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Invasion could lead to 'genocide'

Gaza crisis worsens as Arab League, AU raise alarm



RAFAH: Graves are made ready to receive the new dead in the cemetery in Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, near the Egyptian border on October 15, 2023, amid the ongoing battles between Zionists and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. — AFP

GAZA: More than one million people have been displaced in the Gaza Strip last week, the UN said Sunday, after sustained Zionist bombardment and warnings about a ground attack against Hamas commanders. Zionists declared war on the Islamist group last Sunday, a day after waves of fighters broke through the heavily fortified border.

Seven days of relentless bombing targeting those who masterminded the attack have flattened neighborhoods and left at least 2,450 people dead in the Gaza Strip, the majority ordinary Palestinians, the health ministry there said. As Zionists seek to avenge the worst attack in its history, the Arab League and African Union warned the invasion could lead to "genocide".

It also faced a grave warning about the security implications of putting boots on the ground in the densely populated enclave. "No one can guarantee the control of the situation and the non-expansion of the conflicts" if Zionists sends its soldiers into Gaza, said Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. "Those who are interested in preventing the scope of war and crisis from expanding need to prevent the current barbaric attacks... against citizens and civilians in Gaza," he added.

Iran is Zionist entity's number one enemy and as well as funding Hamas also backs Hezbollah in Lebanon to the north,

where cross-border fire has intensified in the last week. At least 10 people have now been killed in Lebanon and two in Zionist entity, prompting the government to shut the border area to civilians. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Zionist entity had "no interest in a war in the north, we don't want to escalate the situation". But he added: "If Hezbollah chooses the path of war, it will pay a heavy price... but if it restrains itself, we'll respect the situation."

The United States, which has given unequivocal backing to Zionists is concerned about violence spreading, and has sent two aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean as a deterrent. In Washington, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said they feared the prospect of Iran becoming "directly engaged", after it praised the Hamas attack but insisted it was not involved. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has in recent days toured Middle Eastern capitals in a frantic round of diplomacy to try to avert a wider crisis in the volatile region.

On Sunday, he pointed to "determination in every country I went to make sure that this doesn't spread," as he left Egypt to head back to Zionist entity. Blinken has appealed to China to use its influence in the region to ease tensions. But on Sunday Foreign Minister

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Eurofighter, Caracal probe panel to submit findings

By B Izaak

KUWAIT: Head of the National Assembly panel probing suspected corruption in the Eurofighters and Caracals deals MIP Adel Al-Damkhi said on Sunday the panel will submit its findings to the National Assembly before the end of the month. The panel was asked by the Assembly to investigate alleged irregularities and kickbacks in the two deals which together cost an estimated \$9 billion. Members of the panel held meetings with senior military officials.

There were accusations about the inflated price of the Eurofighters and some technical problems with the Caracals. Damkhi said the aim of the investigation is to halt squandering of public funds in addition to saving lives of Kuwaiti military personnel. The lawmaker alleged that "some gangs" have attempted to interfere in the investigation and alter the findings of the committee, adding that the panel has reached "positive" results that will help stop squandering of public funds. He also charged that some senior officials who were suspended at the request of the panel have used fake accounts on social media to place obstacles in the face of the committee's probe.

In the meantime, a number of MPs met on Sunday to arrange issues that should be given priority in the Assembly's new term starting at the end of this month. MPs attending the meeting said it was broadly agreed that legislation that improve the standard of living of Kuwaiti citizens in addition to political reform bills should be given priority for debate by the Assembly.

Germany issues travel warning

BERLIN: The German government on Sunday urged its nationals not to travel to Zionist entity, the Palestinian territories or Lebanon because of "an escalation of violence" following the attacks on Zionist entity. The travel warning is at the highest level given by the German government. "Due to the escalation of violence in the region in connection with the massive

terrorist attacks by Hamas on October 7, we warn against travelling to the countries and areas mentioned," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"A travel warning is usually only issued if there is a risk to life and limb," the ministry added in a thread on X, formerly known as Twitter. Germany had already issued a travel warning for the Gaza Strip and certain areas of Lebanon. In its statement, the foreign ministry said it would continue to "do its utmost" to support citizens seeking to leave Zionist entity or the Palestinian territories.

In addition to commercial flight options and

two German air force planes bringing back citizens from Zionist entity on Sunday, the German government said its military stood ready to do more. "If necessary, further air force flights can be arranged. In the event of a deterioration of the situation, the Bundeswehr is also ready for a military evacuation operation." Commercial travel out of Lebanon was still possible, the statement added. German citizens in the affected areas are urgently advised to register with the electronic crisis list ELEFAND to be kept up to date on exit travel possibilities, the ministry said.— AFP

Thousands rally in UK in solidarity with Palestinians

LONDON: Tens of thousands of people rallied Saturday in London and other UK cities at pro-Palestinian demonstrations, amid police warnings that anyone showing support for the militant group Hamas could face arrest. Protesters marching through the heart of the British capital were shadowed by a heavy police presence of more than 1,000 officers. Similar rallies took place in Manchester in northern England, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and other UK cities.

In London, demonstrators massed

near BBC News' headquarters before an afternoon rally near Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Downing Street office and residence. Parts of the entrance to the building in central London's Portland Place, where the rally started, were left splattered with red paint thrown by protesters from the Palestine Action group. The broadcaster has been criticized by supporters of both Zionists and the Palestinians.

Some held Palestinian flags and placards - bearing slogans such as "Freedom for Palestine", "End the massacre" and "Sanctions for Zionists". Chants of "Rishi Sunak, shame on you" could be heard. "I think all just people around the world, not just in Britain, must stand up and call for this madness (to end)."

Continued on Page 6



LONDON: Protesters carry placards and a large Palestinian flag along Whitehall during a 'March For Palestine' - part of a pro-Palestinian national demonstration, in London. — AFP

Putin sees gains on Ukraine frontlines

MOSCOW: Russian forces have made gains in their Ukraine offensive, President Vladimir Putin said Sunday, including in Avdiivka, a symbolic industrial hub where fighting has been fierce. "Our troops are improving their position in almost all of this area, which is quite vast," he said in an interview on Russian television, an extract of which was posted on social media on Sunday.

"This concerns the areas of Kupiansk, Zaporizhzhia and Avdiivka," Putin said, praising the army's "active defense strategy". On Saturday, Kyiv reported "very heated" fighting around Avdiivka Saturday, saying Russian forces had "not stopped assaulting" it for days in their attempt to

surround it. Ukraine last week said Russia had stepped up assaults on the frontline city, which lies just 15 kilometers from Moscow-held Donetsk.

Avdiivka has been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance since 2014, after it briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists. It has since marked the frontline and was regularly bombed even before the offensive began in February 2022. Russian forces now control territory to the east, north and south of Avdiivka in a bid to push Ukrainian forces further from Donetsk.

Some 1,600 civilians are believed to be in the city, which had a pre-war population of 31,000. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had said Kyiv was holding its ground in Avdiivka, but Moscow has previously claimed its positions had improved there. On Sunday, Kyiv's army said Russian attacks had been "repelled" in the area and remained "without success". — AFP (See Page 7)

Lebanese journalist dies

BEIRUT: Lebanon and the world of journalism mourn the loss of a stalwart figure, Giselle Khoury, who passed away at the age of 62 after a protracted battle with cancer. Khoury's professional career began in 1986 at the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation. In 2002 she joined MBC group and contribute to the launch of the "Al Arabiya" channel. The deceased moved to the BBC Arabic channel in 2013 and then to the "Sky News Arabia" channel, in 2020.



Giselle Khoury



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Working from cafes: A profitable trend for businesses, employees

Business owners, entrepreneurs explore, cut costs

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: With the growing number of entrepreneurs in Kuwait and around the world who don't have the means to rent an office, more people are looking for a place which provides a quiet work environment and keeps them from getting bored. Due to this need, many of these entrepreneurs turned to get work done at cafes, using them as an alternative office. If you take a tour around cafés in Kuwait, you will notice many people who have become regular customers. The trend is also helping cafes grow their business. Kuwait Times asked several customers at coffee shops about why they like to work from there. We also asked a café branch manager about how the trend is affecting their businesses.

Customer Ali Essa said that the main reason that pushed him to take his work sessions to cafes is the high level of focus that he enjoys there. He said there is mostly no one to interrupt him at a cafe,

unlike sitting at home or at an office with other employees. Shaimaa Nabeel, a freelance designer, said that she is still starting out her personal business, so she cannot afford to rent an office. She said finding a peaceful environment for working is not impossible after a recent decision by the Ministry of Commerce, which relieved entrepreneurs like Nabeel of the requirement to have a physical location for their office. "We have so many options for cafes that provide us with the perfect environment," she said.

While working from a café is cheaper than renting an office, it still costs money as customers are not allowed to sit at a coffee house without ordering anything. Most entrepreneurs who work from cafes daily stressed that it's much better for them to pay around KD 100 per month than to rent an office that will not cost them less than KD 250 for the same period and for which they will need a license.

According to reports, the idea of coffee houses started originally in London in

1652 which was named after its owner the Ottoman refugee Pasqua Rosee, whose main goal was serving Turkish coffee not only for the purpose of profit, but also to spread part of his country's culture. With time, the cafe business around the world grew as one of the main sectors that the global business food and beverage market can't ignore. As more customers choose to work from cafes, "it turned to be more profitable," according to a cafe branch manager of one of the most famous international coffee houses in Kuwait.

He told Kuwait Times that many factors contribute to making cafes a desirable environment for people to get work done. Project developers played a big role through understanding this new market need and taking advantage of it. He said that improvements in the café's designs, furniture, lighting and services helped greatly in attracting more customers.

The branch manager pointed out that the trend has helped them build relationships with customers as they start



to treat the café as their home or office, which makes them regular customers who are happy to come daily and pay for coffee and food. "Having a regular customer for any business is the way

possible to gain fixed profits, not to mention that it will definitely lead to expanding the business through opening new branches to meet the customers' growing requirements," he said.



KUWAIT: The Tourism Projects Company in Kuwait launches this season, Winter Wonderland Kuwait, on Sunday.



Winter Wonderland Kuwait launches its second season

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The Tourism Projects Company in Kuwait opened one of its events for this season, Winter Wonderland Kuwait, on Sunday, October 15, 2023. The opening attracted a large number of

people, in addition to amusement park staff. Winter Wonderland Kuwait welcomed the attendees in a special and very enjoyable way by bringing in performers who showcased different acts at the entrance gate, as well as playing exciting songs that added fun to the atmosphere.

The total capacity has increased to 15,000 visitors per day, in addition to an increase of 70 percent in the operating area, from 75,000 square meters to 130,000 square meters. Kuwait Times spoke to four young visitors who came to Winter Wonderland. They expressed their excitement and joy over the opening day, saying that since last year, they have been waiting for

the reopening of Winter Wonderland Kuwait so they can spend time and enjoy a beautiful atmosphere.

One of them said that this is the first time she has been able to enter Winter Wonderland, as tickets were sold out last year, but this year she booked her ticket earlier. She said that the place was more beautiful than she thought it would be. They then went on to play various available and diverse games. They visited stalls that provide food, drinks, and more. Visitors had the opportunity to relax, enjoy, and recharge their energy to play again. Visitors expressed their joy and happiness.

Dar Suad Al-Sabah withdraws from pro-Zionist expo

KUWAIT: The Dar Suad Al-Sabah House for Culture and Creativity announces the cancellation of its annual participation and withdrawal from the 75th session of the Frankfurt International Book Fair following what Jurgen Bos, the director of the fair, announced in a statement of his explicit support for the Zionist attack on Palestinians in Gaza and the permissibility of the blood of civilians and the killing of hundreds of children.

The Frankfurt Fair decided to allocate part of the events to support Zionist voices and host representatives of the Jewish community in Germany to justify the aggression at a time when the exhibition announced the withdrawal of the Palestinian writer Adnia Shibli's award and the cancellation of her honor previously scheduled for the exhibition.

Dar Suad Al-Sabah expresses its regret at this dangerous trend that tilts cultural effort towards an inhumane act that opposes the moral goal pursued by human decency. The House also denounces this biased position of an occupier and aggressor who turned Gaza into a mass grave and an open prison for more than two and a half million people who deserve a decent life. The House also affirms its support for the Palestinian right in full and the return of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of free Palestine.



Dr Suad Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Cancer Aware Nation Campaign organized an awareness program on Saturday as part of 'Your health is your capital' campaign.

Cancer: Early detection helps recovery by 30%

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of the Cancer Aware Nation Campaign, Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh, said awareness contributes to nearly one-third of recoveries from cancer diseases and that early detection helps in increasing recoveries by 30 percent. Al-Saleh spoke at the festival that was held in Mubarakiya on Saturday as part of "Your health is your capital" campaign activities to promote awareness about breast cancer.

He said he will continue to work so as to achieve the best results in the fields of awareness and early detection, in addition to exchanging expertise to achieve integration of action and reach all sections of society with the support of government and private entities in addition to NGOs. He spoke about CAN's cooperation with societies at the level of the Gulf countries, who have vast experience in this field and are members of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control. He said volunteer work is affected by the new developments in Gaza and the people's suffering due to those events.

Al-Saleh received a message from the Director of Aid and Hope for Cancer Patients Society in Gaza, Iman Shannan, in which she said what is going on in Gaza is a tragedy and cancer patients can no longer receive treatment, nor can they reach their treatment centers. Dr. Khalid said he called the Patients Fund Aid in an attempt to help, and they obliged and contacted "Mercy Around the World", which represents them in Gaza, to extend immediate aid for cancer patients, but they apologized due to the blockade on Gaza.

CAN's Board and Executive Committee member, Dr. Hussa Al-Shaheen, said the presence of partners in

order to support the important educational programs to strengthen women's health reflects the amount of knowledge about the importance of awareness. She said prevention is among the most important matters CAN seeks to shed light on due to its major effect on building a healthy body by focusing on suitable physical activity for each age.

Women's Voluntary Association for Community Development Dr. Muna Al-Qattan said the association is keen on promoting awareness about the disease and sharing information about it. She underlined the necessity of providing early detection services in order to increase recovery percentages, adding that death rates dropped by 40 percent between the 1980s of the last century and 2020, according to WHO statistics. She said WHO numbers indicate that there are 1.83 million new cases of breast cancer per year, while the disease kills 458,000 people each year. Although the disease affects women mostly, men are also subject to it at a lesser rate, she added.

She said that the reduction of deaths resulting from breast cancer in the world by 2.5 percent per year will avoid 25 percent of deaths by 2030 and 40 percent by 2040 among women who are less than 70 years old. She said the campaign also focuses on the risks of obesity, which increases the risk of getting breast cancer, and that weight gain must be avoided over time while maintaining a balanced diet rich in vegetables and fruits, in addition to physical activity.

Majid Mohammad from cancer patients friends in Sharqa spoke on behalf of participating Gulf countries said the association's efforts to fight cancer reflects our commitment to joint work in health awareness and providing the best care and support for cancer patients and their families. He said cancer is a health challenge in our Gulf societies and can only be avoided through increasing awareness programs and joint cooperation with various sectors to have sustainable plans to alleviate the disease and reach the sought after goals.

Kuwait schoolchildren show solidarity with Palestinians

KUWAIT: While marking Greening Week on Sunday, Kuwaiti schoolchildren did not forget the Palestinian people, particularly children, in the Gaza Strip, who have been under continued Zionist occupation aggressions. Children from different schools nationwide demonstrated in solidarity and support for their Palestinian peers in the face of the occupation's death machine. They hoisted flags of the State of Palestine, paintings, and portraits that reflect the strength of the Palestinian people in defense of their territory and rights, in addition to their resistance against the Zionist occupation. — KUNA



Kuwaiti children lift banners - expressing support to Palestinians.



Photo shows the Al-Quds exhibition during the Greening Week event. — KUNA photos

Local

Zain contributes to upskilling national talents in cybersecurity

Company main partner of CODED Academy's 'Kuwait Hackathon' competition



Sheikh Talal Al Khalid honors Al MUSAIBEEH in recognition of Zain's support.



Al Khalid with top guests and the three winning teams.

KUWAIT: Zain joined the closing ceremony of Kuwait Hackathon, the nation's biggest cybersecurity competition of its kind that was hosted at Kuwait University's Cultural Center. The much-anticipated Hackathon was launched by CODED Academy and the National Cybersecurity Center (NCSC) and witnessed the participation of many aspiring Kuwaiti programmers and coders.

The closing ceremony was attended by H.E. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al Khalid Al-Sabah, National Assembly members Abdulaziz Al Saqabi and Abdulwahab Al Eissa, Director of the National Cybersecurity Center (NCSC) Major General Mohammed Bouraki, Director of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Dr. Ammar Al Hussein, Zain Kuwait Corporate Affairs Department Manager Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH, Co-Founder and CEO of CODED Academy Ahmad Marafi, and top officials from the public and private sectors.

Zain's support as a Main Partner to this competition came in continuation of its efforts to raise cybersecurity awareness in the community and encourage aspiring Kuwaiti coders. The company was keen on contributing to upskilling national talents in cybersecurity, data protection, and testing the efficiency of government systems. The competition was joined by many programmers, and winners of the top three places were pre-

sent with large cash prizes. Those who showed promising talents were also offered special career opportunities in cybersecurity.

CODED launched this competition in response to the parliamentary initiative proposed by National Assembly members Abdulaziz Al Saqabi and Abdulwahab Al Eissa, which was adopted by Sheikh Talal Al Khalid. The competition was the biggest of its kind in Kuwait and aimed to increase awareness of cybersecurity and the protection of data, test the efficiency of sensitive government systems, and up-skill national talents in cybersecurity.

Zain is proud to be one of the top strategic partners of CODED Academy throughout the years, a fruitful partnership that has contributed to empowering thousands of aspiring programmers and developers into the local market through numerous programs and initiatives for all age groups.

Many of Zain's initiatives center around youth and education development, and as digital skills are gaining accelerating importance in the future of education and the economy, the company has put the development of programming and digital competencies of the youth at the forefront of its priorities. Zain is keen on contributing to preparing the next generation of local talents with the skills required by modern markets, most important of which are cybersecurity skills.

The Kuwait Hackathon competition aimed at in-



Many aspiring Kuwaiti coders joined the competition.

creasing awareness of protecting data and digital systems, as well as encouraging local programmers to develop their skills in order to competently face the highly increasing cybersecurity threats. The competition offered optional workshops for those who wished to refine their skills before entering and competing.

The competition presented large cash prizes for winners to encourage every Kuwaiti programmer and coder to participate in defending the nation's cybersecurity ecosystem. The first-place winner received KD 20,000, while the second-place winner received KD 10,000, and the third-place winner received KD 5,000.



Sheikh Talal honors one of the winners.



Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal attends the closing ceremony of 'Kuwait Hackathon' competition.

Minister underlines the importance of digital technology

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, highlighted the importance of preparing technologically proficient cadres to address the mounting challenges in the age of digital technology. "Modern information technology is usually associated with cybersecurity challenges," he noted in an address to the closing ceremony of the "Kuwait Hackathon" competition on Saturday evening.

The cybersecurity competition was held under the patronage of Sheikh Talal by the Kuwait National Cybersecurity Council (NCSC) at Kuwait University in collaboration with Code Academy. Sheikh Talal praised the competition as "a first important step to-

wards building the capacity of our national cadres to protect our security of information systems."

He reaffirmed the commitment of the Kuwaiti government to fostering technologically proficient cadres. He urged the participants in the competition to improve their skills in cybersecurity and contribute to the protection of the information security of their homeland. On regional developments, the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior reaffirmed Kuwait's support for the struggle of "the brotherly people of Palestine against the brutal Zionist occupation," taking pride in the stance of the Kuwait leadership and people.

"We are proud of the Amiri Decree of 1967 proclaiming that Kuwait is in a state of war against the Zionist gangs in occupied Palestine," he said, noting that the proclamation is still in effect, which signals Kuwait's steadfast support for rights and justice. Sheikh Talal prayed to Allah the Almighty to protect "our faithful brothers in Palestine," grant mercy to the martyrs, and free the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque from the brutality of the Zionist occupation forces. — KUNA



Sheikh Talal addresses the closing ceremony of 'Kuwait Hackathon' competition. — KUNA photos

'UNHCR Patron' title bestowed to Kuwait Zakat House Chief

KUWAIT: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on Sunday bestowed the title of UNHCR Patron to Kuwaiti Zakat House Chief, Dr. Majed Al-Azmi, for the house's valuable contributions to supporting refugees through its partnership with the commission. UNHCR representative to the country, Nesreen Rubaian, stated in a press conference that Zakat House provided support to more than 50,000 displaced people.



Dr. Majed Al-Azmi

This, Rubaian explained, was through prompt response to urgent cases and support for UNHCR



Participants attend the UNHCR press conference. — KUNA photos

projects in all of Bangladesh, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Mauritania. Dr. Al-Azmi, she added, amplified efforts and urged charitable organizations to support refugees grappling with escalating crises. UNHCR Patron is an honorary title bestowed upon individuals who play a significant role in raising awareness on the issue of coercive displacement, garner support, and take part in commission activities.

On his part, Dr. Al-Azmi hailed the humanitarian

partnership between the two entities and spoke of its importance to Zakat House, saying that it provided a platform for the exchange of expertise, the achievement of common goals, and the integration of efforts. As for UNHCR representative to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Khaled Khalifah, he congratulated Dr. Al-Azmi and stated that Islamic charity organizations are instrumental to meeting demands and humanitarian needs for forcibly displaced people. — KUNA

Cooperative societies vow to keep prices of commodities in check

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (KUCCS) affirmed on Sunday that it is keen on keeping prices of commodities in check and providing consumers with goods at reasonable prices. Speaking to KUNA on the issue, chairman of KUCCS Abdulwahab Al-Fares said that the union had recently launched a platform where consumers could be updated about the prices of different commodities, saying that a hike or decrease in prices would be available for the masses to see.

He affirmed that the cooperative society movement in Kuwait is unique, noting that the union had always

backed nationally produced products, whether in Kuwait or after being exported. He reiterated KUCCS's stance on countering monopolies and making sure that prices were in check, affirming that no one is above the law in this regard. On his part, chairman of the board for the Al-Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society, Mohammad Al-Kanderi, said that there was a solemn effort to keep prices reasonable for consumers, adding that the board had taken necessary measures to ensure the quality of goods and their availability.

He affirmed that KUCCS had proven itself to be a major player in providing consumer goods in the region. Regarding the hike in price for certain commodities, Al-Kanderi revealed that sometimes goods increase in price due to global disturbances such as the one created by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, Kuwait had made sure that consumers would get their products during crises.

Some countries in the region were eager to benefit from the Kuwaiti Cooperative Society experience, said Kanderi, who pointed out that Kuwait was to show its expertise within this domain. Consumer cooperative societies were first introduced in Kuwait in 1962 as entities dedicated to providing consumer goods to the masses. Cooperative Societies represented 70 percent of the retail sector business in Kuwait. — KUNA



Abdulwahab Al-Fares



Mohammad Al-Kanderi

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Arab experts discuss consumer protection

KUWAIT: The 19th meeting of the group of experts in the field of competition protection and monopoly control in the Arab countries discussed the latest developments in the legislative environment of consumer protection laws. The meeting was held on Sunday with the participation of Kuwait. The director of the Economic Integration Department of the League of Arab States, Dr Bahgat Abu Al-Nasr, said in an opening speech of the meeting chaired by Egypt that the expert group will also discuss the protection of competition and the prevention of monopolies by issuing national laws or updating existing laws and maximizing benefit by presenting visions and ideas about them.

Abu Al-Nasr added that the meeting participants will be briefed on the latest developments and achievements of the Arab Competition Network, which was launched in March last year at the initiative of Competition Protection and Prevention of Monopolistic Practices in Egypt. He said that the two days meeting will talk about the comments of the Arab states on the executive mechanism of the Arab competition network, as it is expected to be completed at the meeting. The delegation of the Kuwait was headed by the director of the Gulf and Arab World Department at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce, Abdullah Al-Hajri. — KUNA

Pharmacist jailed

KUWAIT: An Egyptian pharmacist was jailed on Sunday after the cassation court sentenced him to five years in prison and imposed a KD 115,000 fine over charges relating to selling psychoactive drugs in Hawally without a prescription. The pharmacist was caught red-handed as he was selling the drugs after investigators managed to make a deal with him. In another note, the appeals court accepted the jailing of a departmental head at the Water and Electricity Ministry, sentencing him to 7 years in jail with a fine.

Kuwait Fund and Central American Bank ink MoU

Minister of finance meets several delegates

MARRAKESH: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to create a joint technical cooperation framework in developing countries' development finance field. The memo was signed by KFAED's Director-General Waleed Al-Bahar and CABEI's Executive Vice President Jaime Palacios, KFAED said.

It is mainly aimed at bilateral coordination for response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters and as well as the exchange of information and technical expertise, it added in a press release. The signing of the MoU came on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) held in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh, with world finance ministers, central bank's governors and finance institutions attending, it said. Kuwait is partaking in the meetings with a delegation led by Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah met separately with a number of ministers on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Marrakesh. During his meeting with Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Raniya Al-Mashat, Al-Jarallah, who leads Kuwait delegation to the meetings, praised the distinguished deep-rooted relationship between the two sisterly countries. The meeting with Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy Sheikh Salman Al Khalifa focused on the historical sisterly ties between Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain. Al-Jarallah reaffirmed, during his meeting with Yemeni Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Wa'ed Ba-Theib and Minister of Electricity and Energy Mane' bin Yameen, Kuwait's support to efforts of the Yemeni government to restore security and stability in the country.

The two Yemeni minister appreciated the role of Kuwait to end the Yemeni crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. Al-Jarallah also received Moroccan Minister of Economy and Finance Nadia Fethah

NBK 'Platinum Sponsor' of the Watheefti career fair

KUWAIT: Reflecting its unwavering dedication to support young national talent, and to attract high-caliber Kuwaiti professionals to join the banking sector, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is sponsoring the Watheefti Career Fair, the largest across the private sector in Kuwait. The Fair running for 3 days from 19 to 21 October 2023 will serve as a direct meeting point for private sector companies and fresh graduates exploring suitable job opportunities.

NBK's participation and sponsorship of this fair comes in line with its role as a leading supporter of young national talent, by qualifying them to join the labor market as well as educating them to take the right decision regarding their career in the private sector.

Speaking on this, Gadeer Al-Kooheji, Head of Talent Acquisition, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK is always keen to sponsor career fairs as they represent key platforms for select-



Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah meets with Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy Sheikh Salman Al Khalifa. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Minister of Finance receives Moroccan Minister of Economy and Finance Nadia Fethah Alaoui.



Kuwait Fund, Central American Bank officials pose for a photo after signing the cooperative MoU.

Alaoui where he affirmed Kuwait support to Morocco in its efforts to recover from the devastating earthquake of September 10. He expressed wishes for Morocco to

succeed in hosting the ongoing IMF-WB annual meetings which gathered representatives of 190 member countries of both institutions. — KUNA

ing and attracting national talent, while, at the same time, offering fresh graduates a great opportunity to explore the job and training opportunities available at the bank.

"It is the strategy of Group Human Resources to build a dynamic and agile workforce by soliciting high-caliber talent and developing them through the best in class training and educational programs to emerge as future leaders," she added. "NBK not only provides job opportunities at a leading local and regional financial institution, but also a promising career path, thanks to its professional training resources and programs that are on par with international standards in a way that helps enhance the skills and competencies of the youth."

This reflects our vision to invest in national talent which goes in line with its job nationalization goals," she noted. "NBK is an employer of choice that promotes diversity and equal opportunities. It also stands out as the institution with the highest job nationalization and employee retention rates across the banking



Gadeer Al-Kooheji

sector, which aligns with the goals of the New Kuwait Vision 2035," she emphasized.

NBK enjoys unique work environment and culture, which are comparable to international peers by raising the slogan "More Than a Workplace", which mainly focuses on supporting employees and caring to improve their physical and mental health. In this context, the bank provides a fitness gym equipped with the latest exercise equipment, which is open for employees, before, after and even during working hours for their convenience, aligning with the bank's initiatives to raise health awareness and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Furthermore, employees can enjoy their breakfast and lunch during working hours or order from the restaurants, and stores available at Level 18. NBK HQ also hosts a well-equipped clinic managed by Wra Hospital, which provides medical checkups, tests, and on-site specialized visits by medical doctors, as well as frequent awareness sessions to raise employees' awareness on various topics related to physical and mental health.

NBK's endeavors to attract national talent go in tandem with its development and training plans to invest in national professionals and prepare a promising banking generation. The bank also offers a wide range of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading providers of training programs for the youth across the banking sector.

Pidgin: A bridge between Asians, Arabs in Kuwait

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Walking along the streets of Kuwait, visiting a supermarket, a gas station, or even riding a bus, you must have come across an odd language that is spoken among two groups of people who seem to be from totally different ethnic backgrounds, yet both can decipher its codes very smoothly. It's not originally Indian, nor is it Urdu nor Arabic. But it feels more like a mixture between the Asian and Arabic languages.

This odd language is known as "Pidgin", which is defined as a reduced language that is used to facilitate contact with groups of people who don't speak the same language; it is usually a hybrid between two or more languages. It isn't acknowledged as a written language and it is not even taught at schools, but its speakers acquire it as a second language based on social norms and frequent practice.

Back in the 1840s, the first Pidgin to ever be established was the Chinese Pidgin English, which was used as a trade language among the British and Chinese people. Ever since, it's continued spreading across many geographical areas around the world, until it landed in the Gulf area in the 1970s. "Kuwait's residents and Asian workers, both went the same distance to reach a middle ground of communication by speaking the Gulf Pidgin Arabic to facilitate business," Dr Ashraf Atta Salem, a linguistics expert, said during an interview with Kuwait Times.

Dr Salem mentioned that he was privileged to become the first Arab researcher in the middle east to shed light on this topic by publishing his research paper "Linguistic Features of Pidgin Arabic in Kuwait" in April 2013, which has been later cited in 21 other research papers.

The paper aimed to introduce the idea of developing the Gulf Pidgin language into a recognized spoken and written language that can be differentiated by certain features and rules. "After 10 years of studying the Gulf Pidgin, I believe it's ready now to become a real language," he said. "Kuwait has a golden opportunity to be the first to establish framework and rules for the Gulf Pidgin, and this language can later be one of the most distinctive signatures that distinguish the gulf countries from other countries around the world."

In the interview, Dr Salem mentioned that the Gulf Pidgin has some remarkable characteristics that can easily be detected at first encounter: Scarcity of vocabulary, use of simplified grammar and less structured words.



Dr Ashraf Atta Salem

Distinct vocabulary, grammar

According to research, pidgin includes no more than 200 words and borrows them from different languages to enrich its vocabulary. That's why a word you may hear often in Gulf Pidgin is "Patcha" which is an Indian word that means "child". Another is "Maku", which is an Iraqi word that means "nothing".

Pidgin applies its simplified grammar when describing nouns. For instance, it uses only single demonstrative pronouns, even when it's referring to multiple objects or people. For example, "Haza nafarat zen", which means these are good people, the language uses singular pronoun "Haza" (this) addressing the plural word "nafarat" (people).

The language also tends to ignore gender identification to avoid complexity. In another phrase like "Haza nafar zen" (This man is good) "Haza", which is an Arabic male pronoun, is used again, but it may be referring to either a man or a woman indistinctively. Pidgin is not bounded by any grammatical rules, which forms very weak sentences that deliver the intended message of the speaker based on the context.

Creating a dictionary

One can't deny the significant impact that the Gulf pidgin had on Kuwait. For almost 40 years, the language has been used as the official way of communication between Arabs and Asians. Dr Salem said the importance of the language has inspired him to express his deep interest and readiness to team up with Kuwait's linguistic researchers to develop Pidgin to reach a more advanced level. He also suggested collecting the Gulf Pidgin vocabulary and definitions of the words in a dictionary, so that the language can be easily and quickly transferred.

The linguistic researcher believes that Kuwait is the best to take this initiative, as among other gulf countries, it is the only area with the highest variety of Asians from different countries such as Iran, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Nepal and Bangladesh. These communities make up 65 percent of Kuwait's migrant workforce, which is a percentage high enough to facilitate the sampling process, he said.

He also stated that learning the Gulf Pidgin can only count as a transitory phase that easily enables Asians to later learn the proper rules of the Arabic language on the long run. Providing academic centers that are specialized in teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers in the regions where they are most present in Kuwait can help achieve that goal.



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Sudanese seek refuge outside chaotic capital

Anguished parents seek answers in Canada 'suicide kit' probe

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KHAN YUNIS: A truck transports a Palestinian family and their belongings to Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on Oct 15, 2023.



RAFAH: A Palestinian boy carries his pet bird in a cage as families leave their homes following a Zionist attack on the Rafah refugee camp, in the southern of Gaza Strip on Oct 15, 2023. — AFP photos



KHAN YUNIS: People cook on firewood, amid shortages of fuel and gas, to provide food for displaced Palestinians amid Zionist strikes in Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza.

Families flee northern Gaza before Zionist invasion

Uprooted Palestinians left without food, shelter

KHAN YUNIS: Thousands of Palestinians have gathered in the south of the Gaza Strip, laying out beds on the streets after UN-run schools filled up following the Zionist entity's warning to evacuate the north of the impoverished enclave. The Zionist authorities on Friday called on the 1.1 million inhabitants of northern Gaza to evacuate, ahead of an expected ground offensive following last week's Hamas attack on Zionist territory.

In Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, thousands of uprooted people gathered in the yard and in hallways, searching for food, water and a place to sleep, according to AFP journalists. "The situation is catastrophic," said Jumaa Nasser, who travelled from Beit Lahia in northern Gaza with his wife, mother and seven children. "We've had no food or sleep. We don't know what to do. I've given my fate up to God. Death and life are in the hands of God."

Store shelves were empty of all basic goods, after the Zionists cut off food, water and electricity

supplies to the coastal enclave of 2.4 million people. Outside the hospital, families sat on the ground, some with children crying. Medical staff were overcome with exhaustion as they worked around the clock amid non-stop Zionist strikes on the area.

On October 7, Hamas fighters infiltrated the Zionist occupation's southern border by land, air and sea, killing hundreds of people and taking tens of hostages. The Zionists have responded with unrelenting strikes on Gaza, in which over 2,200 have been killed so far in the long-blockaded strip. Thousands took refuge in a school sponsored by UNRWA, the UN agency in charge of Palestinian refugees.

Ahmed Abu Shaar, a father of 13, said "our situation is tragic. There's not enough food or water. We don't know if we will die here or if they will force us to flee to Egypt, or if we will return to our houses that may have been destroyed." AFP journalists in Rafah said they saw other displaced people looking for places to stay. About 200

people crowded into a filling station for cooking gas at the entrance to Rafah.

One of them, Ahmed Abu Ruk, said "I've been waiting in line for an hour to get some gas so we can cook and give food to the children." In front of a water filling station, tens of people lined up to fill bright yellow jerrycans. The Zionist army on Saturday said it would give people six hours a day to evacuate Gaza, though it was unclear how many days this would last. The UN has warned of potentially "devastating" humanitarian consequences as a result of the Zionist evacuation order.

Second 'Nakba'

Hamas, which controls Gaza, has rejected the evacuation order, saying they are "steadfast on our land and in our homes and our cities ... no displacement, no deportation". Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas expressed on Friday, during a meeting with US State Secretary Antony Blinken, his "total

rejection" of the displacement of Gaza's inhabitants.

He warned of a "second Nakba", referring to the displacement and expulsion of more than 760,000 Palestinians to establish the Zionist state in 1948. On Saturday, hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports gathered at the Rafah border crossing, in the hope that they would be allowed passage into Egypt. The crossing was closed in recent days after the Zionist airstrikes hit the Palestinian side. Rafah's border crossing is the only one out of Gaza not under the Zionist control, but passage is often hampered by closures and the need for multiple authorizations.

While waiting for the signal that the border was open, Rami Omar al-Sharafi, who holds an American passport, said "they told us at 2:00 am to go to the border crossing between midday and 5:00 pm. We came despite the bombing. "The road is very dangerous and I have children with me. So far, the embassy hasn't communicated with me. We are just waiting to see what will happen". — AFP

Tensions mount in US campuses over attacks in Palestine

WASHINGTON: The deadly Zionist retaliation following last week's Hamas attack on the occupation has sparked angry disputes at some of most prestigious universities in the United States. At Harvard, Stanford and New York University (NYU), bitter clashes involving students, professors and administrators have blown up into viral debates on social media, with echoes in the political and media worlds.

In at least a few cases, people's stances on the conflict have cost them job offers — or led to threats of violence. At Harvard, a statement signed by several student groups sparked an explosive response. The text said that the students "hold the (Zionist) regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence"; that the recent events "did not occur in a vacuum"; and that "(Zionist) violence has structured every aspect of Palestinian existence for 75 years."

'Moral cowardice'

That drew a caustic reaction from Lawrence Summers, who is not only a former US Treasury Secretary but the former president of Harvard. "I am sickened," and not just by the students' statement but by "the silence from Harvard's leadership," he said on X, the former Twitter. This left Harvard looking "at best neutral towards acts of terror against the Jewish (Zionist entity)," Summers said.

Jake Auchincloss, a Democratic member of Congress from Massachusetts, said on social media that he was "ashamed" of his alma mater, calling the Harvard students' statement "morally depraved" and accusing university leaders of displaying "moral cowardice." Without referring to the letter or Harvard specifically, former US president and current Republican frontrunner for the 2024 nomination Donald Trump accused "American Universities" of "allowing or enabling the open hatred against (the Zionist entity) and America" in a post on Truth Social.

University officials did publish a statement of their own, but an avalanche of criticism prompted Harvard president Claudine Gay to issue a second



CAMBRIDGE: Supporters of Palestine gather at Harvard University to show their support for Palestinians in Gaza at a rally in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Oct 14, 2023. — AFP

statement. "Let there be no doubt that I condemn the terrorist atrocities perpetrated by Hamas," she said. "Such inhumanity is abhorrent." Amid the furious reaction, a list of the groups that had signed the students' statement was deleted — "for student safety," a later posting said.

Some of the groups' members had fallen victim to "doxxing," having their personal information posted on the internet without consent. And a vehicle driving near campus carried a large screen displaying names and photos under the title: "Harvard's leading anti-Semites." On X, businessman Bill Ackman wrote that some CEOs were demanding that the names of all signers be made public — to ensure that none of the executives' companies ever hire them.

Uneasy times

At NYU, after the president of the Student Bar Association declared that "(the Zionist entity) bears full responsibility for this tremendous loss of life," the law firm of Winston & Strawn withdrew a job offer made to them earlier. In the meantime, on the West Coast, administrators at prestigious Stanford University came under fire for refusing to condemn protesters' pro-Palestine banners. School leaders said that students were free to express their "constitutionally protected" opinions, and that the banners did not cross the legal line into threatening speech.

Back in the East, students at Georgetown University in Washington wrote the school's president to castigate him over his "long silence on Palestin-

ian suffering." And a petition calling for the firing of a Yale professor who had referred to the Zionist occupation as a "murderous, genocidal settler state" quickly drew close to 45,000 signatures. Against this tense backdrop, students on both sides of the issue say they feel uneasy.

"We have so many Jewish students feeling threatened," something that "they've never experienced before," Jillian Lederman, president of Brown (University) Students for (the Zionist entity), told CNN. And a Palestinian student at Harvard, who declined to give his name, told ABC News that "it's a really, really scary time to be Palestinian ... in an environment that is so hostile." Harvard announced this week that university police were protectively stepping up their presence on campus. — AFP

International

Anguished parents seek answers in Canada 'suicide kit' probe

At least 100 dead worldwide after using substance sold by Canadian man

WINDSOR: The moment Kim Prosser learned that her 19-year-old son Ashtyn had died by suicide, she says she dropped to the floor, where she lay "shaking and so cold." Ashtyn was one of at least 100 people who police say died after a Canadian man sold him a substance over the internet that was used to assist people with suicides.



Kenneth Law

The seller — Kenneth Law — has been accused of sending as many as 1,200 packages across dozens of countries since 2020. Arrested in May, he is facing multiple charges of "counselling or aiding suicide" as a sprawling international investigation unfolds. Authorities suspect the 58-year-old Law, formerly a cook at a Toronto hotel, of marketing the substance — which can also be used as a food additive — to vulnerable people online.

Ashtyn was one of them, Prosser told AFP during an interview at a park facing the Detroit River in Windsor, on the U.S.-Canada border, about an hour away from her home. "He was super happy, fun-loving, outgoing, but only with, you know, people that he would find passion with," she said. He had expressed suicidal thoughts to her in the past, she said.

Then, in March, she got that final call to tell her "this time he did it. He succeeded, and Ashtyn's gone." Ashtyn was one of 14 victims aged between 16 and 36 in Canada who used kits they purchased from Law to end their lives, according to police. With more than 160 packages sent in the country, they fear that number will rise.

In Britain, at least 272 people purchased products from Law's websites — 88 of whom died, police there



MAIDENHEAD: David Parfett poses with a picture of his late son Tom at his home in Maidenhead, United Kingdom, on Sept 22, 2023.

have said. Alerted by Interpol, several other countries have launched investigations, including New Zealand and Italy, where nine buyers have been identified and one victim has died.

Australian authorities are also understood to have launched a search. France, for its part, has documented around 30 buyers — but has not opened an investigation as the use of the product does not constitute an offense, a police source with knowledge of the case told AFP. The same is true of Ireland, which has reported a "small number" of deaths but has not launched a criminal investigation.

Law, who has been in custody since his arrest, intends to plead not guilty, said his lawyer Matthew Gourlay. "This is certainly the first of its kind prosecution," he told AFP, adding that his client was being prosecuted for selling a product that "until recently was available

on amazon.com. So we find that to be troubling." "I'm selling a legal product, okay," Law told the Globe and Mail newspaper shortly before his arrest. "And what the person does with it? I have no control."

'A knock on the door'

David Parfett, whose 22-year-old son Tom died of suicide in Britain in 2021, fears that defense may well hold. Parfett, who lives in Maidenhead, outside of London, describes the moment he learned of Tom's death as "a knock on the door early morning. And then, of course, your world's very different after that."

"He loved football. The one overriding memory of Tom as a kid was he always had a ball at his feet," he told AFP from his Victorian home, where the walls are covered in photos of Tom. "I remember him every day. Losing him is something that kind of almost never leaves you." His son,



WINDSOR: Kim Prosser poses for a portrait while holding a photo of her son Ashtyn Prosser, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, on Sept 14, 2023. — AFP photos

he said, "was struggling, he was depressed."

In the wake of Tom's death, Parfett says he came across a forum visited by his son online where other users "were encouraging him to take his own life," and using coded messages that sent him to Law's website. The father of three fears it is "unlikely" that Law will be prosecuted for his son's death. "Kenneth Law was just a businessman ... And he seemed to find a way in which he could convince himself that supplying suicide kits was a perfectly legitimate business," Parfett said.

Prosser, who is now working to launch an association in her son's memory to fill gaps in health care for people in distress, says she hopes that Law "can take accountability for the decisions that he made." "I do know that Ashtyn wasn't well, and I know that he had struggles," she said. "The hardest thing for us to do is to ask for help." — AFP

Azerbaijan leader raises national flag in Karabakh

BAKU: Azerbaijan's president Ilham Aliyev raised his country's flag in the main city of Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday, in his first visit there since Baku retook control of the mountainous region in an offensive that led to the exodus of most ethnic Armenians. It was Aliyev's first visit to Karabakh during his two-decade rule. "President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has raised the National Flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the city of Khan-kendi and delivered a speech," Aliyev's office said in a statement. Armenia calls the city Stepanakert.

Baku's September lightning offensive ended three decades of Armenian separatist rule in Nagorno-Karabakh. The vast majority of the estimated 120,000 ethnic Armenians that had been living in the territory fled across the border to Armenia. Aliyev's office said he visited several other places and towns in Karabakh, showing pictures of the long-time leader in military attire on his knees kissing the Azerbaijani flag before it was raised. — AFP

'Paradigm shift' needed on plastics health risk: Experts

BANGKOK: A "paradigm shift" is needed on the risks posed to human health by plastics, researchers said Wednesday, warning of huge gaps in scientific understanding of the issue. So little research is currently available that regulators should shift from an assumption that plastics are safe, to insisting on rigorous testing before products are approved for use, the researchers added.

The call came as a new database mapping existing scientific studies was unveiled by the Minderoo Foundation, an Australian nonprofit. The Plastic Health Map attempts to collate all research on the issue since the 1960s, when plastic production and pollution began ramping up. "While as authors we fully expected gaps in research, the extent of those gaps shocked us," said Sarah Dunlop, Minderoo Foundation's head of plastics and human health.

"We call for a paradigm shift in chemical regulation whereby new plastic chemicals are rigorously tested for safety before being introduced in

consumer products," Dunlop and co-researchers said in a study published alongside the new database. There should also be "ongoing post-introduction biomonitoring of their levels in humans and health effects throughout individuals' life span", they added in the research published in the journal *Environment International*.

The database created by the project collects peer-reviewed primary human studies published between 1960 and 2022 that focused on the health effects of exposure to plastic chemicals and particles. It looked for work that measured or detected plastics in human bio-samples, rather than in animal or laboratory models.

It found a range of black holes in knowledge, including little research on populations in poorer countries, where weak waste management and fewer non-plastic alternatives increase exposure. And not a single study was found on the effect of micro and nano plastics on human health — a field that has gained increasing urgency as the tiny particles have been found throughout the human body. There was also little work on "substitution" chemicals, which have replaced formulas already known to cause harm, the role of paternal plastics exposure on infants, or the health impacts on older adults.

Of 1,500 chemicals considered, just 30 percent

had been studied at all for their effect on human health, the researchers said. The mapping exercise had some limitations, the researchers acknowledged, including searching just two major portals and excluding research on plastics in medical settings, like IV lines. It also focused on a select number of chemicals, based largely on which plastics people are most likely to encounter in daily life.

The database was launched ahead of fresh negotiations on a global plastics pollution deal, in Nairobi next month. A draft deal published last month will guide discussions, but it contains a range of pathways, from more to less ambitious, and campaigners fear a weak final treaty full of loopholes could emerge.

There have been calls for reductions in the production of so-called virgin plastic, as well as a possible plastic tax. That is strongly opposed by industry, as well as some major plastic-producing nations, which have focused on more reuse and recycling, even though less than 10 percent of the world's plastic is recycled.

On current trends, annual production of fossil-fuel-based plastics will nearly triple by 2060 to 1.2 billion tons, while waste will exceed one billion tons. Negotiations will continue in Canada in April next year, with the goal of reaching a final deal in South Korea in late 2024. — AFP

Invasion could lead to...

Continued from Page 1

Wang Yi said Zionists' response had "gone beyond the scope of self-defense". He called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his emergency government to "cease its collective punishment of the people of Gaza".

Zionists have massed thousands of troops and heavy weaponry in the desert south of the country, waiting for the green light to go in to northern Gaza. The army has told 1.1 million Palestinians in the north of the Gaza Strip — nearly half of its 2.4-million population — to head south to safety. On the other side of the border, Zionists were moving to safer areas. Military spokesmen Lieutenant Richard Hecht and Daniel Hagari said any ground offensive would be triggered by a "political decision". Netanyahu visited frontline troops on Saturday, telling them "more is coming" but without specifying when any ground operation would start.

Hecht singled out Yahya Sinwar, the chief of Hamas in Gaza blamed for the October 7 attacks, calling him "a dead man walking". Aid agencies, including the UN and ICRC, as well as foreign governments have repeatedly criticized request for Gazans to leave their homes — and accused it of inflicting collective punishment on ordinary people. The UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees said on Sunday that some one million people had already been displaced in the first week of the conflict.

"The number is likely to be higher as people continue to leave their homes," UNRWA director of communications Juliette Touma said. Palestinians carrying whatever belongings they can, in bags and suitcases, or packed onto three-wheeled motorbikes, battered cars, vans and even

donkey carts have become a common sight in recent days. But they have had to find shelter wherever they can in the increasingly crowded south of the Gaza Strip, including in the streets and UN-run schools.

Zionists had cut off water, fuel and food supplies to Gaza for the duration of the conflict. Local hospitals are becoming overwhelmed with increasing numbers of dead and injured. Zionist energy minister Katz on Sunday said water supplies to southern Gaza had been switched back on. "This will push the civilian population to the southern Strip," he said. But power outages threatens to cripple life-support systems, from sea water desalination plants to food refrigeration and hospital incubators.

In Rome, Pope Francis called for humanitarian corridors in Gaza and urged that "children, the sick, the elderly, women and all civilians should not fall victim to the conflict". "There have already been so many deaths, please let's not shed any more innocent blood," he said, castigating "the diabolical force of hatred, terrorism and war". Gazans are effectively trapped, with crossings closed and Egypt also having shut the Rafah border in the south. Convoys of humanitarian aid are stacked up on the Egyptian side, witnesses told AFP. The mood in Zionist entity has swung between collective grief, fury and a strong desire to punish Hamas, which Netanyahu has likened to the Islamic State group. There are also deep fears about the safety of some 120 hostages being held in the Gaza Strip. "We must bring them back home alive," said a tearful Yrat Zailer, the aunt of children aged nine months and four years who were abducted with their mother.

Zionists pushed on with its evacuation of southern towns close to Gaza that were targeted in the Hamas attacks. Packed buses were taking families to hotels in Jerusalem and the Red Sea resort city Eilat. "It's hard, I'm crying," said Helen Altoker, 50, an evacuee from the town of Sderot. "It's terrifying every time there's a warning, we have to leave. It's better for the children." — AFP



LONDON: Police officers make an arrest in Trafalgar Square after a 'March For Palestine', part of a pro-Palestinian national demonstration, in London. — AFP

Thousands rally in UK in solidarity...

Continued from Page 1

Ismail Patel, chairman of the Friends of Al-Aqsa campaign, told AFP at the demonstration in the capital. "Otherwise, in the next few days, (we) might see a catastrophe unfolding."

'Without issue'

The rallies come as Zionist entity intensifies its war to destroy Hamas, relentlessly pounding the Gaza Strip and deploying tens of thousands of soldiers nearby ahead of an expected ground offensive. That follows last Saturday's attack by Hamas, which saw hundreds of its fighters cross the border to take hostages and kill more than 1,300 people on the streets, in their homes and at a rave party.

London's Metropolitan Police Service said it deployed more than 1,000 officers Saturday, as the events thousands of miles away reverberate in Britain and elsewhere. In its latest update, the force said the rally passed "without issue", with seven arrests made. It added there were eight further arrests during "small pockets of disorder and unacceptable criminality" in nearby Trafalgar Square afterwards. They related to suspected assaults on emergency workers, allegedly setting off fireworks in public places and suspected public order offences.

Nine officers were treated for minor injuries. Police and the government had earlier noted a spike in UK anti-Semitic crime and incidents since the Hamas assault. Officers in Sussex, southeast England, arrested a 22-year-old woman Friday suspected of having made a speech backing Hamas. A banned terrorist organization in Britain, its members — or those found guilty of inviting support for it — can be jailed for up to 14 years under UK law.

The Met said this week that general expressions of support for Palestinians, including flying the Palestinian flag, were not criminal offences but reiterated that supporting Hamas was a crime. Ferouza Namaz, 34, a student from Uzbekistan, joined the London protest, arguing that civilians in Gaza were "absolutely innocent". "Just being Palestinian does not give the rights to kill them. These appalling atrocities have been taking place for so many years," he added. Zionist entity insists it does not deliberately target civilians in the Gaza Strip or other Palestinian territories.

Jeremy Corbyn, ex-leader of the main opposition Labor party — who was accused of allowing anti-Semitism to flourish during his four-year party tenure — addressed the London rally. "If you believe in international law, if you believe in human rights, then you must condemn what is happening now in Gaza by the army," the now-independent lawmaker said. But reiterating his unwavering support for Zionist entity, Sunak said Saturday that Britain stands with the country "not just today, not just tomorrow, but always". "No words can begin to describe the horror and barbarism unleashed a week ago," he added. — AFP



GAZA: A fireball erupts during Zionist bombardment in the northern Gaza Strip — AFP

International

Sudanese seek refuge outside chaotic capital

Port Sudan, Wad Madani emerge as potential replacements to war-ravaged Khartoum

PORT SUDAN: Six months after tensions between rival Sudanese generals ignited a devastating war, thousands lie dead, millions are displaced, and the once-thriving capital, Khartoum, is a shadow of its past glory. When the first bombs fell on April 15, the capital's residents looked on in terror as entire neighborhoods were razed and essential services were paralyzed, exacerbating their misery.



WAD MADANI: Volunteers from a charitable organization distribute food to internally displaced people at a camp in Wad Madani, the capital of Al-Jazirah state, on Aug 31, 2023. — AFP photos

Those who could escape the bloodshed and destruction rushed to the Red Sea coast about 1,000 kilometers (621 miles) to the east. Port Sudan, now home to Sudan's only functioning airport, became a sanctuary for fleeing civilians and a transit hub for foreigners leaving the northeast African country.

Its rows of white colonial buildings were quickly filled with those who left Khartoum, including United Nations staff and government officials setting up makeshift offices. In late August, they were joined by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, whose fighters are

pitted against those of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the conflict.

Burhan, the de facto leader of Sudan since leading a 2021 coup, had spent over four months stuck inside the army headquarters in Khartoum, besieged by Daglo's men. But even though he has left Khartoum, there has been no let-up in fighting for the capital, as well as the western region of Darfur, where allegations of ethnically motivated attacks by the RSF have led to an international war crimes investigation. The United Nations' Human Rights Council voted last Wednesday to set up an independent fact-finding mission to probe the accusations.

'Life doesn't stop'

Despite the exodus, millions of people have had little choice but to stay in Khartoum, where their bullet-scarred homes are shaken by daily blasts. A constant plume of smoke now defines the capital's skyline, while businesses and warehouses lie abandoned, ransacked and charred.

Before the war, the capital's three districts — Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North — were the center of power, infrastructure and industry in the country of 48 million people. "The war has shown just how much Khartoum had monopolized everything, (and) that's why the banks, the companies and all government stopped working," said urban planner Tarek Ahmed.

But economic analyst Omaima Khaled said that did not mean life had come to a halt. With no end to the war in sight, "there had to be somewhere else where people's affairs could be managed," she said, and the obvious choice was Port Sudan — a safe and well-connected city. "It's first of all geographically far from the war," said Khaled, with fighting mainly taking place in the capital and the western region of Darfur. It also has a long history of being "Sudan's second largest commercial center," she said, which could "very well make it an economic capital". But Port Sudan has one crucial flaw: "It's 3,000 kilometers from the country's western border and 2,500 kilometers from its south, in a country that severely lacks an efficient transport network," said the economist.

Sudan's dilapidated road network is as highly cen-



PORT SUDAN: Sudanese wait outside a Passports and Immigration Services office on Sept 3, 2023.

tralized as the economy. Avoiding the war-torn capital requires massive circuitous routes around a country three times the size of France. But the problems do not stop there, according to Port Sudan resident Hend Saleh. "There's a shortage of drinking water and electricity," she told AFP, with the coastal town's already fragile infrastructure now catering to tens of thousands more. Port Sudan — founded in 1905 by British rulers to replace the historic port of Suakin, 60 kilometers away — "is newer than other Sudanese cities and has a better urban plan and a better service network," according to engineer Fathi Yassin. But it is burdened by the same shortfalls as the rest of Sudan, where decades of dilapidated infrastructure are adding to the immense impact of war.

Sudan's rainy season, which begins in June, has wreaked havoc on vast swathes of the country, with hundreds dying of cholera and dengue fever while 70 percent of hospitals remain out of service, the United Nations has said.

War spreading south

Unlike other Sudanese cities that draw water from the Nile, Port Sudan relies almost entirely on increas-

ingly unpredictable rainfall. Its residents have long demanded a connection to the river, which would require 500 kilometers of pipes — an expense Sudan, already one of the poorest countries in the world before the war, has never been able to afford.

Closer to the Nile, the city of Wad Madani — 200 kilometers south of Khartoum — has also emerged as a potential capital. Wad Madani, the capital Al-Jazira state in the fertile heartland south of Khartoum, was the first destination for fleeing Khartoum families in the early weeks of the war.

The state now hosts more than 366,000 displaced people, in a thin string of villages between Khartoum and Wad Madani, as well as the state capital itself. Interim governor Ismail Awadallah said the city also looked set to absorb more of the economy, with "17 large companies discussing their relocation and even expansion in Wad Madani". But Wad Madani's economic potential might remain unfulfilled, as the fighting in Khartoum encroaches south. Authorities last Wednesday announced paramilitaries had taken control of large areas of the Gezira agricultural scheme, only around 35 kilometers northwest of Wad Madani. — AFP

Putin sees gains on Ukraine frontlines, including Avdiivka

MOSCOW: Russian forces have made gains in their Ukraine offensive, President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday, including in Avdiivka, a symbolic industrial hub where fighting has been fierce. Ukrainian forces say they continue to repel Moscow's troops in the area. "Our troops are improving their position in almost all of this area, which is quite vast," Putin said in an interview on Russian television, an extract of which was posted on social media on Sunday.

"This concerns the areas of Kupiansk, Zaporizhzhia and Avdiivka," Putin said, praising the army's "active defence strategy". On Saturday, Ukraine reported "very heated" fighting around Avdiivka, saying Russian forces had "not stopped assaulting" it for days in their attempt to surround it. On Sunday the Ukraine police said in a statement that "Russians shelled Avdiivka with artillery, shells hit a private house and killed a man".

Kyiv said last week that Russia had stepped up assaults on the frontline city, which lies just 15 kilometers (nine miles) from Moscow-held Donetsk. Avdiivka, which is built around a vast coking plant, has been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance since 2014, when it briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists. It has since marked the front line. Avdiivka was regularly bombed even before Russia's full-scale military offensive began in February 2022 and the area is heavily fortified.

It would be more of a symbolic victory than a strategic one if Russia does capture Avdiivka, given that the town has represented Ukrainian resistance to Russian assaults for so long. Russian forces now control territory to the east, north and south of the town. They are gradually tightening the noose around it in a bid to push Ukrainian forces further away from the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk, which is bombed almost daily by Kyiv's forces.

On Sunday, Kyiv's army said Russian attacks had been "repelled" in the area. "The enemy keeps trying to break through our defenses but without success", it said. On Saturday, the city's Ukrainian mayor, Vitaly Barabach, described the situation on the ground as "very tense", with the Russians attempting to "encircle the city" with "more and more troops". — AFP



DONETSK: A man stands in the courtyard of his house damaged as a result of a missile strike, in Donetsk on Oct 15, 2023. — AFP



TOKYO: This file photo taken on September 29, 2022 shows members (right) of Japan's Ministry of Defense and Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) bowing to apologize to former JGSDF soldier Rina Gonoji (left), who routinely faced sexual harassment and sexual assault at her unit and during training sessions. — AFP photos

'Not proud at all': Japan's army struggles to recruit

TOKYO: A recent open day at a Japanese military base near Tokyo was a fun family outing but, despite the games and snacks, the army recruitment stand was bereft of visitors. "This is the reality. The festival is always packed but no one comes," confessed one of the two soldiers on duty, unwanted leaflets on the table next to a green armored vehicle.

Japan has massively upped its defense spending in recent years, alarmed by China's growing assertiveness in the region and the frequency of North Korea's missile tests. But a report by a panel of experts in July highlighted an "extremely high" risk that the armed forces would be weakened because of a lack of personnel. Although numbers fluctuate from year to year, since 1990 the strength of the Self-Defense Forces, as Japan's military is known, has fallen by more than seven percent to under 230,000. In 2022 fewer than 4,000 people joined up, undershooting the target by more than half. The last time its objective was met was in 2013.

'Ashamed'

Many advanced economies are having problems recruiting enough people, with the situation particularly acute in Japan, where one in 10 people is 80 or over. But according to current and former soldiers who spoke to AFP, it's not just demographics to blame. "I was ashamed to say that I was in the Self-Defense Forces. It didn't make me proud at all," said Yuichi Kimura, 45, a former parachutist who now runs a firm helping former soldiers get civilian jobs.

Morale is "low", he said, due to "poor pay" and a "lack of ambition" on the part of the armed forces, whose role since World War II has been exclusively defensive in line with Japan's pacifist constitution. Many join up hoping to help during natural disasters but are dismayed to find themselves doing military tasks. "Most soldiers weren't thinking at all about national defense (when they joined)," said Kohei Kondo, 25, a former sergeant.

Japan's defense ministry insists it only recruits suitable candidates but according to media reports, standards have fallen, including when it comes to psychological tests. In June, two people were killed by a new recruit in a shooting incident at a military firing

range. Japan "recruits just about anybody because no one expects an actual armed conflict", said Kimura, the former paratrooper.

Sexual harassment

In an effort to halt the decline, in 2018 Japan increased the maximum age for new soldiers to 32 from 26. Another solution, the July report said, is to use more unmanned vehicles in the air, on sea and on land. The army is even reportedly considering allowing recruits with tattoos — markings traditionally associated with "yakuza" gangsters. Japan also aims to increase the proportion of women by 2030 to 13 percent, from nine percent at present. Featuring photos of smiling servicewomen, the defense ministry website promises "an environment adapted to women". But according to Fumika Sato, professor of military sociology and gender sociology at Hitotsubashi University, there is a considerable gap with "reality on the ground".

The army is "an environment conducive to harassment and sexual violence", she told AFP. The army has been roiled for the past year by a series of damaging revelations of sexual assault within its ranks. They started when former soldier Rina Gonoji went public with explosive allegations of abuse that drew major attention. There is no concrete evidence of a link, but in the year to March 2023, the number of female recruits tumbled 12 percent, having previously risen every year since 2017. "Things were happening in my company that could have had the same repercussions," admitted Kodai Suzuki, 27, another former soldier. "What parents would let their daughter join such an institution?" a serving junior officer said on condition of anonymity. — AFP



ASAKA: Soldiers from the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force take part in a military review in Asaka, Saitama prefecture on Oct 14, 2018.

Afghans flee western region after fresh earthquake kills two

HERAT: A magnitude 6.3 earthquake killed two people in western Afghanistan Sunday, with damaged prisons emptied and residents fleeing a region where tremors have claimed at least 1,000 lives this past week. Since Oct 7, a series of potent quakes have jolted Herat province, levelling whole villages, burying families and leaving thousands homeless as winter approaches. Residents in the provincial capital Herat city had just begun returning to their homes, after days of sleeping outside fearing aftershocks, when the latest earthquake hit around 8:00 am (3:30 GMT) on Sunday.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said two new fatalities and 154 injuries were registered at Herat Regional Hospital, where patients were being ferried on stretchers and treated outside under gazebos. "The situation is very critical," MSF's Afghanistan Program Head Yahya Kailah told AFP. "In terms of psychology, people are panicked and traumatized." "People are not feeling safe. I will assure you 100 percent, no one will sleep in their house."



INJIL: Afghan children stand outside their makeshift tents in an earthquake-affected area of Injil district in Herat province on Oct 15, 2023. — AFP

The latest quake's epicenter was 33 kilometers (20 miles) northwest of Herat city and was followed by aftershocks of magnitudes 5.4, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, the US Geological Survey said. Officials said more than 528 prisoners had been released from Herat province and neighboring Badghis province because jails "were in danger of collapsing" from quake damage. The Prisons Administration Authority said those freed included inmates who had served large portions of their sentences and showed signs of reform.

Herat city resident Haris Aryan said he sent his family south to Farah province to escape the trauma of the quakes. "Many people, anyone with relatives or accommodation in neighboring provinces, all of them have fled," he told AFP. "Those who do not have anywhere to go ... they are spending nights in the roads and parks."

National disaster management officials said they were investigating the scale of Sunday's earthquake. MSF official Kailah predicted "casualties will be low" because residents in the worst-hit areas were already living outdoors after their homes were destroyed last week. "It's Allah's blessing that it happened during the day, people were awake," said 27-year-old Herat city shopkeeper Hamid Nizami. — AFP

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2023

Middle East growth set to slow this year, says IMF

Global headwinds and geopolitical risks weigh on economic momentum

KUWAIT: The combined effects of global headwinds, domestic challenges, and geopolitical risks weigh on economic momentum in the Middle East and Central Asia and the outlook is highly uncertain across the region, according to International Monetary Fund.

Growth is set to slow this year in the Middle East and North Africa region, driven by lower oil production, tight policy settings in emerging market and middle-income economies, the conflict in Sudan, and other country-specific factors, it said.

In the Caucasus and Central Asia, although migration, trade, and financial inflows following Russia's war in Ukraine continue to support economic activity, growth is set to moderate slightly this year. Looking ahead, economic activity in the Middle East and North Africa region is expected to improve in 2024 and 2025 as some factors weighing on growth this year gradually dissipate, including the temporary oil production cuts. But growth is expected to remain subdued amid persistent structural hurdles.

In the Caucasus and Central Asia, economic growth is projected to slow next year and over the medium term as the boost to activity from real and financial inflows from Russia gradually fades and deep-seated structural challenges remain unsolved. Inflation is broadly easing, in line with globally declining price pressures, although country-specific factors — including buoyant wage growth in some Caucasus and Central Asia countries — and climate-related events continue to make their mark. Despite some improvement since April, the balance of risks to the outlook remains on the downside. In this context, expediting structural reforms is crucial to boost growth and strengthen resilience, while tight monetary and fiscal policies remain essential in several economies to durably bring down inflation and ensure public debt sustainability.

Gold prices jump more than 3% over Mideast tensions

KUWAIT: Gold prices recorded a price jump of over three percent at the end of last week's trading, reaching \$1,933 per ounce amid escalating military tensions in the Middle East. Gold recorded its best weekly performance since the beginning of this year as demands increased for the precious metal as a safe haven amid the increasing conflict in the Middle East and the absence of any kind of calm, the Kuwaiti-based company Dar Al-Sabaek said in a report on Sunday.

Gold futures for December rose by 2.5 percent,

GCC countries record 7.3% GDP growth in 2022

MARRAKESH: The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, emphasized that despite economic disruptions, policymakers in GCC countries have successfully alleviated the economic consequences of these challenges, SPA said on Sunday.

The GCC nations experienced substantial growth in their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reaching 7.3 percent in 2022. Al-Budaiwi's remarks came while attending the Arab governors' meeting with the President of the World Bank Group, Ajay Banga. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on Saturday in Marrakesh,

Mysterious rise in US Treasury yields perturbs markets

NEW YORK: The surge in US treasury yields has sparked much anxiety among investors, in part because there is no easy explanation for the rise. Last week the yield on the 10-year US Treasury note climbed to 4.88 percent for the first time since 2007, while the 30-year offering reached 5.05 percent, also a 16-year peak.

Both have edged back in recent days, due mainly to elevated geopolitical risk, analysts say, although yields remain high. The most oft-cited justification for the rise has been expectations that monetary policy will stay hawkish in response to the resilient US economy. "The Fed expectations have been shifting," said John Canavan, analyst at Oxford Economics.

Policy space in many countries in the Middle East and Central Asia has diminished following an extended period of shocks, particularly among the region's emerging market and middle-income countries. Amid high public debt and inflation, fiscal consolidation and tight monetary policy are needed in many countries in the region. In this context, structural reforms offer a way to not only increase potential growth, but also accrue near-term growth benefits, it said. In addition, reforms can be instrumental in accelerating economic diversification among oil exporters. In a novel analysis for the region, this chapter shows that most structural reforms help lift output, with the impact growing over time. Governance reforms — particularly, enhancing the rule of law and government effectiveness — are especially important and can also generate positive output effects during periods of weak growth or relatively limited policy space. Improving the government's ability to implement policies and regulations to promote private sector development also contributes to fostering growth through improved investment and productivity.

Moreover, prioritizing governance reforms before other reforms can magnify their overall growth dividends, and the strategic packaging of reforms — for example, by combining external sector and credit market reforms — can amplify positive output effects. Importantly, the design of structural reforms will need to include political considerations and distributional impacts.

Central banks in the Middle East and Central Asia face difficult trade-offs and policy challenges at a time when core inflation, though gradually declining, remains above central bank targets in many countries. In this context, a prolonged period of tighter monetary policy to reduce inflation could have unintended consequences for financial systems in the region. This

or the equivalent of \$5.58, to reach \$1,942 an ounce, achieving their best weekly performance since last March, the report added. Gold extended gains ending more than two weeks of bearish trend due to the increase in geopolitical tensions, it explained. This coincided with US economic data indicating that there was no need to raise interest rates in both short and medium terms, which led to a slowdown in US Treasury bond yields and thus an additional rise in gold prices, it stated.

It underscored that the prevailing trend among investors in gold amid uncertainty that the global economy is experiencing. Despite the rise in gold prices, there are still new buyers, especially with increasing fears that the conflict in the Middle East may extend to other regions. Safe haven assets are remarkably popular, which provides gold with the opportunity to reach \$2,000 per ounce, it pointed out. Regarding the local market, it mentioned that the

Kingdom of Morocco.

During his speech, the GCC Secretary-General emphasized that economic challenges present a risk to the mutual objective of a poverty-free world characterized by sustainable development and widespread prosperity. He pointed out that the global economy is currently traversing a precarious course, with the World Bank forecasting a substantial deceleration in global economic growth in the years ahead. Al-Budaiwi also underscored that tackling global challenges demands a dedication to shared values and objectives, recognizing that the interdependence of nations ne-

"From the Fed's perspective, we're seeing stronger than expected economic growth, some increase in inflation and uncertainty, particularly as oil prices surge again." While two-year US treasuries are considered the closest proxy to Fed interest rates, the market has been unsettled by the jump in yields of longer-run bonds of five, 10 or 30 years.

"Something is happening in the bond market and nobody fully understands how you kind of break it down," said Adam Button of ForexLive. Karl Haelling of LBBW pointed to increased bond issuance by the US Treasury Department, saying markets are increasingly worried that the US "fiscal situation is moving on a long-term unsustainably bad trajectory."

For Yardeni Research, "the bond market has changed recently and disconcertingly," the consultancy said in a recent posting. Perplexing moves by US treasuries in response to economic news "suggest a shift in bond investors' focus from what monetary policymakers may do, to rising alarm about what fiscal policymakers are doing."

"The worry is that the escalating federal budget deficit will create more supply of bonds than demand



MARRAKESH: (Centre left to right) Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group, Sergii Marchenko, 2023 Annual Meetings Chairman and Minister of Finance of Ukraine and Kristalina Georgieva, MD of the IMF take part in annual meetings in Marrakesh. — AFP

chapter assesses the state and resilience of banking sectors in the Middle East and Central Asia to credit and liquidity risks that could emerge in a "higher-for-longer" interest rate environment. The results suggest that banking systems would be resilient in an adverse scenario of higher interest rates, corporate sector stress, and rising liquidity pressures.

However, pockets of vulnerability exist in some countries, particularly among state-owned banks,

and capital losses could emerge that, while manageable, could limit lending and add to downside risks to output. Policies to mitigate downside risks center on strengthening macroprudential frameworks, containing the vulnerabilities stemming from the sovereign-bank nexus, enhancing clear and timely communication, establishing emergency liquidity tools to stem systemic financial stress, and developing resolution regimes to reduce the buildup of zombie firms.



price of a 24-carat gram gold increased to KD 19.35 (about \$59), while the 22-carat gram was trading at KD 17.5 (roughly \$53). The silver traded at KD 271 (approximately \$826) per kilogram. — KUNA

ecessitates collaborative efforts and synergy.

Furthermore, he emphasized that global economic challenges call for sustainable solutions to alleviate their impact. This, he said, can be achieved through collective actions and measures taken by the international community, in cooperation with global financial institutions, as well as through bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries and international organizations.

These efforts are essential to secure a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable global future, he noted. Concluding his remarks, Al-Budaiwi praised the advancements resulting from the structural reforms implemented by GCC countries in response to economic challenges. These reforms have yielded favorable outcomes, including economic growth, an improved business environment, increased competitiveness, and a substantial rise in women's workforce participation. Furthermore, the non-oil sector experienced a notable increase of 4.8 percent in 2022. — Agencies

can meet, requiring higher yields to clear the market," added Yardeni Research.

But not everyone is on board with this perspective. "We can blame higher long-run yields on many things, but deficits are not one of them," said Nick Colas of DataTrek Research.

Yet another factor in the market shift has been a slowing in demand. "Central banks are no longer buying bonds, they are selling them," Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at Markets.com, said of the retreat. After multiple rounds of quantitative easing, the Fed has been in a belt-tightening mode, reducing the size of its balance sheet and not replacing bonds that reach maturity with new purchases.

But Peter Boockvar, chief investment officer of Bleakley Financial Group, said that the US central bank may not be able to pull off "quantitative tightening," noting that the Fed reversed course in 2019 following turbulence in markets. A "failure" by the Fed means "things cracking in the financial system well before the Fed's balance sheet shrinks by much and we're left with this perpetually large Fed presence in the markets." — AFP

IMF agrees funding boost for Africa, extra board seat

MARRAKESH: The IMF announced Saturday member nations agreed to increase their contributions to the global lender and give sub-Saharan Africa a third seat on its executive board at its first meetings on the continent since 1973. Boosting the International Monetary Fund's quota resources and giving Africa a bigger voice within the institution were among the priorities of the week-long talks of the IMF and World Bank in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Spanish Economy Minister Nadia Calvino, who chairs the IMF Financial Committee, said at a press conference that there was "agreement on a meaningful increase of quotas by the end of the year." The quotas, which are based on the size of a country's economy, determine how much funding a nation should provide to the IMF, its voting power and the maximum amount of loans it can obtain.

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva and World Bank President Ajay Banga used this week's meetings to urge members to step up funding so their institutions can better support nations hit by poverty and climate change. The conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas has raised concerns about its impact on already weak global economic growth in the wake of the Ukraine war, elevated inflation and high interest rates.

Georgieva said the agreement on quotas was "very heartwarming." The goal, she said, was "to make the fund strong financially in terms of our ability to step up should we be hit by yet another shock."

Asked when the IMF will change its voting shares, Georgieva said: "the membership has agreed that this is going to be the next step and that there will be a clear pathway and plan to go there."

Giving countries like China, which is now the world's second biggest economy, a larger voting share has been a controversial issue. China has a 6.08 percent share of votes compared to 6.14 percent for Japan, the third global economy. "At some point, a revision of the IMF's quota distribution will be inevitable," French central bank governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau said in Marrakesh on Wednesday. "But the emerging countries that will benefit from this — including China — will have to accept common rules of the game," he said. While voting shares were not changed, the IMF agreed to expand its executive board from 24 to 25 members to give Africa another seat.

Sub-Saharan Africa will now have three executive board members instead of two.

"I will finish with what warmed my heart the most: uniform support for a third African chair on our executive board," Georgieva said. "That is so important for meetings that take place on African soil," she said. "Despite all the difficulties I can only praise our members for finding this pathway to solidarity on which hundreds of millions of people depend." — AFP

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

IMF: CBs could tame inflation without causing a recession

UK services sector continues to lift economic growth

KUWAIT: The IMF and World Bank held an annual meeting in Marrakech on Tuesday where the divergence between country groups economic recovery was addressed, as well as the financial risks associated with "higher for longer" interest rates.

The IMF sees that there is a higher probability for central banks to tame inflation without causing a recession in the global economy, and is now expecting global economic growth to slow down from 3.5 percent in 2022, to 3 percent in 2023, and to 2.9 percent in 2024.

Meanwhile, global inflation is forecast to decline to 6.9 percent this year from 8.7 percent in 2022, and down to 5.85 percent in 2024. IMF chief economist Pierre Olivier Gourinc has added it was too soon to tell how the conflict in the Middle East "could affect economic growth in the region and the rest of the world."

US September PPI data was released on Wednesday, showing a higher than expected increase as final demand rose by 0.5 percent from the previous month, and 2.2 percent from the previous year, marking the third consecutive monthly increase. While the cost of gasoline increased by 5.4 percent, PPI excluding food and energy showed a 0.3 percent monthly increase, while core PPI was up 2.8 percent from the previous year. This news release came in line with a drop in the 2-year and 10-year treasury yields as investors seek safer investment options and expect a pause on further tightening policies.

FOMC speakers

The FOMC meeting minutes and recent speeches by Fed and FOMC members emphasized the intent for Fed officials to keep rates unchanged for the time being as they forecast a slower pace of rate cuts to counter the stronger than expected economic activity. Fed Chair Jerome Powell stated that the primary driver for the decision of another 25bp rate hike would be dependent on the GDP growth, labor market conditions, and inflation, where GDP is currently expected to be at 2.1 percent for 2023, and to 1.5 percent for 2024. Meanwhile, on Friday, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia President Patrick Harker said that "absent a stark turn in what I see in the data and hear from contacts... I believe that we are at the point where we can hold rates where they are." Additionally, Harker emphasized that "it will take some time for the full impact of the higher rates to be felt."

Consumer price index

The latest CPI y/y data released from the US shows that inflation has been unchanged from August, as September's figure came in at 3.7 percent. Economists believe that even though the latest numbers have been encouraging, especially when comparing inflation to COVID levels, it is still going to be a while before inflation returns to normal levels. Gas prices rose by 2.1 percent in September, playing a key part in the latest inflation figure. Core CPI on the other hand fell from 4.3 percent in August to 4.1 percent in September on an

annual basis. The index for shelter was the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, accounting for over half of the increase. Meanwhile, the indexes for used cars and trucks and for apparel were among those that decreased over the month.

negative, with the expectations index falling from 66.0 all the way to 60.7. Additionally, the one-year inflation outlook rose from 3.2 percent to 3.8 percent, while the five-year inflation outlook also rose from 2.8 percent to 3.0 percent.

Activity in the UK services sector continues to lift UK economic growth. GDP m/m has shown a growth of 0.2 percent for August, substantially up from July's figure of -0.6 percent. In the three months leading to August, GDP increased by 0.3 percent, showing growth in all sectors. The main driver behind the increase in GDP

Rates - 15th October 2023

| Currencies | Previous Week Levels | | | | This Week's Expected Range | | 3-Month Forward |
|------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Open | Low | High | Close | Minimum | Maximum | |
| EUR | 1.0561 | 1.0494 | 1.0639 | 1.0509 | 1.0400 | 1.0800 | 1.0560 |
| GBP | 1.2225 | 1.2120 | 1.2337 | 1.2141 | 1.2000 | 1.2400 | 1.2156 |
| JPY | 149.07 | 148.15 | 149.86 | 149.55 | 147.00 | 150.00 | 147.30 |
| CHF | 0.9100 | 0.8985 | 0.9123 | 0.9020 | 0.8900 | 0.9100 | 0.8934 |

annual basis. The index for shelter was the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, accounting for over half of the increase. Meanwhile, the indexes for used cars and trucks and for apparel were among those that decreased over the month.

for August was the services sector as its output rose by 0.4 percent. On the other hand, production output continues to fall in the UK. After dropping by 1.1 percent in July, production output dropped by 0.7 percent in August. Similarly, the construction sector also fell by 0.5 percent in August.

Unemployment claims

Unemployment claims came in at 209,000, unchanged from last week's figure. The labor market remains to be tight in the US, adding to the worries of Federal Reserve. Employment continues to remain robust and seems to be able to withstand any "trigger" deployed by the Fed. The ever so tight labor market is the main reason behind the "soft-landing" narrative, as it shows that a recession might be avoided.

Consumer sentiment

The latest data to come out from the University of Michigan shows that consumer sentiment in the US dropped to 63 in October from 68.1 in September, well below the expected 67.4 figure. The outlook of consumers on the US economy has become more

China consumer price index

Almost a year on from China's reopening post COVID, the outlook does not seem any more positive, sending signals of worry to the global economy. The latest CPI data to come out of China shows that y/y inflation is at 0.0 percent. The world's second largest economy is still flat lining after it was initially hoped that the reopening of China would replenish the global economy. Moreover, China's trade activity has been trading lower with trade reports showing that imports.

Kuwait Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30870.

Czech lawmakers pass tax hikes to rein in finance gap

PRAGUE: The Czech parliament passed an austerity package raising taxes in a bid to heal ailing public finances hit hard by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The centre-right governing coalition pushed the package through the 200-seat parliament with 108 votes. The extensive package is designed to cut the public finance deficit from 3.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) this year to 1.8 percent in 2024 and 1.2 percent in 2025. "The austerity package will enable us to meet the Maastricht criteria (for euro adoption) next year," Prime Minister Petr Fiala said on X, formerly Twitter.

He added the criteria, setting limits for inflation, government finances, the exchange rate and interest rates, were "an indicator of the good shape of public finances". Sticking to its koruna currency, the Czech Republic has yet to join the euro under its 2004 EU accession terms, but no date has been fixed to date despite an ongoing debate. Lawmakers on Friday approved sizeable cuts in subsidies and wages in the government sector. They also raised the corporate income tax rate to 21 from 19 percent and increased the property tax and the excise tax on tobacco and alcohol.

The legislation, which has yet to be approved by the senate and signed by the president, is expected to take effect on January 1 next year. Heavily dependent on car production and exports to the eurozone, the Czech economy has slowed down remarkably since the pandemic hit in 2020.

In the second quarter of 2023, GDP in the EU and NATO member of 10.5 million people fell by 0.6 percent annually and stayed put against the previous quarter. The International Monetary Fund said this week it expected the Czech economy to grow by 0.2 percent this year and by 2.3 percent in 2024. - AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 12 OCTOBER 2023

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| Market | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Premier Market | 31,106 | 7,239.01 | -2.2% | -3.7% | -10.8% | 403,202,652 | 152,821,685 | 34,881 | 17.4 | 1.2 | 77.3% |
| Main Market | 9,157 | 5,480.65 | -3.4% | -4.1% | -2.1% | 456,371,292 | 46,769,314 | 20,876 | 12.8 | 0.7 | 22.7% |
| All Share | 40,264 | 6,622.89 | -2.5% | -3.8% | -9.2% | 859,573,944 | 199,590,999 | 55,757 | 13.4 | 0.8 | 100% |

| Sector | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Banking | 23,998 | 1,605.53 | -2.3% | -4.5% | -10.5% | 179,697,415 | 91,791,937 | 18,648 | 16.6 | 1.1 | 59.60% |
| Basic Materials | 456 | 807.25 | -2.7% | -3.1% | -6.7% | 3,722,802 | 2,350,788 | 896 | 9.2 | 2.2 | 1.13% |
| Consumer Discretionary | 997 | 1,484.78 | -3.5% | -4.6% | -0.1% | 56,519,022 | 10,475,264 | 3,942 | 12.5 | 0.9 | 2.48% |
| Consumer Staples | 177 | 581.92 | -0.8% | -2.4% | 21.2% | 2,934,541 | 1,411,335 | 307 | 73.3 | 1.1 | 0.44% |
| Energy | 198 | 947.84 | -1.7% | -1.4% | -16.7% | 2,888,262 | 126,031 | 317 | 9.1 | 0.7 | 0.49% |
| Financial Services | 4,381 | 1,204.09 | -2.6% | -2.8% | -4.2% | 314,765,143 | 41,290,800 | 11,806 | 26.0 | 0.8 | 10.88% |
| Health Care | 236 | 475.11 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.9% | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 12.2 | 0.9 | 0.59% |
| Industrials | 3,051 | 881.20 | -2.7% | -4.2% | -18.3% | 36,141,178 | 19,250,692 | 5,584 | 12.3 | 0.9 | 7.58% |
| Insurance | 907 | 2,219.01 | -0.6% | -0.1% | 43.1% | 455,529 | 169,924 | 119 | 10.4 | 0.9 | 2.25% |
| Real Estate | 2,515 | 1,173.19 | -3.1% | -0.2% | -2.9% | 238,201,386 | 21,536,924 | 9,544 | 14.1 | 0.6 | 6.25% |
| Technology | 9 | 640.20 | -1.7% | 15.2% | -8.0% | 357,138 | 29,251.69 | 71 | NM | 0.8 | 0.02% |
| Telecommunications | 3,143 | 1,028.26 | -3.5% | -4.1% | -13.0% | 22,225,132 | 10,860,640 | 4,142 | 9.5 | 1.3 | 7.80% |
| Utilities | 196 | 468.42 | -2.7% | -4.3% | -5.3% | 1,666,396 | 297,412 | 381 | 14.4 | 1.6 | 0.49% |

Top Gainers

| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|----------|------------|----------|------------|---------|--------|
| UNICAP | 48 | 16.22% | 504,494 | 22,018 | 56 |
| EMIRATES | 35.8 | 9.48% | 1,000 | 36 | 1 |
| MASSALEH | 29.2 | 6.18% | 229,263 | 6,335 | 26 |
| KFIC | 62.5 | 5.93% | 880,371 | 53,160 | 20 |
| KPPC | 32.8 | 5.81% | 18,150,312 | 590,892 | 487 |

Top Losers

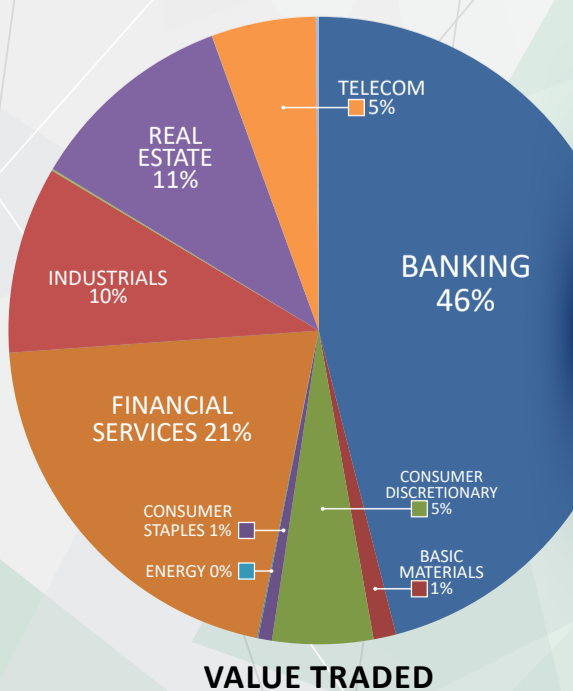
| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|---------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| PAPER | 163 | -18.50% | 539,187 | 85,720 | 119 |
| EKTITAB | 18.1 | -18.47% | 12,403,466 | 235,671 | 256 |
| FTI | 51.8 | -16.32% | 66,310 | 3,535 | 30 |
| COAST | 80.2 | -16.20% | 20,406,082 | 1,719,121 | 1,058 |
| MASAKEN | 28.1 | -14.59% | 11,146,803 | 347,177 | 559 |

Top Volume

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|--------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| SOKOUK | 43 | 4.88% | 69,620,616 | 2,894,570 | 1,862 |
| KFH | 709 | -1.80% | 61,048,837 | 43,330,112 | 8,629 |
| MAZAYA | 56 | -3.78% | 48,606,084 | 2,801,302 | 995 |
| NCCI | 109 | -6.84% | 43,207,279 | 4,778,141 | 721 |
| KIB | 152 | 0.00% | 38,045,457 | 5,706,781 | 1,319 |

Top Value

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|---------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| KFH | 709 | -1.80% | 61,048,837 | 43,330,112 | 8,629 |
| NBK | 854 | -2.40% | 33,076,751 | 28,202,878 | 4,343 |
| ZAIN | 463 | -2.11% | 17,768,391 | 8,225,312 | 2,673 |
| BOUBYAN | 600 | -0.99% | 11,091,398 | 6,635,466 | 1,315 |
| NIND | 202 | 0.50% | 29,715,023 | 5,948,368 | 878 |



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value increased 13% and 23%, while Main market volume and value dropped 0.1% and 12%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indexes suffered from the economic and geopolitical circumstances in the region and fell further down.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 6622, with support levels at 6526 and 6487, while resistance at 6621. The Premier index closed at 7239, with support levels at 7094 and 6883, while resistance at 7343. The Main index closed at 5480, with support levels at 5467, 5447, and 5424, while resistance at 5495.

Business

IMF raises India growth forecast

Analysts warn of major headwinds ahead for economy

MARRAKESH: The International Monetary Fund has raised its growth forecast for India, saying the country's growth will remain strong in 2023 and 2024 — but analysts warn there will be headwinds ahead.

According to the IMF's October update of its World Economic Outlook, India's economy will grow 6.3 percent in 2023, an increase from an earlier forecast of 6.1 percent. Economists who spoke to CNBC are also bullish about India's growth, attributing the economy's growth to an increase in consumption, infrastructure spending, and more businesses being set up — but they say geopolitical risks and inflation concerns will be challenging.

"India will continue to be a bright spot in the global economic picture," Alicia Garcia-Herrero, chief economist for Asia Pacific at Natixis said. The country "has been favored by foreign investors in recent years, reflecting its promising long-term outlook helped by a youthful demographics and a fast-expanding middle class. We expect such a trend to continue," she told CNBC. Consumer spending remains one of the biggest growth drivers in the world's most populous nation, she added.

India's consumer market is set to become the world's third largest by 2027 as the number of middle to high-income households rise, according to a report by BMI, a Fitch Solutions research unit. "India is on the map. There is a lot of pent-up demand and sentiment is very positive. There is a sense that India is back on the frontline and the propaganda in the media helps consumption too," she added.

India's government has "taken several steps to improve businesses and this is attracting global and local investors," said Nilesh Shah, managing director

at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management. "The China-plus-one strategy is also pushing relocation of global supply chains and India will be a beneficiary," he added. India is on the map. There is a lot of pent-up demand and sentiment is very positive.

The optimism in India's growth story is partly because more Indians are choosing to work or set up businesses in the country rather than "moving to the Western world in search of better opportunities," Shah said. "The West is less appealing than it used to be," Garcia-Herrero said. "And India is more appealing than it used to be — at least for very talented people." While the IMF maintained its 2024 projection of 6.3 percent growth in India, economists are expecting the country to face a slew of headwinds. "Widening current account deficit, resurging inflation and heightened geopolitical tensions would be the major headwinds for India," Garcia-Herrero warned.

Although India's "pre-election environment is quite conducive to growth," the Reserve Bank of India's loose monetary policy will be "creating future problems," the economist said. "India is not increasing productivity as much as needed to make their growth sustainable over time. But this will only become a problem in the next two decades, it's not an immediate issue."

Heatwaves and droughts have caused water levels in southern Indian reservoirs to fall below 10 years average, causing an adverse effect on agriculture and rural recovery, Kotak's Shah pointed out. Geopolitical tensions have intensified from rising tensions between India and Canada, as well as the attack on Israel by Palestinian militant group Hamas which caused oil prices to spike by more than 4



The International Monetary Fund has released new economic forecasts for India and warns that it will be hard for policymakers to bring down inflation while keeping a growth momentum. —AFP

percent on Monday. "India imports more than 80 percent of its oil consumption, so higher prices will impact India's trade and fiscal deficit, inflation and growth adversely," Shah said.

Although economists remain optimistic about India's growth, Garcia-Herrero emphasized the importance of foreign investments to keep the economy going. "In India's position as the leader of the global south competing with China, India needs

more foreign investments to create more manufacturing jobs," she said.

In the report published Tuesday, the IMF said the global economy will continue to recover at a slow pace as a consequence of the Ukraine war, high inflation and the aftermath of the pandemic. Its projections show that global growth will slow from 3.5 percent in 2022 to 3 percent this year, before falling further to 2.9 percent in 2024. — Agencies

Asia continues to fuel global growth: IMF

MARRAKESH: Strong consumer spending has supported growth in Asia's three largest economies this year, but there are already signs that the region's recovery may be running out of steam, according to IMF.

"We expect growth in Asia and the Pacific to accelerate from 3.9 percent in 2022 to 4.6 percent this year, unchanged from the projection from last April. This is largely explained by the post-reopening recovery in China and stronger-than-expected growth in the first half of the year in Japan and India," the International Monetary Fund said. With pandemic restrictions lifted, demand in these economies was bolstered by consumers running down savings accumulated during the pandemic, leading to notable strength in the services sector.

While Asia is still set to contribute about two-thirds of all global growth this year, it is important to note that growth is significantly lower than what was projected before the pandemic and output has been set back by a series of global shocks. We have lowered our estimate for growth next year to 4.2 percent, from the 4.4 percent projected in April. Our less-optimistic assessment is based on signs of slowing growth and investment in the third quarter, in part reflecting weaker external demand as the global economy slows, such as in Southeast Asia and Japan, and faltering real estate investment in China.

The economic boost that China enjoyed after its re-opening is now



MARRAKESH: Moroccan prime minister Aziz Akhannouch (center) attends the 2023 annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), in Marrakech on October 13, 2023. — AFP

losing momentum earlier than previously expected. While we project the rebound will underpin growth quickening to 5 percent this year, the economy would slow to 4.2 percent next year amid the deepening property-sector slump, down from the 4.5 percent we had forecast in April.

The drag from China would historically have been offset by forecasts for faster growth in the United States and Japan, but the resulting boost is likely to be more muted this time. The strength of the US economy has been focused in the service sector, rather than in goods, which doesn't fuel greater demand for Asia. And US policies such as the Inflation Reduction Act and CHIPS and Science Act are re-orienting demand toward domestic sources rather than foreign, providing a smaller boost to imports from Asia, it said.

In the near term, the sharp adjustment in China's heavily indebted prop-

erty sector and the resulting slowdown in economic activity will likely spill over to the region, particularly to commodity exporters with close trade links to China. Beyond this, an aging population and slowing productivity growth will further temper growth over the medium-term in China, amid rising risks of geoeconomic fragmentation, and bear upon prospects in the rest of Asia and beyond. In a downside scenario where "de-risking" and "re-shoring" strategies take hold, output could decline by up to 10 percent over five years in the Asian economies most closely linked to China's economy.

A welcome development is that disinflation is on track in Asia, with inflation now expected to return to central bank target ranges next year in most countries. This process is well ahead of most other regions, where inflation remains high and is expected fall within target only in 2025.

The global environment remains

highly uncertain, and while risks to the outlook are more balanced than they were six months ago, Asia's policymakers must stay the course to ensure continued growth and stability. On the downside, a more protracted real estate crisis and limited policy response in China would deepen the regional slowdown. And a sudden tightening of global financial conditions could lead to capital outflows and put pressure on Asia's exchange rates that would threaten the disinflation process.

Countries with inflation still above targets, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, should continue to signal a commitment to reducing inflation. This will entail maintaining restrictive monetary policy until inflation durably falls to target and expectations are firmly re-anchored.

In many of the region's emerging market and developing economies, including Indonesia and Thailand, financial conditions have remained relatively accommodative and real policy rates remain close to neutral levels, reducing the need for an early loosening of monetary policy.

As long-term prospects dim, countries must redouble their efforts to advance growth-enhancing reforms. Raising government revenue ratios from low levels would allow for additional spending on important needs such as education and infrastructure, while keeping public debt in check. Finally, strengthening multilateral and regional cooperation and mitigating the effects of geoeconomic fragmentation are increasingly vital for Asia's economic outlook in coming years. To that end, reforms that lower nontariff trade barriers, boost connectivity, and improve business environments are essential to attract more foreign and domestic investment across the region, it said.

Arab region can lead clean energy transition: Official

RIYADH: The Regional Director of the United Nations Development Program, Dr. Abdullah Al-Dardari, said that the potential possessed by the Arab region qualifies it to lead the transition towards clean and renewable energy, praising Saudi Arabia's circular economy approach and its efforts to reduce pollution and preserve the environment.

In an interview on the sidelines of the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week (MIENACW) 2023 in Riyadh, Al-Dardari noted that the field of renewable energy constituted a great opportunity to diversify sources of income, noting that the Arab region faces many difficult environmental conditions, including water scarcity, food security threats, and environmental and climate crises.

The UN official emphasized the presence of a historic opportunity for the region to be an international leader in sustainable economy, as the cost of producing renewable energy has become relatively cheap and competitive compared to traditional energy sources, while the region also possesses financial resources, minds, and a political desire to drive the transition towards clean energy. Emphasis must be placed on improving the efficiency of traditional energy use, in addition to enhancing the reliance on renewable energy, Al-Dardari said, noting that this includes reducing pollution and emissions and increasing economic and environmental efficiency. He also pointed out the importance of investing in knowledge, research, development and production to achieve these goals.

Al-Dardari stressed that the region must adapt to current climate changes, and suggested developing genetically modified agricultural products to enable their cultivation in difficult conditions, such as high temperatures, water shortages, and drought. He also underlined the necessity of working to reduce the waste of resources, saying that studies have shown that a third of the region's resources are squandered. — Agencies

Spain seeks to expand trade with Saudi

RIYADH: Spain has outlined efforts to raise the level of trade and economic exchange with Saudi Arabia by developing a new action plan with the Saudi-Spanish Business Council.

Spanish Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Jorge Hevia Sierra said that preparations were underway for the fourth meeting of the Joint Economic Cooperation Committee, which is scheduled to be held in Riyadh in 2024. "Economic and trade relations are of particular importance to us. In 2021, Spanish exports to Saudi Arabia reached nearly \$3 billion, while the value of Spanish imports from Saudi Arabia amounted to \$5.1 billion," the ambassador said, noting that Spanish imports were mainly related to oil.

He added: "We must try to increase exchange in other areas. This is something we are working on with our Saudi counterparts. At the same time, we are deploying serious efforts through the Spanish-Saudi Business Council and its new board of directors - an institution in which we have high aspirations."

Sierra said the energy field was one of the main areas of bilateral cooperation, pointing to ongoing communication between the Saudi Minister of Energy, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, and Spanish Vice President and Minister of Environmental Transformation Teresa Ribera. Regarding the volume of joint investments, the Spanish diplomat revealed that exports of Spanish goods increased by 55 percent in 2022, compared to the previous year, while imports increased by 72 percent. According to the 2022 data, Spain remains the fifth largest EU exporter to Saudi Arabia, after Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and France, and the fifth EU importer, after Italy, the Netherlands, France, and Poland, the ambassador said. He pointed out that the balance of Spanish investments in Saudi Arabia reached 483 million euros as of December 31, 2020, according to the latest data issued by the Spanish Investment Register in March 2023. — Agencies

IMF reaches fund raising targets for poverty reduction

MARRAKESH: The International Monetary Fund has reached the fundraising targets for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) agreed to in July 2021.

"Today marks an important milestone in our collective efforts to strengthen support for our most vulnerable members. I am delighted to announce that we have successfully met the fundraising targets for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) agreed to in July 2021. Reaching these targets is critical to allow the IMF to continue to support low-income countries with zero-interest rate financing to meet their evolving needs," said Kristalina Georgieva, IMF Managing Director said following the IMF/WB annual meetings in Marrakech.

Low-income countries have been hit hard by multiple global shocks in recent years. Not only are they bearing the brunt of economic scarring from the pandemic, these countries are also grappling with food price shocks, high debt, and the increasing occurrence of climate disasters. Throughout these challenges, the IMF has been a strong partner for low-income countries, she said.

Since the onset of the pandemic, zero-interest lending through the PRGT has increased fivefold — to about \$30 billion — benefiting 56 countries. Currently, 30 countries (almost 45 percent of all PRGT-eligible countries) have an ongoing PRGT-supported program, the largest share since the inception of the PRGT in 2009. Through these programs, the IMF is playing a crucial role in supporting strong policies to drive sustained and inclusive growth, catalyzing financing from partners, and unlocking debt treatment where needed. Looking ahead, demand for PRGT



MARRAKESH: Activists hold placards during a demonstration against poverty and climate change during the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), in Marrakech. — AFP

support is projected to reach nearly \$40 billion during 2020-24, about five times the historical average.

The IMF has stepped up its support to low-income countries in several ways. Within weeks of the pandemic, we scaled up our emergency financing at unprecedented speed, providing a 'lifeline' to our most vulnerable members. A year later, the 2021 SDR allocation was an additional 'shot in the arm' that provided liquidity to help low-income countries face the immediate impacts of the pandemic. Today, SDR channeling from economically stronger members to the PRGT provides a much-needed 'booster' to help low-income countries tackle the economic fallout of multiple shocks and address transformational challenges.

"Heading into the annual meetings, we had just successfully met our target to raise \$17 billion (SDR 12.6 billion) for PRGT loan resources (Table 1). And

here in Marrakech, I am delighted that we have also met our fundraising goal of \$3 billion (SDR 2.3 billion) for PRGT subsidy resources, which ensures that PRGT financing can continue to be provided at zero-interest rate," she said.

She said more than 40 contributors have delivered for these urgently needed subsidy resources — one-third of them from emerging market economies, including from here in Africa.

Even countries that had previously benefited from IMF support are now stepping up and giving back in a remarkable show of solidarity. This broad-based show of support is a testament that, even in a more fragmented world, we can still come together to help our most vulnerable members. And it could not be more befitting that this show of solidarity culminates here in Africa, where, for the first time in 50 years, we gather for our annual meetings, she said.

Lifestyle



US singer Madonna speaks onstage during the 65th Annual Grammy Awards at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.



Madonna performs during the Bridgestone Super Bowl XLVI Halftime Show at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana. — AFP photos

Madonna puts health woes behind her to launch 40th anniversary tour

Pop legend Madonna kicked off her 40th anniversary "Celebration Tour" in London on Saturday, entrancing fans three-and-a-half months after a bacterial infection led to her hospitalization and its postponement. The 65-year-old US superstar spent several days in intensive care in New York after being found unconscious in her apartment there in June, and has since been recovering, and rehearsing, for the rearranged 78-date tour. She had not been due to begin at The O2 Arena in the British capital, but after postponing the original July 15 start date in Canada, it became the curtain raiser — to the delight of fans in the UK.

"I wasn't expecting it to be the opening night but as things are, it is really, really excited to see her," teacher Kate Taylor, 46, told AFP ahead of the concert. "I'm really excited for the greatest hits because I think that's what we all want to see," she added. Janet Hutton, turning 50 on Sunday, had travelled from Slovakia to see her icon for the fourth time.

"Madonna is the queen of pop," she said. "You have other people, like Britney or Beyonce or Ariana Grande, but there's only one Madonna. "And when you're a

big fan of Madonna, you feel that you live with her and we live with her now and we're very excited to see her."

Tech issues

Madonna may have put health woes behind her, but she was also forced to overcome some early on-stage technical hitches in the first of four sold-out performances at The O2. After taking to the stage in spectacular fashion — with a powerful rendition of her 1998 hit "Nothing Really Matters" — she had to stop the show briefly to "press the reset button" following sound issues. "This is exactly what you don't want to happen on your opening night so this wasn't planned. I'm sorry," Madonna told the crowd.

After the problems were resolved, she launched into lively versions of 1983 breakthrough single "Holiday", 2005's "Hung Up" and other favorites, while running through an array of elaborate costumes. They included a punk rocker-style ensemble featuring a classic statement bra, black jacket and chains, for her 1982 track "Everybody".

For the first time since her early days, Madonna will not be performing along-

side an on-stage band during the tour. But her daughter Mercy James made a special surprise appearance on opening night, to play a piano on stage as her mum sang her track "Bad Girl". Madonna paused her show again later, this time to send a message of support for Zionists and Palestinians "suffering" amid the "heartbreaking" violence there. In other messaging during the hours-long gig, a photograph of the late singer Sinead O'Connor appeared on large screens while Madonna draped a Ukraine flag over her back before launching into "Don't Cry for Me Argentina".

Madonna — whose full name is Madonna Louise Ciccone — started out as a dancer in the late 1970s in New York. Thanks to classics including "Like A Virgin" and "Material Girl", she went on to win seven Grammy Awards and sell more than 300 million records worldwide. Over the years she has also taken in acting, film directing and business ventures. Her 40th anniversary tour will also include shows in Paris in mid-November, in Montreal in January, before winding up in Mexico on April 24. — AFP

Prominent Iranian director Dariush Mehrjui stabbed to death

One of Iran's most important film-makers, Dariush Mehrjui, was stabbed to death on Saturday evening alongside his wife at their home near Tehran, the judiciary said on Sunday. The 83-year-old was indelibly associated with the Iranian new wave of cinema, having made "The Cow" in 1969, one of the movement's first films.

"During the preliminary investigation, we found that Dariush Mehrjui and his wife, Vahideh Mohammadifar, were killed by multiple stab wound to the neck," said Hossein Fazeli-Harikandi, chief justice of Alborz province, near Tehran, according to Mizan online news agency. In an interview published on Sunday by the newspaper Etemad, the film-maker's wife said that she had been threatened and their home had been burgled.

"The investigation revealed that no complaints had been filed regarding the illegal entry into the Mehrjui's family villa and the theft of their belongings", said Fazeli-Harikandi. Dariush

Mehrjui's most notable films, alongside "The Cow", included "Mr Gullible" (1970), "The Cycle" (1977), "The Tenants" (1987), "Hamoun" (1990), "Sara" (1993), "Pari" (1995) and "Leila" (1997).

The films were all screened at the Forum des Images in Paris, during a tribute attended by Mehrjui. Between 1980 and 1985, the film-maker lived in France where he worked on the documentary "Journey to the Land of Rimbaud" (1983).

On returning to Iran, he triumphed at the box office with "The Tenants". In 1990, he directed "Hamoun", a dark comedy showing 24 hours in the life of an intellectual tormented by his divorce and his intellectual anxieties in an Iran overwhelmed by the technology companies Sony and Toshiba. Throughout the 1990s, Mehrjui also depicted the lives of women in "Sara", "Pari" and "Leila", a melodrama about an infertile woman who encourages her husband to marry a second woman. — AFP



Iranian film director Dariush Mehrjui and his wife Vahida Mohammadifar attend a ceremony in Tehran. - AFP

'FLOWER MOON' DESCENDANTS FEEL PAIN OF MURDERED OSAGE ANCESTORS

As eagles swoop overhead and a cool autumnal wind blows through the cemetery in Gray Horse, on the ancient lands of the Osage people in northern Oklahoma, Margie Burkhart points to the tombs of ancestors murdered a century ago. The tragedy that struck her family is at the heart of the new Martin Scorsese film "Killers of the Flower Moon," taken from the best-selling book of the same name.

In the 1920s, Mollie Burkhart, Margie's grandmother — played in the film by Native American actress Lily Gladstone — saw her mother, her sisters and her brother-in-law murdered. The killings came one after another — in a poisoning, in a bombing, in a bullet to the head. "I think they systematically chose which ones to die," 61-year-old Margie Burkhart told AFP. Intensifying the ordeal even further: The killings were orchestrated by Mollie's own husband, Ernest Burkhart, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, and his uncle William Hale (Robert De Niro) — two white settlers intent on getting their hands on the Osage family's rights to their oil-rich property.

'Just for greed'

Today, the yellowing fields around Gray Horse are dotted with the occasional oil rig — but this is nothing compared to the huge boom at the turn of the 20th century, when the huge machinery covered the prairies for miles around. That's when one of the most prolific oil fields in the US at the time was discovered on the Osage reservation. The Osage people held the exclusive rights to exploiting this underground wealth — rights that legally could only be transferred to or inherited by an Osage member's legal heir.

"The Osages were considered the wealthiest people in the world," said Kathryn Red Corn, who is Osage, speaking in a house built by her great-grandfather in Pawhuska, the seat of the Osage nation's current government. That wealth drew the attention of some nefarious white settlers.

People came to the area and wooed and married members of the Osage nation for their money, said the 82-year-old Red Corn. "They would have them murdered, and then they would inherit what they had," she said. The walls of her living room are decorated with Osage art and black-and-white photos of her ancestors. In all, at least 60 members of the Osage nation — many more by some estimates — were believed murdered during a period that became known as the Reign of Terror.

Suspicious poisoning

Red Corn's grandfather, Raymond Red Corn Senior, who was also Osage, suspected his second wife, a white woman, of poisoning him. He died suddenly in his 40s and in otherwise good health, Kathryn Red Corn said. His death, in the early 1920s, was never investigated.

For Margie Burkhart, the sense of an-



Former director of the Osage Nation Museum Kathryn Red Corn points at a photo of her great-grandfather in her house in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. - AFP photos

ger and suffering around these murders are still palpable — feelings reawakened this summer when she attended a private screening of Scorsese's film. "They took away my (great-)aunties, and I could have had a big family," she said, almost choking on the words. "I could have had a lot of cousins, nieces, nephews — and I grew up without them." She added: "William Hale didn't have to do that," she said of one of the masterminds of the killings. "He was one of the richest people in Osage County." "It was just for greed. He wanted more money."

'No justice'

"Simply because they were Indian, their life had lesser value," lamented 62-year-old Jim Gray, a former principal chief of the Osage nation. He said his great-grandfather Henry Roan was murdered in 1923, also in a plot orga-

nized by Hale, who had taken out a life insurance policy in Roan's name. Both Ernest Burkhart and Hale were eventually convicted of murder — despite their efforts at a cover-up — and received life sentences.

Gray said only a small percentage of the Osage murders in this period were investigated by federal authorities. "These stories have not been told," he said in the small town of Skiatook, north of Tulsa. "There's been no justice for those families." Gray was deeply concerned when he heard that Hollywood had taken an interest in this painful chapter of Osage history.

"Were we just going to be second-tier characters in our own story?" he wondered. Instead, Gray said, "Imagine our surprise when Scorsese reached out and met with us, and listened to us, and effectively rewrote big

portions of the script." Having originally focused on the federal investigation, writers reworked the script to center on the story of Mollie and Ernest Burkhart. "You're going to watch this film and the Osage influence, you're going to be able to feel it," Gray said.

He hopes the film's October 20 US release will spark debate about "the people that were stepped on" to make the country "what it is today." Gray added: "People may not want to talk about it. It's not in our history books." But, he went on, "We need to know our past, especially the mistakes... so that we won't repeat them." Margie Burkhart also hopes the film keeps memories of the Osage's searing trauma from dimming into oblivion. "In two, three years from now, when the movie fades away, I hope people are still talking about it," she said. — AFP



The granddaughter of Mollie Burkhart, Margie Burkhart, looks on at the White Hair Memorial.



Traditional dolls are seen displayed behind the granddaughter of Mollie Burkhart, Margie Burkhart.



Former director of the Osage Nation Museum Kathryn Red Corn shows a signed copy of "Killers of the Flower Moon," a book written by David Grann, in her house.



Former chief of the Osage Nation (2002-2010) Jim Gray points to a photograph of all five chiefs of the Osage Nation at a local art gallery in Skiatook, Oklahoma.



An aerial view shows a pumpjack operating at an oil well in Gray Horse, Oklahoma.

Lifestyle



Attendees gather to follow the main fashion show during the Kibera Fashion Week.



A fashion designer adjusts a creation on an amateur model as other models observe the process during a fitting session at a fashion studio.

Fashion Week hits Kenya's biggest urban slum

Towering models parade down a three-meter (10-foot) high catwalk overlooking the rusting tin roofs of Kibera, the Kenyan capital's biggest urban slum. It's the second edition of Kibera Fashion Week in the heart of the sprawling area and the place is packed. For six hours, interspersed with pop music perfor-

we have style, creativity. What we lack here is opportunities." Avido was born and bred in Kibera, population about 250,000, where he works. His creations have attracted global stars from Bruno Mars to Beyonce. Boasting a range of partnerships from the Goethe Institute to the European Union, Nairobi Design and

the streets. Back home he sewed them into clothes and produced a 15-square-metre piece lit up with rose, green and blue neons that was installed in one of the backstreets of Kibera.

Helen Wanjiru grew up in Nairobi's far from wealthy Kawangware district and has covered her clothing with broad pockets, from the back to front, including the legs. "The pockets are big but they are empty," said the 26-year-old, who moved into fashion after working in data processing.

"It is an analogy—a lot of youths in Kenya, they have education, they have ideas but they don't get jobs because there is no opportunity." The Fashion Week is quite distinct from often stuffy Western shows. The audience, mostly young, loudly acclaims the models and reserves a noisy welcome for designers who come out on to the catwalk.

'Not just about Paris and Milan'

The extravaganza also offers a chance for local fashionistas to show themselves, often in extraordinary outfits. But in a country used to wearing second-hand goods and a market dominated by expensive foreign imports, the haute-couture fashion world remains remote. Avido wants to change that.

"Many people here have only seen fashion shows on TV," he said. "We want to show the people what fashion is. "People like our parents used to think that fashion and design was not an art ... They used to think that if you were involved in fashion and design, you were like a tailor "And if you were



Viti logo model Julie Nasuju (center) talks to another fashion model as they take a break during a fitting session at a fashion studio in the informal settlement of Kibera in Nairobi.



Fashion designer Pius Ochieng works on one of his dystopian inspired designs.

mances, hundreds of spectators from Kibera and across the city, watch the diverse collections float by on Saturday.

"Kibera is full of style," says designer Avido, who launched the first show last year. "People don't get to see it because the image they have about Kibera is post-electoral violence, prostitution, drug abuse," explains the 27-year-old, whose real name is David Ochieng.

"We want to show that here,

the Masai Mbili group, the show has brought together 11 projects from 376 candidates with a wide variety of styles using cotton, jute, wool, pearls and even metal.

Empty pockets

Designer Pius Ochieng, who is not related to Avido, chose a "Mad Max" post-apocalyptic approach. The 26-year-old harvested computer motherboards, spark plugs, LED lighting, chains, springs and other metal bits from dumps and



A models stands on the catwalk while showcasing a dystopian inspired design at the main fashion show.



Models get ready to take the catwalk while wearing dystopian inspired designs.

involved in modeling, they would see you maybe like a prostitute."

Project manager Violet Omulo said she attended the show, "to chill, have fun and discover upcoming designers. "African fashion is special and it's coming up. "We need to promote it with such

events so that people know that we can be creative ... that it's not just about Paris or Milan. "Kenya, also in Africa in general, has talented designers." she said.—AFP



A fashion designer adjusts a necklace on an amateur model during a fitting session at a fashion studio.



A model is helped by an assistant to get her hair done at the backstage of the main show of the Kibera Fashion Week.



Fashion designer Pius Ochieng fits in one of his dystopian inspired designs at his house and creative studio in the informal settlement of Kibera in Nairobi ahead of the Kibera Fashion Week. — AFP photos



A model holds an umbrella while walking the catwalk at the main fashion show during the Kibera Fashion Week.



Models dance and sign during a break at the backstage of main show of the Kibera Fashion Week.



Attendees stand next to a banner at the entrance of the main fashion show during the Kibera Fashion Week.

Lifestyle



Designer Avido puts Kenyan slum on the fashion map

His creations are made in Kibera, the largest urban slum in Kenya, but have attracted the attention of global stars such as Beyonce and Bruno Mars and featured in Vogue magazine. For Avido, his designs have a dual purpose: both to show to the world what can come from the impoverished Nairobi neighborhood where he was born and raised, and to make it a better place. Last year, the 27-year-old designer launched Kibera Fashion Week and the second edition was staged on Saturday in the heart of the sprawling slum.

Avido, whose real name is David Ochieng, drew inspiration from his journey to create one of his mottos: "Great things can come from places least expected." The eldest of four children raised by a single mother in Kibera, Avido had never thought about pursuing a career in fashion. "Looking for an alibi to keep me alive is what pushed me into fashion," he said in his deep voice.

He wanted to escape life on the street, saying 60-70 percent of his childhood friends had lost their lives through crime or drugs. Forced to leave school at the age of 11 because of a lack of money, he tried to stay out of trouble — first by playing football and later working on construction sites before he joined a dance troupe. He then began designing outfits for the dancers. "I started spending time with the tailors that were sewing the clothes that we were dancing with," he said. "I learned sewing even without knowing."

Basket hat, bomber jackets and kimonos

He went on to train as a fashion designer. "He was really motivated... a go-getter," recalled Japheth Okoth, a charity employee who helped Avido get his first sewing machine. "The moment he got that machine, he started designing clothes, making shirts," he said. One of his garments brought him to the attention of Jamaican singer Don Carlos, the

style, mixing a variety of patterns and textures, notably ankara, the vibrant African wax fabric, and the velvet found on his kimonos and bomber jackets. His inspiration comes not from the catwalks of New York, Paris or Milan, but from the streets of Kibera.

"Here in the street you get to have everything: when you speak about avant-garde, official, everything is in the street," he said. One of his signa-

singer Chronixx, Coldplay frontman Chris Martin and Beyonce, who commissioned him and other African designers for her "Black is King" project. His creations were also featured during Berlin Fashion Week in 2019.

'No point growing alone'

But Avido keeps both feet firmly in Kibera, where all his clothes are made. When Vogue Italia contacted him for an interview and photoshoot, he insisted that the models they used were young women from Kibera and that they were paid. Traumatized by his childhood days when he would have to go to class in ragged uniforms, Avido — through his eponymous foundation — also makes uniforms for Kibera pupils, pays school fees for some and teaches young mothers and deaf women how to sew.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he also produced thousands of masks to be distributed free of charge. "Fashion is not just about making clothes, but it's a platform to be able to make our community a better place," he said. "When it comes to projects, I try to think of the impact that it is going to have and if it is not going to have an impact around, I normally am not going into it," he added.

Despite his global renown, he has no intention of leaving his native slum. "I don't see the point of growing alone. I could grow, leave, be part of the Paris Fashion Week. But I'd rather have a fashion week here and inspire people here," he said. — AFP



Kenyan rising fashion designer and Kibera Fashion Week founder David Ochieng looks on as he scouts the locations for the main show of the Kibera Fashion Week.

founder of reggae group Black Uhuru who was visiting Kibera on the sidelines of a concert in Kenya in 2017. Avido offered him a shirt, and the encounter convinced him to devote his life to fashion.

With his "Looklike Avido" label, he developed a colorful, gender-neutral

ture products, however, comes from the Kenyan countryside: a conical basket woven by his grandmother, which he turned upside down and wore as a hat one rainy day.

His style has caught the eye of Bruno Mars, rapper Ty Dolla Sign, reggae



Young frogs may camouflage selves as animal poo: Study

The young offspring of a frog native to Southeast Asia display an "unusual color pattern", probably to camouflage themselves "as animal droppings" to escape predators, according to a study. A team of researchers studying juvenile Wallace's flying frogs — which are bright red with small white dots — made the findings thanks to an experiment at Vienna's Schoenbrunn Zoo, the zoo said on Thursday. "The young frogs probably count on the fact that they will be seen but considered something inedible," University of Vienna researcher Susanne Stueckler said.

She and several others recently published their findings in the journal Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology. To test their hypothesis that the frogs were trying to escape predators, the researchers created differently colored wax frog models and placed them in the zoo's rainforest house. The house "contains a diverse community of avian predators that are well known to use color vision to detect frogs as prey", the study notes. It found that the attack rate was significantly greater for red than for green but was reduced by half when red models had white spots. "We show that the unusual color pattern of juveniles likely functions as a masquerade of animal droppings," the researchers said. — AFP

'Working on the rubble': Artist paints on quake-hit Turkey city

Artist Saype, known for his murals around the world, unveiled on Friday a piece painted on rubble in the southern Turkish city Antakya, devastated by February's deadly quake. The February 6 quake in Turkey and war-ravaged Syria killed more than 55,000 people and left thousands homeless and reliant on international assistance. The black and white mural of two hands holding each other was painted on 1,000 square meters (10,700 square feet) of rubble, in a space that was once home to residential buildings, a bakery and tailor. "It used to be a lively street," Guillaume

Legros, known as Saype, told AFP.

"When the earthquake hit, I was moved. I came here in July and I couldn't believe it. I realized the extent of the catastrophe," the Frenchman, whose wife was born in Turkey, said. He decided to dedicate a project to the survivors of the earthquake on the ruins of the now unrecognizable ancient town. "I worked directly on the rubble, on old homes, on family photos. I'd never painted on stones before," the artist said, who is known for painting on grass.

During the 16 days Saype was working on the piece, he met locals who

had lived in tents and shipping containers for eight months since the disaster. "We met many people who used to live in the apartments upon whose rubble were painting. They came to collect objects." "They were shocked but thanked us for coming," he said, adding that he wants his work to put a spotlight on the needs of survivors in Antakya. The artist now plans to sell prints of the piece to raise money for survivors and families of victims. — AFP



This aerial photograph shows French-Swiss artist Guillaume Legros, known as Saype working on his giant biodegradable landart painting located between damaged buildings from the Beyond Walls project in Hatay.



French-Swiss artist Guillaume Legros working on his giant biodegradable landart painting.

US man pleads guilty to theft of 'Wizard of Oz' slippers

An elderly US man pleaded guilty Friday to the theft nearly 20 years ago of a pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in the classic film "The Wizard of Oz." The sequined shoes — indelibly associated with the character Dorothy clicking them together and saying repeatedly, "there's no place like home" — were stolen in 2005 from the Judy Garland Museum in the actress's hometown of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The footwear was recovered in an FBI sting in 2018 and Terry Martin, 76, was charged with the theft in May this year.

Martin pleaded guilty to one count of theft of major artwork, and he remains free until his sentencing date which has not yet been set, the US Justice Department office in North Dakota said. Martin told a Minnesota court on Friday that he had used a sledgehammer to smash a plexiglass case and stolen the slippers because he mistakenly believed they were made with valuable ruby gems. After learning that the "gems" were made of glass when he tried to sell them on the black market, "I didn't want anything to do with them," Martin told a federal judge in Duluth, according to the Minnesota-based Star-Tribune newspaper.

Martin did not provide any details on how he had discarded the slippers, and the terms of his plea agreement are sealed. But prosecutors have recommended that Martin, who appeared in court in a wheelchair with an oxygen tank, does not serve any time in prison. The slippers are among four pairs that Garland wore during the making of the beloved 1939 film. They are, the Justice Department said, "widely viewed as among the most recognizable memorabilia in American film history."



At the time of the theft the shoes were insured for \$1 million but their current value is around \$3.5 million. When the slippers were recovered in 2018, they were authenticated by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, which has another of the four genuine pairs. After the theft, police in Grand Rapids received numerous tips, chief Scott Johnson said in 2018. One claimed the shoes Dorothy wore on the yellow brick road were nailed to a wall in a roadside diner. Another insisted they were thrown in an iron-ore pit. "They're more than just a pair of shoes," said Johnson at the time. "They're an enduring symbol of the power of belief." — AFP

Disposable diaper scare causes Panama-Florida flight to turn around

A flight from Panama to the United States made a u-turn Friday after the discovery of a suspicious package in the toilet that turned out to be... an adult diaper, airport officials said. Panama's civil aviation authority at first announced the Copa flight between Panama City and Tampa, Florida, had to turn around due to a presumed "bomb threat."

Back on the tarmac, the plane was emptied of passengers and searched by a police explosives unit. The agents discovered that the object was in fact "a disposable adult diaper" carefully wrapped in a black rubbish bag, airport security head Jose Castro said. Police posted a photo of the suspect package on social media. — AFP

Sports

Angel Yin beat world number one Lilia Vu in Shanghai to win maiden LPGA title

Reigning champ Kim shares PGA Vegas lead with Hadwin, Griffin

SHANGHAI: Angel Yin won on the LPGA Tour for the first time as she held her nerve on the first playoff hole to beat world number one Lilia Vu in Shanghai on Sunday. On a dramatic final day that saw the lead change hands repeatedly at Qizhong Garden Golf Club, the Americans both finished 14-under after four rounds, a shot ahead of the chasing pack, to ensure they went to a playoff.

In hazy conditions at the \$2.1 million event, overnight co-leader Yin birdied the par-four 18th in the sudden-death playoff. It was Yin's first victory on the LPGA Tour in her 159th start. "Feels amazing. I got to say," said the 25-year-old, who is ranked 35 in the world. "I was playing today and I was like, wow, winning is tough. It's not easy. So hats off to Lilia for playing so well last day again, and obviously she's been playing really well." Vu had shot a final-round four-under-par 68 and Yin, who shared the overnight lead with Sweden's Maja Stark, carded a 70 to take them into the playoff. Vu said she was happy with her performance during the week but felt she was not at her best in the final round. "I made a lot of mistakes today, to be honest, and I felt like this was definitely not my A-game," she said.

"Today was just Angel's day, I'm happy for her," she added. South Korea's Choi Hye-jin, who started the day in 24th position, rocketed up the leaderboard with an eight-under 64 for third place on 13-under for the tournament. Choi at one point held the clubhouse lead. In the end, she finished alongside Germany's Esther Henseleit, Liu Yu of China and the Thai duo of Ariya Jutanugarn and Pavarisa Yoktuan. Sweden's Stark had led after three rounds but lost her nerve with a 72 to finish tied eighth.

Danielle Kang of the United States, who won the tournament the last time it was played, in 2019, carded a final-round 71 for a share of 17th. As part

of the LPGA swing through Asia, the tour moves on to South Korea next for the BMW Ladies Championship from October 19 to 22. The LPGA Shanghai was the first international golf event in China since the pandemic.

Meanwhile, defending champion Tom Kim closed with a 25-foot birdie putt to fire a nine-under par 62 and share the lead after Saturday's third round of the PGA's Shriners Children's Open. The 21-year-old from South Korea birdied four of the last six holes to stand alongside Canada's Adam Hadwin and American Lanto Griffin on 15-under 198 after 54 holes at TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas. Kim, a runner-up in this year's British Open at Royal Liverpool, made nine birdies in all plus an eagle against two bogeys after starting the day six strokes adrift. "It was great. It's not bogey-free but it's still nine-under par," Kim said. "I played great today."

"I got into that place where I was comfortable and I was very calm. I didn't feel like I was rushing into anything. I was just really in my place. I had a lot of good shots. I had a lot of good looks. I left myself in some tough situations but recovered really well."

Hadwin, who began the day five off the pace, fired a bogey-free 63, his eight birdies including a tap-in at the par-5 16th after driving the green in two and another at the par-3 17th after landing his tee shot within three feet of the hole.

"I was a little off early," Hadwin said. "I chipped in on one to settle things down. I had a great up and down from just behind the green on three as well. And then I started hitting some really good shots. I flushed it out there. I've been hitting it really well for three days. Made a few more putts today."

Hadwin's only PGA victory came at the 2017 Valparaiso Championship but he lost a playoff to American Rickie Fowler in July at Detroit. Griffin, a 36-hole



SHANGHAI: USA's Angel Yin celebrates with her trophy after winning the Shanghai LPGA golf tournament in Shanghai on October 15, 2023. - AFP

co-leader whose only PGA win came at the 2019 Houston Open, began with 12 pars then birdied three of the last six holes to fire 68 and stay at the top.

"That was frustrating. I was hitting good putts but they weren't quite right," Griffin said of his birdie-free start. "They were just all on the edges. Just tried to hang in there. I'm pretty proud of myself for hanging in there on the back and giving myself a shot for tomorrow."

Kim seeks his third career PGA title after triumphs in last year's Wyndham Championship and in

Vegas, where he won by three strokes and also fired 62 in the third round. "Nice to come back here the next year and shoot the same score as I did last year in round three," Kim said.

"I didn't try to force anything. I just tried to hit the best shots I can and if it works out great. I'm glad it worked. Whatever happens, I'm glad I gave myself a chance tomorrow." Canada's Taylor Pendrith, South Korea's Lee Kyung-Hoon and American Vince Whaley were one stroke back sharing third on 199. - AFP



MANDALIKA: First-placed Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia (C), second-placed Aprilia racing's Spanish rider Maverick Vinales (L), and third-placed Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP's French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrate during the podium ceremony after competing in the Indonesian Grand Prix MotoGP at the Mandalika International Circuit in Kuta Mandalika, Central Lombok on October 15, 2023. - AFP

Italy's Bagnaia wins Indonesia MotoGP to reclaim title lead

MANDALIKA: Italy's Francesco Bagnaia won the Indonesia MotoGP on Sunday with a spectacular ride that took him back to the top of the championship standings after rival Jorge Martin crashed out. Maverick Vinales (Aprilia) came in a close second behind the 26-year-old Ducati star, with Fabio Quartararo (Yamaha) in third at the Mandalika circuit on the Indonesian resort island of Lombok. Bagnaia made a mesmerising surge from 13th to the top spot after rising to the podium places within the first four laps, refusing to let Pramac's Martin punish him further for a poor performance in practice and qualifying. It was set to be another dream double weekend for Martin after winning Saturday's sprint and taking the lead from the green light, up from sixth, to dominate the early stages of the race.

But it quickly turned into a nightmare for the 25-year-old Spaniard when he crashed on lap 14 of Sunday's main event, a potentially huge moment in the title race. Vinales put the pressure on Bagnaia in the late stages after being overtaken, coming to within four-tenths of a second of the pack leader.

But the Italian, known for his phenomenal defence, saw out the race to turn the tables on Martin, opening up an 18-point gap with just five race weekends left and prompting wild celebrations in his garage. "I think we were deserving a race like this," Bagnaia told reporters. "I was doing the maximum I could then when I saw

Martin going. I said to myself 'take care of the tyres' and that was the correct thing. I am very, very happy." He later told a news conference that he was frustrated before Sunday's race because he had been "struggling a lot" on new tyres, and worked into the night with his team. Martin, who was several seconds clear when he crashed, said handing the title advantage to Bagnaia had not affected him. "It happens. I was still pushing... and still focused on being fast," he said. "I did an amazing race until that point. I have to be calm, (there's) still 10 races to go, still a long way." Frenchman Quartararo said he was unhappy with his speed but content with his spot on the podium. "To be back in the podium, from Austin to India was a long time, now from India to here was shorter so really happy," he told reporters.

Bezzecchi heroics

It was a superlative weekend for Italian Marco Bezzecchi, the Mooney VR46 rider who surprised by riding just a week after surgery on a broken collarbone. Starting from ninth on the grid, he produced a heroic ride to fifth behind Fabio Di Giannantonio.

That kept him 63 points behind in the title race, which he still has a slim chance of winning. The race was marred by a series of crashes in hot and humid conditions, with only 14 riders out of 21 finishing the race.

Marc Marquez's race ended when he slid off the track in lap eight, with the Spaniard shouting to the sky as he left his Honda bike after a dismal weekend in which he also failed to complete Saturday's sprint race. Marquez will join Gresini Racing for the 2024 season. Luca Marini, who immediately lost his pole position to Martin from the green light, saw his day go from bad to worse when he went down at turn 10 after being nudged by Brad Binder, sliding off the track. -AFP

"He's world-class for a reason," Tszyu said of the Las Vegas-based Mendoza, who earned his right to face Tszyu with crushing upset knockout wins over Jeison Rosario and the highly-touted Sebastian Fundora. "But he's second best." The victory improved the Australian to 24-0-0, with 17 knockouts, and cemented his status as the number one challenger to big-talking American Charlo, who holds the other three major sanctioning body world crowns—WBA, WBC, and IBF—in the 154-pound division.

Tszyu won the WBO interim title when he stopped American Tony Harrison in March and defended it with a spectacular first-round demolition of Mexico's Carlos Ocampo in June to position himself as the mandatory challenger to Charlo. But, instead of facing Tszyu as he was supposed to, Charlo opted to move up two weight classes to super middleweight and take on Canelo Alvarez in a more lucrative bout last month. Charlo not

Bumrah stunned by 'temple celebration' going viral

AHMEDABAD: India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah said he was surprised to see his World Cup "temple point" gesture go viral especially as he's usually "too tired to celebrate". The 29-year-old was man of the match in Saturday's seven-wicket rout of Pakistan.

Along with New Zealand pair Matt Henry and Mitchell Santner, he is the tournament's leading wicket-taker with eight in three games. Bumrah's eight wickets have cost just 93 runs. His performance in the 132,000-seater Ahmedabad Stadium on Saturday also saw him bring out his distinctive celebration—pointing his right index finger to his temple.

It's a gesture used by England footballer Marcus Rashford, a player at Bumrah's favourite club Manchester United. Three-time tennis Grand Slam title winner Stan Wawrinka also utilises it at key moments.

"I had no intentions of making it viral or spreading it everywhere," Bumrah told the ICC Digital Insider on Sunday. "It just came to my mind. I'd seen Rashford do it as well. I thought it was cool. There's no particular big back story behind it. At the end I decided to do it."

"Usually I'm too tired to celebrate. But that is one occasion where I did celebrate." Bumrah took two wickets in India's opening win of the World Cup against Australia and added four more in the win over Afghanistan. On Saturday, he dismissed dufferman Mohammad Rizwan and then Shadab Khan before finishing the match with 2-19. Despite a 100% record, India are not thinking yet of a third World Cup title to add to triumphs in 1983 and on home soil in 2011.

"We're not thinking about the momentum. The team is right now thinking about recovery," Bumrah said as India head for Pune and their fourth game against Bangladesh on Thursday. "We've played three games back-to-back and the result has been on the good side because our preparation has been good. The team vibe is also good. People are pretty relaxed. They're looking to execute, they're looking to have fun with each other. It's a good place to be now." - AFP



India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates.

only lost but was stripped of his WBO belt, with Tszyu elevated from interim titlist to full champion.

"Charlo, where are you?," Tszyu said mockingly in the ring, tapping the belt he took from him. "He'll probably think in his delusional head that he would beat me. Come get it. Let's prove to everyone who is king of this division." Charlo, who has taunted Tszyu as a "paper champion", has indicated he plans to return to the super welterweight division, with a fight between the two in Las Vegas seen as possible. Against Mendoza, Tszyu was simply too powerful and precise.

After sizing each other up in round one, Tszyu got on the front foot, landing jabs to the face and body before the American had a better third round. The patient Tszyu kept stalking Mendoza and a powerful left-right combination opened a cut on the American's nose. An uppercut in the fifth added a bloody nick under his swelling right eye. -AFP



LUCKNOW: Australia's Sean Abbott (C), Cameron Green (R) and Josh Hazlewood attend a practice session on the eve of their 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match against Sri Lanka at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow on October 15, 2023. - AFP

Aussies 'need to start winning quick' to rescue WCup bid

LUCKNOW: Australia captain Pat Cummins admitted Sunday the five-time champions have "got to start winning and start winning quick" to rescue their faltering World Cup campaign. Australia have lost both their opening matches, by six wickets to hosts India and 134 runs to South Africa, their heaviest defeat at a World Cup. Despite boasting the batting firepower of David Warner and Steve Smith, they have yet to post a total of 200. "We're obviously 0-2, so we've got to start winning and start winning quick," said Cummins ahead of Monday's clash against Sri Lanka in Lucknow. "Every game now becomes almost like a final. You've got to win just about all of them." The figures so far make for grim reading for Australia. None of their batsmen have made a half-century with Smith top-scoring with 46 against India and Marnus Labuschagne matching that modest mark in the rout by South Africa.

They have also been hamstrung by their fielding performances. Against India, Virat Kohli was dropped on 12 before he went on to make a match-winning 85. Had the catch been taken, India, chasing just 200 to win, would have been teetering at 20-4. It got worse against South Africa where five chances went down.

Needing 312 to win, Australia slumped to 70-6 and were reduced to a damage limitation exercise in an effort to shore up their run rate. "No doubt we haven't been up to the standard that we like to hold," said Cummins. "We've been off the mark and been outplayed both games. It's not ideal at all. I think everyone was a little bit flat after the last game." Australia are second from bottom of the 10-team table, behind even the Netherlands and propped up only by Afghanistan.

On Monday, they tackle fellow winless side Sri Lanka who have had no problems scoring runs -- 326 against South Africa and 344 in the game with Pakistan. Unfortunately for the 1996 champions, they conceded a World Cup record 428 to the Proteas while Pakistan's pursuit to win by six wickets was the highest successful chase in tournament history.

Sri Lanka came out on top 3-2 in a five-match series with Australia on home soil in June last year. However, Australia eased to a comfortable 87-run win when they sides met at the 2019 World Cup at The Oval.

"Looking back at 2019, India and South Africa were the two teams that we lost to in the round games there," added Cummins. "I think in the last year, they're kind of the two teams that we've had the most trouble against. So the opportunity now is we've got some teams we haven't played for a while that we've had a lot of success against and we can be really confident when we go out there." - AFP

Tszyu sends Charlo warning with dominant WBO title defence

GOLD COAST: Undefeated Australian Tim Tszyu scored a unanimous points decision over tenacious American Brian Mendoza to defend his WBO super welterweight title on Sunday, then taunted Jermell Charlo to "come and get it". The 28-year-old, son of renowned former world champion Kostya Tszyu, was brilliant and brutal in the 12-round battle on Australia's Gold Coast that left Mendoza bloodied but somehow still standing. All three judges scored the bout in his favour, 116-111, 116-112 and 117-111.

Sports

Nagelsmann enjoys 3-1 win over USA in Germany debut

Musiala's speed and skill were major highlights of the performance from Germany

NEW YORK: Julian Nagelsmann got off to a winning start as Germany's coach on Saturday with his team securing a comfortable 3-1 win over the United States in a friendly. Germany looked much improved from the team that had suffered a 4-1 home defeat to Japan last month, a result which saw Hansi Flick fired as coach after a run of five matches without a win.

The Euro 2024 hosts could ill-afford another surprise loss but they delivered a solid, well-rounded performance after recovering from a Christian Pulisic opener for the USA in the match at East Hartford, Connecticut. Although Pascal Gross struck the post early on for Germany, who were missing midfielder Joshua Kimmich due to illness, the home side looked threatening with Pulisic and Tim Weah lively on the flanks.

Gio Reyna, who had gone through a bitter public row with coach Gregg Berhalter after the World Cup last year, returned to the starting line-up and provided some creative touches as the Americans started well. Pulisic put the USA ahead in the 27th minute with a superb solo goal, cutting in from the left flank and then unleashing a fine drive into the far corner.

But that appeared to serve merely as a wake-up call for Germany with Ilkay Gundogan levelling in the 39th minute after good work from Leroy Sane. Sane dribbled across the American defense, played a one-two with Gundogan and tried to go round American goalkeeper Matt Turner, who could only

push the ball into the path of Gundogan, who had a simple conversion.

Germany went ahead in the 58th with center forward Niclas Fuellkrug slotting home after a perfectly weighted one-touch pass from Robin Gosens. With the USA defense at disarray, Fuellkrug then set up the lively Jamal Musiala for a simple tap-in to make it 3-1 for the Euro 2024 hosts.

Sane should have made it four when he was set up nicely by Musiala, but the Bayern Munich winger fired his shot wide from a promising position. Musiala's speed and skill were major highlights of the performance from Germany with Gundogan, as always, calm and intelligent in the center of midfield.

"Against a good team with a lot of speed, we took a very good step in terms of football," said 36-year-old Nagelsmann, who felt his team had been too rushed in the opening 45 minutes. "In the second half, we also had a fast pace of play, but more patience and control. That was the difference."

Berhalter's Americans missed the impact of injured central midfielder Tyler Adams and Pulisic noted their weakness at that back. "It hurts. We had a good start to the game. I felt like we hurt them in a lot of moments. But yeah, little mistakes here and there. Defensively, we can be a bit better," the AC Milan winger said. "Obviously, we have to give them credit. They have some unbelievable players. They played a strong game." Germany will face Mexico in Philadelphia on Tuesday, when the USA will take on Ghana in Nashville. — AFP



EAST HARTFORD: Germany's #10 Florian Wirtz and USA's #19 Joe Scally fight for the ball during international friendly match between Germany and USA at Pratt & Whitney Stadium, in East Hartford, Connecticut. — AFP



National Guards Undersecretary, Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Rifai poses for a group photo with the fencers and other officials.

Kuwait National Guard cares for all society segments

KUWAIT: The National Guards Undersecretary, Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Rifai, affirmed on Sunday the squad support for all segments of the society namely special cases. Lieut. Gen Al-Rifai's remarks came in a statement released by the Guards after a fencing match for special challenges' cases, held under sponsorship of the National Guards Deputy Chief Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, at the officers' club.

The match pitted the internationally acclaimed Kuwaiti Paralympic fencer, Tareq Al-Gallaf against the US fencer, Rick Swagger. Al-Gallaf beat the American fencer 15-13 in the game, attended by the honorary chairperson of the Kuwaiti Club for the Handicapped, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah, and the US Charge d'Affaires, James



Kuwaiti and American fencers clash during the match. — KUNA photos

Holtznider. It was also attended by the deputy director general of sports for all at the Public Authority for Sport, Hamed Al-Hazim, Ameera Al-Hassan, the Head of the Office at UN-Habitat (United Nations Human Settlements Programme), and the chairperson of the military cooperation office at the American Embassy, Colonel Lamont Jupuc. — KUNA

Qatar's Sheikh Jassim withdraws bid to buy Man Utd

MANCHESTER: Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani has withdrawn a bid to buy Manchester United, a source close to the deal told AFP on Saturday. United announced nearly a year ago that they were exploring "strategic alternatives to enhance the club's growth", with a full sale as one of the options.

Sheikh Jassim and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe were the front-runners after several rounds of bidding earlier this year, but the process has stalled in recent months despite the anger of supporters towards current owners, the Glazer family.

The Daily Mail reported that Ratcliffe is now set to secure a 25 percent stake in the club for around £1.5 billion (\$1.7 billion). The Glazers have owned the En-

glish giants since a leveraged takeover in 2005 for £790 million saddled the club with huge debts.

Figures in March showed United's debt has now grown to £970 million. Sheikh Jassim's bid was for full control of United and promised to clear the club's borrowings. Further talks this week broke down despite an improved bid believed to be around £5 billion.

By contrast, Ratcliffe is reportedly willing to buy a smaller stake to break the impasse over the Glazers' £6 billion asking price. Founder of petrochemicals giant Ineos, Ratcliffe is a boyhood United fan and already has a portfolio of sports investments.

Ineos owns French club Nice and Swiss side Lausanne-Sport, as well as leading cycling team Ineos Grenadiers and is a major sponsor of the Mercedes Formula One team. United's fortunes on the field have also faded under the Glazers' tenure. The Red Devils have not won the Premier League since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 and last won the Champions League in 2008. They currently sit 10th in the Premier League and have lost their first two Champions League group stage matches for the first time in the club's history. — AFP

Biggar bows out, but insists Wales' future is bright

MARSEILLE: Dan Biggar ended his stellar career with Wales in a disappointing defeat by Argentina in the World Cup quarter-final, but the Toulon fly-half believes the future is bright for Welsh rugby. Biggar's 112th Test appearance in the red jersey saw Wales go down 27-19 to Argentina on Saturday, leaving the playmaker described by Wales coach Warren Gatland as a "great servant" feeling a mix of "frustration and disappointment".

"You know sometimes when you're absolutely hands-down beaten, you can hold your hands up and let it slide a little bit but we felt like we had control of that game, certainly for large periods of that first half," Biggar said.

"But fair play to Argentina, they hung on in there and turned the game into a bit of a brawl really, which probably suited them a bit more than it did us." While Biggar steps away from the international stage, he will continue at club level in the Top 14 with Toulon, but admitted he would miss the passion of being involved in the Wales set-up.

"Yeah, that's been my character from day one really. Hopefully people will remember me for being passionate and caring about every moment. I am going to miss it," said the 33-year-old, who leaves as Wales' fourth-highest Test points scorer with 633 points and also fourth on the list of their most-capped players.

"I didn't think I would be particularly emotional, I almost thought I would be relieved, but there's definitely a bit of sadness. I'm definitely going to miss it in the months and years to come. "It'll be raw for a couple of days, maybe a couple of weeks. But when I reflect back on my career, hopefully I'll be fairly pleased with what I've done."

Heart on his sleeve

Biggar, who played at Ospreys and Northampton before heading to southeast France, insisted that the future of Welsh rugby was "100 percent" bright without him. "They've been a vital part of the success, or redemption, of this team," he said of the younger players coming through, led by co-captains Jac Morgan, 23, and Dewi Lake, 24.

Wales came into this World Cup with many predicting they would struggle to emerge from their group. "If you'd offered this five months ago, we'd have snapped your hand off. But as we stand here, we're pretty disappointed. This young group have driven standards and pushed us to keep going.

"I've got no doubt they will achieve some really good things if they keep the squad together and allow boys like Sam Costelow some time in that 10 seat and allow him to drive it and make it his team." Costelow was unfortunate enough to be in the first receiver position when his pass was picked off by Argentina veteran Nicolas Sanchez for an intercept try that effectively ended the game as a contest.

"I said that to him at the end: 'Just enjoy making this team your own now for the next few years'. Hopefully that will come through," Biggar said. Lake said it was tough to lose a figure like Biggar, who also won three caps for the British and Irish Lions. "Biggs' has given his time to Welsh rugby. He's a centurion, a Lions tourer, a leader," the hooker said.

"He has been unbelievable in a Wales jersey and a Lions jersey. He takes hits like no 10 I've seen in world rugby. In terms of his leadership and speaking after the game, we will miss him and I think he will miss us as well.

"He has been an unbelievable ambassador for Welsh rugby," Gatland said he had enjoyed seeing Biggar grow into the player he had become. "He has had some incredible highs and some lows as well. When I remember him as a youngster coming in and the way he has matured and developed as a player, it's been pretty special," the New Zealander said.

"He really wants to win, he wears his heart on his sleeve and that is one of the big accolades that he has brought to this team over the years." — AFP



MARSEILLE: Argentina's fly-half Nicolas Sanchez (C) catches the ball during the France 2023 Rugby World Cup quarter-final match between Wales and Argentina at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille, south-eastern France. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, **ESMAIL**, holder of Passport No. M0230004 do hereby change my name to ISMAIL AMARJI (as given name) AMARJI (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known as in the name of ISMAIL AMARJI and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all documents. #4246 – 16-10-2023

I, **Natasha** holder of Indian Passport #Z4825793 have changed my name to be Natasha Priti Menezes (New Name) from Natasha Priti Menezes Fernandes (Old Name) (C#4244) 15-10-2023

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Hurkacz beats Rublev to win Shanghai Masters in thriller

Zheng takes second career title at Zhengzhou Open



SHANGHAI: Hubert Hurkacz saved a match point before defeating fifth seed Andrey Rublev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (10/8) to win a thrilling Shanghai Masters final on Sunday. It was the big-serving Pole's second Masters triumph, to go with the one he won in Miami in 2021, and a seventh ATP title in all.

"It was such a battle, especially emotionally," the 16th seed said after surviving a nail-biting third-set tie break in front of the watching Roger Federer. "I had a match point and Andrey hit an amazing serve and then he had a match point and then I had some match points. "It was back and forth and such a tricky match." Hurkacz had Rublev under pressure early and broke the Russian with a vicious whipped forehand that Rublev had no chance of returning to lead 4-2 in the first set. The 25-year-old Rublev let out an angry roar in response and then Hurkacz easily held his own booming serve to go up 5-2.

The Pole Hurkacz came into the final with a tournament-leading 77 aces and Rublev could not handle his blistering serve. Hurkacz sealed the first set in 31

minutes — and it was inevitably with another ace. He sent down 21 over the course of a topsy-turvy final.

It was the first set that Rublev had dropped in Shanghai. But Rublev, who won the Monte Carlo Masters in April, struck back to break his opponent's torpedo of a serve for a 2-0 lead at the start of the second set. A rejuvenated Rublev kept the 26-year-old Hurkacz at bay to send them into a deciding third set. Rublev on Saturday described his angry outbursts in his semi-final win over Grigor Dimitrov as "ugly" and he was struggling again with his emotions at times. In contrast, Hurkacz went about his business with quiet determination.

Meanwhile, Zheng Qinwen swept to her second career title — her first on home soil — at the Zhengzhou Open on Sunday, winning a hard-fought three-set final and celebrating with an impromptu karaoke session at the trophy ceremony.

The popular 21-year-old capped an incredible week with a 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Czech seventh-seed Barbora Krejickova to become just the

third Chinese woman to win a singles title at the WTA 500 level or higher, after Li Na and Zheng Saisai.

This year marked the first time in WTA Tour history that three different Chinese women have won a singles title in a season, with Zhu Lin triumphing in Hua Hin, Wang Xiyu in Guangzhou and Zheng claiming her first trophy in Palermo in July.

After winning Asian Games gold on September 29, the 24th-ranked Zheng suffered a disappointing first-round loss at the China Open to Elena Rybakina, but she recovered remarkably by securing the biggest title of her young career 13 days later.

"That was such a special experience to win my first 500 in China, especially in Zhengzhou," said Zheng, who will return to the top 20 in the rankings on Monday. Zheng was the first to break as she leapt to a 2-0 advantage but Krejickova grabbed the next five games and took a one-set lead in 39 minutes.

Zheng's first-serve percentage was a shockingly low 29 percent and the Chinese number one knew that statistic had to change for her to stand a chance

against the former French Open champion. The home favorite began the second set on the right foot, breaking from the start and carving out a 5-2 gap.

Her first-serve percentage was a healthy 68 percent in that set, and she won 92 percent of those points. The final set was a tug of war, with the quality of play going up. Rallies got longer, and each player came up with incredible shots when their backs were against the wall.

A brilliant crosscourt backhand winner gave Zheng a pair of break points in game seven and the 21-year-old inched ahead 4-3 on a Krejickova double fault, her sixth of the match. Krejickova struck back but she could not hold off Zheng, who regained her advantage and served out the victory in style, with an impressive one-two punch and three service winners.

"Definitely a tough day for me but it was a great week," said Krejickova, who was bidding for a third title of the season from four finals contested. Only Iga Swiatek (seven) and Aryna Sabalenka (six) have reached more singles finals than Krejickova in 2023. — AFP

Bach coy as members call for rule change to extend his term

MUMBAI: International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach refused to rule out standing for another term as several members called Sunday for a change of rules that would let him extend his time in office. The German was elected for a first eight-year term in 2013 and re-elected for a further four-year spell in 2021.

Allowing the 69-year-old former Olympic fencing champion to remain in the post beyond 2025 would require a change to the Olympic Charter. Nevertheless, there were several calls for Bach to continue during Sunday's opening day of the 141st IOC Session in Mumbai.

Luis Mejia Oviedo, the president of the Dominican Republic Olympic Committee, hailed Bach's speech during Saturday's opening ceremony when he announced plans to look at creating an eSports Games. Oviedo, lauding Bach's response to Russia's invasion

of Ukraine, said the IOC needs to "rely on the leadership which you have shown".

Paraguay's Camilo Perez Lopez Moreira urged Bach to run for a further four years, saying the IOC needed his "peaceful leadership". Djibouti's Aicha Garad Ali added she was speaking "on behalf of Africa" in calling for a charter amendment.

International Gymnastics Federation president Morinari Watanabe told Bach "I love you" as he professed admiration for his leadership. Watanabe, who is Japanese, however, repeatedly insisted the IOC "must be a role model" for international federations when it came to "good governance".

He also warned about the dangers of "corruption" and a "negative image", in what appeared to be a reference to Sepp Blatter having to resign as president of football's global governing body after being re-elected to a fifth term in the middle of the 2015 'FIFAgate' scandal. IOC vice-president John Coates of Australia said no alteration to the existing rules could take place in Mumbai because any proposal to amend the Charter must be submitted 30 days before a session, and first requires consideration by the IOC's executive board.

Bach responded by saying he was "loyal to the Olympic Charter" but did not rule out agreeing to an amendment that would allow him to run again. "Thank you very much for your kind words of support, because I think these words of support are not only directed to me, they are directed to all of us," he said.

Bach added the expressions of support for his leadership went "straight to my heart". "I always appreciate this support, friendship and the love expressed by Mr Watanabe," Bach said. Nevertheless, he added: "Having said this, you also know I am very loyal to the Olympic Charter. Being a core author of this Olympic Charter drives me to be more loyal to this Olympic Charter. "You have heard the explanation of the chair of our legal commission (Coates) in this direction."

At a press conference following Sunday's session, IOC spokesman Mark Adams defended Bach's decision not to close down any debate by simply saying he had no intention of standing again. "Inevitably, those who don't like us will criticize us," said Adams.

"But I think in an open session, where members and representatives of other members make a point, it needs to be fully considered and not dismissed out of hand. "No



MUMBAI: In this photograph taken on October 14, 2023, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C) along with International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach (C, left) greets the gathering during the inauguration of 141st Session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Mumbai. — AFP

decision has been made. John Coates made some clarifications on the Charter. "But I think it would be strange if we were to deny members the right to raise points that they thought were

important to them. "Whether you or I think they are not that's another question. They will, I guess, be discussed later on in a considered manner as they should be." — AFP

Italy cruise as Denmark edge towards Euro spot

PARIS: Reigning champions Italy eased to a 4-0 victory over Malta in Euro 2024 qualifying on Saturday, while Denmark strengthened their position and dented the hopes of outsiders Kazakhstan. Giacomo Bonaventura curled in his first Italy goal and Domenico Berardi produced a fine strike of his own to double the lead in Bari.

Berardi struck again in the second half before Davide Frattesi rounded off a comfortable evening for Luciano Spalletti's side who kept hold of second place in Group C ahead of next week's showdown with England. "That match is where we will really see how much potential we have," Spalletti told broadcaster RAI.

Italy, with a game in hand, closed to within three points of England going into their clash

at Wembley. "It will definitely be emotional, I have amazing memories from that stadium," said Berardi, who played in Italy's Euro 2020 shoot-out final win over England.

"We'll go there trying to do what we did today, play our own game and look to win." Ukraine are level with Italy after a 2-0 win over North Macedonia in Prague. Georgiy Sudakov put Ukraine ahead on 30 minutes and substitute Olexandr Karavaiev sealed victory deep into stoppage time, ahead of their visit to Malta next week.

Denmark avenged their shock loss to Kazakhstan in March as Robert Skov netted twice in a 3-1 win in Copenhagen. Jonas Wind set the Danes, semi-finalists at Euro 2020, on their way before Skov scored a quick-fire double either side of half-time.

Kazakhstan pulled one back via Yan Vorogovskiy but they fell four points off the pace in Group H. "First of all, we must be happy about a victory in a European qualifier at home. It hasn't been plain sailing in this group." Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand told broadcaster TV2. "It was an extremely important home game, and we were forced to win. The pressure was

there, and we got the victory we had to."

Benjamin Sesko's brace powered Slovenia to a 3-0 win over Finland in Ljubljana. Sesko's first came from the penalty spot and the RB Leipzig forward added another with a clinical finish, taking him to eight goals in his last 11 international appearances.

Defender Erik Janza grabbed a late third for Slovenia, who lead Denmark at the top on goal difference. The two countries meet in Copenhagen on November 17. Slovenia are away to Northern Ireland next week and Denmark will be almost certain to beat San Marino — losers in all but one of 82 previous Euro qualifiers.

Northern Ireland beat San Marino 3-0 for only their second win in seven outings. Hungary seized control of Group G thanks to a 2-1 victory at home to Serbia. Barnabas Varga's opening goal for Hungary was cancelled out by Serbia defender Strahinja Pavlovic, but Roland Sallai volleyed in a stunning 25-yard effort right after to win it for the hosts.

Hungary are three points clear of Serbia and have a game in hand. Montenegro, in third, go to Belgrade on Tuesday in a crucial fixture for both sides. — AFP



BUDAPEST: Hungary's goalkeeper #01 Denes Dibusz (C) makes a save during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group G qualification football match Hungary v Serbia at the Puskas Arena of Budapest. — AFP