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Kuwait deeply affected by killing of civilians in Gaza: Crown Prince

Sheikh Mishal rues int'l double standards • UN chief urges ceasefire to end 'nightmare'



CAIRO: (Left) Representative of HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, attends the Cairo Summit for Peace on Oct 21, 2023. (Right) Regional and Western leaders pose for a family photo during the summit. — KUNA photos

CAIRO: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said Kuwait is deeply affected by the Zionist occupation forces killing innocents in the Gaza Strip. In his speech to the Cairo Summit for Peace on Saturday, HH the Crown Prince said the continuous air raids have killed thousands of men, women and children and cut off electricity, water, food and fuel, while also imposing forced displacement of the people of the Gaza Strip.

This humanitarian crisis is caused by the lack of efforts by the international community to resolve

the issue and bring violence to an end, HH Sheikh Mishal said, adding the international community has double-standards when it comes to dealing with the Zionist occupation force's violations. He renewed Kuwait's condemnation of the Zionist entity's war crimes, calling on the international community to take serious action to immediately end the attacks and protect civilians. HH the Crown Prince also called for opening safe passages to deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

Meanwhile, HH the Crown Prince affirmed Kuwait's rejection of any attempts of forced displacement or putting more pressure on neighboring coun-

tries to deal with the impact of this displacement. He noted that Kuwait and its people will continue to support Palestinians and their rights for an independent country within the borderlines of the June 1967 agreement. He added peace is the only solution for the crisis, underlining the need to commit to the terms of international laws and conventions related to the issue, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

UN chief Antonio Guterres pleaded Saturday for a "humanitarian ceasefire" in the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas militants that has devastated much of Gaza, demanding "action to end this godawful nightmare". Addressing the Cairo summit

as the conflict raged into its third week, Guterres said the Palestinian enclave of 2.4 million people was living through "a humanitarian catastrophe" with thousands dead and more than a million displaced.

"We meet in the heart of a region that is reeling in pain and one step from the precipice," he told the meeting that included the leaders of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates as well as of Italy and Spain and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The bloodshed began on Oct 7 when Hamas fighters killed at least 1,400 people and took more than 200 hostages, according to Zionist officials.

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All eyes on Qatar in Gaza captive release efforts



JERUSALEM: Natalie and Judith Raanan speak on the phone with US President Joe Biden after being released by Hamas on Oct 20, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: Boasting good relations with both Western governments and Hamas, Qatar has emerged as the key power in efforts to release the captives seized by the Palestinian group from the Zionist entity even as other states show readiness to help. French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday lauded the key role played by Qatar in the release by Hamas of two American captives held since its attack against the Zionist entity on Oct 7, adding he was confident of further releases.

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First aid enters Gaza ravaged by Zionist war

GAZA: The first aid trucks arrived in war-torn Gaza from Egypt on Saturday, bringing urgent humanitarian relief to the Hamas-controlled Palestinian enclave suffering what the UN chief labelled a "godawful nightmare". The Zionist entity has vowed to destroy Hamas after the Islamist group carried out the deadliest attack in the country's history on Oct 7.

The Zionist entity has retaliated with a relentless bombing campaign on Gaza that has killed more than 4,300 Palestinians, mainly civilians, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. A Zionist siege has cut food, water, electricity and fuel supplies to the densely populated and long-blockaded territory of 2.4 million people, sparking fears of a humanitarian catastrophe.

AFP journalists on Saturday saw 20 trucks from the Egyptian Red Crescent, which is responsible for delivering aid from various UN agencies, pass through the Rafah border crossing from Egypt into Gaza. The crossing — the only one into Gaza not controlled by the Zionist entity — closed again

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RAFAH, Egypt: People on the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing watch as a convoy of lorries carrying humanitarian aid crosses to the Gaza Strip on Oct 21, 2023. — AFP

In war-torn Gaza, fears of a new Nakba

GAZA: Omar Ashur became a refugee during the "Nakba" or "catastrophe" experienced by Palestinians following the Zionist entity's creation 75 years ago and now fears the ongoing bombardment of Gaza will again force him into exile. A retired general from the Palestinian Authority security forces, 83-year-old Ashur lives in Al-Zahra in central Gaza where Zionist missiles flattened an area of more than 20 buildings late on Thursday.

Many residents had raced into the street with no idea of where to go. When they returned in the early hours of Friday morning, they found a scene of devastation, with several blocks of buildings reduced to smoking ruins and rubble, an AFP journalist said. The area lies about 10 km south of Gaza City where Zionist warplanes have focused their fierce bombardments since Hamas militants stormed into the Zionist entity on Oct 7, beginning an attack that has killed at least 1,400 people.

Although the Zionist entity urged Palestinians living in northern Gaza to head south ahead of an expected ground operation, Ashur decided to stay. Beyond the ongoing bombardment, he also worries about the future.

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GAZA: An aerial view shows destroyed buildings in Al-Zahra south of Gaza City on Oct 20, 2023 following Zionist bombardment overnight. — AFP

Kuwait echoes support for UN efforts to promote rule of law

Diplomat criticizes 'double standards'

NEW YORK: Kuwait reiterated its full support for UN efforts to promote the rule of law principle, which pushes forward all national, regional and international endeavors for a secure, stable and prosperous world. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Diplomatic Attaché Abdullah Al-Harbi during a meeting of the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly on the rule of law principles at both national and international levels.

He stressed that it is incumbent upon all countries to apply the rule of law and that the common understanding of this principle should be based on compliance with international charters, laws and norms. He added that the rule of law is a well-established concept in the UN Charter, which states that one of the UN's goals is to create the conditions for attaining justice and respecting commitments enshrined in treaties.

The Kuwaiti diplomat underlined that the significance of the rule of law at the local level reflects the security of communities that are ruled by constitutions and laws that ensure equality, justice, respect

for human rights and the enactment of national laws that meet relevant international commitments.

In this context, he pointed out the Kuwaiti Constitution, which has established institutional action and promoted democracy, freedoms and civil rights, as well as separation of powers. However, the Kuwaiti diplomat lashed out at the use of double standards in addressing serious violations of people's self-determination rights, citing the Zionist occupation's recent aggression on the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Ahmad Aboul Gheit of the Arab League has affirmed the necessity of reaching an "immediate ceasefire" and ending the "brutal" bombing against the civilians of the Gaza Strip. In his speech at the Cairo Peace Summit, Aboul Gheit said that it is imperative to urgently open a safe corridor to deliver humanitarian aid to the entire Gaza Strip and ensure continued supplies of food, medicine, water and energy.

He indicated that the continuation of the current situation shows a clear and flagrant violation of international humanitarian law by the occupying Zion-

ist entity, the "occupying power". The Arab League rejects all "types of targeting and violence against civilians without discrimination," he said, noting that "all civilians are equal and the human soul has its sanctity". Aboul Gheit called on all parties, mainly those not involved in the conflict, to bear responsibility, exercise restraint and not open the way for any measure that may increase any possible confrontation or lead to its expansion. He further urged all international main powers to get an urgent agreement on reaching a limited and clear scope for a comprehensive political settlement, which helps Palestinians establish their independent state and live in peace.

Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, emphasized in his speech the union's readiness to make all possible efforts to reach "just and comprehensive peace" and a two-state solution. He called for an immediate stop to violence and mobilized humanitarian support for food, water and medicine. In addition, Faki called for the release of civilian hostages, mainly women and children. — KUNA



Kuwait's Diplomatic Attaché Abdullah Al-Harbi

Ministry reviews article 24 status

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior has initiated a review of article 24 residency status, which grants ordinary residence without work to individuals who can substantiate the sources of their income during their stay. The General Directorate of Residency Affairs is responsible for establishing the necessary conditions and requirements for granting and renewing this type of residence.

It has come to light that a significant number of individuals were granted this residency without meeting the entitlement criteria. Article 24 residency is typically designated for specific cases, including businesspersons, wives of expatriates, partners in commercial enterprises, and wives seeking to join a breadwinner while their husband serves a criminal sentence in prison, among other specific cases.

However, it has been discovered that some residents obtained this status improperly, either by failing to meet the required conditions or by circumventing the ministerial decision that outlined the conditions for transferring residence. In response to

this manipulation, the residency affairs sector has devised a comprehensive review plan for the article 24 residency category. Renewal of such residency or the granting of new ones is now exclusively conducted through the assistant undersecretary for the residency and nationality affairs sector.

Renewal processes are being streamlined by facilitating them in the offices of residence affairs in various governorates, with the aim of minimizing congestion and reducing processing times. Residents who had their residency canceled due to their ineligibility under article 24 are urged to adjust their status accordingly.

Residence renewal under Article 24 will be approved only for those who satisfy the stipulated conditions. For those suspected of violating these conditions, their cases will be referred to the audit committee, potentially leading to the cancellation of residency for at least 5,000 expatriates who failed to meet the requirements of article 24.

Article 24 provides ordinary residence without employment for those who can prove the sources of their financial support during their stay. The director general of the General Directorate of Residency Affairs is responsible for defining the conditions and regulations needed to grant and renew such residencies.

Manpower authority to recruit specialists

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) has reaffirmed its commitment to recruiting specialized labor with fitting academic qualifications, following the adoption of the Gulf Cooperation Council guide for classifying professions in all sectors. Specialized technical workers will not be hired from abroad unless their academic qualifications match the requirements of the professions they are being recruited for. This measure is aimed at ensuring optimal productivity and efficiency at work.

PAM specified that the transfer of specialized workers will only be allowed within the same company for which the commercial visit was initially issued. Additionally, workers seeking a transfer must provide their criminal record status, a copy of their entry visa, and meet the specific requirements of the profession to which they are transferring.

It is important to note that the process of converting a commercial visit into a work residence permit in the private sector (article 18) will be considered as a new permit issuance rather than an internal transfer. As a result, the number of expatriate workers needed by the company seeking to transfer the worker will be adjusted accordingly. Important-

ly, all procedures with the authority can be completed through an automated service, eliminating the need for the personal presence of the employer.

The authority also mentions that certain procedures involving other government agencies need to be reviewed, particularly when opening a new file for stakeholders who are not yet in their database. The automation system has been successful in eliminating residency trade by reducing human intervention and recording all procedures systematically. "The authority's leadership and officials are committed to expanding the use of automation and transitioning all procedures from paper to digital format. This has been achieved through close cooperation with other relevant government agencies, including the ministries of health, interior, commerce and justice, as well as the Public Authority for Civil Information and other organizations," PAM added.

Furthermore, PAM has begun issuing permits for recruiting expatriate workers from abroad in accordance with the standard procedures for issuing entry visas and work permits. All companies wishing to obtain permits for hiring expatriate workers must submit applications through the automated service Sahel. This process involves six steps leading to the payment of the required fees via the official website of the ministry of interior and the subsequent issuance of the visa from the labor department.



24 drug suspects arrested; narcotic substances seized

KUWAIT: Officials from the Ministry of Interior arrested 24 people of different nationalities for drug-related cases. About 16 kilograms of various narcotic substances and 10,000 pills of psychotropic substances were also seized. The ministry said in a press release that these seizures come as a continuation of the efforts of the criminal department in intensifying the security presence and arresting outlaws and drug dealers.

Security personnel from the General Directorate of Drug Control were able to arrest suspects and confiscate 80 imported bottles of wine, three unlicensed weapons and ammunition, and a huge sum of money. The suspects admitted that the banned substances belonged to them. Security officers are continuing their work protecting lives and properties. The ministry called on everyone to cooperate with the security men and report any negative phenomena on the emergency phone (112) and the hotline of the General Department of Drug Control (1884141). — KUNA



Artists express outrage over Gaza massacres



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti artists expressed their outrage at the Zionist entity's oppression in Gaza and the killing of Palestinian civilians. Kuwaiti and Arab artists who participated in the "Gaza Rises" exhibition at the Kuwaiti Artists and Media Syndicate headquarters emphasized their rejection of tyranny, creating a diverse range of artworks that conveyed a mixture of resilience, sorrow, pride and Arab identity. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait stands with Palestinians, world must react: Crown Prince

Gulf-ASEAN summit denounces attacks on Palestinians



RIYADH: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders take a group photo after their meeting at the King Abdulaziz International Convention Center. — AFP photos

RIYADH: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said that Kuwait stood in solidarity with the Palestinians, namely the people of the Gaza Strip, who are suffering from a brutal assault from the Zionist occupation. Delivering a speech at the GCC-ASEAN Summit held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, His Highness Sheikh Mishal added that the international community must take responsibility and protect the Palestinians from the recent bout of Zionist aggression.

Issue with Iraq

His Highness also highlighted the Khor Abdullah issue with Iraq, saying that the Iraqi government must take urgent and necessary steps to handle the recent Federal Supreme Court decision on maritime navigation in the waterway in line with the principles of good neighborliness. In regards to the GCC-ASEAN summit, His Highness Sheikh Mishal hoped that the international meeting would come out with decisions bolstering cooperation between the members of the two organizations.

He commended the efforts exerted in holding the summit, and also lauded the ASEAN stance towards issues pertaining to the region as well as the Arab and Islamic worlds. Earlier today, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman opened the GCC-ASEAN summit aimed at boosting cooperation between the two entities.

GCC-ASEAN summit

Meanwhile, Gulf and Southeast Asian leaders have condemned attacks on civilians in the Gaza

Strip and called for a permanent ceasefire, according to a statement published after a summit meeting. The six-member GCC and the 10-member ASEAN also called for the release of some 200 hostages held by Hamas militants, as well as the restoration of basic services for Palestinians and the delivery of humanitarian aid, the statement said.

Zionist entity has vowed to destroy Hamas after the Islamist militant group launched an unprecedented raid from the Gaza Strip into southern Zionist entity on October 7, killing at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians who were shot, mutilated or burned to death, according to Zionist officials. Hamas gunmen also kidnapped nearly 200 hostages including foreigners from around two dozen countries ranging from Paraguay to Tanzania. The army said that most of those being held "are alive".

In response, war planes have leveled entire city blocks in Gaza in preparation for a ground invasion. More than 3,785 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have died in the bombing, according to the latest toll from the Hamas-run health ministry. "As we gather, we are saddened by the escalating violence that Gaza is witnessing today, the price of which is being paid by innocent civilians," Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said as he opened the summit in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

"We affirm our categorical rejection of targeting civilians in any way and under any pretext, and the importance of adhering to international humanitarian law and the necessity of stopping military operations against civilians and infrastructure that affect their daily lives," Saudi Arabia, guardian of the holiest sites in Islam, has never recognized Zionist entity and has paused discussions about taking that step in re-



RIYADH: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah seen during his departure from Riyadh after attending the GCC-ASEAN summit.

sponse to the Zionist-Hamas war. Two other GCC members, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, established ties with Zionist entity as part of the Abraham Accords of 2020, but have issued statements criticizing Zionists in recent days.

ASEAN is currently headed by Indonesia which also does not have ties with Zionist entity. "The violence must stop, humanity must be the priority in this moment, and we must prevent things from getting worse," Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in Riyadh. "We must not forget that the root cause of the problem is the occupation of the Palestinian

territories, and this is what must be resolved based on the agreed international parameters."

The summit came on the heels of solidarity visits to Zionist entity by Western leaders including US President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Nasser Al-Masri, a Kuwaiti analyst who attended the summit, said those stops risked fuelling more violence by emboldening Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden and Sunak "added more flames, they did not come with solutions", Masri said. "Those guys can bring a solution, they can stop Zionists... They can add protection to the Palestinians." — AFP

Social media's role in modeling human behavior, societies

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The extent of the power of social media on societies and individuals, especially after the revolution of smartphones and wide spread of multiple social media platforms, is no secret today. Now, almost every individual can open their own page or channel and broadcast through it whatever they perceive, which holds the possibility of being true or misleading, besides the difficulty of censoring and controlling violent scenes on different social media platforms, which may contribute to subconsciously normalizing inhumanity among individuals.

To dig deeper into this issue, Kuwait Times interviewed Associate Professor of Communication and Culture Studies at Kuwait University Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra, Professor of Mass Communication at Kuwait University Dr Khaled Al-Qahs and Psychologist and Therapist Jumanah Mohammad. Ghabra said the media is an integral factor that affects society just like other parts of society, such as the laws that make up the country, economy, education sector, etc. The influence of any structural institution such as the media will affect individuals' values, ethics and behaviors, which means it can affect our thoughts around racism, classism, nationalism and even issues of violence.

For instance, stereotypes about Muslims being terrorists were spread in US media, which led to the Muslim travel ban law in 2017 in the US. This does not stop there, as it seeps into other sectors such as schools. Hence, we cannot deny the media's impact on humans' attitudes and behavior.

On his part, Qahs said studies indicate that social media has diverse and multiple effects on the audience receiving the messages and content delivered to them. The process does not end with just sending the message (media content) from the sender to the final receiver. There are various effects on the ideas, values and behaviors of the audience, such as changing attitudes or perspectives, cognitive changes, socialization, collective excitement, emotional arousal, social control, reality construction and reinforcement of the status quo. However, media is not the sole cause of influencing humans. It operates through a network of elements and influences to create impact, such as the time we spend using social media, the nature of what we watch and our life experiences.

Moreover, Ghabra spoke about the relationship between exposure to inhuman actions through media and humans' behavior, as she said that the problem with the ethics and responsibility of reporting does not only fall upon the media — it is much deeper than that. It is the ideologies that circulate; for example, if we look at the promotion of violence against women, it is not necessarily that the media and popular culture are promoting it. It is the ideology of patriarchy



Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra



Jumanah Mohammad



Dr Khaled Al-Qahs

that taught individuals, both women and men, that men are superior to women, and this can also seep into our education, our upbringing (family), certain interpretations of religion and so forth.

Hence, people that write and produce the news, films, music, TV shows and so forth have already internalized this sort of thinking unknowingly, and this is reflected in different forms of

media and popular culture. Qahs added that many researchers in the field of media and its relationship with society have been concerned with the phenomenon of increasing violence in media content. Some studies suggest that the spread of violence in societies is due to the audience's exposure to content that contain verbal and physical violence. These studies have yielded several findings about violence, such as the fact that the audience (especially children and teenagers) learn violence through observation and watching, especially in TV series and movies.

Qahs also clarified that people do not automatically apply the aggressive behavior they observe but internalize it to moments of anger and stress. The repetition of viewing leads to desensitization towards violence and aggressive behavior, resulting in a lack of concern and tolerance towards violent behavior in the media, making people more inclined to tolerate violence in all its forms. Therefore, it is necessary to educate society about the dangers of the spread of violence, and the need to monitor media content, particularly the depiction of intense violence in news bulletins, TV series and movies.

Ultimately, Mohammad explained how individuals can protect themselves from adopting and normalizing wrongful behavior, as she said individuals should avoid excessive consumption of content that goes against human values and ethics, in order to prevent the burying of condemnation and the development of acceptance towards such content or actions. On the other hand, they should strengthen their thinking and good behavior through reading or engaging in dialogues with experts in the field, in order to close any intellectual gaps that social media influences may exploit, as the consequences can be significant.

MoH uses robot device to perform rare operations

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Ministry of Health (MoH) revealed on Saturday the use of the world's newest surgical robot device in performing an operation to remove a prostate from a patient suffering from a cancerous tumor. The MoH said in a statement that the robot (Da Vinci Xi) was used in the operation conducted last Wednesday at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center. On the same day, a regular robot was used to remove the kidney of another patient who also suffered from a cancerous tumor.

The director of the center, Dr Saad Al-Dosari, said that Dr Ali Abdul Wahab performed the two operations for the patients who left the center the next day. According to the statement, Al-Dosari said that the device (Da Vinci Xi) is one of the latest technologies applied in robotic surgeries and is used in multiple specialties. He pointed out that the operation performed using this device is characterized by low bleeding and does not cause acute pain as with traditional operations, as it does not require large incisions and wounds, as well as reducing the patient's hospital stay.

He added that what distinguishes surgical operations performed using a robot compared to a normal endoscope is the perfect 10-fold magnified and three-dimensional vision, in addition to the robot's hands having extreme precision because they contain joints that enable them to rotate like a human hand, allowing sewing to the smallest millimeter using the smallest types of needles and threads, in addition to "hand tremor filtering", which facilitates the surgeon's work and reduces the rate of complications.

Al-Dosari pointed to studies that have proven that



"robot-assisted surgeries are safe. More than five million robot-assisted operations have been performed globally. Robot has been adopted by the American Food and Drug Administration as a technique used to perform surgical operations by surgeons who have received certified training."

He pointed to the increase in the number of robotic devices used at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Kidney and Urology Center. This is to ensure that the MoH uses the latest technologies in surgical procedures, specifically artificial intelligence technologies. He said that since 2014, the center has witnessed more than 1,500 major robot-assisted surgeries, including radical removal of the prostate, bladder, kidneys, and tumors, and modification of the congenital defect in the kidney pelvis. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait medics use the world's newest surgical robot device in performing an operation to remove a prostate from a patient suffering from a cancerous tumor.

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Embassy in France cautions Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Embassy in France has urged its nationals to exercise caution, heed local authorities' instructions, and steer clear of outgoing protests or rallies. In a statement received by KUNA, the embassy asked Kuwaitis in France to be cautious for their own safety and to maintain contact with the embassy using the following phone numbers: Emergency number: (+33670673834) Embassy number: (+33147235425)

Also, the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs has 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. They can seek any help they need by calling the embassy in Lebanon at the following phone number: 0096171171441. — KUNA

KRCS offers urgent aid to Palestinians

GAZA: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) carried on providing urgent aid to Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip amid the ongoing campaign dubbed "Kuwait besides you." KRCS said in a statement that it has provided meals, bread, and the second batch of medical supplies to hospitals in Gaza. The campaign comes amid a death toll due to the Zionist barbaric aggression on the Gaza Strip, which went up to 4,385 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian health authorities. The authorities added in a statement that the number of those injured went up to 13,561 people.

KRCS has been providing urgent aid to Palestinians that have been facing the occupation forces' aggression for 15 days in a row. The society announced that it had donated three fully equipped ambulances for brothers in the Strip. KRCS' Director General Abdulrahman Al-Aoun told KUNA in a statement that this

donation is part of society's humanitarian contributions during these current events in Gaza. He added that ambulances will be transported through Egypt when the Rafah crossing is opened, noting that this support aims to strengthen ambulances and emergency capabilities in the Strip to remain able to provide ambulance services to the Palestinian people.

Al-Aoun elaborated that the KRCS continues to distribute daily meals and loaves of bread in shelter centers, and it delivers some medical devices and supplies to the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip. He pointed out that a convoy of relief and medical aid is currently prepared to enter the Gaza Strip in coordination and cooperation with the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescent Societies. Al-Aoun affirmed that the Palestinian issue is a "permanent issue" for the association and Kuwaiti people in general.

He indicated that Kuwait would not hesitate to offer all possible relief, humanitarian aid, and development assistance to the brotherly Palestinian people. Meanwhile, director general of the Wafa Foundation for Development and Capacity Building, Mohsen

Kuwait, Arabs seek end to Gaza bombardments

Arab ambassadors urge EU to be on right side of history

KUWAIT: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call from Portuguese Foreign Minister Joao Titterington Gomes Cravinho. Sheikh Salem asserted during the phone call the importance of ending the cycle of violence and ensuring such violence would not spread to other areas, including the protection of civilians. The two ministers also discussed the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and Gaza Strip, including boosting efforts to ensure humanitarian aid reaches the Palestinian people, in addition to achieving a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian conflict.

Right side of history

The Council of Arab Ambassadors in Brussels has called on the European Union to put pressure on Zionists to stop their aggression in Gaza and underlined that there can be no peace and security in the region without a solution to the question of Palestine. Speaking at a press conference organized by the Council at the Brussels Press Club, Jordan's Ambassador to Belgium and the EU, Saja Majali, said, "We as Arab countries enjoy partnerships with the EU, and we expect the EU to also stand by the Palestinian people."

"We urge our friends to be on the right side of history, and the right side of history is to stand with the helpless Palestinian people," she stressed. Majali noted that if one thing has united the Arab world, it is the Palestinian cause. "We have never been divided when it came to Palestine, and we express solidarity with our Palestinian brethren," she added. On his part, Palestine's Ambassador to the EU and Belgium, Abdulrahman Alfarra, called on the EU to put pressure on Zionists to stop the aggression in Gaza.

"We call on the EU to play a catalyst role to urge Zionists to meet their international obligations as an occupying power and return to negotiations on a two-state solution that provides a viable



Arab Ambassadors (in Brussels) urges EU to be on the right side of history. — KUNA

state for Palestine," he said. "It is beyond belief that some still speak of the right to self-defense of an occupying power that has made it clear it is seeking blind vengeance, forced transfer, and annihilation of our people," Alfarra said.

On his part, Egyptian Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union Badr Abdel Aty said there is a high level of anger in our region, and we are very concerned about the spillover from the current cycle of violence. "The core of the problem in our region is the Palestinian issue. Without solving it, there cannot be comprehensive peace and security in our region," he stressed. The Egyptian ambassador denied that the Rafah border crossing from Egypt to Gaza has been closed from the Egyptian side.

"This is not true and false information," he said, and he clarified that aid convoys from the EU, the UN, and the international community are waiting at the border for security guarantees from Zionists that they will not

be attacked. He stressed that the transfer of the people of Gaza is "not acceptable to Egyptians, Palestinians, and Arabs." Saudi Ambassador to Belgium, Dr. Khalid Al-Jindan, said in his intervention that so long as the occupation continues, the crisis in the region will continue. Answering a question on western hostages reportedly being held by Hamas in Gaza, Aljindan recalled that there are 6,000 Palestinian prisoners in jails and nobody talks about them as hostages.

Fadi Hajali, Ambassador of Lebanon to Belgium and the EU, said the people in Lebanon are "emotionally very distressed" by what might happen to them following the atrocities taking place in Gaza. "Our request is for an immediate ceasefire and to help the civilians as fast as possible," he added. The press conference was organized by the Council of Arab Ambassadors, including the Kuwait embassy, to address the aggression on Palestine, its people, and the European position. — KUNA



KRCS continues offering urgent aid to Palestinians in Gaza. — KUNA photos



Atawneh, told KUNA that the KRCS has provided, through its team of volunteers and the foundation, hot meals to displaced families since the first day of the aggression on the Gaza Strip.

He added that KRCS' bakery has been approved, which covers a daily amount of bread for shelter centers and the displaced, in addition to supplying diesel to hospitals and providing large quantities of medicines and medical supplies. The move has an effective impact on mitigating the sufferings of the displaced families, he said.

'Brutal bombing'

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Ahmad Aboul Gheit of the Arab League affirmed on Saturday the necessity of reaching an "immediate ceasefire" and ending the "brutal" bombing against the civilians of the Gaza Strip. In his speech at the Cairo Peace Summit, Aboul Gheit said that it is imperative to urgently open a safe corridor to deliver humanitarian aid to the entire Gaza Strip and ensure continued supplies of food, medicine, water, and energy.

He indicated that the continuation of the current situation shows a clear and flagrant violation of international humanitarian law by the occupying entity, the "occupying power". The Arab League rejects all "types of targeting and violence against civilians without discrimination," he said, noting that "all civilians are equal and the human soul has its sanctity". Aboul Gheit called on all parties, mainly those not involved in the conflict, to bear responsibility, exercise restraint, and not open the way for any measure that may increase any possible confrontation or lead to its expansion.

He further urged all international main powers to get an urgent agreement on reaching a limited and clear scope for a comprehensive political settlement that helps Palestinians establish their independent state and live in peace. Meanwhile, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki emphasized in his speech the union's readiness to make all possible efforts to reach "just and comprehensive peace" and a two-state solution. He called for an immediate stop to violence and mobilized humanitarian



support for food, water, and medicine. In addition, Faki called for the release of civilian hostages, mainly women and children.

UNRWA sets up tents

Meanwhile, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has established dozens of tents in western Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip, to accommodate a large number of refugees. In a press statement issued Saturday, the agency, which is receiving more than 500,000 persons in southern Gaza, called for abidance by international humanitarian law and protecting civilians, civil infrastructure, and UN facilities. It was noted that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Gaza is estimated at one million, half of whom live in UNRWA in the fifth governorate.

About 17,000 displaced persons at the Khan Yunis training center affiliated with the UNRWA live in tough conditions, as there are very limited utilities, it was noted. More than 8,000 IDPs, including the agency's workers, seek refuge at the UNRWA logistic base in Rafah, south of the Strip, it indicated. The agency stressed that it continued its efforts at high levels to deliver sustainable humanitarian supplies, including medicine, water, fuel, and food, to the Strip. Since the aggression launched by the occupation forces on Gaza, sixteen UNRWA workers have been killed, in addition to the wounding of several others. — KUNA



UNRWA's new refugee camp is expected to receive more than 500,000 persons in southern Gaza.



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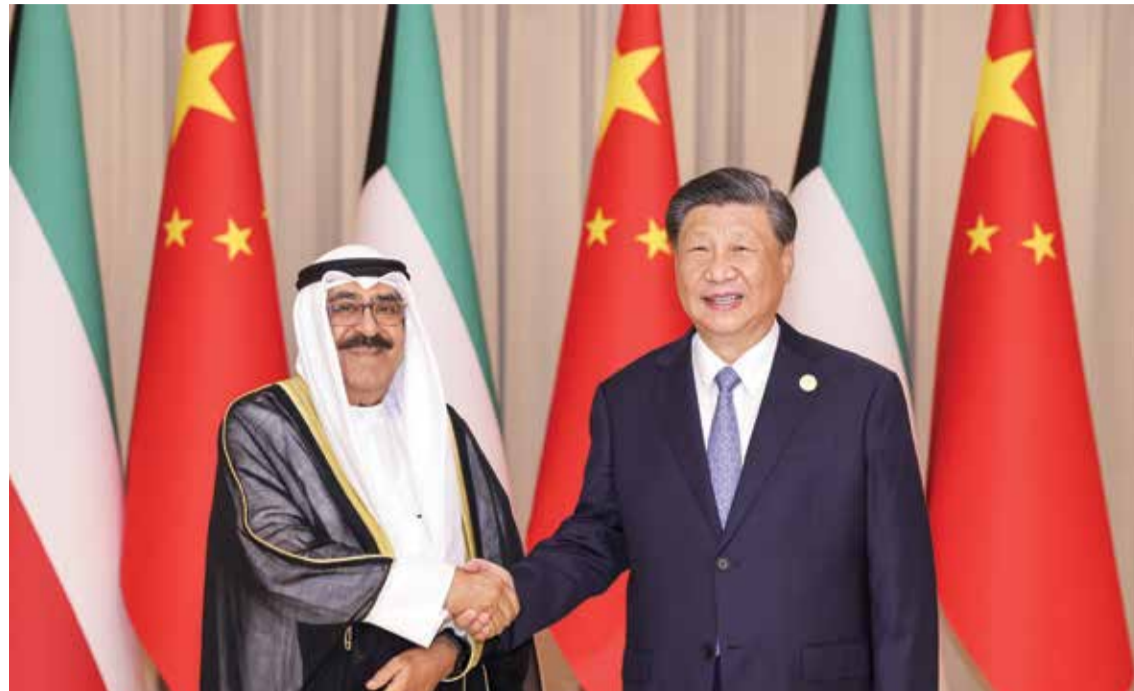
Building an Open, Inclusive and Interconnected World for Common Development



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Chinese President Xi Jinping



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his last visit to China.

*Keynote Speech by HE Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
At the Opening Ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation
October 18, 2023*

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Heads of International Organizations,
Representatives of Various Countries,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Today, we are meeting here for the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF). On behalf of the Chinese government and Chinese people and in my own name, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you all!

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) I proposed. The BRI, drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road and focusing on enhancing connectivity, aims to enhance policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity, inject new impetus into the global economy, create new opportunities for global development, and build a new platform for international economic cooperation.

Over these 10 years, we have stayed committed to this founding mission. Thanks to our joint efforts, Belt and Road international cooperation has gotten off the ground, grown rapidly and produced fruitful outcomes.

Belt and Road cooperation has extended from the Eurasian continent to Africa and Latin America. More than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations have signed Belt and Road cooperation documents. We have held two sessions of the BRF before, and have established over 20 specialized multilateral cooperation platforms under the BRI.

Belt and Road cooperation has progressed from "sketching the outline" to "filling in the details", and blueprints have been turned into real projects. A large number of signature projects and "small yet smart" people-centered programs have been launched.

Belt and Road cooperation has expanded from physical connectivity to institutional connectivity. Important guiding principles for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation have been laid down, which include the principle of "planning together, building together, and benefiting together," the philosophy of open, green and clean cooperation, and the goal of pursuing high-standard, people-centered and sustainable cooperation.

Over these 10 years, we have endeavored to build a global network of connectivity consisting of economic corridors, international transportation routes and information highways, as well as railways, roads, airports, ports, pipelines and power grids. Covering the land, the ocean, the sky and the Internet, this network has boosted the flow of goods, capital, technologies and human resources among countries involved and injected fresh vitality into the millennia-old Silk Road in the new era.

Trains speeding along rail tracks, automobiles running on roads, flights connecting different countries, cargo ships breaking waves, and e-commerce bringing so much convenience to people — they have all become symbols of international trade in the new era, just like camel caravans and the sailing ships were for the past age.

Hydro, wind and solar energy based power plants, oil and gas pipelines, and the increasingly smart and interconnected power transmission networks are removing the development bottleneck caused by energy shortage and fulfilling the dream of developing countries to achieve green and low-carbon development. These energy projects have become the oasis and lighthouse for sustainable development in the new era.

Brand new airports and harbors, smooth roads, and newly built industrial parks for business cooperation have created new economic corridors and new growth drivers, and have become the trading routes and staging posts of the new era.

Rich and colorful cultural years, art festivals, expos and exhibitions, Luban Workshops, people-to-people exchange programs like the Silk Road Community Building Initiative and the Brightness Action program, and deepening exchanges between non-governmental organizations, think tanks, media organizations, and the youth — all these flourishing activities have composed a symphony of friendship in the new era.

When COVID-19 struck, the Belt and Road became a life-saving road. China provided more than 10 billion masks and 2.3 billion doses of vaccines to other countries and jointly produced vaccines with over 20 countries, making a special contribution to BRI partners' efforts in fighting COVID-19. And China also received valuable support from more than 70 countries when it was hit hard by the pandemic.

Belt and Road cooperation is based on the prin-

ciple of "planning together, building together, and benefiting together." It transcends differences between civilizations, cultures, social systems, and stages of development. It has opened up a new path for exchanges among countries, and established a new framework for international cooperation. Indeed, the BRI represents humanity's joint pursuit of development for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Our achievements in the past decade are truly remarkable, and there is so much we can draw from them.

We have learned that humankind is a community with a shared future. China can only do well when the world is doing well. When China does well, the world will get even better. Through Belt and Road cooperation, China is opening its door even wider to the world, with its inland regions turning from "full-backs" into "forwards," and coastal regions scaling new heights in their opening-up. China's market has become even more closely integrated with the global market. China has become a main trading partner of more than 140 countries and territories and a primary source of investment for more countries. Both Chinese investment overseas and foreign investment in China have boosted friendship, cooperation, confidence and hope.

We have learned that win-win cooperation is the sure way to success in launching major initiatives that benefit all. When countries embrace cooperation and act in concert, a deep chasm can be turned into a thoroughfare, land-locked countries can become land-linked, and a place of underdevelopment can be transformed into a land of prosperity. Countries taking the lead in economic development should give a hand to their partners who are yet to catch up. We should all treat each other as friends and partners, respect and support each other, and help each other succeed. As the saying goes, when you give roses to others, their fragrance lingers on your hand. In other words, helping others is also helping oneself. Viewing others' development as a threat or taking economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's own life better or speed up one's development.

We have learned that the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit is the most important source of strength for Belt and Road cooperation. I once said that the pioneers of the ancient silk routes won their place in history not as conquerors with warships, guns, horses or swords. Rather, they are remembered as friendly emissaries leading camel caravans and sailing ships loaded with goods. Belt and Road cooperation is based on the belief that flame runs high when everyone adds wood to the fire and that mutual support can get us far. Such cooperation seeks to deliver a good life not only to people of just one country, but to people in other countries as well. It promotes connectivity, mutual benefit, common development, cooperation and win-win outcomes. Ideological confrontation, geopolitical rivalry and bloc politics are not a choice for us. What we stand against are unilateral sanctions, economic coercion and decoupling and supply chain disruption.

What has been achieved in the past 10 years demonstrates that Belt and Road cooperation is on the right side of history. It represents the advancing of our times, and it is the right path forward. We need to remain clear-eyed and undisturbed in a volatile world, and we need to be keenly aware of our responsibility for history, for the people and for the world. We should jointly address various global risks and challenges, and deliver a bright future of

peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Changes of the world, of our times, and of historical significance are unfolding like never before. China is endeavoring to build itself into a stronger country and rejuvenate the Chinese nation on all fronts by pursuing Chinese modernization. The modernization we are pursuing is not for China alone, but for all developing countries through our joint efforts. Global modernization should be pursued to enhance peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation and bring prosperity to all. On our way forward, we will encounter both headwinds and tailwinds. We need to stay focused on our goal, take results-oriented actions, persevere, and keep moving forward until our goal is met. China will work with all parties involved to deepen Belt and Road partnerships of cooperation, usher this cooperation into a new stage of high-quality development, and make relentless efforts to achieve modernization for all countries.

Now, I wish to announce eight major steps China will take to support our joint pursuit of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

First, building a multidimensional Belt and Road connectivity network. China will speed up high-quality development of the China-Europe Railway Express, participate in the trans-Caspian international transportation corridor, host the China-Europe Railway Express Cooperation Forum, and make joint efforts to build a new logistics corridor across the Eurasian continent linked by direct railway and road transportation. We will vigorously integrate ports, shipping and trading services under the "Silk Road Maritime," and accelerate the building of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and the Air Silk Road.

Second, supporting an open world economy. China will establish pilot zones for Silk Road e-commerce cooperation, enter into free trade agreements and investment protection treaties with more countries. We will remove all restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector. In light of international high-standard economic and trade rules, we will further advance high-standard opening up in cross-border service trade and investment, expand market access for digital and other products, and deepen reform in areas including the state-owned enterprises, digital economy, intellectual property and government procurement. China will hold the Global Digital Trade Expo annually. In the next five years (2024-2028), China's total trade in goods and services is expected to exceed USD 32 trillion and USD 5 trillion respectively.

Third, carrying out practical cooperation. China will promote both signature projects and "small yet smart" livelihood programs. The China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China will each set up a RMB 350 billion financing window. An additional RMB 80 billion will be injected into the Silk Road Fund. Together, they will support BRI projects on the basis of market and business operation. Cooperation agreements worth USD 97.2 billion have been concluded at the CEO Conference held during this Forum. China will carry out 1,000 small-scale livelihood assistance projects, and enhance vocational education cooperation through Luban Workshops and other initiatives. We will also step up joint efforts to ensure the safety of BRI projects and personnel.

Fourth, promoting green development. China will continue to deepen cooperation in areas such as green infrastructure, green energy and green transportation, and step up support for the BRI Interna-

tional Green Development Coalition. China will continue to hold the BRI Green Innovation Conference, and establish dialogue and exchange mechanisms for the solar industry and a network of experts on green and low-carbon development. China will implement the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road, and provide 100,000 training opportunities for partner countries by 2030.

Fifth, advancing scientific and technological innovation. China will continue to implement the Belt and Road Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan, hold the first Belt and Road Conference on Science and Technology Exchange, increase the number of joint laboratories built with other parties to 100 in the next five years, and support young scientists from other countries to work on short-term programs in China. At this Forum, China will put forward the Global Initiative for Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance. We stand ready to increase exchanges and dialogue with other countries and jointly promote the sound, orderly and secure AI development in the world.

Sixth, supporting people-to-people exchanges. China will host the Liangzhu Forum to enhance dialogue on civilizations with BRI partner countries. In addition to the Silk Road International League of Theaters, the Silk Road International Arts Festival, the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road, the Silk Road International Alliance of Art Museums, and the Silk Road International Library Alliance that have been set up, China has also launched the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities. And we will continue with the Chinese government scholarship Silk Road Program.

Seventh, promoting integrity-based Belt and Road cooperation. Together with its cooperation partners, China will release the Achievements and Prospects of Belt and Road Integrity Building and the High-Level Principles on Belt and Road Integrity Building, and establish the Integrity and Compliance Evaluation System for Companies Involved in Belt and Road Cooperation. We will also work with international organizations to carry out research and training on promoting integrity in Belt and Road cooperation.

Eighth, strengthening institutional building for international Belt and Road cooperation. China will work with its BRI partner countries to strengthen the building of multilateral cooperation platforms covering energy, taxation, finance, green development, disaster reduction, anti-corruption, think tank, media, culture and other fields. China will continue to host the BRF and establish a secretariat for the Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

The past decade has been a journey of dedicated cooperation and fruitful outcomes. Belt and Road cooperation was proposed by China, but its benefits and opportunities are for the world to share. Let us meet the expectations of the people, assume responsibilities entrusted on us by history, closely follow the trend of the times, and press ahead with energy and enterprise. Let us deepen Belt and Road international cooperation, and bring Belt and Road cooperation to a new stage of higher-quality and higher-level development. Let us advance modernization of all countries, build an open, inclusive and interconnected world for common development, and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind.

I wish the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation a full success!
Thank you.



International

Fleeing Zionist entity strikes, south Lebanon families move into schools

Nearly 4,000 people left flashpoint border areas

TYRE, Lebanon: Shocked by images of dead children in Gaza, Mustafa Al-Sayyid quickly whisked his family to the closest shelter when Zionist strikes began near his village in southern Lebanon this week.

"What we are seeing on television—the massacres happening in Gaza, the children—it cuts your heart to pieces," said the 53-year-old from Beit Lif, barely six kilometers (3.7 miles) from the Zionist entity border. "If I wasn't afraid this would happen to us, I wouldn't have left my home," said Sayyid, who has two wives and 11 children, around half of whom are under 10.

The family is among nearly 4,000 people who have fled flashpoint areas near the Zionist entity frontier and flocked to the southern city of Tyre, according to local officials. Around half are staying in three public schools that have been converted into makeshift shelters, while the rest hunker down with relatives or friends. The scale of displacement has gradually swelled since the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a massive October 7 assault on southern Zionist entity, killing at least 1,400 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping more than 200 in the deadliest attack in Zionist entity's history.

Since then, some 4,385 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed in relentless Zionist bombardments, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. The tensions have spread to the Lebanese-Zionist entity border, where near-daily tit-for-tat attacks have emptied out entire villages.

At least 22 people, including four civilians, have been killed on the Lebanese side, according to an AFP tally. And at least three soldiers and one civilian have died in Zionist entity. Sayyid, whose brother was killed in the 2006 war between Zionist entity and Hezbollah, said he wants to avoid any more family deaths. "All my children are young. If the apoca-

lypse comes, how will I get them all out in one go?" he wondered inside a classroom stripped of desks and dotted with thin mattresses.

"So I thought, better to leave now." Fears of a spillover loom large in Lebanon's border villages, which were occupied by Zionist entity forces for 22 years before their withdrawal in 2000. A steady stream of families, mostly from the pummeled village of Aita Al-Shaab, queued at the Tyre municipality this week to secure a spot in one of the classrooms. "We have reached full capacity in all of our shelters," said Tyre mayor Hassan Dbouk. "Now we are looking for a place to open a fourth centre." In the border village of Dhayra, farms and olive groves have been abandoned at the height of the harvest season.

Farmers already crushed by a four-year-long economic crisis in Lebanon are bracing for an uncertain fate—even if the fighting abruptly stops. "Everyone in Dhayra relies on farming. We have nothing but God and agriculture," said Mussa Suwaid, 47, speaking outside the Tyre shelter where he has been staying for a week. "I have five sheep, each worth around \$500. I left them without food and ran away," he added. He also was forced to leave behind his 88-year-old father and his cow.

"He told me he would rather die than abandon the cow and his home," Suwaid said.

Ravaged by an economic crisis that has been widely blamed on official corruption and ineptitude, Lebanon has not implemented an evacuation plan. Instead, the villagers have left under their own steam, strapping bags to motorcycles or hitching rides with neighbors.

Yulla Suwaid, unrelated to Mussa, said she waited for two hours in a pool of her own blood before her



TYRE, Lebanon: Mustafa Al-Sayyid's children who fled their village in southern Lebanon, sit in a classroom of a school where displaced Lebanese families from villages near the southern border took refuge in Tyre city, on October 19. — AFP

brother came to save her during the Zionist entity bombardment that destroyed their Dhayra home last Wednesday. The 43-year-old school teacher was running down the stairs when the strike sent part of the wall crashing down on her legs, leaving her badly wounded.

"If I had completely lost my legs, what would I have done? Who would have taken care of me?" she asked at a shelter in Tyre, both legs fully bandaged after surgery. In a nearby school, Ahmad from Beit

Lif said he had planned to get married this month. Instead, the 26-year-old buried his father, who died of cancer, as the Zionists shelled nearby. He then fled to Tyre with his fiancée's family.

Declining to provide his surname due to security concerns, Ahmad fought back tears as he recalled one of his father's last actions. "I made him go to my fiancée's family to ask for her hand in marriage," he told AFP. "I smile, but there is a lot of sadness underneath." — AFP

Pakistan's ex-PM Sharif arrives home for comeback bid

LAHORE: Three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan on Saturday after four years of self-imposed exile, primed to make a political comeback ahead of elections. Thousands of supporters were waiting for him at a rally in his power base of Lahore where the streets have been shrouded in green and yellow party banners. Pakistan is facing overlapping security, economic and political crises ahead of polls already pushed back to January 2024, with Sharif's primary opponent, the fiercely popular Imran Khan, languishing in jail.

"We are completely ready for elections," he told reporters before his flight left Dubai for Islamabad.

"Our country which should have been at the heights of prosperity has really gone backwards," he said. "How did we get here? Why did it come to this?" Sharif was serving a prison sentence for graft when he left the country in 2018 seeking medical care in Britain, ignoring multiple court orders to return.

Analysts say he has likely brokered a deal with the powerful military establishment and last week a court granted him protective bail, temporarily removing the threat of arrest. The "Lion of Punjab" touched down briefly in Islamabad where he signed court papers, before flying on to Lahore and taking a helicopter to the Greater Iqbal Park where he will address his supporters. More than 7,000 police have been enlisted to control



LAHORE: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stands beside his daughter Maryam Nawaz (left) as he waves to his supporters gathered at a park during an event held to welcome him in Lahore on October 21, 2023. — AFP

crowds, according to a senior officer on site.

"I'm here to welcome my leader. The inflation is very high and poor people are desperate," said 18-year-old Razi Ullah. "God has given him a chance to come back and turn things around. He's done it before." Sharif's return has been touted for months by his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, who hope his political clout and "man of the soil" swagger will revive its flagging popularity.

"I am a poor man, I expect only one thing from Nawaz Sharif: that he brings down inflation," said 50-year-old Umar Sabir who travelled over 250 kilometers (155 miles) to attend the rally. Sharif has been prime minister three times but never completed a full term. Often draped in a red Gucci scarf, he has seen

more" help sent through. The UN has said that about 100 trucks per day are needed to meet worsening needs in Gaza. The Palestinians need "a continuous delivery of aid to Gaza at the scale that is needed", the UN chief told the Cairo "Summit for Peace".

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi argued that the "only solution" to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict is "justice" and said that "Palestinians must realize their legitimate rights to self-determination" and have "an independent state on their land". Abbas stressed his demand for a two-state solution and an "end to (the Zionist entity's) occupation" and rejected what he has warned could be a "second Nakba" — a reference to the more than 760,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven from their lands during the creation of the state of the Zionist entity. "We will not leave," he repeated three times at the end of his speech.

Cairo and Amman have repeatedly rejected calls for large numbers of refugees to enter Egypt from Gaza, warning that a "forced displacement" of Palestinians would lead to the "eradication of the Palestinian cause". Egypt and Jordan were the first Arab states to normalize relations with the Zionist entity, in 1979 and 1994 respectively, and have since been key mediators between Zionist and Palestinian officials.

Turkey's foreign minister Hakan Fidan urged for the current conflict to become, "rather than a regional conflagration, a breeding ground for a just and lasting peace". He also condemned "unconditional military aid to the Zionist entity which only serves to maintain the occupation", while Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan condemned the failure of the UN Security Council to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire after a US veto. — Agencies

Antony Blinken welcomed the aid and urged "all parties" to keep the Rafah crossing open. But a Hamas spokesman said "even dozens" of such convoys could not meet Gaza's needs, especially as no fuel was being allowed in to help distribute the supplies to those in need.

Tens of thousands of Zionist troops have deployed to the Gaza border ahead of an expected ground offensive that officials have pledged will begin "soon". A full-blown Zionist ground offensive carries many risks, including to the hostages Hamas took and whose fate is shrouded in uncertainty. So the release of two Americans among the hostages — mother and daughter Judith and Natalie Raanan — offered a rare "sliver of hope", said Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross. — AFP

Storm Babet triggers flooding, power cuts in northern Europe

STOCKHOLM: Deadly Storm Babet unleashed extensive flooding and damaged towns in Denmark and Norway late Friday and early Saturday, while continuing to sweep across the UK. Three people died in Scotland and England and families were trapped in flooded homes on Friday as the storm battered Britain and Ireland.

After it made landfall in Scandinavia, the storm triggered a sharp rise in water levels in towns in southern Denmark, flooding the first floor of homes which were left without power for several hours. Water levels in several Danish towns exceeded their normal height by more than two metres (seven feet), levels normally only reached once every hundred years, according to Denmark's DMI weather service.

"We are having to clear large quantities of water from the towns, especially in southern Jutland," Martin Vendelbo of the Danish Emergency Management Agency told the Ritzau news agency. Fishing boats were left stranded or about to sink in the port town of Rodvig, according to photos from Danish media. In southern Norway, up to 20,000 residents were without power early Saturday after strong winds blew roofs off buildings and downed trees and power masts, but the Norwegian news agency NTB said the situation was improving.

The storm continued to wreak havoc in the UK, with London's King's Cross station forced to close on Satur-

day afternoon to prevent passengers massing on platforms after the cancellation or delay of numerous trains. Network Rail said on X, formerly Twitter, that London North Eastern Railway (LNER), which runs services between London and the north-east of England and Scotland, was still severely disrupted due to the storm.

Leeds Bradford airport in northern England, which was closed on Friday after a passenger plane skidded off the runway in strong winds, reopened late Saturday morning. The UK's Environment Agency has issued three severe flood warnings posing "a danger to life" in the area around the River Derwent in the city of Derby, central England.

Flood duty manager at the Environment Agency, Katharine Smith, said "ongoing flooding is probable on some larger rivers including the Severn, Ouse and Trent through to Tuesday." Interviewed on BBC One on Saturday morning, Labour MP Toby Perkins said that around 400 homes in his constituency of Chesterfield in central England had been flooded, and that many people now had "no idea where they're going to be living from now". Scotland was left reeling after two people died in the county of Angus, with First Minister Humza Yousaf warning on X for people to exercise caution in light of a red severe weather warning in the coastal county and parts of Aberdeenshire.

The chief executive of Aberdeenshire Council Jim Savege, however, adopted a reassuring tone on BBC Breakfast, saying "it's been quite quiet overnight in terms of a low level of incidents to respond to".

Almost all the 33,000 homes left without power in Scotland had been reconnected by Saturday morning, according to the Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN). — AFP

Kuwait deeply affected by killing...

Continued from Page 1

The Zionist entity says around 1,500 Hamas fighters were killed in clashes before its army regained control of the area under attack. The Zionist entity has hit back with a relentless bombing campaign, killing more than 4,300 Palestinians, mainly civilians, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry, and cut off supplies of water, electricity, fuel and food.

Guterres said "the grievances of the Palestinian people are legitimate and long" after "56 years of occupation with no end in sight" but stressed that "nothing can justify the reprehensible assault by Hamas that terrorized (Zionist) civilians". He then stressed that "those abhorrent attacks can never justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people".

Jordan's King Abdullah II called for "an immediate end to the war on Gaza" and condemned what he labelled "global silence" on Palestinian death and suffering. "The message the Arab world is hearing is loud and clear: Palestinian lives matter less than (Zionist) ones. Our lives matter less than other lives," he charged. "The application of international law is optional. And human rights have boundaries — they stop at borders, they stop at races, and they stop at religions."

The summit came on the day a first convoy of aid trucks rumbled into southern Gaza, which Guterres said needed to be rapidly scaled up, with "much

First aid enters Gaza ravaged by...

Continued from Page 1

after the trucks passed. The lorries had been waiting for days on the Egyptian side after the Zionist entity agreed to a request from its main ally the United States to allow aid to enter.

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned Friday that the relief supplies were "the difference between life and death" for many Gazans, more than one million of whom have been displaced. "Much more" aid needs to be sent, he told a peace summit in Egypt on Saturday. US Secretary of State

All eyes on Qatar in Gaza captive...

Continued from Page 1

The West is increasingly using the influence of the small but gas-rich Gulf Arab state, a key global investor, in such situations, with the role of Qatar also crucial to the release last month of five Americans held by Iran. While Egypt has traditionally in recent years served as the main mediator between the Zionist entity and Palestinian groups and Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also makes no secret of its desire to be involved, the focus is on Qatar helping to return the captives safely.

"The most accommodating mediator is Qatar," said Hasni Abidi, director of the Geneva-based Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World (CERMAM). "It knows Hamas well and is its loyal financial backer," he said, in referring to Doha's financing of the salaries of civil servants in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip. Qatar, which has hosted Hamas' political office for more than 10 years, is also respected by the United States, the Zionist entity's chief ally. It is home to the largest US military base in the region.

The Zionist entity says 203 people — Zionists, dual nationals and foreigners — were abducted by Hamas gunmen when they launched the deadliest attacks in the Zionist entity's 75-year history. At least 1,400 people were killed, according to the government. The Zionist entity has responded with a relent-

less bombing campaign against the Gaza Strip that has left at least 4,385 people dead, mostly civilians, according to the Hamas administration.

US captives Judith Tai Raanan and her daughter Natalie Shoshana Raanan were back in the Zionist entity late Friday, the Zionist government said. "This is a very good outcome obtained by the negotiators, in which Qatar played a very important role," Macron told a group of reporters Friday. Macron said France wanted similar operations to go on in the next "hours and days" to continue "allowing hostages, in particular our hostages, to get out".

"We are confident: The channels we have are the right ones and are useful," he added. In a later message on X, formerly Twitter, Macron said Qatar played a "decisive role" in securing the release of the two American captives. Qatar is a "specialist in the release of hostages", said Etienne Dignat of Sciences Po university in Paris and an expert on hostage situations. It was with Qatar that \$6 billion of frozen Iranian funds from South Korean banks was parked pending the release in a hugely complex and sensitive swap deal of the five American citizens held by Iran.

It appears to have been no coincidence that Macron's envoy for Lebanon, the former foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, a trusted confidant of the president on security issues, was in Qatar this week, according to diplomatic sources. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also paid a visit to Qatar on his marathon trip to the region this week.

The emirate had invited the Taleban to open an office in Doha with the approval of the United States, making it possible to negotiate the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan in 2021. — AFP

In war-torn Gaza, fears of...

Continued from Page 1

fearing the war will push Gaza's residents — two-thirds of whom are refugees — to flee again. "What's happening is dangerous," Ashur told AFP. "I fear that the ongoing destruction has a clear aim, so people don't have a place to live which will spark a new Nakba," he said, referring to the 760,000 Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 war that accompanied the Zionist entity's creation.

Gaza's population of 2.4 million is largely made

up of descendants of those refugees. Ashur was just eight when he and his family fled in 1948 from Majdal — what is today the Zionist town of Ashkelon — to Gaza. And for him, the ongoing war brings back painful memories. "What's happening today is much worse. At the time, (the Zionist entity) would shoot to kill and force people to flee but the current situation is more horrific," he said.

The Oct 7 attack was the most deadly attack on Zionist soil since the state was founded. Since then, more than 4,300 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed in relentless Zionist bombardments, according to Gaza's health ministry. At least a million Gazans have been displaced by the ongoing bombing campaign, the UN says, with the Zionist entity also cutting off supplies of water, electricity, fuel and food to the impoverished enclave. — AFP

International

Arabs face reprisals in Zionist entity

A campaign of arrests and dismissals over online solidarity with Gaza

HAIFA, Zionist entity: A campaign of arrests, sackings and dismissals have targeted Zionist entity Arabs or Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem over social media posts expressing solidarity with the heavily bombarded Gaza Strip. Zionist entity Arabs—many of whom identify as Palestinian citizens of Zionist entity—have expressed solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza amid Zionist entity's aerial bombing campaign that has so far killed over 4,000 people in the impoverished enclave, the majority civilians, according to the health ministry in the Strip.

The campaign comes in response to an October 7 attack that saw Hamas militants infiltrate into southern Zionist entity by land, air and sea, killing 1,400 people. Abir Bakr, a lawyer for Palestinian singer Dalal Abu Amneh who was arrested briefly four days ago, told AFP her client "went to the police station to file a complaint after she received hundreds of messages in both English and Arabic threatening her and her family with death". But rather than investigating her complaint, "she was detained because of a comment she posted on Facebook," Bakr said.

"They put cuffs on her hands and feet, and subjected her to insults and humiliation. They want to frighten people and teach them a lesson through Dalal" because "she wrote a single sentence" on social media, Bakr continued. Following the start of Zionist entity's bombardment of Gaza, Abu Amneh had posted "there is no victor but Allah" alongside a Palestinian flag on her Facebook page. The Zionist entity police said Abu Amneh had been arrested on suspicion of "publication of incitement" and "behavior that could harm public order". The famed singer—who has several hundred thousand followers on Instagram—is also a neurologist in the Zionist city of Haifa.

The magistrate court in the city of Nazareth on Wednesday ordered her release on bail set at 2,500 shekels (\$625). But she was placed under house arrest in her mother's home, and has been forbidden from posting about the ongoing war for 45 days.

Bakr pointed out that "translations from Arabic to Hebrew are often faulty, which leads to misunderstanding of the context" in many of the posts. Every day, Zionist entity police publish statements detailing the arrests of people who have written or liked content they consider inciting.

Among them are those who circulated video clips of the Zionist entity who were killed during the Hamas attack in Zionist entity on October 7, police said. Many Arabs in Zionist entity and residents of east Jerusalem—annexed by Zionist entity following the 1967 Six Day War—refused to talk to AFP, fearing reprisals. Zionist entity police on Wednesday said they "arrested 76 people" from east Jerusalem "on suspicion of committing crimes of incitement on Facebook and supporting terrorist organizations". Lawyers also said a young man in the village of Kabul in northern Zionist



SDEROT: A picture taken on Oct 21, 2023 shows smoke rising over buildings in the Gaza Strip during a Zionist strike. — AFP

entity was arrested for five days simply for posting a photo of children in Gaza with the words "my heart is with you". Hassan Jabareen, director of the Adalah organization which works to defend the rights of the Arab minority in Zionist entity, told AFP "there are many people on the right wing who are filing complaints against Arab citizens".

Zionist police chief Kobi Shabtai has meanwhile banned any "demonstrations against the war", which Adalah considers illegal. According to Zionist entity media, at least 63 Arabs in the territory have been arrested so far for posts that allegedly "support terrorism", though details of most posts were not made clear. Students and workers inside Zionist entity have

been subject to dismissals and legal prosecution, Zionist entity's left-leaning Haaretz newspaper wrote in an editorial Wednesday.

The state of emergency currently imposed in Zionist entity "constitutes fertile ground for violation of individual rights, and especially freedom of expression", the editorial said. "Arab citizens expressing opinions diverging from the general trend have been fired," it added. The newspaper further said "the Rehovot municipality, for example, demanded that construction contractors in the city sign a promise not to allow Arab workers on the work site".

Jaafar Farah, director of the Musawah rights organization, told AFP that "since the beginning of the war,

almost 150 (Arab) workers have been fired and about 200 students from various universities and educational institutions have been dismissed" for expressing solidarity with Gaza on social media. Heads of Zionist universities on Wednesday published a letter to Education Minister Yoav Kisch in which they said "they play their role in holding accountable the few who express solidarity with terrorist organizations". And an Arab teacher in a secondary school in the city of Tiberias was suspended until further notice for liking the page "Eye on Palestine" on Instagram, according to a group of lawyers following the case. The acting mayor of Tiberias, Boaz Yosef, said: "If she wants to teach, let her go teach in Gaza." — AFP

For displaced Gazans, fear and suffering on the road south

KHAN YUNIS: Fadwa Al-Najjar said she walked for 10 hours with her family from the north of war-torn Gaza to reach a UN camp for displaced Palestinians, witnessing terrifying scenes along the road. "We left the house at 10 am and we got here at 8 pm," said the 38-year-old who walked 30 kilometers (18 miles) with her seven children after Zionist entity told more than a million Palestinians to move south ahead of an expected ground offensive. More than 4,100 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed in relentless Zionist bombardments, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Najjar said she left the north with nearly 90 members of her extended family who were forced to walk because they couldn't pay the 1,000-shekel fare (\$250) demanded by a bus driver.

"We tried to rest along the way but the bombardments were intense so we started to run," she said, describing how at one point, several cars on the road in front of them were hit by a strike. "We saw bodies and limbs torn off and we just started praying, thinking we were going to die," she said, standing outside one of dozens of tents at the emergency camp.

Zionist entity has denied targeting civilians who were fleeing to the south and has accused Hamas of using the population as "human shields"—a charge denied by the Palestinian Islamist movement.

"The bombings were happening overhead all the way. I would have preferred not to leave, to have stayed at home and died there," said Malak, one of Najjar's daughters. The tents, which can hold hundreds of people, were set up by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) on the western edge of Khan Yunis. Opposite, street vendors have set up stalls selling tinned goods, cooking pots and drinks. Earlier this week, the UN said "over one million people, almost half the total population of Gaza, have been displaced" with some 600,000 in the central and southern part of the enclave, which is home to 2.4 million people.—AFP



KHAN YUNIS: Displaced people fetch drinking water in the yard of a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) school in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on October 20, 2023. — AFP



SRIHARIKOTA, India: This handout photo taken and released by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on October 21, 2023, shows the lift-off of the Gaganyaan Test Vehicle (TV) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. — AFP

India launches key test for manned orbital mission

NEW DELHI: India on Saturday successfully launched the first unmanned trial run of its upcoming crewed orbital mission, in the latest milestone for its spacefaring ambitions. The Gaganyaan ("Skycraft") mission is slated to send three astronauts into Earth's orbit in 2025, an important yardstick of the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) technical capabilities. Saturday's rocket tested the emergency escape system of its crew module, which separated from the thruster and made a soft sea landing about 10 minutes after the launch.

"I am very happy to announce the successful accomplishment of the mission," ISRO chief S. Somanath said afterwards. The lift-off was postponed for two hours after bad weather and a glitch in the engine. ISRO will conduct a series of 20 major tests, including carrying a robot to outer space, before the final manned mission takes place in 2025. Gaganyaan is the first mission of its kind for India and comes with an estimated price tag of \$1.08 billion, according to ISRO.

India plans to send astronauts beyond the reaches of Earth's atmosphere for three days before they are brought safely back with a soft landing in Indian territorial waters. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced plans to send a man to the Moon by 2040 following a year of triumphs for India's space program. India became in August just the fourth nation to land an unmanned craft on the Moon after Russia, the United States and China.

The following month, India launched a probe to observe the outermost layers of the Sun from solar orbit. India's space program has grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the Moon in 2008, and it has steadily matched the achievements of established spacefaring powers at a fraction of their cost. India also plans a joint mission with Japan to send another probe to the Moon by 2025 and an orbital mission to Venus within the next two years. Experts say India can keep costs low by copying and adapting existing technology, and thanks to an abundance of highly skilled engineers who earn a fraction of their foreign counterparts' wages.—AFP

How today's age of misinformation is holding back progress

Harm reduction is a prominent topic among policymakers, business leaders and the general public, being an important contributor to a healthier, thriving society¹. But despite the advantages of harm reduction approaches to society, today's lack of factual information, era of misinformation and a growing distrust of science² threatens to erode the positive advantages brought by such practices.

There is a risk that when individuals lack the full facts related to harm reduction options and practices, they may be hesitant to take positive action out of fear or skepticism over the benefits of such positive action. Vaccine hesitation provides us with a timely example. A US study of data derived from leading social networks and directly from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found a correlation between misinformation and vaccine uptake. Where misinformation rose, vaccine uptake decreased³.

Digging deeper, evidence suggests that active misinformation isn't the only hurdle to individuals being adequately informed about their health. A recent study released by the American Academy of Dermatology points to the dangers of a simple lack of understanding in other areas related to personal health⁴. The survey of more than 1,000 adults in the United States found that 67 percent of respondents believe that SPF 30 sunscreen offers twice as much protection from the sun's harmful UV rays as SPF 15 sunscreen. Meanwhile, 43 percent are unaware that shade protects a person from UV rays.

Looking at nutrition, a research paper⁵ on the impact of consumer confusion on nutrition literacy and subsequent dietary behavior sheds light on the causes of uninformed consumers. The paper found that "inadequate nutrition information derived from unreliable sources, flawed baseline nutrition knowl-

edge, and poor nutrition literacy" hold participants back from making healthier dietary choices.

Misinformation and a lack of access to the facts is also holding back progress towards a smoke-free future. In an international survey of more than 29,000 adults, we at PMI found that nearly half of respondents wrongly believed that e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products are more than or equally as harmful as cigarettes (around 45 percent for each product category). Meanwhile, according to the same survey, more than six-in-ten exclusive smokers (63 percent) would be more likely to switch to a better alternative (such as e-cigarettes or heated tobacco products) if they had clarity on how they differ from cigarettes and the science behind them⁶.

The examples shared above all point towards a need for greater transparency of factual information, open two-way dialogue, and a louder voice for science among all forms of media platforms if misinformation and misunderstanding related to personal wellbeing, in the broadest sense, are to be addressed. Misleading or inaccurate information, whether online or offline, has a very real impact on people's perceptions and behaviors. At best, it leaves the public confused. At worst, it erodes their trust in facts, science, and expert guidance, and can lead them to make unwise and therefore unhealthy choices.

Ultimately, facts become too difficult to ignore. But we can achieve so much more, much faster, if we make a conscious effort to eliminate misinformation. Scientific evidence and transparency remain our strongest tools to achieve this and enable both men and women to make informed decisions.

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¹<https://www.was=hingtontimes.com/video/harm-reduction/>

²<https://www.britannica.com/story/what-makes-people-distrust-science-surprisingly-not-politics>

³<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-10070-w>

⁴<https://www.aad.org/news/new-aad-survey-reveals-growing-importance-sun-protection>

⁵<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/185506774.pdf>

⁶<https://www.pmi.com/media-center/news/misinformation-a-major-threat-to-smoke-free-progress>



Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2023

Gulf Bank records KD 53.8 million in net profit for first 9 months of 2023

Net profit increased by 18% compared to 2022

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first nine months ending 30 September 2023. The bank reported a net profit of KD 53.8 million, an increase of KD 8.1 million or 18 percent compared to 2022 first nine months net profit of KD 45.7 million.

The increase in the bank's net profit was mainly driven by a 7 percent or KD 7.3 million increase in net interest income for the first nine months of 2023. As a result, operating income grew by 6 percent or KD 7.8 million to reach KD 140.1 million and operating profit grew by 8 percent to reach KD 75.2 million for the same period.

Subsequently, the bank's return on assets improved from 0.9 percent in the first nine months of 2022 to 1.0 percent for the same period of 2023 and return on equity grew from 9.0 percent to 10.0 percent. For the third quarter of 2023, the bank reported a net profit of KD 18.0 million, an increase of 17 percent over the third quarter of 2022. Operating income for the third quarter of 2023 was KD 47.9 million, an increase of 2 percent compared to the same period of last year and operating profit was KD 25.9 million, with an increase of 2 percent over the same period of last year.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio stood at 1.2 percent as of 30 September 2023, similar to the prior year. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 470 percent including total provisions and collaterals.

Total credit provisions as of 30 September 2023 reached KD 311 million whereas IFRS9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 190 million. As a result, the bank has very healthy excess provision level of KD 120 million, which is above what is required by the IFRS9 accounting requirements. As of 30 September 2023, total assets stood at KD 7.0 billion while net loans and advances reached KD 5.2 billion. Shareholders' equity reached KD 740 million and total deposits stood at KD 5.1 billion for the same period.

The bank's regulatory Tier 1 ratio as of 30 September 2023 was 13.6 percent which is above the regulatory minimum of 12 percent while the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 15.8 percent, which is above the regulatory minimum of 14 percent.

Strong performance

Commenting on the first nine months of 2023 financial results, Gulf Bank's Chairman Jassim Mustafa Boodai said: "We are very pleased with our third-quarter

**Jassim Mustafa Boodai:**

- The third-quarter results demonstrate solid progress against our strategy and strengthen the Bank's position as one of the leading Kuwaiti financial institutions.

- For the third quarter of 2023, the bank reported a net profit of KD 18.0 million, an increase of 17 percent over the third quarter of 2022.

results, which showcase our continuous strong performance. These results demonstrate solid progress against our strategy and reinforce the bank position as one of the leading Kuwaiti financial institutions."

Enhanced customer experience

One of Gulf Bank key milestones during the third quarter of 2023 was the launch of the newest version of the bank's mobile application. The new version of the app incorporates advanced security features to safeguard customer data and financial transactions while providing a seamless user experience. It also includes many features and services, available through a smart user interface, which are designed to meet customer requirements. It is worth mentioning that currently 90 percent of Gulf Bank transactions take place through electronic channels in line with the overall digital transformation strategy of the bank.

Community support and youth programs

Gulf Bank continues its commitment to support community by launching data science and innovation programs aimed at empowering the youth. Internally, the Bank launched the ninth edition of its AJYAL program a dedicated development program to enhance employees' skills and capabilities in accordance with the highest international banking standards. This program demonstrates Gulf Bank's dedication to hosting a thriving work environment and supporting employees in reaching their full potential.

Recognition of credit worthiness

Gulf Bank's creditworthiness and financial strength is recognized internationally. During the year 2023, Capital Intelligence affirmed the bank's Long-Term Foreign Currency Rating at 'A+' with a

Stable Outlook. In addition, Capital Intelligence has affirmed the bank's KD 50 million Basel III-compliant Tier 2 Subordinated Bonds at "BBB+" with a "Stable" Outlook. Furthermore, Fitch Ratings has assigned Gulf Bank a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating of 'A' with a 'Stable' Outlook, and Moody's Investor Services has assigned the Bank a Long-Term Deposits rating of 'A3' with a 'Stable' Outlook.

These ratings are a testament to Gulf Bank's solid financial performance, experienced management, and ability to navigate the global and local banking landscape successfully.

Acknowledgements

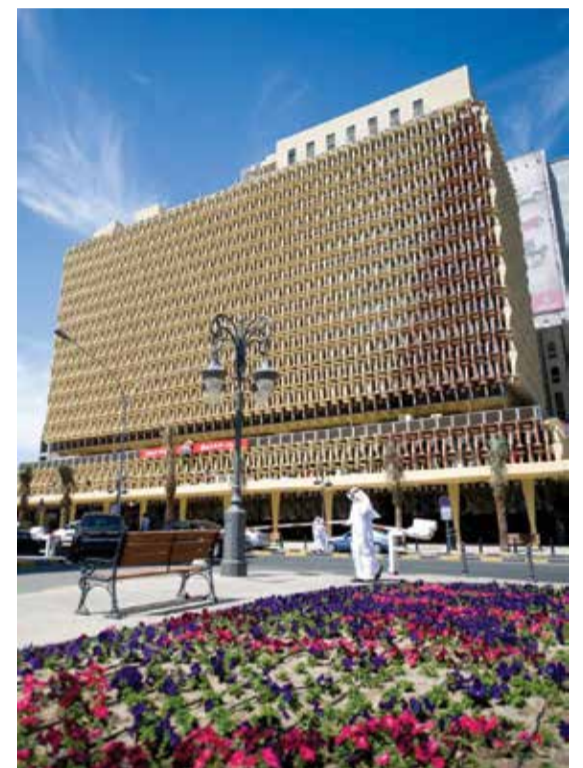
Boodai concluded his remarks by stating: "Gulf Bank remains dedicated to its long-term vision of delivering sustainable growth, enhancing our competitive position and generating superior shareholder returns." He added: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their ongoing trust, and our employees for their commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank the Central Bank of Kuwait for their continuous support. Finally, I want to thank our clients for their loyalty, and reiterate our commitment to offering them the best banking experience."

Key positive indicators

- Nine months 2023 net profit of KD 53.8 million, an increase of 18 percent compared to the same period of 2022.

- For the third quarter of 2023, the bank reported a net profit of KD 18.0 million, an increase of 17 percent over the third quarter of 2022.

- Return on assets improved in the first nine months 2023 to reach 10.0 percent and return on equity grew to reach 10.0 percent.



- Non-performing loan ratio stood at 1.2 percent as of 30 September 2023, with a strong non-performing loan coverage ratio of 470 percent.

- Capital ratios as of 30 September 2023, Tier 1 ratio was 13.6 percent and Capital Adequacy Ratio was 15.8 percent.

Capital increase and future growth opportunities
During the third quarter, Gulf Bank obtained the Central Bank of Kuwait and Capital Market Authority approvals to increase the Bank's issued and paid-up capital. Gulf Bank will have a public offering with rights issue of 260,869,565 new shares at a nominal value of 100 fils in addition to a share premium of 130 fils for each share. The total proceeds will result in an increase in the Bank's capital base by about KD 60 million. The opening date of subscription period will start on 29th of October 2023 and ends on 12th of November 2023.

Boodai commented: "The rights issue will boost the Bank's Capital Base and Regulatory Capital Adequacy Ratios, enhancing the bank's ability to pursue future growth opportunities in line with its strategy, aiming to generate a strong and sustainable long-term value to all our stakeholders."



US budget deficit widens to \$1.7tn on lower tax revenue

WASHINGTON: The US budget deficit has widened to \$1.7 trillion, government data showed on Friday, in a development that could add pressure on President Joe Biden as he seeks reelection in 2024. The deficit expanded by \$320 billion for the fiscal year ending September 30, following a drop in tax revenues and lower deposits of earnings by the Federal Reserve on the back of higher interest rates. Elevated rates also added to spending, bringing the 2023 shortfall to its third-largest on record.

Total government outlays decreased slightly from the previous year, after the Supreme Court canceled Biden's student loan forgiveness program, noted a joint statement by the Treasury Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

When the accounting impact involving this program is removed over the recent two years, the deficit nearly doubles to around \$2 trillion, Treasury officials confirmed when speaking with journalists on Friday. In the latest year, spending increased in some areas, with a \$134 billion rise in Social Security due to cost-of-living adjustments and a \$162 billion bump in outlays for interest on the public debt.

Net interest expense as a percentage of gross domestic product stands around 2.5 percent, the highest level since 1998, said a Treasury official.

The latest deficit expansion comes after the budget shortfall shrank by half in fiscal year 2022, on the back of the US pandemic recovery.

At that time, the deficit fell after COVID-related spending such as unemployment insurance and other programs declined as the world's biggest economy bounced back from the virus outbreak, with businesses returning to normal. A rising deficit could weigh on ongoing talks about funding federal agencies, with Congress facing a November 17 deadline to act on the budget and avoid a potential government shutdown. It also comes as Biden turns to Congress for aid to Ukraine and the Zionist entity, requesting a massive \$106 billion national security package on Friday. The United States saw "atypically strong growth in revenues in 2022, driven by record-high capital gains receipts and the historic recovery from the pandemic," said the Treasury and OMB.

But revenues in 2023 fell to 16.5 percent of GDP. Individual and corporate receipts returned to lower levels "in line with projections made after the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017," the statement said, referring to cuts under former president Donald Trump's administration. "This year, the effect of the Trump tax cuts on revenues and deficits is clear," said a White House official in a separate statement. Although the US economy has shown resilience in the face of higher interest rates there have been warnings, including by credit rating agencies, about longer-run fiscal risks. "The Biden Administration continues to focus on navigating our economy's transition to healthy and sustainable growth," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in a statement. — AFP

Mideast war: What risks face the energy sector?

LONDON: The escalation of hostilities between Zionist forces and Hamas could further strain global oil and gas supplies, already disrupted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, experts have warned. Increases in oil prices in response to the conflict, triggered by the bloody attack by Hamas in the Zionist entity on October 7, have so far been relatively mild.

Brent, the European benchmark, has gained around 10 percent, while its American equivalent has gained around 9 percent. Prices are around \$90 per barrel, still far from their historical highs. "Zionist entity is not an oil producer and no major international oil infrastructure runs close to the Gaza Strip or southern Zionist territory," Edoardo Campanella, analyst at UniCredit, told AFP.

However, investors are conscious of the "Middle East tinder box's inherent risk to global oil supply. Hence they have been diving into contracts compounding matters," explained Stephen Innes, analyst at SPI AM. The prospect of Iran, a supporter of Hamas and sworn enemy of Zionist entity, being drawn into the conflict presents one of the main risks for the energy market. The OPEC member has seen its production and exports damaged by years of international sanctions, but has nevertheless increased its production over the last year and is suspected of

smuggling barrels onto the market. This has helped contain global prices despite rising demand and tight supply, leading the Biden administration in the US to "turn a blind eye," according to Helge André Martinsen, analyst at DNB.

Even if Tehran stays out of the conflict, "the West might decide to tighten sanctions on Iran or simply to enforce existing sanctions more effectively," said Campanella. Iran could respond by blocking the Strait of Hormuz, the most important oil transit zone in the world, with a daily flow of more than 17 million barrels -- 30 percent of all oil traded by sea, according to Seb Research. Only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have pipelines to bypass the Strait of Hormuz when shipping crude oil outside of the Gulf, explained Campanella.

The worst-case scenario, unlikely but not impossible according to analysts, would be stronger sanctions leading Iran to retaliate by attacking oil installations in Saudi Arabia, one of the world's main producers and exporters. Attacks on its infrastructure in September 2019, claimed by Yemeni Houthi rebels supported by Tehran, caused Saudi to temporarily halve production, leading the price of Brent to jump by almost 20 percent in one day.

Experts recall previous oil shocks, such as the OPEC embargo against Zionist allies in the midst of the Yom Kippur War 50 years ago, and then in the wake of the Iranian revolution in 1979. The shocks led to crude prices jumping within a few months, bringing developed economies to their knees. But they are less exposed this time around given the rise of the US as a producer and an OPEC that claims to be less political. On the gas side, the effects are more immediate. — AFP



Fifty years after the 1973 Arab oil embargo, the current crisis in the Middle East has the potential to disrupt global oil supplies and push prices higher.

Business

US inflation is 'still too high': Powell

Fed says geopolitical tensions threaten global economy

WASHINGTON: US inflation is "still too high" despite a recent slowdown, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said, leaving the door open for a new interest rate hike. Additional evidence of "persistently above-trend growth" or fresh signs of tightness in the labor market "could warrant further tightening of monetary policy," he told a conference in New York.

The Fed recently slowed its aggressive campaign of monetary tightening which lifted its benchmark lending rate to a 22-year high, as it looks to slow down inflation without pushing the US economy into recession. Headline inflation, as measured by the Fed's favored gauge, has more than halved since peaking in June last year, but remains stuck above its long-term target of two percent.

"Inflation is still too high, and a few months of good data are only the beginning of what it will take to build confidence that inflation is moving down sustainably toward our goal," Powell said in a speech that was briefly delayed by climate change protesters. "We cannot yet know how long these lower readings will persist, or where inflation will settle over coming quarters," he continued, adding that the Fed would pro-



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference following a Federal Open Market Committee meeting, at the Federal Reserve in Washington, DC. — AFP

ceed "carefully" at future interest rate meetings.

"The Fed is in no hurry to tighten monetary policy further. A November rate hike can safely be priced out," EY Chief Economist Gregory Daco wrote in a note to clients. US stocks declined fol-

lowing Powell's remarks, ending the day firmly in the red. Powell said the Fed's current policy stance is "restrictive," suggesting that monetary policy was working to put "downward pressure on economic activity and inflation." The US economy "is handling much higher rates—at least for now—without difficulty," he said. "Does it feel like policy is too tight right now? I would have to say no," he added. Recent data points to the continued strength of the US economy supported by resilient consumer spending, while the tight labor market is showing some signs of softening.

Powell warned that "a range of uncertainties, both old and new," were complicating monetary policy.

The Fed's upcoming decisions will be "based on the totality of the incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks," he said, echoing previous comments. "Our view remains that the Fed is done with its tightening cycle, but that rate cuts won't occur until June 2024," said Daco from EY. Futures traders now assign a probability of 99 percent that the Fed will hold interest rates steady on November 1, following its next meeting, according to data from CME Group.

In an unusual move, Powell also addressed the ongoing conflict between Zionist entity and Hamas militants in Gaza. "Geopolitical tensions are highly elevated and pose important risks to global economic activity," he said. "Speaking for myself, I found the attack on Zionist entity horrifying, as is the prospect for more loss of innocent lives," he continued. The Fed's role is to monitor what economic implications these developments could have, he added.

Analysts have voiced concerns that the Zionist entity-Hamas war could spread into a broader regional conflict in the crude-rich Middle East, with implications for oil production.

Speaking later Thursday, the president of the Philadelphia Fed voiced a slightly softer, more "dovish" perspective on interest rate policy. "I believe that we are at the point where we can hold rates where they are," Patrick Harker told a conference in Philadelphia.

"I think doing nothing at this moment equates to doing quite a lot," he said. "As long as policy rates remain restrictive, we will keep steadily pressing down on inflation and bringing markets into better balance," he added. — AFP

UK retail sales slide as cost of living crisis bites

LONDON: Britain on Friday published retail sales data that added to its economic gloom and offered no respite for the government, which suffered fresh vote setbacks overnight. Retail sales slid 0.9 percent in September, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

"Retail sales fell notably in September, with retailers telling us that cost-of-living pressures are influencing consumers, particularly for sales of non-essential goods," added ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. "It was a poor month for clothing stores as the warm autumnal conditions reduced sales of colder weather gear," he added.

The often-volatile retail sales had grown 0.4 percent in August. A separate survey showed consumer confidence plunging in Britain. GfK's Consumer Confidence Index slumped nine points to minus 30 in October, the level seen in July last year.

"This sharp fall underlines that the cost-of-living crisis, and simply not having enough money to make ends meet, are still exerting acute pressure for many consumers," said Joe Staton, client strategy director at GfK. Friday's data comes as Britain's ruling Conservatives lost two parliament seats to La-



A modern floor with legs of a crowd walking in a shopping mall in the background.

bour in another ominous setback for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his party ahead of a general election expected next year. The overnight by-election results—the latest in a string of traditionally safe Tory seats lost to rival parties in recent years—saw Labour overturn huge majorities to further fuel hopes of a return to power after nearly 14 years in opposition. Official data this week showed British annual inflation remaining elevated, prolonging the cost-of-living crisis and stoking fears that UK interest rates could stay higher for longer. The Consumer Prices Index held at 6.7 percent last month, the highest level

in the G7 grouping of rich nations.

The ONS on Friday added that the government's net borrowing undershot expectations last month, at £14.3 billion (\$17.5 billion), which may allow it to cut taxes next year in a bid to rally much-needed support ahead of the general election, according to analysts. "But with the full upward impact on borrowing from higher interest rates and weaker GDP growth still coming down the line, any package of pre-election net tax cuts and/or spending rises will probably need to be modest," noted Ashley Webb at Capital Economics. — AFP

Putin praises energy ties with China

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed the "unprecedented" energy links between Moscow and Beijing despite failing to secure a much-sought agreement on a major new gas pipeline. Russia has been hit by massive Western sanctions over its Ukraine offensive, and with Europe trying to sever its energy links with Moscow, the Kremlin has looked eastwards to replace crucial lost export revenue.

"Relations in the overall partnership and strategic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Chinese People's Republic have reached an unprecedented high level and continue to develop dynamically," Putin said in a statement addressing a Russian-Chinese energy forum in Beijing.

"One of the key areas of this relationship is energy cooperation, which is becoming increasingly active," he added. Putin was wrapping up a two-day visit to China, his first outside the former Soviet Union this year and part of the Kremlin's drive to strengthen its economic partnerships across Asia.

But the trip appeared not to have led to a breakthrough with Beijing over the "Power of Siberia 2" gas pipeline—a massive new gas link to China through Mongolia that Russia wants to build. The initiative would export gas from Russia's Siberian fields that used to supply Europe, potentially doubling the volumes Russia can send to China via pipeline.

On Tuesday, Putin had assured his Mongolian counterpart that an agreement on Power of Siberia 2, which would pass through the steppes of Mongolia to reach northeast China, was on track. "Everyone agrees with this project (...) It's a question of implementation. I think we will move forward at a good pace," he said. Moscow hopes to start building the pipeline in 2024, but there were no public statements from Russian or Chinese officials that a deal had been reached during Putin's time in Beijing.

The head of the Russian gas company Gazprom, Alexei Miller, hailed on Thursday a 46.6 percent increase in exports through the existing "Power of Siberia" pipeline so far this year. Russia launched that pipeline in 2019, under a landmark 30-year contract worth \$400 billion. The Power of Siberia is ramping up to a maximum capacity of 38 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year—though this is less than the 55 bcm capacity of each of the two Nord Stream pipelines between Russia and Germany. Europe cut its pipeline imports from Russia after Moscow launched its offensive in Ukraine, while blasts to the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines last September could have put them permanently out of operation.

Russia has also significantly boosted its oil exports to China, often selling at a discount amid a price cap on Russia's seaborne crude exports being imposed by the G7, EU and Australia. The head of Russian oil company Rosneft, Igor Sechin, told the same energy forum where Putin was speaking that "over 75 percent" of Russia's exports to neighboring China are energy linked. He said that Russia was China's main oil supplier in 2023, overtaking Saudi Arabia. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US home sales slid further in September to the lowest rate in 13 years, according to industry data released.

US home sales dip in Sept to lowest rate since 2010

WASHINGTON: US home sales slid further in September to the lowest rate in 13 years, according to industry data released, with interest rates high and the supply of properties limited. Existing home sales crept down 2.0 percent last month from August, reaching an annual rate of 3.96 million, seasonally adjusted, said the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

This was the slowest pace since October 2010, as elevated interest rates make homeownership pricier for new buyers. Existing homeowners are also less likely to put their real estate on sale after having locked in lower rates previously.

"As has been the case throughout this year, limited inventory and low housing affordability continue to hamper home sales," said NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun. From a year ago, home sales in September were around 15 percent lower. "The Federal Reserve simply cannot keep raising interest rates in

light of softening inflation and weakening job gains," Yun said in a statement.

He added that unlike in 2010, there are currently not many distressed sales. The median price of existing homes rose from last year for a third straight month to \$394,300, said the NAR.

This confirms a "pressing need for more housing supply," Yun added. But builders are also contending with weaker demand due to affordability issues, and are squeezed by tighter credit conditions, economist Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics told AFP. "Home sales will likely remain under pressure until supply eases and interest rates stabilize or move lower," she said, adding that "neither one of these two things is going to happen quickly."

The popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage recently hit its highest level since 2000. It averaged 7.57 percent as of October 12, according to home loan finance company Freddie Mac, significantly above 6.92 percent a year prior. In September, all four major US regions logged sales declines from a year ago. "Sales likely now are close to the incompressible minimum, where the market consists only of people who have to move, for job or family reasons," said economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics in a recent note. "The housing market remains a long way from recovery," they added. — AFP

Global stocks retreat further on Mideast fears

NEW YORK: Global stock markets slid Friday on worries that an expected ground invasion of Gaza by Zionist entity would spark a wider conflict in the Middle East. Wall Street stocks declined Friday, as investors looked to lower their risk going into the weekend.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.9 percent, while the S&P and Nasdaq indexes fell over one percent. The yield on the 10-year US Treasury, which briefly rose this week to levels not seen since 2007 amid concerns the Fed is entering a long period of high interest rates, slipped slightly.

The Federal Reserve has been raising its benchmark lending rate to cool demand and bring down stubborn inflation, with some success. Nevertheless, rates remain stuck above its long-term target of two percent. At the same time, markets are warily eyeing ongoing conflict in the Middle East, for signs it could spread to other countries. "Going into the weekend there is a downward trend as short-term investors try to square positions," Jack Ablin, Cresset Capital's chief investment officer, told AFP.

"There is an unwillingness from certain investors (to) hold risk positions over the weekend," he added. Major stock markets in Europe closed down more than one percent, while those in Asia also saw declines. Oil prices finished slightly slower. The US Federal Reserve warned Friday that the recent attack on Zionist entity and the ongoing Ukraine conflict could cause harm to the world economy and boost global inflation. Hamas carried out a deadly attack on Zionist entity from the Gaza Strip on October 7, and killed at least 1,400 people. In response, Zionist entity launched a relentless bombing campaign on Gaza. More than 4,100 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed, according to the latest toll from the Hamas-run health ministry. "The attack on Zionist entity, in conjunction with Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, has ratcheted up geopolitical tensions," the Fed said in its semi-annual report on financial stability. "Escalation of these conflicts or a worsening in other geopolitical tensions could reduce economic activity and boost inflation worldwide," it added. Elsewhere in Washington, fresh figures published Friday showed the US budget deficit for the past year widened to \$1.7 trillion, in a development that could add pressure on President Joe Biden as he seeks reelection in 2024. — AFP

US auto union boss sees progress in talks

NEW YORK: The head of the US auto workers union reported "serious movement" on Friday in negotiations to end a strike with automakers Stellantis and General Motors, but saw no progress with Ford. Nearly 34,000 United Auto Workers (UAW) members are now on strike, a number that has grown since the initial September 15 move to shut down one plant at each of the "Big Three" US car makers. "I'm happy to report that in the past 24 hours, we've seen serious movement from both (Chrysler owner) Stellantis and GM," said UAW President Shawn Fain in an online video address. Meanwhile, Ford continues "to pretend they can't afford what we're asking for," he added.

The UAW has previously expanded its strike and recently said the labor action had entered a new stage involving last-minute walkouts. But on Friday, it did not add any new sites to those already shut down. Fain said that each of the members of the "Big Three" had now agreed in principle to a 23 percent average wage increase over the four-year life of the agreement under negotiation. "The companies keep saying they hit their limit and then their limit goes up. We think there's more ground to gain," he added. The industrial action marks the first joint strike at the three major automakers, as workers push for higher wages and other improvements.

In particular, these relate to the transition to making electric vehicles. The positive signals follow recent tensions with the UAW announcing last week an immediate walkout at Ford's Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville, where some of the company's most profitable models are built. On Monday, Ford appealed to workers to band together against competitors like Japanese carmakers Toyota and Honda, as well as Chinese automakers—in asking for an end to the strike. — AFP

Business

NBK Group's diversification strategy remains highly effective: Al-Bahar

Deputy Group CEO at NBK speaks in an interview with Bloomberg TV

KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO at National Bank of Kuwait said: "This was another very strong quarter for NBK in 3Q2023. Our performance remained solid with net profit reaching KD 431 million in the nine-month period, up 15.2 percent year-on-year."

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Al-Bahar highlighted that the Group's diversification strategy remains highly effective in advancing the bank's goals. This is evident as it continues to drive revenues and earnings growth from various locations and across business segments.

"We maintained our margin expansion on the back of higher interest rates and our key focus continues to be on a healthy balance sheet and strong capitalization," Al-Bahar added.

Solid foundation

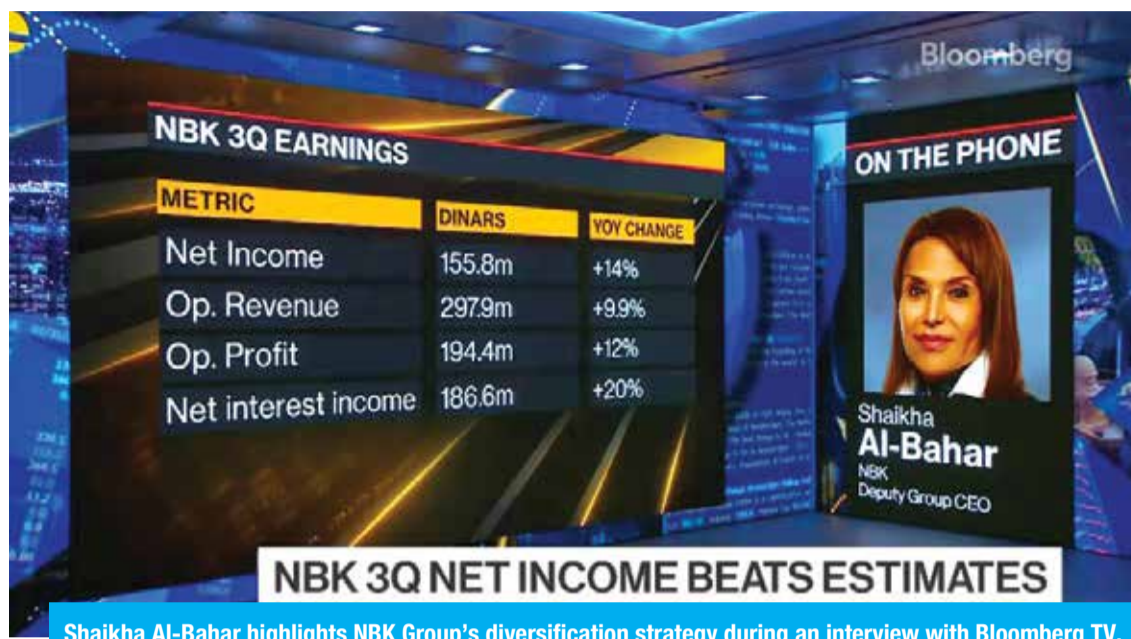
Al-Bahar emphasized that the upsurge in profitability primarily stems from NBK's success in achieving robust revenue growth across all core banking activities within the Group's operations. Operating revenues surged by an impressive 15.6 percent year-on-year in the first nine months of 2023, surpassing the rise in operating expenses, which was at 10 percent. The increase in total revenues can be attributed to the core business activities, with net interest income recording a substantial growth of 21.8 percent and fees and commissions income rising by approximately 9 percent.

"Our financial stability and strength are supported by our flexible business model, which places emphasis on diversifying revenue sources across geographical regions and sectors. This approach ensures strong asset quality and the continuous expansion of our balance sheet. I believe that we will witness these same positive trends shaping our expectations for the remainder of the current year," Al-Bahar noted.

Managed expansion

When discussing the potential for expanding the bank's regional presence, Al-Bahar referenced the recent surge in mergers and acquisitions within the region, adding that she doesn't believe that those expansions are justified for the Group from a risk reward perspective.

Discussing NBK's expansion strategy, Al-Bahar commented, "Our expansion strategy is very disciplined, and it will always follow and be aligned with



- Our profitability has been mainly driven by our ability to generate core revenue growth across the group operations.
- Our diversification strategy continued to serve us well as we continued to derive revenue and earnings growth from various locations and across business segments.
- Prolonged or widespread tensions in the region can further exacerbate the challenges faced by the already struggling global economy

our key strategic initiatives and priorities. We are happy with our geographic footprint and focus more on growing our presence in our key growth markets."

"We are approaching the Saudi markets it on all fronts leveraging on our strong regional wholesale franchise, our global wealth management platform, and capabilities as well as our digital banking experience," Al-Bahar remarked.

Robust financial mix

In response to a question regarding the high in-

terest rates and their effects on the industry and NBK, Al-Bahar observed that recent US economic data supports the fact that the Fed is to raise its rate in one of the two remaining meetings for this year. As for Kuwait, the regulator has opted not to follow the Fed in each hike given the flexibility of the currency regime, and the currency is pegged to a weighted basket of other international currencies. "Although higher interest rates are generally positive for margins but no doubt it poses some risks to economic growth especially considering the fragile

environment we have today." As for NBK and how this situation influences its profit margins, Al-Bahar stated, "We continue to enjoy a very healthy funding mix, with CASA at around 40 percent serving our cost base well. This factor plays a crucial role in mitigating interest costs."

Al-Bahar emphasized that the bank's balance sheet is flexible and dominated by interest bearing assets which reflected positively in the growth of the bank's NIM during the period by 31 bps to 2.57 percent in 9M2023 from 2.26 percent for the same period last year.

Geopolitical development

In response to inquiries regarding the influence of ongoing developments in the Middle East, Al-Bahar affirmed that the current events within the region are indeed impacting oil prices. These prices have surged by \$6 to reach \$91 since these events erupted. This surge indicates the market's capacity to navigate the consequences of these developments, with no disruptions observed in global market supplies.

"While the increase in oil prices may bring advantages to the budgets of oil-producing nations, including Kuwait and the GCC, it does pose a potential threat to the global economy, which is currently facing numerous challenges," Al-Bahar remarked.

Al-Bahar cautioned about the repercussions of broadening the scope of confrontations and the adverse effects it could have on escalating inflation levels. This escalation threatens the "soft landing" that central banks worldwide strive for, potentially resulting in disruptions to global international trade and capital flows. Al-Bahar also addressed the influence of the ongoing tensions on stock markets, which are already experiencing pressure as a consequence of investor concerns in a high-interest rate environment. Since the start of the year, all GCC markets, barring Dubai, have been on a declining trajectory compared to their global counterparts.

Al-Bahar foresees that these market pressures could exacerbate if regional geopolitical tensions persist. Concerning Boursa Kuwait, Al-Bahar commented, "The correction in Kuwait has been more pronounced, with stock market indices declining by approximately 9 percent since the start of the year. However, the stability of the situation in the country could potentially bolster performance going forward, contingent upon the mitigation of the impact of geopolitical tensions."

IMF and Sri Lanka reach agreement for \$330m disbursement

WASHINGTON: The IMF said Thursday it has reached agreement with Sri Lanka to disburse the second tranche of a \$3 billion loan to aid the country's recovery from its worst-ever economic crisis. The recommendation to make roughly \$330 million available to the South Asian country follows agreement over the first review of the four-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) agreement it signed up to in March, the International Monetary Fund said in a statement. The release of the funds is subject to approval by its executive board, it added.

The Sri Lankan government defaulted on its \$46 billion debt last year at a time when months of food and fuel shortages were making life a misery for millions of people. "The authorities remain committed to the ambitious reform agenda under the EFF and their reform efforts have been commendable," IMF Senior Mission Chief for Sri Lanka, Peter Breuer, and his deputy, Katsiaryna Svirydzenka, said in a statement.

They noted Sri Lanka's "rapid" disinflation, from 70 percent in September last year to just 1.3 percent by September this year, along with a "significant fiscal adjustment expected by the end of this year." Gross international reserves also increased by \$1.5 billion between March and June this year, while shortages of essential items have eased, they added. — AFP

Climate 'loss and damage' talks end in failure

PARIS: A crucial meeting on climate "loss and damages" ahead of COP28 ended in failure Saturday, with countries from the global north and south unable to reach an agreement, according to sources involved in the talks. The agreement to set up a dedicated fund to help vulnerable countries cope with climate "loss and damage" was a flagship achievement of last year's COP27 talks in Egypt. But countries left the details to be worked out later.

A series of talks held this year has tried to tease out consensus on fundamentals like the structure, beneficiaries and contributors—a key issue for richer nations who want China to pay into the fund. A transition committee on the establishment of the fund met late Friday and into Saturday in Aswan, in southern Egypt. But the delegates were unable to reach an agreement and deferred the decision to another meeting due November 3 to 5 in the United Arab Emirates, according to a webcast of the debate on the official YouTube channel of the United Nations.

Ahead of the breakdown, the discussion hit a hurdle over where the funds should be held. There was a divide over it being managed by the World Bank, accused of being in the hands of the West, or in a new independent structure, called for by many developing nations, but would be time consuming and complex to replenish with new funds. The failure "is a clear indication of the deep chasm between rich and



Extreme weather events are set to become more severe in South Asia, a major driver of climate change-related loss and damages.

poor nations", Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy for Climate Action Network International, said in a statement to AFP on Saturday. "Developed countries must be held accountable for their shameless attempts to push the World Bank as the host of the fund, their refusal to discuss the necessary scale of finance, and their blatant disregard for their responsibilities" under the terms of already established

international climate agreements, he said.

Rachel Cleetus with the Union of Concerned Scientists said that "today's disappointing outcome is a blow to communities... facing an unrelenting onslaught of climate impacts". "The United States and other rich countries seem more focused on evading or minimizing their responsibility than engaging in good faith negotiations," she added. — AFP

S&P returns Greece's credit rating to investment grade

WASHINGTON: The ratings agency S&P has returned Greece's credit rating to investment grade for the first time since 2010, citing the "significant progress" it has made in tackling economic challenges.

S&P is upgrading the country's credit rating to BBB-/A-3 from BB+/B for long- and short-term local and foreign currency sovereign credit ratings, it announced in a statement Friday.

Its decision makes it the first of the three major US ratings agencies to lift Greece's credit rating from speculative to investment grade. "Greece's public finances are improving thanks to the budgetary consolidation efforts," it said, explaining its decision. "Since the debt crisis in 2009-2015, significant progress has been made in addressing Greece's economic and fiscal imbalances," it added.

S&P expects the government to achieve a primary surplus of "at least" 1.2 percent of GDP this year, well above target, growing to 2.3 percent of GDP over the next three years. The general election earlier this year that returned Kyriakos Mitsotakis to power "allows the government to continue to build upon past reform efforts" to make Greece internationally competitive, S&P said. "We expect additional structural economic and budgetary reforms, coupled with large EU funds, will support robust economic growth in 2023-2026 and underpin continued reduction in government debt," it added. — AFP

Green groups lose UK lawsuit over fossil fuel exploration

LONDON: Environmental groups on Thursday lost a legal challenge brought against the UK government to prevent it from issuing new licenses for oil and gas extraction in the North Sea.

The High Court in London ruled against Greenpeace and Uplift, who argued that the licensing round had not taken into account the greenhouse gas emissions from burning the newly-extracted fossil fuels. Greenpeace said it planned to appeal, with Uplift adding it was considering its next move.

"If you told most people that the government is allowed to approve new oil and gas while ignoring 80 percent of the emissions it would produce, they simply wouldn't believe you," Philip Evans, Greenpeace UK's climate campaigner, said following the court's decision.

"This is completely irresponsible behavior from ministers during a climate crisis. That's why we will be appealing, and hope this ruling will be overturned. Uplift executive director Tessa Khan described it as "a deeply disappointing decision". Welcoming the judge's ruling, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said that while the government was "decarbonizing our economy and scaling up home-grown clean energy, the transition cannot happen overnight and we'll continue to need oil and gas".



A laborer unloads waste coal and stone as smoke and steam rise next to a steel factory.

The Conservative government also argues that drilling for new oil and gas is necessary to boost Britain's energy security after Ukraine's invasion by Russia—a key producer of fossil fuels—sent energy prices soaring on tightened supplies.

Thursday's ruling comes after the UK government last month authorized oil and gas production

in its largest undeveloped field—and decided to dilute its net zero targets. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has softened policies aimed at the UK achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Specifically, he announced in September that a ban on the sale of petrol and diesel cars would be pushed back to 2035 from 2030. — AFP

Lifestyle



Douglas C-47 B Dakota American army airplane covered with stickers at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.--AFP photos



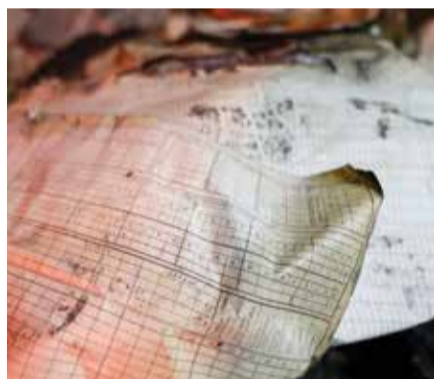
Ten ton chain at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.



A 1 megawatt transformer inside the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.

Like something out of a Bond film, the giant Zeljava airbase was carved into a mountain between Bosnia and Croatia and designed to withstand a nuclear strike. But for decades it sat idle, with only the occasional intrepid tourist daring to venture into its crumbling cavernous core. Built in secret in the 1960s to hide a fleet of Soviet fighter jets in what was then Yugoslavia—a socialist federation that sought a middle ground between Moscow and Washington during the Cold War—it had its own power, water purification and ventilation systems and could operate autonomously.

In its heyday, the underground base could hold nearly 60 MiG-21 aircraft, with its 3.5 kilometers (2.2 miles) or so of tunnels also home to command centers,



This picture shows schedules of food distribution and kitchen duty inside the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain.



Secret Cold War Balkan 'Bond' base opening to world

The interior of a Douglas C-47 B Dakota American army airplane covered with stickers at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.

offices and dormitories. The remains of the enormous 100-ton retractable concrete doors at its four entrances are still visible with metal reinforcements protruding from the structures.

Beyond its cavernous interior, the base had five runaways that straddle the border between Croatia and Bosnia. "All the systems were state-of-the-art at

of the Yugoslav army, using powerful explosives. "All that was inside, all that equipment, everything was burned," said Fazlic. "Only the tunnels and the walls remained."

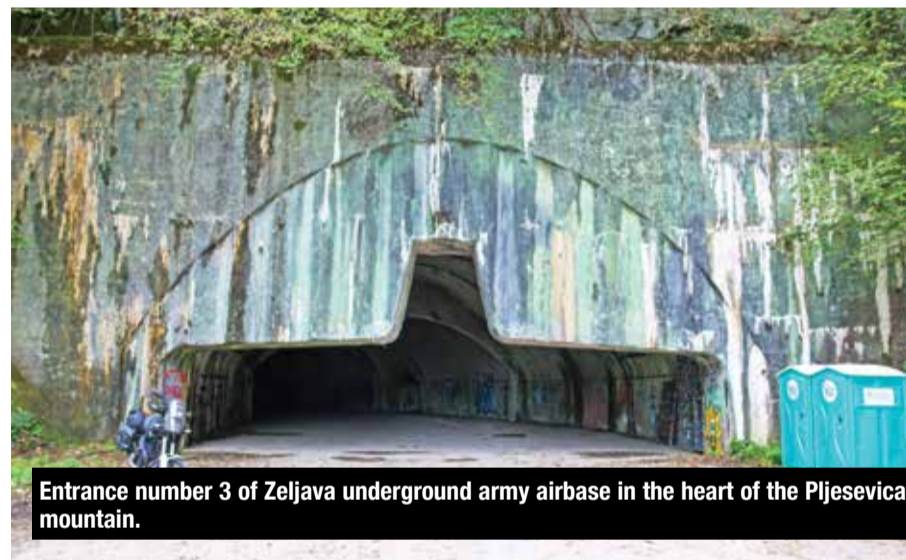
After its destruction, the base sat largely vacant and in disrepair, attracting adventurous tourists looking to explore old relics from the communist

base could attract many more, notably some of the 1.7 million tourists that visit the nearby Plitvice Lakes national park every year. "By revitalizing Zeljava, we would create additional content for the national park enabling tourists to stay a day longer," said Ante Kovac, the mayor of the area. Car races have already been staged at the base, and officials believe its extraordinary size means it could house data centers, or host parties or a Cold War museum.

'Frozen in time'

At the moment, visitors walk with flashlights through its humid, pitch-black tunnels, carefully avoiding holes in the ground, while some drive through portions of the base. "It's crazy that it has been frozen in time," said Angelo Virag, a photographer visiting from the Croatian capital Zagreb, who was in awe of the "absolute ingenuity of engineering". His cousin Mario Garbin—from Perth, Australia—gushed over the "raw, authentic nature of the infrastructure that has been left untouched for the last 30 years."

Aviation fanatic Hamdija Mesic from the nearby Bosnian town of Bihac said he hopes that the two runaways located in Bosnia would be reopened to fellow pilots soon. "Such a huge facility abandoned to the ravages of time cannot be found anywhere else in the world," he told AFP. However, others hoped the site would remain as it is. "You don't have signs where you have to go and what to see, it's more like a discovery place," Maria Moreno, a 33-year-old interior designer from Spain, told AFP. "This is why I liked it. "Turning it into a tourist attraction would lose its charm."—AFP



Entrance number 3 of Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain.



This picture shows the cockpit covered with stickers of a Douglas C-47 B Dakota American army airplane, at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.

that time," said Mirsad Fazlic, a former pilot who worked at the base for nearly a decade in the 1980s. "It was the then best military and civilian technology."

'Everything was burned'

During the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1990s, the facility was destroyed by the remnants

era. That all changed in 2016 with the release of a Slovenian mockumentary called "Houston, We Have a Problem!" featuring the base. Since then, locals estimate that the state-owned complex has been drawing more than 150,000 people a year.

Authorities in the area have high hopes that with the right marketing, the



This picture shows a 1 megawatt transformer at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.



Visitor Mario Garbin flashlights as he walks inside a dark tunnels at the Zeljava underground army airbase in the heart of the Pljesevica mountain, on Croatia's border with Bosnia.



Swedish study shows snoozing in the morning isn't bad

You snooze, you lose? Swedish researchers said Wednesday that might not be the case, after their study even saw some benefits for those struggling with morning drowsiness. While for many, a reach for the snooze button on the alarm clock is how most days start, researchers at Stockholm University noted that little is still known about the habit, prompting them to conduct two studies, the results of which were published Wednesday.

The first sought to identify who the snoozers actually were via the use of questionnaires collected from 1,732 respondents. "In the first study we found

that in general younger people were the ones snoozing and they were to a high degree night owls," Tina Sundelin, sleep researcher at Stockholm University, told AFP, noting that the initial finding was not too surprising. Sundelin explained that the most common reason for snoozing was simply "because they felt too tired to get up."

But in some cases respondents said they just enjoying the feeling of staying in bed for a while longer, describing it as a "luxury". The second study then examined how snoozing actually impacted performance and they had 31 individuals join them at their

sleep lab. They then tested the difference between uninterrupted sleep and getting up immediately or first waking up a half-hour earlier and snoozing before getting up.

"What was interesting is that they got less sleep when snoozing but the difference was on average only six minutes," Sundelin explained, adding that most of them managed to get a lot of sleep during that half hour even though it was disturbed. The test subjects were then asked to perform a few cognitive tests, such as math and memory tests.

Despite having their sleep interrupted at the tail end, there wasn't much

difference in how tired they felt, nor was their performance on the tests negatively affected. "In some of the tests, they even performed a little better after having snoozed," Sundelin said, adding that "the clearest effect is that it isn't negative." For Sundelin, the results mean that those who need to snooze a little to ease into the day shouldn't be too worried. "If you're snoozing and feel like it's helping you, it seems like there isn't much reason to stop doing it, as long you are getting enough sleep before," Sundelin said.—AFP



Chinese sci-fi fans over the moon at Chengdu Worldcon

In a sleek silver building designed to look like an expanding nebula, thousands of delighted Chinese science fiction fans gathered this week for a massive international convention. The World Science Fiction Convention, or Worldcon, globally the oldest and most influential sci-fi event, has never been held in China before. The convention's venue is the striking Chengdu Science Fiction Museum—designed by the renowned Zaha Hadid Architects, built in just one year and opened for Worldcon.

On Friday its cavernous atrium was filled with a buzz of excited voices. "To be attending a science fiction convention is one of the happiest occasions of my entire life," said a young wom-

friends here, who also like science fiction," she said, visibly moved. "It's really very precious. It is hard to share my interests with people who don't understand." "I think science fiction should be a way of life," Icing, a 21-year-old sporting a voluptuous blonde wig and amber contact lenses, told AFP.

cool place before," Icing added, looking around with wide eyes.

Huge scale

Holding the event in China was not without controversy, with a petition that the hosting rights be revoked over allegations of human rights abuses in

the scale and feel was unlike anything he'd seen before. "I don't think that we'll ever see—unless they come back to China—a convention that's run as thoroughly as this one is," the 74-year-old said. That shift towards officialization was another factor some fans had expressed unease with. "If they put on a good convention, I don't care," said MacDermott. "What's important is the experience that people have."

'Big Liu'

Global interest in Chinese science fiction has spiked in recent years, after Liu Cixin's "Three-Body" series became an international phenomenon. Liu was the first Asian author to win best novel at Worldcon's Hugo Awards, described as the "Nobel Prize of science fiction". The "Wandering Earth" films are also based on a short story by Liu. Clutching a pile of books, 39-year-old Chen Tingting told AFP she had given the "Three-Body" series to a friend going through a difficult time.

"There was a period when I was quite unhappy, but after I read the books, I came to think the universe is really so vast, humankind is so insignificant in comparison," she explained. On Friday afternoon, the queue for Liu's book signings snaked around the museum's curves for hundreds of meters, with some fans proudly telling AFP they had waited four hours. Yang Maoxu came to Worldcon dressed in a Star Wars costume complete with helmet and two lightsabres, but he too said Liu was his favorite. "I came across Big Liu's work quite late, and really regretted not finding it sooner," he said. "It felt like I'd known him all along."—AFP

Women sci-fi writer numbers rocketing in China

Women writers are taking the Chinese science fiction scene by storm, with their increasing prominence one of the genre's most noticeable trends, according to participants at a major convention in Chengdu this week. Worldcon—the world's oldest and most influential sci-fi gathering—is taking place in China for the first time, drawing hordes of eager local fans of all genders. China can still be a relatively socially conservative country, and under President Xi Jinping the space for the expression of feminism has shrunk even further over the last decade.

But in science fiction, the number of women authors has rocketed in recent years, said Regina Kanyu Wang, a writer and editor nominated for two prestigious Hugo Awards at Worldcon this year. More women are now realizing "it's not only this nerdy, geeky style of science fiction that can be published, or that can be regarded as science fiction", she said.

"Liu Cixin (the author of the world-famous Three-Body series) is great, we all love him. But there's so much more outside of the Liu Cixin style." The good news is that once women do get their start as writers, they do not tend to feel they are treated unequally, according to Wang. The market and readers are demanding new perspectives, she said.



A person wearing a costume participates at the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention in Chengdu, in China's southwest Sichuan province.

"Nowadays, a lot of Chinese female sci-fi writers pay attention to the problems women face that men might not feel," Zhou Danxue, a literature scholar at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, told AFP. "The writers can use their own methods to reflect uniquely female feelings."

'New sense of community'

In the past two years, there have been four anthologies published that were made up of only women or non-binary authors, Wang said, a major breakthrough. Previously, there was not even one all-women collection, and before the 1990s, there were very few prominent women authors at all. "The Way Spring Arrives," one of the anthologies that Wang co-edited, includes an essay pinpointing the internet as a nurturing ground for women and queer talent.

Its widespread use "not only brought people a new sense of community, but ... removed a lot of trade-based and societal barriers to authorship, especially for non-male writers", author Ni Xueting explained. Chen Qiufan, one of China's most prominent sci-fi authors, told AFP that traditionally the genre was not taken particularly seriously, and was seen as "written by and read by boys". Now, you have "a much broader audience and a more diverse one", he said, estimating his own readers' gender split was around 50/50.

Monet, a 21-year-old visiting the convention on Friday, said she had sometimes felt isolated in her fandom. "It's hard to share my interests with people who don't understand. They would ask why a girl liked sci-fi?" she said. She was optimistic those attitudes could change, pointing out the schoolchildren roaming excitedly around the convention centre.

"I think (interest in) Chinese science fiction must be cultivated from childhood," she said. "I don't think we had this kind of opportunity when we were young... I really envy them, to be honest."—AFP



A boy uses VR glasses during the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Visitors walk next to a giant sculpture at the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.

an who gave her name as Monet. The 21-year-old wore a costume inspired by the hit film "Wandering Earth 2", though with some customizations—a plethora of badges and ribbons, and furry ears that swiveled to match her head movements. A red armband showed she was a member of an underground "Wandering Earth" fan group based in Chengdu, she explained.

"I didn't expect to meet so many

"For example, me wearing this outfit today... I think we should incorporate sci-fi, incorporate fantasy into our own lives. We shouldn't ever lose our childlike innocence," he said. Around him, groups of tracksuited schoolchildren chattered happily as they were shepherded through the entrance hall, dominated by a massive statue of a beloved robot dog from "Wandering Earth 2". "I don't think I've ever seen such a

northwestern Xinjiang region circulating beforehand. This Worldcon also looks very different compared to past ones in other global cities, which historically are run by volunteers with costs covered by members.

Attendees on Friday seemed mostly Chinese, with only a small proportion of foreigners appearing to have made the trip. Bruce MacDermott, whose first Worldcon experience was in 1968, said



Children walk past space suits of the Chinese sci-fi movie "The Wandering Earth" on display at the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Visitors are seen next to a stand of the book "Three Body Problem" at 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Visitors check a Kormo mascot on display at the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Visitors watch a water and light show during the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Visitors attend the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention.



Poland arrests thief posing as store mannequin

Polish police said Thursday they had arrested a 22-year-old man who posed as a store mannequin in order to later steal jewelry at a Warsaw shopping centre. After entering a clothing store, the man "put on a new outfit, then stood still in the window like a mannequin in order to fool security guards and surveillance cameras," said Robert Szumiatka, a spokesman for Warsaw police.

After closing time, the man slipped out and managed to swipe jewelry from a stand at the shopping centre before being apprehended. "We'd never seen anything like it," Szumiatka told AFP. Charged with theft and burglary, the man faces 10 years in prison.—AFP

Lifestyle



Susan Sarandon



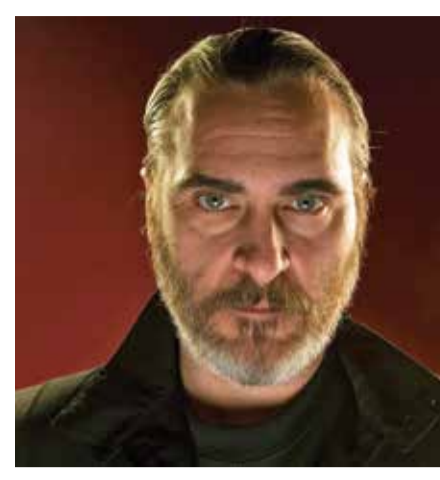
Jon Stewart



Andrew Garfield



Ramy Youssef



Joaquin Phoenix



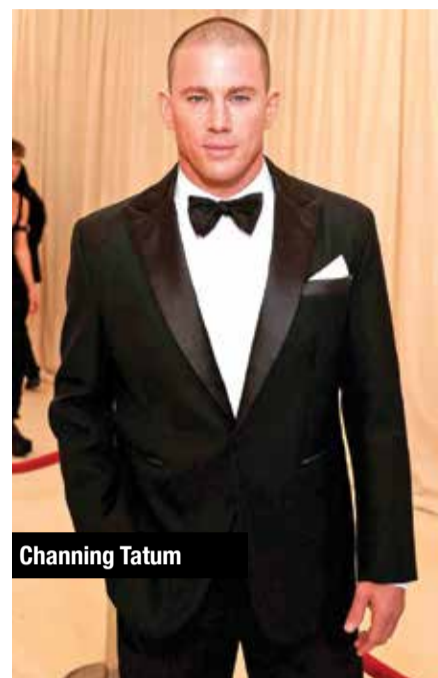
Cate Blanchett

Hollywood actors call for ending Zionists' onslaught on Gaza

A-list Hollywood celebrities including Cate Blanchett, Joaquin Phoenix, Ramy Youssef and Andrew Garfield penned a letter to US President Joe Biden on Friday, urging him to call for a ceasefire and ending the Zionist military's attack on Gaza. Dozens of top-flight names from the world of entertainment asked Biden to work to achieve an "immediate de-escalation" and ceasefire "before another life is lost."

"We urge your administration, and all world leaders, to honor all of the lives in

the Holy Land and call for and facilitate a ceasefire without delay—an end to the bombing of Gaza, and the safe release of hostages," said the letter, released by artists4ceasefire.org. "Saving lives is a moral imperative." Friday's letter, which was also signed by Jon Stewart, singer Dua Lipa, Susan Sarandon and Channing Tatum, comes a week after hundreds of Hollywood figures signed an open letter condemning Hamas.—AFP



Channing Tatum



Dua Lipa



The sails of the Opera House are illuminated with lights at the start of the Vivid Sydney festival in Sydney.—AFP photos

Australians fete Sydney Opera House's 50th anniversary

Australians celebrated on Friday the 50th anniversary of the Sydney Opera House by lighting up the sails of a harbourside "masterpiece" that has become an international icon. Fifty years to the day since Queen Elizabeth II opened the world's most recognizable concert hall, people lined the water's edge at night to see a spectacular laser show illuminate its exterior. Besides the party, the Opera House, which lures about 11 million visitors a year, has been hosting events recalling its complex history.



Danish architect Jorn Utzon poses for a photo in his home in Eisnora on January 29, 1957.

The Opera House's Danish architect, Jorn Utzon, never set foot in the building that he designed after beating 232 others in a 1956 competition offering a prize of 5,000 Australian pounds—a decade before dollars were introduced. Utzon moved to Australia with his family the following year to embark on the project. But in 1966, Utzon quit the building—with its shells nearly finished—and left Australia over disagreements with a state public works minister about his vision, budget and the financing. Oth-

er architects finished the work, making drastic changes to his plans for the interior. Utzon never returned to Australia. He died in Copenhagen in 2008, a year after the Opera House had been listed as a world heritage site by UNESCO, which praised it as a "masterpiece of 20th century architecture".

'So magic'

A few days before the 50th anniversary party, two of Utzon's children told an Opera House audience about the enduring impact the building has had on their family and the lives of others. His daughter Lin recalled that she was "terribly, terribly unhappy" to leave Australia as a little girl when her father's contract came to an abrupt end. His architect son Jan had to stop, near tears, as he described how one woman wrote a letter to his father about how she had taken a ferry across Sydney Harbour with the intention of taking her life.

Overcome with emotion, Jan asked his sister Lin to finish the story. "She saw the image of the Opera House and decided if somebody could overcome all those difficulties and build something so magic and so uplifting, who is she to take her own life? And so she didn't," she said. Construction of the innovative building took 14 years and the cost—first estimated at Aus\$7 million—grew to Aus\$102 million by completion, largely paid for by state lotteries.

The interlocking vaulted sails—covered with more than one million Swedish-made tiles—shelter two main performance halls and a restaurant, all resting on a vast concrete platform. The result is a "great urban sculpture" UNESCO says, hailing it as a "daring and visionary experiment that has had an enduring influence on the emergent architecture of the late 20th century".

As well as serious architectural credentials, the Opera House has had its lighter moments. In the 1980s a net was installed above the orchestra pit in the Joan Sutherland Theatre after a chicken featuring in an opera performance walked off the stage and landed on top of a cellist.—AFP



People walk before the Opera House in Sydney on May 18, 2020.

Don't dress as Barbie this Halloween, union asks striking actors

Actors: Put away those Barbie and Spider-Man costumes. Hollywood's ongoing actors' strike has already brought the US entertainment industry to a halt—and now it is coming for the nation's favorite spooky holiday too. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) this week advised its 160,000 members to avoid dressing as characters tied to the studios it is currently striking against. That rules out everything from Warner Bros' "Barbie" to Disney's Marvel superheroes and Netflix's "Stranger Things."

A post entitled "Make Halloween a SCREAM with these SAG-AFTRA Strike-Friendly Tips & Tricks" suggested members instead dress as "generalized characters and figures (ghost, zombie, spider, etc)." Alternatively, actors can still create costumes based on characters from animated TV shows, which are not part of the current strike.

"Let's use our collective power to

send a loud and clear message to our struck employers that we will not promote their content without a fair contract!" said the post. SAG-AFTRA members walked off film and TV sets in July, over terms including pay and the use of artificial intelligence. The strike is now approaching its 100th day, and a series of high-level talks abruptly collapsed in acrimonious fashion last week.

Studios only recently resolved a separate strike by Hollywood writers that lasted nearly 150 days. With Halloween seemingly becoming the latest front in the battle between actors and studios, "Deadpool" star Ryan Reynolds saw the funny side. "I look forward to screaming 'scab' at my 8 year old all night," he wrote on social media. "She's not in the union but she needs to learn."—AFP



SAG-AFTRA members picket outside of Netflix's building on day 99 of their strike against the Hollywood studios in Hollywood, California.—AFP photos



MTV cancels Europe Music Awards over Zionist-Gaza war

MTV cancelled on Thursday its Europe Music Awards ceremony, due to be held in Paris on November 5, citing the "devastating events" taking place in Gaza. "As we watch the devastating events in Gaza continue to unfold, this does not feel like a moment for a global celebration," the organizers said in a statement. "With thousands of lives already lost, it is a moment of mourning."

Stars including David Guetta, Jung Kook (of BTS) and Thirty Seconds to Mars had been due to perform at the annual event. Organizers Paramount Global said they were acting out of "an abundance of caution for the thousands of employees, crew members, artists, fans, and partners who travel from all corners of the world to bring the show to life."—AFP

Carthage film festival canceled in solidarity with Palestinians

The Tunisian government has announced the cancellation of the 34th Carthage Film Festival, Africa's oldest cinema showcase, in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Scheduled to take place from October 28 to November 4, the festival, which accepts entries only from Arab or African directors, is a major event in the Tunisian cultural calendar.

However, the culture ministry said in a statement it was canceling the event "in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and considering the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip... following the brutal Zionist aggression". Tunisia, which hosted the Palestine Liberation Organization from 1982 to 1994, has long been a firm supporter of the Palestinian cause.—AFP



Sports

Astros beat Texas after melee as D-backs win in MLB playoffs

Altuve blasts his 26th career MLB playoff homer

WASHINGTON: Jose Altuve smashed a three-run home run in the ninth inning to deliver defending champion Houston a dramatic 5-4 comeback victory over Texas on Friday in the Major League Baseball playoffs. The 33-year-old Venezuelan second baseman, talisman of the Astros' dynasty run, rallied the visitors after a benches-clearing scuffle in the eighth inning saw two players and Astros manager Dusty Baker ejected. Altuve blasted his 26th career MLB playoff homer off Rangers closer Jose Leclerc to give Houston a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven American League Championship Series, moving the Astros within one win of their third consecutive World Series and fifth in seven seasons.

"We were really down. We didn't want to go home down by one... so it was good to hit that one and get the team to win," said Altuve, who rated it his best playoff homer. Also rallying to win was Arizona, which edged Philadelphia 6-5 to level the National League Championship Series at 2-2 with game five on Saturday in Phoenix. "It's an awesome feeling," said Arizona's Alek Thomas, who hit a two-run homer. "We're going to keep doing our thing."

The Astros, who downed Philadelphia in last year's World Series, have now won 19 of their past 22 road games and seven in a row at Texas. "That was a huge victory," Baker said. "This will go down in history." Texas outfielder Adolis Garcia crushed a three-run homer in the sixth to give the Rangers a 4-2 lead before he was tossed as intense emotions boiled over. Garcia was hit by a pitch from Houston's Bryan Abreu, sparking a melee that saw both players and Baker ejected. "It was just the heat of the moment," Garcia said. "I just reacted to being hit by the pitch... he could have hurt me."

Zarco wins MotoGP thriller; Bagnaia 2nd

PHILLIP ISLAND: France's Johann Zarco won a thrilling Australian MotoGP on Saturday with a last-lap overtake to clinch a maiden victory ahead of Italian Francesco Bagnaia, who stretched his world championship lead. The Ducati-Pramac ace passed fading teammate and world title contender Jorge Martin in a nail-biting finale to take the chequered flag just 0.201secs clear of Bagnaia on his factory Ducati.

"I was surprised to see Martin dropping down, so I thought something was possible," said 33-year-old Zarco after finally winning in his 120th grand prix. "To cross in first after so many races, it is really high emotion. I don't want to cry at the moment, but I think it will come. This is a track that everyone loves, and if you can win here you feel like you are part of the big guys," he added.

Young Gresini rider Fabio Di Giannantonio came

The Rangers must win game six Sunday in Houston to sustain hope of their first World Series trip since 2011. "You're going to get punched in the gut," Rangers manager Bruce Bochy said. "They've done a great job of bouncing back all year and I'm confident they will." Solo homers by Houston's Alex Bregman and Texas' Nathaniel Lowe, and Jose Abreu's run-scoring single in the sixth put Houston ahead 2-1. Garcia belted his fourth homer of the playoffs off Astros starter Justin Verlander to give Texas a two-run edge.

Tensions flared in the bottom of the eighth when Abreu hit the 30-year-old Cuban slugger with a fastball and Garcia reacted angrily, confronting Houston players. "He could have injured me," Garcia said. "I just let him know that shouldn't happen there." Teammates needed to restrain Garcia after both squads ran from the dugout onto the field. "I don't think anybody likes to get hit, especially by a 95-mph fastball," Altuve said of Garcia. "He got a little mad, but hopefully it doesn't go beyond this."

Umpires decided Abreu deliberately hit Garcia with the pitch and ejected him, Garcia and Baker, who argued in vain the Astros didn't want another baserunner. "I haven't been that mad in a long time," Baker said. "I was just seeing red." "I know Abreu. I know he's not trying to hit anybody in a two-run game in the post-season," Bregman said. "Everyone is amped up because this is what we play for." In the ninth, Houston's Yainer Diaz singled, Jon Singleton walked and Altuve smashed the ball over the left-field wall to plate the winning runs. "I was just focused on getting one pitch in the middle I could really hit," Altuve said. "And it happened."

third at a blustery and overcast Phillip Island for his first-ever podium. KTM's Brad Binder was fourth, with less than one second separating the top four. Pole-sitter Martin led for 26 laps of the 27-lap race, but his soft rear tyre was cooked at the death and he could not hang on as grip deserted him. Most other riders were on medium rear tyres, which last longer.

The Spaniard ended fifth in a setback to his world title hopes, with Bagnaia now 27 points ahead with four grand prix left in the 20-leg season. "It was very long and very tough," said reigning world champion Bagnaia. "For a moment, I was a bit worried ... but when I saw that Jorge was stuck with the same gap, I said okay 'we will catch you.'" "Absolutely," he added on it being a good day for his championship defense. "But we know how things can change, it's very easy to start having problems. So feet on the ground."

Perfect start

At least the rain stayed away during the grueling test after the grand prix was brought forward a day to avoid forecast wild weather. The 13-lap sprint has been shifted to Sunday, but will only take place if safe to do so, with rain and wind



ARLINGTON: Corey Seager #5 of the Texas Rangers hits a double against Justin Verlander #35 of the Houston Astros during the sixth inning in Game Five of the American League Championship Series at Globe Life Field on October 20, 2023. - AFP

At Phoenix, Philadelphia's Kyle Schwarber blasted a solo homer in the fourth inning, his 19th career playoff homer, the most by a left-handed batter. Philadelphia took a 5-2 lead after Johan Rojas tripled and scored on Trea Turner's sacrifice fly in the seventh, but the Diamondbacks pulled level on a bases-load-

ed walk in the seventh and Thomas's homer in the eighth. Arizona's Ketel Marte singled with two outs in the eighth, advanced on a hit batter and scored the final run on Gabriel Moreno's single. Schwarber hit a two-out double in the ninth but Turner then struck out to end the game. - AFP

gusts of up to 65 kph (40 mph) expected. Martin won the sprint in Indonesia last week, but crashed out of the main event to hand Bagnaia victory, and with it an 18-point lead in a championship race that has become a two-man show.

Marco Bezzecchi, riding for the VR46 Ducati-satellite team, headed into Phillip Island third on the championship ladder and in dire need of a win to stay in contention. But he only finished sixth to be 73 points behind Bagnaia. Martin set a new lap record to grab a third pole of the year for the perfect launchpad into the race and he sped off the line to hold off Binder and Bagnaia in an ideal start.

Bagnaia did not have the pace to keep up and Di Giannantonio soon passed him into third, and quickly widened the gap. At the front, Martin was seemingly in a class of his own, stretching his advantage over Bagnaia to nearly five seconds by lap 10. But as his rear tyre began wearing he slowed and the chasing pack closed in, with Zarco able to pass him on turn four of the final lap to snatch the last-gasp win. Last year's winner Alex Rins withdrew ahead of qualifying due to pain from leg fractures sustained in Italy four months ago. — AFP

Latham hails 'fantastic' India ahead of marquee World Cup clash

DHARAMSALA: New Zealand skipper Tom Latham on Saturday said hosts India have been playing "fantastic cricket" and the Kiwis will need to adapt quickly to win the battle of World Cup table-toppers. Both teams come into the contest unbeaten in their four matches and now meet in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala to get ahead of each other in the race to the semi-finals.

New Zealand have an edge over India in World Cup match-ups with a 5-3 advantage and knocked out the much-fancied team in the semi-finals of the last edition in 2019. "I'm not sure to be honest," Latham, who is leading the side in the absence of the injured Kane Williamson, said on his team's good record against India at the 50-over showpiece. "They're a fantastic team. They've been playing some great cricket for a long period of time. We've had some great contests in ICC events, but also in bilateral series, whether that be home or away."

New Zealand reached the final of the last two World Cups but lost to Australia in 2015 and then England four years ago. "Being adaptable is probably one of the most important things for us as a group and trying to do that as quick as possible," Latham told reporters. "Obviously with this format you play everyone once which is unique to 2015 where it was pool play." Latham, a wicketkeeper-batsman, added: "So yeah, again we're in India, we're offered different conditions that we're used to. So, adaptability, sticking to our plan as best you can."

'Good luck All Blacks'

New Zealand's previous two matches have been in hot and humid Chennai but the action now shifts to the winter capital of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. New Zealand have bowling depth and their seamers including Trent Boult, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson shared six wickets in the last win over Afghanistan. "I think there's many factors that lead into a game. I don't think it's one specific area that you can nail down," said Latham.

"But as you said, India's top order have been fantastic this tournament. And again, our bowling attack has done a really good job up front as well. So that's going to be a great contest with bat and ball and obviously vice versa with Indian seamers in our top order." Latham confirmed speedster Tim Southee will be available for the key match. On Williamson, who is nursing a fractured thumb, Latham said, "fingers crossed he'll be available for later on in the tournament". Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner, who plays for Indian Premier League side Chennai Super Kings, leads the bowling chart in the tournament so far with 11 wickets and Latham said the team will "lean" on his experience. — AFP



PHILLIP ISLAND: Prima Pramac's French rider Johann Zarco (right) competes against Repsol Honda's Spanish rider Marc Marquez during the MotoGP Australian Grand Prix at Phillip Island on October 21, 2023. - AFP

Schauffele fights back at windy Zozo Championship

INZAI: Xander Schauffele finished with a flourish to move three strokes off the lead heading into the last two days of the US PGA Tour's Zozo Championships in Japan on Friday. The American, playing his first competition since the Ryder Cup, braved fierce winds to fire three birdies on the final five holes and card a 69 at Narashino Country Club. Beau Hossler took the second-round lead at 7-under, one stroke ahead of fellow American Justin Suh and two in front of Japan's Satoshi Kodaira.

Schauffele had three bogeys before hauling himself back in contention at 4-under, and the Tokyo Olympics champion said the conditions were "hard" to deal with. "It seemed to be a lot of crosswinds on most of the holes—made it hard to hit it close," he said. "The par-fives were probably the only holes

that you could birdie, and if you didn't hit in the fairway, you're struggling."

Schauffele said he was "able to clean it up late" but was not sorry to return to the clubhouse when he did. "I think everyone's happy that the round's over," he said. Overnight leader Collin Morikawa, also playing his first tournament since the Ryder Cup, carded a 73 to drop to 3-under. Morikawa said he hit only three fairways all round and put himself "in some wrong spots" as he struggled to deal with the wind. "I've just got to hit more fairways, that's all it is," said the twice major winner. "Made the round extremely hard today not being able to hit those fairways."

Defending champion Keegan Bradley was also on 3-under, while 2021 winner Hideki Matsuyama was on 5-over after carding a 76. Hossler shot a 65 to take the sole lead at the 78-man, no-cut event on the outskirts of Tokyo. "It's a difficult golf course in spots, it's a very gettable golf course in spots," said Hossler. "That being said, playing in easily 20-to-30-mile-an-hour winds today was certainly a challenge. I'd say anything under par was a really quality score, so to shoot 5-under was incredible." — AFP

McKeown becomes first woman to hold 'backstroke' records

BUDAPEST: Australian Kaylee McKeown said she was "super stoked" after becoming the first woman to hold world records in all three backstroke disciplines by smashing the 50m mark. The 22-year-old clocked 26.86 seconds at the World Cup in Budapest on Friday to better the previous best of 26.98 set by China's Liu Xiang in 2018. "I am super stoked with that," said McKeown, who is a red-hot favorite to dominate in the pool at next year's Paris Olympics.

"The only thing I can keep doing is training hard and keep believing in myself and believing in my coach. I never saw myself as a sprinter so it's really nice to have that under my belt. Next year is going to be a really tough year so the more confidence I can build, the better," she added. McKeown has held the 100m world record since June 2021 and bagged the 200m in March. — AFP



DHARAMSALA: New Zealand's captain Tom Latham (left) and Tom Blundell attend a practice session on the eve of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between India and New Zealand on October 21, 2023. - AFP

Sports

France shock women's rugby world champions N Zealand

A surprise result at the WXV1 top-tier tournament

WELLINGTON: France used a watertight defense to stun world champions New Zealand 18-17 in a surprise result at the WXV1 top-tier women's rugby tournament in Wellington on Saturday. The French claimed an early lead and defended it bravely, making more than 200 tackles to snatch a first-ever win over the Black Ferns on New Zealand soil and hand the tournament hosts their first defeat against any side for two years. The result also exacts some revenge for France's heartbreaking Rugby World Cup exit last year, when beaten by New Zealand by a single point in the semi-finals.

Captain Manaea Feleu said her third-ranked French side had tackled their way to victory. "We knew it was going to be a great battle against the Black Ferns, they are world champions," she said. "We knew it was going to be hard and tough for 80 minutes and I'm just grateful we gave it 100 percent." Operating with less possession, France opened up a 15-7 lead at halftime through long-range tries to wingers Emilie Boulard and Cyrielle Banet.

Liana Mikaele-Tu'u scored New Zealand's opening try but her team slipped further behind when Morgane Bourgeois landed penalties on either side of the interval. New Zealand's chances diminished when replacement prop Chrissy Viliko was shown a

red card for an illegal cleanout with 15 minutes remaining but her team regrouped and created a try for winger Katelyn Vaha'akolo to close within one point. Black Ferns captain Ruahei Demant said her team would need to improve for their remaining matches against Wales and England.

"We were down in their half a lot but we didn't capitalize on the pressure we were putting them under," Demant said. "We know what the French bring. You can't mistake because they punish you." It completed the first of three rounds of matches at the inaugural tournament which features the six leading women's teams. Canada beat Wales 42-22 earlier on Saturday, after top-ranked England opened with a 42-7 rout of Australia on Friday. Goal-kicking forward Sophie de Goede scored 17 points for Canada, converting all six of their tries, including her own.

The fourth-ranked Canadians pulled clear in the second half after leading by four points at the interval. The second round of matches is in Dunedin next week, with England facing Canada in the clash of two unbeaten sides, while New Zealand play Wales and France meet Australia. The tournament concludes in Auckland, where the highlight is expected to be a rematch of last year's World Cup final, between New Zealand and England. — AFP



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's Ruby Tui is tackled by France's Emilie Boulard during the WXV 1 women's rugby match between New Zealand and France at Sky Stadium in Wellington on October 21, 2023. — AFP

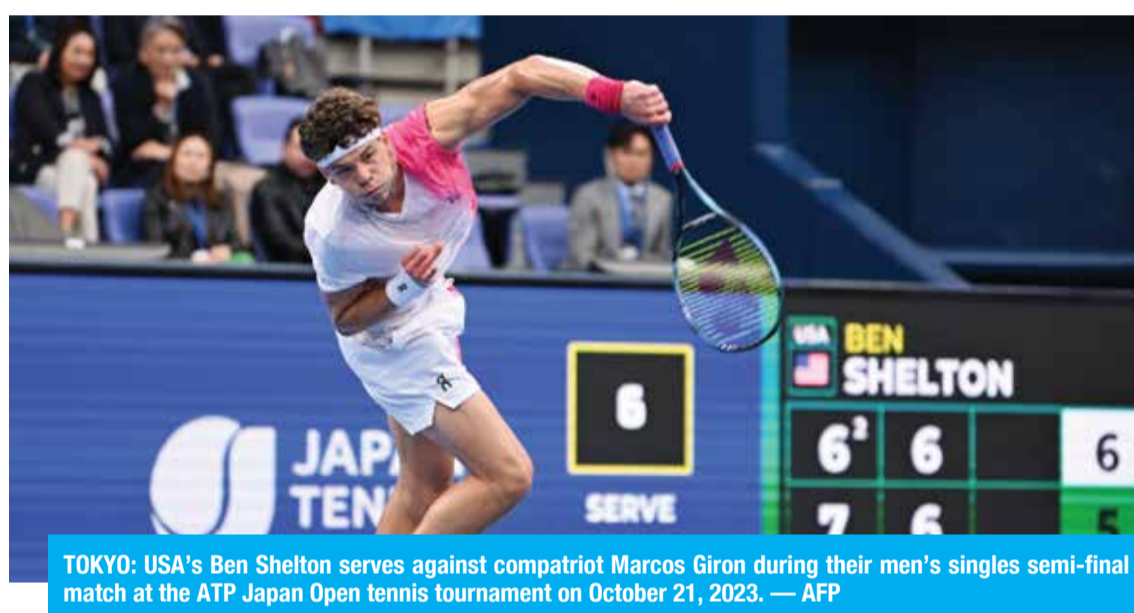
Shelton shakes things up to reach first final at Japan Open

TOKYO: Rising American star Ben Shelton said he had to "shake things up" to reach his first ATP Tour final at the Japan Open on Saturday after another grueling three-set match.

The 21-year-old beat American qualifier Marcos Giron 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 in Tokyo and will face Russia's Aslan Karatsev in Sunday's final. Shelton lost the first set and found himself two breaks down in the second against world number 79 Giron, who eliminated second seed Casper Ruud earlier this week.

Shelton said it was "definitely a difficult place to be in" and credited a change in strategy for turning the match in his favor. "I knew that if I continued to keep playing the way I was, with the rhythm that he'd found, I was going to lose the match," he said. "I tried to shake things up and try something that was going to surprise him. I was able to get him out of his rhythm for the three or four games that I needed to get myself back into the match."

Shelton rode the momentum after he had survived his second-set scare, closing out the match with an ace before letting out a roar and thumping his chest. He said the encounter was "one of the tougher matches that I've played in my career." "I definitely had to adjust during the match today and problem-solve and come up with solutions when my back was against the wall," he said. "I was able to figure it out and get it done in three sets, but definitely not an easy task today."



TOKYO: USA's Ben Shelton serves against compatriot Marcos Giron during their men's singles semi-final match at the ATP Japan Open tennis tournament on October 21, 2023. — AFP

It was Shelton's third three-set match this week, with all of them featuring at least one tiebreaker. Karatsev has won all his matches in straight sets, including his 6-3, 6-4 semi-final victory over Japanese wild card Shintaro Mochizuki. Shelton said his route to the final had been "a little bit different." "To be able to have been as composed as I was throughout the week, to get to the place that I'm in, I couldn't be happier," he said. Karatsev has beaten fourth seed Alex de Minaur and sixth seed Frances Tiafoe this week in Tokyo. He said his win over Mochizuki was "tricky", with the crowd getting behind the world number 215 home favorite after his unlikely run to the semi-finals.

"The opponent was really hard, playing without any pressure," Karatsev said of 20-year-old Mochizuki, who knocked out top seed Taylor Fritz in the second round. "I had to focus a little bit more than normal - if you lose the focus then the crowd can get crazy and then you're in trouble." Karatsev lost to Shelton at the US Open, where the American reached the semi-finals. Karatsev said his opponent's long matches this week in Tokyo are unlikely to make much of a difference when they meet again in the final. "I think he's really fit - it doesn't really matter whether he plays three sets or two sets," said Karatsev. "Maybe I will come a little bit fresher than him but I don't think it's a huge advantage." — AFP

Leclerc takes pole in Texas as Verstappen slips to sixth

AUSTIN: Charles Leclerc claimed his third pole position of the season on Friday as Max Verstappen had his best lap deleted and slipped to sixth on the grid in a dramatic qualifying at this weekend's United States Grand Prix. The Ferrari driver showed commanding pace as he clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 34.723 seconds to outpace McLaren's Lando Norris by a tenth with resurgent seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes taking third.

Carlos Sainz was fourth in the second Ferrari ahead of George Russell in the second Williams and Verstappen, whose late best lap was quick enough for pole before it was rubbed out after he exceeded track limits at Turn 19. It was the 21st pole position of Leclerc's career and gives him a chance of frustrating newly-crowned three-time champion Verstappen's bid for a 50th career victory in Sunday's race. "I am very happy with my qualifying and to take pole position," said Leclerc. "It was a really good lap and the team did a great job. We had a very clean F1, which is so important on these sprint weekends."

Norris described his front-row start as a "bonus for the team". He said: "I think I was quick enough to get pole position. I know Charles said he made a

few mistakes, but so did I! And anyway, I am happy with second nevertheless." Hamilton, who relished the performance of his car's upgrades at one of his favorite circuits, said: "I love being here at this circuit and I love the country. This is such an incredibly challenging circuit and one of my favorites, up there with Silverstone."

'My best shot'

"We've taken a step closer to these guys this weekend, thanks to everyone in the factory who have been pushing so hard. I will give it my best shot tomorrow." Behind a grumbling Verstappen, who complained on team radio, the Alpines of Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon were seventh and eighth ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull and Oscar Piastri in the second McLaren.

The session began in glorious sunshine with a track temperature of 42 degrees Celsius and the air at 35, conditions to challenge tyres and cars at the Circuit of the Americas. Leclerc set an early fastest lap before Verstappen and then Nico Hulkenberg took command, the German making the most of a major upgrade package for his Haas on home soil.

Both Ferraris then swept to the top with Sainz leading Leclerc by two-tenths ahead of Gasly's Alpine, with everyone running on softs, before they began their second Q1 runs. Sainz chose to save tyres and miss a second run as Verstappen went top by almost half a second only to be outpaced by Hamilton, on new tyres, who beat him by two-tenths. Norris was second. At the bottom end, it was bad news for



AUSTIN: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (right) celebrates with the award for the pole position after the qualifying session for the 2023 United States Formula One Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, on October 20, 2023. — AFP

Aston Martin, despite an upgrade package, as both two-time champion Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll failed to make the cut. Alonso was 17th and eliminated from Q1 for the first time this year along with Hulkenberg, in his Haas. Stroll, 19th, and the Williams pair Alex Albon and Logan Sargeant. Stroll had missed most of practice due to brake problems, which also afflicted Alonso. — AFP

Rapinoe's OL Reign advance to NWSL semi-finals

LOS ANGELES: Retiring American women's football star Megan Rapinoe has at least one more match before her iconic career concludes. Veronica Latsko's header in the 87th minute gave Rapinoe's OL Reign a 1-0 victory over visiting Angel City on Friday in a National Women's Soccer League quarter-final match. Latsko took a cross from fellow American Phoebe McClemon in the heart of the box and nodded the ball into the bottom left corner of the goal to deliver the triumph. As a result, Rapinoe's Seattle-based squad advanced to the semi-finals at top seed San Diego on November 5.

"Once the second half started, we began to play with more intensity and we got the goal, even though it took a little longer than we wanted," Rapinoe said. Rapinoe, who announced this year it would be her final season, received an ovation as she was removed late in second-half stoppage time from her final home match, played before 12,152 people at Lumen Field.

"To win the last one, play in front of another incredible crowd, I tried to hold back the tears," Rapinoe said. "To end my career here in Seattle on such a high note means the world to me. Thank you Veronica for that." The 38-year-old striker, celebrated for off-field activism as well as her success on the pitch, ended her epic US national team career last month with 63 goals in 203 caps over more than 17 years, playing in a farewell match at Chicago's Soldier Field. — AFP

Simba, Ahly draw in lively start to African Football League

JOHANNESBURG: The first edition of the African Football League (AFL) kicked off on Friday with a lively 2-2 quarter-final first leg draw between Simba of Tanzania and Al Ahly of Egypt in Dar es Salaam. Moroccan Reda Slim put the visitors ahead in first half stoppage time before a capacity 60,000 crowd that included FIFA president Gianni Infantino and his CAF counterpart, Patrice Motsepe. Simba scored twice within seven minutes early in the second half thanks to headers from Tanzanian Denis Kibu and Malian Sadio Kanoute.

Simba goalkeeper Ally Salim then failed to grasp a cross on 63 minutes, allowing Mahmoud Kahraba to equalize by pushing the ball into the net. The clubs meet again on Tuesday in Cairo with record 11-time African champions Ahly favoured to win and face Petro Luanda of Angola or Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa in the semi-finals. The AFL underwent a name change several months ago from CAF Africa Super League amid fears that the original title might be linked with the failed 2021 attempt to form a European Super League. Initially, a 24-club, 197-match tournament culminating in a single-match final, it was reduced to eight teams with two-leg quarter-finals, semi-finals and final due to limited sponsorship. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
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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, STEVEN JAORAWALA, holder of Indian Passport No K3652734 having permanent address T-85 Choti Gol building Yusuf Azad Qawaal Marq (Belgrami road) opposite Bhabha hospital Kurla (West) Mumbai, pin 400070 Maharashtra India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) MUSTAALI MU-ZAFFAR HUSAIN and (surname) JA-ORAWALA. Maharashtra Gazette No. U-93039. #4248 - 20-10-2023

Manchester City return to Premier League summit

Football world mourns Bobby Charlton

LONDON: Manchester City beat Brighton 2-1 on Saturday to return to the Premier League summit on a day when the action on the pitch was overshadowed by the death of England World Cup winner Bobby Charlton. Charlton's family announced that the midfielder, who won 106 caps for England and scored 49 international goals, had "passed peacefully in the early hours of Saturday morning". Tributes poured in from across the football world, with former England captain David Beckham praising the Manchester United great as a "national hero".

City manager Pep Guardiola also expressed his condolences after the champions held on to beat Brighton at the Etihad. "I am sorry to the Manchester United family and England," he said. "Next week, when we go there, we will be present to make a tribute. 'I love this country for many things but one of the things is how they take care of the legends.' City's hard-fought win meant they leapfrogged Liverpool, who briefly topped the table after their 2-0 victory against neighbors Everton in the early kick-off.

It was City's 21st consecutive victory at the Etihad Stadium in all competitions, setting a new record for a winning run at home by a Premier League club. The treble winners, who had lost their previous two league games, dominated the first half, taking the lead through Julian Alvarez in the seventh minute. Erling Haaland ended his brief goal drought by doubling City's lead 12 minutes later, driving home a fierce left-footed shot from just outside the area. But it was a different story after the break. Ansu Fati pulled a goal back in the 73rd minute to heap the pressure on the home side, who held on despite the sending off of defender Manuel Akanji.

Liverpool's derby dominance

Liverpool had fortune on their side against Everton at Anfield, where Mohamed Salah scored twice. Everton's Ashley Young was sent off before half-time for two bookable offences, while Ibrahima Konate escaped a second booking in the second half with the game still goalless. The home side struggled to make their

man advantage count, but finally achieved the breakthrough 15 minutes from time when Salah smashed home from the penalty spot after Michael Keane handled. Salah was then teed up by Darwin Nunez to make the points safe deep into stoppage time.

Everton manager Sean Dyche was angry about the decision not to send Konate off. "I have no clue how he didn't feel it was a bookable offence," he said. "I like to think there are a lot of fair-minded people here today who are stunned that wasn't a second yellow card." Even Klopp said he could understand Everton's frustration at a lack of consistency from referee Craig Pawson. The three points mean the Reds have lost just one of their last 29 Merseyside derbies and remain unbeaten at Anfield in front of a crowd against Everton since 1999.

Newcastle, whose early-season struggles are now a distant memory, romped to a 4-0 win against sorry Crystal Palace, with goals from Jacob Murphy, Anthony Gordon, Sean Longstaff and Callum Wilson. The win, their fourth in five Premier League matches, lifts Eddie Howe's men to fifth in the Premier League. Elsewhere, Brentford beat Burnley 3-0 while Wolves came from behind to beat Bournemouth 2-1 thanks to a late winner from Sasa Kalajdzic. Luton recovered from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 against Nottingham Forest.— AFP



MANCHESTER: Brighton's Japanese midfielder #22 Kaoru Mitoma vies with Manchester City's English defender #02 Kyle Walker to header the ball during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Brighton and Hove Albion on October 21, 2023. — AFP

Mbappe on target as PSG ease past Strasbourg 3-0

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored one goal and made another as a much-changed Paris Saint-Germain eased to a 3-0 win over Patrick Vieira's Strasbourg in Ligue 1 on Saturday. Mbappe opened the scoring with a 10th-minute penalty and set up Carlos Soler to make it 2-0 just after the half-hour mark at a wet and windy Parc des Princes. The reigning champions were heading for a routine victory and added a third in the 77th minute courtesy of Fabian Ruiz.

It was a second straight win for PSG following their 4-1 defeat away to Newcastle United in the Champions League earlier this month, and the result

moved them provisionally to the top of Ligue 1 after nine games. The Qatar-owned club are a point clear of Monaco and two ahead of Nice, who face Marseille later on Saturday. "The logical concern with these games straight after an international break is that it is clearly not easy for the players to switch their mentality but the team played well and managed the game very well," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. He rested several regular starters with this game also coming just before a key Champions League meeting with AC Milan.

Achraf Hakimi and Ousmane Dembele were among those to be left out at kick-off, while Soler and Ruiz came in along with Danilo Pereira, Bradley Barcola and Lee Kang-in. South Korean international Lee was making his first appearance for PSG in over a month, having helped his country win football gold at the Asian Games in the meantime. "In general all those players who have been involved less up to now this season did well. —AFP

England's World Cup winner Charlton dies

LONDON: England World Cup winner and Manchester United great Bobby Charlton, described by the club as a "giant of the game", has died at the age of 86, it was announced on Saturday. Charlton was a key member of England's victorious 1966 World Cup team and also enjoyed great success at club level with United, who became the first English club to win the European Cup in 1968, a decade after members of the team were killed in an air crash in Munich.

"It is with great sadness that we share the news that Sir Bobby passed peacefully in the

early hours of Saturday morning. He was surrounded by his family," said a statement on behalf of the Charlton family. "His family would like to pass on their thanks to everyone who has contributed to his care and for the many people who have loved and supported him."

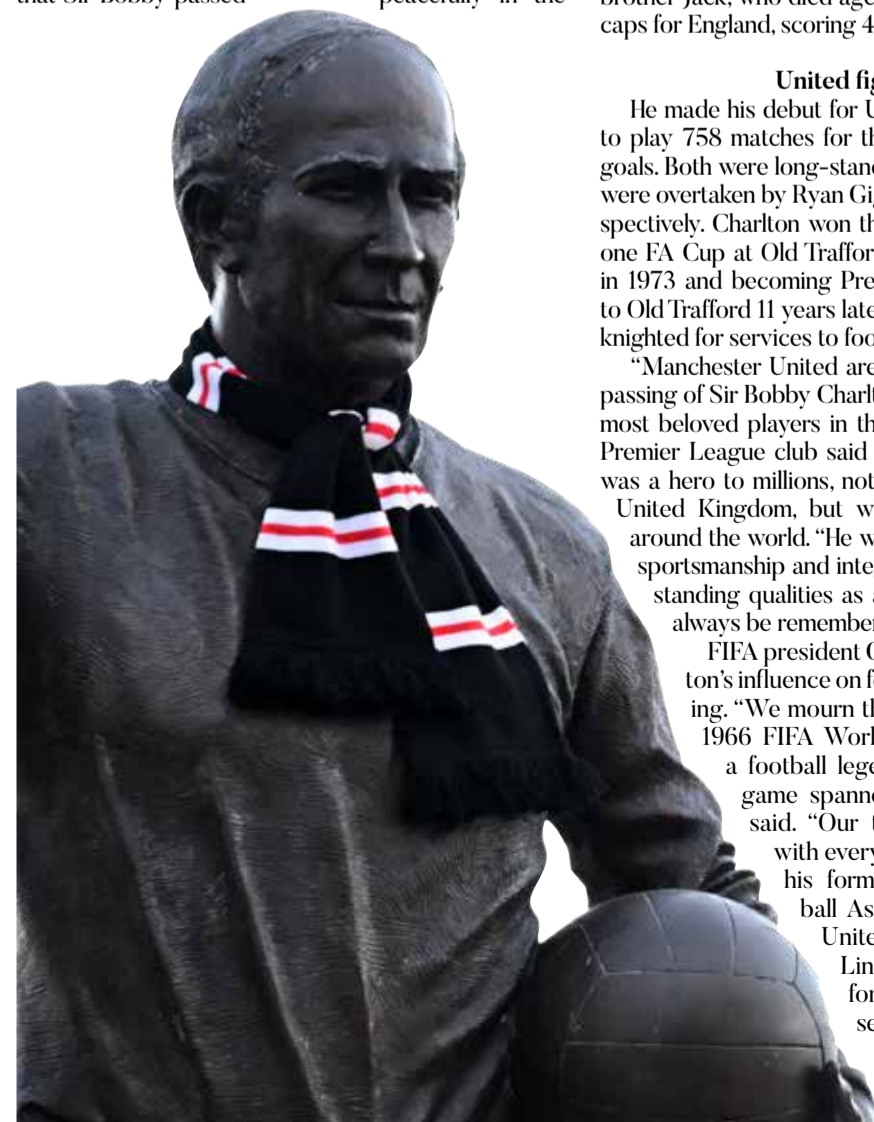
In 2020, it was announced Charlton had been diagnosed with dementia and as the disease took hold he stopped attending matches at Old Trafford. United posted a picture of Charlton on X, formerly known as Twitter, with the caption: "Words will never be enough." Charlton's European Cup success at United came 10 years after the 1958 Munich air disaster, which he and team manager Matt Busby survived but which claimed the lives of eight of Charlton's team-mates. The midfielder played in the World Cup final alongside his brother Jack, who died aged 85 in 2020, and won 106 caps for England, scoring 49 goals.

United figurehead

He made his debut for United in 1956 and went on to play 758 matches for the Red Devils, scoring 249 goals. Both were long-standing club records until they were overtaken by Ryan Giggs and Wayne Rooney respectively. Charlton won three league titles and one FA Cup at Old Trafford and, after leaving United in 1973 and becoming Preston manager, he returned to Old Trafford 11 years later as a club director. He was knighted for services to football in 1994.

"Manchester United are in mourning following the passing of Sir Bobby Charlton, one of the greatest and most beloved players in the history of our club," the Premier League club said in a statement. "Sir Bobby was a hero to millions, not just in Manchester, or the United Kingdom, but wherever football is played around the world. "He was admired as much for his sportsmanship and integrity as he was for his outstanding qualities as a footballer. Sir Bobby will always be remembered as a giant of the game."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said Charlton's influence on football had been long-lasting. "We mourn the loss of one of England's 1966 FIFA World Cup winning team and a football legend, whose impact on the game spanned generations," Infantino said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone who was close to him, his former teammates, The Football Association and Manchester United. Rest In Peace." Gary Lineker, the former England forward and now a BBC presenter, said Charlton was "for me, England's greatest ever player". "He may no longer be with us but he'll have footballing immortality. RIP Sir Bobby." — AFP



MANCHESTER: A scarf is pictured wrapped around a sculpture of Bobby Charlton, part of the 'United Trinity' sculpture, outside of Old Trafford Stadium in Manchester, central England, on October 21, 2023, following the death of Bobby Charlton. — AFP

Kazemi wins Kuwait Riding Center Show

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: International rider Shaker Al-Kazemi won the second edition of the Kuwait Riding Center Show Jumping Championship, which was held on Friday at the center's track in the Sabhan area. He succeeded in winning first place in the fifth main heat at a height of 130 cm in 72.89 seconds without a fault. Riders Ahmad Al-Ansari, Khalid Al-Khubaizi, Abdulwahab Al-Faris, Fawaz Rashid, and Ghazi Al-Jurairi followed him. The fourth heat (at a height of 120 cm) was won by rider Ali Al-Kharafi. He beat Hussein Al-Kharafi, Fawaz Al-Subaie, and Khalid Al-Khubaizi. Faisal Al-Khunaini won the



third heat at a height of 110 cm. A large number of riders competed in the Beginners Category at heights of 70 and 90 cm. Rider Shaker Al-Kazemi said local clubs are keen on organizing many championships in order to enhance the technical level and develop the show jumping sport.

