prairie, more than a dozen pregnant mares are waiting to be bled for the last time this year. This "blood farm" near Selfoss in southern Iceland is collecting blood from pregnant horses raised for the sole purpose of extracting a special hormone used in the veterinary industry. The practice has had animal welfare groups up in arms ever since a shocking video of horses in Iceland being maltreated emerged on YouTube a year ago.

People working in the industry now insist on anonymity when speaking to the media. "There is no way we can make the public understand completely this kind of farming", says the 56-year-old owner of the farm near Selfoss. "The public in general is too sensitive". At farms like this one, several liters of blood are collected from each horse in order to extract the PMSG hormone (Pregnant mare serum gonadotropin), also known as eCG, produced naturally by pregnant mares.

Sold by the veterinary industry, farmers use the hormone to improve the fertility of other livestock like cows, ewes and sows around the world. The foals are meanwhile usually sent to the slaughterhouse. Iceland is one of the rare countries - and the only one in Europe - to carry out the controversial practice, along with Argentina and Uruguay, and to a lesser

Europe bees stung by climate change, pesticides, parasites

Bees pollinate 71 of the 100 crop species that provide 90 percent of food worldwide. They also pollinate wild plants, helping sustain biodiversity and the beauty of the natural world. But climate change, pesticides and parasites are taking a terrible toll on bees and they need protecting, according to European beekeepers, who held their annual congress in Quimper, western France, this week.

The congress, which said some European beekeepers were suffering "significant mortalities and catastrophic harvests due to difficult climatic conditions", was an opportunity for beekeepers and scientists to try to respond to the major concerns. The European Union, the world's second largest importer of honey, currently produces just 60 percent of what it consumes.

French beekeepers, for example, expect to harvest between 12,000 and 14,000 tons of honey this year, far lower than the 30,000 tons they harvested in the 1990s, according to the National Union of French Beekeepers (UNAF). "I've been fighting for bees for 30 years but if I had to choose now, I don't know if I'd become a beekeeper," said UNAF spokesman Henri Clement, who has 200 hives in the unspoiled mountainous Cevennes region in southeastern France.

Clement is 62 and not far off retiring. "But it's not much fun for young people who want to take up the profession," he said. Many of the subjects buzzing around the congress were evidence of this - Asian hornets, parasitic varroa mites and hive beetles (all invasive alien species in Europe), pesticides and climate change.

With climate change, "the bigger issue is just the erratic weather and rain patterns, drought and things like that", explained US entomologist Jeffery Pettis, president of Apimondia, an international federation of beekeeping associations in 110 countries. "In certain places, the plants had been used to a certain temperature. And now it goes up, and you have a hot dry summer, and there are no flowers," Pettis told AFP.

No flowers means no pollen, which means bees dying of hunger. Climate scientists say human-induced global heating is intensifying extreme weather events like flooding, and heatwaves that exacerbate wildfires. "The fires seem to be a big issue," Pettis said. "They come sporadically and we lose hives directly from flooding and fires."

Pollen quality

Pettis, a former scientist at the US Department of Agriculture, published a study in 2016 on the quality of pollen produced by goldenrod - a hardy perennial also known as solidago that produces a myriad of small, yellow, daisy-like flowers. The study showed that the more carbon dioxide - a greenhouse gas-accumulates in the atmosphere, the lower the amount of protein in goldenrod pollen. North America bees are dependent on nourishment from goldenrod pollen to get through the winter, Pettis explained. "Getting inferior food ... should affect wintering. It could happen with other pollen sources. We don't know."

As in France, 30 to 40 percent of hives in the United States are dying every winter, Pettis said, decimated by varroa mites, pesticides and the destruction of wild

spaces where wild plants grow. "Today, there are even American startups that are developing drones to pollinate plants in the place of bees. It's utterly appalling," said Clement.

Toxic pesticides are another factor decimating bee colonies and other pollinating insects. French molecular biophysics scientist Jean-Marc Bonmatin said parasites like varroa, were "boosted by the presence of neonicotinide pesticides, which directly poison pollinators". Neonicotinides, chemically similar to nicotine, are systemic pesticides.

Unlike contact pesticides, which remain on the surface of the treated leaves, systemic pesticides are taken up by the plant and transported throughout the plant, to



A farmer checks on bees working in their hive in Isokyro, western Finland on Sept 11, 2022. — AFP photos

their leaves, flowers, roots and stems, as well as to their pollen and nectar. These toxic substances can remain in the soil for between five and 30 years, Bonmatin said. The EU restricted the use of three neonicotinides - but not all - in 2013 and banned them outright in 2018. But since 2013, several EU states have repeatedly granted "emergency authorizations" to use the noxious insecticides on major crops.

Limiting toxic chemicals

He said open source software called Toxibee was being launched soon to help farmers protect bees by identifying the least toxic molecules to use on their crops. "Before they spray the crops with pesticides, they can try to limit their noxious effect," he said. "Because what kills bees will one day damage people's health too."

Pettis strove, however, to remain upbeat, pointing to some of the ways people can help bees. "(We should) diversify agriculture and try not to be driven by chemically-dependent agriculture, support organic and more sustainable farming". He also stressed the incredible resistance of some bee species, helped by factors in the natural world.

He cited the example of a black bee found on the Ile de Groix island in Brittany, which has survived varroa attacks without beekeepers treating them for mites or giving them supplementary feeding. "We think the bees are dependent on us but in reality they survive pretty well even without us," he said. "And you still have the beauty of the bees. It's such a good thing to work with bees." — AFP

also sparked debate in Iceland, where most inhabitants learned about the practice for the first time even though it has been going on since 1979.

"This makes us think about where we stand in our ethics", the vice chair of Animal Welfare Iceland, Rosa Lif Darradottir, told AFP. "To make a fertility drug that is used on farm animals ... to enhance their fertility beyond their natural capacity, just so that we can have a stable flow of cheap pork ... The cause is not noble", she said.



A box containing three cans full of mares' blood are seen at the 'blood farm'.

for eight weeks.

The blood collection, carried out from the end of July until early October, is profitable: the 56-year-old running the operation near Selfoss - who also works as an attorney - makes up to 10 million kronur (\$70,000) a year from the business. "In many cases, the mares show signs of short-term discomfort during the blood collection", says Sigridur Bjornsdottir, a horse specialist at the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST). But "this is not considered a serious change (of their condition) unless the symptoms are severe, extended, or the mare shows signs of chronic stress".

In 2021, Iceland had 119 blood farms and almost 5,400 mares raised for the sole purpose of giving blood, a figure that has more than tripled in the past decade. The PMSG hormone is turned into a powder by Icelandic biotech group Isteika, the biggest producer in Europe handling around 170 tonnes of blood per year.

'Noble' cause?

The figure is likely to be lower this year, after the controversial video prompted some farmers to quit the business amid concerns about animal welfare activists. "Farmers were severely hit and shocked by the video", said Isteika managing director Arnthor Gudlaugsson. While he acknowledged there were problematic cases, Gudlaugsson said the video, filmed with a hidden camera, was designed "to give an overly negative description of the process".

The video did lead to a police investigation and the farms featured were identified. MAST inspected all of Iceland's blood farms this summer and "no serious deviations" were observed, and none were ordered to shut down. The scandal has

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Mathekoa Libe, 18, rides his donkey on his way to refill a gas bottle in Thaba Bosigo, 25 km east of Maseru, capital of Lesotho, on Oct 8, 2022.— AFP photos



Thabo Mathie, 27, poses on the side of the road.



Daniel Mathala, 75, wears a traditional chief hat at the wedding of his daughter.



Sky Phakoa, 23, carries a bunch of leaves as she poses in Thaba Bosigo.

Slow-journeying in mountainous Lesotho

In the remote countryside of Lesotho, a kingdom in southern Africa, time stretches wide between long treks on horse or donkey back and hours of herding cattle along mountain ranges. Mounted on his donkey, Matekoa Libe rides along the steep, rocky paths. His long legs slapping against his donkey's flanks as it lopes forwards.

"I'm going to the village (to get) gas," said the smiling 18-year-old as he stops to speak to AFP, holding a grey cooking gas cylinder placed next to him on the donkey's back. He pulls a woolen hat over his head and hurriedly ties his shoelaces, and he sets off again, waving a colored pompom at the end of a stick. Then he descends from the heights of Thaba Bosigo, about 25 km from the

capital Maseru. This is the cradle of the Sotho, the main ethnic group in the constitutional monarchy of 2.2 million people. The sandstone plateau, which rises slightly over 1,800 meters, served as a refuge for Sotho pastoralists from the onslaught of European settlers and Zulu warriors from neighboring South Africa in the early 19th century. Completely surrounded by South Africa, Lesotho is the largest of only three enclaved states in the world, far bigger than San Marino and the Vatican City, both of which are within Italy.

Straw hats and cannabis

Lesotho is also one of the highest countries in the world, with more than 80 percent of the country sitting 1,800 m

above sea level. But in the Belgium-sized country, the most convenient and commonly used off-road transport are horses and donkeys. Road infrastructure is still limited in Lesotho, one of the poorest countries in the world, with just three main roads linking Maseru to the rest of the country.

In the central highlands, nature remains untouched. Scattered in dotted lines, men draped in traditional blankets herd sheep and horned cows. Motifs on the warm and bright woolen blankets are loaded with meaning, from celebrating life and nationality, to fertility and royalty, or peace, love and courage. Sitting atop large rocks, shepherds sporting straw hats chew pieces of grass or smoke cannabis. Lesotho pioneered the grow-

ing of cannabis for medical use on the continent more than two decades ago.

Kingdom of the sky

On weekends, men gather around liters of sorghum beer and accordions. Famo, a kind of local hip-hop born almost a century ago from the poems of laborers working the South African mines, still rings out from the informal bars, known as shebeens and built from roofing sheets.

In the small kingdom, cacti and aloes grow to spectacular sizes. But temperatures plummet below zero and snow falls during the southern winter. Lesotho hosts one of just two ski resorts in sub-Saharan Africa. On the plains, women in dresses and wide-brimmed hats wheel-

barrows across the fields carrying farm produce. People here live on a shoe-string, growing what they eat: spinach, maize, sorghum and potatoes.

Unemployment is high in the former British protectorate, nicknamed the "kingdom of the sky", which became independent since 1966. Under a thatched roof of her rondavel stone house, wife and mother Masikilo Hlehli, 35, lives in a single room. In the center is a pot on a wood fire. There is no running water or electricity. Life in the villages stops at sunset. "We are still underdeveloped. I graduated five years ago but I've not been employed ever since," she said.— AFP

Indigenous Guarani live in deepening poverty in Brazil

In the middle of a football match on an improvised dirt pitch in southern Brazil, a famished young indigenous boy abruptly abandons the game, throws a stick into the sky and fells a bird. Then he runs home to have his family cook it. Scenes like this leave chief Inacio Martins saddened. "Hunger's no fun," says the 51-year-old head of the Ava Guarani people in the village of Marangatu, where some 200 Indigenous families live in deep poverty.



Daniela Acosta, a resident of the Tekoha Marangatu Guarani indigenous village, makes coffee during an interview in the municipality of Guaira, Parana state, Brazil, on Oct 13, 2022.

Their situation is similar to that of many native communities in Brazil, where far-right President Jair Bolsonaro - whose political fate will be decided in a polarizing runoff election Sunday - came to office four years ago vowing not to allow "one more centimeter" of protected Indigenous reservations. Forced from their ancestral lands to make way for industrial-scale agriculture, the Ava Guarani have been reduced to living in hunger and hopelessness on a leftover scrap of unwanted territory in the state of Parana.

"We need land to farm. We know how, but the soil here is nothing but rock," says Martins, pointing to the dusty expanse surrounding the community's overcrowded huts. "Where are we going to go?" he asks. "It used to be we'd run away whenever white people came to take our land. Now there's no land left to run to."



A man sits in front of his house at Tekoha Marangatu Guarani indigenous village.— AFP photos

'Ashamed' to beg

Daniela Acosta, 27, is one of the few Ava Guarani with a paying job. She takes a bus every day at 2:30 am to work in a poultry processing plant 65 km away. She uses her salary to pay off her student debt from a teacher-training program. After that, there is little left for food. But she would be "ashamed" to beg in the city, she says. Indigenous people are not usually "well received" there anyway, says the mother of one, who lives in a tiny home with a small space for her bed and another to cook.

"No one comes here to see how we live. I hope some day we'll manage to have our land declared a reservation, so we can be self-sufficient and not have to depend on others," she says. Inhabitants of the region's 14 Indigenous villages - which hope to one day win the right to a reservation - are chronic victims of discrimination, threats and even hit-and-run highway accidents, according to a 2017 report by a commission backed by Brazilian rights groups and the Norwegian embassy.

Court battle

"The problems started when (the Indigenous communities) began demanding their land" in the 2010s, says Marina Oliveira, of the Indigenous Missionary Council, which is helping them. At that point, she says, the Ava Guarani came to be seen as a threat by local farmers, many of whom inherited their farms from grandparents who received titles from the government to settle the land in the 1940s.

"Landholders look at Indigenous people and think we're going to invade their land," says Martins. "But we're not dumb enough to do something like that. We just want to protect our rights. This land is ours. We never sold it to the white man."

The government's Indigenous affairs agency, FUNAI, has established the borders of a 27,000-hectare reservation for the Ava Guarani, based on their documented presence on the land since at least the 16th century. But a court annulled the process in 2020, after Bolsonaro took office, in what Oliveira calls a "completely abnormal" ruling. In June, the public prosecutor's office asked FUNAI to appeal. Critics say the Indigenous affairs agency has been hijacked by hardline Bolsonaro allies.— AFP



Riopele Group Director Albertina Reis Machado poses for a photo at Riopele textile factory in Vila Nova de Famalicao on Oct 13, 2022.

Portuguese textiles become int'l player

Shaken in the last 20 years by competition from Asia, Portugal's textile industry has found its footing again and become a major player, supplying firms not just in Europe but also in the United States. The industry has benefited from its flexibility and inexpensive labor along with a spirit of innovation focused on limiting damage to the environment.

Near Vila Nova de Famalicao, in the northern district of Porto, the Riopele factory hums with a deafening noise of nearly 200 state-of-the-art weaving machines that run 24 hours a day six days a week. The textile industry's advantages are "reactivity and the capacity to adapt", engineer Jose Rosas told AFP as he stood by a digital screen where he follows the massive workshop's activity in real time.

One of the jewels in an industry anchored in the Ave valley, the company founded in 1927 and its thousand employees are struggling to meet orders after a respite during the COVID crisis. Every day, the factory produces 40,000 m of fabric, 98 percent of which is earmarked for export. Among its growing customers are Spain's Inditex, which owns Zara, and France's SMCP (Sandro, Maje, Claudie Pierlot and Fursac), according to Portuguese industry figures.

There is also increased demand from firms in Germany and Italy as well as in the United States such as Tommy Hilfifer. Customers value a "capacity to be different" from foreign competition, Riopele group director Albertina Reis told AFP, citing her firm's ability to use "new techniques" for sustainable output without compromising on aesthetics. Alberto Paccanelli, who heads Brussels-based Euratex, which represents the European textile and clothing industry, paid tribute to Portugal's sector.

"Portugal has the advantage of a workforce that remains competitive" by offering "quality products at reasonable prices,"



A Riopele's employee separates fabric threads at Riopele textile factory.— AFP photos

according to the president of Euratex, which held its annual conference in Porto in mid-October. Portugal's textile sector has made a dramatic comeback. Shaken by competition from companies relocating to Asia for cheaper production costs, the sector lost between the years 2000 and 2015 nearly 100,000 jobs out of a total of 235,000 recorded at the start of the era, according to the Portuguese Textile Association (ATP). Riopele is one of Portugal's biggest textile producers but there are many others, including JF Almeida and the TMG group.

Record exports

Since then, the sector has resumed hiring, benefiting from a minimum salary of Á705 (\$696) per month paid over 14 months, one of the lowest wages in the European Union, after those in eastern Europe. Exports of textile products from Portugal, which find their largest markets in Spain and France, hit last year the record sales figure of Á5.4 billion, 16.4 percent higher than the previous year, according to the ATP.

The industry group hopes to do even better this year. This success is owing not only to Portugal's low production costs,

but also to the sector's capacity to "adapt to the market", ATP President Mario Jorge Machado said. Following the pandemic, which led to delays in deliveries, the industry prefers to use supply chains that are closer to home, Machado said. "The companies understood that they needed to find solutions and partners to reconcile sustainable development with competitiveness," he said, hitting on the theme of the Porto conference.

To meet the challenge, the region of Vila Nova de Famalicao has been equipped for 30 years with a technological institute for textiles and clothing (CITEVE), which works on new fibers produced from recycled material and dyes derived from natural products. However, the sharp gas and electricity price increases caused by the war in Ukraine penalise a sector heavily dependent on energy.

Despite several billion euros in Portuguese government aid pledged for textile firms, industry executives are calling for a coordinated European plan to avert distortions in competition. That would "avoid creating competition" among European countries, said Dirk Vantghem, Euratex director general. — AFP



Several samples of fabrics are pictured at the technological institute for textiles and clothing (CITEVE) in Vila Nova de Famalicao on Oct 13, 2022.

Sports

Celtics crash to their first loss of the season 120-102

Mazzulla and star power forward Williams ejected

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics crashed to their first loss of the season in a stormy 120-102 road defeat to the Chicago Bulls on Monday that saw head coach Joe Mazzulla and star power forward Grant Williams ejected. After opening their campaign with three straight wins, the Celtics looked poised to deliver another statement victory as they sprinted into a 19-point lead midway through the first quarter at Chicago's United Center.

But Chicago regrouped swiftly and stifled the Celtics' offensive game to come roaring back in the second quarter, outscoring the visitors 35-15 to open up a 65-54 lead at half-time. The Bulls added another 35 points in the third quarter to romp into a 21-point lead heading into the fourth. By that stage Celtics interim head coach Mazzulla had already been tossed from the game, ordered back to the locker room after backing star Jayson Tatum's questioning of a refereeing decision.

A grim night for Boston got worse early in the fourth quarter when Williams was also tossed for bumping into referee Cheryl Flores as he got to his feet. Williams remonstrated furiously before storming off down the tunnel to jeers from the Chicago crowd. DeMar DeRozan led the scoring for Chicago with 25 points while Ayo Dosunmu added 22 points. Zach LaVine (19 points), Nikola Vucevic (18) and Derrick Jones Jr. (10) also made double figures for the Bulls.

Tatum (26 points) and Jaylen Brown (21) led Boston's scorers. Mazzulla blamed his ejection on a loss of composure. "It's unfortunate," he told reporters. "We have to be composed in all situations. Regardless of what happens, we have to be better, more composed, and it starts with me." Mazzulla was also dismayed by the defensive shortcomings that allowed Chicago to come back after the Celtics' fast start. "I think we just let go of the rope defensively," Mazzulla said. "When you get off to a great start like that you have to continue to play, especially on the road."

More Morant magic

In Memphis, Ja Morant and team-mate Desmond Bane scored 38 points each as the Grizzlies overpowered the Brooklyn Nets 134-124. It was another barnstorming performance from Morant, who has averaged just over 34 points per game in four outings this season. However, the 23-year-old star was forced to share



CHICAGO: Malcolm Brogdon #13 of the Boston Celtics and Derrick Jones Jr #5 of the Chicago Bulls collide during the second half at United Center on October 24, 2022 in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

top billing with team-mate Bane, whose 38-point haul included 8-of-10 from three-point range. Brooklyn kept in touch with the Grizzlies throughout thanks to 37 points each from Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving. It marked the first time since 1983 that four players in one game have scored 35 points or more.

Irving described the third quarter which saw Memphis pile on an eye-watering 45 points as "horrendous." "When you give up 39 points in the first quarter and 45 points in the third quarter - that's just not a trait of a great team on the defensive end," Irving said. Irving reserved special praise for Grizzlies talisman Morant. "He's an incredible student of the game and he takes his craft very seriously," Irving said. "A trait of a great player is that they don't have fear - and Ja doesn't have any fear, night-in, night-out."

In Portland meanwhile, the Trail Blazers maintained their perfect start to the season with a 135-110

blowout over the Denver Nuggets. Portland improved to 4-0 after restricting Nuggets star Nikola Jokic to just nine points. Damian Lillard - who had scored 41 points in back-to-back games heading into Monday's fixture - led the scoring for the Blazers with 31 points. Lillard was one of six Portland players in double figures, including Anfernee Simons with 29 points and Jerami Grant 21 points.

The Philadelphia 76ers finally got off the mark with their first win of the season in a 120-106 defeat of the Indiana Pacers. James Harden led the Sixers' scorers with 29 points while Joel Embiid added 26, including a perfect 9-of-9 from the free-throw line. In Miami, Fred VanVleet and Pascal Siakam combined for 47 points as the Toronto Raptors defeated the Heat 98-90 in a low-scoring game. Toronto snatched victory after outscoring Miami 27-14 in a decisive fourth quarter that saw Nick Nurse's men rain down five three-pointers. — AFP

Australian ex-skipper accuses South Africa of ball-tampering

SYDNEY: Tim Paine has accused South Africa of ball-tampering just days after Australian cricket was rocked by the sandpaper-gate scandal in 2018, alleging it was covered up by the match broadcaster. The former Australian skipper made the cheating claim in his new autobiography released Tuesday and widely reported by Australian media. He wrote that South Africa picked at the seam in the Test that followed the now-infamous Cape Town one where TV cameras caught Australia's Cameron Bancroft hiding sandpaper in his trousers after appearing to use it on the ball.

Paine claimed in the South African instance, the host broadcaster "immediately pulled the shot off the screen" and the footage "got lost." "I saw it happen in the fourth Test of that series," he wrote, referring to the match in Johannesburg that the Proteas won by 492 runs. "Think about that. After everything that had happened in Cape Town, after all the headlines and bans and carry on."

"I was standing at the bowlers' end in the next Test when a shot came up on the screen of a South African player at mid-off having a huge crack at the ball." "The television director, who had played an active role in catching out Cam (Bancroft), immediately pulled the shot off the screen. "We went to the umpires about it, which might seem a bit poor, but we'd been slaughtered and were convinced they'd been up to it since the first Test. But the footage got lost. As it would."

The Bancroft scandal sent shockwaves through Australian cricket, with the batsman, along with then-captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner, sent home in disgrace. Warner and Smith were both

slapped with one-year bans while Bancroft was given nine months. Paine was on the tour as wicketkeeper and appointed Test skipper in the aftermath. In the book, he alleged ball-tampering was commonplace in cricket, but conceded that using sandpaper was "next level" and "shameful".

But he denied any suggestion of a team meeting that planned what Bancroft did, saying his heart sank as replays showed what happened. "A sense of dread came over us all," he said, while adding that he regretted that more support was not offered to Smith, Warner and Bancroft in the fallout from the rest of the team. "Would it have worked out better for those three players if we had owned it as a team? I think it would have," he said.

'Hung out to dry'

Paine quit as Test skipper last November, on the eve of the Ashes campaign against England, when lewd text messages he sent to a female colleague in 2017 were about to be made public. He retreated from cricket as the scandal took its toll and only returned for Tasmania this month. In the book, he blasted Cricket Australia, claiming he was "hung out to dry". "I felt they were driven by the need to protect their image," Paine wrote. "I was prepared to cop the flak for what I did, but in my mind, Cricket Australia had abandoned me and made it look like they thought I'd sexually harassed someone."

Australia's cricket authorities investigated the sexting allegations in 2018 and cleared him of any code of conduct breach. When the story broke last year, then-Cricket Australia chair Richard Freudenstein - who was elected to the board in 2019 - said it was a mistake not to axe Paine at the time. "The reality was they were happy to defend me and accept I hadn't breached their code of conduct as long as it was kept private," wrote Paine. "If the story hadn't run, I would still be captain and, if Cricket Australia had handled it like they said they would, I would still be playing for Australia." — AFP



Australia's former captain Tim Paine

All Blacks must be 'switched on' for Japan's threat

TOKYO: Recalled centre Anton Lienert-Brown said Tuesday that the All Blacks will not take Japan lightly when they meet in Tokyo this weekend, insisting they were now "a feared opponent". New Zealand kick off their northern hemisphere tour on Saturday against 2019 World Cup quarter-finalists Japan before moving on to Europe to face Wales, Scotland and England on successive Saturdays.

The All Blacks have never lost a Test against Japan but their preparations have been disrupted by seven player withdrawals. Lienert-Brown is back in the squad for the first time this year after missing the Rugby Championship through injury, and he said he was looking to "make a statement".

"For us, we really respect Japan, we know how far they've come in the last few years and they're a feared opponent now," said the 27-year-old, who has won 56 caps for the All Blacks. "It's about us getting our stuff right, making sure that we're switched on the whole week and we prepare the best we can, because we know challenge ahead." Leicester Fainga'anuku became the latest All Blacks player to leave the squad on Monday when the back returned home for family reasons.

He was replaced by Mark Telea, who trained with the squad shortly after arriving in Japan on Tuesday morning. The Barrett brothers, Scott, Jordie and Beauden, were among six New Zealand players who did not board the plane on Saturday after their grandmother died. They are expected to arrive in Tokyo on Thursday but will not be available for selection against Japan. Sam Whitelock, Will Jordan and Folau Fakatava were left at home because of injury.



New Zealand's Anton Lienert-Brown

Utility back Damian McKenzie was one of five players brought into the squad as cover and he is looking to grab his chance with both hands. "It's great to be called back into the squad, not in great circumstances obviously, thinking of the Barrett family back home," said McKenzie, who played a season in Japan's domestic league last year. "It's cool to be back in the environment. If I'm given the chance this weekend then I've just got to come out and make the most of that." — AFP

NZ's try-machine dazzles All Blacks' legend Kirwan

WELLINGTON: All Blacks legend John Kirwan rates New Zealand try-machine Portia Woodman as one of the greatest wings in rugby after her eye-catching exploits at the women's World Cup. Woodman has scored five tries in the tournament with her blockbusting runs for the hosts, who face Wales in a quarter-final in Whangarei on Saturday. "She is one of the best wingers across both genders," said Kirwan, 57, who won the inaugural Rugby World Cup with the All Blacks on home soil in 1987. "If you go through a list of what makes a great winger, she has it all: pace, power, step, fend, acceleration, aggressiveness in contact," Kirwan told AFP.

"It's a winger's job to score tries and she takes every try which is there for the taking." Kirwan scored 35 tries in 63 Tests for New Zealand, compared to Woodman's 32 tries in 21 appearances for the Black Ferns, which includes five seven in a warm-up before the tournament against Japan. After claiming a hat-trick in the opening victory over Australia, Woodman scored two more in a 56-12 pool win against Wales, their opponents again on Saturday.

Woodman was top-scorer with 13 tries when New Zealand won the 2017 women's Rugby World Cup, including eight in one game. But disaster struck the following year when she ruptured her Achilles tendon. After a long spell on the sidelines, Woodman returned to help New Zealand win Olympic gold in Tokyo last year. Kirwan suffered a similar injury towards the end of his career and said recovery can be tough. "I snapped my Achilles and was never the same, from an acceleration point of view," Kirwan said. "I really admire her for coming back, because it's not only physical but also psychological." Woodman admitted the injury still affected her. "The biggest thing is the calf on that side will never gain the strength back," she said. "So that's a constant battle to work on it." Woodman's barnstorming style has seen her compared to another All Blacks legend who struck fear into defenders, Jonah Lomu. — AFP



TOWNSVILLE: Zimbabwe coach Dave Houghton (left) talks with player Ryan Burl during a training session at Riverway Stadium in Townsville. — AFP

Zimbabwe coach slams 'ridiculous' WCup conditions

HOBART: Zimbabwe coach Dave Houghton has slammed the umpires' decision to carry on with their Super 12 match against South Africa at the Twenty20 World Cup even in "ridiculous" amounts of rain. In a weather-hit stop-start match in Hobart, South Africa were on the brink of victory in their revised chase of 64 in seven overs when a final spell of showers forced a washout.

Quinton de Kock with an unbeaten 47 off 18 balls had steered the total to 51 for no loss in three overs but South Africa and Zimbabwe shared a point each in Group 2 on Monday. "I don't think we should have even bowled a ball, to be fair," said Houghton. "But the umpires are the guys making those decisions out in the middle and they seemed to think it was fit to play. I disagree with them, but there's not much I can do off the field."

Zimbabwe won the toss and elected to bat but their innings only began after a rain delay of more than two hours and 30 minutes and the match was reduced to nine overs a side. Zimbabwe managed 79-5, before De Kock replied with a flurry of fours and a six before rain arrived again, forcing the umpires to cut overs further. "The rain had got so heavy at one stage, it was ridiculous," said Houghton. "For most of the evening it was misty with mizzle, but it got to the stage where we could hear it thumping on the roof in the dugout."

"To me that's no longer mizzle and drizzle-that's time to get off the field. "And the field was wet when we started, it was wet when South Africa fielded, so they were difficult conditions for both sides. "But it just got more and more wet as we bowled. I don't think the conditions were right to carry on playing." Zimbabwe fast bowler Richard Ngarava slipped and had to be taken off injured. Houghton said: "He's lying in the changing room with a bunch of ice strapped to his ankle. Obviously we're not too happy about the fact he's not in a great space for bowling at the moment."

South Africa coach Mark Boucher said Zimbabwe would have wanted to carry on if they had got into a similar position as the Proteas. "We bowled with a ball that was quite wet as well," he said. "We were in a very good position. You walk away from this game thinking we were hard done by." The washout has left South Africa in a tricky spot in a group which includes heavyweights India and Pakistan. Only two teams from the group make the semi-finals. — AFP

Sports

Barcelona's financial problems run deeper; \$1.28 billion in debt

'European exit' - another impending blow

BARCELONA: By the time Barcelona kick off against Bayern Munich on Wednesday at the Camp Nou, they may already be eliminated from the Champions League. Xavi Hernandez's side have just one win from their first four matches in Group C, with a 3-3 draw at home against Inter Milan earlier in October likely sealing their fate. Should the Italian side beat already-eliminated Viktoria Plzen earlier on Wednesday at the San Siro, then Barcelona will be out.

For a club which spent lavishly in the summer on players including Robert Lewandowski, Jules Kounde and Raphinha, in sporting terms, the elimination is embarrassing. Financially, it puts more strain on the club's accounts which stood at 1.3 billion euros (\$1.28 billion) in debt in the summer, thanks to overspending and the COVID-19 pandemic, before president Joan Laporta and the board pulled their infamous "palancas" - financial leverage.

They sold 25 percent of their La Liga television rights for the next 25 years to American investment firm Sixth Street Partners across two deals, for a combined total of an estimated 665 million euros. Barcelona also sold two 24.5 percent stakes in Barca Studios to Socios.com and Orpheus Media, to help fund their summer spending spree and manage their wage bill, adding a further 200 million euros. The club had accounted for reaching the Champions League quarter-finals, so a second consecutive group-stage elimination will cost them an estimated 20 million euros in prize money, not counting revenue from ticket sales or television rights.

On the other hand, they will earn some income from a potential Europa League run, albeit significantly less than in the Champions League. They will also save some money by not having to pay player bonuses tied to Champions League progress. "If they go out of the Champions League, they will lose income but also stop paying bonuses, thus, saving money. (Their situation) won't vary much this season," said La Liga president Javier Tebas on Friday.

Deeper problems

La Liga's own financial fair play spending rules prevent clubs from overspending on transfer fees and salaries, based on their debt levels and income. Barcelona previously could only spend a quarter of any money they earned as a result. Harnessing their financial leverage this summer helped them get past the rule and revamp the squad, but next summer problems beckon unless they can reduce their overblown wage bill. "The palancas worked for this year, they said it themselves, but for next season they can't do it again, they have to reduce their salary," added Tebas.

"They can't continue with 500 million euros of salary to pay, they have to reduce it to 400 or a little more, like Real Madrid and other big European clubs. If not, next year they will be back on the 1:4 spending ratio." Sergio Busquets' contract expires in the summer but some of the squad's other highly-paid players, including Gerard Pique and Jordi Alba have longer to run on their deals. Champions League elimination certainly won't help Barcelona's financial situation, but a more worrying issue is that overblown salaries handed out by the previous



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's Brazilian forward Raphinha (right) takes part in a training session at the Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona on October 25, 2022, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League 1st round, group C football match between FC Barcelona and Bayern Munich. —AFP

Josep Maria Bartomeu regime are still weighing the club down.

After failing to reach agreements with some players over a pay reduction in the summer, Laporta and club treasurer Ferran Olive put forward a guarantee of around 11 million euros of their

own money, to ensure Kounde was registered. Regardless of whether they are eliminated or there is an unlikely Champions League "miracle", unless Barcelona can reduce their wage bill in the months to come, next summer they will have to be significantly thriffter. — AFP

Zain 'main sponsor' of Belgium v Egypt match

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the upcoming international friendly football match to be hosted in Kuwait between Belgium and Egypt's national football teams at Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium on 18 November. The match comes in collaboration with the Kuwait Football Association.

The announcement was made during the press conference held at Jaber Stadium's Conference Hall, attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, director of the match's organizing committee Moaed Al Shehab, and representatives from the Kuwait Football Association and the event's sponsors.

Speaking during the press conference, Waleed Al Khashti said: "We're thrilled to announce that Zain will be the main sponsor of the upcoming friendly showdown between Belgium and Egypt's national football teams. The match will be hosted at Kuwait's biggest sports venue, Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium, next November."

Al Khashti continued: "Our support to this unique event comes as part of our strategy to contribute to developing the local sports scene and support efforts that bring the biggest global events to Kuwait. As you all know, Zain is the official sponsor of the Kuwait Premier League (Zain League) in partnership with the Kuwait Football Association - one of the partners present with us today to bring



Al Khashti at the press conference

you this match."

Al Khashti added: "By being a part of this event's success, we wanted to expand from the local scene to the regional and international stages, given that it is set to feature some of the biggest Arab and world football stars. This is not the first time we join a similar event, as Zain previously sponsored friendly matches featuring Real Madrid v Kuwait's National team, as well as Bayern Munich v Kuwait Sports Club." Al Khashti concluded: "Hosting this thrilling event contributes to developing the regional sports sector, especially that it comes in preparation for the upcoming FIFA World Cup in neighboring Qatar, and so we are very thrilled to be a part of it."

The organizing committee has coordinated with Paris Saint-Germain.

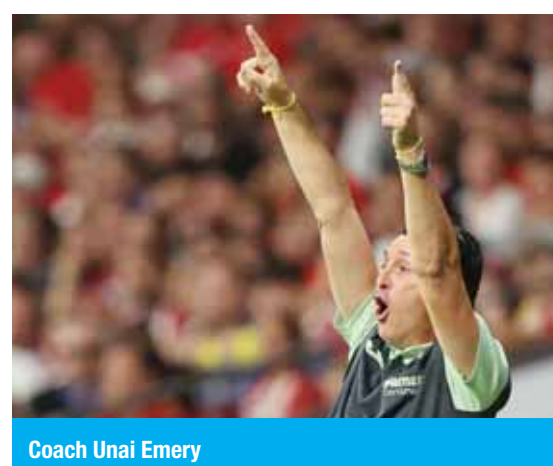
During his spell at Arsenal he led the Gunners to the 2019 Europa League final where they were humbled 4-1 by Chelsea. Villa said Emery, who was due to be out of contract with Villarreal at the end of this season, will take over from November 1 after work permit formalities are completed. It will be Emery's second Premier League stint after managing Arsenal for 18 months before he was dismissed following a seven-match losing run.

Former Liverpool and England midfielder Gerrard paid the price for Villa's wretched start to the season, which sees the club languishing just one place above the Premier League relegation zone. Villa have won only two of their 11 league matches this term and their tame surrender at Craven Cottage proved the final straw for the club's hierarchy as they axed Gerrard after just 11 months in charge. Villarreal said Emery would hold a farewell press conference at the club's training ground on Tuesday.

"Head coach Unai Emery has informed Villarreal CF of his unilateral decision to terminate his contract with the club," the Spanish outfit said in a statement.

the Kuwait, Belgium, and Egypt football associations to host the match in Kuwait with the participation of both teams' biggest stars. The match is set to be broadcasted via Belgian and Egyptian TV channels, as well as over 100 other countries. The match will be held at Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium on 18 November at 6:00 PM. Tickets are available on the official website: matchworldgroup.com.

Zain's support to this event springs from its corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting the local sports sector. Zain is also a strong believer in the talents and capabilities of the nation's young athletes and continues to support a great number of local athletes who represent Kuwait in local, regional, and international arenas.



Coach Unai Emery

"Emery has gone down in Villarreal CF history for becoming the first coach to win a title with the club, the UEFA Europa League, as well as the historic achievement of reaching the Champions League semi-finals last year. "Villarreal CF would like to thank Unai Emery for the work he has done and wishes him the best of luck in his career." — AFP

Russia rejects US basketball star Griner's appeal

KRASNOGORSK: A Russian court on Tuesday rejected an appeal from US basketball star Brittney Griner of her nine-year prison term on drug charges, ignoring her plea for the "traumatic" sentence to be reduced. The court in Krasnogorsk near Moscow ruled to leave Griner's August verdict "without change", while noting that each day the athlete had spent behind bars since her February arrest would be counted as one-and-a-half of her term. Griner had earlier pleaded for the sentence to be cut at Tuesday's hearing, which Washington had denounced as a "sham".

"I really hope that the court will adjust this sentence because it has been very very stressful and very traumatic," Griner said by video link from her detention centre just outside the Russian capital. The 32-year-old was handed nine years in prison in August for possessing vape cartridges with a small quantity of cannabis oil, after she was arrested at a Moscow airport in February. The case came amid fierce tensions between Moscow and Washington over Russia's military offensive in Ukraine.

Speaking slowly so her words could be translated into Russian, Griner asked the court for leniency given that the amount of cannabis found was "barely over the significant amount". "I don't understand the first court's decision to give one year less than the max when I've been here almost eight months and people with more severe crimes have gotten less than what I was given," she said. "So I just beg that the court... reassess my sentence."

Not expecting 'miracles'

Her lawyers had earlier said that Griner "does not expect any miracles" but had hoped for a reduction of her term. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre earlier this month described the appeal hearing as "another sham judicial proceeding" and said Griner should be released immediately.

When she was arrested, the two-time Olympic basketball gold medalist and Women's NBA champion had been in Russia to play for the professional Yekaterinburg team, during her off-season from the Phoenix Mercury. She pleaded guilty to the charges, but said she did not intend to break the law or use the banned substance in Russia. Griner had testified that she had permission from a US doctor to use medicinal cannabis to relieve pain from her many injuries, and had never failed a drug test.

The use of medical marijuana is not allowed in Russia. In August, Moscow said it was ready to discuss a prisoner swap for Griner, but there has been no apparent progress. Reports have suggested that Griner and another American jailed in Russia, Paul Whelan - a former US marine arrested in December 2018 and accused of spying - could be traded for Victor Bout, a Russian arms trafficker serving 25 years in jail on a 2012 conviction. — AFP

Villarreal's Emery named Villa coach

LONDON: Former Arsenal coach Unai Emery will return to the Premier League in November as the new head coach of Aston Villa, the English club announced on Monday. Emery, who leaves his post at Spanish club Villarreal, takes over from Steven Gerrard who was sacked last week after Villa slumped to a 3-0 defeat to Fulham. In a statement, the Midlands club said: "Aston Villa is delighted to announce the appointment of Unai Emery as the club's new head coach."

Villa described Emery as a "highly experienced top level coach who has managed over 900 games". The 50-year-old led Villarreal to Europa League success in 2021, beating Manchester United in the final, before guiding them to the semi-finals of last season's Champions League last season where they lost to Liverpool. Prior to that he also took Sevilla to three successive Europa League titles between 2013 and 2016, going on to lift Ligue 1 in France

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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-Frazi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

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

Nuzha Industrial Shuwaikh	22526804
Qadsiya	24814764
Dasmah	22515088
Bneid Al-Gar	22532265
Shaab	22531908
Qibla	22518752
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22459381
Mirqab	22451082
Sharq	22456536
Salmiya	22465401
	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ANIL P.V. PERUMPRETHU VEE- DU, MANJAKALA P.O, MANJAKALA, KOLLAM DISTRICT, PIN 691508, SSLC BOOK HOLDER NO: 423660 DATED MARCH 1999, PASS- PORT HOLDER NO.

H4169325 ISSUED AT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DATED 06/05/2009 DO HERE-BY CHANGE MY NAME AS MUHAMMED ASHIQ P.V. THIS CHANGE WILL COME INTO EFFECT IN ALL RECORDS RELATED TO ME. (C#2425) - 26-10-2022.

Bears stun Patriots for first road victory of the season

Chicago end a sequence of three away defeats



FOXBOROUGH: Justin Fields #1 of the Chicago Bears rushes for a 3-yard touchdown during the first quarter against the New England Patriots on October 24, 2022. —AFP

NEW YORK: The Chicago Bears scored their first road victory of the season on Monday after overpowering the New England Patriots 33-14 at Gillette Stadium. Bears quarterback Justin Fields finished with 179 yards from 13-of-21 passes as Chicago ended a sequence of three away defeats with an emphatic win at a rainswept Foxborough. Chicago improved to 3-4 with the victory while New England fell to 3-4 on a grim night for Bill Belichick's team, who remain rooted to the foot of the AFC East division.

The build-up to Monday's fixture had been dominated by discussion surrounding the Patriots quarterbacks, with starter Mac Jones back in the line-up after missing three games with an ankle sprain. However Jones was pulled early in the second quarter

after tossing an interception to Bears rookie safety Jaquan Brisker, with the Patriots already trailing 10-0 following a Fields rushing touchdown and a Cairo Santos field goal.

That paved the way for the return of the popular Patriots understudy Bailey Zappe. Zappe's introduction threatened to transform the game, with the Patriots reserve quarterback leading back-to-back touchdown drives to put New England into a 14-10 lead. However, Chicago reasserted themselves, with Fields finding Khalil Herbert for a 25-yard reception for a touchdown before Santos added a field goal to make it 20-14 at half-time. Two more Santos field goals in the third quarter left the Bears 26-14 up before David Montgomery rushed over from one yard in the fourth quarter to seal the Chicago win. — AFP



FOXBOROUGH: Jakobi Meyers #16 of the New England Patriots dives across the goal line to score a 30-yard receiving touchdown as Eddie Jackson #4 of the Chicago Bears is unable to make the tackle during the second quarter on October 24, 2022. — AFP

West Ham thump Bournemouth with VAR controversy

LONDON: A goal at the end of each half from Kurt Zouma and Said Benrahma was enough to give West Ham a welcome 2-0 win over Bournemouth in the English Premier League on Monday although both goals were tinged with controversy. Zouma's first goal since November 2021 was allowed to stand by the VAR despite a clear handball by Hammers defender Thilo Kehrer.

Benrahma then converted a stoppage-time penalty after VAR spotted a handball against Bournemouth substitute Jordan Zemura. Victory marked a fifth successive win in all competitions at the London Stadium for West Ham who climb to 10th, in the top half of the Premier league for the first time this season.

The key moment came at the end of a scrappy first half when Kehrer scooped Jarrod Bowen's corner into the air before it was headed clear by Chris Mepham, nodded back by Tomas Soucek and eventually over the line via the top of Zouma's head. The handball was deemed not to be deliberate and had not led directly to the goal so it was allowed to stand. Bournemouth caretaker boss Gary O'Neil was angry with the decision, telling the referee: "It's a handball, that's a fact."

The former West Ham midfielder, who has been in charge since the sacking of Scott Parker at the end of August, was booked for his protests. "He (Kehrer) has no intention of playing the ball. It's a blatant handball. His hand moves towards the ball," O'Neil told Sky Sports after the game. "I'm not surprised because it's getting ridiculous. Since I've been here there's been 10 serious VAR checks and none have gone our way." With time

English Premier League Table

English Premier League table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Arsenal	11	9	1	1	25	11	28
Manchester City	11	8	2	1	36	11	26
Tottenham	12	7	2	3	23	14	23
Newcastle	12	5	6	1	20	10	21
Chelsea	11	6	3	2	16	11	21
Manchester Utd	11	6	2	3	16	16	20
Fulham	12	5	3	4	22	22	18
Liverpool	11	4	4	3	22	13	16
Brighton	11	4	3	4	15	14	15
West Ham	12	4	2	6	11	12	14
Brentford	12	3	5	4	18	21	14
Everton	12	3	4	5	11	12	13
Crystal Palace	11	3	4	4	12	16	13
Bournemouth	12	3	4	5	10	25	13
Aston Villa	12	3	3	6	11	16	12
Southampton	12	3	3	6	11	19	12
Leicester	12	3	2	7	21	24	11
Leeds	11	2	3	6	13	18	9
Wolves	12	2	3	7	5	18	9
Nottingham	12	2	3	7	8	23	9

running out at the end of the game, Vladimir Coufal's cross hit the hand of Bournemouth's Zemura as he slid in to block.

Referee David Coote consulted with VAR and duly awarded the penalty which Benrahma fired past Mark Travers, who had come on at half-time for the injured Neto. "The performances are getting better but are still not taking enough chances," West Ham coach David Moyes told the BBC, adding that he had not seen either of the controversial moments. — AFP

Zidane: 'Forget the controversies and focus on football'

PARIS: French World Cup-winning hero Zinedine Zidane said it was "time to forget the controversies and focus on the football" at the upcoming World Cup in Qatar, despite calls to boycott the tournament over the Gulf state's rights record and treatment of migrant workers. "I hope France have a great tournament but I don't know yet if I will go to Qatar," former Real Madrid coach Zidane, 50, said

as he attended the unveiling of his own wax figure at the Musee Grevin in Paris.

When asked about the World Cup, which will begin on November 20 after more than a decade of controversy since Qatar was named as host, Zidane said the focus should now be on the sport "for all those fans who just want to watch the football". "In any case, it doesn't matter what we say, it will never be enough, or true or the right thing to say," added Zidane, who was accompanied by his parents, his wife and children. Zidane, who helped lead France to glory at the 1998 World Cup on home soil, was an ambassador for Qatar's successful bid to stage the tournament. When the tiny country was named as host by FIFA in 2010 he declared himself "very pleased" with the decision. —AFP



DOHA: Camel-mounted royal guards patrol outside the government palace in Doha ahead of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup football tournament. — AFP