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ANGER BOILING OVER

Kuwait slams Gaza hospital massacre • MPs call to reject new US envoy amid protests



(Left) People gather around bodies of Palestinians killed after a blast ripped through the Ahli Arab Hospital in central Gaza after they were transported to Al-Shifa Hospital on Oct 17, 2023. (Right) Kuwaitis gather in Irada Square opposite the National Assembly for a second night on Oct 18, 2023 to protest the Zionist entity's massacre at Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza and the Zionist military's ongoing heavy bombardment of the Gaza Strip. — Photos by AFP and Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

By Ghadeer Ghloom and Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Tuesday strongly condemned and denounced the Zionist occupation forces' barbaric airstrike on the Baptist Al-Ahli Hospital in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of innocent civilians were killed. For the past two days, Kuwaitis have been protesting in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance in Irada Square.

The occupation forces targeting of hospitals and public facilities is a violation of international humanitarian law, according to a statement from Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs. The ministry said Kuwait also urged the international community and the UN Security Council to immediately stop such

inhuman acts against the Palestinian people. Such practices run counter to all laws, religious teachings and human norms, it said.

Kuwait also reiterated its principled stance in support of the Palestinian people and vowed to continue offering the assistance they need to alleviate their suffering. It also renewed the call for serious and swift action to stop such gruesome crimes. The ministry of foreign affairs also urged citizens planning to travel to Lebanon to delay it "during this current phase". The ministry in a statement called upon the citizens present in Lebanon to "voluntarily return" home unless there is a pending need for their presence there, considering the current conditions in the region.

On Wednesday, Kuwait said its support for the Palestinians would remain "unwavering" at a time where a spate of Zionist attacks on the Gaza Strip has plunged the region into its worst violence in decades. Calling for a decisive end to "(Zionist) atrocities" committed against the Palestinian people, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah told a gathering of top diplomats from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah that these "appalling" acts contravene international laws and basic humanitarian principles.

The Kuwaiti minister thanked Saudi Arabia for the initiative to host the talks given the alarming status quo, where Zionist forces have stepped up attacks on the Palestinians to "unprecedented levels", which

includes the "targeting of innocent civilians and critical infrastructure", he underlined. He expressed Kuwait's "vehement condemnation" of these "criminal acts" perpetrated by (Zionist) forces, calling on the international community to intervene and ensure the protection of innocent Palestinians, chiefly, the establishment of "safe passages" that allow the delivery of much-needed aid, the minister said.

Kuwait has repeatedly warned of the repercussions if the international community continues to handle the situation with "double standards", he told the OIC foreign ministerial-level talks, reiterating Kuwait's support for an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders.

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Biden hugs Bibi, blames Palestinians



TEL AVIV: Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hugs US President Joe Biden upon his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport on Oct 18, 2023. — AFP

TEL AVIV: US President Joe Biden delivered unequivocal US backing for the Zionist entity in person on Wednesday, supporting his ally's stance that Palestinian militants were behind a deadly rocket strike on a Gaza hospital that has inflamed anger across the Middle East and beyond. Arab countries blamed the Zionist entity, which has rained bombs on Gaza since the Oct 7 attack by Hamas fighters, with protests in Muslim countries from Egypt to Pakistan.

But Biden, on a solidarity visit to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, voiced support

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GCC vows \$100m in Gaza aid, OIC slams Zionist 'impunity'

MUSCAT/JEDDAH: The Gulf Cooperation Council on Tuesday announced \$100 million in emergency aid for the Gaza Strip, as the Zionist entity bombards targets in the enclave during its war against Hamas militants. After an extraordinary meeting in Muscat, the bloc's foreign ministers pledged "an urgent humanitarian relief operation" with "relief aid worth \$100 million".

The top diplomats of the six GCC countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — met as nearly 500 people were killed in strikes on a Gaza hospital compound sheltering displaced people. The GCC meeting's final

statement stressed "the necessity of ensuring the urgent delivery of this aid" without specifying how it will get to Gaza.

In recent days, Gulf countries have sent plane-loads of assistance to Egypt's El Arish, hoping to send it through the Rafah border point — Gaza's only crossing that is not under Zionist control. On Tuesday, hundreds of laden trucks headed along the 40-km road from El Arish to Rafah, aid officials said. GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi "called on the international community to... demand an immediate halt to all forms of military escalation against defenseless civilians in Gaza", an English statement on the GCC website said.

The international community must also "categorically reject any calls to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from Gaza, as this represents a violation of basic human rights and international principles", it added.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Wednesday denounced the Zionist entity's



MUSCAT: GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi and Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Al-Busaidi hold a press conference on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP

backers for granting the country "impunity" in its war in Gaza. The 57-member bloc of Muslim-majority countries "deplores the international positions

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Protests across Muslim world on 'day of rage'

BEIRUT: Thousands rallied across the Arab and Muslim world on Wednesday to protest the deaths of hundreds of people in a strike on a Gaza hospital that they blame on the Zionist entity, despite its denials. Condemnation was widespread across the region and angry crowds gathered after calls from Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement and Palestinian factions for a "day of rage".

"Death to America, death to (the Zionist entity)," hundreds of Hezbollah supporters chanted at a rally in Beirut's southern suburbs. "The (Zionists) will try to target more hospitals, rescue workers, civil defense volunteers and Gaza's residents without flinching, in order to push Gaza's people out," senior Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine told the demonstrators. Protesters took to the streets of the West Bank city of Ramallah and Nablus, shouting "Free, free Palestine".

The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which both established ties with the Zionist entity in the Abraham Accords of 2020, criticized the Zionist entity for being behind the strike, as it hits back at Hamas militants over a

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TUNIS: Protesters gather for an anti-Zionist demonstration outside the French embassy along Avenue Habib Bourguiba on Oct 18, 2023. — AFP



Protesters rally for Palestine in Irada Square



KUWAIT: People gathered in Irada Square opposite the National Assembly for a second night on Wednesday to protest the Zionist entity's massacre at Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza and the Zionist military's ongoing heavy bombardment of the Gaza Strip. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In my view

Gaza and the neutrals who have conscience



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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Individuals with political opinions can be likened to human beings encircled by a group of powerful wrestlers. Presently, many neutral intellectuals remain silent. The situation in Gaza is marked by the disregard for rules of engagement and the existence of an oppressive system reliant on excessive power.

In 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, Saddam Hussein employed various justifications for the occupation. He initially claimed that Kuwait was infringing on his rights, subsequently asserting that it was a patriotic Kuwaiti revolution seeking his assistance. He claimed that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq, which he was restoring. However, these assertions did not deceive the free world and informed individuals.

There exist international rules that cannot be circumvented, and all countries, especially weaker ones, are obliged to adhere to these laws and regulations. This is the reality of our world today. Adhering to international rules can secure your rights, as exemplified by Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation and Egypt's actions following the October war, which included negotiations and the liberation of Sinai from Zionist occupation.

Presently, the Arab people of Gaza find themselves caught between death and displacement once again. This is a significant tragedy that the world is neglecting, focusing instead on the victims of the occupying entity. The situation may ultimately lead to the direct or indirect occupation of Gaza, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives and property. The world may eventually forget this battle, just as it has with previous conflicts, leaving sorrow in the hearts of mothers and orphans.

The management of the struggle in Gaza has been marred by the involvement of individuals ill-suited for the task. They have made errors in selecting their allies, at times aligning with their enemies to confront their adversaries. It is imperative to break the silence of neutral, educated Arabs. Seminars under the auspices of the Arab League are necessary to enhance the knowledge of our people. Too often, individuals gather to promote harmful agendas under enthusiastic slogans that only lead to destruction.

The time has come to respect the Palestinian people and uphold their right to a dignified life. Dignity should signify the preservation of life without need and fear, which is central to the ideals of Islamic sharia. When victory in war is unattainable, there is no room for unnecessary death. If withdrawal or negotiation can protect the lives of your people, it is a right that should be exercised. This is why Khalid bin Al-Waleed was titled "Saif Allah Al-Maslouf", signifying a reluctance to needlessly sacrifice lives.

The suffering is palpable in the hearts of our children and women in Gaza, with tears flowing. We continue to pray for Allah's mercy on the martyrs and the recovery of the ill. It is also essential to pray for wise leaders who can lead them to agreements that bring peace and ensure a secure life. Peace is something that the Zionist entity fears, as it is the genuine path to victory in accordance with international rules.

Chinese 44th naval fleet docks at Shuwaikh port

Envoy hails deep-rooted ties between China and Kuwait



44th naval fleet of the Chinese Navy arrives at Shuwaikh port. — KUNA photos



Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait Liu Xiang

KUWAIT: The Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait, Liu Xiang, on Wednesday hailed the deep-rooted ties between China and Kuwait, which was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing. In a statement to KUNA upon the arrival of the 44th naval fleet of the Chinese Navy at Shuwaikh port on Wednesday, Liu mentioned that China must make every effort to implement the outcomes of the visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China last month and to meet with the Kuwaiti and Chinese leaderships.

He added that both sides are linked by a deep traditional friendship, as Kuwait is the first country in the Middle East to sign cooperation documents within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative with China. In recent years, cooperation and exchanges between both sides in various fields have achieved productive results, especially since Chinese

President Xi Jinping successfully met with His Highness the Crown Prince in the Chinese city of Hangzhou last month, which provided strong momentum to develop Chinese-Kuwaiti ties, he stated.

He added that the fleet arrived for a five-day visit, underscoring that this visit, the third of its kind, will undoubtedly enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between the Chinese and Kuwaiti armies. China is a strong and steadfast defender of global peace and stability, and since 2008, it has been sending naval fleets to participate in international ship escort operations over the past 15 years, he pointed out.

Chinese naval forces dispatched 45 fleets, completed about 1,600 escort missions for over 7,200 Chinese and foreign ships, and actively implemented the Global Security Initiative proposed by Xi, which demonstrates China's assumption of responsibility for protecting global peace and stability, he said. — KUNA

Kuwaiti, Omani leaders exchange greetings; FMs condemn Gaza massacre

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti government and people to the Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq and the Omani people.

This came during Sultan Haitham's reception of the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi following their emergency meeting in Muscat to discuss the escalation in the Palestinian territories. The Kuwaiti FM also wished the Sultan of Oman everlasting wellbeing and further progress and welfare for Oman.

For his part, Sultan Haitham sent sincere greetings to the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people and wished them further progress and prosperity. The GCC foreign ministers listened to Sultan Haitham's vision for the current situation in the Palestinian territories and his directives for cementing joint GCC action to maintain security, stability, and prosperity.

Escalation in Palestine

Meanwhile, the extraordinary 43rd meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers on Tuesday thoroughly deliberated the escalation in the Gaza Strip and its huge ramifications for the region. In a press statement, GCC Secretary Jassem Al-Budaiwi said that the foreign ministers reviewed the developments in the Palestinian territories in light of the occupation's escalating violence and indiscriminate and illegal bombing of residential neighborhoods in the Gaza Strip, which left thousands of civilians dead or injured.

They discussed Zionist plans to expel Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the enormous challenges facing the region due to such acts. Al-Budaiwi said. Addressing the conferees, the GCC chief emphasized the centrality of the Palestinian cause for the GCC countries. He reiterated the GCC's support for Palestinian people's rights and called for the implementation of the relevant UN resolutions. He deplored the repeated Zionist encroachments on Palestinians and their rights.

Al-Budaiwi held Zionist occupation authorities responsible for the deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip. He regretted the silence of the international community towards such Zionist violations, stressing that such silence must end. The GCC chief renewed his call to the international community to take swift action to protect the Palestinian people and immediately stop all forms of military escalation against defenseless civilians in the Gaza Strip.

He called for lifting the siege on the densely populated Strip and providing its people with humani-



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah is received by Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq. — KUNA

tarian, relief, and medical needs. Al-Budaiwi delineated the need to allow the evacuation of the injured people as per international law and international humanitarian law. He voiced categorical rejection of Zionist plans to evict the Gaza Strip and forcibly displace its people, dismissing them as a breach of basic human rights and international norms.

He reaffirmed the GCC's support for the Palestinian people and its efforts to find a lasting, comprehensive, and peaceful solution to the conflict to help the Palestinian people restore their legitimate rights. He called for resolving the Palestinian cause through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Kuwait was represented in the meeting by a delegation headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Local

Boursa Kuwait organizes breast cancer awareness session, lights building in pink

Month-long campaign include series of informative posts



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait lights up the building in pink during its breast cancer awareness campaign.



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait continued its Breast Cancer Awareness campaign with an awareness session presented by Dr Mervat Saud Al-Saleh, a General and Breast Cancer Consultant and Professor at Kuwait University as well as the first female surgeon member of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons to be licensed in Saudi Arabia, for its female employees as well as those of the KCC and brokerage firms located in the Boursa Kuwait building.

The company's month-long campaign for October also included a series of informative posts about the disease and the benefits of early detection and downstaging on its social media platforms. Additionally, like many buildings across Kuwait and around the world, the Bour-

sa Kuwait building was lit up in pink, the color associated with breast cancer since 1992, to commemorate this month.

The World Health Organization recognizes October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month – the Pink Month – and actively seeks to educate those concerned about the disease, including early identification and signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer, with this year's theme being "Keeping Her in the Picture". This powerful statement calls upon everyone to play a crucial role in the fight against breast cancer, ensuring that women around the world remain at the forefront of the battle for health and awareness.

Female breast cancer has now surpassed lung cancer as the most diagnosed

cancer worldwide, with an estimated 2,261,419 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in women across the world in 2020. However, the number of women who have died of breast cancer has decreased by 43 percent since 2020 following a peak in 1989. This is thanks to early detection, treatment improvements, and greater breast cancer awareness. As a result, more than 460,000 breast cancer deaths were prevented during that period.

During her session, Dr Mervat Al-Saleh spoke about the benefits of early detection and screening, and applauded Boursa Kuwait's efforts to raise awareness about this noble cause. "With the modern advancements in medicine, we have become well-equipped to save the lives of people diagnosed with this and

virtually all forms of cancer, especially if it is detected early. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for giving me this opportunity to emphasize the importance of regular screenings and self-examinations in our fight against breast cancer."

Additionally, the bourse collaborated with MedCell to offer attendees of the session and other patrons free blood tests, body composition analysis and vital signs monitoring on the Boursa Kuwait premises. These tests are beneficial in screening risk factors associated with various types of cancer, including breast cancer. The company also offered attendees exclusive discount vouchers on the tumor markers lab package for women, ultrasounds and mammograms at its laboratories and imaging center. Sup-

porting and serving the communities and people across Kuwait is a responsibility that Boursa Kuwait takes very seriously.

The company seeks to be a force for good for both external and internal stakeholders, actively giving back and driving positive impact through an ongoing and diverse range of community and social impact endeavors, including several health-based initiatives with institutions to organize blood drives, awareness sessions and others. Boursa Kuwait is committed to making a positive, long-lasting impact in the community in which it operates, championing a series of initiatives aimed at preserving the well-being of the community and has established internal policies and procedures to ensure the sustained health of its employees.



Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah briefed on Kuwaiti participation in 8th World Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi. — KUNA photos



Minister enhancing investment climate

ABU DHABI: Kuwait Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah has stressed the importance of concerted efforts between the public and private sectors in various regional and international forums in order to highlight the promising investment climate in Kuwait. This came in remarks to KUNA during his visit to the pavilion of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and the Kuwaiti Public-Private Partnership Authority at the Eighth World Investment Forum.

Highlighting the image of the Kuwaiti investment scene is a responsibility for all concerned bodies to help shed light on the investment map in Kuwait, he added. He pointed out the importance of participating in regional and international forums, which would attract foreign investments, expand cooperation with markets around the world, and keep pace with developments, investment, and technical activity in a way that enhances sustainable development in Kuwait.

The forum aims to facilitate dialogue and action on global and emerging investment and development challenges. It also discusses the main investment challenges resulting from multiple global crises, revitalizing investment in food security, the transition to low-carbon energy, health systems, supply chain



resilience, and how to enhance productive capacities in the poorest countries.

Sovereign funds 'key'

An official of the KDIPA has affirmed the necessity of establishing sovereign investment funds based on international partnerships for financing key projects. The official, Naif Al-Haddad, director of strategic research at KDIPA, was speaking to KUNA after participating in the World Investment Forum. He indicated in the interview with KUNA that stakeholders have become par-

ticularly aware of the importance of such funds, based on lessons learned from the experience of coping with the outbreak of the coronavirus.

He affirmed that KDIPA's participation in the event is aimed at promoting the development ventures in Kuwait in the sectors of energy, water, sewage, and public health, in addition to transport, communications, real estate, and waste treatment. Al-Haddad also indicated that the forum constituted an opportunity to lure foreign investors to partake in the development schemes in Kuwait. — KUNA

Overcoming anxiety amid Gaza genocide

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Since October 7, the Middle East has been shaken by horrific news of attacks on Gaza civilians. This deeply affects people abroad who have loved ones and family members living in Palestine/Gaza, subjected to ethnic cleansing and genocide by the Zionist entity. These attacks involve targeted airstrikes on civilian homes, resulting in the deaths of over 3,500 Palestinians, the majority of them were children and women. Additionally, there have been violations of international war laws, with paramedics, journalists and hospitals targeted using internationally-prohibited weapons.

Families of the targeted civilians who live outside Palestine are left anxiously watching the news and social media for updates, as these are the primary sources of information about what is happening inside Gaza. The images and reports are horrifying, with innocent children and women brutally murdered by the Zionist entity.

Kuwait Times interviewed Palestinian expatriates and citizens who have been closely following the news and discussed the mental and emotional impact on them

during these trying times. Many of them have experienced anxiety and insomnia in the past few days but have managed to find ways to cope. They shared some advice through Kuwait Times for readers on how to overcome these feelings (all names have been withheld).

One Palestinian expat expressed that her life has come to a standstill as she continuously follows the news in Gaza, even though she has no relatives there. The horrifying reports make her feel guilty for not being able to do more for her people. She supports the resistance movement and can't lead a normal life or sleep well at night, consumed by thoughts of her people's suffering. To overcome insomnia, she relies on her faith in the truth prevailing in the end. She also recommends exercise, daily walks, open conversations with experienced individuals in politics to gain a better understanding of the situation and maintaining a high morale to support their loved ones in Palestine.

A Kuwaiti citizen, who usually remains composed in the face of news, particularly concerning Palestine, as he thinks fighting the Zionist entity is an obligation for any Muslim and any humane person, found himself highly angry due to the fierce attack on freedom of speech on social media during the current Gaza crisis. This anger disrupted his sleep and work routine as he was determined to challenge social media platforms that seemed to support the actions of the Zionist entity. He realized that the world is already aware of the situation, and blocking their voices won't be the end. Patience and a



positive outlook helped him overcome the insomnia and life stagnation he initially experienced.

Another Palestinian expat living in Kuwait, who has relatives in Gaza, shared her experience of the first days of the attack, during which she couldn't sleep or do anything for three days. She was also deeply affected by the number of families in Kuwait who lost their relatives in the Gaza attack. She believes that resistance is the only solution to conquer fear, whether inside Gaza or abroad. She emphasized that living in Kuwait, with its honorable stance on Palestine, provides her with strength, a valuable source of support for an oppressed people.

Kuwait's charity amplifying Gaza humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: The International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) continued to support the current humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip by implementing multiple relief projects with the aim of containing the chaos there as a result of the ongoing occupation's aggression against Gaza. Deputy Director General of IICO Ibrahim Al-Bader confirmed to KUNA that IICO is working hard to secure urgent relief aid and is harnessing all its capabilities to keep pace with the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

IICO has been working through its partners inside Palestine since the outbreak of events in Gaza to implement several relief projects, including those related to medical affairs, by supplying the Ministry of Health with medical supplies, treatments, surgical and emergency tools, operating electric generators, and sponsoring 150 nurses and pharmacists, he said. Also, IICO is trying to strengthen the capabilities of several hospitals in Gaza, including Al-Durrah Children's Hospital, Al-Karama Hospital, Hayfa Charity Hospital, and others, with the aim of maintaining the medical and civilian staff, he added.

Among the relief projects is a project to provide food and meals by distributing them to displaced families and field crews participating in the rescue, in addition to providing rent allowances, shelter parcels, and handing out blankets, clothes, and purchase vouchers to affected families, he explained. He underscored IICO's endeavor to bear the responsibility of responding to the cries of children and the wounded during the stifling blockade they are experiencing without water, electricity, food, or medicine.

The success of the Kuwaiti campaign "Fazaa for Palestine" and the active participation of IICO with 23 Kuwaiti charitable societies collected approximately \$10.5 million, with the participation of over 60,000 donors, he mentioned. He concluded his speech by noting that IICO has been supporting the humanitarian situation in Palestine since 1988, providing during the last five years development, cultural, health, social, educational, and relief projects worth over \$54 million, expressing his gratitude to the philanthropists who responded to the campaign "In support of Gaza" in a way that reflects the country's awareness of the suffering of Palestinians.

Humanitarian efforts

Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), along with a delegation from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), held a meeting on Wednesday deliberating the situation in Palestine and mechanisms for amplifying cooperation in joint humanitarian work. After the meeting, UN official and head of finance and resource mobilization section Lisa Dowton highlighted to KUNA the importance of partnership with KRCS in providing relief, aid, and humanitarian assistance all over the globe. She commended the work of the society in improving humanitarian situations in all of Palestine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Indonesia, as well as providing relief to Rohingya and Syrian refugees.

On a local scale, she took note of society's role in putting forth health and education assistance in addition to necessary provisions for families in need. On his part, KRCS Chief Dr Hilal Al-Sayer stressed the necessity of integrating efforts between humanitarian organizations to provide urgent relief in light of the proliferating crises. He also expressed his confidence in international organizations, their field missions, and their ability to manage projects transparently. KRCS will continue to alleviate the suffering felt by refugees across the globe and support all efforts aiming to provide aid, asserted Al-Sayer. — KUNA

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'Haifi' puts Kuwait on international map

Arab housing ministers' 88th meeting kicks off

CAIRO: The Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction held its 88th meeting at the Arab League's headquarters on Wednesday. In a speech at the event, Jordan's Ambassador to Egypt and its permanent envoy at the Arab League, Amjad Adaleh, affirmed the importance of the meeting's agenda in facing housing and reconstruction issues as a result of natural disasters and climate change that affected the infrastructure of Arab countries.

He underlined the need for coordination and partnership between Arab states as well as with regional and international organizations specializing in reconstruction. On her part, Chief of the Department of Environment, Housing, Water Resources, and Sustainable Development at the Arab League, Shahira Wahbi, said the meeting will follow up on the implementation of the global sustainable development plan 2030 and the Arab executive strategy for housing and urban development.

The meeting also discusses preparations for the fifth Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to be held in Libya from December 19 to 21. Moreover, Wahbi said the meeting will discuss supporting Somalia in training workers in the housing field, supporting reconstruction in Yemen, and rehabilitation of cities affected by conflict, natural disasters and those under the Zoinist occupation. — KUNA



The fruits of (Haifi Kuwait) palm tree.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti farmer Mubarak Al-Haifi was able to grow a unique palm tree that put Kuwait on the international production map. The fruits of this palm tree, named Haifi Kuwait, are distinguished by their delicious taste and large size. Al-Haifi said in a statement to KUNA that he was able to cooperate with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) to reproduce more similar trees with the same dates. — KUNA



Kuwaiti farmer Mubarak Al-Haifi



'Haifi Kuwait' palm tree

Burgan Bank participates in 2nd Watheefti National Career Fair

KUWAIT: Building on its comprehensive strategy for human capital development, Burgan Bank announced its participation in the upcoming Watheefti event, Kuwait's largest employment fair, set to take place on October 19-21 at The Arena Kuwait – 360 Mall, with the participation of over 100 companies. Burgan Bank's renewed participation in Watheefti comes to reaffirm its steadfast commitment to the development of Kuwait's national talents.

Commenting on the Bank's upcoming presence at Watheefti, Abdulwahab Abdulraheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition Human Resources and Development at Burgan Bank, said: "We are delighted to be part of Watheefti in its second edition among some of Kuwait's top employers. In Kuwait, it is essential to have events of this magnitude, like Watheefti, that enable employers to find suitable talents who are capable of contributing to this success and

that open a window of opportunities for aspiring job seekers."

In its first edition, Watheefti career fair attracted 32,000 registrations – 19,520 of whom attended the event over a span of three days. Among the event attendees were employed talents seeking other opportunities, graduates preparing to join the workforce, as well as undergraduate and high school students looking to build up their skills through internship opportunities. In addition to the employers' booths, Watheefti also introduced a number of workshops that allowed employers to share their expertise with the event attendees.

Abdulwahab added: "In our mission to serve our customers and community in ways that make their lives overall better and easier, we are always on the lookout for promising national talents who share our passion for excellence and growth, and who are able to approach challenges with creativity. Kuwait is home to an exceptional pool of talents who hold the potential to achieve great successes with the right guidance and proper development." Burgan encourages all those looking for career opportunities in the banking sector to visit the Bank's booth at the career fair and learn about the available job opportunities that meet their skills.



Abdulwahab Abdulraheem

Should 17-year-olds be allowed to drive?

By Jarah Al-Shebly

KUWAIT: Imagine you've just turned 17 and live in Fahaheel. You have to commute to Kuwait University in Shadadiya, which is a 35-minute journey, every day. Unfortunately, your family can't drop you off because they work in the oil sector, and their schedules don't align with yours. As a result, you rely on taxis, which is financially draining, costing you a substantial KD 465.

In this day and age, a significant percentage of first-year university and high school students are 17 years old. In Kuwait, which faces challenges over transportation, cars remain the primary mode of travel. During this critical transition period, these students need a vehicle that can help them become more independent and reduce their reliance on their parents, expensive taxis or ride-sharing apps.

Kuwait Times conducted interviews with various affected individuals, including Mohammad Alabdulsalam, a Kuwaiti student embarking on his university journey, and lawyer Khouled Aloudah, to gain insights into the challenges faced by students.

According to Mohammad, cars play a vital role in transportation in Kuwait. "As a 17-year-old student living in Kuwait without a driver's license, the transition to university can indeed be challenging. In Kuwait, having a car and a driving license is highly advantageous to avoid dependence on private transportation options like taxis or relying on family members for rides," he said.

Mohammad suggested granting driving licenses to 17-year-olds could be a solution. "Introducing driver's

licenses for both 17-year-old university and high school students would have numerous benefits. At 17, you're on the cusp of becoming an independent adult, and learning to drive safely and responsibly at this age would make the transition much smoother. Being able to decide when to leave home and ensuring punctuality is part of this convenience," he added.

Furthermore, Mohammad believes that expanding alternative modes of transportation could alleviate the issue in the long run. "Certainly, one solution could be implementing a metro system. Consider this: An affordable mode of transportation that can connect you to most places you need to go, including school or university."

Another perspective is provided by Khouled, a lawyer who has studied law both in Kuwait and the US. She shared her experiences living in Kuwait, where owning a car is a necessity, and in the US, where she resided in cities like New York and St Louis. Khouled described New York as a vibrant city where she had various transportation options.

"I've lived in two vastly different cities. In Kuwait, I couldn't go anywhere without my car. On the other hand, I lived in NYC, where I had the option to use the subway or cycle to get around. It made me more physically active, reduced the stress of parking and traffic, and made going to university much more convenient," she explained.

Making driver's licenses available for 17-year-olds and possibly even 16.5-year-olds, with rigorous training and strict rules, is a necessity. This could enhance road safety and reduce accidents, benefiting both the current and future generations. In the absence of alternative transportation options, the country should also work on improving various modes of transportation, such as dedicated bus lanes to avoid traffic, a comprehensive metro system connecting the entire country, and efficient train connections to neighboring nations.



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World conflicts 'strengthen' China ties with Russia: Putin

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Gazans massacred in hospital strike

51 medical buildings hit, 60 ambulances targeted by Zionists since Oct 7



GAZA: People stand over bodies of Palestinians killed after a strike ripped through the Ahli Arab hospital after they were transported to Al-Shifa hospital, on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP photos

GAZA: For tens of thousands of families in Gaza, hospitals became a refuge from seemingly endless Zionist shelling. Then came the strike Tuesday night on Ahli Arab hospital in central Gaza, which the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory said killed at least 471 people and over 300 wounded, some in critical condition.

The ministry, which blamed the Zionists for the strike, said Ahli Arab was sheltering not only hundreds of sick and wounded, but also people "forcibly displaced from their homes" because of other strikes. The Zionist army said a rocket misfired by Islamic Jihad Palestinian militants caused the strike. Gaza residents, who have been told to flee the north of the Palestinian territory, had packed the courtyards and corridors of the territory's overwhelmed hospitals in the belief they were a safe haven from the Zionist bombardments that followed the Oct 7 attacks by Hamas on south occupied Palestine. Gazans combed through the debris of the devastated hospital, collecting the bodies of the dead in the battered enclave Wednesday, hours after the strike. Alongside rows of charred vehicles, volunteers recovered corpses and human limbs that were placed in body bags, while the remains of others were covered in white shrouds and blankets.

"This is a massacre," Ahmed Tafesh, who assisted in the recovery effort, told AFP, saying he had collected the eyes, arms, legs and heads of the deceased. "I have never seen anything like this in my life." At the nearby Shifa hospital in Gaza City, residents gathered to identify the dead at the hospital's mortuary and take other bodies for burial. Yahya Karim, 70, was among those searching for clues about the fate of their relatives.

"I don't know how many of them died and how many are still alive," said Karim, admitting that he had planned to shelter in the hospital before the strike. Outside the Ahli hospital, others who survived the attack who spoke

to AFP recounted the terrifying moment when the strike occurred. "We felt there was fire and things were falling on us. We started looking for each other. The electricity cut suddenly, and we couldn't see," said Fatima Saed through tears. "I don't know how we came out of it."

Gaza resident Adnan al-Naqa told AFP that around 2,000 people were taking refuge at the hospital on Tuesday night at the time of the strike. "As I entered the hospital, I heard the explosion, I saw a massive fire," said Naqa. "The entire square was on fire, there were bodies everywhere, children, women and elderly people."

'No one has pity'

At Nasser hospital, before the Ahli Arab strike, women made bread and spread out clothes to dry in the courtyard of the facility in the southern district of Khan Yunis, as a stream of ambulances brought casualties and surgeons desperately sought to save lives inside. Makeshift mattresses cover the ground and each night the homeless and displaced try to sleep amid the roar of air attacks and the growing cold.

Ibrahim Teyssir is one of thousands to seek refuge around the Dar al-Shifa hospital, the biggest in Gaza and the heart of the medical system for the 2.4 million population. "No one has pity on us," said Teyssir. "What have we done to deserve this? What have our children done? Most people are not part of any armed group." Hospitals are at a "breaking point and are overflowing and with people desperately seeking a safe shelter," the World Health Organization said. "Crowding is getting worse. Over 30,000 people are sheltering at Shifa Hospital alone," the UN agency told AFP, quoting Hamas health ministry figures. "We are extremely concerned about disease outbreaks due to mass displacement and poor water and sanitation among people who are already in a dire situation."

Safe haven

The hospitals were attractive because they had been relatively spared from the Zionist bombing raids that have hit Gaza every day since the October 7 attacks in which 1,400 people died in southern occupied Palestine. But the WHO says that 51 medical buildings have been hit, 12 medical workers have been killed and 60 ambulances targeted.

About 3,000 people have died in Zionist raids since the since the Hamas attacks, according to the Gaza authorities. About one million people from northern Gaza have moved to Khan Yunis and other southern districts to avoid the looming Zionist ground offensive.

About 100,000 people are left in the northern district around Gaza City that the Zionist occupation 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. — AFP

A woman reacts while holding a pillow as she stands amidst debris outside the site of the Ahli Arab hospital on Oct 18, 2023.

West Bank gripped in fear as settler violence escalates

RAMALLAH: The Zionist war on Hamas in Gaza has stoked fear in the occupied West Bank, where Zionists have killed dozens of Palestinians and residents say they now live in terror of more reprisal attacks by Zionist settlers.

Thousands of Palestinians have rallied in solidarity with besieged and bombed Gaza, and stone-throwing youths have burned tires in clashes with Zionist forces. On Wednesday, hundreds of protesters in Nablus, many draped in Palestinian flags and some holding Hamas banners, chanted slogans against the Zionist occupation and its ally the United States. "Free, free Palestine," they chanted.

Others derided Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, whose Fatah movement is Hamas's rival and has been criticized by Palestinians over its collabo-

ration with the Zionists. "Down, down with Abbas," they shouted. An AFP correspondent in Nablus said Palestinian security forces fired tear gas at protesters as they marched out of the city center.

"I care about my people, I care about my city, I care about Gaza and Gaza people. So this is why I, perhaps in years I haven't spoken out, I'm speaking now," said Ferial, 50-year-old Nablus resident, who only provided her first name.

More danger than ever

As the occupation has vowed to destroy Gaza's Hamas rulers, many Palestinians living in the West Bank say they feel in more danger than ever — both from Zionist settlers and the soldiers who protect them. "Soldiers and settlers are now quick to open fire in revenge for what's happening in Gaza," said Faraj Beitaoui from Beita, a northern village where two people have been killed this month.

Zeid al-Chouaibi, from Palestinian rights group Al-Haq, said the tense recent days had seen the "looting of shops, threatening graffiti from settlers, attempted attacks on villages, and the murders". About three million Palestinians live across

the West Bank, which has been occupied by the Zionists since 1967.

Scattered throughout are Zionist settlements, which are considered illegal under international law but home to 490,000 Zionists. Since the ongoing Zionist attack on Gaza, settler attacks against Palestinians have more than doubled, from an average of three to eight incidents a day, according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

Deadliest year since 2005

Before the Gaza war, the West Bank was already torn by its deadliest upsurge of violence since at least 2005 according to the UN, marked especially by months of frequent pre-dawn Zionist army raids. The hardline nationalist government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which includes far-right settlers, had vowed to crack down on Palestinian militant groups across the territory.

While the world's attention has been focused on Gaza, the rage and violence has spilled into the West Bank. At least 61 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,250 wounded since, according to the territory's health ministry.

Most were shot dead by Zionist forces, others killed by settlers according to Palestinian health officials. Thousands of mourners have turned out for their funerals. Zionist forces have detained some 700 Palestinians in the West Bank, mostly Hamas members, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group.

Among them are dozens of Gazans who were working legally in Zionist-occupied areas when the war broke out and took refuge in the West Bank, according to the group. Amid the heightened tensions, Palestinians have been out on patrol each night in Deir Jarir village near Ramallah. "There's a group where we exchange information and where we keep one another informed of settler movements," said Haidar Makho, a 52-year-old resident.

In nearby Qusra village, settlers killed five Palestinians last week, the health ministry said. Most shops are now shuttered in Huwara, a northern West Bank town which has been the scene of Palestinian attacks on Zionists and reprisals by settlers. The town's mayor, Moin Dmidi, voiced fear of worse ahead. "We're all afraid of new settler attacks after what happened in Gaza." — AFP

International

World conflicts 'strengthen' China ties with Russia: Putin

Xi hails 'continuously deepening' political mutual trust

BEIJING: Russian leader Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that world conflicts "strengthen" his country's relations with China, after talks with Xi Jinping that celebrated their nations' deepening political and economic ties. Putin, on his first trip to a major global power since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, met his "old friend" Xi in Beijing on the sidelines of a major forum in an event overshadowed by conflict in the Middle East.

At a press conference following the talks, Putin said that global turmoil served to bring China and Russia even closer together. "All these outside factors are common threats and they strengthen Russian-Chinese cooperation," he said. The Russian leader also said he had "optimism" for the future of the relationship.

Xi, too, said that "political mutual trust between the two countries is continuously deepening", according to Xinhua news agency, hailing their "close and effective strategic coordination". Xi noted that he had met with Putin 42 times in the past decade, saying they had "developed a good working relationship and a deep friendship". Putin was the guest of honor at the summit hosted by Xi in Beijing this week to celebrate his Belt and Road Initiative, a vast trade and infrastructure project.

Hospital strike condemnation

International attention has been focused on the Zionist-Palestinian war, which has raged for more than 10 days, and both Russia and China condemned the Tuesday night strike on a Gaza hospital that killed hundreds. Putin on Wednesday said the strike was a "tragedy" and showed the need to bring the conflict between Zionists and Hamas to an end.

"This is a terrible event ... I really hope that this will be a signal that this conflict needs to end as soon

as possible," he said. China's foreign ministry said it was "shocked by and strongly condemns" the strike, calling for an "immediate ceasefire".

Earlier, Xi called for joint efforts by China and Russia to "safeguard international fairness" and "justice", Xinhua reported. China is Russia's largest trading partner, with exchange between the nations reaching a record \$190 billion last year, Beijing customs data shows. And Xi said Wednesday it was progressing towards a goal of \$200 billion set by the two countries in bilateral meetings this year.

Beijing has drawn criticism from Western countries for its stance on the Ukraine war, on which China insists it is neutral. It has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion. 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. In his talks with Xi, he stressed the importance of "close coordination in foreign policy" in "the current difficult conditions".

'Oppose unilateral sanctions'

Representatives of 130 countries are in the Chinese capital for the two-day talking shop that wraps up on Wednesday. Earlier, Xi said in a speech to the international delegates that his country rejected "economic coercion" and "bloc confrontation".

In an apparent reference to China's rivalry with the United States, Xi said Beijing would not engage in "ideological confrontation, geopolitical games or bloc confrontation". "We oppose unilateral sanctions, economic coercion, decoupling and delinking," Xi told delegates.

"Viewing the development of others as a threat and economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's own life any better or one's own development any faster," he said. Instead, Xi said,

outside noticed a "small fire" where the attackers had been standing and were able to put it out, "preventing further consequences".

While police were investigating at around 8:00 am, a 30-year-old man on an e-scooter stopped outside the synagogue and tried to approach the building. When police moved in to stop him, he resisted and began shouting anti-Zionist slogans. Police said they released the man but have opened a probe against him on charges of incitement of racial hatred and an attempted attack on an officer.

The building, which also houses a daycare center and a school, belongs to Kahal Adass Jisroel, which calls itself as "a growing Jewish community in the heart of Berlin". On social media, it confirmed that "people and the building, fortunately, were unharmed".

'Despicable'

Without addressing the incident specifically, Scholz posted a message on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, condemning anti-Jewish hatred. "Attacks against Jewish institutions, violent riots on our streets — this is inhumane, disgusting and cannot be tolerated," said Scholz on a trip to Egypt. "An-



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping (left) shakes hands with Russia's President Vladimir Putin during the opening ceremony of the third Belt and Road Forum on Oct 18, 2023. — AFP

ti-Semitism has no place in Germany. My thanks go to the security forces, especially in this situation."

A police union and local media reported clashes between demonstrators and police late Tuesday at pro-Palestinian rallies in Berlin, which have been largely banned since Hamas' October 7 attack on the Zionists. The Zionist embassy in Berlin condemned the incidents, calling for German authorities to address anti-Semitic attacks with "unwavering severity".

The Central Council of Jews in Germany, representing the country's 200,000-strong community, said Hamas blaming the Zionists for a deadly strike on a hospital in Gaza late Tuesday might have played a role in fomenting hate. "We all have a responsibility to ensure that innocent tragic victims are not used for repulsive terror propaganda," it said in a statement.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the protection of Jewish institutions in Germany had "the highest priority", calling the attempted firebombing a "despicable act". Scholz had last week called on his compatriots to show solidarity with the country's Jewish population and guarantee their safety, condemning incidents at pro-Palestinian rallies.

Germany has stepped up protection at Jewish

institutions across the country, citing its solemn responsibility for Jewish life since the Holocaust. Even before the latest turmoil in the Middle East, Germany in May reported a new record in the number of politically motivated crimes last year, including a nearly 29-percent jump in anti-Semitic crimes to 3,027. The vast majority of the offences — 2,552 — were attributed to the far-right scene. — AFP



BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz takes his seat to chair a meeting of the security cabinet at the Chancellery in Berlin on Oct 18, 2023. — AFP

Germany has stepped up protection at Jewish

Scholz vows action after Molotovs thrown at synagogue

BERLIN: Chancellor Olaf Scholz vowed to fight anti-Semitism on German soil, after attackers hurled two Molotov cocktails at a Jewish synagogue in Berlin early Wednesday. Police in the German capital said they were probing the attack in the Mitte district of the city. There were no reports of injuries or damage.

The attack, at around 3:45am (0145 GMT), comes amid a sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the wake of the Zionist war on Hamas. "Two unidentified people came on foot and threw two burning bottles filled with liquid in the direction of the synagogue on Brunnenstrasse," a commercial and residential street, police said in a statement.

"The bottles landed on the pavement and broke, extinguishing the fire." As the masked assailants ran away, round-the-clock security forces stationed

ANGER BOILING OVER...

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MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on the government to reject the new US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara over the US' total support for Zionist atrocities on Gaza, and warned if her credentials were accepted, he would grill the foreign minister. Speaking at a protest late Tuesday in Irada Square to condemn the Zionist raid on the hospital in Gaza, Kandari said the attack signals the death of international humanitarian conscience, adding the attack is a massacre not only against the Palestinian people, but also a massacre against humanity. "The least we can do today is not to receive the new US ambassador to Kuwait. This is the least official response" by Kuwait to the massacres of Palestinians, Kandari told cheering crowds.

The US administration is financing the Zionist air raids on Gaza and is providing protection and giving international cover to their crimes, he said. Kandari said Kuwait should not welcome the US ambassador-designate, due to arrive in the next two days. "If the credentials of the ambassador are approved, I will file to grill the foreign minister," Kandari declared. Sasahara served as the US Consul General in Jerusalem between 2018-2019 until the United States moved its embassy to Jerusalem. She has also served in Amman and Saudi Arabia.

MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi supported the call by

Kandari, adding that the foreign minister should reject the ambassador's credentials. "The least degree of support (to the Palestinians) is to reject to receive the ambassador of those who support criminals who kill children," Saqabi said on X. MP Muhammad Al-Sayer said developments in Gaza require the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to review their foreign relations. He called for the use of oil and foreign investments as a weapon and for imposing gradual sanctions to save "our people in Palestine".

MP Hasan Jowhar called on his X account on Kuwait to withdraw its investments, worth tens of billions of dollars, from international companies and investment funds whose executives have declared their support to the Zionist entity. Jowhar said that he has monitored at least eight such companies and funds that declared support for the Zionist entity and urged the prime minister to withdraw Kuwaiti funds from them "so we don't become partners in shedding Palestinian blood".

Meanwhile, MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem reiterated his call to other MPs and the speaker of the house to consider his motion, which he submitted two days ago, to hold an emergency term of the Assembly to discuss the situation in Gaza, in addition to disputes in Khor Abdullah and Durra gas field. The assembly is currently in summer recess and the new term opens only on Oct 31. No regular sessions can be held before the new term opens. Ghanem said the Assembly should not wait for two weeks to debate developments in Gaza and instead should convene an emergency term for one day, which requires the signatures of 33 lawmakers.

But he gave the Zionist entity a warning, despite saying he understood the urge to hit back at those responsible for the worst attack in the Zionist entity's history on Oct 7, when some 1,400 people were killed. "I caution this while you feel that rage: Don't be consumed by it. After 9/11, we were enraged in the United States. While we sought justice we also made mistakes," he said.

The Zionist entity said afterwards it had agreed to Biden's request to allow aid into the besieged Gaza Strip via Egypt after mounting concern about dwindling supplies and warnings of a humanitarian catastrophe. But it said it was limited to "food, water and medicine" and conditional on it not being used by Hamas, Netanyahu's office added.

The horror of the hospital deaths overshadowed Biden's high-stakes regional visit, with Jordan cancelling a summit between King Abdullah II, Biden, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. The Zionist entity's military campaign to destroy Hamas, which is holding 199 hostages in the besieged territory, has now claimed the lives of 3,478 people, according to health officials.

In besieged Gaza, the hospital blast brought new horrors after 12 days of sustained bombardment that the Zionist entity says targets Hamas and which has destroyed entire city blocks. — AFP

GCC vows \$100m in Gaza aid, OIC...

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that back the brutal aggression against the Palestinian people, and grant (the Zionist entity) impunity, taking advantage of the double standards that provide cover for the occupying power", said an OIC statement published after an emergency meeting of foreign ministers.

The same statement blamed the Zionist entity for a rocket strike on Gaza's Christian-run Ahli Arab Hospital that killed 471 people. Arab countries have also individually blamed the Zionist entity for the incident that has inflamed anger across the Middle East. The OIC, based in the Saudi coastal city

Protests across Muslim world...

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deadly attack on Oct 7. "The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns the (Zionist) attack... resulting in the death and injury of hundreds of people," the UAE's official WAM news agency said early on Wednesday.

Bahrain's foreign ministry "expressed the Kingdom of Bahrain's condemnation and strong denunciation of the (Zionist) bombing", the Bahrain News Agency said. In Manama, a handful of activists gathered in front of the cordoned-off Zionist embassy to call for Bahrain to break off diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity.

Saudi Arabia, which has halted talks on potential ties with the Zionist entity since violence flared, called the blast a "heinous crime committed by the (Zionist) occupation forces". Qatar, one of Hamas' main backers, slammed the "brutal massacre". Morocco, another country that recognized the Zionist entity in 2020, also blamed it for the strike, as did Egypt, which became the first Arab country to normalize relations with the Zionist entity in 1979.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi condemned in the strongest terms "the (Zionist) bombing" of the Ahli Arab hospital, which led to "the deaths of hundreds of innocent victims" among the Palestinian citizens in Gaza. He called the "deliberate bombing" a "clear violation of international law".

In war-torn Yemen, demonstrators took part in a massive pro-Palestinian protest in the capital Sanaa, which is controlled by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Algeria condemned the strike as a "barbaric act"

of Jeddah, called on the international community "to hold the (Zionist) occupation accountable for these heinous war crimes against the Palestinian people".

It also condemned the United Nations Security Council for failing to stop the violence. "Everyone who gave (the Zionist entity) carte blanche to wage this deadly war, provided it with weapons, and even sent military reinforcements to support it in committing this heinous crime, colluded with this crime," Palestinian foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki said in his remarks.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the Zionist entity was acting "with the full support of the United States and some Western countries". Earlier, he told reporters in Jeddah that Islamic countries with diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity should expel its ambassadors and "stop exporting oil to this regime", though the OIC statement did not mention such steps. — Agencies

carried out by "occupation forces" while in Tunisia, thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters rallied outside the French embassy, condemning Western support for the Zionist entity. Some waved Palestinian flags while others demanded the ambassador be expelled, accusing France of being among the Western "allies of the Zionists", AFP journalists reported.

Libya's Tripoli-based internationally recognized government called the hospital strike a "despicable crime" as several hundred people protested in Tripoli and other Libyan cities. Hamas official Osama Hamdan also called for region-wide protests on Friday and Saturday, demanding the "expulsion of the ambassadors of the Zionist entity in all Arab and Islamic capitals". Jordan said the Zionist entity "bears responsibility for this grave incident".

Some 5,000 Jordanians gathered outside the Zionist embassy, demanding the expulsion of the Zionist entity's diplomatic mission. Security forces blocked off roads leading to the embassy but the size of the demonstration looked set to swell due to the anger in Jordan, which is home to many Palestinian refugees. "No Zionist occupation on Jordanian land," protesters chanted, brandishing Palestinian flags.

Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit called on Tuesday for leaders to "stop this tragedy immediately". "What diabolical mind intentionally bombards a hospital and its defenseless inhabitants?" he wrote on X, previously Twitter. Iraq, which also blamed Zionist authorities, demanded an "immediate and urgent resolution" from the UN Security Council to stop the Zionist entity's Gaza onslaught, as hundreds protested in the capital Baghdad, brandishing Palestinian flags.

In the Syrian capital Damascus, hundreds of people with Palestinian flags gathered near parliament, many wearing T-shirts bearing the image of President Bashar Al-Assad. "Martyrdom or victory," one banner read. — AFP

Biden hugs Bibi, blames...

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for the Zionist entity's position that a misfired Islamic Jihad rocket caused the deadly carnage at Gaza's Christian-run Ahli Arab Hospital. "I was deeply saddened and outraged by the explosion at the hospital in Gaza yesterday," Biden said about the strike that killed 471 people according to Gaza's Hamas-controlled health ministry.

"And, based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," said the US president, referring to the armed movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad. "But there's a lot of people out there not sure, so we have to overcome a lot of things," Biden added, as protests also erupted against the Zionist entity and the United States in the occupied West Bank and Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Asked later by reporters what made him sure the Zionist entity was not responsible for the strike, Biden replied: "The data I was shown by my defense department." At a news conference later, Biden said: "Based on the information we have seen today it appears the result of an errant rocket fired by a terrorist group in Gaza."

International

TikTok moms nurture 'detox for kids' misinformation

Videos promoting detox products part of banned predatory marketing scheme

WASHINGTON: A TikTok army of American moms claiming to be "detox" specialists is pushing unproven treatments for childhood behavioral disorders — while hiding that their misinformation is actually a marketing campaign aimed at making money. Influencers with a large following, these mothers typically cite personal testimonies to passionately endorse detox sprays or bath treatments, claiming without evidence that they help rid children of toxins such as heavy metals and parasites. Their videos, which often garner millions of views on platforms including TikTok, illustrate how unqualified nutrition influencers deftly skirt content moderation rules to peddle potentially harmful health misinformation that experts say is difficult to police. Claiming to have the answer to mood swings, picky eating and even autism, the influencers are accused of preying on desperate parents and reaping financial rewards through what researchers call predatory multi-level marketing (MLM) schemes. MLMs are banned on TikTok.

Danica Walker, a self-styled "detoxification specialist" holds up a spray in one video and claims it helped cure her toddler's "mood issues" within weeks. Like dozens of similar endorsements on her account, this video is not marked as an advertisement. But a website linked in her TikTok bio directs users to a company that bears the hallmarks of MLM, a form of direct sales using independent contractors. It sells detox products, including the spray in Walker's video, and recruits new sales representatives through an "affiliate program." Neither Walker nor the MLM company responded to AFP's request for comment. Comments under her video such as "Did you get paid for this?" and "It didn't work for me and it was so expensive" did not elicit a public response from Walker.

'Fake treatment'

AFP examined around a dozen of what appeared to be a flood of TikTok accounts of influencer moms promoting scientifically unproven detox products. The accounts appear to violate TikTok's community guidelines. Without commenting on the detox influencers, a TikTok spokeswoman told AFP: "Our community guidelines make clear that we don't allow MLM."

Two accounts, including Walker's, were deactivated immediately after AFP flagged them to the spokeswoman. Many influencers appear to sidestep the possibility of legal challenges with a standard disclaimer: the endorsements are "not medical advice."

"It has become part of their sales tactic — 'I'm giving you this information mother-to-mother, not as your doctor,' so it presumably protects them legally but also connects them with potential consumers," TikTok misinformation researcher Abbie Richards told AFP. "The claims these accounts are making could be entirely fabricated in the name of selling merchandise and they aren't even marked as advertisements."

People working for MLMs can earn money through commissions from direct sales of products or by recruiting new distributors, according to the US Federal Trade Commission. The real-life impact of the "pseudoscientific misinformation" is huge, said Jonathan Stea, a clinical psychologist and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Calgary. "Detox is a scam," Stea told AFP. "There's no compelling scientific evidence to support detox treatments for eliminating 'toxins' from the body. Ultimately, a detox bath is fake treatment for a fake condition."



WASHINGTON: This photo illustration shows multiple screens displaying TikTok videos about detoxing children on Oct 6, 2023. — AFP

'Preying on moms'

Parents of autistic children in particular have lashed out at influencers for peddling falsehoods for personal gain, including that detox treatments cure symptoms such as speech delays and enable non-verbal children to start singing. "A lot of you (influencers) are reaching out saying: 'Hey girl, I know your child has autism. I have the perfect thing for you,'" a mother named Anna Maria said in a TikTok video. "Cut it out. Stop preying on moms in the special-needs community."

But seeming to validate the adage that lies spread faster online than the truth, such videos attract far lower engagement and traction than the slick and sentimental detox endorsements. TikTok appears flooded

with unqualified influencers who spread misinformation, from vaccine- and abortion-related falsehoods to health myths, which experts say can have a serious impact on medical decisions. Last year, the watchdog Media Matters exposed another "predatory" MLM scheme on TikTok to covertly sell weight loss products not approved by US health regulators. "TikTok's inability to detect such a large-scale MLM sets a bleak precedent for meaningful moderation of these exploitative schemes," Media Matters wrote in its report. "The platform benefited from a significant amount of positive media attention after announcing its MLM ban (in December 2020), but its actual enforcement seems to be failing." — AFP



BATKEN: Kyrgyz men sell and buy dried tobacco leaves, which are used to make nasvay, at a tobacco bazaar.



KARA-BULAK: Kyrgyz farmer Askarbek Duisheyev carries tobacco leaves he cut to make nasvay in the village of Kara-Bulak, some 1,000 kilometers southwest of the capital Bishkek, on Sept 29, 2023.



BATKEN: Workers crush dried tobacco leaves, which are used to make nasvay at a tobacco bazaar on Sept 30, 2023. — AFP photos

Nasvay: Chewing tobacco poisoning Kyrgyzstan

BATKEN: Farmer Askarbek Duisheyev pours a small plastic bottle into the palm of his hand and tips some green balls under his tongue. This is nasvay, a type of toxic chewing tobacco hugely popular in Central Asia that is a key part of the fragile economy of impoverished southern Kyrgyzstan. "I've been growing tobacco to make nasvay for the past two years. What else is there to do? There's no work in the Batken region," Duisheyev, 59, told AFP. "I have to earn money and feed my family," he said, as he cut tobacco leaves with a sickle in the village of Kara-Bulak, not far from the Tajik border.

Batken province is the poorest in the former Soviet republic, with nearly half the population living below the poverty line of 540 euros (\$570) a year. Surviving often means either leaving to work in Russia or growing tobacco to make nasvay. The unregulated production of this addictive and cancerogenic product supports a third of the population according to the campaign group "Kyrgyzstan Without Tobacco".

Mysterious recipe

At the start of autumn, barns in Batken are filled with drying tobacco leaves. Since he does not have enough space of his own, Duisheyev rents storage from a neighbor who has left to work in Russia like millions of Kyrgyz. "You can't stay (inside) too long. The smell is overpowering," he warned.

After being dried, crushed and mixed in with mysterious ingredients — usually lime, oil or even poultry droppings — the tobacco becomes nasvay, which users slip between their gums and lips. "The secret is simply mixing three or four ingredients," said nasvay producer Israil Khakimov.

But chewing the altered tobacco can lead to a long list of health problems. "Consumption of nasvay can lead to gastrointestinal, oral and liver diseases, as well as cancer of the lips, throats and stomach," said Saipidin Toroyev, a cancer specialist at Batken hospital.

"Nasvay is dangerous because, as it is placed in the mouth, the saliva brings particles down to the stomach and into the blood stream, causing damage to the whole body," he told AFP, also pointing to its psychotropic and addictive effects. Cheaper than cigarettes, consumption has shot up in recent years among both men and women, according to the health ministry.

'Had to find another job'

Working out the number of users is tough since nasvay is part of the black economy. And politicians are torn over whether to eradicate a public health hazard or turn a blind eye to an industry that supports a farming region suffering from water shortages and frequent cross-border conflicts with neighboring Tajikistan.

Alisher Seidakmatov, who is in charge of agricultural development for the Batken region, told AFP that it is "also profitable to grow fruit and vegetables". That view is not shared by producers. "I had to grow tobacco because my salary was insufficient and I would not earn the same growing potatoes," said Duisheyev. His salary as a forest ranger was just 10,000 soms (100 euros) per month. "I had to find another job," he said.

With his relatively modest production of around half a ton of nasvay, he was able to earn his annual forest ranger salary with one harvest. The nasvay ends up being sold in 50-kilo sacks on Saturdays in the regional capital at a busy tobacco market crowded with trucks and vans. A buyer comes up to Dzhunusali Seidakmatov's stall, picks up a fistful of tobacco, rubs it and breathes in. Negotiations begin, but the two fail to strike a deal.

"He wanted me to sell it to him for 445 soms per kilo. I was expecting 450 soms," said the seller, who wore a traditional Kyrgyz white felt hat. "It's not a problem. I've already sold more than 80 kilos," he said. — AFP

Senegal awash in plastic from water sachets

DAKAR: Moussa Ndoye, a 28-year-old beachgoer in Senegal's capital Dakar, gulps down the water from two plastic sachets in quick succession and throws them in the sand. "This is our rubbish bin," he says with a laugh, sitting with friends in the shade of a large wooden fishing boat. The white sand shore is littered with plastic waste, including discarded transparent pocket-sized drinking water sachets. Practical, easily purchased in shops or from street hawkers, and cheaper than water bottles, the sachets are integral to everyday life in Senegal.

But they are a key contributor to plastic waste marring the West African nation's streets and coastlines. Water sachets take 400 years to decompose into microplastics, according to Adams Tidjanis, professor of environmental studies at a private university in Dakar. In Senegal, more than 250,000 tons of plastic are discarded each year, while only about 30,000 tons are recycled, according to a 2022 report by the Ministry of Urban Planning. "There are a lot of them on the beaches, they're part of the plastic waste we see the most," says Pape Diop, head of an environmental protection association. Previously, "fishermen took cans (of water) to sea, but now they use sachets of water, drink them, then throw them away—this waste all end up here (on the beach) because the sea rejects it," he adds.

Plastic pollution

In addition to polluting the water, the sachets obstruct drains, contributing to urban flooding. They are often burned with other trash, releasing toxins into the air. In Dakar, they litter sports fields, construction sites and busy intersections. They are particularly noticeable during the hot season, which runs from June to October.

It is a phenomenon seen across much of the continent, with water sachets common in Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. They are outlawed in Kenya and Rwanda under bans on single-use plastics dating back to 2017 and 2019, respectively. Senegal passed similar single-use plastics legislation in 2020, supplementing a 2015 law. But exceptions were made for the sachets and other types of plastics in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely affected people who live from day to day. "Our socio-economic realities do not allow us to move towards their total ban", explains Khadijatou Drame, who runs legal affairs at the environment ministry. Around 50 brands compete for Dakar's water sachet market. They sell the sachets individually or in batches of 30. The 400 ml sachets fetch 50 CFA francs (\$0.08) on the street. For 250 ml sachets, it's 25 CFA francs.

Amadou Diallo, 63, launched the "Debeya" brand in 2017. In his small factory in the Dakar suburb of Guediawaye, tap water passes through three blue tubes containing cotton, thread and coal to purify it. The water flows on through two 1,000-liter tanks and then into a packaging machine that fills the sachets, seals them and places them in a blue basin. — AFP



DAKAR: A worker fills plastic sachets with drinkable water on Aug 23, 2023. — AFP



SHEFFORD: An anti-Conservative Party graffiti is seen on a wall near the High Street in central Bedfordshire, north of London on Oct 17, 2023. — AFP

'Ghost of Boris' looms over pivotal UK poll

FLITWICK: UK voters go to the polls Thursday in a bellwether local poll that could make it clear just how serious a challenge Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives face at the next general election. The vote in the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency follows the resignation of MP Nadine Dorries, a key ally of ousted ex-premier Boris Johnson. Dorries held the seat, a Tory stronghold since 1931, with a huge 24,000 majority in the 2019 general election.

If the Conservatives lose it this week, it will be one of the biggest collapses of support in English by-election history. Sunak's party — battered by a bruising cost of living crisis, stubbornly high inflation and the fall out from a series of political scandals under Johnson — is currently trailing in the polls behind Keir Starmer's main opposition Labour Party.

But with recent surveys showing Labour's poll lead narrowing after Sunak announced populist policies, the poll is being closely watched. Retirees in the mainly rural constituency in central England told AFP they expected the Conservatives to hold the seat but that without Johnson they would flounder in the national ballot, expected next year. Some younger voters said they were so fed up with politicians of all stripes they wouldn't be voting in either poll. Nursery nurse Leigh-Ann Munn said she hadn't decided who to vote for yet but that the biggest issue for her was spiraling costs. The 31-year-old mother of a toddler from the small town of Ampthill said the rise in food, energy and housing costs had hit her family "big time". "My grocery bills have doubled. Nursery costs have gone up, everything has, it's just so hard," she said.

'Red wall'

Labour is hoping Thursday's result will mirror the drubbing meted out to the Conservatives in July in the northern Selby and Ainsty local election, where the opposition overturned a 20,000 majority. Voters on the same day, however, narrowly backed the Tories in Johnson's former Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in a local poll dominated by contentious plans by London's mayor to extend a scheme taxing the use of the most polluting vehicles.

Retired museum worker Maureen Dunlop, 75, said she thought "getting rid of Boris" had been a mistake for the Tory Party. "I know he was an idiot," she said referring to controversies over COVID-19 rule breaking in his Downing Street Office, "but I don't think they'll win (next year) without him."

Johnson won a landslide election victory in 2019 with an 80 seat majority in parliament. The resounding win was partly due to so-called "red wall" voters, former Labour supporters who backed the Conservatives for the first time. "All the people who voted Conservative instead of Labour because of him will just go back to Labour won't they," Dunlop said. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2023

KFH reports record net profit of KD 461.5m up to end of Q3 2023

Al-Marzouq: KFH recorded its highest-ever quarterly profits in history

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that KFH has, by the grace of Allah, reported a record net profit for its shareholders of KD 461.5 million (\$1.5 billion) up to the end of the third quarter of 2023, an increase of 124.3 percent compared to the same period last year. KFH showed its highest-ever quarterly profit in history, and the biggest in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Earnings per share up to the end of Q3 2023 reached 30.81 fils; an increase of 61.1 percent compared to the same period last year.

Net financing income up to the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 713.9 million; an increase of 40.4 percent compared to the same period last year.

Net operating income up to the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 739.8 million; an increase of 59.7 percent on the same period last year.

Financing receivables as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 19.0 billion, an increase of KD 155 million or 0.8 percent compared to the end of last year. Total assets as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 37.1 billion, an increase of KD 99 million or 0.3 percent compared to the end of last year.

Also, shareholders' equity as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 5.2 billion. Depositors' accounts as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 21.1 Billion, an increase of KD 46 million or 0.2 percent compared to the end of last year. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 16.44 percent which is above the minimum limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

Efficient strategy

Al-Marzouq said that the positive growth in all important financial indicators and the record profits achieved by KFH emphasize the bank's successful and efficient strategy and the benefits and significance of

the acquisition deal. He pointed out that KFH maintained good ratios in terms of profitability, ROA, ROE, improving asset quality as well as the coverage ratio of provisions for non-performing debt, cost to income ratio and all key financial indicators. Al-Marzouq explained that KFH has solid credit ratings, high liquidity ratios and strong capital base that support its business growth and financial position locally and globally. It also enjoys wide geographical expansion in Kuwait, Bahrain, Türkiye, UK, Germany, Egypt, Malaysia and others.

Elements of strength

Al-Marzouq stressed that KFH continues its strategy to improve the role of core banking activity in achieving profitability and sustainable growth, keeping pace with developments in digitization, AI and innovation. He also highlighted the importance of investing in human resources, enriching knowledge, supporting entrepreneurship and youth, providing financing solutions and corporate banking, supporting SMEs, as well as enhancing synergy across the Group to boost KFH's leading position globally. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of continuing KFH's unprecedented role in social commitment and executing strategic community initiatives inside and outside Kuwait.

Sustainability efforts

Al-Marzouq explained the vital role of KFH in green finance and linking investments to SDG. He said that in appreciation of its outstanding endeavors, KFH has picked up various awards in sustainability such as Best Islamic Bank for ESG-global category 2023 from Euromoney magazine and Kuwait's Best Bank for Sustainable Finance award from Global Finance magazine. These awards are based on a number of criteria including KFH's evident efforts in applying ESG norms, growth in sustainable instruments and green finance of total financing portfolio.



Hamad Al-Marzouq



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood

Financial robustness and credit worthiness

Meanwhile, KFH Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al-Rushood said that there are many factors behind the record results in Q3 fiscal 2023 and the sustainable growth KFH maintained for several years. These include the optimal implementation of KFH's strategy, robust operational performance, applying best responsible banking practices, risk management, balanced priorities and strong solvency and creditworthiness.

"As the largest bank in Kuwait, KFH also ranked first among the listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of capital base and market capitalization to reach KD 10.5 billion. This means that KFH has greater ability to support companies and lead giant financing deals," said Al-Rushood.

Digital excellence

"KFH's strategy of digital transformation gained significant momentum as the digital initiatives and ap-

plications included many aspects with the aim of improving customer experience and meeting customers aspirations and increasing financial inclusion. In addition, KFH offers a comprehensive financial solution at the fingertips of the customer anytime and anywhere through alternative channels ie, KFH Go branches, KFHonline (mobile application and website), as well as KFH XTM devices," explained Al-Rushood.

He added that at the end of Q3, KFH customers carried out more than 152 million digital banking transactions through KFHonline on mobile and website, with a growth of about 40 percent compared to the same period last year.

Awards & recognitions

Al-Rushood added that KFH bagged prestigious world-class awards, the most prominent of which were: 2023 World's Best Islamic Financial Institution and Best Islamic Corporate Bank from Global Finance magazine, Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, and World Best Islamic Bank for ESG 2023 from Euromoney magazine in addition to three global awards in Human Resources from Brandon Hall Group among many other prestigious awards, according to the criteria and methodologies of each magazine. These awards are in recognition of KFH's pioneering role, prominent contributions in the Islamic banking industry and in offering distinguished financial solutions and services.

He stressed the importance of maintaining positive results and praised the trust of shareholders and customers, and the support of the Board of Directors. He also praised the role of the regulatory authorities and the efforts of staff and all partners and stakeholders and emphasized the necessity to move forward in strengthening KFH's leadership locally and globally.

Highest in Kuwait banking sector

Praise be to Allah

Financial Results up to the end of Q3 of 2023

461.5

Million KD

124.3%

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House

Record Profits

Financial Results up to the end of Q3 of 2023

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Business

NBK EQUITY MARKETS REPORT

Global equity markets negative in Q3

Mounting headwinds dampen equity market outlook

KUWAIT: Global equity markets were mostly negative in Q3 2023 as gains from earlier in the quarter were wiped out in September – the worst month of the year for equities. Various headwinds weighed on sentiment, most notably rising oil prices which reignited inflation concerns and strengthened the case for extended “higher for longer” Fed monetary tightening. GCC equity markets mostly followed suit despite higher oil prices, influenced by the negative global sentiment.

The concerns about inflation and growth prospects were compounded by elevated bond yields, reflecting expectations of higher inflation and prolonged monetary tightening. The 10-year treasury yield reached a 16-year high of 4.6 percent in late September, with higher bond yields offering a compelling risk-free investment alternative in an increasingly volatile equity market. Moreover, higher bond yields have shrunk a previously higher equity risk premium, implying a

weaker risk-reward proposition for equity investments. The higher yields, typically a reference for the pricing of loans, carry negative implications on the broader economy, increasing the likelihood of an economic downturn and suppressing equity valuations, especially for growth stocks. Moving into mid-October, equity markets remained mostly bearish, with adverse geopolitical developments in the Middle East compounding pre-existing market weakness.

European and US equities lead losses

Third quarter losses were led by US and European markets, erasing a significant portion of the gains achieved in previous quarters, with the Euro Stoxx 50 and S&P500 down 5.1 percent and 3.6 percent q/q, respectively. The downturn was concentrated in September, with declines led by the tech/growth-heavy Nasdaq composite, down a steep 5.8 percent m/m to the lowest level since May, while the S&P500 fell

4.9 percent m/m to a 3-month low. European markets also fell (Euro Stoxx 50 -2.8 percent) as the ECB raised its key interest rate to a record high, while economic weakness continued to weigh on Chinese equities (CSI 300 -2 percent), with declines likely curbed by the monetary stimulus measures rolled out by the Chinese authorities during the quarter.

GCC equities track global peers

The negative global sentiment spilled over into GCC equity markets, triggering a sell-off despite higher oil prices, pushing year-to-date performance into negative territory for most regional markets. As in global markets, GCC investors were also concerned about higher-for-longer interest rates and their negative implications on oil demand, economic growth, and equity market liquidity.

The October slump pushed combined GCC equity market returns deeper into negative territory: the

MSCI GCC was down -6.8 percent YTD as of October 13, from -3 percent as of the end of Q3.

Equity market prospects remain uncertain given the mounting global economic headwinds, which have severely weighed on confidence as of late. The deteriorating geopolitical landscape, oil market volatility, still elevated bond yields and inflation and growth uncertainty are notable downside risks for equity markets. A faltering Chinese economy with a yet-to-be-resolved property crisis is an additional factor weighing on the global demand and growth outlook. The upcoming earnings season will also be key in shaping the equity market's direction.

Confidence could be restored should the mentioned risks subside, especially if signs of economic resilience and under-control inflation become apparent, paving the way for a possible equity market recovery, though downside risks could outweigh for now.



PARIS: SpaceX, Twitter and electric car maker Tesla CEO Elon Musk during his visit at the Vivatex technology startups and innovation fair in Paris on June 16, 2023. At right is the X logo. — AFP

Musk's X starts charging users in 2 countries

WASHINGTON: The social media site X, formerly known as Twitter, said Tuesday it has started charging new users in New Zealand and the Philippines for basic features such as posting messages in a trial aimed at reducing spam.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who bought Twitter last year for \$44 billion, has long complained about fake accounts, bots and spam on the platform, introducing a number of controversial changes that have been sharply criticized by users around the world. Under the trial, named “Not A Bot”, new users in New Zealand and the Philippines will have to pay an annual fee for the ability to write on X, like and reply to posts, and bookmark content.

“This new program aims to defend against bots and spammers who attempt to manipulate the platform and disrupt the experience of other X users,” the company said on its website. “It is not a profit driver,” it said in a separate post on X. “So far, subscription options have proven to be the main solution that works at scale.”

It added that existing users will not be affected by the model, which will cost around \$0.75 per year for new users in the Philippines and \$0.85 for those in New Zealand. Those who decline to pay will be able to access X in read-only mode, limited to viewing content and following accounts, the company said.

“Anything that a platform does to protect their users from the harm they might experience is a step in the right direction,” said NetSafe, an independent online safety charity in New Zealand. “Whether trying to stop bots from contacting people indirectly, that might engage in harmful conversations, or taking steps to verify who its users are... those things are potentially useful in trying to reduce harm.”

But Jonathan de Santos, chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, said this would limit participation. “We get that the program is meant to curb the use of bots, but this also seems like putting the burden of fighting misinformation and disinformation on users,” he said.

Musk in September suggested charging all X users, saying it was the only way to combat the spam and bots that plague the platform. But the idea was widely panned by users. Industry analysts said it would make X even less appealing to advertisers. After taking over the company, the billionaire sacked thousands of staff and drew criticism for allowing banned conspiracy theorists and extremists back on the platform, sending advertisers fleeing. — AFP

US tightens curbs on AI chip exports to China

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday said it was tightening curbs on exports of state-of-the-art AI chips to China, sending the share price of Nvidia and other semiconductor companies plummeting on Wall Street. The measures are the latest chapter in the policy started under the Trump administration to limit Beijing's ability to gain ground and become a leading tech economy.

“Today's updated rules will increase the effectiveness of our controls and further shut off pathways to evade our restrictions,” said US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. The new rules tighten measures taken a year ago that banned the sale to China of microchips that are crucial to the manufacturing of powerful AI systems. But calls to further close the supply chain grew after the world discovered the powers of AI with the launch of ChatGPT.

Also causing alarm in Washington was news that China-owned Huawei had released a new smartphone that featured a powerful home-grown advanced chip. In a statement filed late Tuesday, Nvidia said the new rules “may impact the Company's ability to complete development of products in a timely manner, support existing customers of covered products, or supply customers of covered products outside the impacted regions.”

The rules may even “require the Company to transition certain operations out of one or more of the identified countries,” it added. When announcing the beefed-up curbs, Raimondo insisted they were intended to close loopholes and prevent China's development of AI for military use.

“It's true that AI has the potential for huge societal benefit. But it also can do tremendous and profound harm if it's in the wrong hands and in the wrong militaries,” she told US media. Atten-

tion has been focused on Nvidia's industry-leading H100 chip, which is crucial for the creation of generative AI, the technology behind ChatGPT and other powerful systems.

Tuesday's update widened the ban to other, lower-performing chips made by Nvidia and other manufacturers that were going to China unrestricted. The rules will not affect chips used in consumer goods such as laptops, smartphones and gaming consoles, though some will be subject to export licensing requirements, a statement said. Nvidia's share price sank sharply following the announcement and closed down 4.7 percent.

Rival chip makers Intel and AMD also finished trading lower. The chip giants have lobbied hard to prevent further curbs on their business in China. During an earnings call in August, an Nvidia executive warned against the tougher curbs, saying they would lead to “a permanent loss” in being competitive in China.

The Semiconductor Industry Association on Tuesday criticized any “overly broad, unilateral controls” that would punish the industry “without advancing national security.” Trade curbs “encourage overseas customers to look elsewhere” for the chips they need, it added. On a bridge-building visit to China in August, Raimondo said the US was seeking a more normalized relationship with the world's second-biggest economy, but the new curbs drew an angry reaction from Beijing. Following Tuesday's announcement, China said it was “strongly dissatisfied” and “firmly opposes” the curbs.

“The US continues to generalize the concept of national security, abuse export control measures, and implement unilateral bullying,” the commerce ministry said in a statement. “The semiconductor industry is highly globalized, and US improper regulation seriously undermines market rules and international economic and trade order, and seriously threatens the stability of the global industrial supply chain.” After the US announced the initial export ban last year, China responded with its own curbs, including the introduction of a license requirement to export the rare minerals vital in the production of semiconductors. — AFP



China's Premier Li Qiang (right) speaks with US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo in Beijing in this August 2023 file photo. — AFP

Crude prices jump after Zionist attack on Gaza hospital

LONDON: Oil prices rallied and global stocks mostly fell Wednesday on fears that the Zionist-Hamas conflict could spill over into a regional war after a strike at a Gaza hospital dealt a blow to President Joe Biden's diplomatic drive. Crude futures briefly vaulted three percent higher as fears grew over broadening unrest that could destabilize the crude-rich Middle East with some analysts predicting a possible return to \$100 oil, while gold hit a four-week peak as investors sought the safe haven investment.

“Last night's explosion at a Gaza hospital, which killed hundreds, has raised the stakes of the conflict and, according to some analysts, reduced the chances of a negotiated solution,” said ActivTrades analyst Ricardo Evangelista. He estimated there is now a higher probability that other countries in the region, such as Iran, could end up involved in the dispute.

“This scenario would almost certainly affect the global oil supply and could drive the price of the barrel to levels above the \$100 mark,” he added. World stock markets had enjoyed a healthy run Tuesday on optimism the crisis could be contained even as Zionist entity's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepared for a ground offensive in the blockaded territory.

Biden had planned to visit Zionist territory on Wednesday to meet with Netanyahu and then travel on to Jordan for a meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II, Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on finding possible ways to de-escalate the conflict.

But news that at least 200 people had been killed at the hospital saw the Arab leaders cancel the summit in Amman and fanned concerns of a regional conflagration, with Iran warning this week that a wider war was becoming “inevitable”. Gaza's health ministry blamed Zionist entity for the hospital explosion.

European markets fell across the board with London also dented by news of stubbornly high UK inflation. Asian markets mostly dropped, with Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Mumbai, Jakarta, Taipei and Manila all down. Sydney, Seoul, Wellington and Bangkok edged up. Tokyo was flat. — AFP

United reports Q3 profit jump

NEW YORK: United Airlines' third-quarter profits were up over 20 percent from last year on “strong and steady” domestic demand and “record” international profits in some regions, the company reported Tuesday. But alongside the positive earnings results, the US airline giant warned its profits could be hit by higher fuel costs, and the prospect of a prolonged conflict in the Middle East.

United's shares fell more than 4.4 percent in after hours trading, as investors digested the results. Net income was \$1.1 billion between July and September, up 20.7 percent from the same period last year, when net income was \$942 million, the company announced in a filing.

“Our strategy to diversify our revenue streams, capitalize on growth opportunities and constantly innovate to enhance our products for our customers is paying off,” United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said in a statement. “We remain on track to hit our financial targets,” he added.

Total operating revenues were \$14.5 billion for the same period last year, up 12.5 percent, while capacity was up 15.7 percent, according to the filing. Its adjusted earnings per share for the third quarter jumped to \$3.65, up sharply from \$2.81 for the same period in 2022.

“United experienced a strong and steady domestic demand environment in the quarter, with 9 percent revenue growth year-over-year,” the company said. “In the international space, profits were at record highs in both the Atlantic and Pacific regions,” it added. Alongside its earnings result, the company also issued updated projections for growth this year, with two possible scenarios depending on the length of the ongoing conflict between Zionists and Hamas in Gaza. It expects total revenues to rise 10.5 percent year-on-year if flights to Tel Aviv remain suspended until the end of October, but only 9.0 percent if they are cancelled through year-end. United also predicted that average aircraft fuel costs would rise substantially in the fourth quarter, from \$2.95 to \$3.28 per gallon. The rising fuel costs are expected to hit the companies' profits, with adjusted earnings per share would fall sharply to between \$1.50 and \$1.80, well below the average estimate of \$2.06 in a survey by Yahoo Finance. — AFP



NBK raises awareness on the risks of untrusted QR codes

KUWAIT: Pursuing its dedication to promote financial culture and raise awareness among the different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its support of the “Let's Be Aware” campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). In this regard, NBK seeks to raise awareness among customers about the risks associated with scanning untrusted QR codes at public places, stores, restaurants or health clubs, inside or outside Kuwait, as well as ads with fake lucrative profits, which may lead users to fake websites and phishing forms.

The risks of QR code scams lie in leading customers to a webpage to enter their personal information, which may be visible to fraudsters who have designed it specifically to lure victims, or download a file that may help fraudsters control customers' devices. Therefore, NBK intensifies warning against disclosing or entering any banking data on untrusted websites.

The bank also reaffirms that it will never ask customers for personal information. Also, websites that ask people to enter their banking information are usually untrusted, especially if the log in QR code is irrelevant to the place you are at like restaurants, health clubs, or ads posted in streets and shopping complexes. With the increasing scamming types and schemes used by fraudsters, NBK intensifies the content related to the “Let's Be Aware” campaign by sharing educational and awareness material on its social media platforms as well as all communication channels. This aims to increase awareness among customers and followers and familiarize them with the various fraud techniques to avoid falling victim to these attempts. NBK harnesses its huge capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to ensure the widest exposure for the messages of this awareness campaign.

It is worth mentioning that NBK makes consistent endeavors to raise awareness among customers, being a fundamental part of its strategy. To this end, it always uses all communication channels to educate them on the necessity to keep their passwords/PINs and financial and personal information confidential, and not to reveal it to anyone impersonating the bank, including the one-time password (OTP). NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives aiming to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses for its employees to enhance their experience in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

Business

Gulf Bank to sponsor two youth companies representing Kuwait in INJAZ competition

Participation following their win in local INJAZ competition 2023

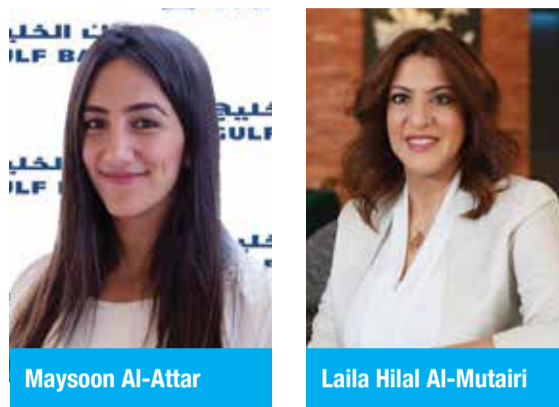
KUWAIT: As part of its continuous support for youth, Gulf Bank, in cooperation with INJAZ Kuwait, announced its sponsorship for the Company Program competition, which took place in May 2023.

The two winning projects from Company Program competition, organized by INJAZ Kuwait, will be representing Kuwait in the regional Company Program Competition. The competition is scheduled to be held in Qatar at the end of this month, with the participation of 14 countries from the Arab region.

The two winning projects were 'Raskla', which won the Best Student Company Award in the university students' category, and 'B-one', which won the Best Student Company Award in the high school students' category. On this occasion, Gulf Bank's Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications, Maysoun Al-Attar said: "We have confidence in the minds and competencies of our youth in representing the State of Kuwait in the regional competition, and we will continue to provide all kinds of support to ensure that they are prepared for it."

Al-Attar also stressed Gulf Bank's keenness to support the high school and university students throughout all stages of the local competition – noting that around 100 volunteers from Gulf Bank participated in the preparation period, providing contestants with plenty of guidance, assistance and mentorship. She added: "At Gulf Bank, we are proud of our long-lasting partnership with INJAZ, of which spans over 17 years, and has witnessed the adoption and support of many ideas and companies: some of which have now become contributors to the economic and business ecosystem in Kuwait today." Al-Attar affirmed Gulf Bank's commitment to support youth and develop their professional work skills, as it helps them keep pace with the requirements of the job market and its rapid changes both locally and globally. This is also part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy which centralizes youth, and Kuwait Vision 2035, which emphasizes the importance of investing in youth.

Al-Attar noted that the successful partnership between Gulf Bank and INJAZ Kuwait, has resulted in training around 26,000 male and female students throughout 2022 and 2023 – covering various academic levels, ranging from primary to university lev-



Maysoun Al-Attar

Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi

els, including fresh graduates.

For her part, the CEO of INJAZ Kuwait, Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi, commented stating that there is a lot of hope in the two companies that were qualified to compete in the regional competition – which is characterized by its competitiveness, distinguished ideas, and innovative projects.

Al-Mutairi stated that INJAZ continues to succeed due to the various companies who believe in the association, and continue to support INJAZ's activities and programs. She further indicated that the partnership with Gulf Bank is extraordinary, as



Gulf Bank is keen to support high school and university students throughout all stages of the local competition.

hone the skills of young people when it comes to job preparation, entrepreneurship and financial knowledge. We are always looking forward to providing everything that serves our youth and prepare them to face future challenges."

sibility studies, team building, raising capital, and finally creating and selling a product or service. In addition to the Company Program, there are other various training activities offered by INJAZ Kuwait, of which include: Innovation Camp, Personal Finance, Career Success, Head Start, Job Shadow Day, and the Company Program.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

- **Maysoun Al-Attar:** We have faith in these young talents to represent Kuwait and are proud to partner with INJAZ Kuwait
- **Laila Al-Mutairi:** We look forward to building a new generation of entrepreneurs and preparing them to face the challenges of the future

it has been a strategic partnership that spans over many years. And Gulf Bank has continued to be a key supporter of the association's activities, by providing volunteers and training programs for students.

She added: "Throughout its journey, INJAZ Kuwait has trained more than 120,000 male and female students in various training programs, which aim to

It is noteworthy the Company Program teaches students entrepreneurial skills, how to prepare for the job market, and provides them with sufficient financial education. The students get an opportunity to establish and manage a real company, and go through the full stages of establishing a new project. They begin by developing a business plan, fea-

Marcos suspends Philippine wealth fund formation

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has suspended the implementation of a law creating a multi-billion-dollar sovereign wealth fund, the government said Wednesday. The surprise announcement came three months after Marcos signed off on the Maharlika Investment Fund Act, which critics said would put public money at risk.

Marcos had pushed Congress for swift approval of the proposal for a 500-billion-peso (\$8.8-billion) fund, which was filed by his son and cousin late last year. The office of executive secretary Lucas Bersamin said Marcos issued the suspension because he wanted to "study carefully" the rules and regulations dealing with implementation of the law. Marcos wanted "to ensure that the purpose of the fund will be realized for the country's development with safeguards in place for transparency and accountability", the statement said. A copy of a memo signed by Bersamin, which was dated October 12, with the president's order for the treasurer and state banks to suspend the implementation of the law was released to reporters. The Maharlika Investment Fund will draw most of its funds from the national government, including the central bank, gaming revenue and two state-owned banks.

The original proposal was for a \$4.9 billion fund that would be partly bankrolled by state-run pensions for government and private-sector workers, sparking public fears that retirement savings could be put at risk. The final version of the bill approved by Congress in May said pension funds would not have to contribute.

The fund will be allowed to make a wide range of investments, including in corporate bonds, equities, joint ventures and infrastructure projects. It had been flagged as a possible item on the agenda for Marcos's meetings with leaders and businessmen from Saudi Arabia during a visit to Riyadh later this week. — AFP

Car suppliers in Germany struggle with electric shift

HERXHEIM, Germany: After years earning bumper profits by producing parts for fossil fuel-powered cars, German suppliers to the crucial auto industry are struggling as the transition to electric mobility gathers pace.

While Germany is well known as the home of titans like Volkswagen, Mercedes and BMW, there are also hundreds of other companies in the country that form part of the sprawling auto sector.

They range from huge firms like ZF and Continental, to far smaller companies, making everything from spark plugs to heaters and exhaust pipes. But as the industry speeds towards an electric future – the EU is planning to ban the sale of new combustion engine cars by 2035 – specialized suppliers in Europe's top economy are struggling to keep up, experts warn. German suppliers have lost nearly three percentage points of global market share since 2019, according to a study by consultancy



KUWAIT: The Athlete's Foot (TAF) franchised by Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW) in Kuwait, celebrated on Wednesday its relocation to Al-Kout Mall during a grand opening event.

The Athlete's Foot relocates to a new spot in Al-Kout Mall

KUWAIT: The Athlete's Foot (TAF), the world's leading athletic footwear brand, franchised by Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW) in Kuwait, celebrated on Wednesday its relocation to a larger and more central spot within Al-Kout Mall, during a grand opening event.

The event featured sports and fun-filled activities, competitions, music, prizes, and more. It was attended by the AAW management team, social media influencers, and mall visitors. The Athlete's Foot Al-Kout's new store, on the Mezzanine 1, offers a wide range

of lifestyle, sportswear, footwear, and accessories for men, women, and children. The store provides a wide selection of modern sports and lifestyle fashion apparel from global brands such as Nike, Adidas, New Balance, Puma, On Running, The Giving Movement, ASICS, and many others.

Al-Kout Mall is the largest mall in southern Kuwait. The mall offers customers a unique blend of traditional and modern shopping and entertainment experiences. It is connected to Al-Kout Souq by an air-conditioned glass pedestrian bridge, and to Hyatt Regency Hotel by a private entrance.

The Athlete's Foot stores in Kuwait are located in Al-Fanar Mall, Mishref Co-Op, Kuwait International Airport in both the departure and arrival areas, Marina Mall, The Avenues, The Gate Mall, The Promenade, The Walk Mall, Al-Khiran Mall, Al-Kout Mall, and the online store at www.theathletesfoot.com.kw.



Strategy&, part of the PwC network. "The success of the past 20 years is at risk of being eroded in a short span of time," it warned.

"In particular, Asian suppliers have made substantial gains by investing heavily, and aligning themselves clearly towards future growth in emerging technologies." Still, analysts say some of the larger players are navigating the transition better while smaller firms are most at risk.

One company that has traditionally relied on fossil fuel-powered vehicles is Eberspaecher, whose products include exhaust systems and heaters. But the firm, which supplies major car brands, has for some time been seeking to pivot to manufacturing more items for electric cars.

At a factory in Herxheim, southwest Germany, workers at a series of high-tech production lines manufacture heaters for hybrid and electric vehicles. As well as heating the vehicle, they also help to regulate the temperature of the battery. The family-owned company, founded in 1865, has been producing the devices for some years and over 10 million vehicles have been fitted with them — evidence, it says, of its successful transition to the new auto landscape.

"We see a vast growth potential with e-mobility

in the global markets, especially North America, Europe and China," Karsten Bolz, from the company's electrical heaters business unit, told AFP.

He sounded relaxed about growing competition, describing it as a "normal part of the automotive business". "We have the right tools, we have the knowledge, we have the right technology," he added.

Nevertheless, Eberspaecher, with over 10,000 employees worldwide, still depended in 2022 for 52 percent its revenues on the combustion engine.

And last year, while net revenues rose to around 2.7 billion euros (\$2.9 billion), the company made a net loss of 94 million euros, compared to net profit of 21 million the previous year.

Elsewhere, the situation appears more alarming. Local media abounds with reports of suppliers making job cuts, or planning to do so, and increasingly looking at shifting production overseas, where costs are cheaper. Like other German manufacturers, car suppliers are being squeezed by sharply higher energy prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and elevated borrowing costs following a recent streak of interest rate hikes.

Of an estimated 400 suppliers in Germany, about 10 percent could face problems, with some potentially going out of business, Ferdinand Dudenhofer,

from the Center Automotive Research, told AFP. "For small- and medium-size businesses with a heavy focus on combustion engines, it's very tough," he said.

The Strategy& study shows several Asian companies rising up the global ranking of suppliers in recent years. In terms of turnover, Chinese EV battery giant CATL was in second spot last year, with Japan's Denso in third, and South Korea's Hyundai Mobis in third.

The battle for dominance with Asian rivals reflects the bigger picture in the auto industry — Volkswagen, for instance, is seeing its market share eroded in China by a crop of homegrown electric car makers. It's not all doom and gloom, however. The top supplier globally in terms of turnover remains Germany's Bosch, whose huge array of products ranges from brakes to batteries, according to the recent study. And with the transition moving at different paces around the world, industry players see an appetite for traditional combustion engine products for years to come. At Eberspaecher, which has operations in Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa, revenues from combustion engines "are an important part of the business, and will stay an important part," said Bolz. "You still have demand in different parts of the world for clean exhaust technologies." — AFP

Business

Xi announces over \$100 billion in new Belt and Road funding

China rejects 'economic coercion, decoupling'

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping said his country rejected "economic coercion" and decoupling Wednesday, as he addressed the opening ceremony of a forum of international delegates to the Belt and Road forum in Beijing. "We oppose unilateral sanctions, economic coercion, decoupling and delinking," Xi told delegates. Beijing will inject over \$100 billion of new funding into its Belt and Road initiative, Xi Jinping said. The Belt and Road is a central pillar of Xi's bid to expand China's clout overseas, with Beijing saying it has now inked over two trillion dollars in contracts around the world.

Beijing would not engage in "ideological confrontation, geopolitical games or bloc confrontation", he added. "Viewing the development of others as a threat and economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's own life any better or one's own development any faster." Instead, Xi said, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would seek to "inject new impetus into the global economy". "The BRI aims to enhance policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity," he said. "We deeply believe that only when there is win-win cooperation can things get done, and get done well," he added.

"China is willing to deepen cooperation with Belt and Road partners... and work unremittingly to realize the modernization of every country in the world."

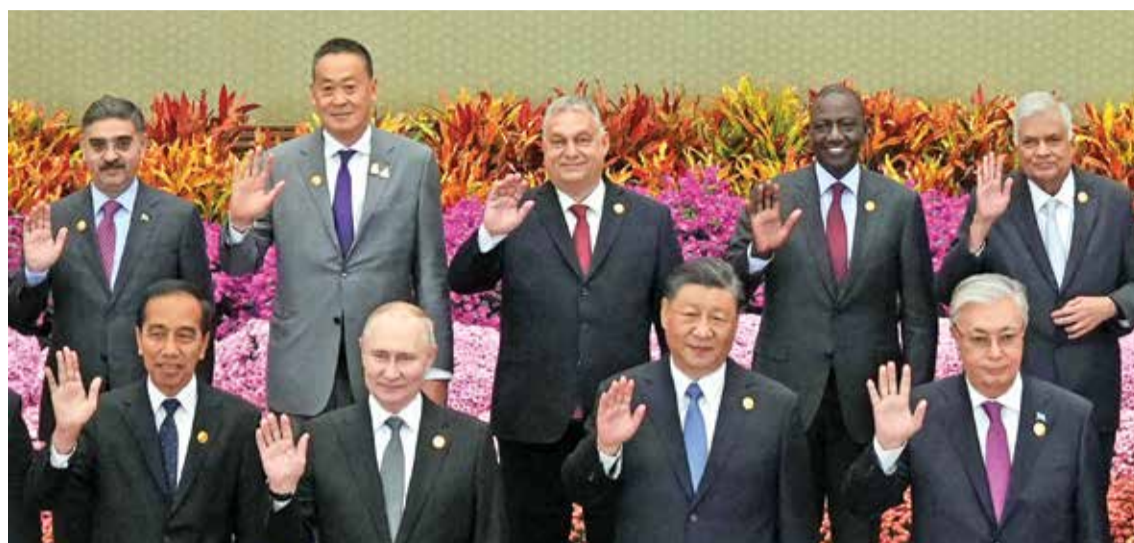
Beijing this week hosts representatives of 130 countries for a forum on the Belt and Road Initiative, Xi's trade and infrastructure project.

Proponents hail it for bringing resources and economic growth to the Global South. But the initiative has also been slammed for saddling poor countries with enormous debt. Xi announced on Wednesday that key Belt and Road lenders the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank will now offer an additional \$100 billion in loans.

Both will set up financing opportunities of 350 billion yuan (\$47.9 billion) for BRI projects, he said. An additional 80 billion yuan will be injected into the project's official lending institution, the Silk Road fund, Xi said. This week's forum, attended by representatives of 130 countries, is the third major summit of its kind to be hosted by Beijing since the Belt and Road's launch in 2013.

Critics have long pointed to opaque pricing for BRI projects built by Chinese companies, with countries including Malaysia and Myanmar renegotiating deals to bring down costs. Beijing has been forced to hand out billions of dollars in bailout loans to BRI countries in recent years to allow the countries to extend their loans and remain solvent, according to a joint report this year by the World Bank and other institutions. And China said this month that BRI participants owe more than \$300 billion to the Export-Import Bank of China.

The initiative has also drawn scrutiny for its massive carbon footprint and the environmental degradation caused by massive infrastructure projects. The development of megaports, pipelines, railways and highways could render the



BEIJING: (Front row, left to right) Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, China's President Xi Jinping, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev with other leaders wave during a group photo in Beijing on October 18, 2023. - AFP

Paris climate goals unreachable, researchers from China, the United States and the United Kingdom warned in 2019. Russian President Vladimir Putin praised China's "success" in its Belt and Road infrastructure project at a forum of international delegates in Beijing on Wednesday. "Given the global dimensions of the initiative the Chinese leader

launched a decade ago, frankly, one can hardly expect to make it work," Putin said Wednesday in his address to delegates. "Our Chinese friends are making it work. We are glad to see this success story as it means a lot to many of us." Putin also said Russia and China shared the desire for "equal, mutually beneficial cooperation" globally. — AFP

China's growth slowed in Q3 but beat forecasts

BEIJING: China's economy grew more than expected in the third quarter, data showed Wednesday, but the reading was still below target and officials continue to face calls for more stimulus while struggling to contain an unprecedented property crisis. The 4.9 percent expansion in July-September was helped by forecast-beating retail sales figures and follows a series of broadly positive readings that point to a period of stability following months of weakness despite the lifting of strict zero-COVID measures.

But authorities are still on edge over turmoil in the real-estate sector, which has long accounted for a quarter of the country's gross domestic product, supports thousands of companies and is a major source of employment. The industry enjoyed dazzling growth for decades, but the recent woes of key developers including Evergrande and Country Garden are now fuelling buyer mistrust while homes lie unfinished and prices plummet. Country Garden, one of China's biggest property firms and long believed to be financially sound, failed last month to repay interest on a loan totaling \$15.4 million.

The group has been granted a 30-day grace period which ends on Wednesday, and risks default if it does not honor the repayment. The country faced a "grave and complex international environment and challenging tasks in promoting reform, development and stability at home" in the first three quarters of 2023, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Wednesday. Authorities have stepped up incentives for property purchases in recent months to reinvigorate the sector, but buyers remain cautious. Households are watching their spending amid sluggish growth, which has hurt consumption this year, though a week-long national holiday in October helped boost spending on tourism and other services.

Retail sales, the main indicator of household consumption, rose a better-than-expected 5.5 percent on-year in September. But the government continues to face calls for measures to rekindle the economy. While



QINGZHOU, China: An employee works on a forklift at a factory in Qingzhou, in China's eastern Shandong province on October 18, 2023. - AFP

leaders have unveiled a series of targeted stimulus for various sectors — particularly property — pressure is building on them to announce wider-ranging support. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday called for China to implement a "comprehensive strategy to address problems in the real estate sector". "China's weaker near-term growth outlook will weigh on regional growth," it said, adding that the country's debt-burdened property sector will be a drag on demand across the region. Bloomberg News reported last week that Beijing was looking at issuing almost \$140 billion in sovereign debt to boost the beleaguered economy, with cash would be spent on various projects.

However, observers say a blockbuster spending splurge similar to that unveiled in 2008 during the financial crisis was unlikely. In a sign of the need for more support, data Wednesday also showed industrial production growth in September stayed flat at 4.5 percent, while urban unemployment dipped to 5.0 percent in September from 5.2 percent in August.

Unemployment data no longer includes a breakdown for 16- to 24-year-olds, after it hit a record high in June of 21.3 percent. Analysts polled by AFP predicted an average 4.3 percent on-year growth

for third-quarter GDP, while experts surveyed by Bloomberg expected 4.5 percent.

China is aiming for "around five percent" growth this year — from a low base last year when the domestic economy was paralyzed by strict COVID restrictions. Zhang Zhiwei, of Pinpoint Asset Management, said in a note he believed "the improvement in third-quarter economic data makes it less likely for the government to launch stimulus in the fourth quarter, as the growth target of five percent is set to be achieved". Last year, the economy grew three percent, far from the official target of 5.5 percent, and one of the slowest rates in four decades. But Stephen Innes, at SPI Asset Management, warned that China continued to face significant economic risks.

"China's high levels of corporate and local government debt, often seen as unsustainable, pose a risk to the economy. Managing this debt without causing a financial crisis is a significant challenge," he wrote in a note. Meanwhile, trade tensions with Washington as well as an ageing population were "long-term structural impairments that could affect economic growth", Innes added, warning that "China's economy is not out of the woods by any means". — AFP

Qatar inks 27-year gas deal with Britain's Shell

DOHA: Qatar has agreed to supply British firm Shell with natural gas for 27 years, the Gulf emirate's state-owned energy company announced on Wednesday.

Since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year, European countries have scrambled to replace lost deliveries of natural gas from Russia. Qatar will supply 3.5 million tons of gas a year under the deal, QatarEnergy said, following two agreements with Shell for a share of the Gulf state's huge North Field gas expansion project.

"We are delighted to sign these two long-term LNG sale and purchase agreements with Shell that will further enhance our decades-long relationship and strategic partnership in Qatar and around the world," Qatari Energy Minister Saad Al-Kaabi said. "These agreements reaffirm Qatar's commitment to help meeting Europe's energy demands and bolstering its energy security with a source known for its superior economic and environmental qualities," he added.

In October last year, Shell inked a deal with QatarEnergy for a 9.4 percent stake in Qatar's North Field South project, the second phase in the expansion of the world's largest gas field, which extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory. In July the same year it also agreed to a 6.25 percent share in the first phase of the expansion, North Field East. Deliveries of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Rotterdam are expected to begin in 2026. The deal with Shell is equal in length to an agreement with France's TotalEnergies announced earlier this month for a 27-year supply of natural gas. Under its North Field expansion, Qatar is set to raise its output of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by 60 percent or more to 126 million tons a year by 2027. — AFP

UK inflation stays elevated in September

LONDON: British inflation remained elevated in September, official data showed Wednesday, prolonging a cost-of-living crisis and stoking fear that UK interest rates could stay higher for longer. The Consumer Prices Index held at 6.7 percent last month, after unexpectedly slowing to the same level in August, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That dashed market predictions for a further slowdown to 6.6 percent, as easing food and drink prices were offset by higher energy costs. The gloomy news came one day after upbeat data showed that UK wage growth was outstripping inflation for the first time in almost two years.

Inflation has sunk from a 41-year peak of 11.1 percent in October 2022, helped by a series of rate hikes from the Bank of England (BoE). Yet Britain still faces a cost-of-living crisis, with inflation remaining at the highest level in the G7 grouping of rich nations, although Japan has yet to report September figures.

ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner said the costs of food, non-alcoholic drinks, household appliances and air fares eased in September, but those falls were "offset" by rising prices for motor fuels and hotel stays.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt insisted that UK inflation remained on a downward path in the longer term. "As we have seen across other G7 countries, inflation rarely falls in a straight line, but if we stick to our plan then we still expect it to keep falling this year," he said. However, inflation is still running at more than three times the BoE's target level of two percent despite the central bank's aggressive rate-hiking campaign which started in late 2021. The BoE left its key rate unchanged at 5.25 percent last month, snapping 14 straight hikes after inflation unexpectedly slowed in August from 6.8 percent in July. Wednesday's data fuelled worries that the central bank will have to remain on guard, particularly as oil prices spike once more on the Israel-Hamas conflict in the crude-rich Middle East. — AFP



Impact of 'de-risking' strategies would be felt beyond China

WASHINGTON: The negative impact of 'de-risking' strategies by major economies would be felt beyond China, while comprehensive reforms in China could generate significant positive spillovers, according to an International Monetary Fund report. China's importance in the global economy has increased dramatically in recent decades, and it has been a particularly crucial driver of trade integration in Asia.

China's medium-term growth prospects, like that of other countries, will be determined in part by major forces such as convergence to advanced economies' income levels and demographics. Yet key

structural policy drivers, including domestic reform momentum, and external factors, including geoeconomic fragmentation, also significantly affect this path, the report said.

What would be the potential implications for Asia and beyond from these different growth paths? In our latest Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and the Pacific, we assess the potential effects of a downside scenario from 'de-risking' between China and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development economies.

As the Chart of the Week shows, so-called de-risking strategies by China and the United States and other OECD countries that aim to reshore production domestically or friend-shore away from one another can result in a significant drag on growth around the world even assuming no new trade restrictions with third countries — especially in Asia. While reshoring would be particularly painful to everyone, it is notable that friend-shoring does not generate net benefits for third countries in the long

term. That's because the benefits from trade diversion are offset by the effects of the contractions in both China and the OECD.

For the region, the results suggest that third countries should not expect to passively benefit from friend-shoring policies, but rather actively pursue reforms that can help them further integrate into global supply chains. For systemic economies around the world, there is an urgent need for constructive dialogue to resolve underlying sources of tensions and resist costly fragmentation outcomes.

In China, the risks that fragmentation poses on medium-term growth underscore the need for comprehensive structural reforms that would help income levels converge more rapidly with those in advanced economies — such as closing productivity gaps between state-owned and private firms and further opening up sectors to competition. Our research shows that achieving this would also have significant positive spillovers for other economies in Asia, the report added.



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso dances at the Aglomerado da Serra favela in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. - AFP photos



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso is pictured at his house.



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso poses for a picture outside his house.

Brazil favela ballet dancer gets his American dream



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso stretches during his last rehearsal in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso is pictured at his house.

Growing up, Dyhan Cardoso had every reason to quit ballet: the only black boy in a class of white girls, the Brazilian favela kid faced mockery for dancing instead of playing football. But there was no stopping his raw passion for dance, which has now landed the 19-year-old phenom a contract with one of the premiere US companies, Atlanta Ballet. "I was always the only boy in class, the only black, the only poor kid," says the wiry dancer, taking a break from practicing his spectacular turns and leaps on the terrace of the brick shack where he lives with his parents and sister in Aglomerado da Serra, one of the largest slums in the southeastern city of Belo Horizonte. "It was uncomfortable, but I didn't care," he tells AFP.

Cardoso started dancing at six years old, after his sister, Dayse, signed up for ballet classes run by a social project in the community. He asked if he could join, too. "The teacher didn't really want to let him, because he was the only boy. But we decided to try it. I could tell he really wanted to," says Cardoso's mother, Heloisa Helena, 57. "He hasn't stopped to this day." Cardoso says he immediately fell in love with dance. "It was a place to play, a way to discharge energy and spend less time on the streets," he says. Ignoring neighborhood kids who made fun of him for not playing football like other boys, he eventually won an invitation to audition at a dance academy on the "rich side" of the city from a customer at a restaurant where his mother worked as a cook, he says.

'Surrounded by white girls'

He won a scholarship to study at the academy and started riding his bike to dance class every day before school. "I was surrounded by little white girls," he remembers. But his passion shone through. "If you have a dream, you have to chase it until you make it happen." Working in the bar his parents own in the favela, Cardoso squeezed in dance practice between cooking, waiting tables, making delivery runs and staffing the cash register. Then, last month, he auditioned for Atlanta Ballet — not expecting to land a job, but "just to keep evolving," he says.

To his amazement, the company — the oldest continually performing ballet in the United States — invited him to join its ranks. "Am I dreaming?" he remembers thinking when Atlanta Ballet's director lavished praise on him after his audition, translated from English to Brazilian Portuguese by an interpreter. Now, the dark-eyed teenager with the lithe, muscular frame is on his way to the United States. He starts his new job later this month. "He has an exceptional physique, and executes difficult moves with extraordinary quality and beauty," says his longtime instructor, Cuban national Dadyer Aguilera.

Cardoso says he hopes to keep improving as a dancer — and has a new goal in Atlanta. "I want to be an example to kids from the favela that they should believe in their dreams and go after them," he says. — AFP



Brazilian dancer Dyhan Cardoso dances at the Aglomerado da Serra favela in Belo Horizonte.

Film director Holland out to 'change the world' with 'Green Border'

Polish director Agnieszka Holland said Tuesday she wanted to "change the world" with her latest film, "Green Border", about migrants stranded on the Polish-Belarusian border. The harrowing black-and-white film won a Special Jury Prize at the Venice film festival last month but also brought scorn and even death threats to its 74-year-old director. Poland's populist government built a razor-wire fence along its border with Belarus in 2022 to deter illegal migrant crossings that it says were orchestrated by Minsk.

The measure has reaped criticism among rights organizations as Poland refused to let the refugees in. "Green Border" tells the story of migrants, border guards and volunteers, using real-life experiences. "The film was necessary as people felt this should be discussed, that we should ask ourselves who we are and what humanity means," Holland told reporters in Prague. "I wanted to change the world" with the film, Holland said in fluent Czech she had picked up during studies at Prague's Film Academy in the late 1960s.



Polish director Agnieszka Holland

Holland, who was nominated for Oscar twice, said she had spent a week in the company of two bodyguards, following death threats as "Green Border" was due to hit Polish cinemas in September. She also faced hate speech from top politicians from the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, which she calls "Lawlessness and Injustice". "The attacks on me were insane, something I have never experienced although I lived in communist Poland," Holland added. Top officials likened her to Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels and Joseph Stalin and told her she "wasn't Polish and should get out of Poland". But Holland said Poles in general received the film well as she toured the country to present it. "People cried, they stood up and applauded even in small cinemas," she said, adding the film worked as "collective psychotherapy" in the affected eastern regions. — AFP



This handout image shows actor Alec Baldwin being processed after the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins at the Bonanza Creek Ranch in Santa Fe, New Mexico, October 21, 2022. — AFP

Grand jury to decide on new manslaughter charges against Alec Baldwin

A grand jury will decide whether Alec Baldwin should face new charges over the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on a film set, US prosecutors said Tuesday. Baldwin was holding a Colt .45 during rehearsals for low-budget Western "Rust" in New Mexico when it discharged, killing Halyna Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza in October 2021. Manslaughter charges against Baldwin — an actor and producer on the film — were dropped in April, due to what prosecutors called "new facts" which demanded "further investigation and forensic analysis," but an investigation into the incident remained active.

"After extensive investigation over the past several months, additional facts have come to light that we believe show Mr. Baldwin has criminal culpability in the death of Halyna Hutchins and the shooting of Joel Souza," prosecutors Kari Morrissey and Jason Lewis said Tuesday. "We believe the appropriate course of action is to permit a panel of New Mexico citizens to determine from here whether Mr. Baldwin should be held over for criminal trial." In the United States, a grand jury is a group of citizens convened to assess evidence and decide whether there is enough evidence of criminality — or probable cause — to justify putting an individual on trial. The case will be presented to the grand jury within the next two months.

Baldwin has repeatedly denied any responsibility for the shooting, and said that he did not pull the gun's trigger. But forensic gun experts hired by the prosecutors concluded that Baldwin must have applied some pressure to the trigger in order for the gun to fire. A criminal case is ongoing against the movie's armorer, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed.

Gutierrez-Reed has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter and evidence tampering charges. Earlier this month, producers of the movie were ordered to hand over documents including Baldwin's financial contracts. Prosecutors at the time told a judge that information including how "Mr Baldwin himself benefits financially from keeping production costs low" could be relevant to the investigation. — AFP



Pop superstars Britney Spears (right) and boyfriend Justin Timberlake (left) talk as they sit courtside at the NBA All-Star Game 10 February 2002 in Philadelphia. - AFP

Britney Spears says she had abortion while dating Justin Timberlake

Britney Spears says in her eagerly anticipated new memoir that she had an abortion during her relationship with Justin Timberlake over two decades ago, according to an excerpt released Tuesday. It is one of several revelations in "The Woman in Me," out October 24, in which the 41-year-old pop star also addresses the controversial conservatorship that barred her from handling her own life and finances for 14 years. "If it had been left up to me alone, I never would have done it," she writes of the abortion, in an excerpt published by People magazine on Tuesday. "And yet Justin was so sure that he didn't want to be a father."

In the book, Spears describes meeting Timberlake when they were both children performing in Disney's Mickey Mouse Club. They later began dating in their late teens, becoming one of the entertainment industry's highest profile couples, before splitting in 2002. According to the memoir, Timberlake "definitely wasn't happy about the pregnancy."

"He said we weren't ready to have a baby in our lives, that we were way too young," she writes. She adds: "To this day, it's one of the most agonizing things I have ever experienced in my life." Representatives for Timberlake, now 42 and married to actor Jessica Biel, did not immediately respond to request for comment. Following the split with Timberlake, Spears had two sons — Sean and Jayden — with her second husband Kevin Federline.

In 2008, after suffering a highly public breakdown, Spears was placed under a unique legal guardianship largely governed by her father, Jamie. During a court appearance in 2021, she told a judge that the conservatorship was preventing her from removing a contraceptive IUD — despite her wanting to get pregnant. "The conservatorship stripped me of my womanhood, made me into a child," says Spears, in another excerpt.

She also writes: "I think back now on my father and his associates having control over my body and my money for that long and it makes me feel sick." The guardianship was scrapped in November 2021. Spears became pregnant in 2022, but later announced she had suffered a miscarriage. In August, her third husband, Sam Asghari, said the pair were filing for divorce. — AFP

Lifestyle



Families and government officials sit inside the Kano Central Mosque to conclude the Islamic rites of solemnization of the wedding of 1,800 couples at Kano Central Mosque, Kano State, Nigeria.



Household items given to couples are seen at the venue of a wedding reception at the Kano state governor's office after taking part in a mass wedding at the central mosque in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria.



Household items given to couples are seen beside brides at the venue of a wedding reception at the Kano state governor's office after taking part in a mass wedding at the central mosque in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria.



A Nigerian balloon vendor displays his wares at the celebration of the wedding of 1,800 couples at Kano Central Mosque, Kano State, Nigeria.



A large number of couples arrive at the venue of a wedding reception at the Kano state governor's office after taking part in a mass wedding at the central mosque in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria.



Nigerian state holds MASS WEDDING for 1,800 couples

Textile trader Yusuf Abdullahi admitted he could not afford to marry despite being 30 years old until Nigeria's northern Kano state financed and staged a mass wedding for 1,800 couples. Customary gifts for newlyweds were also provided by the state as part of efforts to enable the poorest to get married. Abdullahi was one of the grooms dressed in a traditional white robe and red cap who took advantage of the weekend ceremonies.

"Life is really tough, this is why I could not get married, though I wanted to, until this time," Abdullahi told AFP inside Kano's central mosque where he and scores of other grooms waited for the religious service on Friday. The brides wore a bright red veil over a long robe. The mass wedding services also took place in mosques across the state. "I pray my marriage becomes the key to my prosperity," Abdullahi said. Rising prices for fuel, housing, transport and food have driven some Nigerians, most of whom live on less than \$2 (1.90 euros) per day, further into poverty. And getting married can be expensive.

Expensive traditions

The state government "took full responsibility of the entire wedding processes and requirements", paying the 50,000 naira (\$65) bride price and for



A couple arrives at the venue of a wedding reception at the Kano state governor's office after taking part in a mass wedding at the central mosque in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria.

customary furniture and food gifts, said Kano governor Abba Kabir Yusuf said. All 1,800 couples were received at the governor's residence on Saturday and given their gifts. A bride price is a tradition in some parts of Africa where the groom pays an amount of money to the bride's family, an obstacle to marriage for some couples.

In the conservative Muslim state

where cultural norms are strong, the bride's family provides furniture and kitchenware, while the groom provides accommodation, boxes of clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, footwear and handbags. "The dire economic situation in the country has made it difficult for brides and grooms to provide the furniture and trousseau (clothes) required for marriage," Abba Sufi, director-general of Kano's Sharia police, Hisbah, told AFP.

The government also presented 20,000 naira grants to each bride "as seed money to start small businesses" and to help lessen financial burdens on their husbands. The mass wedding program has helped boost Kano's economic development by providing work to furniture makers, hospitality workers and textile traders, Yusuf said.

Rampant divorce

Mass weddings are often popular among women because they ban divorce without the wife's consent. Divorced women with children in the conservative society can face financial hardship and difficulty remarrying. Sharia police made couples sign a document pledging not to refer "irreconcilable disputes" to them for reconciliation and not to divorce without their consent, Sufi said.

Kano has the highest divorce rate of any Nigerian state, thought to be ex-

tenuated by the economic decline of the once thriving manufacturing region. "Every groom has to have an occupation, a means of income, for him to participate in the mass wedding," Sufi said. Financial responsibility falls mainly on the husband's shoulders but poverty coupled with rising inflation have led authorities to encourage women to work.

Vocational training

Brides took part in a vocational training session before the wedding where they were taught how to make household products as a source of income. "The wisdom behind teaching the brides some vocational skills is to make them self-reliant because life has become so expensive," Na'isa Ahmad, one of the trainers told AFP during the session.

"But if a woman has a trade she will be of help to herself, her husband and the society as a whole," she said. The brides were taught how to make body-care products, room freshener and insecticide, according to Maimuna Yakubu Yakasai, a 47-year old bride who took part in the training. "We have learnt a lot. If you have a trade that fetches you some little money you can pay for little cash expenses (which) is a relief to your husband," she said. — AFP



Couples dressed in white and robes walk on the street of Kano to attend a wedding reception at the Kano state governor's office after taking part in a mass wedding at the central mosque in Kano city, Kano State, Nigeria. - AFP photos

Rodin statue 'unlocated' in Scottish collections

A statue by French sculptor Auguste Rodin, part of his famous "Les Bourgeois de Calais" group, is currently "unlocated" in Glasgow's art collections, museum officials said on Monday. The plaster sculpture, purchased by Glasgow Museum from the artist in 1901, was exhibited in Kelvingrove Park between June 25 and September 30, 1949, according to Glasgow Life, the organization in charge of many of the Scottish city's cultural venues.

But since then, it seems to have been lost. According to the Comité Rodin, which maintains a catalogue of the artist's works around the world, the two-meter sculpture represents "Jean d'Aire", one of the figures in the Calais group, its director Jerome Le Blay told AFP. The disappearance is "regrettable, but must be put into the context of the times", as plaster works did not arouse much interest in the 1940s, he said.

The value of the work today would be around £3 million (3.5 million euros), he estimated. The bronze statues of the six "Bourgeois de Calais", celebrating the sacrifice of these local dignitaries during a siege of the northern French town by English armies during the Hundred Years'

War, were commissioned by the municipality and unveiled in 1895. Numerous bronze and plaster versions of the statue exist around the world. The missing statue had "suffered damage" at the time of the 1949 open-air exhibition, according to Glasgow Life.

Comité Rodin believes it could therefore have suffered the same fate as another statue by the artist representing John the Baptist, which was exhibited at the same time at Kelvingrove. That broke, and its remains are stored at the Glasgow Museum Resource Centre. Le Blay hopes that the remains of the "unlocated" piece may similarly be found in the archives at a later date.

Around 1,750 other objects have disappeared from Scottish museums, in-

cluding gold coins linked to Queen Mary I of Scotland, who reigned in the 16th century, according to The Times newspaper. The British Museum also recently acknowledged the theft of thousands of items from its reserves, prompting the resignation of its director.

Museum Wales, the institution managing seven national museums in Wales, has also discovered that it is missing 2,000 objects, according to the BBC. The organization claims many of the items may simply have been misplaced or misclassified and that they could be found as the inventory check progresses. — AFP



Iran singer who criticized headscarf law freed on bail

Iranian pop singer Mehdi Yarrahi was freed on bail on Tuesday following his detention for releasing a song against compulsory headscarves, a newspaper in the Islamic republic reported. The 41-year-old had been arrested in August on the orders of prosecutors in Tehran for distributing an "illegal song" that challenged "the morals and customs of Islamic society". "Mr Mehdi Yarrahi was freed on bail a few minutes ago from Evin prison" in Tehran, the Shargh newspaper reported on its website. The singer released the track Roosarito, which means "your headscarf" in Persian, around the anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Iranian Kurd who died on September 16, 2022 after being arrested by the morality police for allegedly breaking Iran's strict dress code for women.

Hundreds of people, including dozens of security personnel, were killed in protests that broke out across Iran after Amini's death. Thousands of protesters were also arrested, accused by the authorities of taking part in "riots" fomented by the West. Yarrahi released the song and its three-minute video in support of "optional veiling", dedicating it to the "courageous Iranian women" involved in the protest movement.

Previously he had received the prize for best pop singer at the Fajr festival, the most important government-backed musical event in the country. His track "Soroode Zan" — "Women's Anthem" in Persian — which was released in October 2022, became a regular feature of the protests, especially at universities. Yarrahi has repeatedly criticized the authorities during his concerts, especially for discriminating against people in his home province of Khuzestan which has multiple ethnic minorities. — AFP



Iranian pop singer Mehdi Yarrahi

Sports

Netherlands humiliate South Africa at Cricket World Cup

South Africa's skipper Temba Bavuma admits it was a painful defeat

DHARAMSALA: Netherlands defeated mighty South Africa by 38 runs at the Cricket World Cup on Tuesday as the European outsiders humiliated the Proteas for the second time in a year. Chasing 246 to win from a rain-reduced 43 overs after Dutch captain Scott Edwards made a crucial 78 not out, South Africa, one of the tournament favourites, were bowled out for 207 in the shadow of the Himalayas.

In November last year, the Dutch sent South Africa crashing of the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia. The victory was the World Cup's second major shock in three days after Afghanistan defeated defending champions England on Sunday. "When we came into the tournament we wanted to have a chance at playing semi-finals and if you want to do that you've got to beat teams," said Edwards.

"Obviously South Africa are probably one of the favourites the way they are playing so it is a big win for us." South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma admitted it was a painful defeat. "There is no point trying to forget what happened. It will hurt and it should hurt. Tomorrow we'll get back on the journey, our campaign is by no means over," added Bavuma whose indiscipline side earlier conceded 32 extras, including 21 wides.

There was no hint of the drama to come as South Africa eased comfortably to 36-0 in their pursuit. However, four wickets then fell for the addition of just eight runs. Quinton de Kock had cracked back-to-back centuries in South Africa's impressive opening wins over Sri Lanka and Australia.

But on 20 he was caught behind off Colin Ackermann, one of three South African-born players in the Dutch starting line-up. Ackermann had been man-of-the-match when the Netherlands shocked South Africa in Adelaide last year.

Bavuma (16) fell three runs later, clean bowled by Roelof van der Merwe who played 13 ODIs for South Africa before moving to the Netherlands. Seamer Paul van Meekeren beat the defences of Aiden Markram for one before Van der Merwe's wily left-arm spin tempted Rassie van der Dussen into a rash reverse sweep with the catch taken by Aryan Dutt at backward point.

De Kock, Markram and Van der Dussen had all made centuries in South Africa's World Cup record total 428 in the win over Sri Lanka. Heinrich Klaasen and David Miller steadily rebuilt the innings in a 45-run partnership for the fifth wicket before Logan van Beek broke through. Klaasen on 28 took on a long-hop and managed only to find Vikramjit Singh at fine leg, leaving South Africa teetering on 89-5.

Edwards hits 78

Marco Jansen (9) saw his stumps scattered by Van Meekeren as South Africa slumped to 109-6 and it was virtually game over when David Miller swung and missed at Van Beek after making 43. Bas de Leede mopped up Gerald Coetzee and Kagiso Rabada before Keshav Maharaj's late, defiant 40 was ended by Van Beek. It was the Netherlands' first win at this World Cup after losses to Pakistan and New Zealand.

Edwards played a brilliant innings while Van der Merwe shone with a late cameo as the Netherlands made a fighting 245-8. Edwards' runs came off 69 balls and featured 10 fours and a six. Van der Merwe, 38, hit a quickfire 29 off 19 balls with three fours and a six before he was caught behind off Lungi Ngidi.

Together, Edwards and Van der Merwe put on a crucial 64 for the eighth wicket after the Dutch were struggling at 112-6. Rabada claimed his



DHARAMSALA: Netherlands' Logan van Beek (C) celebrates after taking the wicket of South Africa's David Miller (R) during the 2023 ICG Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between South Africa and Netherlands at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamsala. — AFP

150th ODI wicket as South Africa's feared pace attack ripped through the Netherlands top order in chilly, damp conditions.

Rabada reached his personal landmark when he struck with the first ball of his spell, cramping up opener Singh and forcing a top edge to Klaasen. Rabada, playing in his 95th ODI, also

accounted for the dangerous De Leede, lbw for two. Max O'Dowd, Ackermann, Sybrand Engelbrecht and Teja Nidamanuru all reached double figures but struggled to get on top of Rabada and fellow fast bowlers Jansen, Coetzee and Ngidi. Dutt hit an undefeated 23 from nine balls with three sixes to boost the total. — AFP



Spanish rider Jorge Martin

Martin aims for error-free race in Australia MotoGP

PHILLIP ISLAND: Spain's Jorge Martin is determined to cut out any errors as a tense title race shifts to Phillip Island this week after a blunder in Indonesia cost him his lead in the MotoGP standings. The Pramac ace won the sprint at the Mandalika track in Lombok last weekend to build a seven-point championship advantage over Italy's Francesco Bagnaia.

But he blew the hard work in Sunday's grand prix, crashing at a gravel trap while three seconds clear and seemingly on track for his fourth victory of the year. It was his first non-score in a grand prix since round three at Austin in April. With just five stops of the 20-leg season left, he cannot afford any more slip ups in Australia with Bagnaia on his Ducati now 18 points ahead and fellow Italian Marco Bezzecchi still in the hunt, 45 points behind.

Martin blamed a dirty track for his mishap, and insisted it was a one-off. "It's been 14 races without a mistake. It's just statistics. It was coming sooner or later," he said. "So, the races still remaining I feel confident to fight for victory." Reigning world champion Bagnaia accepted Martin's gift, powering to a sixth MotoGP win of 2023 and his first

since Austria in August. That Austria triumph put Bagnaia 66 points ahead of Martin, but injury and errors, including a failure to finish at Catalunya and India, saw the lead eroded by his rival. The Italian said being back in the winners circle had revived his confidence heading into a challenging Australian weekend. "To have that performance again was very, very important," he said, adding that it gave him "a lot of motivation". "Not only for me, but also for my team. They are trying always to give the maximum possible."

During last year's grand prix, the waterfront Phillip Island circuit was marred by persistent rain, and more is forecast this week. Despite the elements, the 2023 race was a thriller with Spain's Alex Rins crossing first ahead of Spanish great Marc Marquez and Bagnaia in one of the closest top three finishes the sport has known.

Martin smashed the nine-year lap record to grab pole position, only to finish seventh. Along with Rins, Honda's Marquez and Aprilia's Maverick Vinales are both former Australian winners. Local hero Jack Miller, who is ninth on the world championship ladder, will be another to watch on his home circuit, confident his KTM machine is well-suited to the Phillip Island conditions.

"I think the KTM can work really, really well around the island," he said. "The bike is nice and agile at high speed which you need around the island, and there's always some decent grip there as well. Fingers crossed we can put on a pretty good show for the home fans." — AFP

Schauffele looks to forget Ryder Cup woes at Zozo Championship

INZAI: Xander Schauffele said Wednesday that he was "still chasing a win this season" as he attempts to brush off his Ryder Cup disappointment at this week's Zozo Championship in Japan. The Tokyo Olympics gold medalist is back in action for the first time since being part of the American team that failed to retain the Ryder Cup following a miserable start in Rome last month. Schauffele's American team-mates Collin Morikawa and Rickie Fowler are also among the field at the US PGA Tour event at Narashino Country Club. Defending champion Keegan Bradley and 2021 winner Hideki Matsuyama return for the 78-man, no-cut event.

Schauffele said he "had a lot of fun despite losing" at the Ryder Cup and turned his attention towards trying to win his first title since July last year. "I played OK at the Ryder Cup, not great," said Schauffele, ranked number six in the world.

"I stayed in Italy for about five more nights so I had a quick turnaround in Nevada before I came here, but my game's going pretty good." The Americans were expected to put up a fierce fight in their



ROME: File photo shows US golfer, Xander Schauffele plays his approach shot from the 1st fairway during his foursomes match on the second day of play in the 44th Ryder Cup at the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Rome. — AFP

Pakistan 'under extra pressure' with no fans

BENGALURU: Pakistan paid a heavy price for being "under extra pressure" in their World Cup defeat by arch-rivals India, said batsman Saud Shakeel, who Wednesday lamented the absence of the team's passionate supporters from the tournament.

Pakistan were thrashed by seven wickets on Saturday at Ahmedabad's 132,000-capacity stadium where there was only a handful of Pakistani supporters. Babar Azam's team slumped from a solid 155-2 in the 30th over to be dismissed for a paltry 191. "I think we were under extra pressure so we tried to get out of that and wanted to play shots," Shakeel told AFP on Wednesday. The smattering of Pakistani fans at the game were expatriates from the United Kingdom and United States. Supporters from across the border are effectively banned after a failure to gain visas.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday lodged an official complaint with the world governing body over the visa delays which have also kept many members of the country's media at home. The PCB also complained over what they described as the "inappropriate behaviour" of Indian fans towards the Pakistan squad at the Ahmedabad game.

"When you have your crowd then you get the support. We did not get that and it was not in our hands," added Shakeel. Despite an eighth loss in eight World Cup meetings with their arch-rivals, Pakistan are still well-placed in the tournament after wins over the Netherlands and Sri Lanka.

Middle-order batsman Shakeel scored 68 against the Netherlands before making 31 in the game with Sri Lanka. He was out for just six against India. Next up for Pakistan is another high-profile duel, this time with five-time champions Australia in Bengaluru on Friday.

"The mistakes we committed in the last game, we must overcome them. That match is gone. If we win against Australia then our position will get better," added Shakeel. "Australia are always good in the World Cup. They are a very good side. We know our strong areas and we must play good cricket."

"We had a good start to the tournament with two wins. We want to go match by match and not commit the mistakes we did against India." On Wednesday, all the Pakistan players with the exception of Mohammad Haris trained in Bengaluru. — AFP

bid to win the Ryder Cup on European soil for the first time since 1993.

But Europe swept the opening session for the first time on Friday and never looked back. Schauffele said the United States were "able to make it somewhat interesting" on the final day but admitted they fell far short of expectations.

"It felt like the tournament slipped away really early on," he said. "Myself and the rest of the other guys wish we could have settled the ship earlier on, just to make it feel like we weren't coming from behind the whole time."

'No lingering anger'

Morikawa is also looking to bounce back in his first tournament since the Ryder Cup. The 26-year-old has not won a title on the US PGA Tour since 2021, but insisted that "nothing is carried over" from the defeat in Rome.

"I'm not going to use momentum from a loss but I can learn from a loss, and take that into whether it's this week or next week or whenever it may be," he said. "There's no lingering anger from losing at a Ryder Cup coming into a week like this — they're two different things." The \$8.5 million Zozo Championship was established in 2019 as the first US PGA Tour tournament in Japan. Thousands of Japanese fans turned up to watch Tiger Woods win the inaugural title for his 82nd US PGA Tour victory — equalling Sam Snead's 54-year-old record. — AFP

India glad to have 'top-gun' Bumrah firing again

PUNE: The return of India "top-gun" Jasprit Bumrah for the World Cup could not come soon enough for bowling coach Paras Mhambrey as he hailed the paceman's strong start to the hosts' campaign. India have won all three of their opening games, with the 29-year-old Bumrah taking eight wickets at a meagre average of just over 10 apiece.

But his career has been blighted by injury, with the unorthodox Bumrah sidelined for over a year following back surgery before returning in August. "You have seen him in the last three games that he has played," Mhambrey told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday ahead of India's match against Bangladesh in Pune.



Jasprit Bumrah

"What he brings to the table — he is a world class bowler. He gives you that breakthrough that you require in the power-plays. He's well adapted to bowl in the middle overs and he's a top-gun 'death' bowler. I think in that sense, we really missed him." Mhambrey added India had yet to consider "rotation" as they look to maintain their unbeaten start in a quest to win a third one-day international World Cup title and second on home soil following their 2011 triumph. And that means the likes of proven performers in seamer Mohammed Shami and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin are set to remain on the sidelines. Ashwin especially has often found himself omitted across all formats in recent times. The 37-year-old was also left out of the team that lost to Australia in this year's World Test Championship final at The Oval.

"He (Ashwin) has been a great lad," said Mhambrey. "He understands that, he's a great team guy. I've never seen him grumpy; I haven't seen him complaining any time for any of the last few years that he's been with us. Mhambrey added: "Even after so many years, I think he's there, he wants to do well for the team, he turns up every practice session, goes through the rigorous grinds and he keeps bowling." Mhambrey said the India bowlers that did play on Thursday would face a "challenging surface".

"It (Pune) is a small ground, comparatively...It is at high altitude. So, I think here, more boundaries will be scored." Bangladesh have lost their last two matches at the World Cup after starting with a six-wicket win over Afghanistan.

They defeated India by six runs when the teams met in the Asia Cup in Colombo last month, with Mhambrey, highlighting the quality of Bangladesh fast bowler Taskin Ahmed and "champion" all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan with Afghanistan having already pulled off a shock defeat of champions England and non-Test nation the Netherlands beating South Africa by 38 runs. Mhambrey said: "When you enter a World Cup, every team will pose you a challenge. So, from our perspective, I don't think we'll take anyone (lightly)." Bangladesh or the Netherlands, I think we want to treat those games as equally important." — AFP

Sports

Germany held by Mexico in an entertaining Philadelphia friendly

Reyna at the double as USA thrash Ghana

PHILADELPHIA: Germany came from behind to snatch a 2-2 draw with Mexico in an entertaining international friendly in Philadelphia on Tuesday. Second-half substitute Niclas Fullkrug saved Germany's blushes, ramming home a low finish from close range on 51 minutes to preserve new coach Julian Nagelsmann's unbeaten record. Germany had arrived in Philadelphia in confident mood after a 3-1 defeat of the United States on Saturday.

That victory was the first of Nagelsmann's reign since being appointed in the aftermath of Hansi Flick's sacking last month following a 4-1 drubbing by Japan. The four-time world champions looked ready to build on that confident performance at a packed Lincoln Financial Field, and took the lead inside the opening half hour.

Union Berlin defender Robin Gosens flicked on cleverly from a corner and Real Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger was waiting at the far post to head in an emphatic finish after 25 minutes. Mexico responded well to that early setback, and Santiago Gimenez had a strong penalty appeal waved away on 27 minutes after being bundled over the box.

Gimenez should have equalized in the 33rd minute, but somehow scooped a close-range shot over the bar with only Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen to beat. Germany thought they had made it 2-0 on 37 minutes when Bayern Munich's Thomas Muller got the ball in the net only to be judged offside.

Instead, however, Mexico swept forward immediately with a lightning fast counter-attack and drew level when Uriel Antuna tucked away a low shot at the near post after Hirving Lozano's low cross. Erick Sanchez headed Mexico into the lead two minutes after half-time to make it 2-1 but Fullkrug's 51st-minute equalizer ensured Germany escaped with a draw.

Earlier, Gio Reyna celebrated his return to the USA starting line-up with two goals as the Americans thrashed Ghana 4-0 in a one-sided friendly on Tuesday. Reyna returned to the USA squad this month for the first time since a bitter public spat with coach Gregg Berhalter stemming from last year's World Cup in Qatar. And the Borussia Dortmund attacker slotted back into the American team in style in Nashville on Tuesday as Berhalter's men ran riot against an outclassed Black Stars side.

Reyna opened the scoring at Geodis Park after just 10 minutes, sweeping home an emphatic finish after good work by Folarin Balogun down the right flank. AC Milan's Christian Pulisic made it 2-0 from the penalty spot in the 19th minute after a clumsy challenge by Ghana defender Gideon Mensah upended Tim Weah in the box.

Pulisic made no mistake from the spot, rifling his shot down the middle as Ghana goalkeeper Abdul Manaf Nurudeen dived. Balogun then made it 3-0 three minutes later after more good work from Weah.

The 23-year-old Juventus forward caught Jordan Ayew in possession and then crossed for Balogun, who turned away from his marker to rifle home a crisp finish. The hosts added a fourth on 39 minutes from an indirect free-kick inside the Ghana penalty area.

Pulisic cleverly rolled the ball into Reyna's path and the forward shot high into the net for 4-0. Berhalter rang the changes for the USA at half-time, removing Reyna, Balogun and Pulisic. Unsurprisingly, the flurry of substitutions to so many key players affected the US fluency in attack, and they were unable to add to their tally in the second half. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Germany's forward Leroy Sane #19 vies for the ball with Mexico's midfielder Jesus Gallardo #23 and forward Hirving Lozano #22 during the international friendly match between Germany and Mexico at Lincoln Financial Field stadium in Philadelphia. — AFP

Juve star Fagioli hit with 7-month gambling ban

MILAN: Nicolo Fagioli's season is all but over after the Italian Football Federation banned on Tuesday the Juventus and Italy midfielder for seven months for gambling offences. In a statement the FIGC said that Fagioli had been given the ban for betting on football matches, an activity which is forbidden for professional footballers, after admitting his guilt and negotiating a plea bargain.

The FIGC said that Fagioli's sentence was officially 12 months but that five of those had been commuted into a "treatment plan" centred on combatting gambling addiction. Fagioli, 22, has to take part in "at least 10 public meetings to be held within five months, at amateur sports associations and both local football federation and gambling addiction recovery centres" according to a FIGC program.

The FIGC added that Fagioli's plea bargain would be terminated and that he would be subject to further disciplinary proceedings should he not adhere to that program. Fagioli has been a rising star of Italian football since returning to Juve last year following a loan spell at Cremonese, and has played once for his country.

However he won't be available for Juve, who have already suffered the scandal of France star Paul Pogba failing a doping test, until mid-May by which time there will only be two games left in the season.

Fagioli could have been banned for as long as three years had he not struck a deal with the

FIGC's disciplinary authorities and shown that he was taking steps to combat an admitted gambling addiction. His punishment is the first in a betting scandal which exploded while the Italian national team was preparing for two crucial Euro 2024 qualifiers with Malta and England.

Gambling scandal

The FIGC investigation is running parallel to a criminal probe into the use of illegal gambling platforms allegedly linked to organised crime. Sandro Tonali and Nicolo Zaniolo were released from the European champions' training camp last week after being questioned by criminal prosecutors for over two hours.

Zaniolo's lawyer Gianluca Tognozzi told the Gazzetta Dello Sport on Sunday that the Aston Villa forward has never gambled on football but that "it's possible he played card games like poker and blackjack on illegal platforms".

If Tognozzi's claim is true Zaniolo will not receive any ban from the FIGC but could be fined following the criminal probe. On Tuesday Tonali's agent Giuseppe Riso admitted that the Newcastle midfielder had an "illness".

"Sandro is shaken up by the situation, but he has already started to fight back," Riso told Sky Sport. "He's always been a fighter and now he's taken on his biggest challenge." There is no indication as yet that any of the trio gambled on their own team's matches nor that they were involved in match fixing.

The news that Tonali and Zaniolo were being investigated was broken last week by disgraced Italian paparazzo Fabrizio Corona, who first claimed months ago that Fagioli had a gambling addiction. Corona is a gossip specialist, hugely famous in Italy, who has spent time in prison for illegally obtaining photographs and blackmailing football clubs



TURIN: Juventus' Italian midfielder Nicolo Fagioli passes the ball during the UEFA Champions League. Fagioli's season is all but over after the Italian Football Federation banned on Tuesday the Juventus and Italy midfielder for seven months for gambling offences. — AFP

and players with them.

He also named Roma and Poland full-back Nicola Zalewski, who as yet is not being investigated by criminal prosecutors nor by the FIGC's disciplinary authorities. — AFP

Spain calls up Jenni Hermoso since kiss scandal

LAS ROZAS DE MADRID: Jenni Hermoso was on Wednesday included in Spain's women's team for the first time since the scandal over the unsolicited kiss former federation president Luis Rubiales gave her at the Women's World Cup final in Australia.

New coach Montse Tome included the 33-year-old midfielder, who plays for Mexican side Pachuca, in the squad which will face Switzerland and Italy later this month in the Nations League matches. Hermoso has been in the eye of the storm that shook Spanish football after Rubiales forcibly kissed her on the lips during the awards ceremony after Spain beat England in the Women's World Cup final in Australia on August 20.

Rubiales was the head of the Spanish football federation (RFEF) at the time, but he has since resigned following an outcry over the kiss, with 39 players striking from the national team to demand changes. He said the kiss was mutual and consensual, but Hermoso said it was done without her consent. The scandal also led to the dismissal of coach Jorge Vilda, who was replaced by Tome, his number two. Last month Tome called up the majority of the Women's World Cup winning players into her squad for upcoming Nations League matches, but left out Hermoso to "protect her". Spain are due to play Italy on October 27 and Switzerland on October 31. — AFP

African Football League set for modest launch

JOHANNESBURG: The African Football League (AFL) kicks off in Tanzania on Friday, bearing little resemblance to the original concept. It was launched amid much hype last year and called the CAF Africa Super League with record prize money for an African club competition, including \$11.5 million (10.9 million euros) to the winners.

A total of 24 clubs—eight each from the north, west/centre and south/east regions chosen on merit—would compete and get \$2.5 million each in advance to buy players and cover travel costs. There were supposed to be 197 mini-league and knock-out matches, culminating in a final African Football

Confederation (CAF) president Patrice Motsepe said would be the "Super Bowl of Africa".

But South African billionaire Motsepe has since admitted to the local media that the AFL has struggled to lure sponsors, resulting in a major downgrading of the first edition. Motsepe said the name change came after unnamed "European friends" told CAF they should scrap "Super League" from the title.

"This advice was based on negative associations with the failed attempt in 2021 to launch a super league in Europe," he said. A planned European Super League collapsed within 48 hours after a backlash from players, supporters and governments forced nine of the 12 clubs who signed up to pull out.

First prize has been slashed to four million dollars, only eight clubs will participate and, instead of a "Super Bowl" climax, there will be a two-leg title decider. The AFL named Saudi Arabian tourism body Visit Saudi as its major sponsor just seven days before Simba of Tanzania host African giants Al Ahly of Egypt in the opening quarter-final first leg.

TP Mazembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo host Esperance of Tunisia and Petro Luanda of Angola have home advantage over Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa on Saturday.

Hectic schedule

The last first leg is scheduled for Sunday in the Nigerian city of Uyo, where Enyimba will confront Moroccan visitors Wydad Casablanca. Each round features home and away matches with a hectic schedule, potentially including several trips covering the length of the continent, due to conclude on November 11.

Ahly and Wydad met in the last two CAF Champions League finals, winning one each, and they will be the teams to beat in the AFL. The build-up has been beset with problems, including the South African Premiership banning Sundowns from taking part, saying it would lead to domestic fixture congestion.

Premiership officials later performed a u-turn and agreed that Sundowns—a club owned by Motsepe and run by his son Tlophane—could take part. CAF

official, who requested anonymity, told AFP Congolese customs officials have blocked the import of VAR equipment for the Mazembe match. There have also been delays in issuing visas.

Mazembe called the actions "inexplicable" in a statement, with the club risking having to move their home match from Lubumbashi to Dar es Salaam in neighboring Tanzania. Petro are contesting a two-year suspension by the Angolan football federation for alleged domestic match fixing.

Swiss-born Ahly coach Marcel Koller has criticized the schedule, saying many players will return to the Cairo club only two days before facing Simba due to the October internationals window. "The dates of the African Football League fixtures are not suitable. The international players, whether Egyptians or another nationality, will suffer because of the dense schedule," he warned.

Tunisian Ali Maaloul, Malian Aliou Dieng and South African Percy Tau are among the foreigners in the Ahly squad. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000

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**

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England secure Euro 2024 berth

Denmark avoids almighty shock with a nervy 2-1 win in San Marino



LONDON: England's striker #09 Harry Kane shoots and scores his team third goal during the Euro 2024 qualifying group C football match between England and Italy at Wembley, in London. — AFP

PARIS: England sealed their place at Euro 2024 on Tuesday as Harry Kane scored twice in a 3-1 win over Italy at Wembley, while Denmark scraped to victory over San Marino to keep their qualification bid on track. Gareth Southgate's England exacted a measure of revenge on Italy in a repeat of the Euro 2020 final won at the same stadium by the Azzurri on penalties.

Luciano Spalletti's Italy still have plenty of work to do to avoid missing out on a major tournament for the third time in four qualification bids. England wrapped up top spot in Group C with two games to spare, sitting three points clear of second-placed Ukraine who won 3-1 in Malta, with Italy three points further back.

"Qualifying is never easy. Sometimes we are just expected to go to the big tournaments but we have seen in the past it is not as easy as it looks," Kane told Channel 4. "We went 1-0 behind and stayed calm. We knew we could get the winner and we have done it."

Four-time world champions Italy host bogey team North Macedonia in their game in hand on Ukraine before taking on the war-hit nation in Leverkusen in a crucial final match. England started brightly on Tuesday but were caught out in the 15th minute by a sweeping Italian move which ended with Gianluca Scamacca tapping home his first international goal from Giovanni Di Lorenzo's low cross.

But the home side levelled shortly after the half-hour mark as Kane planted a penalty into the corner after Jude Bellingham had been fouled in the box. England only needed a point to qualify but completed the turnaround 12 minutes after the restart as the rampaging Bellingham won the ball in midfield before feeding Marcus Rashford, who cut inside and lashed a shot past Gianluigi Donnarumma. Kane put the result beyond any doubt in the 77th minute, powering through the Italy defence and slotting home his 61st England goal.

Denmark, losing Euro semi-finalists to England two years ago, avoided an almighty shock with a nervy 2-1 win in San Marino to stay second in Group H. The Danes could make sure of qualification in their next match with a win against group leaders Slovenia next month.

But they had to work hard against perennial losers San Marino, despite taking a first-half lead through Manchester United striker Rasmus Hojlund. Denmark created very little and were made to pay as Alessandro Goliniucci pounced to score San Marino's first goal in Euro qualifying for four years to equalise in the 61st minute.

But Danish substitute Yussuf Poulsen broke San Marino hearts, steering a header into the far corner with 20 minutes to play. San Marino have now lost 83 of their 84 Euro qualifiers—the sole exception a goalless draw with Estonia in 2014.

Panathinaikos midfielder Adam Gnezda Cerin kept

Slovenia top as he netted the winner in a 1-0 victory over Northern Ireland in Belfast. But Slovenia still need another win from their last two matches to clinch a place at the finals, after Bakhtiyor Zainutdinov's late double snatched Kazakhstan a dramatic 2-1 win in Finland.

The Kazakhs, who next host San Marino, visit Slovenia in the two teams' final game, which could prove a winner-takes-all affair. Hungary missed the chance to wrap up progression from Group G despite coming back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Lithuania.

Liverpool midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai scored a penalty and created Barnabas Varga's leveller as Hungary edged closer to booking a ticket to Germany. An Aleksandar Mitrovic brace and Dusan Tadic's goal helped Serbia beat Montenegro 3-1 to stay second. Serbia sit one point behind Hungary and five clear of Montenegro, although they have played a game more than their rivals. — AFP

Messi double helps Argentina stay perfect, Brazil slump

MONTEVIDEO: Lionel Messi scored two goals as Argentina extended their perfect start to South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup on Tuesday with a 2-0 victory over Peru. The Inter Miami star took his international goal tally to 106 with strikes in the 32nd and 42nd minutes at Lima's Estadio Nacional.

Messi's first-half brace left reigning world champions Argentina on top of the South American qualifying table with 12 points from four games, five points clear of Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela, who all have seven points.

Restored to the starting line-up after coming off the bench in last Thursday's 1-0 win over Paraguay, Messi showed no sign of the injuries that have recently limited his appearances in Major League Soccer.

The 36-year-old crashed home an emphatic opener just after the half-hour mark, then added a second 10 minutes later after good work by Enzo Fernandez down the left flank.

The win leaves Argentina firmly on track to return to the World Cup finals in 2026, which are being expanded to include 48 teams and will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada. The top six teams in South America's 10-team qualifying competition will be guaranteed a place at the finals.

While Argentina continued their serene progress through qualifying, arch-rivals Brazil suffered a nightmare 2-0 defeat in Montevideo, crashing to a first loss against Uruguay in 22 years. The defeat was compounded by the sight of veteran forward Neymar being stretchered off just before half-time with what appeared to be a knee injury.

Uruguay's Darwin Nunez struck with a bullet header on 42 minutes to open the scoring in a dour first half at the Estadio Centenario. The Liverpool striker then played a pivotal role in Uruguay's second, holding up the ball well from a throw-in and cutting back for Nicolas de la Cruz to fire past Brazil goalkeeper Ederson on 77 minutes, sealing a 2-0 victory.

The win was Uruguay's first over Brazil in a World Cup qualifying fixture since a 1-0 victory over the Selecao in Montevideo in July 2001. The defeat marked another disappointing result for five-world champions Brazil, who were

zuela last week in the previous round.

Brazilian team officials said Neymar would undergo examinations in Sao Paulo on Wednesday to assess the nature of his injury. Venezuela meanwhile boosted their hopes of reaching the World Cup for the first time with an impressive 3-0 rout of Chile in Maturin. Winger Yeferson Soteldo was the star for La Vinotinto, scoring the opening goal and setting up second-half goals for veteran striker Salomon Rondon and Darwin Machis. Soteldo opened the scoring in stoppage time at the end of the first half, stabbing a low angled shot into the bottom corner to the delight of a raucous home crowd.

The Santos winger turned provider for Venezuela's second, bursting down the left flank and cutting back for Rondon to sweep home from close range on 72 minutes. Soteldo was also involved in Venezuela's third, once again finding space on the left wing and crossing for an unmarked Machis to make it 3-0. Elsewhere Tuesday, Paraguay got their first win of the qualifiers, defeating lowly Bolivia 1-0 in Asuncion with a 69th-minute strike from Antonio Sanabria. Bolivia remain bottom of the standings while Paraguay are seventh with three points from four games. In Quito meanwhile, Colombia maintained their unbeaten start to qualifiers with a 0-0 draw away to Ecuador. — AFP

Ruud loses to qualifier Giron at Japan Open

TOKYO: Norway's Casper Ruud said his trip to Asia was "not what I was really hoping for" after exiting the Japan Open with a second-round defeat to qualifier Marcos Giron on Wednesday. World number eight Ruud, who reached this year's French Open final, lost in the Beijing Open quarter-finals before bowing out in the last 16 of the Shanghai Masters this month.

Ruud's Asian swing ended with a 6-3, 6-4 defeat to American world number 79 Giron in Tokyo, but he tried to stay positive, noting his fall at the first hurdle at last year's tournament. "I think it went better than last year so what can you say, I played better than last year, for sure," said the tournament's number two seed.

"Maybe not what I was really hoping for and kind of what I needed but there's still a couple of weeks to go and I'll keep my head high and try to fight in the last couple of weeks of the year." Ruud had to work hard to beat Japan's Yosuke Watanuki in a 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 first-round win on Tuesday night.

He said he was "never able to get into a rhythm" against Giron in a match that lasted just 1hr 20min. "I tried to play the same level as I did yesterday—maybe I wasn't able to but it's OK, it's not always easy to shift from one day to the other with different opponents," said Ruud.

"I wasn't able to be ready enough for his game and counter his game." German number three seed Alexander Zverev and American Frances Tiafoe, seeded sixth, had already been eliminated in the first round in Tokyo.

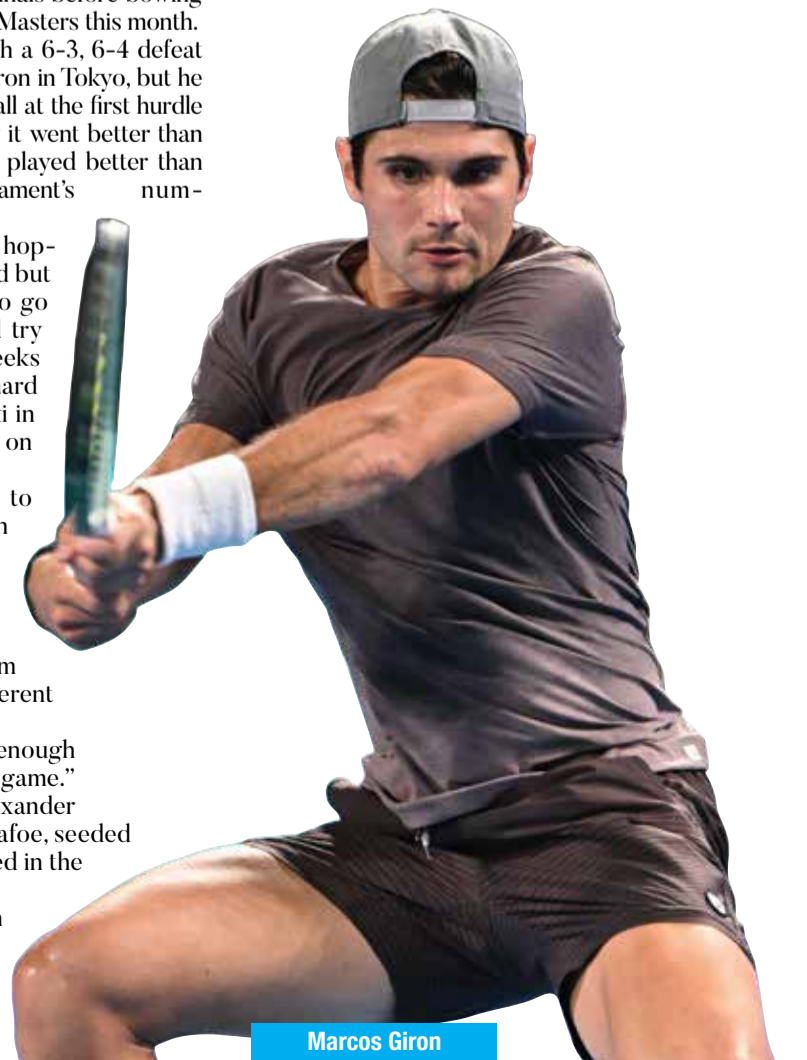
Shanghai Masters champion Hubert Hurkacz joined them after losing to China's Zhang Zhizhen. Zhang, who won gold at the Asian Games in the Chi-

nese city of Hangzhou last month, beat the Pole 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4). American number five seed Tommy Paul booked his place in the quarter-finals alongside Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime, the number eight seed. Paul beat fellow American Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-2 to progress in his tournament debut.

Paul said the "very fast" Tokyo court was to his liking. "The fast ones are a little bit more fun because you can really take advantage of well-struck shots and get to the net," said the 26-year-old. "It's quicker points, your serve is a little bit more effective. I do enjoy a fast hard court." Auger-Aliassime beat Austria's Sebastian Ofner 6-4, 6-1. — AFP



LIMA: Argentina's forward Lionel Messi and Peru's midfielder Wilder Cartagena (R) fight for the ball during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualification football match between Peru and Argentina at the National Stadium in Lima. — AFP



Marcos Giron