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Kuwait calls for immediate ceasefire in war on Gaza

GCC 'united' on halting aggression • Fourth aid plane leaves for Egypt

Crown Prince returns home after UK visit



LONDON: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is being seen off by Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Bader Al-Awadhi, UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis and other diplomats on Thursday. HH the Crown Prince and his accompanying delegation returned home on Thursday after the official visit to the United Kingdom. — KUNA

CAIRO/RIYADH/KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for relevant international agencies to assume their responsibilities towards protecting civilians, in addition to the importance of allowing humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah delivered a speech on Thursday before an emergency meeting of the Arab Human Rights Committee to discuss the crimes of the Zionist entity's occupation against humanity in the Gaza Strip.

Sheikha Jawaher said that Kuwait's request to hold a special session comes out of its belief in the importance of the Arab League's role in supporting the Palestinian cause. "We meet today, 20 days after the horrific and brutal attacks launched with all barbarism by the occupying Zionist entity on the Gaza Strip under the pretext of the right to self-defense," Sheikha Jawaher added. She described these violations as "war crimes", stressing that forced displacement, apartheid, and blocking access to humanitarian aid are a grave violation of international humanitarian law. She also pointed out that all of this is happening in the face of

a terrible silence from advocates of human rights. Sheikha Jawaher reaffirmed the principled and firm position of Kuwait on the Palestinian issue.

The Gulf countries are united on the issue of halting the Zionist entity's aggression against the Gaza Strip in addition to allowing the entry of urgent relief aid, said Secretary General of the GCC Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Thursday. Speaking to (CNN Business), Al-Budaiwi called for avoiding double standards in international reactions to the appalling violations carried out by the Zionist entity's aggressors against the people of Gaza.

He reiterated calls for establishing an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as capital, adding that civilians should be avoided during the time of war according to international law.

Meanwhile, the fourth Kuwaiti aid plane, carrying 10 tons of necessities and supplies, departed Kuwait on Thursday, heading to Egypt to provide assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip. This initiative came in line with the Kuwaiti leadership's directives and reflected the people's heartfelt support to the Palestinian people. Government and non-government entities as well as charities had coordinated their

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Special Assembly session on Gaza; term starts Oct 31

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Thursday invited MPs to the opening session of the new parliamentary term on Oct 31 and also to a special session the following day to debate the developments in the Gaza Strip in Palestine under a Zionist entity's barbaric attack for three weeks.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah will inaugurate the new term with a speech expected to focus on cooperation amid serious regional developments. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Saadoun will also deliver speeches before the assembly elects members for permanent and temporary panels for the next year.

The special session over the Zionist entity aggression on Palestinian civilians in Gaza was demanded by 48 MPs and is expected to debate a new draft law that bans any dealing or sympathy with the Zionist entity. In the meantime, head of the assembly's financial and economic affairs committee MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said on Thursday that the panel has approved a host of draft laws to improve the standard of living for Kuwaiti families.

Other bills approved include raising the minimum limit of pensions for Kuwaiti citizens, doubling monthly children allowance to KD 100, raising social allowance for married Kuwaitis by KD 100 monthly, increasing the monthly cost of living allowance to KD 250 from KD 120, in addition to increasing interest-free loans for retired Kuwaitis to 21 times of pensions from seven times of those pensions.

Hamas: Zionist strikes killed 50 hostages

KHAN YUNIS, Palestinian Territories: Hamas said on Thursday Zionist entity strikes on Gaza have killed almost 50 of the hostages its militants seized in bloody cross-border attacks as the United Nations warned "nowhere is safe" in the territory.

The group's armed wing made the claim after Zionist entity sent tanks, troops and armored bulldozers into the enclave in a "targeted raid" overnight that the military said destroyed multiple sites before withdrawing. "(Ezzedine) Al-Qassam Brigades estimates that the number of Zionist prisoners who were killed in the Gaza Strip as a result of Zionist strikes and massacres has reached almost 50," the group said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

On the 20th day of Zionist entity's bloodiest Gaza war yet, the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, Lynne Hastings, said that despite the Zionist entity military issuing warnings to people in Gaza City to leave, "advance warnings make no difference".

She said in a statement that when evacuation routes are bombed, "people are left with nothing but impossible choices. Nowhere is safe in Gaza."

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GAZA CITY: A young boy stands amid the rubble of a building in the aftermath of a Zionist strike on Gaza City on October 26, 2023. — AFP

Massive manhunt for gunman after 18 killed in US

LEWISTON: Police in the US state of Maine waged a major manhunt on Thursday for a gunman who killed 18 people at a bowling alley and a bar in the deadliest mass shooting this year in America. The rampage in the small northeastern town of Lewiston also left 13 people wounded, three of them in critical condition, with a wide area under lockdown as schools were closed, roadblocks erected and residents ordered to stay indoors.

Governor Janet Mills said the suspect was "considered armed and dangerous, and police advise that Maine people should not approach him under any circumstances." "This attack strikes at the very heart of who we are and the values we hold dear," Mills told a press conference. "This is a dark day for Maine."

Police named the suspect as Robert Card — seen in surveillance footage pointing a semi-automatic rifle with an extended clip as he walked into the bowling alley in Lewiston. News outlets broadcast footage of people fleeing in terror from the venue after the shooting started on Wednesday evening.

One survivor told television reporters that he was 15 feet (5 meters) from the gunman when he opened fire. He thought at first it was a balloon popping. "And as soon as I turned and saw it was not a balloon and he was holding a weapon. I just booked it down the lane and I slid basically into where the pins are and climbed up into the machine and was on top of the machines for about 10 minutes until the cops got there," he said.

Card is a certified firearms instructor and a member of the US Army Reserve, according to law enforcement. As hundreds of law enforcement officials flooded the search zone, Lewiston police chief David St. Pierre said on Thursday that "this is an all hands on deck approach."

"We continue to work tirelessly in bringing the situation to an end," he told reporters, vowing "to



LEWISTON, United States: Law enforcement officers gather outside Lewiston High School, Maine on October 26, 2023. — AFP

locate and hold the person accountable." President Joe Biden called Maine's governor and officials to offer federal support, and ordered flags to be lowered to half-mast at the White House

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Ambitious mothers' dilemma: Balancing career and children

A mother's life is always a rollercoaster ride: Expert

By Passant Hisham

In my view

Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power

By Bedour Al-Thuwaini

Positive thinking indeed paves the way for success by fostering an optimistic outlook and empowering individuals to overcome challenges. It encourages us to focus on opportunities rather than limitations, exemplified by the metaphor of viewing the cup as half full rather than half empty. Kuwait's generosity is evident in the abundant blessings it has bestowed upon both its citizens and residents, creating an environment of appreciation and gratitude. Statistics shown that expats or foreigners move to Kuwait because of its many perks and most importantly no taxes to be paid whatsoever. The citizens' and residents' needs are being met on a daily basis.

Some of the essential needs are health, education, and most especially security and safety. Yet many citizens, tend to have a pessimistic opinion about this country. No one denies the negatives of Kuwait. However, the advantages outweigh the negatives on every single aspect. Decisions making and improvements may be delayed however, no decisions worth making is taken hurriedly.

One of the main positive influencers who made every Kuwaiti proud of his patriotic accomplishments that truly portrays his devotion to the country, is Yousef Al-Omran. Yousef is one of few who managed to get in action instead of complaining about the country. His love of his country was through actions and devotion. "The first blessing of Kuwait is that it gave us safety and security." "The second is the blessing of healthcare, as Kuwaitis, we receive free treatment and most importantly we are given scholarships in Kuwait or abroad for free. Because our government values our education," Al-Omran said. Al-Omran also added, "Our government's doors are always open for us. For me as a volunteer, I have never had been mistreated or kicked out no matter the situation. They are always eager to listen and provide us with whatever we need. And for me, there is nothing more I could ask for as I am very grateful for this blessing."

Moreover, healthcare is the main problem the world faces nowadays, with inflation going up almost every day people around the world are struggling to get medical attention and treatment. It is becoming almost a luxury when in reality is a basic necessity. Alia Dashi commented: "The most important thing in life is medical treatment. For me, as someone who suffers with rheumatoid, one needle costs around KD 750. And my daughter suffers from Crohn's disease and her treatment costs up to KD 1,000 every two months. It is such a blessing to be able to live in a country where I don't have to worry about not being able to afford treatments. We are very thankful and grateful for this country; we are very blessed. Thank God!"

This issue is not only appreciated by adults, but also the youth as they are aware of this issue. Al-Judy Al-Adwani a Kuwaiti teenager, commented on healthcare saying: "When we travel abroad, we face problems or issues with our health or fall sick. The first thing we get ask at the hospital is money. If you lack the ability to pay you get no treatment whatsoever. They expel you from the hospital if you have no insurance no matter how urgent, old, or young. On the contrary, in Kuwait, the government do care about its citizens and residents alike and always makes sure the treatment is affordable."

Pessimistic comments about Kuwait affects the youth as it portrays a negative, hateful view of their country. Moreover, these comments negatively impact the children as it would frustrate and obscure the prosperity of the future. Even if it is not noticeable in the meantime, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Mother of Hadi Al-Otaibi says: "Praise be to God, Kuwait has given us the security and safety, we sleep in our homes safely and this is the simplest thing that Kuwait has given us, we are more than grateful for everything that Kuwait has provided for us. Our children get free education and a job after graduation. For me, I think there is nothing more I could ask for as it is already more than enough." Safety, education and healthcare are the most essential needs if not the essential to get a dignified, healthy, and prosperous life. Furthermore, education is what makes a society, or in other words, the future. That is the reason the government encourages and offer the students with good grades with a full scholarship in Kuwait or abroad. This article is ending with the same quote as the begging by William James "Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power." Because to have brighter future, one must think positively. As the pessimism never wins.

KUWAIT: Watching her kids grow day by day, witnessing their first step and hearing their little voice calling her "Mama" for the first time ever — these were the little details that made it worthwhile for Sara, a 43-year-old dentist, to quit her career to raise her family.

The 43-year-old mother of two warmly reminisced about how she became completely satisfied with her role as a full-time mother. Nermeen, a 53-year-old mother of three quit college for the same reason. Dr Ayat El-Sayed, a certified parenting expert, college professor, and mother of two, had a different learning experience that she now aims to pass on.

"My career has cost me my mental health and my time with my kids," El-Sayed noted. But she explained how she learned the hard way to stop constantly blaming herself and let go of the illusion of wanting to be good enough. Because, according to her, there's no way you can ever maintain a "perfect balance" between your personal life and professional life. "It has always been a rollercoaster of ups and downs, but what mattered the most for me is surviving all these ups and downs with the least possible negative impact on me and my family."

She pointed out that the most challenging thing about being an ambitious mother is that it feels like having two full-time jobs. She returns from her official job at 5 pm, fully drained, to start fulfilling her second job's duties in caregiving, teaching, driving, cooking and cleaning. "You have to be holding all the ropes in one hand, and not let go of any of them, the only thing you can do is to relax the tension of one rope at a time, to keep the others well tightened." She used this analogy to describe the most realistic way an ambitious mother can perform her duties in all the different parts of her life.

"It's like women are naturally created with this microchip sense of guilt," she said. She explained that this sense of guilt is like a double-edged sword, even though it can be the source of every mother's constant pain, but it's also the reason behind her



Dr Ayat El-Sayed



power, for that it pushes her to be fully devoted to her multiple roles toward her home and her career.

She added that even though there's no doubt that a woman's career is crucial, it cannot come at the cost of her children. Parents should never forget that they play an essential role in shaping their children's mindsets and personality and enriching their behavior and knowledge so that they can play their own roles in adding value to the world.

Clearly, this essential role is what makes it harder for some women to choose to follow their career goals. After a long time of trying to beat the inner conflict between their ambitions and their children, Sara and Nermeen found a different way to leave their signature in the world away from the common standards forced by society.

"A family is the nucleus of the society and a mother is the one responsible for raising this family," said Nermeen. That's why she chose to dedicate all her care, love and attention to nurturing her little seeds. However, both women didn't give up completely on their ambitions because, as Nermeen believes, dreams have no limits. Even now in her 50s, Nermeen is in the process of enrolling in university to pursue her study in her desired major, marketing.

On the other hand, Sara decided to follow a different path as she now works as an online freelance teacher for children, besides exploring her interest in handcrafts by taking tailoring classes. She is very

satisfied with the way she is in control of shaping her life in a way that aligns with her goals as a mother and at the same time helps her acquire and deliver values beyond motherhood.

None of the mothers regretted any of the directions that they have taken, whether it was choosing their children, ambitions, trying to balance both, or even choosing a totally different path. Every one of them chose what suited her lifestyle and values in life. But El-Sayed made a very important point by asserting that following her career ambitions was an investment in her children's growth in the end. She wanted to teach her girls to be financially independent, to understand what self-worth is, and to be able to adopt multiple skills in life such as time management and multitasking. Instead of teaching them these skills, she wanted to set a realistic example for them to follow, something she could never have achieved if she chose to settle for performing her house chores.

Despite their different experiences, the three mothers agreed that the special bond between them and their children is invaluable, compared to any other achievement in life. And if a mother's ambitions are putting this bond at risk, the ambitions are worthless. "When my daughter escapes all her life problems by holding on to my embrace so tight, knowing that I am always there for her, this alone is enough to reassure me that I have fulfilled my message in the world," said Sara.

NBK holds masterclass in partnership with IE Business School

KUWAIT: Reflecting its firm belief in the importance of investing in the human capital by developing, training and increasing the efficiency of its employees, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a masterclass titled "Future Makers" by Peter Fisk, a global business leader in the areas of creativity and innovation.

This is the fifth masterclass of a series consisting of 6 masterclasses and workshops organized by NBK, in partnership with IE Business School - Madrid, focusing on developing personal and practical skills in areas related to digital transformation and planning for the future, in view of the rapidly changing world.

The masterclass discussed incredible technologies and geopolitical shifts, complex markets and stagnating growth, explore how businesses can survive and thrive and move forwards to create a better future. It also explored how businesses can survive, thrive and move forward to create a better future by introducing new innovative ideas, providing examples of the most innovative companies in the field which managed to achieve unprecedented successes within a short time.

It also showcased the prerequisites of an innovation-friendly environment and the factors that encourage opening up to new ideas and exploring untraditional and innovative solutions that help overcome challenges related to disruptive change in the workplace, in view of environmental crisis and social distrust, unexpected shocks and uncertain futures.

The lecture also highlighted the need to learn from the innovative strategies of giant companies,



Maryam Al-Nasralla

which achieved incredible success over the recent past years, in order to be able to identify the unique work mechanism that embraces and drives creativity and innovation among the employees of these organizations.

Peter Fisk is a global business leader in the areas of Leadership and Growth, Marketing and Innovation. He is Professor at IE Business School and an award-winning author of many books including "Business Recorded" which was nominated for business book of the year in 2022, explore innovative strategies with "Gamechangers", built on over 100 case studies of the most disruptive, interesting companies.

Besides, Fisk is founder and CEO of GeniusWorks based in London, helping to develop better strategies and ideas for businesses and to make them happen. He also works independently with other business schools. He has over 30 years of practical business experience in managing and developing high-flying brands in Europe, North America and Asia. Fisk worked with over 300 companies and 55 countries helping them to accelerate and magnify growth, from Adidas' growth into new markets to McKinsey's leadership development to Santander's future bank vision and Virgin's launch of new brands.

Commenting on this, Maryam Al-Nasralla, Talent Management Team Leader, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK strives to drive creativity and innovation by providing the best-in-class training opportunities in innovative approaches that take into consideration the changing market dynamics, so as to ensure building an agile workforce prepared to tackle the challenges in the future."



KUWAIT: NBK hosts a masterclass titled "Future Makers" by Peter Fisk.

"NBK regards investing in its employees as a key strategic pillar to achieve sustainable growth, and maintain its excellence and leading position in the banking sector. Therefore, it strives to keep pace with the latest developments in the training and development area, to deliver on its commitment to empower and qualify its employees through specialized programs," she accentuated.

"All the programs and courses delivered to employees are designed within an integrated training plan developed according to methodological and scientific standards to meet the needs of all relevant departments, in cooperation with the best banking experts and globally reputable training agencies. NBK is always introducing new training opportunities that promote an open work culture, enabling leaders to create a work environment driving employees' creativity and innovation," she noted.

Kuwait participates in GCC endowments meeting in Muscat

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs participated in the 9th meeting of Islamic affairs and endowments ministers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, held in Muscat. In a statement, the Head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Ministry Undersecretary Dr Bader Al-Mutairi said they presented an initiative to develop a unified regulatory mechanism to organize endowments process.

He stressed the ministry's keenness to contribute to unifying visions, coordinating efforts, deepening communication, and investing in capabilities, effective initiatives, and constructive cooperation to achieve the prosperity of the Islamic nation and gulf societies, stressing the need to transform ideas into reality and practical programs.

He noted the Ministry's constant endeavor to support leadership and advance Islamic and humanitarian work, and adopt distinguished Kuwaiti initiatives to enhance joint Gulf cooperation. Al-Mutairi appreciated the efforts spent by the Gulf delegations that contributed to enriching the meeting with ideas and recommendations that have positive impact. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The fourth Kuwaiti aid plane, carrying 10 tons of necessities and supplies, departed Kuwait on Thursday, heading to Egypt to provide assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip. — KUNA

Local

KPC, Kuwait University sign MoU to collaborate on education, research

Risk management key as per 2040 strategy: CEO

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah on Thursday described risk management as a keystone to decision-making process, attributing KPC's high standing among its peers to its adoption of comprehensive risk management mechanisms as per the 2040 strategy. Sheikh Nawaf stated this while speaking at signing of Memorandum of Understanding between KPC and Kuwait University. KPC, he added, aspires to amplify cooperation with state bodies in education and research, to create a link between education and modern work requirements.

Kuwait University as a beacon of academic work, he explained, joined together with KPC to establish a model of cooperation and development in relation to risk management. The MoU consists of training programs, symposiums, workshops, consultative services as well encouraging research papers to keep up developments and provide an opportunity to train KU graduates and diversify job market specialties. Al-Sabah took the opportunity to commend the work of the risk management department at KPC and KU faculty for their efforts and hard work in dictating the terms of this MoU.

KPC 2040 strategy sets out to meet current and future energy demands, maintain world-class standards of operational excellence, capitalize on opportunities, develop a digital strategy and utilize alternative and renewable energy sources. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials during the signing of MoU between KPC and Kuwait University. — KUNA

Omniya moves a step forward with AI to reach larger audience

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: In recognition of the importance of environmental safety and the necessity of preserving earth's sustainability, as well as investing in human power to benefit this cause, Omniya has launched a new project to reach a larger segment of the population residing in Kuwait. In hopes of obtaining cooperation and enthusiasm of the largest number of people in preserving the environment and recycling plastic, Omniya sought the assistance of artificial intelligence to reach the Indian community and achieve the spread of the first-of-its-kind application in Kuwait, to collect plastic with the aim of recycling it to preserve the environment. To look more into Omniya's new initiative, Kuwait Times interviewed, Farah Shaban, the COO of Omniya.

Kuwait Times: Why Does Omniya target the Indian community?

Shaban: The Indian community in our beloved country Kuwait consists of more than one million residents. They contribute to the development of this nation, and their cultural background stems from a good awareness of plastic sorting and recycling in their country. They represent the largest group of



Sana'a Al-Qemlas (left) and Farah Shaban (center)

workers who actually benefit from the rewards system offered by the Omniya digital application, making them the primary target audience.

KT: With regards to using artificial intelligence, what are the potential effects of this step?

Shaban: The use of artificial intelligence technology has provided us with a great opportunity to reach the Indian community in a pleasant and flexible manner. Our upcoming plan is to disseminate awareness messages to download the Omniya application for collecting plastic, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait and the Arab Gulf.

KT: Have Omniya found any positive impact for using artificial intelligence?

Shaban: The impact of this announcement has resulted in over 20,000 views so far, spreading through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, especially among domestic workers.

KT: What marketing strategies does artificial intelligence offer to Omniya, and to what extent does Omniya benefit from using Artificial Intelligence today?

Shaban: Omniya believes in the capabilities of Kuwaiti youth and has started collaborating with Salem Al-Ateby, a Kuwaiti youth specializing in artificial intelligence technology. We have developed a complete strategy to expand and reach the target audience, aiming to achieve the highest possible number of downloads for the Omniya application, increasing awareness among individuals about the importance of plastic sorting from its source to protect the environment and achieve true sustainability goals by establishing a recycling sector. Education is also a crucial sector within our plan, and we have started using artificial intelligence technology in this regard.

Burgan Bank sponsors Expo 965 Team

KUWAIT: Stemming from its unwavering support for Kuwait's youth and their contributions to cultural programs and entrepreneurial initiatives, Burgan Bank announced its sponsorship of the Expo 965 Team for Heritage Crafts Exhibitions and Talented Kuwaitis.

The strategic sponsorship is set to span a year, covering the team's efforts throughout the 2023-2024 season. This sponsorship marks an expansion of Burgan's efforts to support local talents and promising artisans, as well as dedication to the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles in business and community development alike. The Expo 965 team, which was established with the sole purpose of preserving Kuwait's traditions and culture and introducing them to the younger generations in an exciting and attractive way, comprises 175 Kuwaiti volunteers who contribute to the domestic cultural scene in different capacities. While some of the team members are owners of private museums, others are researchers whose work revolves around Kuwaiti heritage, dialect, and rare antiques.

"Our sponsorship of the Expo 965 Team comes under the umbrella of Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility and sustainability program and our unwavering support of Kuwait's most ambitious talents," commented Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank. "Under the umbrella of this program, the Bank continues to support all events and initiatives that shed a light on arts, contributing to the preservation of Kuwait's cultural heritage and the handicrafts that reflect the Kuwaiti identity and capture the history of our ancestors."

She went on to note, "We truly appreciate the yearlong efforts that the Expo 965 Team exert in organizing top-class exhibitions, domestically and abroad, which allow for showcasing high-quality crafts and artwork that embody the Kuwaiti heritage. With every successful exhibition, a wider audience, especially the younger generations, get to



Burgan Bank announced its sponsorship of the Expo 965 Team for Heritage Crafts Exhibitions and Talented Kuwaitis.

learn more about the Kuwaiti culture and renew their pride in our rich heritage."

On his part, Ali Mohammad Kamal, Founder of the Expo 965 Team, said: "We extend our gratitude to Burgan Bank for its sponsorship and support of our team's effort throughout the upcoming year. We are very proud to be partners with a proactive institution such as Burgan Bank which shares our belief in the importance of preserving our cultural heritage, artisanship, and rare antiques. We are also grateful for their support in helping us preserve the non-tangible aspects of our culture such as our dialect and customs that face the danger of dwindling and slowly vanishing from our memory and the world's." Kamal clarified that the team was established in 2016 on the shoulders of a select group of creatives, artists, and craftspeople whose primary cause is to safeguard Kuwait's national heritage against erosion and collective forgetfulness.

This goal, he clarified, can only be achieved through supporting and developing rising artists and continuously educating the younger generations about their country's rich culture and what it stands for. "We are very proud of being able to represent Kuwait and its culture in international exhibitions and foreign embassies," he added. "In addition, we continue to organize local exhibitions that target school and university students who expressed genuine fondness of the displayed artwork and crafts, and even engaged with the different activities that we embed throughout the exhibitions."

It serves to note that Burgan Bank continues to support all initiatives and events that advocate for Kuwait's national arts and culture heritage, no matter the format. As part of this collaboration, Burgan Bank and Expo 965 will share timely updates of all upcoming events in 2023-2024, allowing a bigger audience to enjoy the beauty of Kuwait's cultural heritage.

MP urges international community to act against Zionist crimes

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti parliamentarian on Wednesday called on the international community to assume its responsibilities towards the violations that the

residents of the besieged Palestinian Gaza Strip are suffering from being perpetrated by the Zionist occupation forces. This came in a speech delivered by a member of the Parliamentary Division, Representative Fahd bin Jamea, before the 147th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, currently held in Angola.

According to Al-Dustour News Network, Bin Jama said that the people of the besieged Gaza Strip demonstrated the highest meanings of sacrifice, loyalty, and defense of the land and homeland in light

of the blatant and hideous violations practiced by a usurping, occupying entity without mercy in front of everyone's eyes and ears.

He added that the Zionist entity killed innocent, defenseless civilians and cut off the basics of life such as water, electricity and medicine, and destroyed the infrastructure, including housing and hospitals, through continuous bombing with its military machinery, which is a vivid example of the collapse of the system of values and principles. —KUNA

Missing persons in conflict: Kuwait calls for unifying efforts

JEDDAH: Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Prisoners and Missing Persons Affairs, Ambassador Rabie Al-Adsani, called on Thursday for united international community's efforts regarding missing persons in armed conflicts and disasters. This came during Ambassador Al-Adsani's participation in a high-level round table organized by the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in coordination with the delegation of the regional mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States.

The Kuwaiti official also called for establishing specialized national bodies whenever necessary to coordinate missing persons' search efforts and to manage collection of data related to their identification. Further, he stressed the importance of encouraging countries to ratify and implement international agreements related to missing persons in conflict and updating national legislation on that matter.

During the talks, Al-Adsani touched on the Kuwaiti experience regarding prisoners and missing persons in all its political, technical and social aspects, and its role in sponsoring and presenting Resolution (2474) of UN Security Council in mid-2019. Resolution (2474) is the first to deal with the issue of missing persons and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, which reflects the status of Kuwaiti diplomacy at the level of humanitarian efforts. The round table discussed how to address missing persons during conflicts and disasters issue, in order to enhance the response of the Organization's member states. Kuwait's side was represented by Ambassador Al-Adsani and First Secretary of the Kuwaiti Delegation to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Turki Al-Daihani. — KUNA



CAIRO: Secretary General of the Arab Media Forum Madi Al-Khamis speaks at the 9th session of the Arab Media Leaders Forum. — KUNA

Kuwait journalist urges Arab media to expose Zionist lies

KUWAIT: The Secretary-General of the Arab Media Forum Madi Al-Khamis stressed the role of the Arab media in defeating slander and exposing the lies promoted by the media machine of the occupying Zionist entity and the West and falsehood being practiced against the Palestinians.

In a statement to KUNA following the conclusion of the 9th session of the Arab Media Leaders Forum on Thursday to discuss ways to respond to the false Zionist entity narrative regarding the aggression on the Gaza Strip, Al-Khamis underlined the importance of the Arab media and said it has a positive role in conveying the correct and unerring media message not only to the Arab world but to the Western world and all the countries across the world to make clear that there are Palestinian victims and children who pay the price and a people who are being killed, displaced, and exposed to the ugliest crimes. He stressed that the inhumane crime of the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people is "heinous and comprehensive," calling for the importance of the media in confronting the false Zionist entity allegations through a strong Arab media by supporting the oppressed in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Khamis pointed out that the Zionist entity attacks on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip has left thousands of martyrs and wounded, and millions were affected and exposed to bombing and abuse, in addition to the destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure.

In response to a question about the recommendations of the forum, Al-Khamis said: The recommendations of the Arab Media Leaders Forum in its 9th session, "It will be drafted and will be submitted to the higher authorities, the Arab Council of Ministers, and to the various media institutions. He added that these authorities, through the recommendations of the forum, will develop a real vision on how to address the deficiencies of the Arab media in confronting the Zionist entity and Western occupation media, and circulate that message to all the various media institutions." —KUNA

Work permits of 5,000 street vendors may be cancelled

KUWAIT: A team formed by the Supreme Committee for Addressing Demographics, chaired by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, is working on listing the work in which work permits can be canceled and not renewed for those who currently have them as part of the measures to reduce the number of marginal workers in the country without affecting the labor market and its needs.

According to official sources there are thousands of expatriates working in these businesses with work permits issued by the Manpower Authority, the first of which is street vendors. They constitute a burden on state services, without real benefit being provided to the market, especially as they work for themselves, sources said. They said that it is also a gateway to visa trade. Besides, cooperative societies and central markets cater to the same needs of the public and obtaining them does not require a large number of laborers.

The sources expected that at least 5,000 work permits can be canceled if the Supreme Committee for the Treatment of Demographics adopts the cancellation of these permits. They pointed out that the procedure to cancel such permits is the first step in this direction and it will be followed with cancellation of more work permits in other sectors soon in tune with the goals announced by the Manpower Authority. The Authority seeks to link work permits to specialization and academic qualification as the committee focuses on technical employment and reducing marginal employment in the country.

New MoE regulation to reduce working hours in schools

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education has stipulated new regulation to reduce working hours for people with disabilities, those physically challenged, medical councils and children's rights in its schools.

The ministry explained in a bulletin circulated to schools that the mitigation hours for people with disabilities and those physically challenged will be two hours as per the recommendations of the Medical Council. "Reducing working hours on children's rights will be by one hour, whether at the beginning or end of work for all educational institutions," the bulletin said.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Flamingos flock to a beach in Kuwait City on a warm evening on Thursday, attracting dozens of people to the beach who want to catch a glimpse of the beautiful birds. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

'Have you killed a Palestinian today?' Street campaign goes viral in Kuwait

Campaign drums up support to boycott Zionist entity products



KUWAIT: Motorists drive past a billboard reading "Did You Kill a Palestinian Today?" on a main street in Kuwait City on October 26, 2023. The billboard is part of a Kuwait-wide campaign encouraging the boycott of Zionist entity products.



This campaign was prominently displayed on street billboards and served as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: On Wednesday, citizens and expatriates in Kuwait were surprised by a prominent boycott campaign that swept through the streets. This campaign featured the provocative question, "Did you kill a Palestinian today?" Its purpose is to encourage people in the country to boycott international franchises in Kuwait that align with the Zionist entity and provide it financial and food support.

This campaign was prominently displayed on street billboards and served as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. These regions have been subject to a collective genocide and a brutal assault by the government and military of the Zionist entity, with support from their business allies who also operate in Kuwait. This campaign led to confusion among local agents of these franchises, who are now seeking to have the Municipality remove the billboards due to the financial repercussions they anticipate, according to exclusive sources.

Meanwhile, this campaign has triggered mixed reactions on social media among Kuwaiti citizens. Some took issue with the provocative phrasing of the question, deeming it rude and aggressive, while others found the call to boycott

these companies justifiable, as they believe that the dire situation in Palestine warrants a stronger call to action urging consumers to boycott.

In terms of public opinion, some people criticized the use of images of living children as examples, considering it ethically questionable. However, many Kuwaiti citizens expressed their pride in Kuwait for being at the forefront of countries supporting the Palestinian cause and taking real action toward it.

Following the start of the Zionist attack on Gaza on Oct 7, one of the most famous international fast-food restaurants publicly announced its full support for the Zionist entity's military during the attack. This included distributing free meals to Zionist soldiers and offering a 50 percent discount to them. This action led to a mass boycott by the restaurant's customers, causing significant harm to franchises. In response, franchises around the world issued a press release clarifying that their profits do not contribute to the parent company. Despite these efforts, the Palestinian solidarity movement, including in Kuwait, has continued to expand its boycott to include all franchise companies worldwide, whether in the food and beverage sector, coffee shops or any other industries.

Kuwait official calls for digitization in insurance sector

RABAT: The head of the Kuwaiti Insurance Regulatory unit, Muhammad Al-Otaibi, emphasized the importance of promoting comprehensive insurance and digital transformation, saying that it "represents a top priority at the present time." This came during Al-Otaibi's participation. In the proceedings of the second session of the regional symposium in the Middle East and North Africa region, which was organized by the Insurance and Social Reserve Supervision Authority in Morocco in partnership with the General Authority of the Capital Market in the Sultanate of Oman in the capital, Rabat, on Oct 25 and 26.

Al-Otaibi added that this symposium constitutes a distinguished opportunity for those in charge of supervisory bodies. And oversight of the insurance sector in the Middle East and North Africa region in order to exchange views on issues related to comprehensive insurance and digitization, thanking the regulatory authorities. He explained that comprehensive insurance and digitization are gaining great importance in the insurance industry at the present time, stressing that the Kuwaiti insurance unit, despite its modernity, has succeeded in consolidating its position.

And correcting the course of the Kuwaiti insurance sector to occupy a distinguished position in the national

economy. He stated that the unit has placed the issue of digital transformation among its top priorities, and that it has come a long way towards this in order to keep pace with the rapid developments witnessed by insurance services in the region and the world in accordance with the development plan and vision of the State of Kuwait. He pointed out that the unit has launched many qualitative initiatives that support the achievement of these goals within the framework of its first strategic plan (2023-2026), based on its vision aimed at becoming an icon of government work in the field of developing and regulating the Kuwaiti insurance sector and raising its standards globally. Al-Otaibi reviewed in this context the unit's latest initiative is the establishment of central insurance warehouses, making the State of Kuwait the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to approve the development of this type of supporting activities for the insurance sector.

He explained that the idea of establishing the insurance warehouse came to address a crisis that the Kuwaiti insurance sector was suffering from. Over the years, he said, "We found the solution in establishing a company that carries out clearing operations between companies in the sector, where it collects insurance premiums and distributes it among them, as well as through which the recoveries due from each are distributed to the other, and the insurance benefits are delivered to customers." He noted that the unit took it upon itself to promote the concept of comprehensive insurance. Through its continuous efforts to facilitate the access of all segments of society, especially those with low income, to insurance products by providing products appropriate to their financial situation and appropriate to their needs. — KUNA



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GAZA: Mourners attend the funeral of fellow journalists Said al-Taweel and Mohammed Sobboh who were killed in a Zionist airstrike on Oct 10, 2023. — AFP photos

Journalists share Gaza's pain

More than 22 journalists killed since Oct 7 Zionist attack on Gaza

KHAN YUNIS: Hundreds of Palestinian journalists have had to flee south from Gaza City and work in fear for their lives in appalling conditions as Zionist air raids pound the territory. Tents in a hospital courtyard have become their newsroom by day and dormitory at night. Some work for local media outlets and others for international news organizations. But all suffer the same ordeal as they try to do their jobs amid the violence and suffering caused by the relentless Zionist bombardment.

The Zionist occupation declared war on Palestine on Oct 7, launching a bombing campaign on Gaza which killed to date more than 7,000 Palestinians, including some 2,700 children. More than 100 Palestinians have been murdered in the West Bank, mostly in raids by Zionist troops or attacks by Zionist settlers. The escalated assault came following the infiltration of hundreds of Hamas fighters into occupied areas near the Gaza border. The Hamas attack left 1,400 people dead.

Since Oct 7, the Palestinian journalists' union says that more than 22 of its members have been killed in Gaza. Media representatives in the Palestinian territory, including AFP, used to work from offices in Gaza City. But intense Zionist bombardments, which destroyed many buildings, forced news organizations to send their teams towards the south, even as Zionist strikes hit targets across the entire territory.

Several hundred journalists, including those from AFP, now find themselves under canvas at the Nasser hospital in the south-

ern city of Khan Yunis. When they are not out reporting, they use the tents to work in by day and to sleep in at night if the sound of bombing allows. The hospital teems with women and men in flak jackets stamped "Press", helmets on their heads because of frequent deadly blasts nearby.

Sleeping in cars

The Nasser hospital also currently houses an estimated more than 30,000 Palestinians displaced by the Zionist attack on Gaza. Hygienic conditions are basic, but at least the hospital generators mean the journalists can charge phones, laptops, cameras and other equipment that enables them to keep doing their job. Water supplies are often cut, and with no showers washing becomes very basic.

Inside the tents, some sleep on mattresses, others on the ground, covering themselves with whatever they can. To get some privacy, many of the women sleep in their cars parked in the hospital grounds. "It's been two weeks that I've worked from the Nasser hospital," Wissam Yassin told AFP. She works for the US Arabic-language television channel Alhurra. "I sleep in the car. I drink very little water in order not to have to go to the toilet," she said. "The bombing is all around us. Several times we've had to abandon our cameras and not go on air for live broadcasts.

"To have a shower I went to a family I don't know near the hospital, and in the evening I sleep in the car." Yassin has covered several Zionist offensives against the Gaza

Strip, but said she has "never experienced such difficult conditions". "I left my home in Gaza on the morning of Oct 7 and haven't been back since," she said. "Sometimes I don't answer calls from my nine-year-old daughter Bana because her crying is heart-breaking and I have no words to calm her."

Houda Hijazi, 25, grew up in Spain and moved to Gaza five years ago where she works as a correspondent for a Spanish-language broadcaster. She too is among the contingent of journalists working from the hospital courtyard. Hijazi left her family behind in Gaza City because of the scarcity of accommodation in Khan Yunis. "It's the first war of such magnitude that I've had to cover," Hijazi told AFP.

Communications problems

"It's a tragic situation, and I haven't been able to see my family for two weeks. I think about them all the time, and that just piles up the pressure on me," she said. Hijazi also has Spanish nationality, and theoretically she could leave the Gaza Strip if the Rafah border crossing with Egypt were reopened. But she said she was determined to stay "and do my work". "But I will get my family out" if possible, she said. "I manage to grab a shower every two or three days inside the hospital" in bathrooms reserved for staff, she admitted.

Mohammad Daher works for Jordanian broadcaster Roya. He evacuated his family from Gaza City to Nuseirat in the center of the territory and then rejoined his colleagues at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yu-



DEIR AL-BALAH: Al-Jazeera correspondent Wael Al-Dahdouh mourns over the body of one of his three children who were killed along with his wife in a Zionist strike on the southern Gaza Strip, on Oct 25, 2023.

nis. The 34-year-old said he hasn't had a shave for several days. "I'll shave when the war is over," he said. "We can barely use the toilets for our personal needs and to remain clean."

Apart from hygiene challenges, according to Turkey's TRT World correspondent Nizar Saadawi, 36, there are "communications problems caused by raids which targeted the network". "Staying in touch with our colleagues, our families and our sources is becoming difficult," he said. "When it started

I slept on my flak jacket in the car park between vehicles, but a couple of days ago we managed to get a mattress and set up a kind of tent with a tarpaulin," Saadawi said.

The journalists work in the shadow of the ever-present fear for their families that consumes all the people of Gaza. On Wednesday, Qatar-based broadcaster Al Jazeera announced that the wife, son and daughter of Wael Al-Dahdouh, its chief Arabic-language correspondent in Gaza, had been killed in a Zionist strike. — AFP

Lebanese battle fire from Zionist phosphorus bombs

BEIRUT: Soldiers and volunteers on Thursday were battling a blaze on Lebanon's southern border caused by Zionist bombing overnight, local officials said, as the occupation and Hezbollah exchange near-daily cross-border fire.

"Overnight (Zionist) bombing with phosphorus led to the fire, which has affected a broad forested area and spread due to the high winds," Naqura mayor Abbas Awada told AFP in a statement. In recent weeks, Lebanon's official National News Agency and Lebanese paramedics have reported fires and injuries due to white phosphorus, while Human Rights Watch has accused the Zionist occupation of using the incendiary weapon in its war against Hamas in Gaza, and in southern Lebanon. Zionist authorities have denied the allegations.

Mayor of the border village of Alma al-Shaab, Jean Ghafari, said fire broke out after Zionist bombing late Wednesday. "The blaze reached the edges of the village after midnight" and was still burning as of Thursday afternoon, he told AFP, adding that it "has come close to houses". Security forces, civil defense personnel, United Nations peacekeepers and volunteers were battling the blaze but "have been unable to completely control it because of strong winds", Ghafari added.

The municipality said some 70 percent of the village's population had fled due to Zionist attacks. An AFP photographer saw fire near houses on the out-



ALMA AL-SHAAB: Lebanese civil defense volunteers extinguish a forest fire which reportedly ignited following shelling from the Zionist occupation on Oct 26, 2023. — AFP

skirts of Alma al-Shaab and burnt olive trees, with the blaze mainly concentrated between the village and the coastal city of Naqura.

Parliament speaker Nabih Berri on Thursday condemned the Zionist use of "phosphorus bombs" along Lebanon's border and blamed "the international community" for the blazes, alluding to Western military support for the Zionists.

Exchanges of fire across the Lebanon-Palestine border have since killed at least 57 people in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally, mostly Hezbollah combatants but also four civilians, including Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah. Four Zionists have been killed on the other side, including one civilian. Phosphorus, a substance that catches fire on contact with the air, is used to create smokescreens to hide troop movements, illuminate the battlefield or destroy buildings by fire. — AFP

Zionist attack on Palestine heaps pressure on Abbas

RAMALLAH: The widely unpopular Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas is facing growing anger on the streets of the occupied West Bank as the Zionist occupation wages its war against Hamas in Gaza. The 88-year-old leader is seen as out of touch with the increasing desperation of the Palestinian people and the Zionist escalation of violence on Gaza and the West Bank, has only exacerbated their discontent.

After a rocket strike on a Gaza hospital last week caused fresh outrage, hundreds of Palestinians took to the streets in a rare demonstration shouting "Abbas step down!" before being dispersed by security forces. Abbas has led the Palestinian Authority (PA) for 18 years but has only limited authority over the West Bank and none over Gaza. On the world stage, Abbas has clung to the unrealized promises of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

The PA was meant to be a first step toward an independent Palestinian state, but negotiations have been at a standstill for more than a decade. Abbas has been powerless against the rapid expansion of illegal Zionist settlements and occupation military control in the West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem, both occupied since 1967, fragmenting what was meant to be a contiguous Palestinian territory.

Violence against Palestinian civilians by Zionist settlers and attacks by Zionist occupation forces have increased. Conditions have only worsened after the formation of the occupation's most far-right

government in history in December, under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Sidelined president

"Abbas bet on the international community, believing that it would force (the Zionist occupation) to withdraw from the occupied territories to give the Palestinians a state," said Ubai Al-Aboudi, director of the Bisan Center for Research and Development, a think-tank based in Ramallah. "However, the international community has shown that it cares little about the blood shed by the Palestinians and their suffering, hence the popular anger," Aboudi told AFP.

Abbas has remained on the sidelines since the Hamas assault. Many Palestinians, regardless of their politics, have expressed support for Hamas on social media. Abbas set off anger last week with a comment reported by the official Palestinian news agency that "the policies and actions of Hamas do not represent the Palestinian people". The statement was withdrawn.

Even before the latest war, Abbas was deeply unpopular, while support for peaceful negotiations was waning. Seventy-eight percent of Palestinians wanted Abbas to resign, according to a poll published in September by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research. Some 58 percent said they supported "armed struggle" to end the Zionist occupation, compared with 20 percent in favor of a negotiated settlement and 24 percent for "peaceful resistance".

Abbas opponents feel "the Palestinian Authority is increasingly assimilated, either by inaction or by security cooperation, to (the occupation's) policy", said Xavier Guignard, a political scientist specializing in the Palestinian territories. There was a real feeling that "Abbas was unable to react to what was happening in Gaza", said Guignard, of the Paris-based Noria Research. — AFP

International

India reopens visas to Canadians

Canadian minister says India has yet to cooperate in investigation into alleged murder

OTTAWA: India will reopen visa services for Canadians, its embassy in Ottawa announced Wednesday, a move that could ease tensions in a high-profile dispute over the killing of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil. Relations between India and Canada plunged after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last month publicly linked Indian intelligence to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June. New Delhi dismissed the allegation as "absurd."

Nijjar, who advocated the creation of a separate Sikh state carved out of India, was wanted by Indian authorities on charges of terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. Canada has called for India to cooperate in the investigation into his death and expelled an Indian diplomat.

New Delhi expressed outrage and reacted by taking countermeasures that included shutting down visa services for Canadians. "After a considered review of the security situation that takes into account some of the recent Canadian measures in this regard, it has been decided to resume visa services," the Indian High Commission said in a statement.

India's foreign minister, Subrahmanya Jaishankar, on Sunday had insisted on increased security for India's missions in Canada. He was quoted by the Times of India as saying security had been a concern and that "if we see progress there, I would like very much to resume visa services."

Canadian Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan welcomed the resumption, calling it "good news for Canadians." He said the two countries had "strong people to people ties" and that it was important for people to be able to go back and forth, for example, for weddings or funerals. Canada's population features 1.4 million people of Indian origin. Sajjan recalled that "a Canadian was killed on Canadian soil" and he said India has yet to cooperate in the criminal investigation.

Canada announced last week it had withdrawn 41 diplomats from India as a result of the row. New Delhi was about to revoke diplomatic immunity for all but 21 of Canada's diplomats and their families, forcing Ottawa to pull out the others. The Indian government had also advised its nationals not to travel to parts of Canada "given the increase in anti-Indian activities."

Nijjar, who emigrated to Canada in 1997 and became a Canadian citizen in 2015, was shot and killed by two masked assailants in the parking lot of a Sikh temple near Vancouver in June. Canada is home to some 770,000 Sikhs, who make up about two percent of the overall population, with a vocal minority calling for creating a separate Indian state called Khalistan. The Sikh separatist movement is largely finished within India, where security forces used deadly force to put down an insurgency in the state of Punjab in the 1980s. — AFP



NEW DELHI: A man checks his mobile as he sits outside an Air Canada regional office in this file photo. — AFP

Pakistan prepares deportation centers as Afghan deadline looms

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said Thursday it would open several "holding centers" for undocumented migrants as a deportation deadline looms for hundreds of thousands of Afghans. Islamabad has given Afghans it has deemed to be living illegally in Pakistan until November 1 to leave voluntarily or face deportation — an order the Taliban government says amounts to harassment.

"These centers have been named as 'holding centers'. Illegal immigrants will be kept there," Sarfraz Bugti, the caretaker interior minister, told reporters. "They will be provided with medical facilities and food. Children, women and elders will be treated with special respect. But at the same time, after Nov 1, we will not compromise on illegal immigrants," Bugti said.

Feroz Jamal, a spokesman for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government, told AFP that from Wednesday undocumented Afghans in the province would be arrested and sent to one of three centers being set up for processing. "It's a transit point. They cannot stay there for a long time. When the border officials have space, we'll send them to be deported," he told AFP.

He said 60,000 Afghans in the province have already returned ahead of the deadline, with queues building at the northern-most border crossing in Torkham. Two of the centers are similar to aid tent camps, while the third will be established at govern-

ment staff accommodation, each capable of holding 5,000 people, a government official who requested not to be named told AFP.

The order comes as Pakistan grapples with a rise in attacks the government blames on militants operating from Afghanistan, a charge Kabul routinely denies. There is also rising anti-Afghan sentiment as a prolonged economic hardship burdens the Pakistani state.

Border protests

Afghans have poured into Pakistan by the millions over decades of conflict during the Soviet invasion, the following civil war and the US-led occupation. Around 1.3 million are registered refugees and 880,000 more have legal status to remain in Pakistan, according to the United Nations. Islamabad says a further 1.7 million Afghans are in Pakistan illegally.

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are estimated to have crossed since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in August 2021 and imposed their austere version of Islamic law, with many migrants seeking asylum in third countries. Police and politicians have said a recent round-up targeted only those without legal status and was in response to rising crime and poor immigration regulation that has strained resources.

But Afghans have accused authorities of indiscriminate arrests, ignoring valid documents and extorting people for money. Saeed Ahmed, a 39-year-old who was born in Pakistan to Afghan refugee parents and still lives in a Karachi aid camp, called for a delay to the deportations, especially with a harsh winter on its way in Afghanistan.

"The deadline is impractical — at least six months should be given for repatriation, so that we can wind up our businesses here," he told AFP on Thursday, adding that documented Afghans like himself were



BALUCHISTAN: Pakistani residents and traders demonstrate against the new immigration policy, near Afghanistan-Pakistan border at Chaman district on Oct 26, 2023. — AFP

being targeted by police. At the southern border crossing of Chaman in Balochistan, several thousand Pakistanis who cross frequently between the two countries have staged a days-long sit-in over tighter border controls.

Those living on both sides will now have to show passports and visas, instead of their identity cards,

Islamabad has said. Taliban authorities across the border in Spin Boldak said they were happy with the previous arrangement but have now enforced the same rules on Pakistanis. Afghanistan is grappling with its own economic hardship, cut off from the international banking system and heavily reliant on humanitarian aid. — AFP

Kuwait calls for immediate...

Continued from Page 1

efforts to gather supplies and send them to Gaza. On Monday, the first aid plane took off from Kuwait carrying around 40 tons of relief materials, including medical supplies and ambulances for the people of Gaza who suffer from continuous attacks from the unjust Zionist entity's occupation forces. Meanwhile, the Palestinian health authorities in Gaza announced

Hamas: Zionist strikes killed...

Continued from Page 1

The army said overnight its forces hit "numerous terrorist cells, infrastructure and anti-tank missile launch posts". Black smoke billowed into the sky after a blast in the grainy night-vision footage the Zionist entity military released hours after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared preparations for a ground war were under way. The operation in northern Gaza came in "preparation for the next stages of combat", the military said. The black-and-white video showed armored vehicles moving near Gaza's border fence. Other footage appeared to show an air strike and buildings being targeted. The raid came after Netanyahu delivered a nationally televised address to Zionist entity is still grieving and furious after the October 7 attacks, telling them "we are in the midst of a campaign for our existence".

International alarm has increased amid growing shock about the scale of human suffering inside the besieged Palestinian territory where Zionist entity has cut off most water, food, fuel and other basic supplies. In southern Gaza, a grieving Umm Omar Al-Khaldi told AFP how she saw her neighbors being killed in an Zionist strike that reduced the house to rubble, with many feared buried beneath.

"We saw them getting bombarded — the children got bombarded while their mother was hugging them," the woman said, desperately pleading for help

on Thursday that the death toll of the Zionist entity's aggression on the Gaza Strip rose to 7,028 and injuries to 18,484. The Palestinian Health Spokesperson Dr Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a press conference that the recent deaths include 2,913 children, 1,709 women and 397 elderly people.

He added that the Zionist attacks targeted 57 health institutes, 12 hospitals and 32 healthcare centers, leading to the death of 101 healthcare workers, and the destruction of 25 ambulances. He warned of a health catastrophe as a result of hospitals turning into shelters housing thousands of displaced people in unsanitary conditions that cause spread of epidemics and infectious diseases. — KUNA

from the outside world. "Where are the Arabs, where is humanity?" she asked. Amnesty International in a statement called for an immediate ceasefire to ensure "access to life-saving aid for people in Gaza amidst an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe".

The human rights group's chief Agnes Callamard said: "Serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, by all parties to the conflict continue unabated." The war's surging death toll is by far the highest since Zionist entity unilaterally withdrew from the small coastal territory in 2005 — a period that has seen four previous Gaza wars. Entire neighborhoods have been razed, surgeons are operating without anaesthetic, and ice-cream trucks have become makeshift morgues. In chaotic scenes, volunteers and neighbors have claved, sometimes with their bare hands, through shattered concrete and sand to pull out civilian casualties.

All too often they recover only corpses which have piled up, wrapped in bloodstained white shrouds.

In Brussels on Thursday, European Union leaders debated calling for "pauses" in the war so aid can get in. The 27-nation bloc has long been split between more pro-Palestinian members such as Ireland and Spain, and staunch backers of Zionist entity including Germany and Austria.

"What we want is the killing and the violence to stop so that humanitarian aid can get into Gaza, where innocent Palestinian people are suffering, and also to allow us to get EU citizens out," Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said. US President Joe Biden, a strong supporter of Zionist entity, earlier joined the calls for it to "protect innocent civilians" and to follow the "laws of war" as it pursues Hamas. — AFP

Displaced Gazans head back north after finding south no safer

KHAN YUNIS: When Zionist entity warned civilians to leave northern Gaza, Rahma Saqallah and her family fled south. But after Zionist entity bombs killed her husband and three of her children, she is heading back home. "Wherever we go, we will die," Saqallah said, as she prepared to leave the city of Khan Yunis in the south of the territory to return to Gaza City with her surviving child.

She is among roughly 600,000 Palestinians UN officials have said fled south in response to Zionist entity's warning to evacuate "for your own safety". Zionist entity's relentless bombardment was launched on October 7.

The strikes, which the Hamas-run health ministry says have killed more than 7,000 people, were initially concentrated in Gaza City. But repeated deadly strikes on the south of the territory in recent days have prompted 30,000 of the displaced to head back home, according to UN figures.

Massive manhunt for gunman after...

Continued from Page 1

and all government buildings. "Once again, our nation is in mourning after yet another senseless and tragic mass shooting," he said. Biden added that the gun violence that plagues the United States "is not normal, and we cannot accept it," urging lawmakers to pass a bill banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Police and rescuers reportedly arrived at the Sparetime Recreation bowling alley at about 7:15 pm in response to an active shooter, and then received reports of another shooting at the Schemengees Bar & Grille. In camera images of 40-year-old Card at the bowling alley, he appeared calm and composed as he moved through the doorway with his rifle raised. Another survivor, Riley Dumont, said she and her family fled to a corner of the bowling venue and hid behind tables and a bench.

"I was laying on top of my daughter. My mother

Many were in any case struggling to find shelter in Khan Yunis, an already densely populated city which has been swamped by the influx of families fleeing the north.

On Wednesday, before leaving, Saqallah told AFP: "My husband and my three sons, Daoud, Mohammad and Majed, became martyrs on Tuesday at dawn".

Her husband was 47, her son Majed 9, and Daoud 18, while Mohammad was due to "celebrate his 15th birthday today (Wednesday)," she said. The strike "destroyed the second and third floors" of the apartment building in which multiple families, around 60 people, were sheltering, she said. It killed 11 members of her extended family and 26 people from other families.

"From my family, only me and my daughter Raghad (17) are still alive. We are alive but I cannot say that we are well," she said. "They have reduced Gaza to ruins, they want to turn it into a cemetery."

"They told us to leave for the south and then they killed us (here)," Saqallah said, calling Zionist entity's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "a liar". Like so many other displaced people heading home, Abdallah Ayyad, his wife and their five daughters had squeezed onto a cart pulled by a motorcycle for the journey back to Gaza City having earlier taken shelter in the grounds of Deir el-Balah hospital. — AFP

was laying on top of me," Dumont told ABC News.

"It felt like it lasted a lifetime," she added. "I just remember people sobbing and crying."

Officers located a "vehicle of interest" — a white sport utility vehicle (SUV) — in Lisbon, a town around eight miles (12 kilometers) from Lewiston. The shooting is one of the deadliest since 2017, when a gunman opened fire on a crowded music festival in Las Vegas, killing about 60 people.

Mass shootings are alarmingly common in the United States, a country where there are more guns than people and where attempts to clamp down on their spread are always met with stiff resistance. The country has recorded at least 565 mass shootings this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), a non-governmental organization that defines a mass shooting as four or more people wounded or killed.

Wednesday's attack was the deadliest mass shooting in 2023 so far, according to the GVA's data. Efforts to tighten gun controls have for years run up against opposition from Republicans, staunch defenders of the constitutional right to bear arms. The political paralysis endures despite widespread outrage over recurring shootings. — AFP

International

Untested US House speaker faces daunting first days

Government shutdown, fundraising some of obscure congressman's biggest challenges

WASHINGTON: Inexperienced and untested, the new speaker of the US House of Representatives faces a baptism of fire as he contends with a pile-up of deadlines, a razor-thin majority and a raucous right wing that is unlikely to allow him an extended honeymoon period. Mike Johnson — a committed Donald Trump acolyte and an instinctive fiscal and social conservative to his core — almost certainly harbors ambitions to drastically rein in spending and government regulation.

But his first days as speaker are brimming with more immediate business, chiefly averting a government shutdown that will bite on Nov 17 unless he can find a compromise with the Democratic-controlled Senate. President Joe Biden is also seeking rapid action on a \$106 billion security package that couples additional aid for Ukraine and the Zionist entity with increased spending on US border security — the latter a key concern for congressional Republicans.

Johnson's good friend and fellow Republican lawmaker Chris Smith described him as a man of "deep faith and principle who knows how to get things done." "Here in the House, Mike's experience as vice chairman of the Republican conference shows that he has what it takes to unite House Republicans so we can continue our work," he said.

The staunch Donald Trump loyalist, who on Wednesday was elected speaker of the US House of Representatives, was the chief architect in Congress of legal efforts to overturn the Republican leader's 2020 election defeat to President Joe Biden. An unapologetic opponent of reproductive rights and an outspoken advocate for tough immigration controls, Johnson climbed quickly through the ranks of Republican politics, where his conservative voting record propelled him to a junior leadership position.

"We're going to serve the people of this country. We're going to restore their faith in Congress, this institution of government. America is the last, best

hope of man on the Earth," he told reporters at a news conference after his nomination, flanked by jubilant colleagues. "Abraham Lincoln said it, Ronald Reagan used to remind us all the time, and we're here to remind you of that, again."

But Johnson, 51, was far from anyone's first choice for the job, having stumbled into his unlikely leadership role almost by default as the last credible Republican standing in a bruising three-week contest. The policy-oriented technocrat's obscurity was seen as a boon in his election as he was one of the few hopefuls who had managed to climb the ranks in Washington without making enemies of other Republicans.

'Well-respected'

"Mike is one of those people who gets along with everybody and he's well-respected," Colorado Republican Ken Buck told CNN. But that advantage could be his biggest hurdle when it comes to governing, as he faces the challenge of building relationships with senators on both sides of the upper chamber of Congress who could barely pick him out of a crowd.

He will also have to corral a party riven by factionalism and reeling from a drawn-out public implosion that has damaged the Republican brand as he seeks to avoid the kind of schisms that led to his predecessor's downfall. He has already begun the healing, winning the support of Florida congressman Matt Gaetz, the chief instigator of the coup against previous speaker Kevin McCarthy.

"If you don't think that moving from Kevin McCarthy to ... Mike Johnson shows the ascendancy of this movement and where the power in the Republican Party truly lies, then you're not paying attention," Gaetz told the conservative War Room internet show. But in a sign of the choppy waters ahead, Gaetz told reporters separately that the new speaker would be pro-



WASHINGTON: Newly elected US House Speaker Mike Johnson poses for a selfie with other House Republicans shortly after being elected Speaker outside the US Capitol on Oct 25, 2023. — AFP

hibited from repeating what the hard right considered one of McCarthy's sins — throwing multiple issues into giant "omnibus" bills that force all-or-nothing votes, allowing the leadership to block dissent on contentious issues.

Mistaken identity

Critics say his predecessor McCarthy was ousted mainly because he relied on governing by "continuing resolution" — the stop-gap bills that essentially kick the can down the road by keeping the country ticking over at current spending levels. He will likely be given leeway to get through the fast-approaching November shutdown deadline with another

legislative band aid, perhaps until mid-January. But conservatives yearning for smaller government will soon expect him to get back to budgeting through the committee process, where every lawmaker gets to debate spending levels and make their case for cuts. And then there's the delicate issue of fundraising. Johnson has some catching up to do to transform from a middling money-spinner to the head of the kind of cash-cow operation that made McCarthy friends all over Washington. In the meantime, the name of the game will be breaking bread with friends and adversaries alike, and introducing himself to an American public that has almost no idea who he is. — AFP



KOROTYCH: A Ukrainian policeman walks past a damaged mail depot following missile strikes in the village of Korotych, Kharkiv region. — AFP

Slovakia declares halt of military aid to Ukraine

BRATISLAVA: Slovakia's new populist Prime Minister Robert Fico said Thursday that his government was stopping military aid to Ukraine, in the first Western reversal of the kind. Fico told MPs that the country would "no longer supply weapons to Ukraine", repeating promises made during his election campaign, but would still supply humanitarian aid to its war-torn neighbor. "I will support zero military aid to Ukraine ... An immediate halt to military operations is the best solution we have for Ukraine. The EU should change from an arms supplier to a peacemaker," he added.

Russia immediately dismissed the impact Slovakia's decision to halt military aid to Ukraine would have on the 20-month-old conflict. "Slovakia did not have such a big share in the supply of weapons, so it will hardly affect the entire process," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, when asked about Bratislava's decision. Asked by AFP for a reaction on the decision, the foreign ministry of Ukraine declined to comment.

Bratislava's previous pro-Western government had shown strong support for Ukraine. The Central European country of 5.4 million people was notably the first NATO nation to deliver fighter jets to its war-torn neighbor. According to the German-based Kiel Institute, Slovakia had pledged 680 million euros in total government support to Ukraine through July 2023. That puts Slovakia among the countries with the largest government support to Ukraine by GDP (0.65 percent), behind Norway, the Baltic states, Denmark and Poland.

Symbolic value

However, Fico's party won last month's general vote on pledges to end military help for Ukraine, raising concerns about cracks in Western support for Kyiv. Slovak political scientist Branislav Kovacic told AFP that Ukraine "will not miss the volume (of aid)

provided by Slovakia" but added that "any loss in unity and support has symbolic meaning". Ukraine's once close ties with fellow neighbor Poland have also recently plunged. Following his party's victory, Fico said, "the people in Slovakia have bigger problems than (dealing with) Ukraine" and called for peace talks as "further killing will not help anyone".

In the run-up to last month's Polish general election, Warsaw said it would restrict arms deliveries to Kyiv as it needed to build up its own army. A very public diplomatic row ensued, with Polish President Andrzej Duda comparing Ukraine to a "drowning man" who risked dragging his rescuers into the water. Speaking at the UN at the time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke of some EU countries "feigning solidarity" and thereby "indirectly supporting Russia".

Fico — who will attend the EU summit in Brussels Thursday — also expressed opposition to sanctions against Russia unless we see analyses of their impact on Slovakia," he said. "If there are to be such sanctions that will harm us, like most sanctions have, I can see no reason to support them."

Shaking hands with Putin

Fico spoke a day after his three-party coalition government was appointed. It includes Fico's left-wing Smer-SD, the far-right and pro-Russia SNS, and Hlas-SD, a breakaway party from Smer. SNS shares Fico's staunch anti-refugee stance and populist leanings.

Its pro-Russian chairman and former parliamentary speaker Andrej Danko said in July that Russian-occupied territories were not "historically Ukrainian". He is infamous for shaking hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin, taking a selfie with Russian State Duma Chair Vyacheslav Volodin, and addressing Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as "my dear friend".

Slovakia is one of the most pro-Russian countries in the European Union, according to the Bratislava-based Globsec think tank. "Respondents' belief that Russia was responsible for the war in Ukraine stood at only 40 percent," it said in a 2023 report. Compare that to the neighboring Czech Republic, with 71 percent. — AFP

Families pay tribute, demand answers for Seoul's crowd crush

SEOUL: A plaque designating the narrow alleyway in South Korea's capital where nearly 160 people were crushed to death during Halloween festivities last year was unveiled by victims' relatives on Thursday. Last Halloween, tens of thousands of people — mostly in their 20s and 30s — had been out to enjoy post-pandemic holiday celebrations in Seoul's Itaewon district, but the night turned deadly with no effective crowd control and bungled official responses to calls for help.

The site of the crush — now decorated with hundreds of notes in tribute to the victims — was officially designated the "October 29 Memorial Alley" by the government. But Thursday's unveiling ceremony was attended mostly by families of those killed and civil society groups, with no senior government representatives present. "This is a place to remember the people who became stars in the sky in an alleyway in the middle of Seoul while enjoying their daily lives on the night of Oct 29, 2022," said Lee Jung-min, a representative of bereaved families, at a ceremony unveiling "It is also a place to pledge safety so that something like this does not happen again in the future," he added. One of the Post-it notes at the site read: "It's been a year but I still sometimes think of you. I hope you can enjoy your youth in heaven, even though you could not enjoy it here."

Lee, who lost his 28-year-old daughter to the crowd crush, said families of the victims were still looking for answers. Lee, along with around 100 other bereaved relatives and activists, is pushing for the passage of a law mandating an independent counsel investigation into what went wrong and who was responsible for the deadly crush. Despite a formal investigation and ongoing prosecutions of local officials, no one has yet been legally convicted. "Only by raising awareness through a clear investigation of the truth and punishment of those truly responsible will everyone be able to live their daily lives safely," Lee said.

'Pain and anger'

At a press conference Thursday, the families of the victims demanded answers about what exactly had happened and who was being held responsible, saying they continued to experience "frustration, pain and anger". "It has been a year since our loved ones have passed and we still know nothing more than what we heard on Oct 29, 2022," said Nari Kim, who lost her brother that night.

No further information has been offered to the victims' families since they were first informed of the disaster, said Yu Hyoung-woo, a father of one of the victims, adding: "The truth of that day is still unraveling." Online, social media users have continued to try to paint the late victims as having been "disorderly" people or even accusing them of being involved with drugs, Yu added. — AFP



SEOUL: Relatives of Itaewon crush victims look at notes of support during an unveiling ceremony of a memorial street marker to remember the victims. — AFP

Little reason for optimism about Sudan talks: Analyst

RIYADH: Sudan's warring parties resumed talks in Saudi Arabia on Thursday aimed at ending a conflict that has raged for over six months and left thousands dead, the Saudi foreign ministry said. Since April, the war between regular forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has killed more than 9,000 people and displaced over 5.6 million.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the resumption of talks between representatives of the Sudanese Armed Forces and representatives of the Rapid Support Forces in the city of Jeddah," a statement said. Both sides announced Wednesday they had accepted an invitation to resume US- and Saudi-brokered negotiations in Jeddah.

Previous mediation attempts have yielded only brief truces, and even those were systematically violated. The latest talks are being held "in partnership" with a representative of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African regional bloc led by close US partner Kenya, the Saudi statement said.

The statement called on negotiators to abide by an earlier agreement announced on May 11 to protect civilians and a short-term ceasefire deal signed on May 20. "The kingdom affirms its keenness on unity of ranks ... to stop the bloodshed and alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people," the statement said. Riyadh hopes for "a political agreement under which security, stability and prosperity will be achieved for Sudan and its brotherly people".

Before the first round of talks in Jeddah were suspended, mediators had grown increasingly frustrated with both sides' reluctance to work towards a sustained truce. Analysts believed that Burhan and Daglo had opted for a war of attrition instead, hoping to extract greater concessions at the negotiating table later.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who helped mediate at the start of the crisis, finalized details of the new talks during a recent stop in Saudi Arabia as part of a tour largely devoted to the Zionist-Hamas war, US officials said this week. The talks will aim for a ceasefire but it is premature to discuss a lasting political solution, the officials said. "The new round will focus on ensuring unhindered humanitarian access and achieving ceasefires and other confidence-building measures," a State Department official said on condition of anonymity.

Alan Boswell, Horn of Africa project director for International Crisis Group, said it had "taken far too long" to get talks going again. "Now we need to see a much higher level of diplomacy within the region if we want to see a serious push for a ceasefire," he said. "My concern is that the talks will continue to flail about unsuccessfully on humanitarian issues before collapsing again." There is little reason to be optimistic, said Kholood Khair, founder of the Khartoum-based think tank Confluence Advisory. The decision to revive talks is based on the assumption that the army and the RSF "are done fighting due to the impending state collapse, suffering and misery," she said on X, formerly Twitter. "They are not yet done. Despite rhetoric by (the army) and RSF, neither care about the human costs of waging this war." As talks resumed on Thursday, witnesses again reported fighting in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023

ECB holds interest rates for first time in over a year

Economic situation in eurozone is deteriorating stronger and faster

BERLIN: The European Central Bank left interest rates unchanged at its meeting on Thursday, bringing an end to a series of hikes that started in July last year. Policymakers had raised rates at each of their last 10 meetings as they sought to rein in soaring inflation driven in large part by surging energy prices in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But ebbing price pressures and signs of weakness in the economy prompted the ECB to hold interest rates at their current levels, while the bank assesses the outlook for the eurozone. The decision not to hike again still left the ECB's key deposit rate at four percent — its highest mark in the history of the central bank. Eurozone inflation had "dropped markedly", the ECB said in a statement.

Having hit double-digit highs at the end of last year, the annual rate of increase in prices sat at 4.3 percent in September. The figure was still more than twice the bank's two-percent target, while inflation was still expected to stay "too high for too long", the bank noted.

All the same, the eurozone economy appeared "weak", ECB President Christine Lagarde said after the meeting held exceptionally in Athens instead of Frankfurt, where policymakers usually gather.

Middle East conflict

The decision to hold interest rates was a "no brainer" for the ECB, according to ING analyst Carsten Brzeski said. "The economic situation in the eurozone is deteriorating stronger and faster than the ECB had anticipated," he said.

Business activity in the bloc slumped in October, while eurozone banks have been tightening

their lending criteria for households and businesses in response to hikes. The ECB's monetary policy moves were being "transmitted forcefully" into the real economy, pushing down inflation but also dampening demand, the central bank said. There was still "more to come" when it came to the impact of higher rates on inflation, Lagarde said.

At the same time, risks to economic growth in the eurozone remained "tilted to the downside", Lagarde said, especially if the impact of interest rate hikes proved to be "stronger than expected". A weaker world economy would also drag on the currency bloc, Lagarde said, alluding to the war in Ukraine and the recent outbreak of the conflict between Zionist and Hamas, which has caused turbulence on oil markets. "We are very attentive to the economic consequences that that could have, whether in terms of direct or indirect impact on energy prices, or the level of confidence," Lagarde said.

Hold on

The ECB's long series of hikes has seen borrowing costs rise further and faster than ever before, lifting rates out of negative territory to a record high. The central bank's guiding principle going forward was that rates would remain "higher for longer", ING's Brzeski said. The commitment to keep rates high was important to bring inflation back to target, Deutsche Bank economist Mark Wall said. "The question is, how long is sufficiently long?" Wall said. While inflation has come down, the ECB does not expect it to return to the target of two percent before 2025, according to its most recent projections in September.

Lagarde refused to be drawn on policymakers'



FRANKFURT: The headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB, background) are pictured next to a housing area in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on October 26, 2023 ahead the meeting of the governing council of the ECB. — AFP

plans for interest rates after the meeting. It was "not the time for forward guidance", Lagarde said, stressing that the bank would be "data dependent". "The fact that we are holding doesn't mean we will never hike again," Lagarde said. Conversely, any dis-

cussions over potential future cuts to interest rates to relieve the eurozone's ailing economy would be "totally premature", she said. To bring down inflation the ECB had "to be steady, we have to hold", Lagarde added. — AFP

Saudi Arabia's fund trying to build a post-oil economy

RIYADH: As global banking elites attend the Future Investment Initiative forum in Riyadh, a focal point of Saudi Arabia's economic reforms, AFP takes a look at the vehicle that is bankrolling the transition: The Public Investment Fund.

From world-class footballers to a new national airline and even a speciality shop serving camel milk gelato, the Public Investment Fund (PIF) has splashed billions on acquisitions intended to diversify the oil-reliant economy. How did the formerly passive sovereign wealth fund evolve into the engine of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform agenda, and what do its investments say about where the kingdom is headed?

Humble origins

Founded in 1971, the PIF maintained a low-profile portfolio for decades until a 2015 cabinet resolution reconstituted its board and named Prince Mohammed chairman — a change the fund's website describes as being "reborn". The idea, said Saudi political analyst Sulaiman al-Oqaily, was to create a kind of "alternative oil field" that would facilitate Saudi Arabia's transition away from fossil fuels.

"The Saudi private sector was fragile and not at the level of ambition to manage the kingdom's transition from a resource-dependent state to a productive state," Oqaily said. "Therefore, the Saudi leadership wanted to have an active fund that would establish companies with a return, so that it could replace the oil fields if they dried up one day."

The PIF now boasts assets under management exceeding \$700 billion and says it has created more than 560,000 "direct and indirect" jobs. Halfway through the Vision 2030 project, however, Saudi



RIYADH: Jared Kushner (R), adviser to former US president Donald Trump, and Italy's former prime minister Matteo Renzi participate in a panel at the annual Future Investment Initiative (FII) conference in Riyadh. — AFP

Arabia remains heavily dependent on oil, even if official statistics show steady growth in non-oil sectors. Robert Mogielnicki of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington said it is "too early to evaluate the extent of the fund's effectiveness in actually diversifying the economy".

In the arena

The PIF has made its biggest international splash in the sports world, including with its 2021 takeover of Newcastle United. Its football push ramped up over the past year as the kingdom signed contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars to lure megastars like Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Neymar to the Saudi Pro League.

Such eye-watering sums would be impossible without the PIF, which has also acquired 75-percent stakes in elite local squads Al-Nassr, Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli. The PIF has taken the lead on facilitating the stars' transition to life in the Gulf, said a fund official who spoke on condition of anonymity

because he was not authorized to brief the media.

"We do everything," the official said. "Our teams are visiting all clubs across the country to see what they actually need" — from new training pitches to gyms and saunas. "All the clubs have to do is play." Beyond football, the PIF funded the LIV Golf circuit, which emerged as a rival to the PGA Tour before officials in June announced a shock merger agreement in hopes of ending the sport's civil war.

The PIF's high-profile investments in foreign firms include stakes in Uber, electric car maker Lucid and video game company Activision Blizzard. Yet domestic investments constitute 77 percent of the fund's portfolio, according to its latest annual report, and its work within the kingdom could ultimately determine whether Vision 2030 succeeds. Its so-called giga-projects include the \$500 billion futuristic megacity known as NEOM, which has generated buzz primarily for The Line, planned parallel mirror-encased skyscrapers extending over 170 kilometres (105 miles) of mountain and desert terrain. — AFP

Honda, GM scrap 'affordable' EV tie-up

TOKYO: Japanese automaker Honda and US giant General Motors said Thursday they were scrapping a tie-up that was aimed at producing "affordable" electric vehicles from 2027. "After extensive studies and analysis, we have come to a mutual decision to discontinue the program," the firms said in a joint statement.

No reason was given, but automakers are reportedly slowing expansion plans in EVs because of cooling demand, particularly in China. GM said this week that it was "moderating the acceleration of EV production in North America to protect our pricing, adjust to slower near-term growth in demand, and implement engineering efficiency and other improvements".

GM and other US automakers have also been hit by a lengthy strike by factory workers in the United States. Japanese automakers have lost market share in key markets in recent years due in part to a slow rollout of EV's, having long focused on hybrid vehicles instead. The tie-up announced in 2022 aimed to develop electric cars cheaper than the US firm's planned \$30,000 Chevrolet Equinox. Honda added that it still hoped to achieve 100 percent electrified vehicle sales by 2040. Honda and GM are still working together in other areas, including a recently announced plan to launch driverless taxis in Tokyo in 2026. — AFP

Turkey lifts key rate for 5th month in inflation battle

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank sharply lifted its policy rate for the fifth month running on Thursday as part of its politically charged battle against historically high inflation rates. The bank said it was taking its main lending rate to 35 percent from 30 percent because "inflation readings were above expectations" over the past three months.

Turkey's official annual inflation rate peaked at 85 percent last October and climbed back up above 60 percent last month. The bank has now more than quadrupled borrowing costs since President Recep Tayyip Erdogan dropped — or at least put aside — his lifelong objection to the idea that raising interest rates helps fight inflation.

The Turkish leader had entered a difficult May election pledging to never allow the bank to raise its key rate while he was president. He reversed course after winning the vote and allowing a new team of Wall Street-trained economists to take on the job of steering Turkey out its worst cost-of-living crisis of Erdogan's two-decade rule.

Erdogan has given his new policy team several crucial

votes of support in the past few months. He told his ruling party faithful on Wednesday that Turkey was waging a "multifaceted fight against inflation". "It takes time to see the steps taken in the economy reflect on people's daily lives," he said in televised remarks.

'Managed depreciation'

Turkey's latest economic crisis began when Erdogan decided to fight inflation by directing the nominally independent central bank to start slashing borrowing costs two years ago. The lira promptly crashed as Turks began to stock up on dollars and gold to preserve their savings and buffer themselves from further economic shocks. The central bank is estimated to have spent well over \$200 billion dollars trying to prop up the lira since Erdogan launched his economic experiment. The post-election policy shift has included a decision to allow the lira to weaken in order to ease the pressure on central bank coffers.

Analysts believe that the lira interventions were also starting to eat away at the competitiveness of Turkish exports to Europe and other parts of the world. The lira has slipped from 20 to the dollar at the time of Erdogan's re-election to around 28.1 to the greenback on Thursday. "It looks like the (central bank) currently has the lira locked in a managed depreciation regime, with a seeming target of around 30.00 at year-end," ING Bank said in a client note. — AFP



ANKARA: Turkey's President and leader of the Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan (C) delivers a speech during his party's group meeting at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara. — AFP

'New dangers and fears': Sunak outlines AI risks ahead of summit

AI could bring opportunities for economic growth and chance to solve problems

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Thursday that governments must be "honest" about the risks posed by artificial intelligence, as he prepares to host a global summit on the issue in Britain next week. In a speech in London, Sunak said while AI could bring opportunities for economic growth and the chance to solve problems that were once thought to be "beyond us", it would also raise "new dangers and new fears".

"The responsible thing for me to do is to address those fears head on, giving you the peace of mind that we will keep you safe, while making sure you and your children have all the opportunities for a better future that AI can bring," he said. "Doing the right thing, not the easy thing, means being honest with people about the risks from these technologies." Sunak's speech comes ahead of a two-day international gathering starting next Wednesday at Bletchley Park, central England, where top British codebreakers cracked Nazi Germany's "Enigma" code.

Bringing together world leaders, experts and others, it aims to "build a shared global understanding of the risks" posed by AI, according to Sunak's office. During his speech, he announced that Britain would create an AI Safety Institute to examine and test new types of AI and explore its risks, including social harms like bias and misinformation. The only people currently testing the safety of AI are the organizations developing it, Sunak noted. They should not be relied on to "mark their own homework", he said.

US stocks mixed after blowout GDP report

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks were mixed early Thursday following a blowout US economic growth report and a trove of uneven earnings. US gross domestic product growth came in at an annual rate of 4.9 percent for the July to September period, the quickest pace since late-2021.

The data reflects the lift from a strong US labor market—a welcome trend but one that could lead the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates higher for

'Risks'
A government study also published Thursday, written with the support of 50 experts, warns that AI has the potential to enhance terrorist capabilities in developing weapons, planning attacks and producing propaganda. It says generative AI, which creates text and images from written prompts, significantly increases risks to safety and security. "By 2025, generative AI is more likely to amplify existing risks than create wholly new ones, but it will increase sharply the speed and scale of some threats," the paper says.

Risks in the digital sphere, such as cyber-attacks, fraud, scams, impersonation and child sexual abuse images, are most likely to manifest and to have the highest impact, it adds.

Global regulation is incomplete and "highly likely" failing to anticipate future developments, the report notes. It recommends industry, academia, civil society, governments and the public all collaborate to help regulate the sphere. AI is tipped to increasingly perform tasks more efficiently than humans, but Sunak stressed the technology should be thought of as more of a "co-pilot", that can help people do their job.

He cited the example of a care worker who could use the technology to help with paperwork. However, the UK leader noted AI's future role in an evolving labour market was unpredictable. The best way to prepare the country for those possible changes, he said, was to educate people in a way that will properly equip them for the future. — AFP

longer. About 15 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.2 percent at 33,091.52.

The broad-based S&P 500 slipped 0.2 percent to 4,179.95, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index dropped 0.3 percent to 14,328.88. A tidal wave of earnings news produced mixed reactions in the market, with toymakers Hasbro and Mattel diving and drugmaker Merck and industrial heavyweight Honeywell International forging higher.

Facebook parent Meta Platforms slumped five percent as the company warned of "volatility" in the advertising market, offsetting a more than doubling in quarterly profit. Ford rose 0.7 percent as it confirmed a tentative agreement with the United Auto Workers union, a key step that could end a labor strike at at least one of Detroit's "Big Three" targeted by the union. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers a speech on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in London on October 26, 2023. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Thursday that the government must be "honest" about the risks posed by artificial intelligence. — AFP

Stellantis to buy stake in Chinese EV start-up Leapmotor

BEIJING: Global carmaker Stellantis said Thursday it will buy a 20 percent stake in Chinese electric car maker Leapmotor, making it the latest European brand seeking a foothold in the country's highly competitive market via partnerships with local manufacturers.

Hangzhou-based Leapmotor only produces electric vehicles and is relatively unknown in Europe, despite selling 10,000 cars a month in China, while Stellantis is one of the world's largest carmakers, owning popular brands including Alfa Romeo and Jeep.

Under the deal, the Netherlands-based firm will spend 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) on the stake in Leapmotor. The two firms will also establish a Stellantis-led joint venture, Leapmotor International, which will hold "exclusive rights for the export and sale, as well as manufacturing, of Leapmotor products outside Greater China", Stellantis said.

"As consolidation unfolds among the capable electric vehicles start-ups in China, it becomes increasingly apparent that a handful of efficient and agile new generation EV players, like Leapmotor, will come to domi-

nate the mainstream segments in China," Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares said in a statement.

"It's the perfect time to take a leading role in supporting the global expansion plans of Leapmotor, one of the most impressive new EV players who has a similar tech-first, entrepreneurial mindset to ours," he said.

With 200 vehicles on French roads since last spring, Leapmotor is seeking to clear regulatory hurdles from the European Union in order to deploy more widely in France—its first target market in Europe. The start-up offers a compact model, the TO3, priced at 26,000 euros—aimed at meeting market demand for entry-level electric cars. Leapmotor told AFP in September that it was ready to ally with a European group, though it did not confirm rumours about a potential alliance with Stellantis. The company's CEO, Zhu Jiangming, hailed the partnership with Stellantis as a "great milestone" in the firm's history. Stellantis already has a presence in China, via a tie-up with the Chinese group Dongfeng Motor to sell its Peugeot and Citroen cars in the world's second-largest economy. But it has struggled to gain a foothold, announcing last week that it would sell the three factories owned by that joint venture to Dongfeng Motor in line with a "strategy of reducing our assets in China". And a joint venture with Guangzhou Automobile Group filed for bankruptcy last year. Other European manufacturers have also stepped up partnerships with Chinese companies to win over local customers.—AFP

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	891	866	901	866	35	20,008,268	-26	-2.91%	-15.65%	860	895	12.6	1.64	3.8%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	250	244	252	244	8	21,252,154	-8	-3.33%	-17.89%	242	248	11.8	1.12	3.8%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	154	148	155	148	7	17,770,324	-6	-3.90%	-17.39%	148	151	15.4	0.56	2.4%	1.12
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	172	164	172	161	11	5,761,159	-7	-4.09%	-21.37%	161	170	16.6	0.64	4.6%	1.36
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	718	678	722	673	49	119,300,696	-42	-5.83%	-9.38%	646	704	16.7	1.74	2.4%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	597	588	599	581	18	11,624,592	-10	-1.67%	-21.89%	579	593	36.3	2.36	1.0%	1.20
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	131	117	132	117	15	6,392,000	-14	-10.69%	-23.03%	113	119	8.3	0.54	4.1%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	218	191	218	191	27	9,601,874	-26	-11.98%	-19.41%	188	195	149.2	0.87	14.1%	2.01
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	113	110	114	107	7	14,579,274	-3	-2.65%	-1.79%	101	110	27.5	0.64	0.0%	0.99
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	175	168	177	167	10	8,811,067	-6	-3.45%	49.01%	162	172	31.9	1.26	2.3%	1.15
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	154	152	154	145	9	12,025,153	-3	-1.94%	14.29%	151	158	8.9	1.09	4.9%	1.66
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	56.0	55	56.9	53	3.7	3,018,323	-2.0	-3.51%	-26.57%	53.0	55.5	-	0.35	16.4%	1.33
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	165	162	167	162	5	18,986,771	-4	-2.41%	54.50%	158	166	14.9	1.15	1.8%	1.07
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	830	811	840	811	29	2,535,397	-21	-2.52%	1.38%	811	825	16.9	1.81	1.6%	1.06
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	101	98.4	101	97.6	3.0	18,774,460	-1.4	-1.40%	2.48%	97	99	17.9	0.61	3.0%	0.61
501	National Industries	Financial Services	200	184	201	182	19	27,760,223	-16	-8.00%	-10.97%	182	190	130.5	0.88	2.5%	1.61
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,103	1,162	1,189	1,095	94	4,299,752	48	4.31%	-4.36%	1,149	1,171	13.0	1.08	5.1%	1.05
506	HEISCO	Industrials	760	726	773	725	48	7,855,762	-30	-3.97%	18.43%	720	753	21.5	1.88	2.6%	0.91
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	648	614	648	614	34	3,926,314	-32	-4.95%	-23.25%	612	633	11.5	1.31	9.6%	0.95
603	Agility	Industrials	520	513	531	510	21	11,660,608	-11	-2.10%	-28.75%	500	520	19.0	0.69	0.0%	1.54
605	Zain	Telecommunications	486	461	490	459	31	9,348,256	-28	-5.73%	-18.12%	459	468	9.5	1.61	7.5%	0.65
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,100	2,993	3,135	2,980	155	479,613	-107	-3.45%	-10.72%	2,980	3,065	8.8	3.64	12.6%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	166	165	168	163	5	796,543	-3	-1.79%	-18.72%	162	167	-	0.72	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,410	1,435	1,550	1,405	145	1,003,203	5	0.35%	-24.47%	1,405	1,485	16.6	9.97	5.2%	1.47
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	76.0	77	77.4	74.9	2.5	15,704,837	-0.1	-0.13%	0.92%	76.6	79.0	8.6	0.92	6.2%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	182	172	183	172	11	20,431,159	-12	-6.52%	-24.61%	172	188	24.3	0.93	1.6%	1.13
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	500	504	518	490	28	3,332,675	6	1.20%	28.24%	490	519	74.3	1.49	2.4%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	447	431	447	423	24	3,139,090	-16	-3.58%	16.49%	425	435	34.8	1.79	3.4%	0.68
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	177	176	177	173	4	1,796,009	-2	-1.12%	-6.38%	173	176	14.2	1.59	6.9%	0.44
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,745	1,710	1,790	1,700	90	813,567	-28	-1.61%	-16.67%	1,700	1,770	21.9	6.04	4.9%	0.92
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,069	1,051	1,069	1,037	32	2,618,558	-6	-0.57%	30.56%	1,033	1,069	12.0	3.71	6.5%	0.66

* As of end of week closing

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Business

Japan show provides glimpse of robots as future of rescue efforts

Nearly 30 percent of the country's population is aged 65 and over

TOKYO: With a drone camera, a survivor is spotted in the rubble. A robot on tracks brings him water while rescuers in exoskeletons clear an escape route for an autonomous stretcher to take her to safety.

This is the futuristic vision on display at the Japan Mobility Show, aiming to exhibit how technology can help and sometimes replace humans in a country short of workers and no stranger to disasters.

But so as not to alarm people, the imaginary tragedy is unleashed by Godzilla, who has unleashed catastrophe in Japanese disaster films since the 1950s. In Japan nearly 30 percent of the country's population is aged 65 and over. "Because of the decline of the population there are fewer and fewer people available for dangerous tasks," said Tomoyuki Izu, founder of Attractlab, a local start-up specializing in autonomous mobility.

"My idea is to help people such as firefighters with my machines," Izu, 61, told AFP. It was Attractlab that co-developed the small delivery robot squeezing through the cardboard rubble at the Japan Mobility Show and designed the remote-control stretcher on wheels or tracks. For now the Japanese government favours "traditional equipment" for relief efforts, he said at the event, which opens to the public this weekend.

But Izu believes there will be a market for more advanced technology in the future. "There's a lot of anime with humanoid robots in Japan, and therefore people love them. But these kinds of autonomous vehicles are still very strange for them," he said.

Since 2016, Japan's Kawasaki Heavy Industries (KHI) has been developing Kaleido, a robust human-

oid robot capable of delicately lifting and moving injured people.

'Shortage of labour'

"In the future this robot will be able to save people, or go to dangerous zones, like fires," said Itsuki Goda from the robotics division of KHI.

He conceded, though, that the machine needs more development on its scanning capabilities to get through difficult terrain. "We need more years of development if we want to use it in real situations, where conditions are always different," he told AFP.

Kaleido's current load capacity of 60 kilograms (132 pounds) will be increased very soon with a new prototype, promised Goda. Price is also an issue. Right now this robot is "maybe 10 times more expensive than a human, but if we produce 10,000 of them per year, the price will go down rapidly", Goda added. Since the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, another niche segment has exploded: robots to clear up disaster areas that are difficult or dangerous to access.

Engineering firm Sugino Machine presented a powerful but small robotic arm rigged on crawlers that can work in areas that emergency workers cannot go. The machine was built in 2018 for a nationally run atomic research agency, as Japan continues the work to decommission the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. "This can be used for initial damage assessment or to remove debris or to remove heavy items that people cannot lift," Akira Inujima from Sugino Machine told AFP. Various tools can be attached to its arm, such as image, temperature or radioactivity sensors, or a high-pressure water lance.



TOKYO: Japanese robotics startup Tsubame Industries exhibit the ARCHAX robot, weighing 3.5 tonnes and measuring 4.5 meters in height, during the press day of the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo. — AFP

"We have a shortage of labour. It is difficult to go all robot. But we can offer solutions to help people's work," he said. "After Fukushima, we have been able to continue technological development because there

has been project after project (heavily supported by the government), like removing debris, that needs our work," Inujima said. "It's important to continue this work and not make this fade away." — AFP

Dhaman insures loan worth \$500 million to Egypt

KUWAIT: The Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) issued a Non-Honoring of Sovereign Financial Obligation (NHSO) insurance policy to cover a \$500 million 7-year international commercial loan to its member country the Arab Republic of Egypt. The loan is provided within the framework of the decisions of the twenty-seventh climate summit held in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022.



Abdullah Al-Sabeeh

The Arab Republic of Egypt successfully closed a \$500 million dual-tranche 7-year international commercial loan equally provided by Deutsche Bank AG and the Arab Banking Corporation (B.S.C.), Bahrain, benefiting from a credit insurance policy provided by Dhaman (rated A+ by S&P).

This landmark deal is the first international loan market transaction benefitting from a multilateral credit-enhancement mechanism for Egypt, involving a multilateral insurer Dhaman and mobilizing the private insurance market.

Abdullah Al-Sabeeh, Director General of Dhaman, said that this transaction "demonstrates Dhaman's commitment to its message of contributing to achieving the SDGs, as well as Egypt's commitment to the diversification of its external financing sources through blended finance solutions with strong support from both Dhaman and global private insurers", adding that "innovative credit-enhanced solutions in favor of member countries are one of the pillars of Dhaman's 2022-2026 strategic plan."

The transaction allowed Egypt to secure favorable financing terms, materially more advantageous than those available on the international bond market. Dhaman provided a credit insurance policy on a sovereign blended finance loan transaction, covering up to 95% of the scheduled principal and related interest. The mobilization of Dhaman's credit insurance policy allowed Egypt to secure a reduced loan margin, resulting in savings compared to current Eurobond yields. This transaction, therefore, supports efforts to stabilize and reduce Egypt's cost of funding, extend maturities and access new funding sources.

This transaction also demonstrates Egypt's strong ESG policy leadership and contributes to the Government's human capital development agenda. The proceeds will be used to cover social projects eligible under Egypt's Sustainable Financing Framework, announced at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022, including health and education budget expenditures aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3 (good health and well-being) and 4 (quality education).

The statement praised the constructive cooperation between all parties to the process, whether the financing entities represented by Deutsche Bank AG and the Arab Banking Corporation in Bahrain, the insurance authorities represented by the Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation "Dhaman" and the reinsurance entities, and the consulting entity represented by Rothschild & Partners in France. This is in addition to the legal bodies that included legal advisory bodies in the United Kingdom and Egypt.

US auto workers union reaches preliminary deal

NEW YORK: The US auto workers union reached a tentative agreement with Ford late Wednesday, a breakthrough in a 41-day stoppage on Detroit's "Big Three" car manufacturers. The deal, which rank-and-file workers must still approve in a vote, includes a 25 percent wage increase for hourly employees, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union said.

Other key elements include guaranteed cost-of-living adjustments; an elimination of different pay levels or "tiers" that disadvantage junior employees; and a right to strike over plant closures. "For months we've said that record profits mean record contracts," said UAW President Shawn Fain in a statement. "And UAW family, our Stand Up Strike has delivered."

Ford confirmed the agreement, saying "we are pleased to have reached a tentative agreement on a new labor contract with the UAW covering our US operations." Also cheering was US President Joe Biden, who hailed an "historic accord," saying "I applaud the UAW and Ford for coming together after a hard fought, good faith negotiation and reaching a historic tentative agreement tonight."

Biden made history in September as the first US president to stand on a picket line as he endorsed the UAW's call for "record" contracts in light of record auto industry profits. The wage increase in the tentative agreement is somewhat lower than the 40 percent sought by Fain when the UAW launched the strike on September 15 in the first ever simultaneous stoppage of Detroit's Big Three (Ford, General Motors and Stellantis).

However, it is much above the nine percent increase Ford initially proposed in August. "This agreement sets us on a new path to make things right at Ford, at the Big Three, and across the auto industry," Fain said, while stressing that the final decision rests with members.

LuLu Hypermarket 'versary celebration offers 'one year free shopping'

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, is celebrating yet another anniversary of its successful operations in Kuwait with bonanza offers from 25th October to 31 December across all its outlets in the country. The highlight of the celebration is a never-before offer of a one-year free shopping for 10 lucky winners, who stand to win KD 1,500 worth of free gift vouchers that enable them to shop through-

Meta quarterly profit jumps but it sees volatility in ad market

SAN FRANCISCO: Meta on Wednesday reported that its quarterly profit more than doubled from last year's figure as it looks ahead at a volatile ad market and lawsuits accusing it of profiting from "children's pain."

"Meta earnings looked pretty good," said independent tech analyst Rob Enderle. "They have clearly cut back on the bleeding surrounding their metaverse efforts and the company appears to be on a more even keel right now." The tech giant said it made a profit of \$11.6 billion as ad revenue climbed 23 percent to \$34 billion when compared to the same period a year earlier.

"We had a good quarter for our

community and business," said Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg. The number of people using Facebook monthly rose slightly to 3.05 billion in a year-over-year comparison while monthly active users of Meta's "family" of apps was 3.96 billion in a 7 percent increase from the same quarter in 2022, the company reported.

Meta said it had trimmed costs, with layoffs and other belt-tightening measures started last year providing "greater efficiency." Meta had suffered a rough 2022 amid a souring economic climate and Apple's data privacy changes, which allowed users to block ad targeting, the pillar of Meta's business. — AFP



WAYNE: In this file photo members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) pickett outside of the Michigan Parts Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan, on September 26, 2023. The US auto workers union announced a tentative agreement with Ford late on October 25, 2023, a breakthrough in a 41-day stoppage on Detroit's "Big Three" car manufacturers. — AFP

"We're going to let that democratic process take its course," said Fain, calling the rank-and-file "the highest authority." Fain said the ratification process will include detailed online presentations and regional meetings. After rejecting a tentative agreement struck by UAW negotiators, workers at Mack Trucks voted to go on strike earlier this month.

Expanding strike

While the initial UAW strike targeted three plants with just 12,700 workers walking out, the union has gradually expanded the action in the ensuing weeks as it has sought a better deal. More than 45,000 workers were on strike prior to the Ford deal. The UAW has about 146,000 auto workers in the United States. In just the last two days, the UAW escalated the strike at both Stellantis and GM, taking down key

factories in Michigan and Texas that make some of the companies' most profitable vehicles.

Both GM and Stellantis are currently offering 23 percent wage hikes. Fain has argued the companies need to sweeten the deal further in light of union concessions after bankruptcy reorganizations more than a decade ago.

Following a tentative agreement, labor unions sometimes do not end a strike until the accord is ratified by members. But in a twist, the UAW said Ford workers would return to their shifts to apply pressure to GM and Stellantis.

"This is a strategic move to get the best deal possible," said UAW Vice President Chuck Browning, adding that "the last thing" GM and Stellantis want is for Ford to get back to full capacity while they mess around and lag behind." — AFP

out the year. The promotion also features other amazing bonanza offers and discounted prices, including the opportunity for 100 customers to win gift vouchers worth KD 100 each.

To avail the opportunity of winning the fabulous prizes that are worth a total of KD 25,000, all that shoppers have to do is make a minimum purchase of KD 5 worth of items, as every KD 5 purchase entitles them to enter the draw from 25th Oct to 31st Dec 2023.

In addition, during the anniversary bonanza sale, shoppers get a flat 50 percent discount across all categories, as well as the opportunity to avail of 21 super deals every day of the promotion period. For those who love shopping for garments, footwear, and ladies' bags, there is a

special deal that provides shoppers who purchase KD 20 worth of items from the garments, footwear, or ladies' bag section to receive a further KD 20 worth of items from the respective sections for free.

And, in the grocery shopping section, shoppers can pick their favorite cut of meat, fish, or fresh apples during special festivals organized specifically for these products during the anniversary celebration period.

The bonanza anniversary celebration at LuLu Hypermarket is the brand's unique way of saying a big thank-you to all their customers for their unwavering support over the years, which has made the hypermarket the undisputed retail leader in Kuwait and the region.



TOULOUSE: This file photo taken on January 12, 2023 in Toulouse, southwestern France shows a smartphone and a computer screen displaying the logos of the Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and their parent company Meta. Meta on October 25 reported that its quarterly profit more than doubled from last year's figure to \$11.6 billion as ad revenue climbed.—AFP

Vlad the Impaler steps out of Dracula's shadow



An exterior view of Bran castle.—AFP photos



Clay figurines representing vampires are pictured at a souvenir shop of Bran castle.



Instruments of torture are displayed at a permanent exhibition, part of the official tour of Bran castle.



Instruments of torture are displayed at a permanent exhibition, part of the official tour of Bran castle.

Clad in a black cape like the infamous count himself, 10-year-old Niklas Schuetz runs through the dark corridors of a hill-top castle in search of the truth about Dracula.

"He was a Romanian prince, not a vampire," said the schoolboy, as he tripped by torchlight through the nocturnal gloom of Forchtenstein Castle.

The group being guided through the Austrian fortress are eager to sink their teeth into the gripping life of Vlad Tepes, the notorious "Vlad the Impaler", whose descendants once held the schloss.

The castle is home to one of the few paintings of the cruel 15th-century prince, and this Halloween its curators are trying to bring the real historical figure out from the chilling shadow of the monster invented by the Irish writer Bram Stoker.

Rather than being a ghoulish fiend, the real Vlad Tepes had for a "long time gone down in history as a positive figure" who courageously fought the Ottoman Turks, said the director of its collections, Florian Bayer.

"More and more people are able to distinguish between the bloodsucking vampire and the historical figure," he said. Voivode Vlad III -- also known by his patronymic name Dracula derived from the Slavonic word for dragon -- once ruled over Wallachia, a Romanian-speaking vassal state of the Kingdom of Hungary.

'Forest' of the impaled

Held as a child hostage of the sultan at the Ottoman court, he later turned against his former captors. In several hard-fought campaigns against the Turks, he struck fear into his enemies by impaling thousands of Turkish prisoners.

This gruesomely slow death was also used against his internal rivals, like "the German merchants from neighbouring Transylvanian towns," historian Dan Ioan Muresan told AFP.

Tepes was often depicted amidst a "forest" of impaled bodies. Yet despite his gory reputation, Vlad was a handsome devil and something of a ladykiller, according to Muresan.

He was a "very handsome man with an imposing build", with long hair flowing over his Turkish-style kaftans adorned with diamonds.

By marrying a cousin of the Hungarian king, he "gave rise to a branch from which the British royal family descends," the historian added.

Indeed Britain's King Charles III has repeatedly boasted of their shared blood ties, saying that Transylvania runs through his veins.

Communist marketing

The gothic novel by Stoker published in 1897 helped kickstart the modern vampire genre.

Dozens of films later, the fictional Dracula had transformed into a pop culture icon.

"Until the 1960s, Romanians didn't associate the character imagined by Stoker with Vlad Tepes," said Bogdan Popovici, head of the national archives in the Transylvanian city of Brasov, home to some of the prince's manuscripts. "It was the Communists who started to commercialise it for the Western market to attract tourists," he said.

While cashing in on selling the vampire myth to visitors, the regime of Romanian Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu sought to resurrect Vlad as a national hero.

Paradoxically, the Communist regime was careful in differentiating the real Dracula from its fictitious counterpart as it pursued its mission to wipe out pagan traditions.

Tears of blood

"Romanians have never recognised themselves in the character, which was born out of a foreign imagination and planted into an exotic reality," said Muresan. "It is being exploited as a kind of tourist trap," he said.

The real Vlad never set foot in Romania's Bran Castle -- widely taken as the inspiration for the lair of Dracula -- but it hasn't stopped it drawing visitors in their droves. Murdered by his own people in 1476 in the wake of a conspiracy, experts dispute the whereabouts of his remains to this day, with some claiming that his head was sent to the sultan in Constantinople to confirm his death.

A recent Italian scientific study based on the analysis of the prince's handwritten letters found that Vlad probably suffered from haemolacria, indicating that he could shed tears of blood. "The creepy detail is undoubtedly enough to keep the Dracula myth alive for some time yet.—AFP



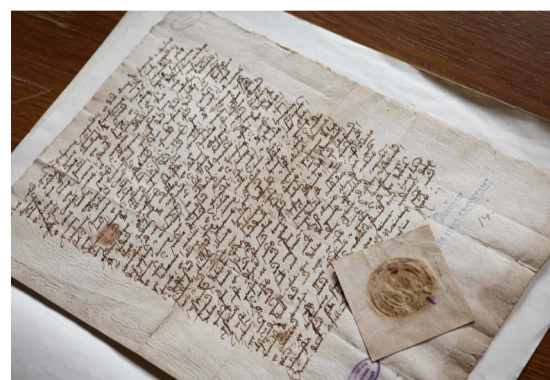
A bust representing vampire is pictured at a souvenir shop of Bran castle.



Bogdan Popovici, head of the national archives in the Transylvanian city of Brasov, home to some of the prince's manuscripts holds a letter written and signed by Vlad Tepes.



Bogdan Popovici, head of the national archives in the Transylvanian city of Brasov, home to some of the prince's manuscripts holds a letter written and signed by Vlad Tepes.



A letter written and signed by Vlad Tepes, the Romanian ruler who inspired fictional character "Dracula" is pictured at the National Archives headquarters in Brasov city.



A toy representing Vlad tepes (Vlad the Impaler) is pictured at a souvenirs shop of Bran castle.



A picture of Vlad III "Dracula", Voivode of the Principality of Wallachia, is pictured at Forchtenstein Castle.



Children in Dracula costumes attend the "Draculade" evening tour at Forchtenstein Castle in Burgenland, Austria.



A child plays at a bronze layout of Bran castle.



A picture of Vlad III "Dracula", Voivode of the Principality of Wallachia, is pictured at Forchtenstein Castle.

Lifestyle



A picture shows former miner in charge of the rehabilitation project of the Svea mine Morten Hagen Johansen (left) as he holds a picture of the mine in front of the site in Van Mijenfjord, Svalbard Archipelago.



A picture shows rusty railway and rubbles on the site of the former Svea coal mine which operated from 1917 until 2020.

ARCTIC ARCHIPELAGO TURNS THE PAGE ON ITS MINING PAST

At the old Svea mine in the Arctic, broken railway tracks overgrown with weeds lead nowhere. Of the hundred buildings that once made up the town, there's almost nothing left. Coal brought fortune to Norway's Svalbard archipelago, but that bonanza became a curse for the remote group of islands, now the most harmful fossil energy for the climate. Svalbard, today home to 3,000 people and located in the fastest-warming region on the planet, is bit by bit erasing all traces of its mining past.

A 40-minute helicopter flight from the main town of Longyearbyen, the Svea mine and its surrounding settlement have been returned to Mother Nature after a massive, recently-completed restoration project. "At its peak there were barracks for 300 people, with a canteen, an airfield with 35,000 passengers yearly, a power plant, a workshop, and storage," said Morten Hagen Johansen, in charge of the project at the mine where he was once employed.

The Svea site is the biggest natural restoration ever undertaken in Norway. Only a handful of man-made objects remain, preserved because they are considered historic. They include a few dilapidated brick buildings, a rusted track vehicle, and railway tracks that once transported wagons loaded with coal. The area "was home to many miners who were working here for decades," Hanna Geiran, head of the Norwegian



A picture shows deer antlers on the site of the former Svea coal mine.

Directorate for Cultural Heritage, told AFP. "Preserving these artefacts helps to better understand what this place was," she added.

Avalanches

The mine was opened by a Swedish company in 1917 and officially closed 100 years later after producing 34 million tonnes of coal. The site has since been returned to its natural state at a cost of around 1.6 billion kroner (about \$140 million) to the Norwegian state.

"The concept is to try to let nature take it back," said Hagen Johansen.

"That means to let creeks run freely. To make sure that avalanches do happen, because that will transport more sediment down and it will make new creeks." The part of the Barents Sea where the Svalbard archipelago is located is warming up to seven times faster than the rest of the planet, according to a study published in Nature last year. At Svea, a spectacular landslide recently created a deep crevasse down a hilly

slope. "It is the result of a very heavy rainfall last summer where they got maybe 50-60 millimetres (2-2.3 inches) of rain in just 24 hours," geologist Fredrik Juell Theisen said. "That was very unusual before climate change started changing the climate up here," he added.

Russian presence

The climate backlash is harsh for the archipelago now trying to rid itself of fossil fuels. Seven other mines located in the hills of Longyearbyen have almost all been closed, with the last one due to shut in 2025. The town also disconnected its coal plant for good this month in exchange for a less-polluting diesel plant, ahead of a transition to renewable energies at a later stage. Going forward, Svalbard's economy will rely on tourism and scientific research.

The only coal still being mined on the archipelago will be a vein in Barentsburg, a Russian mining community with just under 500 Russians and Ukrainians, most of them from the Donbas region. Under the 1920 international treaty that recognizes Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard, all signatories are entitled to exploit the region's natural resources equally.

As a result, Russia has for decades maintained a mining community on Svalbard, via the state-run company Trust Arktikugol, in a strategic region belonging to a NATO member. Accord-



A picture shows geologist in charge of the Department of Polar Affairs in the Norwegian government Fredrik Juell Theisen.

ing to some observers and Russia itself, strict environmental regulations that Norway has introduced in the region -- about two-thirds of Svalbard land is protected in one way or another -- are at least partly aimed at limiting Russia's uncomfortable presence.

It's impossible to know whether such considerations played into Oslo's decision to restore the Svea mine at great cost, said Mats Kirkebirke of the Norwegian think tank Civita. "But there's no denying that some of the Norwegian environmental policies and the geostrategic policies on Svalbard are aligned." —AFP



An aerial view captured from a helicopter shows the ice cap, snow and rivers on top of mountains in the Arctic Norwegian Svalbard Archipelago, northern Norway.



A picture shows rusty elements and rubbles on the site of the former Svea coal mine.



An aerial view captured from a helicopter shows snowy mountains and a river in a valley of the Arctic Norwegian Svalbard Archipelago.

Fashion mogul Peter Nygard rejects sex lair portrayal at trial

Fashion mogul Peter Nygard, on trial for alleged serial rapes, on Wednesday took a Canadian jury on a virtual tour of his properties and offices, rejecting claims his Bahamas mansion included a secret sex lair. The founder of Nygard International has pleaded not guilty to charges of sexually assaulting four women and a 16-year-old girl in Toronto between 1988 and 2005.

His accusers have said he invited them to his opulent offices in Toronto on the pretense of modeling or designing opportunities, only to find themselves "trapped" in a top floor bedroom suite with a hot tub, where they claimed he preyed on them. The court also heard testimony about Nygard's property in the Bahamas, known as Nygard Cay, where he threw lavish parties.

Nygard flatly rejected on Wednesday that any part of the estate had been designed or intended to be used for secret sexual romps. "That's insane," he said. "There was no such thing as that." His lawyer Brian Greenspan earlier this week disputed the prosecution's depiction of Nygard as "a sexual predator... (and) what's been misrepresented as his secret and hidden cave."

On the stand, Nygard recounted his childhood, his family's immigration from Finland and his building of Canada's largest womenswear maker.

He founded his business empire in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1967. The company, however, filed for bankrupt-

cy protection shortly after police and the FBI raided its Manhattan corporate headquarters in 2020. At times Nygard, 82, struggled to remember dates and names, telling the jury he has increasingly suffered "memory lapses."

"It's almost embarrassing that all of a sudden my mind goes blank," he said, adding with a chuckle: "I recommend not to get old." Mostly he appeared lucid and even jubilant when speaking about his garment industry work and his properties -- all designed by him and inspired, he said, by his Finnish heritage.

As he reminisced, jurors were shown pictures of his homes and offices, featuring stone and woodwork and large windows. Greenspan has said Nygard would testify that he doesn't recall meeting four of his five accusers and would "categorically" deny the allegations made against him by the fifth complainant.

"It is impossible to have a recollection of what did not occur," Greenspan told the court on Tuesday, calling the women's testimony "inaccurate, unreliable and untrustworthy." Nygard is to resume testifying on Thursday. —AFP



Peter Nygard

Car drivers torture NZ city with Celine Dion songs

Car drivers armed with a playlist of Celine Dion songs have been plaguing residents of a small New Zealand city for months on end with loud, late-night "siren battles".

The beloved Canadian singer's melodies lose their charm when blared at high volume as late as 2 am, say the sleepless residents of Porirua, north of Wellington and home to 60,000 people.

"It's a headache," Porirua Mayor Anita Baker told AFP on Thursday. Siren battles have erupted in parts of New Zealand for at least seven years.

Local media have reported on contestants -- often people with family links to Pacific Island nations -- using large siren-type speakers on cars and even bicycles to drown each other out with their powerful systems. They "love Celine Dion", the mayor said.

"They like anyone with a high pitch and great tone in their voice," she said.

In Porirua, people have had enough of hearing the power ballads, including "My Heart Will Go On" and "It's All Coming Back To Me Now".

The contests start as early as 7 pm and can go on until as late as 2 am, the mayor said. "It's really loud music. They only play a quarter of the song, so it's like having a turntable and it comes screeching out." Competing cars park with their engines running, blasting out music before moving to avoid police, Baker said.

'Not getting any sleep'

"It's happening down in our city cen-

tre, which is like a basin, so the noise just goes out like a drum to all the suburbs," she said.

"People are just not getting any sleep, because it's all hours." Nearly 300 disgruntled residents have so far signed a petition on the website change.org demanding Porirua City Council put a stop to it. "There is a petition coming my way, but I have already had lots of emails and complaints through," Baker said.

One resident, Diana Paris, wrote on the petition she was "sick" of the noise. "Although I enjoy Celine Dion in the comfort of my lounge and at my volume, I do not enjoy hearing fragments of it stopping and starting at any time between 7 pm and 2 am," she said. Baker said the late-night music sessions started in November 2022 during the Rugby League World

Cup when local fans celebrated Samoa's run to the final.

"We had a parade down here and they have just continued on. Summer is starting and they are back." There are no set nights when the high-decibel music will start up, she said. "It's absolutely random now and it can be any day of the week." Baker has attended organized siren battles.

"I can see why they like them, they are a bit of fun. There were families watching and it finished at 10 pm, not one or two in the morning when people need to sleep."

The mayor said she would meet with police to find a resolution. "We don't want people leaving the city because of the noise. That's unacceptable," she said. —AFP



Canadian singer Celine Dion performs on the opening night of her new world tour "Courage" at the Videotron Centre in Quebec City.—AFP

Lifestyle



Women gesture before exercising in a mall in the Saudi capital Riyadh.



Women pose for a picture before exercising at a mall in Riyadh. — AFP photos

'Too hot outside': Saudis take to walking, jogging in malls

The shops have not yet opened, but the air-conditioned concourse of a Riyadh shopping mall is crowded anyway - a haven for walkers and joggers grateful for somewhere cool to exercise. The early-morning crowd includes 55-year-old engineer Mohammed Sultan, in a white T-shirt and black trainers, doing laps around the mall trailed by his niqab-wearing wife.

"It's too hot outside to exercise. The weather here is cold and does not cause thirst," Sultan says, noting that even in October, the end of the hot period in Saudi Arabia, daytime temperatures can still approach 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

"Walking in gyms (on a treadmill) is very boring," he adds with a laugh. It is a scene replicated daily in malls across the Saudi capital, highlighting how a growing interest in physical fitness in the Gulf kingdom has collided with a dearth of suitable spaces for working out.

Long popular in the United States, another car-centric country with an obe-



Women exercise in a mall in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

sity problem, mall-walking is increasingly becoming a Saudi sport.

Roughly one in five Saudi adults is obese, according to an in-depth study published by the World Bank last year that described the issue as "alarming".

To help bring that percentage down,

the Saudi Sports for All Federation now organizes races such as the Riyadh Marathon, which this year drew thousands of runners onto the capital's streets. But such events are fairly irregular, and new gyms sprouting up in Riyadh often charge steep fees - a turn-off for Saudis

who spurn fancy machines and simply need space to stretch their legs.

Officials have begun work on a 135-kilometre (85-mile) Sports Boulevard in the capital featuring foot, cycle and horse-riding paths.

'The only option'

However that project - billed by organizers as "a green spine through the city" with "cooling water features" and shaded football pitches - is still years from completion. That makes malls "the only option" for many people - at least for now, says Australian expat Zuzana Kalous, who formed a women's walking group in Riyadh in 2020 that meets four times per week in different shopping centres.

"The mall is safe for women, air-conditioned and controlled. No pollution, no dust, no traffic," she tells AFP as more than 20 members of her group jog past storefronts one recent morning. The contained environment also guarantees people can exercise even in less-than-

ideal weather, like spring sandstorms or winter rains, says Saudi nutritionist Laila al-Rifai, a member of Kalous's group.

"Commercial centres are the ideal solution to continue walking at any time of the day, at any time of year," she says. Hassan Merhi, a Lebanese fitness trainer based in Riyadh, encourages his clients to walk outdoors as much as possible, noting that most studies show it offers a better workout than staying inside.

"It helps burn fat faster and reduces stress," he says. But Batoul Zind al-Hadid, a 41-year-old from Syria, says a mall walk is "excellent for those who are still feeling out their first steps".

Not only does it tend to be more social, with groups gathered together in the same space, it also allows her to stay on top of the latest fashion trends by studying the display windows. It is, she says, "a more comprehensive and entertaining experience". — AFP



Visitors stand in one of the rooms of the Maria Callas Museum.



Former Mayor of Athens, Kostas Bakoyannis, speaks to journalists and public during the official opening of the Maria Callas Museum in Central Athens. — AFP photos

Opera diva Maria Callas museum opens in Athens on centenary

A quarter of a century in the making, Greece's capital Athens on Thursday opens a museum honouring legendary soprano Maria Callas, billed as the first of its kind in the world. Designed to mark the centenary of her birth, the museum showcases over 1,300 exhibits including Callas' school scrapbook, inscribed books and sheet music, opera dresses and photographs,

second floor, where visitors step onto a forest scene as Callas - silhouetted on a stage at the back wall - sings an aria from Bellini's opera Norma. It was one of the defining performances of an illustrious career spanning more than three decades which saw Callas dubbed "La Divina" - the divine.

Another room recreates the night view from the diva's balcony in Paris,

met Greek tycoon Aristotle Onassis. She ended up divorcing her Italian industrialist husband Giovanni Meneghini for Onassis, who later left her to marry former US first lady Jackie Kennedy.

Dozens of Greek institutions and private collectors, among them the late artists Alekos Fassianos, Dimitris Mytaras and Panayiotis Tetsis, have made contributions to the new museum, the city said. Some of the items have been donated by Milan's La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, the Teatro La Fenice in Venice and the Arena di Verona, where Callas made her Italian debut in 1947, it said. "We aimed to charm those who don't know (Callas) and don't listen to opera... and help them understand what made her stand out," the museum's exhibition designer Erato Koutsoudaki told AFP.

Born in New York to Greek emigre parents in 1923, Sophia Cecilia Anna Maria Kalogeropoulos lived in Athens from 1937 to 1945 after her parents separated. "As soon as my mother realized my vocal qualities, she decided to turn me into a child prodigy," Callas later wrote. "But child prodigies never have a real, genuine childhood."

The building in Athens where Callas briefly lived with her mother and sister is to become a music academy, Bakoyannis said Wednesday. After attending singing classes at the National Conservatory, she made her professional debut with the Royal Opera of Athens in 1941. Callas retired after a final stage appearance in Sapporo, Japan in 1974. She died in Paris of a heart attack in 1977, aged 53. Her ashes were scattered in the Aegean Sea two years later. A biopic of Callas starring Angelina Jolie, titled Maria, is due to be released next year. — AFP



A visitor looks at a bust depicting the diva Maria Callas, during the official opening of the Maria Callas Museum.



A visitor looks at one of Maria Callas' costumes in one of the rooms of the Maria Callas Museum.

organizers said.

"The great diva, Maria Callas, returns home," Athens mayor Kostas Bakoyannis said Wednesday at a media tour of the venue. "We are very proud of this first museum that combines technology and lived experience," he said. A listed four-storey building from the 1920s that previously housed a hotel, the custard-colored museum near central Syntagma Square took over a decade to complete at a cost of 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million).

The collection began 24 years ago, when the city acquired some Callas items at a Paris auction. "This is a museum for all the senses," said Konstantinos Dedes, one of the project supervisors. The tour begins on the

complete with flowing curtains. There is also a recording of Callas giving a masterclass at the Juilliard School of music in New York in the early 1970s.

'Don't overact'

"You don't have to overact," she sternly tells students, urging them to make use of their face and eyes. Among the collection's top exhibits are the soprano's personal photo album, her backstage mirror and her prescription glasses, which she almost never wore in public.

There are also monogrammed matchbooks given to her by airlines and hotels on her final world tour in 1973-74, and the menu of the fateful Venice party in 1957 where Callas

Iran bans 12 actors from work over hijab violations: Minister

Iranian authorities have banned a dozen women actors from working for failing to observe the Islamic republic's strict dress code which includes mandatory headscarves, an official said Wednesday.

"Those who do not follow the law, will not be allowed to work," Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili told reporters after the weekly cabinet meeting.

On Tuesday, Iranian media reported that a dozen actresses who were found to be violating the hijab law - among them Taraneh Alidoosti, Katayoun Rihahi and Fatemeh Motamed-Aria - "will not be allowed to play roles in movies". Alidoosti and Rihahi were among the public figures who were briefly detained during last year's widespread protests over the death in custody of 22-year-old Iranian Kurd Mahsa Amini.

Amini had previously been arrested for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women. Her death triggered months-long demonstrations which the authorities labelled as "riots" fomented by foreign governments. Since last year's mass protests, women have



Fatemeh Motamed-Aria

been increasingly flouting the dress code which requires head coverings and modest clothes. Covering the neck and head has been compulsory for women since 1983, following Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran has stepped up measures over the past few months against women and businesses who breach the hijab rules. In September, lawmakers voted in favor of toughening the penalties, which include jail sentences of up to 10 years, for women who violate the dress code. — AFP



Taraneh Alidoosti



Katayoun Rihahi

K-pop star G-Dragon under police probe for alleged drug use

K-pop star G-Dragon - of the wildly successful but problem-plagued band BIGBANG - is under investigation for alleged drug use, police said Thursday, becoming the latest in a string of South Korean entertainers to face such a probe. South Korea has extremely tough legislation on illegal drugs, and even Koreans who take drugs like marijuana legally overseas risk prosecution upon returning to their home country.

This year, President Yoon Suk Yeol called for more stringent measures to eliminate drug traffickers, saying the

country was no longer "drug-free".

Police in Incheon told AFP on Thursday that they had "opened an investigation" into G-Dragon's case, but declined to provide details of the allegations against him.

The disclosure comes less than a week after police launched an investigation into "Parasite" actor Lee Sun-kyun, who stands accused of using marijuana and other psychoactive drugs. Local news reports said that Lee - previously celebrated for his wholesome image - was being dropped from his ongoing television and commercial projects.

Earlier this month, another high-profile actor, Yoo Ah-in, was indicted for alleged drug use. G-Dragon's group BIGBANG is one of South Korea's most successful boy bands, having sold at least 140 million records worldwide since their debut in 2006. But its members have often been in the limelight for misconduct. — AFP

Sports

Sergio Perez racing to secure his Red Bull future at home event

'I don't think Max is going to get the warmest reception in Mexico'

MEXICO CITY: Sergio Perez will be racing for his Red Bull future alongside runaway title winner Max Verstappen when he drives in front of an impassioned home crowd at this weekend's Mexican Grand Prix. While newly-crowned three-time world champion Verstappen hunts another milestone victory at one of his favourite tracks, Perez seeks to shake off a series of lacklustre races and secure at least a podium finish in the champions' second car in the rarefied air at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez.

"This is my most important weekend of the season and I can't wait for my home race," said Perez, who requested his noisy fans support not only him, but his team-mate who was booed after winning last Sunday's United States Grand Prix in Texas.

"The support in Austin was crazy," said Perez. "So I can't even imagine what Mexico will be like. It's going to be very special. I am optimistic. I want Mexico to come out, but to support the whole Red Bull team—not just me."

Perez won two races in the early stages of this season before his form faded, but he has finished third at the last two Mexican Grands Prix and, even with a contract for 2024, knows he is in sore need of the seventh victory of his career.

His relationship with Verstappen went through a stormy period last year, notably in Brazil, and his fan-base, who long to cheer him as the first Mexican driver to win his home Grand Prix, have not been slow to show their feelings, as in Austin.

"I don't think Max is going to get the warmest reception in Mexico," said team chief Christian Horner. "But it's water off a duck's back to him." Ever-pragmatic, the 26-year-old Dutchman will be focused on

winning and conceded after a tough battle to win from sixth on the grid last Sunday that he faces another challenge this weekend.

"It's great to be in Mexico," he said. "We have a great history here, winning and taking a double podium in the last two years and it's Checo's home race too so it will be a big one for us. "The atmosphere is always amazing and it is the highest altitude track of the season, which is stressful on the cars. Our RB19 has been faultless in most conditions so I'm looking forward to seeing how we perform."

"We revert to a normal race format this weekend, too, so that is good—and I expect more of a fight again. We'll need to use our strategy and the aim is to keep winning."

Norris chasing first win

Verstappen scored his 50th victory in Texas. Another win, which would increase his record for a single season to 16, would draw him level with four-time champion Frenchman Alain Prost. It would also bring his record-equaling 18th podium, a total he set in 2021. After winning four of the last five races in Mexico, Verstappen will be the man to beat, but knows that Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton was close to catching him, before he finished two seconds behind in second place before being disqualified last weekend. Hamilton has won twice in Mexico and finished second in 2021 and 2022.

Lando Norris of McLaren, who was promoted to second, is also capable of mounting a serious threat as he bids to avoid equalling German Nick Heidfeld's record of 13 podium finishes without claiming a win. Yet it may be Perez who



AUSTIN: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen races during the practice session for the 2023 United States Formula One Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. — AFP

emerges as his greatest rival now that, after his promotion to fourth last Sunday and Hamilton's disqualification, he holds a 39-points lead in the fight for second in the standings—with Horner dreaming of Red Bull's maiden one-two finish.

"It's not ideal when you go through a difficult period, but I love the challenge of getting back," said Perez. "The easiest thing would be to just walk out, but that's not me. It's not who I am and I will not give up." — AFP

Kuwait handball team defeat UAE 31-26

KUWAIT: Kuwait men's handball team defeated its UAE counterpart 31-26 in their Asian Men's Handball qualifying matches for 2024 Olympic games. The match took place in Doha Qatar as the Kuwait team placed seventh in the qualifiers that will continue until October 28 with 11 teams participating.

The teams were distributed into two groups the first includes Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, UAE, India and China, while the second group has Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, Japan and Kazakhstan.

The teams in first and second place from each group qualify for the semi finals as the first of the first group will meet the second of the second group, and the first of the second group will meet the second of the first group as the winning teams will meet in the final match on October 28th to qualify for Paris 2024. This the third time Qatar hosts the Asian qualifiers for the Olympics as it hosted the first in 2015 follows Rio in 2016 and 2019 and Tokyo in 2020. — KUNA

De Kock still going his own way with World Cup run-spree

MUMBAI: If the World Cup represents Quinton de Kock's farewell to one-day internationals, then the South Africa opener is bowling out in style. De Kock is currently the tournament's leading batsman with 407 runs, including three hundreds, from just five matches at an average of over 81 heading into South Africa's game against Pakistan in Chennai on Friday.

Scores of 100 and 109 powered the Proteas to wins over both Sri Lanka and Australia, with De Kock's superb 174 on Tuesday the cornerstone of South Africa's 149-run rout of Bangladesh in Mumbai. But having already called time on his Test career last year, the wicketkeeper-batsman announced before the World Cup he would be leaving the ODI stage after the 50-over game's showpiece event in India.

A star of the lucrative Twenty20 franchise circuit, the left-hander may still be available for the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States. Yet now aged 30, a time when many cricketers are approaching their peak, the end of De Kock's international career is in sight.

"I've played a lot of cricket already," said De Kock, a veteran of 54 Tests and almost three times as many ODIs, prior to the World Cup. Even the way he marked his 150th ODI, with a commanding 140-ball innings, including 15 fours and seven sixes, against Bangladesh failed to provoke much obvious excitement in the gifted shotmaker.

"I am a bit more tired than satisfied," said De Kock, off the field for the entire Bangladesh innings after a bout of cramp. But stand-in South Africa captain Aiden Markram had no trouble afterwards paying tribute to both De Kock's talent and his less heralded cricket intelligence. "We all know Quinton to be the free-spirited guy that he is, but he actually has a fantastic cricket brain on him," said Markram, deputising as skipper for the ill Temba Bavuma. "He assesses conditions really well and communicates that to us off the field even before we've walked out to bat. So, it adds a lot of value in that regard."

Fellow batsman Markram added: "You never want to clip his (De Kock's) wings really. You just want to let him fly." De Kock's determination to plough his own furrow was evident early on, with reports of the 15-year-old's debut for provincial side Gauteng against a touring Durham team saying the precocious teenager had faced England fast bowlers Stephen Harmner, Liam Plunkett and Graham Onions without a thigh pad. "I honestly can't remember, but it is probably true," said De Kock. — AFP

Pakistan believe 'miracles can happen' to rescue WCup dream

CHENNAI: Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan insisted Thursday that his under-performing teammates believe "miracles can happen" as the former champions enter a "do-or-die" battle to rescue their faltering World Cup campaign.

After starting brightly with wins over the Netherlands and Sri Lanka, the 1992 champions have been well beaten by India and Australia before being humiliated by neighbours Afghanistan last time out. On Friday, they face another test of their resources against free-scoring South Africa who have four wins in five games and have shrugged off their shock loss to the Netherlands.

"We have under-performed in all three departments—batting, bowling and fielding," said Shadab. "We have not played good cricket but have bounced back from such situations." With four group games to play, Pakistan can still make the semi-finals but there is little margin for error. However, as well as victory on Friday, they also need to improve their -0.40 net run-rate which could prove to be the tie-breaker in the race for semi-final spots. "If you have belief, miracles happen," said Shadab, the deputy to skipper Babar Azam. "We have not played like we were playing before the World Cup but from tomorrow we have to start a winning streak."

He added: "When you are in a do-or-die position then I think the pressure is less because you have nothing to lose." Shadab has been one of many in the Pakistan squad who has yet to fully fire. The 25-year-old leg-spinner has just two wickets at 90.00 and scored 74 runs in three outings.

He was dropped for the match with Australia

Maxwell suffered 'dark thoughts' over WCup after broken leg

NEW DELHI: Australia's Glenn Maxwell revealed he had endured "dark thoughts" over his World Cup dream after breaking his leg in a freak accident. Maxwell blasted his way into the record books on Wednesday when he hit the fastest World Cup century off just 40 balls in his team's 309-run rout of the Netherlands.

However, the 35-year-old admitted that breaking his leg at a friend's birthday party last year and then setting back his recovery when he suffered an ankle injury in South Africa in August had left him in a dark place. "There's probably moments post the South Africa T20 series when I was forced to go home with a little setback. That was quite a frustrating period," Maxwell said.

"You do start to get some dark thoughts of like: 'is this going to affect me for the whole World Cup? Am I going to be struggling to get through every game? Am I going to be letting the team down by having to field in cold zones on the field where I'm not getting much ball'."

He added: "That wouldn't have sat well with me, I think, if that had been the case. The fact that I don't have to be hidden in the field is quite nice." Despite a return Wednesday to the swashbuckling style that saw him dubbed "The Big Show", Maxwell admitted he still feels pain.

He had a metal plate inserted in his left leg after fracturing his fibula last November. "Don't worry, every game still hurts. It's still hard work, but it's nice to get that load, I sup-



CHENNAI: Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq (R) attends a practice session ahead of their 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match against South Africa at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on October 26, 2023. — AFP

lia before being recalled to face Afghanistan. "When you don't do well the criticism is valid but there are ups and downs in a player's performance so I am confident that I will improve," said Shadab who scored 40 in the losing cause against Afghanistan.

Shadab insists the shock eight-wicket defeat to Afghanistan in a game also played at Chennai is now behind them. Victory, he insists, will hopefully quieten the criticism which has grown steadily since the eighth loss

in eight World Cup meetings to India.

"I always tell the players that if you are going to a tournament like this, you have to cut off from the social media," said Shadab. "If you perform then everyone says that 'he is doing so well', but when you are not performing then the same people will say 'he is not good enough'." He added: "It's the mentality that when someone is not in the team, then they are the best and when someone is in the team they are the worst." — AFP



NEW DELHI: Australia's Glenn Maxwell celebrates after scoring a century (100 runs) during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Australia and Netherlands at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

pose, and feel confident I can get through a full one day," he added.

On Wednesday, Maxwell only arrived at the crease in the 40th over, before attacking the Dutch bowlers, bringing up his 50 with a reverse sweep for six. He hammered Bas de Leede for two fours and three sixes to bring up his 100 in a 28-run 49th over. De Leede ended with the World Cup's worst return, 2-115 off his 10 overs.

When the assault was over, Maxwell had made 104 off 44 balls with nine fours and eight sixes.

His astonishing blitz bettered the previous World Cup record of South Africa's Aiden Markram who cracked a century off 49 balls against Sri Lanka just 18 days ago at the same venue.

"I'm very aware of records. I'm very aware of balls faced. I love the fastest 50, fastest 100 records. I think they're pretty cool records," he said. "I've been in those positions before I could make fast hundreds when I get on the run - I know I'm difficult to bowl to. It's just about getting past the first ball." — AFP

Sports

Wembanyama scores 15 in NBA debut but San Antonio Spurs fall

'Tonight really marks the beginning, I hope to keep that dream feeling'

SAN ANTONIO: French prodigy Victor Wembanyama scored 15 points for the San Antonio Spurs in his much-anticipated NBA debut on Wednesday but Luka Dončić's triple-double spoiled his start as Dallas beat the Spurs 126-119. This year's top NBA Draft pick, in foul trouble throughout the second half, made 6-of-9 shots from the floor, 3-of-5 from 3-point range, with five rebounds, two assists, two steals and a blocked shot over 23 minutes in his first NBA contest.

"It was a lot of emotion. It would have been perfect to win," said Wembanyama. "Tonight really marks the beginning. It's still a dream, I hope to keep that dream feeling." Slovenian guard Dončić had 33 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for the Mavericks, who scored the last eight points for the victory.

"It all starts with our defense," Dončić said. "We played good defense for three quarters but especially at the end we locked in." Wembanyama, the 19-year-old phenomenon considered the top NBA prospect since LeBron James, used his 7-foot-4 (2.24m) frame, surprising quickness and outside shooting touch to display his arsenal of skills in the first game of his rookie campaign.

"I was happy. It's representative," Wembanyama said of his performance. "This in itself is not exceptional. But I hope what I do next will make it special." Wembanyama had two fouls in the first quarter, two more early in the third quarter and his fifth only 26 seconds into the fourth quarter.

"Maybe I wanted to do too well, not to put my energy into the right things," he said. "I don't need to put that much energy into defense. I'm learning for a first game. These are simple things." He returned with 7:12 to play and sparked late. Wembanyama

made an alley-oop dunk shot off a pass from Devin Vassell, added a 3-pointer, and his dunk with 4:56 to play gave the Spurs a 113-112 lead.

A Wembanyama jumper tied it at 115-115 with 3:55 remaining, but "Wemby" wasn't a main scoring option late for the Spurs and the Mavs were too tough down the stretch. "I was just focused on being the best I can be when I step back in the court," Wembanyama said. "We're hungry already for the next game."

"Wemby" began drawing huge cheers from a sellout crowd after only 38 seconds, blocking a jump shot by eight-time NBA All-Star guard Kyrie Irving. Wembanyama grabbed his first rebound off the defensive boards after 59 seconds and his first assist came 12 seconds later off a Zach Collins jumper.

Wembanyama opened his NBA scoring account on a 3-pointer with 8:24 remaining in the first quarter for a 13-7 Spurs lead. "Fortunately for us he's a very talented, prioritized young man," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said of Wembanyama. "I don't have to teach him what it is to be a pro."

Tatum leads Boston win

In other NBA openers, Jayson Tatum had 34 points and 11 rebounds while Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis added 30 points to lead Boston's 108-104 triumph at New York. Porzingis had the most points for any player making his Celtics debut. Sacramento's Harrison Barnes scored 33 points to power Sacramento over host Utah 130-114.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander's 31 points led Oklahoma City in a 124-104 win at Chicago. Donovan Mitchell's 3-pointer with 12.1 seconds remaining lifted Cleveland to a 114-113 victory at Brooklyn.



SAN ANTONIO: San Antonio Spurs' French forward-center #01 Victor Wembanyama shoots the ball past Dallas Mavericks' US power forward #03 Grant Williams during the NBA basketball game between the Dallas Mavericks and the San Antonio Spurs at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

Mitchell and Max Strus each scored 27 to lead the Cavaliers.

Detroit missed four shots in the last 64 seconds and host Miami, led by Bam Adebayo's 22 points

and 19 from Jimmy Butler, edged the Pistons 103-102. C.J. McCollum had 24 points and Zion Williamson added 23 to lead New Orleans over host Memphis 111-104. — AFP

Bellingham can cap sublime Madrid start in first Clasico

BARCELONA: Jude Bellingham is loving life at Real Madrid, even before getting the chance to play in the club football's biggest match, the Clasico. The England international will lead Los Blancos into battle at Barcelona's temporary Olympic Stadium home on the Montjuic hill on Saturday, having become Carlo Ancelotti's key player within three months.

Bellingham has begun the season in extraordinary form, with 11 goals in 12 games for the club across all competitions. It is a spectacular start that nobody could have envisaged, even the Madrid coach himself, despite deploying Bellingham in a more attacking number 10 role. His goals are making up for the departure of Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema and the failure to sign Kylian Mbappé from Paris Saint-Germain.

"This is the club I want to be at for the next 10 to 15 years of my life, I am loving it," Bellingham told reporters while on international duty last week. Madrid fans have fallen head over heels in love with Bellingham, but they are notoriously fickle. Nobody has escaped the Santiago Bernabéu's whistles forever, including all-time top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo.

Bellingham's remarkable start could be undermined if the Liga leaders disappoint their supporters in Catalonia at the weekend. The 20-year-old midfielder was on-target again with a decisive strike in the 2-1 win at Braga on Tuesday night which helped Madrid maintain their perfect start in the Champions League.

Bellingham was taken off late in the game with thigh discomfort but Ancelotti said it was nothing to worry about. "He's good," said Ancelotti. "Nothing important, he'll recover, he'll be there on Saturday."

Unlike previous big money imports, Gareth Bale, whom fans grew to dislike despite his success because of a disconnect, and Eden Hazard, whom they rarely saw fit, there has been an instant connection between Bellingham and the club's supporters.



BRAGA, Portugal : Sporting Braga's Turkish defender #05 Serdar Saatci (L) fights for the ball with Real Madrid's English midfielder #5 Jude Bellingham during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 3 Group C football match between SC Braga and Real Madrid CF at the Municipal stadium of Braga. — AFP

Bellingham said his legs were trembling when he first heard Madrid fans serenade him with the chorus of Beatles song 'Hey Jude', but his performances have been steadily impressive. The former Birmingham City and Borussia Dortmund player combines technical skill and grace with a physicality which makes him tough for any defence to quell.

'10 times better'

Bellingham shone for Dortmund as they took the Bundesliga title race to the wire last season and has stepped up several levels since, surrounded by Champions League winning players who accentuate his already-evident quality.

"I'm 10 times better than I was last season ... I'm learning every day," said Bellingham in August. "I'm

like a sponge, taking in everything my teammates tell me. That's why I've started the season so well."

While some players would be overawed by the challenge of representing arguably the biggest club in world football, Bellingham has taken to it like a duck to water. Perhaps it should come as no surprise after his mature performances for England at the Qatar World Cup last year while still a teenager.

Barcelona will have to decide whether they fear Bellingham or Brazilian winger Vinicius Junior more, when deciding how to line up in the Clasico. The Catalans' coach Xavi Hernandez has often deployed centre-back Ronald Araujo on the right of the defence to try and shackle Vinicius, but the Uruguayan might also be his team's best bet to keep Bellingham at bay—something few teams have managed this season. — AFP

Nothing bigger than WCup final against All Blacks, says Kolisi

PRELES: Iconic Springbok captain Siya Kolisi insisted Thursday that rugby does not come any bigger than a World Cup final against old rivals New Zealand. The two sides clash at the Stade de France on Saturday to renew a rivalry unparalleled in the world of rugby union.

"It's huge," said Kolisi, who was also Bok skipper when South Africa beat England to win the Webb Ellis Cup four years ago in Japan. "We've prepared as hard as we can. We know what to expect. I don't think as a player it will ever get any bigger. I think it will be the biggest game of my life."

Kolisi said he had watched the 2007 final in France, when South Africa again beat England, and had been inspired as John Smit lifted the trophy. He said he had watched that game with people who didn't even normally follow rugby.

"It's only because South Africa were playing that they just sit and watch the game," said Kolisi, who was the first black player to wear the captain's armband for the Boks in a Test match. "I never thought I'd be here playing the final in the same place that I was watching John Smit lift the World Cup. "This is the stuff that you dream about. Honestly, I'd be lying if I said this wasn't one of my dreams to play in the World Cup final in France against the All Blacks."

'In the streets'

The last time the Boks faced off against New Zealand in a World Cup final was in 1995, when Nelson Mandela rallied behind the home team once seen as a symbol of apartheid. That victory became a



DOMONT: South Africa's lock Eben Etzebeth (C) passes the ball during a training session in Domont, North of Paris, ahead of the France 2023 Rugby World Cup final match against New Zealand. — AFP

unifying, jubilant moment in a country still torn by deep societal divides and struggling with high poverty and unemployment.

"I didn't get to watch the game. I was four then," said Kolisi. "The significance of the game is huge. It opened a lot of doors for me and many others. "It was a huge game for South Africa in general and that's why it's highly spoken about even to this day."

For coach Jacques Nienaber, that 1995 success was also well remembered. "After the victory we were all in the streets. I was at university then," he said. "I watched the game about a year ago. It's amazing how the game has changed."

"There were over 80 kicks in that game. And they played with a leather ball. There wasn't any lifting

in the line-outs so there were a lot of differences back then. "The ball in play was under 24 minutes. There was literally no rugby, it was set-piece after set-piece. The game is a far better product now than it was back then, but not taking anything away from the game." Kolisi warned against any complacency when taking on New Zealand come Saturday despite having inflicted the heaviest defeat ever, 35-7, on the All Blacks in their final warm-up match in August.

"They're one of the most successful teams in the world," he said of the team that lost the opening game of this tournament to hosts France. "They turned it around quietly and now they are here. We had to find our way too. "I don't think it will ever be bigger than this." — AFP

MLBRangers, D-Backs rise from 100-loss years to World Series

WASHINGTON: Two seasons after losing more than 100 games each, the Texas Rangers and Arizona Diamondbacks will meet in the World Series and one will complete an unlikely championship journey. The 119th edition of Major League Baseball's best-of-seven title showdown opens on Friday in Arlington, Texas, as the D-backs try to rule again after taking the 2001 crown in their only prior trip.

The Rangers lost in 2010 and 2011 in their only prior appearances. The championship chance comes after Arizona went 52-110 in 2021, matching Baltimore for MLB's worst record, while Texas was barely batter at 60-102, the Rangers' most defeats since 1973. "I can't wrap my arms around it," D-backs manager Torey Lovullo said. "And I know the Rangers are in a very similar boat. It just goes to show you perseverance, persistence, hard work, that anything's possible." Even so, things were far from perfect this season.

Arizona was 84-78, the worst record of any MLB playoff team and were only the second World Series team to be outscored in the regular season after Minnesota in 1987. Texas went 90-72 but lost on the last day of the season to drop the American League West division title, settling for a wildcard playoff spot. The Rangers, however, have gone 8-0 on the road in the playoffs. "It's hard to explain some things," Rangers manager Bruce Bochy said. "It's just heart and determination these guys have shown on the road. There's something about the road that brings the team together."

"These guys, they've taken their punches, but they keep getting up." Arizona swept out division winners Milwaukee and the Los Angeles Dodgers then ousted Philadelphia. Only six teams have recovered from 100-loss seasons to reach the World Series within two campaigns, none faster, and only two—the 1914 Boston Braves and 1969 New York Mets—have then won the crown. One club will join that rare list this year. "There were a lot of teams that probably felt like we didn't deserve to be here," D-backs World Series game one starting pitcher Zac Gallen said. "It was almost this quiet (vow), 'All right, we'll show you.'" Texas star slugger Adolis Garcia, who defected from Cuba in 2016, was among the few on the 2021 Texas squad still with the Rangers.

"We've lost more than 200 games throughout that journey," he said. "It's not even about beating (any) particular opponent. It's how proud I feel about the journey we've been on and how we've been able to improve to get to this point."

Garcia has been a clutch hitter for Texas, winning the AL Championship Series Most Valuable Player award. "My teammates trust me," Garcia said. "They deposit their trust in me. They're seeing how I want to perform to help the team win." "This guy is an incredible talent," Bochy said. "What he did is truly amazing. He's just a talented guy."

Dominican second baseman Ketel Marte has served the same role for Arizona and was National League Championship Series MVP. "Ketel, just special player," said D-backs rookie Corbin Carroll. "There were times this year where it was, like, how do you even pitch this guy? He's back in that mode right now. It's special to watch."

Marte is on a 16-game playoff hit streak, the longest by any player to begin his MLB post-season career. He's one game shy of matching the all-time MLB playoff hit streak record shared by Manny Ramirez, Derek Jeter and Hank Bauer.

"The whole idea is to give everything you've got," Marte said through a translator. "Thankfully, things are working out." Bochy, 68, came out of a four-year retirement a year ago to manage Texas after managing San Francisco to titles in 2010, 2012 and 2014. "It's unreal I'm here," Bochy said. "That's special. But it's more about trying to find a way to get a ring for those guys. This team has played with as much heart and determination as any club I've had." — AFP

Mbappe helps PSG move top of CL

Haaland bags brace as Man City extend perfect start



PARIS: AC Milan's French forward #09 Olivier Giroud fights for the ball with Paris Saint-Germain's Slovak defender #37 Milan Skriniar during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and AC Milan at the Parc de Princes in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe helped Paris Saint-Germain move top of Champions League Group F with a 3-0 victory over AC Milan on Wednesday, while Newcastle slumped to a first defeat, 1-0 against Borussia Dortmund.

Erling Haaland was back on the scoresheet as Manchester City won 3-1 away to Young Boys, and fellow British side Celtic drew 2-2 in Glasgow against Atletico Madrid. Goals from Mbappe, Randal Kolo Muani and Kang-in Lee in Paris against Milan sent PSG top of the closely-contested Group F with six points.

The deadlock was broken just after the half-hour mark when Mbappe received the ball from Warren Zaire-Emery, unbalanced Fikayo Tomori and then wrong-footed compatriot Mike Maignan with a smart, low finish.

Ousmane Dembele thought he had doubled the hosts' advantage on 50 minutes only for a VAR check to disallow it for a foul in the build-up. Kolo Muani, the third member of PSG's French front three, then did double the lead three minutes later with a close-range tap-in before Lee struck.

"We are very proud of our performance," Kolo Muani said to Canal Plus. "Winning these games gives everyone confidence." Newcastle came back

to earth with a home defeat by Borussia Dortmund, which saw the Germans move above them into second place on head-to-head.

It was a tight encounter with Dortmund edging it thanks to a first-half goal from Felix Nmecha. Nmecha gave Borussia a deserved lead on the stroke of half-time with a well-controlled finish following excellent defensive and then creative work by Nico Schlotterbeck.

Newcastle nearly claimed a point in the closing stages of the match when Callum Wilson's header struck the crossbar, before a later Anthony Gordon chance was deflected on to the woodwork. Dortmund coach Edin Terzic told TNT: "With the first half we deserved to win and the second half we protected the win."

Haaland breaks duck

Manchester City made it three from three to top Group G, with Manuel Akanji's goal and a Haaland brace seeing off Young Boys in Switzerland. Man City endured a frustrating first period on a plastic pitch in Bern, with Young Boys goalkeeper Anthony Racioppi producing several fine saves.

Immediately after half-time a stunning save from the Swiss 'keeper saw the ball rebound off

the crossbar and fall straight to Akanji. The hosts stunned the Champions League holders on 52 minutes when Meschack Elia broke clear of the defence and lobbed a finish over the advancing Ederson.

However, hopes of an upset were extinguished when Haaland broke his five-game goal drought in the competition with a penalty in the 67th minute. After a Julian Alvarez goal was disallowed, the Norwegian striker produced a fine finish to round off a 3-1 win.

"I am sorry, but this guy will score goals all his life, with the chances he is an incredible threat," said City coach Pep Guardiola of Haaland. In Germany, Leipzig created a five-point buffer for themselves in Group G's second position with a 3-1 win against Red Star Belgrade, thanks to David Raum, a second-half stunner from starlet Xavi Simons and Dani Olmo.

Topsy-turvy in Paradise

The points were shared between Celtic and Atletico in a lively draw, which saw the hosts pick up their first point of the campaign. Celtic took the lead early when Kyogo Furuhashi lifted the ball beyond Jan Oblak in the fourth minute, completing a fine team move.

On 23 minutes, Joe Hart tipped an Antoine Griezmann penalty onto the post only for it to rebound perfectly to the Frenchman who made no mistake second time round. The hosts sprang back immediately when a 27th-minute cross fell at the back stick to Luis Palma, who hammered the ball back across the unsuspected Oblak.

Alvaro Morata got Atletico back into the tie on 53 minutes when he sent a perfectly judged header back across Hart and into the net. Rodrigo De Paul picked up a late second yellow card, but the hosts were unable to turn their numerical advantage into a winner.

Feyenoord moved into top spot in Group E following a 3-1 victory against Lazio in the pool's early kick-off. A Santiago Gimenez brace and first goal for summer signing Ramiz Zerrouki saw the Dutch home despite a late penalty converted by Pedro for Lazio, who dropped into third.

Barcelona saw out a win at home 2-1 against Shakhtar Donetsk thanks to first-half strikes from Ferran Torres and Fermin Lopez, making it three from three for the Group H leaders. Porto came from behind in Belgium to beat Antwerp 4-1, with all their goals coming in the second half courtesy of an Evanilson hat-trick and Stephen Eustaquio. — AFP

S Lanka push dismal England closer to World Cup exit

BENGALURU: Sri Lanka pushed dismal England to the brink of World Cup elimination on Thursday when they handed the defending champions an eight-wicket thrashing. It was a second win in five games for 1996 champions Sri Lanka.

However, England now have four defeats and just one victory and need to win their remaining four matches to maintain their slender hope of sneaking into the semi-finals. Chasing just 157 to win, Sri Lanka reached 160-2 with 146 balls to spare thanks to in-form Pathum Nissanka and Sadeera Samarawickrama.

Nissanka hit an undefeated 77, his fourth successive fifty at the tournament, off 83 balls with seven fours and two sixes, the second of which ended the contest when he launched Adil Rashid over long-on. Samarawickrama was 65 not out from 54 balls with seven fours and a six to follow the 108 he made against Pakistan and 91 in the win over the Netherlands.

"It's incredibly tough, an incredibly disappointing tournament. As captain, you feel that a lot," said England skipper Jos Buttler. "We've been short of our best by a very long way. I'm disappointed for myself and the boys that we've not given a good account of ourselves." He added: "There's no clear answer. If there was one golden nugget that we're not doing then we'd pick that up." Earlier Ben Stokes top-scored for England with 43 but even he was unable to perform one of his trademark rescue missions as Sri Lanka ripped through their rivals in just 33.2 overs.

England, who won the toss and chose to bat, started briskly, reaching 45-0 by the seventh over before veteran all-rounder Angelo Mathews struck. Former skipper Mathews, who was called up to replace the



BENGALURU: Sri Lanka's Sadeera Samarawickrama is hit by the ball during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between England and Sri Lanka at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on October 26, 2023. — AFP

injured Matheesha Pathirana after initially being left out of the 15-man squad, is appearing in his fourth World Cup. The 36-year-old, bowling in an ODI for the first time since March 2020, had Dawid Malan caught behind after the opener had made 28.

Mathews also effected the run-out of Joe Root (three) before also claiming the wicket of the recalled Moeen Ali (15). In between, opener Jonny Bairstow became Kasun Rajitha's first wicket of the match after making 30 off 31 balls. Buttler, on eight runs, and the returning Liam Livingstone, with just one to his name, fell to fast bowler Lahiru Kumara, the man-of-the-match. "I'm very happy with my performance, I've worked really hard for it," said Kumara. "Angelo has a lot of experience. It was really great to have him back."

Chris Woakes's dismal World Cup continued when he fell to Rajitha for nought leaving England on 123-7 in the 26th over. Woakes had been dropped for the 229-run rout at the hands of South Africa but his return was over in just four balls with Sadeera Samarawickrama just clinging onto a low catch at point. — AFP

Swiss probe into FIFA chief Gianni Infantino dropped

GENEVA: Swiss prosecutors announced Thursday they have dropped their three-year criminal proceedings against FIFA president Gianni Infantino over suspected collusion with officials concerning the corruption scandal that engulfed world football's governing body.

Infantino declared a "full and clear victory" in the case and demanded an apology from what he called the "envious and corrupt" people out to tarnish his reputation. A probe was opened in July 2020 to investigate suspicions of collusion between Infantino and Switzerland's then-attorney general Michael Lauber, the country's top prosecutor.

Lauber was in charge of Switzerland's probe into the towering corruption scandal that exploded at the heart of Zurich-based FIFA in 2015. But he was forced to recuse himself from the investigation in June 2019, following media revelations that he had held several undeclared meetings with Infantino during the probe.

Two special prosecutors were assigned to the case, but in a statement Thursday, they said the investigation had closed, with the allegations refuted. "The criminal proceedings... are discontinued," the statement said.

"The suspicion of instrumentalization of the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland by FIFA has not been substantiated in the course of the comprehensive investigation. "On the contrary, the suspicion was refuted."

In a statement, FIFA noted its "extreme satisfaction" with the decision, saying the only surprise was how long it had taken to reach an "obvious conclusion". "The new FIFA is today a clean, well-run and robust organization which operates in accordance with the highest ethical and governance standards," it declared.

For his part, Infantino, 53, said it was a "full and clear victory for me, for the new FIFA and for justice". "It is now clear that the accusations against me were mere attempts by poor, envious and



Gianni Infantino

corrupt people to attack my reputation. If these people have some dignity left, they should at least have the decency and apologize for their actions and the damage caused," he said.

"Indeed and with no surprise, the investigation fully and clearly confirms that I have always acted in a lawful and correct way, always defending exclusively the interests of FIFA and football." — AFP