

2 BRI development consistent with New Kuwait vision: Envoy

7 Gunman who killed 2 Swedes is shot dead by Belgian police

13 Nintendo, Sony face off with new Mario and Spider-Man games

16 Oscar-winner Yeoh voted onto International Olympic Committee

More than 500 killed as Zionists hit Gaza hospital

Mideast 'on brink of abyss' • 2,000 US troops on alert • Biden to visit Zionist entity



GAZA: Zionist air strikes on a Gaza hospital compound Tuesday killed more than 500 people, the health ministry in the Hamas-run Palestinian territory said. "More than 500 displaced people killed in occupation strikes on the yard" of the Ahli Arab hospital in central Gaza, the ministry said. "Hundreds of victims are still under the rubble," it added. Photos showed fire engulfing the hospital halls, shattered glass and body parts scattered across the area.

Jordanian King Abdullah II on Tuesday warned of a dire situation in the Middle East if the conflict between the Zionist entity and Hamas is allowed to spread to other countries. "The whole region is on the brink of falling into the abyss," Abdullah said after meeting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin. "All our efforts are needed to make sure we don't get there," he said. Scholz also warned against an escalation. "We have a common goal to prevent a conflagration in the region," said Scholz. "I once again expressly warn Hezbollah and Iran not to intervene in this conflict," he said.

The Jordanian king on Tuesday also dampened hopes his country would accept Palestinian refugees from Gaza. "On the issue of refugees coming to Jordan — and I think I can quite strongly speak on behalf not only of Jordan as a nation but of our friends in Egypt — that is a red line," he said. The escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza "has to be dealt with-

side Gaza and the West Bank", he said. Meanwhile, the US military on Tuesday ordered 2,000 personnel to prepare for deployment to the Middle East as a show of force amid the escalating conflict between the Zionist entity and Hamas in Gaza. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the deployment would allow the United States "to respond more quickly" to the crisis, while the White House stressed it did not intend to put US combat forces on the ground.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said preparing the troops for deployment "is really about sending a signal of deterrence". "We don't want to see this conflict escalate and widen," Kirby said on CNN. "There are no plans or intentions to put US boots on the ground in combat in (the Zionist entity)."

The move comes as President Joe Biden heads to the Zionist entity on Wednesday to underscore Washington's support for its close ally. But Biden also hopes to prevent the escalating war in Gaza from spilling over into a wider Middle East conflict. The trip will come 12 days after Palestinian fighters burst through the Zionist entity's heavily fortified Gaza border, killing more than 1,400 people. The Zionist entity has responded with withering air strikes that have killed more than 3,500 people, mainly civilians. It has also imposed a crippling siege on Gaza and deployed tens of thousands of

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NEWS IN BRIEF

US envoy to Kuwait approved

WASHINGTON: The US Senate on Monday approved Karen Sasahara's nomination to be US Ambassador to Kuwait by unanimous consent. President Joe Biden had nominated Sasahara to the post last year, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted in April to advance the nomination for approval. Sasahara previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa, and before that, as Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Amman and as Consul General in Jerusalem. Other postings include Sanaa, Baghdad, Beirut, Mexico City, London, Jeddah and Washington.



Karen Sasahara

Boycotts hit book fair over Zionist support

FRANKFURT: The world's biggest book fair in Frankfurt lamented a "disaster" Tuesday after publishing groups from several predominantly Muslim countries withdrew in protest at organizers' support for the Zionist entity following Hamas' massive attack. Organizations that pulled out — including from the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia — were also angered at a decision to postpone an award ceremony for a Palestinian author following the outbreak of the Zionist-Gaza war.

The Frankfurt Book Fair official begins Wednesday against the backdrop of the escalating conflict that began after Palestinian fighters burst through the heavily fortified Gaza border on Oct 7 and launched the deadliest attack in the Zionist entity's history. Book fair organizers swiftly denounced the "barbaric" assault and rushed to reorganize the schedule, pledging Zionist voices would feature prominently.

But, highlighting the bitter divisions unleashed by the conflict, the world's biggest publishing trade event has since faced withdrawals by organizations in mostly Muslim countries. Among them was the Indonesian Publishers Association, which said organizers' decision to "take sides and give (the Zionist entity) a platform has undermined the ideals of dialogue and efforts to build mutual understanding". "Siding with (the Zionist entity) while forgetting the suffering of the Palestinian people is like reading only one book

to feel like you understand the whole world."

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, and does not have diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity. The publishing association had been due to take part in activities promoting Indonesian culture at the fair. The education ministry in Malaysia said it was pulling out, citing organizers' "pro-(Zionist) stance". The Sharjah Book Authority, in the United Arab Emirates, and the Emirates Publishers Association have also withdrawn, while the UAE-based National newspaper reported the Arab Publishers' Association in Egypt had pulled out.

Asked about the withdrawals, fair director Juergen Boos told a press conference he was "very disappointed" some participants had chosen not to come "because of geopolitics". "That's a complete for disaster for us, for myself."

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Campaign for Palestine in schools

KUWAIT: The education ministry launched the 'national campaign to support the Palestinian people's resistance', which includes expressing solidarity with Palestine during the morning assembly at schools around Kuwait. School managements are requested to include speeches raising awareness on the Palestinian issue, the Palestinian people's resistance and importance of solidarity and cooperation between Muslims during the morning assembly, the ministry said in a circular.

Colombia lashes out at Zionist envoy amid spat

BOGOTA: Colombia on Monday said the Zionist entity's ambassador should leave the South American country before rowing back comments amid a worsening spat over President Gustavo Petro's remarks on the war with

Hamas. Foreign Minister Alvaro Leyva initially said the envoy, Gali Dagan, should "at a minimum, apologize and leave" after criticizing Petro's comparison of Zionist attacks on Gaza with the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Leyva lashed out on social media at the "rudeness" of the Zionist entity's response to Petro, adding: "Shame." In a later post, Leyva said he had merely demanded "respect" for Colombia's president, adding "I have not said that the (Zionist) ambassador is expelled." After the Hamas attacks on Oct 7, and



Gustavo Petro

Xi welcomes 'dear friend' Putin to China

BEIJING: Chinese leader Xi Jinping welcomed his "dear friend" Russian President Vladimir Putin to Beijing on Tuesday, kicking off a multilateral summit overshadowed by the Zionist-Hamas war. Beijing this week hosts representatives of 130 countries for a forum on Xi's vast trade and infrastructure project, the Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI). At the top of the guest list is Putin, who is on his first trip to a major global power since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine threw his regime into international isolation.

The two leaders met Tuesday evening at an event kicking off the forum, video posted by Russia's foreign ministry showed, shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries. They then took part in a group photo with other leaders attending the summit. Putin is due to hold in-depth talks with Xi on the sidelines of the forum on Wednesday, the Kremlin said,



BEIJING: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands during a welcoming ceremony at the Third Belt and Road Forum on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP

Local

Forum facilitates dialogue and action on investments

KDIPA: Kuwait is a promising hub for investment



KDIPA's pavilion at the forum.



Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah leads Kuwait's delegation to World Investment Forum. — KUNA

ABU DHABI: Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah stressed Monday the importance of Kuwait's participation in the Eighth World Investment Forum (WIF) organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as it represents a significant and effective contribution to facing global investment challenges.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al-Jarallah, who is the representative of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and leading Kuwait's delegation to the forum, lauded the pioneering role of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development in establishing this forum's valuable topics to develop and find solutions to economic and investment challenges.

The forum, which will last until October 20, aims at facilitating dialogue and action on global and emerging investment and development challenges. It also focuses on the main investment challenges caused by multiple global crises, revitalizing invest-



A KDIPA's personnel responds to a visitor's inquiries.



Personnel of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) seen during the forum.

ment in food security, transitioning to low-carbon energy, health systems, supply chain resilience and how to enhance productive capacities in the poorest countries. In addition, it discusses measures to enhance clean energy investment in developing countries, which face an investment gap amounting to \$2.2 trillion annually to transition to low-carbon

energy, according to UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2023.

Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) seized the opportunity during its participation in the Global Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi to highlight promising investment opportunities in the country to achieve the desired goals of diversifying

the economy and backing private sector entrepreneurship in the national economy. During this event, which will last until Friday, the authority plays a vital role in alluring investments to the country through offering several services and privileges, facilitating government procedures, and enhancing the country's image. — KUNA



Diplomatic attache Meteb Al-Enezi

Kuwait seeks legislations to execute vital projects

NEW YORK: Kuwait is keen on developing economic legislation to execute vital projects that would ultimately contribute to transforming the Arab Gulf nation into a financial hub, a diplomat said. "Kuwait's strategy aims at encouraging and promoting the contribution of the private sector to the development of infrastructure; therefore, it placed a partnership program between the public and private sectors" and established an authority for this purpose, diplomatic attache Meteb Al-Enezi told a UN committee discussing the global trade law.

He said the authority has a mandate to provide financial and technical assistance for public-private partnerships (PPP), aimed at benefiting from the expertise of the private sector to promote competitiveness and innovation. The authority, said Al-Enezi, announced many promising projects in energy, water, waste water management, education, health, transport, telecommunications and real estate. The State of Kuwait, he added, sought to develop cyber-related legislation to develop trade and economic activities.

"My country seeks to implement an international financial, economic and commercial system," he said, and Kuwait was upgrading e-government services coupled with the exploration of means to address cyber crimes, citing the establishment of the cybersecurity agency. Al-Enezi, meanwhile, said Kuwait supported an international cross-border law to address economic disputes around the globe. — KUNA

Early stages of parenthood, a challenging phase

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Becoming a new parent can be an overwhelming experience, and many find themselves grappling with the challenges that come with their first child. Kuwait Times spoke with several new parents to gather insights on how to best prepare for the journey of raising a child to provide valuable guidance for those navigating the early stages of parenthood.

Ahmed Al-Farhoud advised parents to surround themselves with a support network, saying "New parents need old experienced ones like family and friends

to provide guidance and emotional support." He added that the first months of being a parent are tiring if the parents do not know what they are doing, affirming that the financial situation can also be overwhelming because there will always be additional expenses that come with having a child, such as medical costs, diapers and baby gear.

Haya Al-Bader said that it is important for women to understand her employment rights for her maternity and that will allow her to adjust to the new family dynamics. For the shopping list, Bader said that the main items needed are a crib, stroller, car seat and baby clothes, advising parents to be mentally ready for sleepless nights and the emotional rollercoaster that comes with caring for a newborn and to understand that every child is unique, and parenting involves flexibility and patience.

Meanwhile, Maha Hatem offered a glimpse into the world of parenthood

saying, "to successfully raise a child in Kuwait, there are several key considerations to keep in mind. First and foremost, take advantage of the diverse international schools available, which often follow foreign curricula and employ expat teachers. These schools provide a rich educational environment for your child."

She added that in Kuwait, childcare is a thriving part of expat life, especially with the substantial number of expat women raising children. The community of mothers in Kuwait often comes together for playdates and coffee gatherings once the kids are off to school, creating a network of support and camaraderie, noting "The mother must connect with other mothers in Kuwait, the exchanging of experiences is so helpful for parents to be prepared."

Kuwait places a strong emphasis on supporting expectant mothers and ensuring high-quality prenatal care, Hatem affirmed adding that parents do not have to worry about giving birth in Ku-

BRI's development initiative consistent with Kuwait's vision

TOKYO: Kuwait Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem confirmed Tuesday that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a development initiative that is consistent with the vision of New Kuwait. This came during his participation as a representative of Kuwait in the celebration of the book launch of Chinese President Xi Jinping, within the activities of BRI's third forum and the tenth anniversary of the initiative.

In a phone call to KUNA, Al-Najem said that this initiative constitutes a real opportunity to revive the Silk Road project and create a vital commercial region that contributes to the prosperity of the global economy. Kuwait is the first country in the Middle East to take the initiative to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation with China in BRI after its announcement in September 2013, he pointed out.

Al-Najem underlined the depth of the historical bilateral ties that go back over 50 years between Kuwait and China, citing a recent visit by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during which the prospects for cooperation were consolidated and several MoUs were signed in various fields. He also stressed Kuwait's keenness on its strategic partnership with

Stomach Botox: An innovative approach to weight reduction

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash, a consultant in internal medicine, digestive system and liver diseases, discussed a groundbreaking approach to weight reduction and obesity management without the need for surgery. She referred to this method as "stomach Botox," which involves a gastroscopic procedure and does not necessitate an extended hospital stay. Additionally, it carries minimal side effects.



Ambassador Jassem Al-Najem and other senior officials take a group photo after the event.

China and ways to support and develop it in various fields in a way that contributes to achieving mutual benefit and common interests.

BRI contributed to the participation of over 150 countries and more than 40 international organizations, in addition to concluding more than 200 cooperation agreements on the joint construction and creating about 420,000 job opportunities in the countries participating in its construction. Today, China holds BRI's third forum in the presence of the Chinese president and with the participation of heads of multiple countries and officials from more than 90 countries. — KUNA



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash

Dr Hashash emphasized that stomach Botox is not suitable for all individuals struggling with excess weight. Patients with a body mass index (BMI) exceeding 40 are not eligible for this procedure. It

is also not recommended for pregnant or lactating women, as well as individuals under the age of 18. This procedure is primarily designed for individuals with a BMI ranging from 27 to 40 who have difficulty controlling their appetite despite multiple attempts to adopt a healthier lifestyle. It is particularly suitable for those experiencing health issues associated with obesity, such as hypertension, as well as bone, joint and spinal pain.

Dr Hashash reassured that stomach Botox is a safe procedure with minimal side effects, typically limited to post-gastroscopy fatigue and tiredness. During the procedure, the doctor injects Botox into the stomach wall muscles, reducing their movement and contractions, subsequently slowing digestion and stomach emptying into the intestines. This, in turn, triggers signals of fullness to the brain, helping the patient feel satiated for an extended period.

wait. "Kuwait offers a good service for pregnant women, where insurance typically covers childbirth. But the parents should be aware of the fact that they should apply for a residency permit for their newborn which is a mandatory process and needs to be completed within 60 days of birth. This involves the submission of essential documents, including copies of passports, civil IDs, marriage licenses, work permits and certificates of employment."



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Local

Kuwait govt to stop naturalizing children of unknown parents

Rise in the number of kids born to expats out of wedlock

KUWAIT: The government is reportedly moving to stop the naturalization of children of unknown parents in Kuwait. Children whose parents are not known are usually cared for by the country and given Kuwaiti nationality when they turn 18 years old. Sources said the decision is in response to the rise in the number of children with unknown parents who are born to expats out of wedlock in areas such as Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, in addition to children born to people in violation of the residen-

cy law who have not been reported. Sources said nearly 1,000 children of unknown parents have been found in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

The sources indicated that children of unknown parents will be referred to the Central Agency for Addressing the Conditions of Illegal Residents, and registered as illegal residents when they turn 18. The Ministry of Social Affairs will take care of them until they reach that age.

Sources added that the agency will include

these children on a special list and will ask them to produce certificates of citizenship from their countries of origin or face deportation if they fail to do so. Naturalizing these children is off the table, said sources, because it constitutes a security risk to the country. Sources went further to say that children adopted by Kuwaiti families will not be naturalized and will be treated as violators of the residency law, "similar to the situation of stateless people currently."

Rehiring professionals? MoH weighing options

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: In a recent article that was published by the author, Iqbal Al-Ahmad, in one of the Arabic local newspapers, she warned of the random decisions that are being taken in the country that would not only negatively affect the country's strategies but also cause losses for the financial budget of the country. The article indicated that the previous decision included the end of service of experienced doctors at the Ministry of Health who are over 60 years old, saying that there were repeated warnings

in the matter with regards to losing their expertise and experiences.

Meanwhile, the author said that the Ministry of Health is studying a proposal to re-hire qualified doctors from abroad who enjoy long experience due to the lack of experienced doctors among their team. Al-Ahmad stressed in her article that the country's decision to dispense any expertise should not be taken unless it is proven that the doctor is not qualified to continue his job, lacks productivity and becomes a burden in the place where he or she works.

She added, "But if the issue of age is what determines this, then this only indicates a lack of knowledge and laziness in determining the criteria for renewal of any energy and experience at any work place." She pointed out that reactions and emotions should not control the country's strategy. Delibera-



tion and rationality studies must be the pillars of any decisions or laws, taking into account all the possibilities that we may face in the future.

In my view

Unearthing the shadows of ethnic cleansing, genocide

Mariam Ahmed Al Ayyoub

Ethnic cleansing and genocide have darkened the pages of history, leaving behind scars that continue to affect Palestine, their history, families, children, the elderly, a struggle that remains at the center of global attention. The painful ethnic cleansing and genocide linger on in the very fabric of Palestine which it stands as a poignant example.

The Palestinian people have experienced the Nakba, or "catastrophe," in 1948, which resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the creation of Zionist entity. This historical trauma continues to shape the identity and collective memory of Palestinians. The Nakba tore Palestinian families apart, as countless individuals were forced to flee their homes, leaving loved ones behind or separated by borders. The emotional trauma of this displacement runs deep, with generations of Palestinians carrying the scars of lost homes and loved ones.

Palestinian children have borne a heavy burden, growing up in the midst of conflict and occupation. The ongoing occupation conflict has seen the loss of young lives and inflicted lasting emotional trauma on those who survive. Many Palestinian children have had to grow up amidst violence and uncertainty. Elderly Palestinian survivors of the Nakba carry the memories of their youth, marked by displacement and loss.

They have endured a lifetime of struggle for justice, recognition and the right to return to their homeland. The Palestinian people's quest for self-determination is intrinsically tied to their historical memory. The Nakba is not just an event in the past but a defining part of their identity, emphasizing the importance of their right to a homeland. It has had a profound influence on Palestinian identity and determination.

The memory of the Nakba remains a rallying point for Palestinians in their ongoing struggle for recognition and statehood with the current brutality that is going on at Gaza. The Palestinian experience underscores the importance of acknowledging historical injustices and seeking justice and reconciliation. The quest for justice is intertwined with the hope of one day realizing their right to self-determination and return to their homeland. Their demand for the right of return is a fundamental part of their quest for justice. This right symbolizes their determination to address the historical injustices of the Nakba and find a path toward healing and reconciliation.

The shadows of ethnic cleansing and genocide cast long. These painful histories remind us of the importance of preserving memory and seeking justice and reconciliation until it is achieved. In an ever-changing world, we must continue to strive for a future where horrors of the current ruthlessness against Palestinians from Zionists are prevented, and where those who have suffered, can find solace and healing. Fighting back serves as a stark reminder of standing at the right side of intolerance against any inhumane act the rights and aspirations of Palestinians are respected and realized.



Group picture of Air Traffic Controllers.

Civil Aviation marks International Day of Air Traffic Controller

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: International Day of the Air Traffic Controller is an annual occasion that commemorates the profession of air traffic control and its role in protecting and ensuring the safety of aircraft, whether in the air or on the ground at airports. For this reason, efforts have been made to hold an annual gathering of air traffic controllers in Kuwait. The first gathering took place on Oct 17, 2023 with the attendance of a distinguished group of Kuwait's pioneering air traffic controllers, who previously conducted air traffic control using primitive tools, far from the latest technology, bridging the past with the present to build a promising future.

During the gathering, Mishal Salem Al-Qana'i, Chief of Operations at the Air Traffic Control Tower and Ground in Kuwait, told Kuwait Times: "Today we celebrate the International Day of the Air Traffic Controller, which falls on October 20 every year. The reason behind this is that in 1922, the first control tower in the world was established at Croydon Airport in Britain. Since 1961, airports have been celebrating International Day of the Air Traffic Controller every year, and in Kuwait, this is the first time we celebrate this event. We have gathered all generations of air traffic controllers at this event."

Director General of Civil Aviation Emad Al-Jalawi told Kuwait Times: "It is no secret that this profession is of great importance and has a great impact on air navigation safety. Therefore, we are here today to honor air traffic controllers in recognition of their work and to highlight the value of their work and their role in ensuring safety, which is not to be underestimated. Today, we bring together both vet-



Mishal Al-Qana'i



Emad Al-Jalawi



Duaij Al-Otaibi

were given to enhance the aviation sector in Kuwait, resulting in significant developments in various aspects, in addition to what is yet to come in the future."

Otaibi further elaborated on the significance of air traffic controllers' mission. "Some may not realize the importance of air traffic controllers and the importance of their mission. The air traffic controller is like a pilot, but on the ground, responsible for monitoring flight routes and working with data and information related to the safety of those onboard the aircraft," he said.

Director of Air Navigation Management Adel Boursli concluded by clarifying that when talking about air traffic control, not only civilians are meant, but also military personnel. He then said today, Kuwait's air traffic controllers witness many issues that they used to only hear about, but that have now become a reality.

eran air traffic controllers alongside new recruits as a tribute to their past contributions." He added those interested in this profession must hold a university degree and undergo a one-year training course to qualify for a license.

Deputy Director General for Air Navigation Affairs Duaij Al-Otaibi said: "We are honored today to host a large number of colleagues in civil aviation in Kuwait, who were the core foundation in launching work as air traffic controllers. Under the wise leadership in Kuwait, the necessary directions



Attendees sing the Kuwait National Anthem.

KISR and Automobile Agents Union discuss electric car project

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) discussed with the Union of Automobile Agents in the country the mechanisms to boost cooperation on electric car projects, as well as suggestions and recommendations guaranteeing the suitability of such vehicles in extremely hot climates. In a press release on Tuesday, KISR mentioned that the meeting handled the outcome of the first project conducted by the institute and supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). Project Manager Dr Hedab Al-Hamawi stated that the two



KUWAIT: Officials from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Union of Automobile Agents hold a meeting. — KUNA

parties considered new projects comparing the performance of four-wheel-drive electric vehicles using charging ports powered exclusively by solar energy.

The use of solar power, explained Dr Al-Hamawi, is to promote the use of renewable energy and preserve the environment. —KUNA

Kuwait's Teachers Society rejects unjustified policies

KUWAIT: Head of the Kuwait Teachers Society, Hamad Al-Houli, has expressed his resentment and regret over the unjustified policies of the Civil Service Council in dealing with the educational issues and has raised concerns over the rights of teachers in particular. The society demanded a report on the eligibility of the members of the educational body to disburse the rewards in accordance with the regulations. Al-Houli, pointed out that the delay of the Civil Service Bureau in responding to the letter of the Ministry of Finance is surprising and unjustified.



Hamad Al-Houli

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News in Brief

Accident kills Kuwaiti

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti was killed and another was seriously injured in a horrific traffic accident on the Sixth Ring Road. The Public Relations and Media Department of the Kuwait Fire Force said that the Central Operations Department received a report about an accident involving a car and a trailer on the Sixth Ring Road. Security operatives rushed to the scene. The victims were sent to hospital.

212 violators nabbed

KUWAIT: Police arrested 212 expatriates for violating the residency law. The suspects were arrested at the vegetable market, Sharq market, fish market in Sharq, Mubarakiya market, Mahboula area, fish market in Fahahel, and Fahahel markets. The Department of Research and Investigation, Department of Control and Coordination, Department of Financial and Administrative Services, Tripartite Committee, Director General Squad, and Department of Follow-up of Violators were involved in the campaigns.

Japan, GCC seek stability

TOKYO: Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kiyoto Tsuji and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) envoys to Tokyo on Tuesday shared the view to continue close communication for regional stability, Japan's Foreign Ministry said. During their working lunch at the Omani Embassy in Tokyo, Tsuji affirmed that strengthening relations with the GCC countries is crucially important for Japan, the ministry said in a press release. Tsuji said his participation in the working lunch is also meaningful to follow up on the Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in September, expressing his hope to further develop relations with the GCC countries in a wide range of fields through such exchanges. The official also noted that, in view of the rapid deterioration of the Palestine situation, Japan is communicating with various stakeholders to calm the situation in order to prevent further escalation. In response, the GCC diplomats expressed their desire for further enhancing Japan-GCC cooperation in various fields, including politics, economy, culture, and people-to-people exchanges, pledging their continued efforts to strengthen the Japan-GCC relationship, according to the ministry. — KUNA

Horseback riding: The healing experience for autistic people

'Movement skill can have a good effect on autistic kids'



One of the kids rides a horse. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: At several Kuwait horse stables, parents take their kids with special needs or those diagnosed with autism to ride horses aiming to improve their condition, working with doctors and specialists to benefit from their successful experiences treating those kids, and seeking information from medical institutes on the positive effects of horseback riding.

Consultant developmental pediatrician Dr. Abeer Awadh said that any movement skill can have a good effect on autistic kids, whether it's horseback riding, swimming, or any other sport, noting that it's important to keep them away from electric devices as much as possible. She noted that it is possible to heal autism if it is tackled in its early stages through different treatment methods, including horseback riding, as well as cooperation between parents, doctors, and trainers.

On her part, owner of Al-Muzaini Equestrian Maai Al-Muzaini told KUNA that three years ago, she established Al-Muzaini Equestrian in Abu Al-Hassany area to help treat her son, and as she saw his condition improve, she opened the stable, offering services for low fees for the sake of kids with special needs and autism to help them get treated as well.

Al-Muzaini explained that the horse's walk impacts the blood circulation of kids with autism, which in turn helps increase their concentration, in addition to the horse's body warmth, which helps calm them down. Through successful experiences, it has been shown that autistic kids do not necessarily have to enroll in specific training courses because horseback riding is enough to start their healing process, Al-Muzaini added, noting that it can also help hyperactive kids.

Al-Muzaini also started a monthly seminar called "You're Not Alone" to exchange expertise between

mothers and benefit from successful experiences, in addition to organizing a periodic session to communicate with horses, aimed at enhancing the kid's linguistic skills. On her part, Specialist Samar Al-Kandari said to KUNA that during her experience treating kids with special needs or autism at Kuwait Riding Center (KRC Stars), she noticed that most cases of autism improved, as well as their psychological health and social skills, stressing the need to enroll them in training sessions at an early age for better results.

Dr. Dalal Al-Mansouri, who also works as a trainer at KRC Stars, said that autistic kids don't have a sense of danger, so they let the kids sit on the horse without a saddle to help simulate a sense of caution and be more stable on the horse. In a statement to KUNA, Reem Al-Sabbagh, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), noted the importance of horseback riding in enhancing social skills and emotional understanding, considering it encourages empathy and understanding of non-verbal communication through interacting with horses, adding that this method can help alleviate stress, enhance calmness, movement skills, and balance.

On his part, horseback riding coach for kids with special needs and autism Ahmad Al-Omran said to KUNA that he uses hippotherapy, a technique he learned in Germany, to help improve the



Horseback riding coach Ahmad Al-Omran

kid's back, hip, and leg muscles, which essentially helps them balance and leads to feeling more confident. Al-Omran recommended using old European horses because they are calmer than Arabian ones, which can be unstable if they are not specifically trained for this field. He called upon the concerned authorities to establish a center specializing in hippotherapy for all those with special needs and autism, to make equestrianism free or at a minimal price, and to open more equestrian centers in Kuwait. Al-Omran noted his keenness on raising awareness about equestrianism and its therapeutic effects via his podcast, where he interviews trainers, players, and specialists in nutrition. — KUNA



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KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Head of Regional Mission of the ICRC Mamadou Sow. — KUNA

Kuwait FM and ICRC chief discuss Gaza

KUWAIT: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday Head of Regional Mission of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) Mamadou Sow to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip. During the meeting, the Foreign Minister stressed the ICRC's role and noble humanitarian efforts, especially regarding the delivery of humanitarian, medical, and relief aid to those in need, emphasizing the need to stop the ongoing escalation in Palestine, occupied territories, and the Gaza Strip.

The minister also underlined the need to protect civilians, ensure the opening of crossings to deliver humanitarian and relief supplies to the people of Gaza, and mobilize international efforts in this context, a statement by the Foreign Ministry said. For his part, Mamadou Sow presented a review of the efforts made by the ICRC within the framework of the planned immediate humanitarian response and the urgent needs of the people of Gaza.

He expressed his deep appreciation for the pioneering and distinguished humanitarian role played by Kuwait in supporting the afflicted and affected peoples and lauded the continuous Kuwaiti support offered to the organization and its humanitarian activities around the world. The meeting also discussed the close cooperation relations between Kuwait and the International Committee of the Red Cross, their future prospects, and ways of strengthening international humanitarian action and supporting joint activities in response to humanitarian crises and disasters in the region. — KUNA

Kuwaiti initiator launches legal platform at GITEX

DUBAI: Kuwaiti initiator Khaled Al-Rashed launched the first global legal platform "oqoud", that uses artificial intelligence (AI) in both English and Arabic, during the GITEX Global 2023 exhibition held in Dubai. In a statement to KUNA on Tuesday, Al-Rashed, who's the platform's CEO, said that he chose to launch it in the UAE since it has the most developed legal technology. The platform is currently in the trial phase with technology experts and is dedicated to lawyers, advisors, judges, business owners, and students of law all over the world.

The website's AI technology can help in presenting different laws and suggestions on amending existing



laws, as well as detailed legal documents, he said, adding that more main languages will be added to the platform soon, including Indian, Chinese, and Spanish. Demand for legal technologies is rising, as using AI lowers costs and time consumption in preparing legal tasks, said Al-Rashed. The Oqoud platform was developed in 2022 by lawyer Al-Rashed, who graduated from the faculty of law at Sharjah University in the UAE. — KUNA



Sweden's fears come true in Brussels 'terror attack'

Diplomatic efforts intensify to free hostages held by Hamas

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RAFAH: Palestinian children search for a place to refill on water in the Rafah refugee camp, in the southern Gaza Strip on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP photos

Gaza crisis deepens as food stocks run low

WFP warns 4 or 5 days of food left in Gaza shops

KHAN YUNIS/GENEVA: Hundreds of families flocked to Gaza's overwhelmed hospitals Tuesday seeking refuge from the seemingly endless Zionist army shelling as it builds up for a ground offensive. Gaza residents, who have been warned to get out of the north of the Palestinian territory, have packed courtyards and corridors in the hospitals that have been relatively unscathed from the Zionist assault that followed the October 7 attacks by Hamas.

Amira, 44, and her children have moved to the courtyard of the Nasser hospital in the southern district of Khan Yunis. "Our bodies itch all over. It has been a week since we could take a shower," she told AFP as she prepared sandwiches for her children with some loaves she had been given. "Death might be more merciful," she added.

About one million people from northern Gaza have moved to Khan Yunis and other southern districts to avoid the looming Zionist ground offensive. More than 2,750 people have died in Zionist bombardments since the Hamas attacks which left 1,400 dead in the Zionist entity.

About 100,000 people are left in the northern district around Gaza City that the Zionist entity says is a Hamas stronghold and has warned will be the target of its assault. Conditions across the tiny territory are worsening every day for the 2.4 million population, according to aid agencies.

UNICEF, the UN children's agency, has said that unless water and fuel are sent "immediately", Gaza inhabitants are in "imminent danger" of epidemics and death.

Food running short

The UN's World Food Program said the food situation in the besieged and blockaded Gaza Strip was worsening, with only four or five days of stocks left in the shops. WFP said stocks were getting low in warehouses inside the Palestinian enclave, but at the shop level, the situation was even more acute.

"The situation in Gaza is getting worse by the



GAZA: Palestinians bake bread at a stall outside Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City on Oct 16, 2023.

minute: the humanitarian situation but also of course the food security situation," WFP's Middle East spokeswoman Abeer Etefa, told reporters at the UN in Geneva via video-link from Cairo.

"The current stocks of essential food commodities are sufficient for only two weeks — and that's at the wholesalers' level," she said, with the warehouses located in Gaza City in the north of the territory and shops having difficulties replenishing supplies. "Inside the shops, the stocks are getting close to less than a few days, maybe four or five days of food stocks left."

Etefa said that out of five flour mills in the Gaza Strip, only one was operating due to security concerns and the unavailability of fuel. "So the bread supply is running low and people are lining up for hours to get bread," she said. Only five bakeries out of 23 in Gaza contracted by WFP were still in operation, she added. "Our food supplies with-

in Gaza are running really short," said Etefa. The spokeswoman said there has been no looting of WFP warehouses, and "anyway, whatever we have left in the warehouses is so little".

Aid at Rafah crossing

Aid agencies have been flying supplies into El Arish airport in Egypt — around 20 kilometers away from the Rafah border crossing and the only one into the Gaza Strip not controlled by the Zionist occupation. So far Egypt has kept the crossing closed to aid going in or foreign nationals trying to flee, as the Zionist occupation has repeatedly struck the Palestinian side of the crossing.

Etefa said the WFP had mobilized over 300 metric tons of food that was either at or on its way to the Rafah border crossing from Egypt into the Gaza Strip — enough food to feed around 250,000 people for one week. "Everyone is still very hopeful that



KHAN YUNIS: A Palestinian woman reacts as others rush to look for victims in the rubble of a building following a Zionist strike on Oct 17, 2023.

we will be able to get inside and this is why more supplies are on the way," she said. "We call for unimpeded access, safe passage for desperately-needed humanitarian supplies into Gaza."

The UN's humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths is due to arrive in Cairo on Tuesday on a visit to the region, expected to last several days, to negotiate aid access to the Gaza Strip. He is set to go to the Zionist entity, and, if conditions permit, to the Palestinian territories, a spokesman said.

The Zionist occupation has also cut power and water supplies to Gaza as part of its action. Gaza's hospitals say they will struggle to keep operating and the human toll grows every hour. Hundreds of children are already among the dead and there are 10,000 injured, many packed into the six remaining hospitals. Shortages of medicines have added to the crisis caused by the lack of water and fuel to keep medical establishments running. — AFP

The Zionist-Hamas military imbalance

PARIS: The Zionist occupation has one of the best-resourced militaries in the world, hugely supported by Washington. In Hamas, it faces a highly-trained armed group with powerful regional allies. With both sides poised for a ground offensive in the wake of the deadly attack by Hamas on October 7 and the Zionist retaliation, here is an overview of their military resources.

The Zionist occupation

The Zionist Defense Forces number 169,500, of which 126,000 are army, according to Britain's International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). On top of that, it has 400,000 reservists, of which 360,000 have been mobilized since the Hamas attack.

The Zionists have some of the most technological advanced defenses in the world, including the "Iron Dome" anti-missile system. IISS says it has some 1,300 tanks and other armored vehicles, 345 fighter jets and a vast arsenal of artillery, drones and state-of-the-art submarines. Though not a declared nuclear state, the

Zionist occupation's nuclear weapons cache is an open secret and the Arms Control Association puts its number of warheads at 90.

US ally

Washington currently provides \$3.8 billion per year to the Zionists in military aid under a 10-year agreement running until 2028. It has delivered increased munitions to the Zionist occupation and deployed two aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean — the USS Gerald Ford, the world's largest warship, and the USS Eisenhower, aimed at deterring not just Hamas but also its allies in Iran and Hezbollah.

British defense analysis firm Janes said US aircraft carriers travel with smaller ships — destroyers, cruisers, submarines and support vessels — that offer a multitude of capabilities including ballistic missile protection, command-and-control, humanitarian assistance, evacuation and disaster relief. "Another aircraft carrier adds another 95,000 tons of power projection to the point that the United States is making," said Janes expert Nick Brown.

Hamas

Hamas has a diverse arsenal built up over many years. Its armed forces, under the name Al-Qassam Bri-

gades, numbers 15,000 men according to IISS, though it notes Arabic media have put the figure at 40,000. They have heavy weapons sourced from across the Middle East — particularly Iran, Syria and Libya — and has also sourced handguns and assault rifles from China and other regions.

It also has a variety of locally-made, improvised explosives and Western sources say enough drones, mines, anti-tank guided missiles, grenade launchers and mortar shells to hold out for a long period, though precise figures are unavailable. The majority of its rockets are also locally manufactured and technologically rudimentary.

Hezbollah

There have already been exchanges across the border between the Zionists and Lebanon, where the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah is based. "Hezbollah can tie up IDF resources without having to fully commit to the fight, instead relying on occasional rocket or missile strikes to prevent the (Zionists) from growing complacent and forcing the IDF to commit manpower and materiel along the northern border," said the Soufan Center, a US think tank.

In 2021, the group claimed to have 100,000 fighters. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a

Zionist think tank, says the number is half that. Independent Middle East expert Eva Koulouriotis estimates Hezbollah has 20,000 highly trained fighters and a reserve of some 50,000 who have received three months of training in Lebanon and three months in Iran.

INSS says the group's arsenal counts between 150,000 and 200,000 rockets and missiles, including "hundreds" of precision rockets. Hezbollah simulated cross-border raids into the Zionist entity in May that involved weapons systems from Iran, Syria, Russia and China.

Iran

Since its Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran has made support for Palestinians one of the pillars of its ideology. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian warned in recent days: "No one can guarantee the control of the situation and the non-expansion of the conflicts" if the Zionist occupation sends its soldiers into Gaza.

Raz Zimmt, of INSS, said Iran currently had "no interest in Hezbollah engaging in an all-out war" that might threaten such a key "strategic asset". But he added that Iran's hand could be forced by "a (Zionist) ground invasion, and especially (Zionist) military success, which will threaten the very survival of Hamas and/or its ability to maintain effective control over the Gaza Strip — AFP

International

Diplomatic efforts intensify to free hostages held by Hamas

Zionist occupation under criticism for 'colossal' failure in handling hostage situation



An image grab from a video released by Hamas on its official Telegram channel on Oct 16, 2023 purportedly shows Mia Shem, a Franco-Zionist woman held hostage in Gaza. — AFP photos



TEL AVIV: Keren Shem, the mother of French-Zionist woman Mia Shem, speaks to the press on Oct 17, 2023.



BEIRUT: Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib (right) speaks to his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan during a joint press conference following their meeting on Oct 17, 2023.

BEIRUT: Diplomatic bids to free around 200 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza gathered pace Tuesday, with Turkey saying it was in talks with the group to secure their release. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spoke from Beirut as calls mounted from the captives' families for world leaders to intervene, after Hamas on Monday released the first video of a hostage purportedly speaking from captivity.

"So far, we have received requests from various countries for the release of their citizens. As a result, we started to discuss these issues, especially with the political wing of Hamas," Fidan told a news conference in Beirut alongside his Lebanese counterpart, Abdallah Bou Habib.

Scores of people were taken hostage during Hamas's attack on Zionists on October 7. The Zionist army has confirmed at least 199 hostages were taken to Gaza. Hamas had claimed that they hold around 250 captives. "Our efforts continue, especially for the release of foreigners, civilians and

children. We will continue our efforts to ensure lasting peace," Fidan said Tuesday, a day after he held a phone conversation with Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh about the hostages.

Zionist forces have carried out localized raids across the border during which they have located the bodies of some of those abducted, with the latest such operation taking place on Tuesday, an army spokesman said.

'Beg the world'

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday also said that intense talks were underway to secure the hostages' release. "I want to be very cautious here ... so as not to endanger the intense talks we are currently conducting," Macron told reporters in the Albanian capital Tirana. "But they are progressing and we are following these talks hour by hour."

France was "working with its partners to free French hostages held by Hamas", the Elysee presi-

dential palace later quoted Macron as saying. Macron spoke after the mother of French-Zionist hostage Mia Shem, urged world leaders to secure her daughter's release after the Islamists aired a video apparently showing the young woman in captivity.

Hamas aired the video on its official Telegram channel, showing a young woman speaking Hebrew. In the video, the first released by Hamas of a hostage purportedly speaking from captivity, the woman says she is being held in Gaza, is being well treated and appeals for her release. "I ask world leaders that my daughter be returned to us in the state that she is today, as well as the other hostages," Keren Shem told a press conference in Tel Aviv. "I beg the world to return my baby to me," Shem added.

'Colossal' failure

Shem said her daughter was at a rave party in the desert near the border when she was abducted

to Gaza during the October 7 deadly attack. "Now she is in Gaza. She is not the only one. There are many adults, children, babies and Holocaust survivors," she said of other Zionists held by the militants. "It is a crime against humanity. All together we need to stop this terror," she added.

The Zionist government has come under criticism for its response to the hostage situation. Since the attack, dozens of Zionists have tirelessly held sit-ins in front of the defense ministry in Tel Aviv to demand the release of the hostages and the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"All these people (the hostages) must come home. This government has failed in a colossal way," said Mona Hanoch, 58. Nearby, sitting on a plastic chair, Cindy Cohen, 65, held up a sign reading: "Prisoner exchange agreement now." "We must release all the hostages in exchange for all the (Palestinian) prisoners held by (the Zionist occupation)," she added. — AFP

Armenia ready to normalize relations with Azerbaijan

STRASBOURG: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday accused Azerbaijan of "ethnic cleansing" in Nagorno-Karabakh but said he stood ready to normalize relations with Baku by the end of the year. The broadside came ahead of planned EU-mediated talks in Brussels later this month between Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

"We, the international community, have been unable to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh," Pashinyan told a plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. "Na-

gorno-Karabakh has been cleansed of Armenians ... in a matter of one week," he went on. "Azerbaijan has clearly and unequivocally demonstrated its decision to render life for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh impossible."

Tensions remain high between the two Caucasian neighbors. In September Aliyev's troops recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway enclave in Azerbaijan. Most of the 120,000 ethnic Armenians who had been living there fled to Armenia. Pashinyan nonetheless said the outline of a deal drawn up over this year, including at a European summit held in Spain two weeks ago, laid the groundwork for an accord between Armenia and Azerbaijan. "We have agreed that we will have a meeting in Brussels during this month."

"And if the aforementioned principles are officially reconfirmed, then the signing of a peace and normalization agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan will become highly realistic by the

end of this year," he said. The outline deal calls for Azerbaijan and Armenia to recognize each other's borders as established at the collapse of the Soviet Union, to which they had both belonged.

It also includes the exchange of prisoners and a guarantee that routes in the region are opened. Azerbaijan says it is not seeking to rid Nagorno-Karabakh of ethnic Armenians and has invited them to return to their homes in the enclave and "reintegrate" into Azerbaijan. No date has yet been publicly fixed for the EU-mediated talks between both sides.

European Council President Charles Michel told AFP at the Spain summit on October 5 the negotiations would happen "by the end of October". The precise timing would be worked out in consultation with Pashinyan and Aliyev. Michel's spokeswoman did not immediately respond on Tuesday when asked by AFP if any date had been agreed. — AFP



STRASBOURG: Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan addresses MEPs during a plenary session at the European Parliament on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP

More than 500 killed as...

Continued from Page 1

troops to the border in preparation for a full-scale ground offensive. So far, the White House has seen no signs of a deepening engagement by Iran in the conflict, according to Kirby. "Outside of the rhetoric, no we haven't," Kirby said. The United States has already deployed two aircraft carriers to the region "to deter hostile actions against (the Zionist entity)," Austin said last week. US media reported the troops being readied for deployment would cover support roles, such as medical assistance and handling explosives.

The Zionist entity has vowed to destroy Hamas while also seeking to rescue the at least 199 hostages taken into Gaza by the Islamist Hamas, which has released a video of one of the captives, French-Zionist woman Mia Shem. The video includes footage of the woman receiving treatment for an arm injury. Diplomatic bids to free the hostages have gathered pace. Turkey said it was in talks with Hamas to secure their release. But there were mixed views about how effective Biden could be, with some Palestinians blaming the United States for backing the Zionist entity, and even Zionists skeptical.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, back in the Zionist entity after a whistlestop regional tour, said Biden's visit would be a statement of "solidarity with (the Zionist entity)" and an "ironclad commitment to its security". The Zionist entity's arch foe Iran has repeatedly warned against a Gaza invasion and Monday raised the specter of a possible "pre-emptive action" against the Zionist entity.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tuesday that "no one can stop resistance forces" if the Zionist entity keeps up its bombardment of Gaza. Deadly flare-ups have rocked the Zionist entity's northern border with Lebanon, where the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant movement is based. Hezbollah said Tuesday that four of its fighters had been killed in south Lebanon, bringing to

nine the number of the group's members killed in intensifying border skirmishes with the Zionist entity. In statements, Hezbollah said four of its fighters had been killed "performing jihad", just hours after the Zionist entity said it killed four militants who attempted to infiltrate the border from Lebanon.

While signaling support, Biden will also try to quietly steer the Zionist entity's military response, as international alarm has grown about the devastating impact of the war on Palestinian civilians. At least 3,000 Palestinians — mostly civilians — have been killed, entire neighborhoods have been razed and survivors are left with dwindling supplies of food, water and fuel.

"The situation is catastrophic beyond what I could have imagined," said Jamil Abdullah, a Palestinian-Swede, hoping to flee the blockaded enclave. "There are corpses in the streets. Buildings are crashing down on their inhabitants. Blood is everywhere. The smell of the dead is everywhere." AFP reporters in Gaza said mortuaries were overflowing, and corpses wrapped in white body bags were even being stored in an ice cream truck.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees says more than one million Palestinians — almost half of Gaza's population of 2.4 million — have fled their homes. World Health Organization regional director Ahmed Al-Mandhari told AFP that Gaza was barreling towards "real catastrophe". "There are 24 hours of water, electricity and fuel left," he said. The Zionist entity has demanded that residents of north Gaza leave for the south, hoping to clear the area of civilians in preparation for a perilous ground assault that would involve grueling urban combat. Since the Zionist entity's evacuation order in north Gaza, entire families, young children and the elderly have gathered belongings and fled to southern Gaza, bedding down in any available space, indoors and out. In the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza the normal population of 400,000 has roughly doubled. Egypt has so far kept closed Gaza's only border crossing not controlled by the Zionist entity, Rafah. The Zionist entity has repeatedly struck the area on the Palestinian side and Monday denied reports of any temporary ceasefire deal to open it. — Agencies

mitted by Hamas terrorists, fueling anti-Semitism, affecting the representatives of (the Zionist entity) and threatening the peace of the Jewish community in Colombia." Ambassador Dagan said last week that protesters had left graffiti including swastikas on the facade of the embassy.

In response to Haiat's statement, Petro said his country does not support "genocide". "If we have to suspend foreign relations with (the Zionist entity), we suspend them," he added. Colombia's armed forces, engaged in a decades-long conflict with leftist guerrillas, rightwing paramilitaries and drug cartels, uses Zionist-made weapons and aircraft. The country has a history of strong diplomatic and military relations with the Zionist entity and the United States. — AFP

Boycotts hit book fair over...

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I want people to be here, to have a (frank) discourse, to have discussions even if it might be controversial." There has also been anger at a decision to postpone an award ceremony for Palestinian author Adania Shibli. She was due to receive the LiBeraturpreis, a German award, for her book "A Minor Detail", based on the real events of a 1949 rape and murder by Zionist soldiers. It is organized by Litprom, which gives out the honor each year at the fair, but the group decided not to go ahead with the ceremony "due to the war started by Hamas". The group says it will hold the event later, and insisted that awarding the prize to Shibli was "never in question".

However, in an open letter released Monday, over 600 signatories including high-profile authors, publishers and literary agents, condemned

Xi welcomes 'dear friend'...

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The United States has asked China to use its influence to help de-escalate the war, which has seen more than a million people in the blockaded Gaza Strip flee the relentless bombardment that the Zionist entity launched in retaliation for the attack. China brokered an entente between key Hamas backer Iran and its regional foe Saudi Arabia earlier this year, and will send its Middle East envoy Zhai Jun to the volatile region this week.

No details have been given about where or when exactly Zhai would travel, though China's state broadcaster CCTV has said he will push for a ceasefire and peace talks. Russia, which has traditionally maintained good relations with both Zionist and Palestinian authorities, has called for an "immediate ceasefire" in the conflict.

In Beijing, Putin is on a mission to strengthen the already strong bond with his communist neighbor, though experts say Moscow is increasingly the junior partner in the relationship. China is Russia's largest trading partner, with exchange between the nations reaching a record \$190 billion last year, Beijing customs data shows. Beijing has drawn criticism from Western countries for its stance on the Ukraine war, on which China insists it is neutral even as it re-

fuses to criticize Moscow's invasion. When Xi made a state visit to Moscow in March, Putin hailed the "truly unlimited possibilities" their countries' partnership offered. But while the BRI forum provides a fresh opportunity for Putin and Xi to showcase their alliance, experts do not expect any new major agreements to be announced. "Russia is aware that China doesn't want to sign any high publicity deals," Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, told AFP. "China holds all of the cards," he said.

Xi kicked off the summit Tuesday with talks with Chilean and Kazakhstan Presidents Gabriel Boric and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chinese state media reported. He then met Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, describing the conservative leader as a "friend" and thanking him for his support for the BRI, state news agency Xinhua reported. Xi also met the prime ministers of Papua New Guinea and Ethiopia.

Putin, meanwhile, had a meeting of his own with Orban, telling him he was satisfied to still maintain relations with some European countries, "despite... current geopolitical conditions". The Russian leader also met with Vietnam's President Vo Van Thong, the Kremlin said. China and Russia's top diplomats were singing from the same song sheet when they met in Beijing on Monday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov thanked China for inviting Putin as the summit's "chief guest", according to a readout from Moscow, which later said the top diplomat would head to North Korea after Beijing. — AFP

Colombia lashes out at Zionist...

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of arms to Colombia's military, said it was "halting security exports" to the South American country as the diplomatic feud escalated.

Zionist foreign ministry spokesman Lior Haiat said Colombia's ambassador, Margarita Manjarrez, had been summoned over Petro's "hostile and anti-Semitic statements". The president's statements were received with "astonishment", said the spokesman. He accused Petro of "expressing support for the atrocities com-

International



BRUSSELS: Swedish supporters react as they wait in the stand during the Euro 2024 qualifying football match between Belgium and Sweden at the King Baudouin Stadium on Oct 16, 2023. — AFP photos



Belgian police officers from the forensic service search for evidence in a street after two people were killed during a shooting.

Sweden's fears come true in Brussels 'terror attack'

PM calls for more 'security' as Swedes urged to pack away football jerseys

STOCKHOLM: Just two months after raising its threat level, Sweden was in shock on Tuesday over the killing of two of its football fans in a "terror attack" targeting Swedes in Brussels. The country's worst fears came true when a suspect of Tunisian origin living illegally in Belgium gunned down two Swedes and injured a third on Monday evening on a street, just before the start of a Belgium-Sweden international football match. The man was shot by police early Tuesday.

The Swedish government, football fans and the public expressed their devastation over the attack.

"Sweden has in modern times never been under as big a threat as now," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told reporters in Stockholm. "Every indication is that this is a terror attack, targeting Sweden and Swedish citizens, just because they are Swedes," he said, adding he felt an "unfathomable sadness".

In August, Sweden's intelligence service Sapo raised its threat level to four on a scale of five after a

series of Quran burnings across the country — most notably by an Iraqi Christian — sparked outrage in the Muslim world and made the Scandinavian country a "prioritized target".

"It was risks like this that were the reason Sapo this summer raised the threat level from three to four," Kristersson said. "Now we know with chilling clarity that there was cause for the concern that they and we in the government described," he added. "We are living in dark times."

In a social media post after the killings, the gunman had boasted of being inspired by the Islamic State extremist group. Several Belgian media named the suspect as Abdesalem L., aged 45. Kristersson said he had been informed that the suspect had "spent time in Sweden" but provided no further details.

Following the attack, Sweden's foreign ministry advised Swedes abroad "to observe increased caution and heightened vigilance, and to heed the advice of lo-

cal authorities." The prime minister vowed "to protect our open, democratic society". "They want to scare us into silence ... That's not going to happen," he said.

'Not used to being targets'

However, he stressed "this is a time for more security, more caution, more vigilance." "We simply can't be naive." The head of security for Sweden's football association, Martin Fredman, told AFP he had advised Swedish football fans in Brussels on Monday "to pack away their yellow-and-blue jerseys" — so they wouldn't be potential targets — "and fly home". He said it was an unusual situation for Swedes. "We're not used to being targets."

The match was halted at half-time and Swedish fans were ordered to stay put for several hours until they could be evacuated safely with police escorts. Andreas Matz, a Swedish journalist covering the match in the arena, told newspaper Dagens Ny-

heter he had always associated Sweden's yellow team jerseys with "such joy, excitement and celebrations". "Now in the future I'm always going to think, 'damn, are you really going to wear the jersey?'," he said. "It's so unbelievably awful that you can be a target because you're wearing the yellow jersey." Kristersson said the measure was a precautionary one for now, "but I don't want Swedes to have to walk around hiding the fact that they are Swedes." Jorgen Axelsson, a fan who had travelled to Brussels with a group of friends to watch Monday's match, told daily Aftonbladet he was stunned by the attack. "Regardless of which country you represent you should be able to wear your team's jersey," he said. At a press conference late Monday, Sweden coach Janne Andersson said he reacted with disbelief when he received the news at half-time. "It was totally unreal. What kind of world are we living in today," he said. — AFP

What we know so far about the Brussels attacker

BRUSSELS: Brussels police on Tuesday fatally shot a man after he gunned down two Swedish football fans in what authorities called a "terrorist attack". Here is what we know about the perpetrator who claimed he was inspired by the Islamic State group:

Failed asylum-seeker

Belgian media named the alleged attacker as 45-year-old Abdesalem Lassoued. Prime Minister Alexander de Croo said he was a Tunisian national staying in Belgium illegally. Officials said he had applied for asylum in the country in 2019, but had been refused in 2020. Authorities tried to track him down to issue him with a demand to leave but he could not be located.

Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne said he was known to police for "human trafficking, illegal residence and undermining state security". Van Quickenborne said that in July 2016, "unconfirmed information was passed on by a foreign police service that the man had a radicalized profile and wanted to leave for a conflict zone for jihad".

Not on watchlist

The minister pointed out that at the time, shortly after the March 22, 2016 attacks that killed 35 people at Brussels airport and in the Brussels metro, "this type of information and notification was legion". Van Quickenborne said Belgian authorities had checked this information but that no action had been taken.

"As far as our services were aware, there was no concrete information of radicalization" and the man was not put on a list of suspected extremists, he said. Earlier this year, he had been reported to the police by the occupant of an asylum center near Antwerp, who claimed that the suspect had threatened him and that he had been convicted of terrorism in Tunisia. Belgium authorities said they received infor-

mation he had not been found guilty of terrorism in Tunisia, only more minor offences.

Targeting Swedes

In a video message in Arabic claiming responsibility after the attacks, the bearded assailant claimed to be inspired by the Islamic State. He declared that he had killed three Swedes. Authorities said it appeared that the attacker was specifically targeting Sweden and had chosen to strike against football fans from the country visiting Brussels for a match.

In recent months, Swedish authorities have issued permits for several protests at which copies of the Quran, Islam's holy book, were burned — triggering angry diplomatic protests from several Muslim countries and a wave of protests.

The federal prosecutor said that in a video posted online before the attack the man had described any desecration of the Quran as a "red line". Belgian officials have said that there does not appear to be any link between the suspect's action and political fallout from the recent Hamas and Zionist attacks. — AFP



ARRAS: A French police officer and a police dog enter the Gambetta high school during its evacuation after a bomb threat in Arras, northeastern France on Oct 16, 2023. — AFP

French school killer claimed attack for IS: Prosecutor

PARIS: The man who killed a French schoolteacher last week was expected to be charged with terror offences on Tuesday, a prosecutor said, adding that he had sworn allegiance to the Islamic State extremist group in an audio recording before his attack. Friday's attack, in combination with the surge in Middle East tensions after Hamas' October 7 attack on the Zionist entity and Zionist deadly reprisals, has jangled nerves in France and put the country on high alert for further violence.

The suspected attacker, Mohammed Moguchkov, 20, a Russian citizen from the mainly Muslim northern Caucasus, was brought before an anti-terror judge who will decide whether to charge and remand him in custody ahead of trial. His 16-year-old brother and 15-year-old cousin, suspected of providing assistance before he fatally knifed teacher Dominique Bernard, 57, at his former school in Arras, northern France, were also appearing before the judge. Anti-terrorist prosecutors have opened a probe into terrorist conspiracy, murder as part of a terrorist plot and related charges. Moguchkov had "sworn allegiance to the Islamic State" in a long audio recording, prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard told reporters in Paris, adding that further information had been gleaned from people close to him and a video recorded before the assault.

A source familiar with the case said he had made a "very marginal" reference to the Zionist attack on Gaza. The killing of Bernard has shocked people in France. It comes almost three years to the day after the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty outside Paris on October 16, 2020. That murder was carried out by an Islamist radical from Russia's southern region of Chechnya, which borders the Ingushetia region where Moguchkov was born.

France again raised its security level after Friday's attack, deploying 7,000 troops. Adding to the tension, the Arras high school was evacuated on Monday over a bomb threat, which proved to be a false alarm. On Tuesday, the Palace of Versailles — one of France's most recognizable historic landmarks — was also evacuated after a bomb threat, according to a post from its account on X (formerly Twitter) and a source familiar with the case. The palace had received a similar threat on Saturday. Following the shooting on Monday in the Belgian capital, Brussels, of two Swedes by a Tunisian man also claiming inspiration from Islamic State, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday: "All European states are vulnerable ... There is a return of this Islamist terrorism." — AFP



BRUSSELS: Supporters leave the King Baudouin Stadium as a police van patrols on Oct 16, 2023. — AFP

Russia moves to revoke nuclear test ban treaty

MOSCOW: Russian lawmakers voted on Tuesday to revoke Moscow's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, moving closer to abandoning a landmark agreement that outlaws the testing of nuclear weapons. The move comes after President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month he was "not ready to say" whether Russia needed to carry out live nuclear tests. Lawmakers in the State Duma lower house of parliament unanimously approved the de-ratification bill in its first reading, with 412 voting for and none voting against.

The bill can be signed into law by Putin after passing three readings in the lower house and receiving approval in the upper house, although this is largely a formality. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) aimed to completely ban all nuclear tests.

It never came into force as it was not ratified by all required signatories, but it did have symbolic value and helped put an end to the more than 2,000 nuclear tests carried out during and shortly after the Cold War.

Both Russia and the United States signed the treaty in 1996, but while Moscow ratified it in 2000, Washington never took the final step of codifying it into law. "For 23 years we have been waiting for the United States to ratify this treaty," Russia's top lawmaker Vyacheslav Volodin said ahead of the vote. "But Washington, because of its double standards, its irresponsible attitude to global security issues, has not done so," he said.

'Threat to existence'

Since the start of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, Putin and other Russian officials have given mixed signals about the possible use of nuclear weapons in the conflict, prompting alarm in the West. Putin mobilized Moscow's nuclear forces shortly after the conflict began and has repeatedly invoked Russia's nuclear doctrine, which allows the use of nuclear weapons if the state faces a "threat to its existence".

In February this year, Russia pulled out of a sep-

arate nuclear treaty with the United States known as New START, which aimed to limit the number of nuclear warheads both sides could deploy. During the summer, Putin confirmed Russia had sent tactical nuclear arms to its ally Belarus and earlier this month announced the successful testing of a nuclear-powered cruise missile.

However, he told journalists at a political forum in Sochi this month that Russia had "no need" to change its nuclear doctrine. "Why should we? Everything can be changed, I just don't see the need for it," he said. "No person in his right mind and clear memory would think of using nuclear weapons against Russia," he added.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters last week that Moscow would only resume nuclear tests if the United States did so first. "We must ensure that our testing base is ready to resume testing activities," he was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies. "But the resumption in practical terms is (only) possible after the relevant tests are carried out by the United States," he said. The Soviet Union last carried out a nuclear test in 1990, while the United States' last test was in 1992. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023

NBK reports KD 431.1 million in net profit for 9 months of 2023

A y-o-y growth of 15.2% • Total assets grew by 6.1% y-o-y to reach KD 36.8 billion

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2023. The bank reported a net profit of KD 431.1 million (\$1.4 billion), compared to KD 374.2 million (\$1.2 billion) for the corresponding period in 2022, improving by 15.2 percent year-on-year. In the three-month period ended September 30, 2023, NBK achieved a net profit of KD 155.8 million (\$504.1 million), demonstrating an annual growth rate of 14.2 percent.

Total assets as of the end of September 2023 grew by 6.1 percent year-on-year to reach KD 36.8 billion (\$119.2 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 5.8 percent year-on-year to KD 21.8 billion (\$70.5 billion), while total shareholders' equity reached KD 3.8 billion (\$12.1 billion), growing by 7.4 percent year-on-year.

Commenting on the bank's 9M 2023 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "We are delighted by the continuous growth in our profits, as it extends from our strong financial performance. This success primarily stems from our core banking activities, demonstrating our solid financial standing, the resilience of our business model, and its ability to generate positive results in diverse economic conditions and cycles".

"Our prudent approach in diversifying revenue streams and making substantial investments, which have upheld our leadership in digital service provision, further strengthen the robust foundations upon which NBK stands. This approach drives us toward sustainable future growth and underscores our dedication to optimizing value for our shareholders," Al-Bahar added.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar highlighted that the com-



mitment to maximizing value extends to encompass all stakeholders. He affirmed NBK's dedication to meeting its social responsibilities, supporting the country's development initiatives and projects, providing innovative and exceptional services to customers, nurturing the growth of local talent, and strengthening reliance on local suppliers.

Al-Bahar concluded his remarks by underlining the ongoing commitment to responsible growth, with a significant focus on adhering to environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG). He also reaffirmed NBK's unwavering dedication to maintaining responsible banking standards not only in Kuwait but also throughout the region.

Meanwhile, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "We are delighted to announce robust profits for the first nine months of 2023. This achievement aligns with our ongoing progress towards attaining our strategic objectives, further solidifying our leadership position and bolstering NBK's prospects for future growth, all while

emphasizing our commitment to sustainable and diversified sources of revenue.

Al-Sager envisions that NBK's profitability will continue to rise in the future. This growth is bolstered by the bank's robust balance sheet, healthy liquidity levels, and substantial capitalization. Furthermore, the careful strategy NBK employs in diversifying revenue streams and managing risks will be instrumental in further strengthening this positive outlook.

"All major business sectors sustained their growth momentum, resulting in a year-on-year increase in net operating income 15.6 percent to KD 863.8 million. This growth was underpinned by the expansion of net interest income, as well as income derived from fees and commissions," Al-Sager added.

Al-Sager highlighted that confidence in the operating environment continued to rise during the third quarter. This optimism was particularly boosted by the government's unveiling of a comprehensive work plan, featuring ambitious development strategies and projects, with a strong emphasis on private sector participation. This favorable backdrop is expected to stimulate business activity in the future.

"We remain cautious on the operating environment as we monitor how the recent geopolitical tensions will evolve and their impact on the business sentiment," Al-Sager added. Al-Sager also explained that the growth in profitability aligns with the strengthening of NBK's financial position. This is evident through the consistent growth in the loan portfolio, customer deposits, and total assets, all while maintaining a high level of asset quality, thanks to NBK's prudent risk management policy.

"The contribution of our International Banking Group and our Islamic banking division, Boubyan

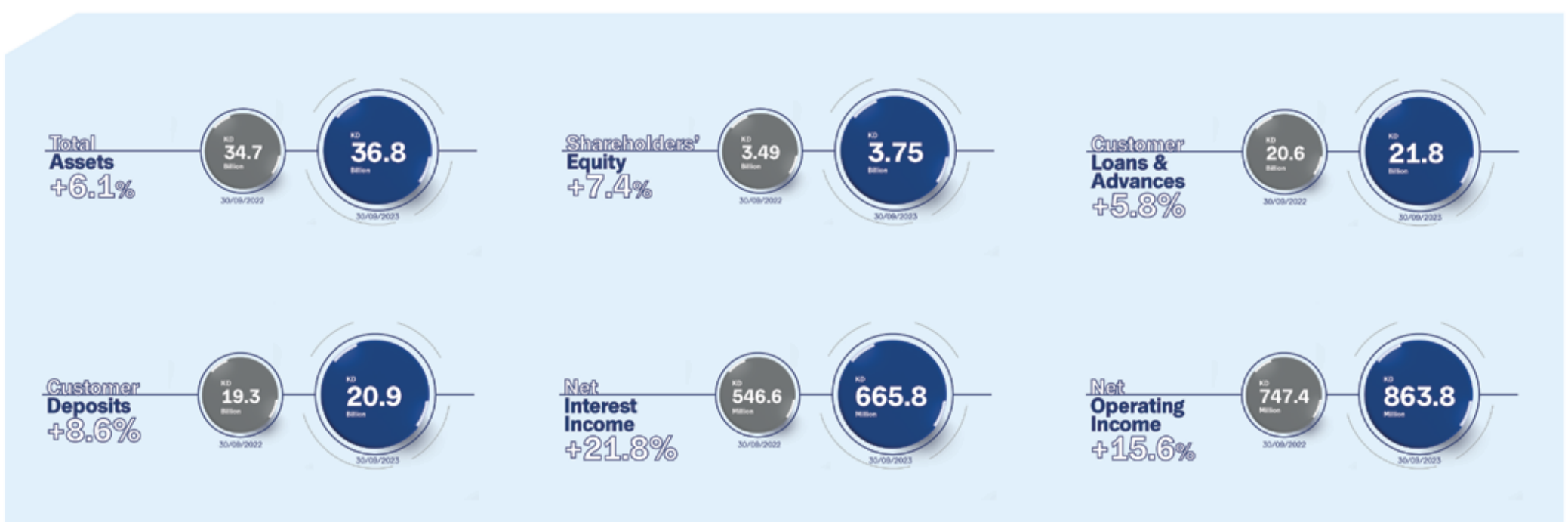
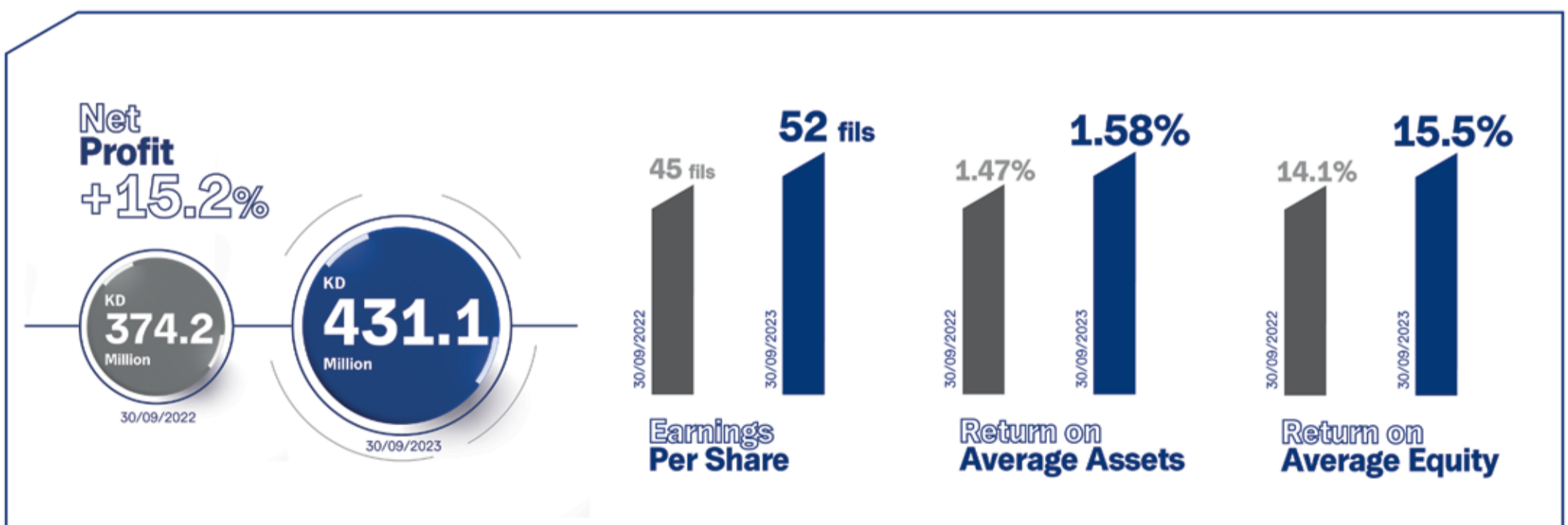
Bank, in driving profit growth underscores our forward-looking vision and the success of our diversification strategy. This emphasizes NBK's continued dedication to increasing its presence in local markets and capitalizing on growth opportunities in the markets where it operates," Al-Sager added.

"We remain committed to making strategic investments aimed at further strengthening our leadership in delivering digital banking services. This plays a pivotal role in maintaining our dominant market share in Kuwait and extending our reach to various customer segments, particularly the younger demographic. Furthermore, these investments align with our expansion goals for our international branches and subsidiaries in the markets where NBK operates," Al-Sager confirmed.

Al-Sager emphasized the current focus on enhancing reliance on big data analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and machine learning. This strategic focus aims to fully leverage the bank's substantial technological infrastructure and enhance the digital banking experience for NBK customers.

"We have made significant advancements in offering responsible banking services to our customers in line with our strategy to incorporate ESG practices and initiatives across all the Group's operations and activities. Additionally, we have introduced services and products to support our customers' efforts in advancing their green transformation initiatives," Al-Sager noted. Al-Sager concluded by highlighting that NBK continues to set a leading example for all private sector institutions by prioritizing social responsibility. This commitment reflects a strong belief in the significance of such endeavors in driving forward the journey toward sustainable growth.

Financial Highlights 9 Months 2023



Boubyan Bank records net profit of KD 61.1m for 9-month period in 2023

Profit grows at a rate of 26% • Bank reinforces financial inclusion and digital transformation

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has announced outstanding financial results for the period ending 30 September 2023, with KD 61.1 million in net profits, at a growth rate of 26 percent compared with last year, with the earnings per share of 13.9 fils.

Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer Adel Al-Majed stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, Boubyan Bank had a solid financial performance during Q3, and recorded a positive growth across all indicators and results. This reflects the success of our expansion plans, increase of our market shares, and progress in accelerating our growth and improving our overall operational performance."

Al-Majed highlighted the most significant numbers recorded by the bank until the end of Q3 of this year, where the total customers' deposits grew by 8 percent to reach KD 6.3 billion, while the bank's financing portfolio grew by 5 percent to reach KD 6.1 billion, and the operating income grew by 7 percent to reach KD 163.2 million. Speaking of the bank's market share, the bank's share of local financing increased to 11.6 percent.

"Boubyan has been recording solid financial results ever since the beginning of 2023 despite the challenges and economic concerns worldwide, and the impact of high inflation. This solid performance, however, was achieved owing to the bank's strategy and vision which fosters sustainable growth based on clear bases and approach", he added.



Adel Al-Majed

- **Growth of key performance indicators and results reflect the success of our business strategy and robustness of our financial position**

- **Boubyan is steadily enhancing its leadership in digital banking by offering products and services of high value to customers**

awards and international rankings received by the bank from a group of prestigious institutions, chief among which are Euromoney, Global Finance, and Service Hero during Q3.

The bank received 10+ international awards and rankings in various business areas such as digital transformation, consumer banking, corporate finance, CSR, and SMEs support, whether locally or internationally, thus, reinforcing its leadership and status as a leading Islamic and digital financial institution.

Reinforcing financial inclusion and digital transformation

Al-Majed went on to add: "During the past period, we witnessed improved expansion plans based on a group of digital financial inclusion reinforcement and implementation criteria, towards solid growth and rapid improvement that we will be seeing over the upcoming years to improve the digital Islamic banking industry."

"Boubyan Bank is a pioneer in laying the foundations of digital transformation and offering digital solutions which made its mark in the Islamic banking sector. The bank now enjoys a clear banking and digital influence in shaping a promising future in Kuwait and the region as a whole amid the tough competition between business sectors", he elaborated.

Boubyan has recently announced an integrated set of solutions available through its mobile App for both individual and corporate customers, such as the issuance of Visa-Oasis Digital Prepaid Card, the first of its kind in Kuwait, which offers credit solutions to customers and gives them the chance to collect air miles against their spending inside and outside Kuwait.

Similarly, the new "Saving Vault" service allows customers to create a vault for each saving target for the customer and helps him achieve it, whether for travelling or for the purchase of a certain product, while setting the necessary timeframe to achieve the final target. Additionally, the bank launched Boubyan Multicurrency Card, which allows customers to add 13 currencies of the most important tourist destinations to the card, where customers can add five different currencies of those to the wallet to use the card in their purchases during travelling or online with ease and assurance.

Moreover, the new "Card Auto Top Up" service was added, which makes it easy for customers to top-up their credit, prepaid, and digital cards automatically when they reach a certain balance without the need to do the same manually. The bank further offers the best and cutting-edge digital payment solutions to customers to ensure that they enjoy the most unique and comprehensive payment services such as Google Pay and Apple Pay services for retail customers.

Nomo Bank

Al-Majed elaborated: "Nomo Bank continues growing its customer base through its various partnerships to offer unique digital property finance solutions to customers in the UK market, thereby having a competitive advantages that meet the real

estate market requirements for those willing to purchase investment or residential units; this, in fact, makes Nomo the best sharia-compliant property finance option in the United Kingdom."

"Despite the relatively short span of Nomo in the market, its recent launch of many products and services puts it on par with top financial institutions, to offer a unique digital banking experience to customers that meets their expectations and needs while ensuring the highest levels of protection and security", he pointed out.

Complete financing solutions with competitive advantages

Al-Majed added: "Any development or innovation of a new service is the result of interaction with customers and constantly listening to their opinions to identify the basics and methodologies of development and change to improve the work environment and reinforce the products and services' portfolio, and stimulate the same."

Key financial indicators in KD million

Indicator	September 2023	September 2022	Growth
Net profits	61.1	48.6	26%
Operating income	163.2	153.1	7%
Customers' deposits	6,287	5,807	8%
Financing portfolio	6,088	5,814	5%
Assets	8,201	7,757	6%

The corporate sector is an integral part of Boubyan. In light of the challenges associated with offering various types of services and products to customers, currently there is a pressing need to provide innovative banking solutions that meet the commercial demands of customers, be they related to logistics or financial needs. This reflects the leadership of the bank and its prominent role in reinforcing the Islamic finance sector and financing mega corporate projects, and the accelerating growth of the finance industry by providing all means of support, innovative financing solutions, and the support necessary to many vital projects for its business banking customers.

Boubyan continues supporting its customers of the segment of local entrepreneurs by offering them a group of integrated financial solutions and exceptional benefits that allow them to manage their banking transactions smoothly and conveniently. Moreover, the bank has recently announced the SoftPOS service, using K-Net's POS App, to complete payment transactions with any cards as an alternative to traditional POS terminals. This aims at reinforcing the banking products and services' offerings, thus reflecting our ongoing approach to develop the digital infrastructure and to offer the best services in the field of digital payments.

In addition to this, there was the latest update for the e-Pay service, which enables the digital collection of payments. The new update added new payment solutions, most of which are offered for the first time in Kuwait, such as the "Payments Scheduling", which allows customers to prepare payment links and arrange for them to be sent on specific due dates on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis, with the possibility of resending them as a reminder in case there is no response to the same or if they are not paid in the first time.

The e-Pay Mandoob service was also offered by Boubyan for the first time in Kuwait. The service maintains the confidentiality of a company's accounts, making the owner or the person-in-charge the only person to have access to performed transactions, thus entitling the company's representative "Mandoob" to merely collect the payments.

The bank continued strengthening its banking network through expansion of its network of branches, ATMs, and ITMs, thereby increasing its network of branches across Kuwait to 49 branches, with the aim of offering a unique banking experience to customers around the clock, especially through its digital channels to expand its banking services and solutions' network, using the latest digital technologies.

Corporate social responsibility

The bank continued its CSR programs and continued strengthening the principles of sustainability within Boubyan's strategy to deliver a message that made it always closer to various segments of the society through its various contributions that aim at increasing social awareness. This ultimately led the bank to be a role model to follow in CSR and sustainable development.

Highlights

- **For the third consecutive year, the bank supports CBK and KBA's Be Aware Campaign "Diraya" to spread awareness about many banking aspects among citizens and residents. This comes in line with the bank's CSR efforts.**
- **Boubyan Bank has been sponsoring many job fairs recently, as a part of the bank's ongoing support to discover national talents and to offer job opportunities and training to the youths who are interested in starting a career in the banking sector.**
- **The bank continued supporting its human resources, especially its national cadres which account for more than 80 percent, while empowering women by appointing them in many leadership positions.**

Al-Majed thanked the executive management as well as all bank's staff who are highly professional. He went on to recognize their efforts towards achieving the best results and positive indicators across all levels, making this year a special year in Boubyan's journey, especially with additional expansion plans.

International awards and rankings

With steady steps, Boubyan Bank managed to be among the top Islamic financial institutions with many



Apple chief Tim Cook made a surprise visit to China this week, greeting gamers in the southwestern city of Chengdu as his company faces slumping phone sales in its biggest market.

Apple CEO Cook makes surprise visit to China

BEIJING: Apple chief Tim Cook made a surprise visit to China this week, greeting gamers in the southwestern city of Chengdu as his company faces slumping phone sales in its biggest market. In a post late Monday on his account on the Weibo social media platform, Cook said he had visited Apple's Taikoo Li store in Chengdu and met young players of the "Honour of Kings" game. The online battle arena game, published by Chinese tech giant Tencent, is one of the world's most-played mobile games.

"The energy tonight was off the charts!" he wrote. "Honour of Kings," he said, "started here in Chengdu and is now a global phenomenon on the App Store."

"The game sets a new bar. It is so popular in China and around the world," he told the state-run China Daily. "You can see that people are so passionate about the game and so excited. It's great to see."

Since the US tech giant first established a presence in China in 1993, Apple has grown into a major provider of smartphones, laptops and consumer electronics in the country. During a visit in March to Beijing, Cook said his company enjoyed a "symbiotic" relationship with China. But Apple has struggled in the country in recent years—last year, sales were hit by curtailed production at factories as a result of China's zero-COVID policy. —AFP

EU to seek virtual elimination of fossil fuels at COP28

LUXEMBOURG: The EU will seek a global phase-out of fossil fuels and for their use to reach a peak in this decade, according to the member states' common position adopted unanimously late Monday.

At the COP28 UN climate talks in November, the bloc will also call for eliminating "as soon as possible" subsidies for fossil fuels which do not serve to combat energy poverty or ensure a "just transition"—but without setting a deadline as NGOs hoped.

"(The European) Council stresses that the transition to a climate-neutral economy will require a global phase-out of unabated fossil fuels and a peak in their consumption in this decade", said a statement released after the meeting of EU environment ministers.

At the same time the 27 European nations will advocate "the importance of having the energy sector predominantly free of fossil fuels well before 2050", a formula expressed this time without the mention of "unabated". EU ministers meeting in Luxembourg bitterly clashed over the inclusion of the word in the negotiating mandate for new EU commissioner for climate matters, Wopke Hoekstra, who will represent them at COP28 in Dubai from November 30 to December 12.

Brussels is looking to triple the amount of global renewable energy used by the end of this decade and double energy efficiency in line with the goals of the COP28 presidency. The EU has already set itself a horizon of 2050 to abolish "unabated" fossil fuels—meaning those reliant on coal, oil and gas that do not have mechanisms to capture or store carbon.

The issue is expected to be bitterly fought over at the UN climate conference in Dubai, and has been the subject of strained debate between EU countries. Together with NGOs, some governments wanted the "unabated" label withdrawn or have strict conditions attached to the use of carbon capture technology, to prevent them being used as justification for continued fossil-fuel burning. "There's no alternative for driving down emissions across the board," Hoekstra said.

"However some sectors are extremely hard to



abate" and thus carbon-capture technology was needed "as part of the total solution space," he said. France's energy transition minister Agnes Pannier-Ruñacher called such tech "of interest" but added that it should be reserved for sectors that were unable otherwise to decarbonize. In the end, the term "unabated" was retained in the agreed text but is no longer mentioned in the formulation of the long-term objective of an energy sector predominantly free of fossil fuels "well before 2050".

'Driving force' for change

In the immediate future, carbon capture technologies "should be tied to those sectors where it's going to be difficult to engage in decarbonization, where it's difficult to wean themselves off fossil fuels for some of the industrial process", explained Spain's ecological transition minister Teresa Ribera, whose country chaired the Luxembourg meeting.

"The long-term objective is that fossil fuels should be phased out of our energy mix as we tried to promote decarbonization," she said. At COP28 many countries will push to secure an unprecedented commitment to move away from "unabated" fossil fuels.

But a global commitment to eliminating fossil fuels entirely would be "very complicated", Hoekstra said.

And, when it comes to an accord to be taken up by UN member countries, "it takes 192 to tango," he said.

The EU is also calling for "striving for a fully or predominantly decarbonized global power system in the 2030s". The bloc also called for global action towards the tripling of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030 as well as a doubling of energy efficiency, in line with the roadmap of the president of COP28. The Europeans also debated whether to maintain in Dubai their legally established objective of a 55 percent reduction in the bloc's greenhouse gases by 2030 or the 57 percent that it should de facto reach under policies already adopted. A 57 percent announcement would reinforce Europe's ambition to be a global leader on combating climate change, said European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic and other officials. In the end, they simply updated their submission to indicate the bloc was aiming to reduce its emissions "by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels".

"It was very important that we insisted on the factual effect of what we were doing," said Ribera. By its example "the EU is a driving force for change", she said. The bloc will also call for strengthening existing funding arrangements evoked in COP27 to compensate poorer countries as they shift to greener energy production and use. — AFP

Business

UAE's growth outlook strong, but global risks weigh: IMF

IMF staff issues statement on conclusion of visit to UAE

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates' economic growth is strong, driven by robust domestic activity. Fiscal and external surpluses remain high on the back of high oil prices. The near-term outlook is positive but subject to elevated global risks and uncertainty, the International Monetary Fund said as its staff concluded their visit to the country. According to their report, UAE banks are adequately capitalized overall, but continued close monitoring of financial stability risks is warranted.

Maintaining a prudent overall fiscal stance amid higher oil revenue will help contain inflationary pressures. Structural reforms to support medium-term growth and a smooth energy transition should be continued, the report added.

A staff team from the IMF, led by Ali Al-Eyd, visited the United Arab Emirates during Sept 25 to Oct 3, 2023, to discuss economic and financial developments, the outlook, and the country's policy and reform priorities. At the conclusion of the mission, Al-Eyd issued the following statement: "The economy continues to grow, benefitting from strong domestic activity. Non-hydrocarbon GDP growth is expected to exceed 4 percent this year and to remain at a similar pace in 2024, driven by tourism, construction, and real estate related developments. Social and business-friendly reforms and the UAE's safe haven status continue to attract foreign inflows of capital and labor, underpinning growth and contributing to elevated real estate prices, particularly in high-end segments," it said.

Following the OPEC+ production cuts, hydrocarbon GDP growth is expected to slow in 2023, but to accelerate next year with the UAE's 2024 OPEC+ production quota increase. Overall real GDP is ex-

pected to grow around 3.5 percent this year. Average inflation will remain contained at around 3 percent in 2023, down from 4.8 percent in 2022.

"Fiscal and external surpluses remain high on the back of high oil prices. The fiscal balance is expected to be around 5 percent of GDP in 2023, driven by oil revenue and strong economic activity. The phased introduction of a corporate income tax that began in June 2023 will support higher non-oil revenue over the medium term. Public debt is projected to continue to decline, falling firmly below 30 percent of GDP in 2023, including with the benefit of the Dubai Emirate reducing its public debt by 29 billion dirhams in line with its Public Debt Sustainability Strategy.

The current account surplus is expected to be notably above the medium-term level in 2023 and 2024. "Banks are adequately capitalized and liquid overall. Bank profitability has increased with higher interest rates and overall credit continues to grow, although at a slower rate. However, rising real estate prices and tighter financial conditions underscore the importance of continued close monitoring of financial stability. Continued efforts to strengthen the macro-prudential and resolution and recovery frameworks, promote the effective management of non-performing loans, and advance the National AML/CFT Strategy and Action Plan are welcome.

"The outlook remains subject to heightened global uncertainty. A decline in oil demand and reduced global trade and tourism from slower global growth, higher-for-longer interest rates, tighter financial conditions, or geopolitical developments would weigh on growth and pressure fiscal and external balances. However, higher oil prices and healthy fiscal buffers help mitigate risks, while re-



form efforts pose upside risks to growth.

"The UAE's sustained reform efforts support medium-term growth and a smooth energy transition, but prioritization and sequencing remain key to ensure effective outcomes. Advancing a medium-term fiscal framework, underpinned by careful coordination of emirate-specific fiscal anchors and rules, would promote long-term sustainability, and help meet climate policy challenges. Ongoing efforts to boost private sector employment, further devel-

op the domestic capital market, and leverage trade and investment in digital and green initiatives will further advance diversification and lift medium-term growth. Building on recent improvements in economic data collection, sharing, and dissemination will buttress these efforts.

"The IMF team would like to express its appreciation to the authorities and other stakeholders for the open and fruitful discussions," the statement concluded.

News in Brief

Smartphone sales sag globally

SAN FRANCISCO: Sales of smartphones continued to shrink globally in the recently-ended quarter as consumers watched spending, market tracker Counterpoint reported on Monday. Smartphone sales fell 8 percent, marking the ninth consecutive quarter of decline in year-over-year comparisons, according to research by Counterpoint's Market Pulse service. The decline was "largely due to slower than expected recovery in consumer demand," the group said in its findings. —AFP

Rolls-Royce to axe up to 2,500 jobs

LONDON: Rolls-Royce, the British manufacturer of aircraft engines, said Tuesday it plans to axe up to 2,500 jobs worldwide, or about six percent of its staff. "It is estimated that 2,000-2,500 roles will be removed globally" under "plans for a simpler, more streamlined, organization", the group said in a statement. Chief executive Tufan Erginbilgic, who began restructuring the group on taking the helm at the start of the year, said the company was building a Rolls-Royce that is fit for the future. — AFP

Ericsson posts \$2.8bn loss

STOCKHOLM: Swedish telecommunications equipment manufacturer Ericsson said on Tuesday it had suffered a loss in the third quarter after writing down the value of its purchase of US cloud operator Vonage. The loss follows Ericsson announcing last week that it was taking a \$2.9-billion charge to write down the value of its assets, in particular its \$6.2 billion purchase of Vonage, which was completed last year. The 30.5-billion-kronor (\$2.8-billion) quarterly loss compares to net profit of 5.4 billion kronors in the three months to the end of September last year. Net sales declined by five percent on a reported basis, and by 10 percent once currency changes are removed. — AFP

German investor morale improves

FRANKFURT: German investor confidence improved more than expected in October, a key survey showed Tuesday, thanks to slowing inflation and growing hopes that the European Central Bank is done hiking interest rates. The ZEW institute's economic expectations index surged by 10.3 points month-on-month to reach minus 1.1 points, the third consecutive monthly rise. Analysts surveyed by FactSet had expected a smaller increase, penciling in a reading of minus seven points. A negative reading means most investors are pessimistic. "It seems that we have passed the lowest point," ZEW president Achim Wambach said in a statement. — AFP

Canada inflation edges lower

OTTAWA: Canada's inflation rate edged lower to 3.8 percent in September—down from 4.0 percent in the previous month amid broad-based price deceleration—the government statistical agency said Tuesday. Prices for groceries continued to rise, according to Statistics Canada, but at a slower pace for many items including meat, dairy, coffee and tea. That was partly offset by a 7.5 percent year-over-year increase in gasoline prices, the agency added. — AFP

Ports, railways, a naval base: Belt and Road in five projects

BEIJING: China's landmark Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has thousands of infrastructure projects in every corner of the globe, generating a staggering \$2 trillion in contracts while courting international controversy.

Here AFP looks at five key projects:

Laos: High-speed railway

Laos took on huge loans from China to partially finance a \$6 billion high-speed railway connecting it with the underdeveloped, landlocked nation. The nearly 650-mile line linking the Chinese city of Kunming to the Laotian capital Vientiane opened in 2021 and has served tens of millions of passengers, Beijing says. It is envisaged as the first string in a sprawling web of rail projects knitting China closer to other countries in Southeast Asia. Both sides have touted the project as a public good, with Beijing saying it "bears friendship, happiness and opportunities".

Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone told the Chinese state-run Global Times on Sunday that the railway "benefits not only Laos but also neighboring countries". But critics have said debt-riddled Laos is unlikely to make much money from the project and will struggle to pay back China, its major creditor.

Pakistan: Economic corridor

Plans to develop an "economic corridor" linking China and Pakistan took on new impetus when they were absorbed into the BRI framework a decade ago. The staunch allies have earmarked tens of billions of dollars for a range of transport and energy projects connecting western China with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. The former chairman of the port's Chinese state-owned operator in July called the site "a blank sheet of paper, and we can draw the most beautiful painting on it". But analysts at the MERICS think-tank have called the corridor "an ambitious gamble that heightens risks" for Pakistan's perennially distressed economy.

Goldman Sachs profits down 36% in third quarter

NEW YORK: US investment bank Goldman Sachs reported a fall in third quarter profits on Tuesday, noting net losses in equity investments compared with a year ago.

The bank reported profits of \$1.9 billion, down 36 percent from the same period last year. Its net revenues were "essentially unchanged" in this timeframe, at \$11.8 billion. The bank reported net losses from real estate investments among other areas.

This weighed on its asset and wealth management unit, which saw losses of 20 percent in net revenues. Goldman also said it took a write-down of \$506 million on GreenSky—a fintech platform for home improvement loans that Goldman acquired with fanfare in 2021. It announced a \$2.2 billion all-stock ac-



A Fuxing bullet train runs on the China's section of the China-Laos Railway.

Djibouti: Naval base

China showered Djibouti with investment after bringing the small African nation into the BRI's orbit—and a sprawling military base is the centerpiece. The reportedly \$590 million facility is Beijing's first permanent naval base outside China and is strategically placed between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Beijing has said the base is used to resupply navy ships, support regional peacekeeping and humanitarian operations and crack down on piracy. But its proximity to a US military base has raised concerns of espionage and Chinese power projection around Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

In response, Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh has slammed Washington's "fixation" with and "incessant" complaints about the base.

Greece: Foothold in Europe

China raised European eyebrows in 2016 when a state-owned shipping firm bought a majority stake in Greece's ailing Port of Piraeus. Athens formally joined the BRI two years later, and the two countries envision the port as a major transit hub linking the Asian and European continents. Beijing's official Xinhua news agency said in August that "in-

sition of GreenSky in September 2021, with the deal closing at a valuation of \$1.7 billion. The firm has since reached a deal to sell GreenSky, after a financial hit linked to the business in the previous quarter.

The bank earlier reported that it suffered a pre-tax loss of \$677 million on GreenSky. Goldman shares ticked up in premarket trading.

In the report, chief executive David Solomon said in a statement: "We're confident that the work we're doing now provides us a much stronger platform for 2024." "I also expect a continued recovery in both capital markets and strategic activity if conditions remain conducive," he added.

Solomon noted that Goldman is a leader in mergers and acquisitions advisory as well as equity underwriting, adding that "a resurgence in activity will undoubtedly be a tailwind." Also Tuesday, Bank of America reported better earnings than expected in the third quarter with its net income rising 10 percent to \$7.8 billion.

This came on the back of a three percent jump in revenue, net of interest expense, to \$25.2 billion. Chief executive Brian Moynihan noted in a statement that

day, while sharply revising data for previous months.

Retail sales rose 0.7 percent last month in the world's biggest economy, reaching \$704.9 billion, while the pace of growth in August was revised upwards to 0.8 percent, the Commerce Department said on Tuesday. While the latest figure marks a slight slowdown, it remains hotter than analysts expected.

US consumption has shown resilience despite higher interest rates, after the central bank embarked on an aggressive campaign to lower inflation last year. The Federal Reserve lifted the benchmark lending rate rapidly, increasing the cost of borrowing and lowering demand by making it pricier to get funds for big-ticket purchases or business expansion.

vestments from China have breathed new life into a... port that once hit development bottlenecks". Opponents say the project aims to use Beijing's economic leverage to enhance its influence over a debt-distressed European Union member. China denies seeking malign influence over other countries through the BRI.

Italy: Poised to pull out?

Italy shocked Western allies in 2019 by declaring its participation in the BRI during a state visit from Xi Jinping. The announcement made Rome the first member of the Group of Seven advanced economies to sign up for the Chinese President's flagship project. The countries signed a series of commercial deals but they did little to staunch a yawning trade deficit or assuage concerns of Beijing's undue influence. Italy now appears to be mulling a withdrawal from the scheme, with the initial memorandum of understanding due to lapse in March next year.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said last month that Rome was "yet to make a decision" on a prospective pullout. But Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani has been less equivocal, saying that the BRI "has not produced the results we were hoping for". — AFP



its performance came about "in a healthy but slowing economy that saw US consumer spending still ahead of last year but continuing to slow."

However, "we added clients and accounts across all lines of business," he said. The latest results by Goldman Sachs and Bank of America come after banks JPMorgan Chase, Citi and Wells Fargo reported robust earnings last week, reflecting a continued boost from higher interest rates. But executives had cautioned that beneficial industry conditions were moderating while the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are adding to uncertainty. — AFP

In September, retail sales excluding motor vehicles and parts, as well as gas stations, ticked up 0.6 percent. Sales at motor vehicle dealers rose 1.1 percent from August, while that at gas stations picked up 0.9 percent. Analysts have been warning that although the US economy has remained strong in the face of elevated interest rates, it is a matter of time before tighter credit conditions bite. A key factor is the job market, a "key underpinning of the consumer," said economist Oren Klachkin at Nationwide. "As long as the job market stays solid and wages continue to rise, we should in turn expect retail sales to be pretty strong, to post positive month-on-month gain," he told AFP. US September industrial production beats expectations. — AFP

Lifestyle



Goats are seen in a barn of Metzler Kaese Molke GmbH farm and dairy, in Egg, in the Brengenzlerwald, Austria. — AFP photos



Goats are seen in a barn of Metzler Kaese Molke GmbH farm and dairy, in Egg.



Farmer Ingo Metzler stands in front of solar panels.

Austria designer farm stands out in struggling field

In idyllic western Austria, Ingo Metzler's goat breeding farm with its striking light wood paneling and big glass facades sets itself apart, aiming to survive in a sector in crisis. "Architecture is a way of expressing our innovative approach and our values," says Metzler, 58, who took over and spruced up the family farm in Vorarlberg, a region which is a pioneer in sustainable design. In the past three decades, the Alpine nation of nine million people has lost more than half of its 200,000 farms with the agricultural sector today accounting for only 1.5 percent of its GDP.

Vorarlberg—with more than 200 architects for around 410,000 inhabitants—has "a very old tradition of wooden construction... with a network of artisans always focused on the spirit of the times" and sought after all over the world, according to Metzler. Metzler said he had no other choice but to move upmarket in the face of "difficult conditions: sloping terrain, harsh climate, small production with significant fixed costs." "We knew that we would not win the price war," said the farmer, who now sells cheese



Farmer Ingo Metzler displays a body care product of his production.

from goats' milk but also high-end beauty products containing whey.

'Prestige'

Today the Metzler farm—sporting solar panels and wood paneling from spruce trees from the region—attracts visitors. Some 10,000 people per year come to explore the premises and check out the some 100 goats. Metzler says "animal welfare" is the priority with for example, dominant individuals able

to access raised boxes "so that the animals are not stressed". For the design, Metzler approached Christian Laesser when he heard the architect of schools and villas had rebuilt the family barn after a fire there.

"He came to see me. The fact that I grew up on a farm allowed me to know the specific constraints of this type of construction," Laesser tells AFP. "Cheese factory, warehouses, cold rooms... I knew the processes," he adds. He says architecture students are increasingly interested in the agricultural sector with farms, in turn, opening their doors to the public as many people are keen to see from where their food comes.

"People are very happy to see us at the forefront, while around us farmers are going out of business," says Laesser's nephew, Stefan Laesser, who also recently had his uncle redesign his farm, adding design gives "a certain prestige". Metzler, too, is reassured: where others have left their farms, three of his four sons work alongside him—with their own designs in mind.—AFP



Employees of Metzler Kaese Molke GmbH farm and dairy are seen in the natural cosmetics production building in Egg.



Cheese and other foods are displayed.



Rabbits are seen in front of a rabbit hutch.



The farm shop and a barn of Metzler Kaese Molke GmbH farm and dairy are pictured in Egg.



An aerial view shows the buildings of Metzler Kaese Molke GmbH farm and dairy, in Egg.



Minecraft passes 300mn copies sold

Video game Minecraft, owned by US tech giant Microsoft, where players build virtual worlds, has passed 300 million copies sold, it announced Sunday, cementing its status as the best selling game ever. In a post to its website, the game's makers said it had recently "crossed 300 million copies sold". "A milestone no-one could have dreamed of when we were all building our first dirt houses!" it said.

For comparison, Grand Theft Auto 5, another behemoth on the video game scene, has sold over 180 million copies since its release in 2013, according to Take-Two Interactive, parent company of the game's publisher Rockstar Games. Officially released in 2011, Minecraft was the brainchild of Swede Markus Persson — who co-founded Mojang Studios to develop the project.

Popular among several demographics, the game allows players to explore a virtually infinite world, where they can gather materials which can then be used to craft tools or build structures. The game can be played in survival or creative mode depending on whether players aim to test their resilience or simply use their imagination to build and for many the game is used as a virtual infinite lego set. In 2014, Markus Persson sold Mojang to Microsoft for \$2.5 billion, after announcing that he had become exhausted running the company in light of the massive media and public attention it was receiving.—AFP

Taylor Swift conquers North America box office with concert film

After her sold-out stadium tour, pop superstar Taylor Swift filled movie theaters with screaming fans as her concert film took in an estimated \$96 million in its opening weekend in North America, smashing records in the category. "This is a sensational domestic opening," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. While ticket sales for "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour"—which features scenes from three concerts—were below some estimates for the Friday-through-Sunday period, they were still "giant numbers" that dwarfed other concert films, Gross said. Up to now, he noted, the biggest do-

mestic concert films were 2011's "Justin Bieber: Never Say Never," which finished its run with total earnings of \$73 million, and 2009's "Michael Jackson's This Is It," at \$72.1 million. Swift surpassed those titles in three days, making this the biggest box office weekend since this summer's simultaneous releases of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer."

The movie, produced with unusual speed, was released with some special Swiftian touches. AMC Theaters, which is distributing it, broke with standard practice and encouraged filmgoers to dance, sing, whip out cell phones and generally act like they were at a real concert, mak-

ing for what one critic called a "delirious, dizzying celebration of Swift-mania."

Far, far, far behind in second place for the weekend was Blumhouse and Universal's scary sequel "Exorcist: Believer," with estimated ticket sales of \$11 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. Leslie Odom Jr. and Ann Dowd star in the horror flick, 50 years after the 1973 original. In third was Paramount's family-friendly animation "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie," at \$7 million. The Paw pups are voiced by Taraji P. Henson, Chris Rock, Serena Williams and McKenna Grace.

Fourth place went to Lionsgate's

blood-soaked "Saw X," with \$5.7 million in ticket sales. The latest in the "Saw" series, with Tobin Bell as the frightening Jigsaw, has received positive reviews. And in fifth was 20th Century's sci-fi film "The Creator," at \$4.3 million. It has John David Washington, Gemma Chan, Ken Watanabe and Allison Janney fighting a war against artificial intelligence.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "A Haunting in Venice" (\$2.1 million) "The Blind" (\$2 million) "The Nun II" (\$1.6 million) "The Equalizer 3" (\$960,000) "Dumb Money" (\$920,000)—AFP



US singer Taylor Swift (center) alongside dancers and band arrive for the "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" concert movie world premiere at AMC The Grove in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Lifestyle



An archaeology student shows a piece of ceramic found during excavations on a burial mound in Leuhan.



An archaeology student searches for materials in a piece of clay found during excavations on a burial mound.



A ground marker during excavations on a burial mound in Leuhan, western France.



An archaeology student excavates a burial mound in Leuhan.

A piece of rock with mysterious markings that lay largely unstudied for 4,000 years is now being hailed as a "treasure map" for archaeologists, who are using it to hunt for ancient sites around north-western France. The so-called Saint-Belec slab was claimed as Europe's oldest map by researchers in 2021 and they have been working ever since to understand its etchings—both to help them date the slab, and to rediscover lost monuments. "Using the map to try to find archaeological sites is a great approach. We never work like that," said Yvan Pailler, a professor at the University of Western Brittany (UBO).

Ancient sites are more commonly uncovered by sophisticated radar equipment, aerial photography or by accident in cities when the foundations for new buildings are being dug. "It's a treasure map," said Pailler. But the team are only just beginning their treasure hunt. The ancient map marks an area roughly 30 by 21 kilometers and Pailler's colleague, Clement Nicolas from the CNRS research institute, said they would need to survey the entire territory and cross reference the markings on the slab. That job could take 15 years, he said.

Rivers and mountains

Nicolas and Pailler were part of the team that rediscovered the slab in 2014 -- it was initially uncovered in 1900 by a local historian who did not understand its significance. The French experts were joined by colleagues from other institutions in France and overseas as they began to decode its mysteries. "There were a few engraved symbols that made sense right away," said Pailler. In the coarse bumps and lines of the slab, they could see the rivers and mountains of Roudouallec, part of the Brittany region about 500 kilometers



west of Paris.

The researchers scanned the slab and compared it with current maps, finding a roughly 80 percent match. "We still have to identify all the geometric symbols, the legend that goes with them," said Nicolas. The slab is pocked with tiny hollows, which researchers believe could point to burial mounds, dwellings or geological deposits. Dis-

covering their meaning could lead to a whole flood of new finds.

'Doomed' slab

But first, the archaeologists have spent the past few weeks digging at the site where the slab was initially uncovered, which Pailler said was one of the biggest Bronze Age burial sites in Brittany. "We are trying to better con-

textualize the discovery, to have a way to date the slab," said Pailler. Their latest dig has already turned up a handful of previously undiscovered fragments from the slab.

The pieces had apparently been broken off and used as a tomb wall in what Nicolas suggests could signify the shifting power dynamics of Bronze Age settlements. The area covered by

the map probably corresponds to an ancient kingdom, perhaps one that collapsed in revolts and rebellions. "The engraved slab no longer made sense and was doomed by being broken up and used as building material," said Nicolas.—AFP



A visitor looks at the prayer niche (mihrab) from the Beyhekim Mosque in Konya (13th century) in the south wing of The Pergamon Museum.



Visitors look at the rock-cut reliefs of Yazilikaya in the south-wing of The Pergamon Museum.



Visitors crowd the Ishtar Gate, constructed circa 575 BC by order of King Nebuchadnezzar II, in the south wing of The Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany.—AFP photos

Babylon Berlin: Antiquities museum shuts for 14-year facelift

One of Berlin's top tourist attractions, the Pergamon Museum and its world-class collection of antiquities, will close this month for a top-to-bottom restoration not due to be completed before 2037. The institution on the German capital's UNESCO-listed Museum Island houses treasures including the Great Altar of Pergamon, built in the second century BC, the 2,600-year-old Ishtar Gate of Babylon and a vast millennium-spanning collection of Islamic art. The museum, which opened in 1930 and was named for the Ancient Greek masterpiece, attracts more than one million visitors a year when all its exhibits are accessible.

The impending 14-year closure beginning on October 23 has prompted a rush by Berliners and tourists alike to catch one last glimpse. Gudrun von Wysesiecki, who grew up on the western side of the Berlin Wall, said she began crossing into the Communist east when it became possible in the 1970s just to see the Pergamon Museum. "I've always

loved this place. Seeing it for the first time was an absolute epiphany," the 75-year-old retired teacher told AFP, standing in the shadow of the ancient Roman Market Gate of Miletus. "We were very lucky to get some of the last tickets this week. At my age, who knows if I'll be alive for the reopening."

'In bad shape'

German archaeologists discovered the ruins of the Pergamon Altar between 1878 and 1886 and sent them back to Berlin based on an agreement between the German government and the Ottoman Empire. Its reconstruction took until 1902. The temple-like museum building was erected to showcase the ornate altar and the Ishtar Gate, with the spectacular lion reliefs of its Processional Way, to the fullest dramatic effect.

However the strains of time and the sheer weight of the collections, resting on a porous Ice Age riverbed, have caused the museum to crumble. Stabilizing and reinforcing the more than century-old

underground concrete foundations are a Herculean task, helping to explain the extraordinary duration and estimated 1.5-billion-euro (\$1.6-billion) cost of the renovation.

Wear and tear across the decades, combined with lasting World War II damage, have led to streaming leaks when it rains, said Barbara Helwing, director of the Ancient Near East Museum housed in the building. She said the repairs were "urgently necessary" to protect the precious collections and ensure visitors' safety. "The building is in really bad shape and it's sinking, which is why we're not only sad that it's closing for so long," she said. Critics however have attacked the eye-watering cost of the makeover and the fact that, apart from a few solar panels, its plans do not include a "green" overhaul. "The completely renovated Pergamon Museum, when it opens in 2037, will in climate technology and energy terms be a building from the fossil-fuelled past," architecture critic Nikolaus Bernau wrote in weekly Die Zeit.

Restitution demands

Culture experts also say with advances in the restitution debate and more Western countries acknowledging the rightful owners abroad of their collections, claims for the Pergamon holdings could grow. Zeynep Boz, an archaeologist at the Turkish culture ministry, told the daily Tagesspiegel last month that she questioned the legality of the German ownership claims and believed the altar itself should return to the "sunlight of Pergamon" in northwestern Turkey.

Helwing admitted the issue was "difficult" and said research on the provenance of the museum's collections would continue during the renovation. The north wing was already closed for renovations in 2012 as part of a Museum Island "master plan" to make its five buildings fit for the 21st century and interconnected with an underground "archaeological promenade".—AFP



A general view shows the main entrance to The Pergamon Museum in Berlin as renovation works on progress.



A general view shows the main entrance to The Pergamon Museum.



Vivid colors are projected onto colorless reliefs of the ancient palace of Nimrud (13th-9th Century BC), part of British artist Liam Gillick's "Filtered Time" exhibition in Berlin's Pergamon Museum.



A visitor photographs a detail from the Processional Way of Babylon at the Pergamon Museum.



A sign shows the way to the Pergamon museum at the entrance of the James Simon Gallery as part of the Museum Island in Berlin.

Lifestyle



An employee wearing a face mask stands next to a screen displaying characters from the Nintendo video game Super Mario at a store for Japanese games giant Nintendo in Tokyo.



The Spider-Man PS4 game, scheduled for release in 2018, is previewed during the Sony PlayStation E3 2017 Media Showcase at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California.



Japanese video game giant Nintendo's game character Super Mario stands at a showroom in Tokyo. — AFP photos

Nintendo, Sony face off with new Mario and Spider-Man games

Nintendo and Sony have a lot riding on two new releases this Friday, "Marvel's Spider-Man 2" for the PlayStation 5 and "Super Mario Bros Wonder" on the Switch. That's where the similarities stop: the two games on rival consoles and their target audiences could hardly be more different.

Veterans

Mario, the moustachioed plumber in a red cap created by Shigeru Miyamoto, revolutionized gaming in 1985 with "Super Mario Bros". It was one of the first "side-scrolling" games allowing horizontal movement in an evolving landscape. The character became one of the best-known in gaming, fuelling the success of Japan's Nintendo, with more than 420 million units sold for the "Super Mario" series alone. "Spider-Man" emerged as a superhero in the Marvel comics of the early 1960s and first appeared in video games in the 1990s, but without major success.

Blockbuster superhero movies in the 2000s led to the character headlining a series of games developed from 2018 by Insomniac for Sony, which bought the studio the following year. The bet paid off, with 33 million copies sold, according to the latest data published in May 2022.



A man walks past a logo of the Super Mario video game at a Nintendo store in Tokyo.

Back to the roots

For the new games, Nintendo and Sony have chosen, as is often the case, radically different approaches. With its Switch console in its seventh year, Nintendo is going old-school with a 2D side-scroller, its first since 2012. But under Takashi Tezuka, co-creator of the franchise, the development team have brought in new power-ups like a "Wonder Flower" that move Mario into surreal new dimensions or turn him into an elephant.

Sony meanwhile has spent heavily developing "Marvel's Spider-Man 2", its graphics pushing the PlayStation 5's technical capacities to the max to enable

Peter Parker and Miles Morales to battle Kraven the Hunter and other villains. "Spider-Man 1 had boosted sales of the PS4 and Sony is counting heavily on this new episode," said Hideki Yasuda of Toyo Securities, who believes the game will easily break even.

He highlighted, however, the "fairly weak pre-orders" in Japan for "Mario Wonder". Players outside Japan also "tend to prefer 3D Mario and it will clearly be difficult for Nintendo to appeal to them as much as with 'Zelda'", he told AFP, referring to Nintendo's major release earlier this year.

Five to 95

Sony and Nintendo clearly have different audiences in mind with these new releases. "Nintendo is clear on this point: it is targeting players aged five to 95 and, this time, its goal is no different," Yasuda said. With its battling superhero movie feel, "Spider-Man" on the other hand is aimed more at action game fans.

What they have in common though is the host of additional characters that gamers can choose. "Spider-Man" can be played in the "skin" of the original Peter Parker or in the guise of the Hispanic-African-American teenager Miles Morales created in 2011. Mario is supported by a cast of 11 playable charac-



In this picture taken on May 9, 2022, a customer looks at the self of the Sony PlayStation video games and accessories at the gaming section of a shop in Tokyo.

ters from the Mushroom Kingdom, such as his brother Luigi, princesses Peach and Daisy, and Yoshi.

Movie hits

Nintendo and Sony have long moved their characters beyond consoles and both are looking to piggyback on the success of movies released this year. "Super Mario Brothers" released in 1993 was one of the first live-action films based

on a video game but it was a huge commercial flop. But this year's animated follow-up, in co-production with Illumination of "Minions" fame, was a huge hit, becoming 2023's second-highest-grossing film after "Barbie". "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse", the sequel to the Oscar-winning 2018 movie, was meanwhile sixth at the box office. — AFP



This recent handout photograph obtained courtesy of Arthur Brand shows Dutch art detective Arthur Brand, dubbed the "Indiana Jones of the Art World", posing next to six paintings he has recovered, including a portrait of William of Orange and the first depiction of a seventh-century king. — AFP

Dutch art sleuth recovers six historic paintings

A Dutch art detective dubbed the "Indiana Jones of the Art World" has recovered another six paintings, including a portrait of William of Orange and the first depiction of a seventh-century king. Art sleuth Arthur Brand made headlines around the world last month when he recovered a stolen Van Gogh stuffed in an Ikea bag, and he believes that widely publicized success is leading to more discoveries.

Thieves made off with the latest six paintings from the town hall of Medemblik, in the north of the country, last month. While the monetary value of the haul is not huge - around 100,000 euros (\$105,000) - the paintings are considered of great historical significance, including the earliest known portrait of Radbod, king of the Frisians from 680AD. Brand was sitting at home on Friday night watching football when the doorbell rang and a man in a van asked him for help to unload some merchandise.

"I asked him, 'what are we going to unload?'. He said with a smile, 'well, the paintings of Medemblik,'" Brand recounted. After the initial burglary in September, Brand had been widely quoted in the Dutch press as saying the thieves should have stolen six bikes,

as these would be easier to resell.

Those comments, plus the publicity surrounding the Van Gogh recovery, probably led the thieves to simply hand the paintings back, explained Brand. "In some cases, they burn them, just to get rid of the evidence because they find out they cannot sell them," he told AFP. "So I'm very thankful that they decided to do the right thing. Stealing is wrong, but if you return it, at least you do something right," he added. Now Brand is hoping that the momentum from the Van Gogh will lead to another prize recovery - a masterpiece by Frans Hals called "Two Laughing Boys".

He also has his eye on recovering work from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, where paintings worth an estimated \$500 million from the likes of Vermeer, Manet, and Rembrandt were stolen in 1990. The authorities in Medemblik had offered a reward of 10,000 euros for the safe return of the paintings but this has gone unclaimed. Brand said he would not be collecting the cash himself. "I told them to give me a good book voucher," he quipped. — AFP

Longer locks: Thai cops allowed to let their hair down

It's out with buzzcuts and in with longer locks for Thai police, as per a new regulation that came into effect Tuesday. After five years of a rule requiring male officers to shave the sides and backs of their heads, they will now be allowed to grow their hair up to five centimeters long on top. The kingdom's newly appointed police chief Torsak Sukvimol said relaxing the haircut rules was a step towards modernizing the force and making officers less identifiable to those seeking to target them.

"I'm afraid that investigators could only go undercover as a monk," he joked. Since 2018, all male officers have been required to have buzz cuts. Thailand is a conservative country and government officials are required to adhere to strict uniform policies. Rangsiman Rome, whose Move Forward party has campaigned for relaxing the strict haircut rules for police, welcomed the move saying it was "a good first step".

But he thinks officers should have the right to choose their hairstyles. Police Cadet Academy dean of social sciences Sorat Klapwila said the change would likely be popular with officers. "Some police officers needed to go to the hairdresser at least once a week," he told AFP. "This change will help them save money."



Liam Gallagher performs at King George's Hall on April 27, 2022 in Blackburn, England.



Police stand guard as pro-democracy protesters march towards the Government House during an anti-government rally in Bangkok. — AFP

In Thailand, junior officers can earn as little as \$250 a month. Wuttipat Cheunjampa, 50, a police officer at Thong Lor police station in Bangkok's wealthiest neighborhood was unmoved by the new hair policy.

"It's just a hairstyle. Maybe they could do something else that improves the livelihood of low-ranking police offi-

cers," he said. Chulalongkorn University professor Sumontip Chitsawang said the public was more concerned about police doing an effective job delivering justice and fighting crime. "In the eyes of the people it's not important," Sumonthip said. — AFP

Oasis frontman Liam Gallagher announces 'Definitely Maybe' tour

Oasis frontman Liam Gallagher on Monday announced a series of shows next year where he will perform his former band's seminal debut album "Definitely Maybe", but still without his brother Noel. The shows at Sheffield, Cardiff, London, Manchester, Glasgow and Dublin will mark the 30th anniversary of the release of the album that set the English band on the way to global superstardom. But fans hoping that the feuding brothers were set to put aside their differences will have to wait, with no sign of songwriter and guitarist Noel joining the tour, despite recently saying "never say never" about a reunion.

The siblings have not played together since Oasis split acrimoniously in 2009, but both still regularly play their

old band's hits to sold out crowds. Liam Gallagher said on social media site Instagram that the prospect of touring "the most important album of the '90s" had left him "bouncing around the house". "I wouldn't be anywhere without it and neither would you, so let's celebrate together," he said.

"Definitely Maybe", released in 1994, contains some of the band's most-loved songs, including "Live Forever", "Supersonic" and "Cigarettes & A***o". As well as the full album, Gallagher will also perform other Oasis songs from the era, potentially including "Whatever" and "Fade Away". Tickets for the shows go on sale on Friday. — AFP

Sports

Zampa pain gain as Australia clinch victory at storm-hit World Cup

Zampa named man of the match in Australia's first win in three matches

LUCKNOW: Leg-spinner Adam Zampa played through pain to return figures of 4-47 and help Australia down Sri Lanka by five wickets for their first win at the 2023 Cricket World Cup on Monday. Five-time winners Australia bundled out Sri Lanka for 209, a total they overhauled in 35.2 overs at a windswept Ekana Stadium.

Zampa was named man of the match in Australia's first win in three matches, but the 31-year-old said it had been tough coming into the match. "To be honest, I wasn't feeling great because I had a bit of a back spasm," said Zampa.

"I was playing through it the last couple of days. Today I felt better, bowled better." Former champions Sri Lanka slipped to a third loss in as many games. The drama on the field may have been limited but that was not the case in the stands.

After rain interrupted Sri Lanka's batting, strong winds brought scaffolding and hoardings crashing down onto the seats below. With only around 3,000 people inside the 50,000-capacity ground, spectators managed to escape injury. However, Australia's reply was delayed when the umpires felt it unsafe to restart the match with high winds still a danger.

Once the game resumed, opener Mitchell Marsh smashed 52 and wicketkeeper-batsman Josh Inglis made 58. Marsh led the chase after Australia lost two early wickets of David Warner, for 11, and Steve Smith, for a duck, to slip to 24-2.

Marsh reached his first fifty in a World Cup off 39 balls but was soon run out after attempting a second

run with Marnus Labuschagne, who hit 40. Labuschagne and Inglis put on a key stand of 77 to deny the thin crowd of any late drama.

Left-arm quick Dilshan Madushanka broke the partnership to send back Labuschagne for his third wicket and spinner Dunith Wellalage got Inglis. But Glenn Maxwell, who hit a 21-ball 31, took the team home with Marcus Stoinis, who made 20, for company.

'Outside noise'

Pat Cummins was under attack for his captaincy in the opening two losses. "Outside noise doesn't bother us too much," said Cummins. "All parts of the game came together at the end. We're underway in the tournament and hope we keep it up."

Madushanka had raised early hopes of a fightback for Sri Lanka after he trapped Warner and Smith—both lbw—in the same over. The left-handed Warner reviewed his decision but the tracker showed the ball would have kissed leg stump and the batsman returned to the stands fuming.

Earlier Sri Lanka elected to bat first and started with a 125-run opening stand between Pathum Nissanka (61) and Kusal Perera (78) before the opposition bowlers hit back to end the innings in 43.3 overs.

Perera reached his fifty with a boundary off Stoinis amid applause from the dressing room and a few Sri Lankan fans. Nissanka soon claimed his second successive half-century as Sri Lanka charged ahead. Cummins dismissed Nissanka through a good out-



LUCKNOW: Sri Lanka's Dilshan Madushanka (L) bowls next to Australia's Marnus Labuschagne during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow. — AFP

field catch by Warner and then bowled Perera. Zampa sent back skipper Kusal Mendis and Sadeera Samarawickrama on consecutive balls between overs to be on hat-trick avoided by Dhananjaya de Silva. Rain interrupted play for about 25 minutes and the break only gave Australia more power to return with wickets as left-arm quick Mitch-

ell Starc bowled De Silva. Sri Lanka kept losing wickets and Zampa grabbed two more including Chamika Karunaratne, who was only called up to replace injured captain Dasun Shanaka at the weekend. But Mendis remained confident of his batting line-up and said they "have six more matches to perform better". — AFP

'Hitman' Rohit raises India's World Cup hopes

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma has led India from the front in their three unbeaten matches of the World Cup to boost his cricket-mad nation's hopes of winning the title at home. The Indian captain has already amassed 217 runs including a record century against Afghanistan, showing no signs of the pressure on his shoulders.

Rohit succeeded superstar Virat Kohli as white-ball captain in 2021 with the aim of securing the national team a third World Cup and first international title since the 2013 Champions Trophy. Australia great Ricky Ponting lavished praise on Rohit for handling the pressure of the job with ease.

"Someone like Virat, who is a bit more heart-on-the-sleeve, and probably listens to the fans and plays up with the fans a little bit more, someone with his personality would probably find it a bit harder," Ponting wrote in an International Cricket Council column on Tuesday. "But I think Rohit will be fine with it. He's a terrific bloke and has been a great player for a long time, and he's done a great job as leader of India."

Rohit, 36, has enjoyed franchise success as a skipper with five IPL titles with the Mumbai Indians and then led India to the Asia Cup title last month in a key test of form ahead of the World Cup. That success would have helped ease a little of the pain suffered when, under his captaincy, India were defeated in the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup in Australia last year.

Rohit has never let expectations get to him and Ponting, once his captain at Mumbai and then coach, said the veteran batsman takes pressure in his stride. "He's very laid back," said Ponting. "You can even see that by the way that he plays. He's a pretty laconic sort of batsman as well, and that's the way he is both on and off the field."

'Nothing is impossible'

Rohit, an opening batsman nicknamed "Hitman" for his ability to get big scores quickly, was out for a duck in the team's opening win against Australia, but was lauded for his captaincy moves. He soon regained form with 131 against Afghanistan as he surpassed compatriot Sachin Tendulkar with a record seventh World Cup century. His ton in 63 balls was the fastest by an Indian in a World Cup to better



India's captain Rohit Sharma

Kapil Dev's hundred in 72 balls against Zimbabwe in 1983. Rohit took his form to the hotly-anticipated clash with arch-rivals Pakistan and smashed a match-winning 86 to thrash the opposition as India climbed to the top of the 10-team World Cup table.

In his career, he has accumulated 10,329 ODI runs including 31 centuries in 254 matches since his debut in 2007. Rohit, who was not selected for India's last World Cup triumph at home in 2011, said he relishes the role of being leader. "Nothing in life is impossible, you can make it possible if you have the belief," Rohit said.

"If you trust in it, if you have the will to go forward, it's everyone's dream firstly to be part of the team and then to captain the team is definitely the icing on the cake. I never thought I would be captain one day."

"I also believe that good things happen to good people. I kept my head straight, kept working hard on my game. I am sitting here today with a wonderful opportunity to bring glory to this beautiful country." Rohit's deputy in the World Cup, Hardik Pandya praised the leader for his ability to bring the best out of players through his faith in them.

"Since he has come, he has backed a lot of boys and we see the result now as well with how the boys are going and expressing themselves," all-rounder Pandya said. "So that's why Rohit has been special in giving them enough opportunity and at the same time telling them that 'you know what, I got your back'." — AFP

Rangers take 2-0 lead over Astros, Phillies down Arizona

LOS ANGELES: The Texas Rangers held off a ferocious late rally from the defending champion Houston Astros to claim a 5-4 victory and snatch a commanding 2-0 series lead in the Major League Baseball playoffs on Monday.

Texas, who had blanked the Astros 2-0 in game one of the best-of-seven American League Championship Series on Sunday, jumped on Houston starter Framber Valdez early to take a commanding 4-0 first inning lead at Minute Maid Park.

Marcus Semien scored after a fielding error from Valdez to make it 1-0 before Adolis Garcia's line drive to right field allowed Corey Seager to score. Mitch Garver then drove in a run to put Texas 3-0 ahead before Nathaniel Lowe singled to left field to send Garcia home for a 4-0 lead. Houston finally got on the board in the bottom of the second inning when Yordan Alvarez crushed a 420-foot home run to right center field. But Texas immediately restored their four-run cushion when Jonah Heim blasted a solo shot to left field in the top of the third to make it 5-1.

The Astros however continued to chip away at the Texas lead, with Alex Bregman's home run in the fourth inning making it 5-2. Houston then appeared to be poised to hit back again in the fifth inning, loading the bases with no outs to pile the pressure on Texas starter Nathan Eovaldi.

England vow to be 'ready' for women's clash with N Zealand

WELLINGTON: England captain Marlie Packer said Tuesday the Red Roses would be "ready" for their showdown with hosts New Zealand in a looming repeat of last year's nail-biting women's World Cup final.

Packer scored one of England's five tries last November in Auckland, but finished on the losing side as New Zealand clinched a 34-31 victory in the dying seconds. That bitter defeat ended England's 30-match winning streak dating back to 2019. "A year on, we've got a very different squad, a new coaching staff, so it's really exciting. We can't wait to play," Packer said Tuesday in Wellington. England, who won a fifth straight Six Nations title last April, are back in New Zealand to take part in a new top-level women's competition. They face Australia at Wellington's Sky Stadium on Friday to kick off "WXV1" — a round-robin tournament played over each of the next three weekends. Hosts New Zealand, Australia and Canada — the best teams from the Pacific Four competition — will each play the top Six Nations teams England, France and Wales.

The third and final round of matches will be in Auckland, where the Black Ferns play England in a repeat of last year's World Cup final. "That was a massive game and there was a lot of disappointment for us," said Packer, the Six Nations' top scorer this season with seven tries. "We can be super proud of the performance we put in," she added. "We know the game is in three weeks' time, we'll make sure we are ready and prepared, but look, we're all about Australia this Friday." New Zealand, who demolished Australia 43-3 in a warm-up game a fortnight ago, start their campaign against France in Wellington on Saturday. Black Ferns captain co-captain Kennedy Simon said they had been watching England and France closely.

New Zealand squeezed past the French 25-24 in a hard-fought World Cup semi-final last year. Simon anticipated more crunch games against the Europeans. "It brings a bit of fire, we don't get to meet them regularly." "Our trainings have been brutal. I know England are big... but we are smart, we're calculated, and we're ready to go." The New Zealander hoped the new competition for the world's top teams would encourage girls to take up rugby. "I think because we'll have all the best teams in one area playing against each other, it'll spark girls playing rugby," she said. "For the growth of women in rugby, it will be huge." — AFP

'Turning point'

But Eovaldi rose to the challenge superbly, extricating himself from the jam to end the inning with Houston unable to cash in. "That was the turning point in the game," Rangers manager Bruce Bochy said of Eovaldi, who finished with nine strikeouts through six innings to claim the win.

"Terrific job by him," Bochy added. "He had good stuff today. He pitched very well." Houston got within two in the sixth inning after a Michael Brantley double made it 5-3. Alvarez then swatted his second home run of the game in the eighth to set up a nerve-jangling finale heading into the eighth.

But Texas closer Jose Leclerc took care of business to remove Jeremy Pena, Yainer Diaz and Jose Altuve in quick succession to seal victory. Game three in the series takes place in Arlington, Texas on Wednesday.

The winner of the ALCS will face the winner of the National League Championship Series between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Arizona Diamondbacks in the World Series. The Phillies - beaten by the Astros in last year's World Series — launched their bid to return to the Fall Classic with a 5-3 victory over the Diamondbacks on Monday.

The Phillies launched an early offensive onslaught with Kyle Schwarber and Bryce Harper blasting first inning solo home runs before Nick Castellanos crushed a third homer in the second inning to make it 3-0.

Harper and J.T. Realmuto drove in two more runs to make it 5-0 and although Arizona got to within two runs, closer Craig Kimbrel shut it down with the Phillies winning on a double play. Game two of the NLCS takes place on Tuesday. — AFP



MUMBAI: United States Ambassador to the Republic of India, Eric Garcetti (L) looks on as Chairman of LA 2028 Olympic Games, Casey Wasserman speaks to the media during the second day of the 141st International Olympic Committee (IOC) session in Mumbai. — AFP

US envoy backs cricket to hit LA Olympics for six

MUMBAI: The United States' ambassador to India believes his compatriots will come to share his joy in the "unabashed fun" of Twenty20 cricket when the format features at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. International cricket's shortest form was approved as one of five new sports for LA 2028 during the International Olympic Committee's session in Mumbai on Monday.

Flag football, baseball/softball, lacrosse and squash were the others. Eric Garcetti, a former mayor of Los Angeles, told reporters in Mumbai late Monday that his passion for cricket had grown during his time living in the UK, but blossomed after he took his post in India six months ago. "I became a real fan when I came here and the T20 format, because it's so fast," he said.

"Most of us don't have a few days to watch a Test match or an entire seven-hour stretch for a World Cup match. But here to see two or three hours of unabashed fun, I'm a convert." Cricket's only previous appearance at the Olympics was during the 1900 Games in Paris, where a team from Great Britain defeated France in a lone match.

"This is a great day for the Olympic movement, a great day for India, a great day for the United States and a great day for cricket fans everywhere," said Garcetti. "I think it will ignite a new generation of cricket players and cricket fans... We think that this format is perfect for the Olympics, perfect for cricket, and no better place to launch than here, in the middle of cricket madness."

The Indian Premier League, featuring the game's global stars, has cemented India's position as the unquestioned economic driving force of the sport, thanks to legions of fans and lucrative broadcasting deals in a nation where the game is almost a religion. Monday's vote also took place while India stages the men's 50-over Cricket World Cup.

Major League Cricket, a professional Twenty20 League, launched in the United States in July, with the US a co-host of next year's men's T20 World Cup together with territories in the West Indies. "By the time of the Olympics, not only Major League Cricket will be significant in the US, we'll have the facilities and the fanbase," said Garcetti.

On a more serious note, Garcetti voiced his support for the concept of the Olympic truce, amid Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the conflict between Zionist entity and Hamas. "The tradition of the Olympics was the Olympic truce," he said. "In ancient times, everybody put down their weapons to have sports unite us... So we hope that this inspires people that peace is better than war, that participating together is better than conflict." — AFP



HOUSTON: Jordan Alvarez #44 of the Houston Astros hits a solo home run against Aroldis Chapman #45 of the Texas Rangers during the eighth inning in Game Two of the American League Championship Series at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Sports

Eddie Jones commits to Australian rugby, denies rumoured Japan move

Australian rugby is banking on a much-needed cash injection from two marquee events

SYDNEY: Australia head coach Eddie Jones on Tuesday ruled out a rumored switch to Japan, pledging to stick with the Wallabies following a disastrous Rugby World Cup campaign. "I'm staying, mate. I've always been committed to Australian rugby and I want to leave it in a better place," Jones told a press conference in Sydney amid speculation of his imminent resignation.

Although the pugnacious 63-year-old said he has unfinished business with Australian rugby, he could not guarantee he would see out the rest of his four-year contract. "That's not my decision," he replied when asked if he would still be in charge for the 2027 World Cup, which Australia will host.

"I don't control those sorts of things, all I do is coach. We've got a review going forward and we'll see what happens at the end of the review." As the faltering Australian side stumbled through its tournament pool games in France, reports emerged that Jones had been secretly interviewing for the head coach role in Japan. Jones has warm relationships with key powerbrokers at the top of Japanese rugby, having previously coached the Brave Blossoms between 2012 and 2015.

'Rumours'

"I haven't been speaking to anyone, mate," Jones assured reporters on Tuesday. "Where the rumours come from? I don't know mate, you'll have to tell me." Jones also defended his decision to stack the World Cup squad with a band of unproven rookies, leaving a host of veterans at home including 125-Test for-

mer skipper Michael Hooper. "The results from the World Cup weren't what we hoped, but I still think I've made the right decision," he said. "Everyone has got their own judgement, haven't they? My choice was to go with youth and I stand by that."

Jones defended the team's performances, saying his one regret was telling reporters to "give themselves an uppercut" during a testy press conference at Sydney Airport before jetting off for France. "I need to give myself an uppercut," a smiling Jones said on Tuesday. Part of Jones's long-term pitch has been the need to blood new talent ahead of the British and Irish Lions tour in 2025, and the home World Cup two years after that.

'People love drama'

After years of financial decline, Australian rugby is banking on a much-needed cash injection from those two marquee events — and can ill afford to continue alienating crowds with lacklustre performances. "I think I've left the Australian team in a great position to go on to 2027," Jones said. "I didn't come back to Australia to have a holiday — to sit down at Coogee Beach and have some fish and chips and a nice flat white," he added. "It was always going to be a battle."

Once dubbed the "Walking Headline", Jones said it was no surprise his recent travails had whipped up a media frenzy in Australia. "People love to see controversy over a coach," he said. "Either a player getting drunk, misbehaving, or the coach getting the sack. "That creates headlines and people love that sort of drama." Jones was hailed as the saviour of



SYDNEY: Australia's rugby head coach Eddie Jones speaks to media at Coogee Oval in Sydney on October 17, 2023. — AFP

Australian rugby when he returned to the national setup earlier this year, replacing New Zealander Dave Rennie after a string of bad results.

Fresh from inking a lucrative four-year contract, he predicted the Wallabies could win the World Cup

this year through a special "smash and grab" raid on rugby's greatest prize. Instead the side were bundled out in pool play — their worst result at the tournament—and have now slumped to seven losses during Jones's nine games in charge. — AFP



Kuwait's archer Malallah wins gold in Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: Kuwait archer Abdullah Yaqoub Malallah won the gold medal of the compound archery of the 13th Arab archery championship being held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Archer Hanan Al-Mayyas won the ladies bronze medal.

Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi expressed his and the board of directors' satisfaction towards the archers' achievements and raising Kuwait's flag and playing the national anthem despite tough competition.

Al-Osaimi said archer Malallah was able to win gold following a tough match with Egypt's Ahmad Fakhri who placed second while Iraq's Mohammad Al-Kaabi was third.

Meanwhile, Al-Mayyas' win came at the expense of Iraq's Fatima Mashadani who won gold and UAE's Amina Al-Awadhi came second. He said the team



of Abdullah Malallah, Ahmad Al-Shatti and Bader Al-Shilahi won the bronze, the Saudi team won gold and Iraq won silver. The mixed team of Abdullah Malallah and Hanan Al-Mayyas won bronze, while Iraq won gold and UAE won silver.

Al-Osaimi dedicated the achievements to HH the

Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who continually care for and support Kuwait athletes motivating them to make more achievements for Kuwait.

44 countries to partake in Asian Paralympic Games

KUWAIT: The Asian Paralympic Games will be held from October 22nd to October 28th with 3,000 players of both genders from 44 countries participating in Hangzhou, China.

Kuwait's delegation includes 41 players who will participate in four games - athletics, basketball, fencing and table tennis. The delegation is headed by Chairman of the Paralympic Committee Mansour Al-Sarheed, board member Saud Al-Mutairi and Talal Al-Mutairi as official.

Mansour Al-Sarheed said all teams are ready for the best participation possible following a sat-

isfactory preparation period. He added "we hope for making many major achievements in the largest gathering of Asian players and we have great confidence in Kuwait champions in all games".

He said we are proud of the major support from Commerce and Industry Ministry, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, Director General of Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Yousuf Al-Baidan and his Deputy Bashar Abdullah.

Meanwhile, athletics coach Nizar Ramadhan said the team is ready following holding training camps including one for runner Faisal Al-Rajhi, and are hoping for good results.

Al-Rajhi on his part said he was happy for participating in the Paralympics which is considered the largest sports event in Asia. He said the wheelchair running event is expected to see strong competition led by world champions from China and Thailand.

Table tennis player Ahad Al-Rashidi said she is keen on giving the best performance, adding



that our morale is high and expect competition to be tough. Meanwhile, Malak Al-Enezi said all are seeking to compete for top places, and have Kuwait's flag flying high.

Prescott, Aubrey lead Dallas to win over Chargers

LOS ANGELES: Dak Prescott rushed for one touchdown and threw another as the Dallas Cowboys bounced back from their thrashing against San Francisco to beat the Los Angeles Chargers 20-17 on Monday.

Dallas quarterback Prescott was given a torrid time by the Chargers defense, sacked five times as Los Angeles chased only their third win of the season. But after a muffed punt allowed the Chargers to tie the game at 17-17 in the fourth quarter, Prescott kept his composure to lead Dallas on a 15-play, 54-yard drive to set up a winning field goal for Brandon Aubrey with just over two minutes remaining.

The drive included a crucial third and nine conversion by Prescott that kept the chains moving to leave Aubrey in field goal range. Aubrey, a 28-year-old rookie who gave up a promising soccer career to pursue a career in the NFL, stepped up to slot what turned out to be the winning points — his 16th successful field goal from 16 attempts this season.

The Chargers had one last drive in an attempt to save the game, but with no timeouts remaining, quarterback Justin Herbert had little margin for error. The Chargers drive fizzled however when Herbert was sacked on second down and then saw a long third down completion attempt picked off by Dallas defender Stephon Gilmore to effectively end the game.

"We're just a resilient team," said Prescott, who finished with 272 passing yards. "Guys just played their asses off. Offense, defense, it's something we can build on." Dallas — billed as potential Super Bowl contenders at the start of the season — had been humbled 42-10 by San Francisco last week.

However the Cowboys will now return to Texas with a 4-2 record in the NFC East heading into a bye week. "We were physical, way more physical than we were last week — but hell, that's the past," Prescott said. "Right now we're moving forward and this was a great one for us to get going into the bye week."

Earlier, the Chargers had taken the lead through Keenan Allen's close-range touchdown in the first quarter before Prescott got the Cowboys back on level terms with an 18-yard rush into the end zone. Aubrey kicked a field goal to put Dallas 10-7 up at the break but Cameron Dicker slotted a 43-yard effort to level for the Chargers at 10-10 heading into the fourth quarter.

Brandin Cooks collected a two-yard pass from Prescott to put Dallas 17-10 ahead but then the Chargers were thrown a lifeline after a bungled punt set up a game-tying score for Gerald Everett. Hopes of a Chargers comeback were snuffed out though after Aubrey's second field goal put Dallas ahead before Herbert's late interception ended the game. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, REGENE ROKI CUTHINO, holder of Indian Passport No. R8110803 having permanent address Karnataka, India - 581360 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) REGINA ROCKY (surname) COUTINHO. #4247 - 17-10-2023

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

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All Blacks back defence to win WCup

NZ produced massive 276 tackles in their 28-24 win over Ireland



SYDNEY: In this file photo Argentina's players celebrate victory at the end of 2020 Tri-Nations rugby match between the New Zealand and Argentina at Bankwest Stadium in Sydney on November 14, 2020. The date of November 14, 2020 will remain forever in the history of Argentine rugby, when that day came the first victory of Los Pumas over the All Blacks, a rival that Argentina will meet again on October 20, 2023 in Paris with a place for the final of the World Cup at stake. — AFP

PARIS: New Zealand's defensive display in victory over Ireland was nothing short of outstanding, setting a benchmark of patience and discipline in a game for the ages that moved them one step closer to the Rugby World Cup final.

The three-time Webb Ellis Cup winners produced a massive 276 tackles in their heart-stopping 28-24 win over the Irish that set up a semi-final against Argentina at the Stade de France on Friday. It was "not so much a scintillating display of attacking rugby (though there were flashes of that), but a brilliant showcase of tackling tenacity and breakdown superiority", gushed Marc Hinton of stuff.co.nz.

New Zealand Herald's Gregor Paul said the All Blacks "pulled off the most disciplined, committed defensive rearguard of the modern age" in producing a scramble defence that snuffed out Ireland's short-pass attacking game. "The way the All Blacks chopped down the northern hemisphere giant, putting an end to their

17-game winning streak, must have given their supporters... goose bumps that will stay on their skin for hours," Richard Knowler wrote in The Post newspaper.

It may be an old adage, but 'defence wins championships' is one that strikes especially true in modern-day rugby union where try-scoring razzmatazz is often diluted the higher up the food chain one goes in tournament settings. All Blacks skipper Sam Cane backed that paradigm, simply saying: "Defence won us the Test match."

"History shows that teams that win World Cups are very good defensively. It is our benchmark going forward." Unflappable No 8 Ardie Savea said the team had been "really patient and disciplined" in the closing minutes of a pulsating quarter-final when Ireland went through a remarkable 37 phases of play in search of a score. "It could have gone the other way but for us to go D (defence) for the last five minutes was pretty special," Savea said. New Zea-

land, with 100 tackles made in the final 15 minutes, held firm and bided their time, 151-Test veteran Sam Whitelock eventually pouncing for the All Blacks' 11th, and most crucial, turnover of the match. "The most impressive thing is the control and mental resilience," centre Jordie Barrett said.

"We've got a defence system there that Scott McLeod has built — we built it basically for Ireland. It was just our system working and obviously some great tucker in that last play." All Blacks coach Ian Foster said "We were disciplined, we held our cool."

"With Scott McLeod and Joe Schmidt helping him, we have been building our system... and how we want to defend. We are making some strides in that space and I was delighted." Foster said. "One mistake and the game could have gone the other way. But you haven't been to a World Cup if you haven't had a game like that. "That is what World Cups are about — you've got to roll your sleeves up and trust what you do."

Defence coach McLeod said that "harsh lessons" from last year's historic home series loss to Ireland had led to a re-build of the All Black's defensive fundamentals. McLeod heaped praise on the team's defensive execution and decision-making in the closing minutes.

"The ball wasn't there to take a number of times and we had to wait for the moment and then execute really well," he said. The focus now, McLeod added, was not to go from the high of that scintillating victory over Ireland to a flat semi-final, as happened in Japan four years ago when they went down to England in the last-four.

Attention to detail and raising energy levels for the Argentina game were key to producing a top performance, he said, echoing fly-half Richie Mo'unga's thoughts after the quarter-final. "We played Ireland, the best in the world. We knew we didn't have to be the best in the world, we just had to be the best on the day." — AFP

New IOC member Yeoh aimed to be Olympian not a movie star

MUMBAI: Michelle Yeoh said she had wanted to be an Olympian before becoming a movie star, after she was voted onto the International Olympic Committee on Tuesday. The first Asian woman to win an Academy Award — when she scooped best actress for "Everything Everywhere All at Once" earlier this year — Yeoh added she hoped to use her new role to continue her work with refugees.

She was one of eight new members voted in on the final day of the 141st IOC session in Mumbai, India. Before the vote, Britain's Princess Anne, the chair of the IOC's member election committee, introduced Yeoh as "a Malaysia junior squash champion".

"Sadly, her other different skills took her away from her sporting life but a very fulfilled career and a lot of interest in sport throughout that." A smiling Yeoh, speaking to reporters afterwards, said: "I remember when someone asked me how did you become an actress and I always said 'I never dreamed of being an actress, but as a child I always dreamed of being an Olympian."

"Sports was very much part of my life growing up, I was very much involved with squash, athletics, swimming and diving." Yeoh added she hoped she could "marry" her experience of being a successful actor with the knowledge gained from being a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme.

"When I see Team Refugee (the Olympic team composed of refugee athletes) it moves me and I feel that could be a very, very good place to start because I have already been working with that. "In the camps, it's true, when you see the kids they don't have anything and you have to give them hope.



MUMBAI: Newly elected International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (R) poses next to IOC President Thomas Bach during the third day of the 141st IOC session in Mumbai on October 17, 2023. — AFP

Somehow I feel sports do that."

Following her election by 67 votes to nine, with one abstention, Yeoh said there were many similarities between acting and top-level sport. Asked if squash was still her favorite sport, the 61-year-old replied: "It used to be, but then two knee surgeries, a bad back. Now I do a lot of free shadow boxing because I still do martial arts in my movies. "So I keep up with hiking and swimming, which is one of the more gentle sports to do."

Yeoh's Hollywood breakthrough came when she was cast in 1997's Bond film "Tomorrow Never Dies" opposite Pierce Brosnan, and she made her reputation in martial arts movies including "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon".

Yeoh insisted she would still be able to devote time to the IOC despite a busy screen career. "If you are passionate about what you do, you will find the time," she said. "We all bring something valuable to the table and I think that is why everyone who is part of this family has been chosen for very good reasons and I'm grateful I have this opportunity." — AFP

Fritz starts Japan Open with a win

TOKYO: Defending champion Taylor Fritz won his Japan Open first round match on Tuesday and said he felt "motivated and ready to play" after his load ahead of the tournament.

The American has been one of the busiest players on the ATP Tour this season but he has taken off the gas since the US appearing in only the Laver Cup and Shanghai Masters.

He beat Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-3 to kick off the defence of his Tokyo title and said it was "probably an advantage that I might be less burnt-out". "After the US Open, I think I had played the most matches of anyone on tour," said Fritz, the number one seed in Tokyo.

"I thought it made sense to start the Asia swing in Shanghai. I feel motivated and ready to play." World number 10 Fritz beat fellow American Frances Tiafoe in last year's Japan Open final and has won six career titles.

He is the highest-ranked American in the world and overcame an early setback to dispatch Norrie in his Tokyo opener. "I was holding easily and then out of nowhere he broke me, so it was a tough spot to be in," said Fritz. "I feel like I played a couple of really good points to break and I played the bigger, more important points better in the return games. "I definitely upped my level." Fritz was joined in the next round by American Ben Shelton, who beat Japan's Taro Daniel 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

Australia's number four seed Alex de Minaur also progressed with a 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/1) win over Britain's Jack Draper. Australia's Alexei Popyrin eliminated Russian number seven seed Karen Khachanov 6-4, 6-2. — AFP



TOKYO: Cameron Norrie of Britain hits a return against Taylor Fritz of the US during their men's singles match on day two of the ATP Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo on October 17, 2023. — AFP