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'CEASE FIRE NOW'

Crown Prince tackles Zionist brutality, Khor Abdullah ruling, MP-govt cooperation

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah opened the new term of the National Assembly on Tuesday by strongly condemning the brutal Zionist aggression on Gaza and the large-scale massacres of Palestinian civilians. Representing HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince called for an immediate ceasefire and allowing the entry of food and other relief aid to the blockaded 2.2 million Palestinians in Gaza. He also called for a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian cause based on international legitimacy.

HH Sheikh Mishal also criticized a controversial ruling issued by the Iraqi supreme federal court a few weeks ago in which it declared as unconstitutional an agreement between Iraq and Kuwait to regulate navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway. "We affirm that this ruling breaches all international covenants, treaties and agreements," he said. The agreement was signed by the two countries in 2012 and was ratified the following year by the two parliaments. But in the surprising verdict, the Iraqi federal court said the Iraqi parliament's ratification was unconstitutional.

Turning to the local issues, HH Sheikh Mishal criticized both the National Assembly and the government for undesirable practices

and failing to live up to expectations, eventually disappointing the Kuwaiti people. He called on lawmakers to improve their parliamentary practices, avoid minor issues and abandon asking lengthy questions, the answers for which take a long time.

HH the Crown Prince also urged MPs to avoid using grillings as a threat and to stop agitating people for marginal issues. HH Sheikh Mishal criticized the government, saying its performance is still below the expectations and aspirations of the Kuwaiti people, adding that despite total support by the leadership, it remains hesitant in taking decisions and is very slow in implementing them. He urged the two authorities to open a new page in relations based on cooperation, understanding and consultations, while avoiding any practices that could pose dangers to national unity amid regional turmoil.

National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said MPs are optimistic to continue the achievements they started in the first term, adding that MPs have already coordinated to select a number of important priority legislation during the term. Saadoun urged the government of Iraq to take urgent and decisive measures to remedy the consequences of the Iraqi court ruling regarding the Khor Abdullah agreement. The speaker also strongly condemned the barbaric Zionist attacks and ethnic cleansing by the Zionist entity against Palestinians in Gaza.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah called on MPs to continue the cooperation they exhibited in the shortened first term, which resulted in approving four key legislations over a short period.

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KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he arrives to deliver a speech during the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly on Oct 31, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)



National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun (top) and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah (above) address the parliament

Saudi set to host 2034 World Cup after Aussie exit

LAUSANNE: Saudi Arabia is in line to host the 2034 World Cup after FIFA announced on Tuesday that the kingdom was the only bidder for the tournament. The decision will be ratified officially at the end of next year, providing all of the technical criteria are met. Saudi Arabia, which has invested heavily in football as well as Formula One and golf, is set to take over from an unprecedented tri-continental line-up for the 2030 event, which will be shared between Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with three matches in South America.

The bid comes one year after neighboring Qatar hosted the first World Cup in the Middle East, where the Saudi national team scored a stunning group stage victory over eventual winners Argentina. At this point, only "expressions of interest" have been submitted. After the full bids for 2030 and 2034 are handed over, they will be evaluated by FIFA and put to a vote at two separate congress meetings at the end of 2024.

But the absence of any competition leaves little room for suspense. Saudi Arabia was initially interested in bidding for the 2030 World Cup alongside Egypt and Greece but that idea was abandoned in June, leaving the path open for the tri-continental bid. Saudi Arabia announced its intention to bid for the 2034 event

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Zionist strikes kill scores in Gaza camp

GAZA: As the Zionist entity rained bombs on Gaza in its war with Hamas on Tuesday, huge explosions ripped through a crowded Palestinian refugee camp, killing dozens and leaving two giant craters in the densely populated area. Wails filled the dusty air as volunteers clawed through the concrete blocks and twisted metal in a desperate search for survivors and bodies, with AFP video footage showing at least 47 corpses being recovered.

Gaza's health ministry reported an initial toll of more than 50 dead, 150 wounded and dozens buried under the rubble, and condemned what it called "a heinous (Zionist) massacre" at the Jabalia camp. Jabalia is located in the territory's north outside Gaza City, an area where ground battles have raged nearby and the Zionist entity has told Palestinians to flee.

One refugee camp resident, Ragheb Aqal, 41, likened the explosion to "an earthquake" and spoke of his horror at seeing "homes buried under the rubble and body parts and martyrs and wounded in huge numbers". The carnage came amid international warnings about the spiraling bloodshed and mounting humanitarian crisis in Gaza, on a day Zionist troops and Hamas fighters had engaged in "fierce battles" in the north. The Zionist entity reported two

of its soldiers were killed inside Gaza. Warplanes kept up a relentless barrage of strikes on Gaza, where the health ministry said — before the Jabalia blasts — that 8,525 people had died, including over 3,500 children. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed growing calls for a ceasefire with the Hamas group he has vowed to destroy while also seeking to liberate at least 240 captives.

Ahmed Al-Kahlout, a Gazan living near an Orthodox church cultural center destroyed in another strike, voiced the growing desperation inside the war-torn, crowded and besieged coastal territory. "We want to live like any other people in this world, to live quietly," he said. "We don't know what to do. The least they can do is give us a truce, give us three hours, a temporary truce or a ceasefire."

The humanitarian toll has sparked global concern, with aid groups and the United Nations warning time is running out for many of the territory's 2.4 million people denied access to food, water, fuel and medicine. "Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. It's a living hell for everyone else," said children's aid agency UNICEF, urging an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire".

Surgeons are conducting amputations on hospital floors without anesthetic, and children are forced to drink salty water, said Jean-Francois Corty, vice-president of Medecins du Monde, which has 20 staff on the ground.

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GAZA: This image grab taken from video footage shows bodies of Palestinians killed in a strike on a refugee camp in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP

Kuwait calls for supporting rights of Palestinians

NEW YORK: Kuwait on Monday called to support the Palestinian people right to choose, including the right for a comprehensive settlement in accordance with the two-state solution and international resolutions, mainly their rights for an independent state on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem being its capital.

The statement by the Kuwaiti UN delegation was delivered by diplomatic attache Shahad Al-Munifi ahead of the Third Committee of the General Assembly under the topic "Hate Speech".

"It is difficult for us to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while the occupying (Zionist) entity continues to direct systematic hate speech against the Palestinian people, describing them as less human and more savage ... not as people with rights who stand by all international legal laws and norms," Munifi said.

She added we are witnessing a "humanitarian catastrophe primarily as a result of what the brotherly Palestinian people suffer from continuous aggression

by the (Zionist) occupation forces and the deprivation of their human and basic rights", reassuring Kuwait's stance towards the Palestinian cause. She also pointed out the world today is in dire need to expand the culture of peace and forgiveness between religions, stressing the manifestation of Islamophobia ignites the essence of hate and hostility between people.

Munifi also voiced disquiet for the possibility of such actions being repeated. "Lately we have witnessed a noticeable increase of deliberate and public acts of religious hatred, represented by the repeated desecration of the Holy Quran", exercised under the right of freedom of expression.

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Zain Kuwait presents Kuwait Dive Team with fully equipped boat

Boat for running marine protection operations • Zain continues partnership of over 25 years



Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan and Kuwait Dive Team Director Waleed Al-Fadhel with Zain officials and Dive Team members.



Zain's boat is fully equipped to run marine operations.

KUWAIT: In support of socially impactful and dedicated volunteer efforts, and in line with its strategic goals to empower a sustainable environment, Zain has renewed its collaboration with the Kuwait Dive Team by presenting a fully equipped boat to aid the team's marine protection operations in Kuwait. The new boat was delivered at the Yacht Club in Salmiya. In attendance were Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan and Kuwait Dive Team Director Waleed Al-Fadhel.

This is the fourth boat presented by Zain to the Kuwait Dive Team throughout their partnership of

over 25 years that started back in 1997. The boats were used by the team's volunteers to run and maintain hundreds of marine protection missions, resulting in the removal of thousands of tons of harmful waste, and the protection of tens of thousands of sea creatures.

Zain's boat will be used to run key marine operations, like installing and maintaining marine cleats around areas containing coral reefs. Marine cleats offer an eco-friendly solution to safely anchor boats and yachts while also preserving marine life. This step also helps prevent accidentally harming

or destroying coral reefs and other creatures near islands and beaches.

The boat will also be used to remove discarded fishing nets, debris, and other harmful waste to protect sea creatures, shipping lanes, and coasts from pollution. The Kuwait Dive Team also uses the boat to monitor coral reefs by conducting periodic visits to study their growth and publish reports that can be used by science centers.

Other operations conducted using the boat include a program for the preservation and rehabilitation of coastlines, covering all of Kuwait's northern

and southern coastlines with regular cleanups to remove any debris and waste. The team also uses the boat to document Kuwait's marine environment, highlighting the nation's rich biodiversity, and sharing footage and content with researchers, environmentalists, and other interested parties. Zain puts environmental sustainability at the forefront of its priorities. The company's social message seeks to create a culture of sustainability within the community by advocating practices like reducing consumption, recycling, using renewable sources of energy, preserving the marine environment, and more.

In Kuwait, politics defines consumer behavior, not finance

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait's business landscape appears to be more influenced by political dynamics in the region than economic factors. Despite initial concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic and financial difficulties among citizens and residents would negatively impact Kuwait's market, it turned out that spending habits remained relatively stable.

However, the ongoing political situation, particularly attacks by the Zionist entity on Gaza and the West Bank, has had a significant impact. This conflict has led to a shift in the market, with a greater emphasis on supporting local businesses and less demand for international brands. As part of a boycott campaign against international brands with ties to the Zionist occupation, there has been a surge in interest among citizens and expats in supporting local businesses.

This increased interest has provided local businesses with an opportunity to strengthen their position in the market. Consumers are turning to local brands that align with their ethical values, and this reflects a shift in market dynamics driven by political events rather than purely economic considerations.

Rawan Al-Essa, who shares this perspective, emphasized that ethical principles have become more important to consumers than ever. During the COVID-19 pandemic and market turmoil, people continued to inject cash into the market, particu-



larly through online shopping platforms. However, this time, the focus has shifted towards ethical and humanitarian principles.

Ali Al-Shemmari, a fashion retail business owner, noted that demand for his products and accessories increased significantly amid the conflict in Palestine. Customers have become more aware of the origin of items and are showing greater support for local production. They are also calling for a more diverse collection, enabling them to reduce their reliance on international brands.

Dalal Khalaf, a citizen who has shifted her shopping preferences toward local businesses due to the recent political events, is also closely monitoring market changes through her business specializing in market analysis. She believes that if the boycott movement against international brands continues, it could lead to a significant shift in investors' interests towards local businesses. This would not only benefit just causes but also offer global opportunities for local businesses. Dalal cited the example of the Russian-Ukraine war, which showcased the potential impact of political dynamics on business preferences.

NBK sponsoring Tamakan program for KU graduates

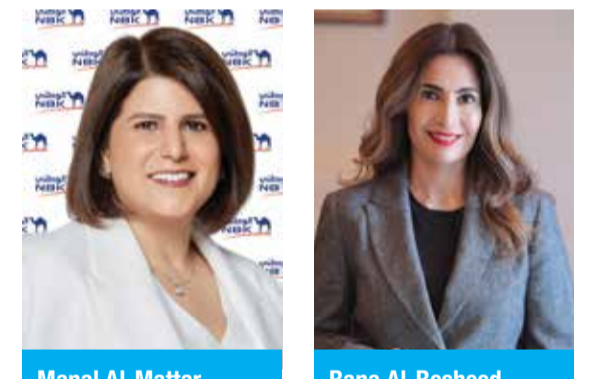
KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors "Tamakan" training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates, as part of the strategic partnership with "Creative Confidence" for the fifth consecutive year. The online registration for "Tamakan" program continues through www.creativeconfidence.co/Tamakan/ until December 3, 2023.

The program is an innovative training experience especially tailored for fresh Kuwaiti university graduates. It aims to support young Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills, expand their capabilities and grow their knowledge in a way that will make them compelling candidates for employment.

NBK will be hosting the program and providing a real business challenge that participants will work on into the final stages of the training sessions. The program will start on December 12 till Feb 2, 2024. Tamakan is a full-time commitment for 10 weeks, 5 days a week, from 8 am-4 pm.

Head of Corporate Communications at NBK, Manal Faisal Al-Mattar, said, "NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with Creative Confidence. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young graduates and empowering Kuwaitis."

"Tamakan" is one of these initiatives that help invest in promising youth talents. NBK is looking forward to the outcome of the program and to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in



Manal Al-Mattar

Rana Al-Resheed

their near future," she added. "NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. Tamakan program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in Kuwaiti youth and support their aspirations," Al-Mattar noted. In her turn, the Founder and Managing Director of Creative Confidence, Rana Al-Resheed expressed her sincere thanks to NBK for their continuous support to Tamakan. "We are proud of this strategic sponsorship that results in supporting and investing in the Kuwaiti youths," Al-Resheed added that graduates will gain real, relevant work experience and develop their skills to help them start their careers. They will get exposed to the latest methods and tools that will help them in designing solutions and shaping ideas in any field.

Tamakan Program offers recent graduates a unique development opportunity before starting their first job. Tamakan is organized by Creative Confidence in collaboration with NBK. Creative Confidence is a Kuwait-based consulting and training company that specializes in creativity, innovation and collaboration.

CAIT, Microsoft hold 'Digital Leader Academy'

KUWAIT: The Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) in Kuwait, in collaboration with Microsoft and its partners PWC, Gartner and BlueVoyant, organized the "Digital Leader Academy" to advance digital sustainability in alignment with the goals of New Kuwait 2035. This initiative comprised of four intensive workshops, each focusing on essential aspects of the digital transformation process and involving 75 government sector leaders and officials.

The workshops, conducted from Sept 26 to Oct 17, aimed to equip government sector leaders with the latest technological advancements and smart digital transformation applications, while also sharing global experiences to expedite Kuwait's government digitalization. The four workshops covered the primary areas of the Digital Leader Academy: Digital transformation, change management, artificial intelligence and information security.

The first workshop, titled "Concept of Digital Transformation in the Government Sector", elucidated the importance and implications of smart digital transformation in government services. It distinguished between digital transformation and digital efficiency, outlined methods for applying digital transformation in government and introduced globally-used technologies in this sector.

The second workshop focused on "Organizational Change Management", empowering government sector leaders to comprehend change program fundamentals, successful ele-



KUWAIT: A group photo of the CAIT, Microsoft and its partners PWC, Gartner and BlueVoyant during the "Digital Leader Academy".

ments, key actors, and strategies for developing sector-specific change programs.

The third workshop delved into "Fundamentals of Cybersecurity", covering information security branches, international standards, risk assessment, intrusion prevention, cybersecurity operations room management, governance, and emerging challenges like cloud computing.

The fourth workshop was dedicated to "Artificial Intelligence", aiming to raise awareness and understanding of this rapidly evolving field. It explained the diverse applications of AI, its role in enhancing government services and data management, and strategies for leveraging it effectively.

Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Fahad Al-Shula commended CAIT's efforts and the Digital Leader Academy's concept. He empha-

sized the significance of cooperation with Microsoft as part of the ministry's strategy to bolster the government sector's technological infrastructure and achieve the vision of New Kuwait 2035.

Dr Ammar Al-Husseini, Acting Director General of CAIT, reiterated the agency's commitment to supporting the nation's digital transformation, highlighting Kuwait's notable achievements in comprehensive digitization.

Alaa El-Din Karim, General Manager of Microsoft in Kuwait, expressed Microsoft's pleasure in collaborating with the Kuwaiti government and its involvement in the workshops. Microsoft aims to leverage its expertise in software to provide secure technology solutions, which are especially critical given the ongoing technological changes and the need for advanced infrastructure to support sustainable development plans worldwide.

CITRA to launch service for name identification

KUWAIT: The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) announced the release of a draft document regarding "caller name identification" on its website. This draft document is being made available for public input and feedback before its official adoption, with the primary objective of reducing fraudulent calls.

This service, as explained by CITRA, allows individuals receiving calls to identify the names of legal entities, such as government agencies, private companies and banks on mobile devices operating on Kuwait's mobile networks. CITRA has undertaken this initiative following extensive studies on the service's significance in mitigating fraudulent calls and providing users with confidence that incoming communications are from trustworthy sources.

CITRA has also taken steps to identify critical sectors that will benefit the most from implementing this service, especially in light of electronic fraud campaigns that target the country.

Chairman of CITRA Omar Al-Omar emphasized that this initiative reflects the authority's commitment to enhancing security and service quality in the telecommunications sector while reducing electronic fraud targeting users. He noted that CITRA has directed telecommunications companies to conduct necessary tests to ensure network readiness and service quality.

The draft document has been published on CITRA's official website to facilitate public participation and gather opinions and views from various sectors. It will be available for review and feedback until Nov 29.

Local

Crown Prince: Kuwaitis ache for Gaza

Sheikh Mishal condemns aggressors, calls for immediate ceasefire



KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah opens the second session of the 17th Legislative term of the National Assembly on Tuesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwaiti members of parliament attend the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly in Kuwait City on Oct 31, 2023.

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said on Tuesday that the Kuwaiti people ached at the sight of the horrific developments in the Gaza Strip, which is under relentless bombardment by the barbaric Zionist occupation forces.

Delivering a speech on behalf of His Highness the Amir at the inauguration of the second session of the 17th Legislative, His Highness Sheikh Mishal said that it was paramount for the world to look into means to implement an immediate ceasefire and increase relief aid to the Gaza Strip. He affirmed that Kuwait supported all measures to find a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian cause in accordance with the international law.

HH the Crown Prince indicated that the government was following up on the deadly incidents in the Gaza Strip, condemning the Zionist entity aggressors for bombarding the Gaza Strip and violating all humanitarian laws and international conventions.

HH the Crown Prince affirmed that Kuwait was keen on boosting its humanitarian role around the globe. HH the Crown Prince added that Kuwait's diplomatic and humanitarian policies would stand firm against all challenges in cooperation with brethren and friends from across the world to achieve global security and peace.

HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Sabah affirmed Kuwait's keenness on respecting international laws and treaties referring to his wonderment on the Iraqi federal court ruling over Khor Abdullah waterway agreement signed in 2012 as unconstitutional. HH Sheikh Mishal stressed that the Iraqi court ruling violated all international laws, treaties and agreements.

HH the Crown Prince called for activating the role of the Kuwaiti people in monitoring and questioning the performances of Kuwait Parliament members. "We emphasize what we have already said in our previous speeches, that it is necessary to follow up and hold your MPs accountable, as it is a huge responsibility in your hands," HH Sheikh Mishal said.

"You, my fellow countrymen, are required to

have a clear, honest and courageous opinion on all issues that MPs may raise, in order to prevent them from claiming wrongful demands as if it was your own, but in fact it is for their personal benefits," he said. HH the Crown Prince mentioned that some parliamentary practices have led to extreme resentment because it did not achieve people's desired aspirations. He stressed on elevating those practices and focusing on important matters that reflect citizens' ambitions. He called on all MPs not to use their parliamentary tools as a mean of pressure to swing the people's opinion and occupy them with unnecessary subjects that may not achieve any kind of justice to them.

HH the Crown Prince sent a cable of congratulation to MP Osama Al-Shaheen on his new post as the Parliament Secretary. In the cable, His Highness wished Al-Shaheen further success in serving his country. HH the Crown Prince sent a cable of congratulations to Dr Falah Al-Hajeri, National Assembly Observer and congratulated him on being voted to the post by acclamation and wished him all success in his endeavors. —KUNA

MP Shaheen elected Assembly secretary, MP Hajeri observer

KUWAIT: The National Assembly unanimously elected MP Osama Al-Shaheen as Secretary and MP Falah Al-Hajeri as Observer. The Assembly also elected the following committees:

• **Committee to Reply to Amiri Speech**
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Jarrah Al-Fouzan
MP Hamad Al-Obaid

• **Interior and Defense Committee**
MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah
MP Khaled Al-Tammar
MP Bader Al-Enezi
MP Majed Al-Mutairi
MP Mohammad Al-Ajmi

• **Financial and Economic Affairs Committee**
MP Bader Al-Shemmari
MP Hamad Al-Mudlej
MP Dawood Maarafi
MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri
MP Shuaib Shaaban
MP Abdullah Fahhad
MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa

• **Petitions and Complaints Committee**
MP Hamdan Al-Azemi
MP Khaled Al-Otaibi
MP Khaled Al-Tammar
MP Mubarak Al-Tasha
MP Mohammad Al-Raqeeb

• **Educational Committee**
MP Jenan Bushchri
MP Hamad Al-Alyan
MP Falah Al-Hajeri
MP Fahad Al-Masoud
MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah

• **Legal and Legislative Committee**
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Jarrah Al-Fouzan
MP Jenan Bushchri
MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi
MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari
MP Khaled Al-Tasha
MP Mohammad Al-Sayer

• **Foreign Relations Committee**
MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf
MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi
MP Marzouq Al-Hubaini
MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari
MP Khaled Al-Otaibi

• **Health Committee**
MP Bader Al-Shemmari
MP Hamad Al-Matar
MP Saad Al-Khanfour
MP Fahad Al-Azemi
MP Hani Shams

• **Human Rights Committee**
MP Mohammad Hayef
MP Adel Al-Damkhi
MP Mubarak Al-Tasha

• **Stateless (Bedoons) Committee**
MP Ahmad Lari
MP Fahad Al-Azemi
MP Hasan Jowhar
MP Hani Shams
MP Bader Al-Enezi

• **Public Utilities Committee**
MP Fares Al-Otaibi
MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf
MP Dawood Maarafi
MP Falah Al-Azemi
MP Ahmad Lari
MP Meteb Al-Rathaan
MP Mohammad Al-Ajmi

• **Public Funds Protection Committee**
MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi
MP Osama Al-Shaheen
MP Muhallal Al-Mudhaf
MP Hamad Al-Alyan
MP Bader Al-Mulla

• **Housing Committee**
MP Fayez Al-Jamhour
MP Hasan Jowhar
MP Hamad Al-Mudlej
MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi
MP Bader Al-Shemmari
MP Mohammad Al-Raqeeb
MP Hamad Al-Obaid

Palestinians facing genocide: Speaker

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun affirmed on Tuesday that the Palestinians were facing a war of genocide carried out by the Zionist occupation forces. Speaking at the opening of the Second Regular Session of the 17th Legislative Term of the National Assembly, Al-Saadoun condemned the horrific acts carried out by the Zionist regime against the innocent people of the Gaza Strip, saying that the Zionist occupiers were committing war crimes against the Palestinian people.

The force displacement, the attacks on hospitals and places of worship, and ethnically cleansing the Palestinians were all barbaric acts carried out by Zionist entity, he added.

Meanwhile, Al-Saadoun touched on the cur-

rent session of the National Assembly, saying that the citizens of Kuwait were eager to seek achievements and developments for the country.

The parliament will work with the government to achieve the development and progress for Kuwait, he affirmed. The Speaker affirmed that parliament must seek all venues to achieve development in the country and meet challenges in line with Kuwait's interest.

He said that despite different views and opinions, national unity based on solemn efforts amongst the people would achieve security and stability for the nation. Safeguarding Kuwait was above all matters, he affirmed, noting that the recent Iraqi Federal Supreme Court ruling over the Khor Abdullah waterway was unlawful. Al-Saadoun called on Iraq to deal with the matter swiftly and respect signed treaties and resolutions, namely UNSC 833 concerning the work of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun addresses the National Assembly session on Tuesday.

PM: Govt seeks sustainable financial stability

KUWAIT: The Kuwait government would be seeking all venues to achieve development for the country as well as finding means for the financial sustainability of the state budget, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday.

Delivering his speech to the inauguration of the Second Session of the 17th Legislative Term, His Highness the Prime Minister affirmed that it was important to redraw the map for economic activities in Kuwait, restructuring the framework of various sectors to diversify resources and achieve sustainable development. He added that the upcoming period must focus on meeting the expectations of Kuwait and its people, building trust in the government abilities to meet the aspirations of people.

Cooperation between government and National Assembly must also be built on trust and respect of

state institutions and the constitution, HH revealed, stressing that the increased participation of the private sector in development plans would meet the goals of Kuwait Vision 2035.

On the subject of the natural resources in the submerged area adjacent to the Kuwaiti-Saudi Divided Zone, including the entire Durra field, he reiterated that the area was jointly owned by the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and both of them have the only right to benefit from its riches. His Highness the Prime Minister also touched on the unlawful Iraqi Federal Supreme Court ruling on the Khor Abdullah waterway, indicating that Kuwait had expressed to the 78th UNGA that Kuwait would not approve of any efforts to fraudulent "historical facts" on the agreement signed between the two sides in 2012.

The Iraqi court ruling did not serve bilateral ties and was against UNSC resolution 833 concerning the work of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission and other matters of concern, he affirmed. HH the Prime Minister sent a cable of congratulations to Dr Falah Al-Hajeri, National Assembly Observer and congratulated him on being voted to the post by acclamation and wished him all success in his endeavors. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah addresses the National Assembly on Tuesday.



Kuwaiti members of parliament attend the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly in Kuwait City on October 31, 2023.



Kuwait diplomat urges UN Council to work towards ceasefire in Gaza

UN-Habitat concludes Urban October activities

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organization Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah called on international community, especially UN Security Council, to assume its responsibilities to stop attacks and crimes against Palestinians, provide international protection for civilians, and secure passageways for medical teams and relief aid to urgently reach those trapped in the Gaza Strip.

This came in the speech of Al-Jarallah, the representative of the minister of foreign affairs, Tuesday, during the closing ceremony of the "Quality of Life in Cities" conference, which is organized by the mission of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Kuwait, on World Cities Day and the conclusion of Urban October activities.

Al-Jarallah pointed out the escalation of military operations committed by Zionist entity occupation forces against Palestinians in Gaza and their targeting of defenseless civilians with military operations and intense airstrikes that resulted in the killing and wounding of thousands of innocent people. He commended what was presented during Urban October, considering it an opportunity to raise awareness about multiple local issues, mobilize the necessary resources to confront global challenges, and exchange experiences on how to address challenges and find solutions to urban development issues.

He said that the humanitarian crises, the challenges they cause, and the negative effects of climate change require international cooperation and solidarity, and an increase in international awareness of urbanization trends and future visions to achieve sustainable urban development, and create free, clean and sustainable cities.

Kuwait realized the importance of urban development and early sensed the necessity of confronting the challenges that would face the city, so

it called for the formation of an entity concerned with confronting these challenges, during which the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) was established, in addition to hosting a regional office for the UN-Habitat, he explained.

Al-Jarallah noted the active role of UN-Habitat in many projects in the field of greening and combating cross-border dust in a regional cooperation that is considered a pioneering example of cross-border cooperation that many countries seek to adopt and emulate. On his side, Secretary General of ATO Abdulrahman Al-Asfour said that what was witnessed at the conference reflects joint commitment to promoting sustainable development and the wellbeing of societies, underlining the importance of joint work and exchanging experiences between Arab cities.

Al-Asfour appreciated the transformations taking place in cities, underscoring that they will contribute to achieving development goals and improving the quality of life of its residents, calling for moving forward with the same effort and dedication in implementing the plans and programs discussed during the conference and strengthening cooperation between cities.

Meanwhile, Member of Kuwait Municipal Council Dr Hasan Kamal told KUNA that their participation in the conference comes to display what they are doing to improve the quality of life in cities and focus on urban areas and Kuwait city in particular. Kuwait Municipal Council is currently working with the Kuwait Municipality on the state's structural plan, which gives the plan for the next 30 years and includes all service projects and takes into account population growth, he explained, pointing out that this will reflect positively on the quality of life in those cities if done correctly.

There are some things that efforts focused on, such as the housing problem, he mentioned, saying

over 600 Arab cities and municipalities.

Asfour pointed out that World Cities Day is a significant occasion that carries great value for humanity. It highlights the importance of cities as cultural, economic and social hubs in human life. The celebration raises awareness of the challenges and opportunities faced by cities worldwide on various issues.

World Cities Day reflects the global commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11, which focuses on "making cities and human settlements open, inclusive, safe and sustainable". This encourages the exchange of experiences and ideas to promote collective learning and the adoption of best practices in city development and management.

Asfour emphasized that cities are hubs of innovation and progress, where diverse human, economic and social resources converge. He highlighted that addressing urban challenges requires international and local cooperation, promoting sustainability and joint action to ensure a better future for upcoming generations in urban environments that signify progress, diversity and prosperity.

He noted that the conference marks a new beginning towards more plans and strategies aimed at achieving sustainable growth for our cities, ultimately delivering the quality of life we aspire to. "Through effective partnerships, we can achieve a significant leap in development programs that enable our cities to keep pace with progress," he reiterated.

Dr Amira Al-Hassan, Head of Mission of UN-Habitat in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf, highlighted the conference's focus on vital topics related to city services, infrastructure and city adaptation to face anticipated challenges due to their geographic locations and the impact of global climate change.

She emphasized that the Habitat program works towards achieving the 11th Sustainable Development Goal and the New Urban Agenda. Kuwait has already adopted the 2030 Agenda

Non-Kuwaitis in private sector draw average monthly wage of KD 305

KUWAIT: The average monthly wage for non-Kuwaiti males is KD 318 (KD 322 at the end of the first half of 2022), and for non-Kuwaiti females about KD 481 (KD 493 at the end of the first half of 2022). The difference in favor of females is about 51.4 percent while the average monthly wage for Kuwaiti males and females in the two sectors is about KD 1,538 (KD 1,504 at the end of the first half of 2022), and for non-Kuwaitis about KD 337 (KD 342 at the end of the first half of 2022).

Official statistics showed that the number of workers in Kuwait at the end of the first half of this year reached about 2.07 million, excluding the number of domestic workers, an increase of 10 percent (188,000 workers), compared to 1.88 million workers at the end of the first quarter 2022.

When adding domestic workers to the family sector, which numbered about 780,000 workers, the total becomes about 2.85 million workers (2.49 million workers at the end of the first half of 2022, and the percentage of domestic workers is about 27.3 percent of the total employment in Kuwait as at the end of the first half of 2023 which is 24.5 percent of the total employment at the end of the first half of 2022.

According to statistics, the average monthly wage for Kuwaiti males in the government sector was about KD 1,929 (KD 1,888 at the end of the first half of 2022), and that rate for Kuwaiti females was about KD 1,350 (KD 1,318 at the end of the half quarter 2022), a difference of 42.9 percent in favor of male wages. The average monthly salary for non-Kuwaiti males in the government sector was about KD 787 (KD 784 at the end of the first half of 2022), and for



Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organization Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah.

that the new cities will improve the quality of life through an integrated system of infrastructure services. There is urban expansion according to the new structural plan, and there are integrated residential, industrial, cities and farms in the north, south and west of the country, including Al-Mutlaa city, all of which will help in development alongside the old cities and the movement of many to them, thus working to reduce crowding and provide job opportunities, he noted.

The reasons are poor healthcare for mothers and children, drugs, violence against children, and diseases, she pointed out, stressing the need for cooperation, political will and funding to work to reduce the causes of death. She underscored the need to make the quality of psychological life a national priority to achieve sustainable results, collect and process comprehensive and detailed data on the quality of psychological life for children and adolescents, and fight the social stigma of psychological disorders. — KUNA



Ambassador Yaqoub Al-Sanad with the Crown Prince Heir Alois von Liechtenstein. — KUNA

Kuwait envoy submits credentials to Liechtenstein Prince

BERN: Ambassador Yaqoub Al-Sanad presented his credentials on Monday as a non-resident assigned ambassador to Liechtenstein to the Crown Prince Heir Alois von Liechtenstein in the capital Vaduz.

Speaking to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Sanad affirmed that during the meeting he stressed Kuwait's keenness to bolster relations with Liechtenstein and to build a global system in which peace prevails and international law and international humanitarian law are respected.

Al-Sanad added that he extended His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings and wishes of good health to His Highness the Prince of Liechtenstein, Hans-Adam II, the royal family and the friendly people of Liechtenstein for continued progress and prosperity.

He also added that the Crown Prince of Liechtenstein has affirmed his nation's alignment with the diplomatic approach of the State of Kuwait in addressing global crises and resolving issues through peaceful means. In line with this commitment, Liechtenstein cast its vote in support of the Arab resolution for a Gaza ceasefire during the United Nations General Assembly session. He also explained that Liechtenstein is keen to achieve a ceasefire, prevent the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and try to find sustainable solutions to this long-standing issue.

In the context of bilateral relations, the Crown Prince highlighted the shared interests and common ground between his country and the State of Kuwait as both nations prioritize stability, international peace and security. He also expressed optimism for enhanced cooperation between the General Authority for Investment, investment entities and the investment fund in his nation. — KUNA

Asfour: Arab cities hold key position in development

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Arab Towns Organization Abdul Rahman Al-Asfour said on Monday that Arab cities and urban centers hold a prominent position in the priorities and development processes. They require transformative efforts to fulfill their development plans and programs.

In his opening speech at the conference on "Quality of Life in Cities", organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf, in celebration of World Cities Day and in partnership with the Kuwait-based Arab Towns Organization, Asfour emphasized that achieving the development process necessitates collective efforts and an openness to others to gain and share experiences, effectively addressing changes.

He stressed that the collaboration has become indispensable for the progress and enhancement of Arab cities, ensuring they keep pace with global developments and advancements. This collaboration is facilitated through seven institutions affiliated with the Arab Towns Organization, serving



Abdul Rahman Al-Asfour



Dr Amira Al-Hassan

and the New Urban Agenda. These efforts aim to address the increasing strain on natural resources and escalating pollution, which pose a serious risk to future generations and the sustainability of urban services and quality of life for families. She expressed hope that the conference would yield comprehensive recommendations, including a roadmap for Arab cities.

Khalid Al-Bakr, CEO of the Quality of Life Program Center in Saudi Arabia, emphasized the significance of the conference in sharing expertise and experiences at various levels in Arab cities. He noted the substantial transformation that Saudi Arabia has undergone under the Kingdom's Vision 2030, initiated by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which has brought about significant changes at the city level.

Bakr underlined the kingdom's commitment to contributing to the implementation of sustainable development plans and goals. He mentioned the "Green Saudi Arabia" initiative, an ambitious national effort aimed at addressing the effects of climate change, improving the quality of life and preserving the environment for future generations. The initiative supports the adoption of a circular carbon economy model and the transition to a green economy, with three primary goals: Reducing carbon emissions, reforestation and safeguarding land and marine areas. — KUNA

non-Kuwaiti females, it reached about KD 698 (KD 698 at the end of the first half of 2022), with a difference in favor of males by about 12.7 percent, meaning that the gender difference is fairer in the case of non-Kuwaitis.

The average monthly wage for Kuwaitis of both sexes in the government sector is about KD 1,583 (KD 1,548 at the end of the first half of 2022), and the same rate for non-Kuwaitis was about KD 742 (KD 741 at the end of the first half of 2022), a difference between the two rates of 113.3 percent in favor of Kuwaitis.

The average monthly wage for Kuwaiti males in the private sector is about KD 1,589 (KD 1,567 at the end of the first half of 2022), which is about 17.6 percent lower than the average wage of males in the government sector. The average monthly wage of Kuwaiti females in the private sector is about KD 1,001 (KD 994 at the end of the first half of 2022), which is about 25.8 percent lower than the rate of their colleagues in the government sector.

The average monthly wage for non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector is about KD 305 (KD 309 at the end of the first half of 2022), which is about 38.8 percent of the level of their non-Kuwaiti colleagues in the government sector, and the average monthly wage for non-Kuwaiti females in the private sector is about KD 425 (KD 435 at the end of the first half of 2022), which is higher than the average wage of non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector by about 39.4 percent, but lower than the rate of their colleagues in the government sector.

In the event of a merger of the public and private sectors, the average monthly wage for Kuwaiti males is about KD 1,862 (KD 1,823 at the end of the first half of 2022), and for Kuwaiti females about KD 1,304 (KD 1,272 in the first half of the first quarter 2022), and the difference in favor of males widens to about 42.8 percent.



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Afghans left with nothing after fleeing Pakistan

King Charles arrives in Kenya as calls for apology grow

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How a hospital tallies Gazan martyrs

Multi-step process documents rising death toll as US dehumanizes Palestinians



RAFAH: A Palestinian medic writes the name Farah abu Shabab on the wrapped body of a child killed in a Zionist strike, at Najjar hospital on Oct 24, 2023. — AFP

KHAN YUNIS: A pathologist checks a body in the morgue of the Gaza Strip's Nasser hospital, takes a photo and notes their name and the place where bombs killed the victim. The doctor is adding another name to a long list of "martyrs" in the ongoing Zionist attack on Gaza. "Between midnight and noon, 17 martyrs, and five others who died of natural causes, came in," Dr Nahed Abu Taaema, director of the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the south of the Palestinian territory, tells AFP.

On his computer, Taaema shows AFP a program in which "martyrs" — the term Palestinians use to designate those killed in the recent escalation of the decades-long Zionist occupation — are listed under one tab, with other dead grouped separately. "The forensic pathologist writes out a full report, seals it and sends it to the office of patient management, which is responsible for entering the information in a database linked to the ministry of health," he adds.

Using the information supplied, employees of the office of patient management fill out a file with the details of each martyr before adding the information to the computer database. "People who die of natural causes are not taken to the morgue to be examined by pathologists, unless the death seems suspect," Dr Taaema says.

On October 26, the Gaza health ministry published the names of some 7,000 Palestinians killed since the Zionist occupation escalated its assault on Gaza on Oct 7. The Palestinian death toll from constant Zionist bombardment of the besieged territory has since risen to more than 8,300, the majority of them civilians. By publishing its list, the ministry intended to prove its credibility, after the veracity of death tolls in Gaza was questioned by US President Joe Biden.

"I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed," Biden had said. "I'm sure innocents have been killed, and it's a price of waging war." US support for the Zionist occupation has been unwavering since Benjamin Netanyahu declared "war" on Gaza after Hamas infiltrated occupied areas on the Gaza-Zionist border, which resulted in the death of 1,400 people.

Nihad Awad, executive director of the largest US Muslim advocacy organization Council on American-Islamic Relations, decried Biden's remark. "We are deeply disturbed and shocked by the dehumanizing comments that President Biden made about the almost 7,000 Palestinians slaughtered by the (Zionist) government over the past two weeks," Awad said. "President Biden should apologize for his comments, condemn the (Zionist) government for deliberately targeting civilians, and demand a ceasefire before more innocent people die."

A day later, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby acknowledged thousands of Palestinian civilians have been killed during the Zionist bombardment of Gaza. But he pushed back against charges that Biden's comments on civilian deaths in Gaza were insensitive and harsh. "Being honest about the fact that there have been civilian casualties, and that there likely will be more, is being honest, because that's what war is: it's brutal, it's ugly, it's messy," he said.

Horror at the cafe
Some victims of air strikes on Gaza are registered as "unknown", and their files are updated later when the bodies are identified by families. For Rizk Abu Rok, a 24-year-old paramedic with the Palestinian Red Crescent, transporting those killed and wounded by Zionist bombardment to the hospital has become a daily routine. But nothing could prepare him for the horror he experienced on Oct 22.

After receiving a report that the Rio Cafe in Khan Yunis had been hit, Abu Rok rushed to the scene in an ambulance, gripped with fear in the knowledge that his father and other relatives had been

sheltering there. "I was convinced that I was about to carry out the bodies of people I love very much," he said.

Arriving at the site of the bombing, he treated a seriously wounded person and gave him first aid before taking him back to the Nasser hospital. "When I arrived, I rushed to the emergency room and found my father there. He had a head wound. I knew immediately that he was dead. "I collapsed and lost my nerve. The nurses brought me outside to calm me down."

When he came back to his senses, Abu Rok went back inside to the emergency room to see if any more of his relatives were there. "I found them all, one after the other: Ajnad, Jamal and Talal Abu Rok, Mohammed Abu Rjeileh and Ahmad Qodeih. They were all killed in the cafe along with another 10 people." The bodies were taken to the morgue to be examined by the pathologist, adding yet more numbers to the Nasser hospital's grim accounting system. — Agencies



WASHINGTON: A protester is removed while others calling for ceasefire raise their painted hands as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken testifies during a Senate committee hearing. (Right) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken testifies during the hearing. — AFP photos

Palestinian Authority should return to control Gaza: Blinken

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday that the Palestinian Authority should retake control of the Gaza Strip from Hamas, with international players potentially filling a role in an interim. "At some point, what would make the most sense would be for an effective and revitalized Palestinian Authority to have governance and ultimately security responsibility for Gaza," Blinken told a Senate hearing.

"Whether you can get there in one step is a big question that we have to look at. And if you can't, then there are other temporary arrangements that may involve a number of other countries in the region," he said. "It may involve international agencies that would help provide for both security and governance."

Blinken said that there cannot be a "reversion of the status quo with Hamas running Gaza." "We also

can't have — and the (Zionist entity) start with this proposition themselves — the (Zionist entity) running or controlling Gaza," Blinken said.

While Blinken backed Zionist goals against Hamas, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long sought to sideline the Palestinian Authority and its president Mahmud Abbas, which exercises limited autonomy in parts of the occupied West Bank. Blinken on a recent trip to the Middle East met twice with Abbas and voiced appreciation for efforts in the West Bank to preserve calm, which has since deteriorated, with at least 122 Palestinians killed by Zionist forces or settlers since Oct 7, according to the Ramallah-based health ministry.

Two members of the Zionist forces have been killed in the West Bank over the same period, one of them by friendly fire, the military said. Blinken again repeated that the United States backed the creation of a Palestinian state, a goal bitterly opposed by members of Netanyahu's hard-right government.

The Zionist entity withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005. It imposed with Egypt a blockade of the territory after Hamas took over in 2007 following the militants' conflict with Fatah, which dominates the Palestinian Authority. — AFP

Attacks on US forces risk conflict with Iran

WASHINGTON: Repeated attacks on American troops in the Middle East risk drawing the United States into a conflict with Iran even as Washington strives to prevent the Zionist attack on Palestine from spiraling into a regional war.

The United States has blamed the spike in rocket and drone attacks — at least 14 in Iraq and nine in Syria since Oct 17 — on Iran-backed forces, and carried out strikes last week in Syria on sites the Pentagon said were linked to Tehran. Washington has massive firepower at its disposal but its military response to the attacks has so far been limited to those strikes — which the Pentagon said did not appear to have caused casualties — in a potential bid to head off a broader conflict.

"We are concerned about all elements of Iran's threat network increasing their attacks in a way that risks miscalculation, or tipping the region into war," a senior US defense official said Monday. "Everybody loses in a regional war, which is why we're working through partners, with allies, working the phone lines, increasing posture to make clear our desire to prevent regional conflict," the official said.

Washington says the attacks on its troops are separate from the escalation of the decades-long Zionist occupation of Palestine that began earlier this month. But Iran said Monday that the attacks on US forces are the result of "wrong American policies" including support for the Zionist entity.

'Seeking to hold back'

There are roughly 2,500 American troops in

Iraq and some 900 in Syria as part of efforts to prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State jihadist group, which once held significant territory in both countries. The damage from the recent attacks on those forces has been limited so far — 21 American personnel suffered minor injuries and a contractor died of a cardiac event while sheltering during a false alarm — but there is significant potential for things to get worse.

"There is substantial risk for US-Iran escalation due to spillover from the Zionist-Hamas war," either at Tehran's direction or because its proxies decide to on their own, said Jeffrey Martini, a senior defense researcher at RAND.

Iran has proxy forces in both Iraq and Syria that have repeatedly targeted American troops in the past — something that had stopped prior to recent events due to Washington reaching "an informal understanding with Iran on reducing regional tensions," Martini said. Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the current situation differs from past spates of attacks because "all of Iran's proxies seem to be getting into the act simultaneously," increasing "the likelihood of something going wrong."

The United States bolstered its forces in the region — including with one carrier strike group that is there and another in transit — as part of its deterrence efforts. "Washington is seeking to hold back while simultaneously making clear that it doesn't need to," Alterman said of its response to the attacks on its troops, noting that deterrence "requires both the capability and willingness to inflict much more damage, while deciding not to do so." "The challenge, from a US perspective, is if you never inflict that damage, your adversary doubts your willingness, but if you do inflict that damage, you can get trapped in an escalatory spiral." — AFP

International

King Charles arrives in Kenya as calls for apology grow

Rights commission asks for 'unequivocal' apology, reparations for colonial abuses



NAIROBI: Human rights activists and former freedom fighters hold banners and chant slogans during a protest against the visit of King Charles to Kenya. — AFP photos

NAIROBI: King Charles III paid a solemn visit Tuesday to the birthplace of independent Kenya, at the start of a trip overshadowed by calls for an apology over Britain's bloody colonial past. Although the four-day state visit by Charles and Queen Camilla has been billed as an opportunity to look to the future and build on the cordial modern-day ties between London and Nairobi, Buckingham Palace has said the king will address historic "wrongs" during decades of colonial rule.

It is the 74-year-old British head of state's first tour of an African and Commonwealth nation since becoming king last year and comes just weeks before Kenya celebrates the 60th anniversary of independence in December. Under rainy skies, Charles and Camilla were given a ceremonial red-carpet welcome by Kenyan President William Ruto, who said on X he was "honoured" to host the royal couple.

Later, Charles and Ruto laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in the Uhuru Gardens memorial park. Uhuru means "freedom" in Swahili and the site is steeped in Kenya's turbulent history. Independence was declared there at midnight on December 12, 1963. The Union flag was lowered and replaced with Kenya's black, red, green and white flag. The gardens were built on the site of a camp where

British colonial authorities detained suspected Mau Mau guerrillas during the suppression of their 1952-1960 uprising. The so-called "Emergency" period was one of the bloodiest insurgencies of the British empire and at least 10,000 people — mainly from the Kikuyu tribe — were killed. Tens of thousands more were rounded up and detained without trial in camps where reports of executions, torture and vicious beatings were common.

'Help the healing process'

Britain has said that while the royal tour will "spotlight the strong and dynamic partnership between the UK and Kenya", it will also "acknowledge the more painful aspects" of Britain's historic relationship with the East African country. Buckingham Palace said Charles will take time to "deepen his understanding of the wrongs suffered" by Kenyans during colonial rule.

On Sunday, the Kenya Human Rights Commission urged him to make an "unequivocal public apology ... for the brutal and inhuman treatment inflicted on Kenyan citizens" and pay reparations for colonial-era abuses. Britain agreed in 2013 to compensate more than 5,000 Kenyans who had suffered abuse during the Mau Mau revolt, in a deal worth nearly 20 million

pounds (\$25 million at today's rates). Gitu left school as a teenager after a disagreement with the principal over his anti-colonial beliefs, later joining the feared Mau Mau rebels as a young man. "We fought to be free because the colonial settlers had grabbed all the fertile land and made it their own," Gitu told AFP during an interview at his home surrounded by pineapple farms outside the town of Thika. "The cruel ... ill-treatment that was meted to the Africans by the colonial administration, I was one to suffer that."

The rolling green hills and lush forests of central Kenya — once dubbed the "white highlands" — were especially prized by colonial settlers, who forced Kikuyu people off the land. But while attention focused on a handful of murdered white settlers, at least 10,000 Kenyans were killed, with some estimates far higher. Tens of thousands were also rounded up and detained without trial in camps where reports of executions, torture and vicious beatings were common. As many as 90,000 Kenyans were killed, and 160,000 jailed in camps, according to the Kenya Human Rights Commission.

The name Mau Mau reportedly came from secret code words for the group, many of whom referred to themselves instead as the Kenya Land and Freedom

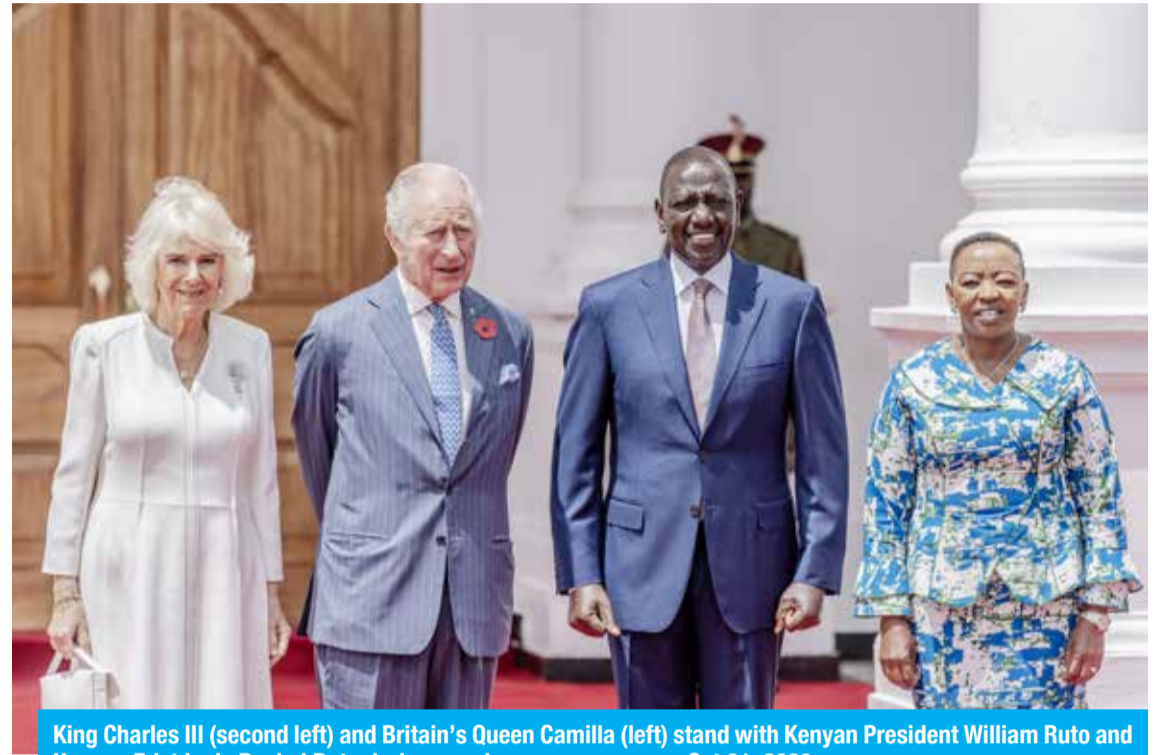
Army (KLEA). While the rise of the Mau Mau is now seen as a key stage in Kenya's path to independence in 1963, it also provoked bitter divisions between those who backed the fighters and those who served in colonial forces. The capture of a top leader, Dedan Kimathi, in October 1956 and his execution by hanging a year later was a significant blow to the movement. Successive governments have tried and failed to locate his remains — believed to have been buried in an unmarked grave at Nairobi's Kamiti Maximum Security Prison.

The insurgency over, Kenya won self-rule in 1963, and became a republic the following year. Kenya's founding president Jomo Kenyatta opposed the violence carried out by the group. The Mau Mau movement remained outlawed until 2003 when then president Mwai Kibaki lifted the ban.

In 2007, a statue of Kimathi was erected in the heart of Nairobi, where he is now feted as an independence hero. In 2013, Britain offered "sincere regrets" and agreed to compensate over 5,000 Kenyans who had suffered abuse during the insurgency, in an out-of-court settlement worth nearly 20 million pounds (almost \$25 million at today's exchange rates). Each claimant received around 2,600 pounds after legal costs were deducted.

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King Charles III (second left) and Britain's Queen Camilla (left) stand with Kenyan President William Ruto and Kenyan First Lady Rachel Ruto during a welcome ceremony on Oct 31, 2023.

Environment, as well as support for creative arts, technology and youth.

Then foreign secretary William Hague said Britain "sincerely regrets" the abuses but stopped short of a full apology. "The negative impacts of colonization are still being felt to date, they are being passed from generation to generation, and it's only fair the king apologizes to begin the healing process," delivery rider Simson Mwangi, 22, told AFP. But 33-year-old chef Maureen Nkatha disagreed. "He doesn't have to apologize, it's time for us to move on and forward," she said.

Family ties

Kenya bears special resonance for the royal family. It is the country where Queen Elizabeth II — then a princess — learned in 1952 of the death of her father, King George VI, marking the start of her historic 70-year reign. Charles has previously made three official visits and this week's tour is being staged 40 years since his mother's state visit in November 1983.

Kenya and Britain are close economic partners with two-way trade at around 1.2 billion pounds (\$1.5 billion) over the year to the end of March 2023. The royal program focuses on efforts to tackle climate change, with Charles long a fervent campaigner for action to protect the en-

vironment, as well as support for creative arts, technology and youth.

During their two-day stay in the capital, the royal couple will attend a state banquet, meet tech entrepreneurs and visit Nairobi's famed national park. They then travel to the Indian Ocean port city of Mombasa, stopping at a marine nature reserve and meeting religious leaders.

Republican voices

But another lingering source of tension is the presence of British troops in Kenya, with soldiers accused of rape and murder, and civilians maimed by munitions. In August, Kenya's parliament launched an inquiry into the activities of the British army, which has a base near Nanyuki, a town 200 kilometers (120 miles) north of Nairobi.

The royal visit also comes as pressure mounts in some Caribbean Commonwealth countries to remove the British monarch as head of state, and republican voices in the UK grow louder. More than a dozen nations out of the Commonwealth grouping of 56 countries still recognize the UK monarch as head of state. But clamor to become a republic is growing, including in Jamaica and Belize, after Barbados made the switch in 2021. — AFP

Mau Mau atrocities loom over King Charles' Kenya visit

NAIROBI: Kenya's Mau Mau guerrillas carried out one of the bloodiest insurgencies against British colonial rule, with thousands of people killed in the brutal crackdown that followed, sparking calls for justice which still resonate in the East African nation. From 1952 to 1960 the fighters threatened colonial communities. The fighters, drawn largely from the Kikuyu ethnic group in central Kenya, took up arms under the slogan "land and freedom" and staged surprise attacks from bases in remote forests.

More than six decades after Mau Mau fighter Gitu Wa Kahengeri was jailed, tortured and denied food in a British-run labor camp in Kenya, he says he is still waiting for justice. Now in his nineties, Gitu has ramped up his push for an apology and compensation from the British government as King Charles III visits the East African country.

'CEASE FIRE NOW'...

Continued from Page 1

Outlining his government's program of action, HH Sheikh Ahmad said the government will continue with its development plan based on redefining the government's role in the national economy to transform it from an unsustainable welfare economy into a productive economy to ensure its sustainability.

These objectives will be achieved by boosting the role of the private sector, improving the business environment and the efficiency of the infrastructure in line with the goals of the 2035 New Kuwait vision, he said. He said the program will focus on raising non-oil ration in public revenues which heavily rely on oil income. Sheikh Ahmad said the new Al-Zour refinery with an output capacity of 615,000 barrels per day

Zionist strikes kill scores in...

Continued from Page 1

At a funeral in southern Gaza, tearful mourners cradled the bodies of relatives wrapped in white shrouds before burying them with their bare hands. "We ask the world to show sympathy for the children to stop these massacres," Yusef Hijazi, the grandfather of one victim, told AFP.

As even the Zionist entity's staunchest allies voiced concern about the humanitarian crisis, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA said there was not nearly enough aid to meet the "unprecedented" needs. "When an eight-year-old tells you that she doesn't want to die, it's hard not to feel helpless," said UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths. Hisham Adwan, Gaza director of the Rafah crossing with Egypt where some aid has been allowed in, said 36 trucks

will be fully operational by the end of the current fiscal year in March. He said that the government provided some 10,000 internal and external scholarships for Kuwaiti students in the current year and has created around 15,700 public sector jobs for Kuwaitis between January and October this year. The prime minister insisted that Kuwait will never accept the Iraqi federal court ruling abolishing the agreement with Kuwait to regulate navigation in Khor Abdullah, adding that the ruling does not serve bilateral relations. He also stressed the Durra gas field is entirely owned equally by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait only. Iran claims the right to a share in the field.

During the opening session, the Assembly unanimously elected MP Osama Al-Shaheen as secretary and MP Falah Al-Hajeri as observer. MPs also agreed to form a committee to investigate allegations made in two grillings filed against former public works minister Amani Bugammaz, who resigned ahead of debating the grillings. The Assembly will hold a special session on Wednesday to debate the Zionist attacks on Gaza. The next regular session is scheduled for Nov 14.

had been waiting there since the previous day. "I feel that it's extremely slow and there's disruption to UNRWAs work, and we don't know why," he said. The Zionist entity said it is inspecting cargo to make sure weapons are not being smuggled in, and monitoring to guarantee Hamas does not seize the supplies. Meanwhile, in a sign that the conflict risked spiraling throughout the region, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis fired drones and missiles towards the Zionist entity and vowed to keep up attacks. The Zionist entity's army also said it had intercepted a missile fired from the Red Sea region. The Zionist entity's military has struck targets in Syria and traded cross-border fire with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, whose caretaker prime minister Najib Mikati told AFP it was his "duty to prevent Lebanon from entering the war".

Anis Abla, head of Lebanon's Civil Defense Centre in Marjayoun, near the Zionist border, said they were completely unprepared for war. "Our equipment is very primitive and there is a shortage of all tools, such as fire suits and extinguisher cylinders," he said. — AFP

Kuwait calls for supporting rights...

Continued from Page 1

In closing, she stated Kuwait believes in the necessity of respecting human beings without any kind of discrimination, as all acts of misleading or false information come at a cost. She also called on the people of Kuwait to take serious action to halt such acts of religious hatred and extremist groups who aim "to terrorize the voice of truth and force it to remain silent".

Meanwhile, two relief aid planes, the eighth in the air bridge efforts for the Gaza Strip, departed Kuwait on Tuesday, heading to Egypt. The aircraft are filled with 50 tons of necessities and supplies. This initiative is in line with the Kuwaiti leadership's directives and reflects the people's solemn support to the Palestinian people. Government and non-government entities as well as charities have

Saudi set to host 2034 World Cup...

Continued from Page 1

on Oct 4, as soon as the procedure had been launched. As a result of the continental rotation, FIFA had only "invited" member countries of the Asian and Oceanian confederations to apply — thus ruling out the traditional footballing heartlands. At one stage, Indonesia had considered a joint bid with Australia,



NAIROBI: Gitu Wa Kahengeri, Secretary General of the Mau Mau War Veterans Association, holds one of the books he has written. — AFP

Two years later, Britain also funded a memorial to all the victims in a rare example of former rulers commemorating a colonial uprising but did not accept legal liability for the abuses. The memorial features a statue of a dreadlocked Mau Mau fighter armed with a homemade rifle being handed food by a woman supporter. The pair turn their heads away from each other, so as not to reveal identities to each other in case they were caught. — AFP



KUWAIT: Humanitarian aid and equipment bound for the Gaza Strip is loaded into a military aircraft on Oct 31, 2023. — KUNA

coordinated their efforts to gather supplies and send much-needed relief aid. On Oct 23, Kuwait began a relief aid mission to help the people of the Gaza Strip, restlessly being bombed by the Zionist occupation forces. — KUNA

or even other countries such as New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, but on Oct 19 it agreed to support Saudi Arabia's bid.

Australia, which successfully hosted the Women's World Cup this year, was also a contender but withdrew its interest on Monday following the Asian Football Confederation's decision to back the Saudi bid. "We have explored the opportunity to bid to host the FIFA World Cup and — having taken all factors into consideration — we have reached the conclusion not to do so for the 2034 competition," Football Australia said in a statement. — AFP

International

Afghans left with nothing after fleeing Pakistan

About 60 percent of those forced to return don't have strong ties in Afghanistan

TORKHAM: Benafsha and her six children huddle together on a ragged blanket between trucks piled high with their household belongings on the Afghan border, after fleeing potential deportation from Pakistan. Her family, like thousands of others, slept outside near the Torkham border crossing and face the prospect of multiple nights in the cold, open air with limited access to food and water, waiting to register with Afghan authorities.



TORKHAM: Afghan refugees rest beside a truck on their arrival from Pakistan at the Afghanistan-Pakistan Torkham border on Oct 30, 2023. — AFP photos

"Afghans have been kicked out of Pakistan and they've come here in winter, it's cold and there are a lot of problems here," the 35-year-old, four months pregnant with her seventh child, told AFP on Monday. Pakistan border officials say more than 100,000 people have crossed into Afghanistan since the beginning of October, when Islamabad announced a Nov 1 deadline for the 1.7 million Afghans it says were living illegally in Pakistan to leave.

Numbers have surged at the Torkham crossing since Friday, Taliban officials and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, leaving authorities and aid groups scrambling to process waves of returnees, many of whom have nowhere to go. More than 20,000 Afghans living in Pakistan rushed to the borders on Tuesday. Millions of Afghans have poured into Pakistan, fleeing decades of successive conflicts, including an estimated 600,000 since the Taliban

government seized power in August 2021 and imposed its harsh interpretation of Islamic law.

The Pakistan government has said from Wednesday it would begin arresting undocumented Afghans who refuse to leave and taking them to new holding centers, from where they will be processed and forcibly returned to Afghanistan. Afghans would be allowed to leave voluntarily until the Nov 1 deadline, after which staggered deportations will begin from Thursday, Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti said in a video statement.

'Emergency situation'

The brightly painted truck Benafsha rented with two other families for 50,000 Pakistani rupees (\$180) each — a steep sum for most Afghans in their situation — and packed to the brim with furniture, appliances and belongings will carry them part of the way to their province of origin, Kunduz. "In Kunduz we don't have land, or a home, or work," said the woman, who was never documented in Pakistan despite living almost all her life in the country. "We don't have anything there."

Taliban authorities have condemned Pakistan's actions, saying Afghans are being punished for tensions between Islamabad and Kabul and calling for people to be given more time to leave. Samiullah Samoon heads up immigration registration at Torkham and said the crossing is facing "an emergency situation." "Neither the Islamic Emirate nor NGOs ... had preparations in place on such a scale. This situation was sudden," he said, citing issues of water and shelter.

The government has established commissions to address the issue, and announced a temporary camp would be set up several kilometers (miles) from the border for about 1,200 families. Staff and technical reinforcements have also been sent to Torkham. "The number of returnees is high, we have only forty people registering them and it takes time, that's why they are kept waiting here."

'Don't know what to do'

By early morning on Monday, a long line snaked out of the registration area and down a road heaving with people, with some providing aid to the migrants and others manning businesses that have sprung up around the ad hoc camp. About 1,000 families were processed on Monday, Samoon said, leaving another

Jing, Zhu and Gui travelled to China's Tian-gong space station in late May and were in orbit for 154 days. They spent the time conducting scientific experiments and carried out a nearly eight-hour spacewalk. A fresh crew replaced them last week after the Shenzhou-17 mission blasted off from the Jiuquan launch site in the country's northwest. Tang Hongbo, Tang Sheng-jie and Jiang Xinlin will perform "space science and application payload tests", according to the country's Manned Space Agency. They will also conduct maintenance work to fix minor damage to the station from space debris.

Beijing has accelerated plans to become a major space power since President Xi Jinping took the reins a decade ago. The world's second-largest economy has invested billions of dollars in its military-run space program to catch up with the United States and Russia. China also aims to send a crewed mission to the Moon by 2030 and eventually build a base on the lunar surface. — AFP

Chinese astronauts return to Earth after 'successful' mission

BEIJING: Three Chinese astronauts safely returned to Earth on Tuesday after five months in orbit at the country's space station, state media reported. Jing Haipeng, Zhu Yangzhu and Gui Haichao touched down at China's Dongfeng landing site at 8:11 am (0011 GMT), according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Footage showed their return capsule parachuting down into the barren Gobi Desert, kicking up a cloud of orange dust as it hit the ground. "On-site medical supervision and insurance personnel confirmed that the astronauts ... are in good health," CCTV said. "The Shenzhou-16 crewed flight mission was a complete success."



INNER MONGOLIA: Payload expert Gui Haichao waves as he leaves the capsule of the Shenzhou-16 spaceship after landing in China's Inner Mongolia on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP

Indonesia arrests 59 militants over election attack plots

JAKARTA: Indonesian counter-terrorism police have arrested dozens of militants from groups linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State over suspected plots targeting next year's presidential election, an official said Tuesday. Police arrested the 59 suspected militants earlier in October and seized weapons, propaganda material and bomb-making chemicals, a spokesman for Indonesia's anti-terrorism unit Densus 88 said.

The forty suspects arrested from IS-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) were planning an attack on the presidential elections due to be held in February, spokesman Aswin Siregar said at a press conference in capital Jakarta on Tuesday. "For them, the election is part of democracy, whereby democra-

cy is immoral. Democracy is something that violates the law for them," he said. "They planned to carry out attacks on security forces who focus on securing the series of election activities."

Another 19 suspects were linked to the Jamaah Islamiyah network, which has ties to Al-Qaeda, Siregar said. "I think this served as a warning for them that Densus 88 would not tolerate the slightest threat to our domestic security, especially in the situation leading up to ... the election," he added.

Jemaah Islamiyah was behind the 2002 Bali bombings that ripped through a nightclub and bar on the Indonesian resort island, killing 202 people including 88 Australians. The attacks were the deadliest in Indonesian history and led to a crackdown on militancy in the Muslim-majority country.

Some Islamist extremists have called for the implementation of sharia law in Indonesia, which officially recognizes five religions in addition to Islam. Members of JAD have staged other attacks, including a series of suicide bombings in May 2018 against several churches and a police headquarters in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-biggest city. — AFP



Afghan refugees arrive in trucks from Pakistan at the border.

400 still waiting, with thousands more people waiting on the Pakistani side of the border as they race to meet the Nov 1 deadline. UN agencies, headed up by the IOM, have set up services for those arriving, but have been strained under the surge in demand. "During the past two weeks we had 2,500 to 3,000 individuals a day but starting from Friday the numbers doubled on a daily basis," said IOM regional coordinator Ziad Salih.

"Our transit center is designed to serve up to 750 per day and now we are dealing with 7,000. It's tiring but we are pushing, we don't stop," Samoon said around 60 percent of the families who have returned do not have strong ties in Afghanistan. A crackdown by Pakistan, however, has spurred people to return anyway, including some who had a legal right to stay.

Taza Gul lived in Pakistan for 40 years but felt

compelled to leave after his sons were arrested. "They detained my sons, I got some released and some are still in jail. I had no more money to get them out," said the 55-year-old. He had entered Afghanistan at the Spin Boldak crossing in southern Kandahar province, where thousands of Afghans also wait for registration with the government.

Gul's family, like many others, rushed to pack what they could, but left work, homes, cars and even family members behind. Mother-of-six Golnaz started to cry as she told AFP that she had left Pakistan with neighbors after her husband was arrested. "My husband is in prison in Pakistan," she said, clutching her youngest child and a worn-out identification document as she went to join the crowd waiting for registration. "I don't know what to do." — AFP

Paris police shoot unarmed woman at train station

PARIS: French police on Tuesday shot and seriously wounded an unarmed woman who was making threats at a train station in Paris during morning rush hour. The incident came with the country on its maximum alert for potential attacks but with the police also under scrutiny over recent fatal shootings of suspects.

Witnesses said the 38-year-old woman, who was completely veiled, shouted "Allahu akbar" ("God is Greatest") and made threats including "you will all die", a police source said, adding that "police fired because they feared for their safety". After passengers on a suburban train travelling from the eastern suburbs to Paris alerted police, agents managed to "isolate" the woman at the Bibliotheque Francois Mitterrand station on the capital's south bank which was evacuated, the source said.

They ordered her to sit on the ground and stop moving, Paris police chief Laurent Nunez told reporters. But instead, he said, she moved towards them and ignored an order to show her hands.

Eight shots fired

Two police officers then fired eight rounds at the woman, inflicting a life-threatening injury to her abdomen, the prosecutor's office said. It had earlier said that one officer had fired only one shot. No explosives or other arms were found on the woman who was taken to hospital, the police source said.

Police have launched two investigations, prosecutors said. One will probe the woman's actions, while another is to elucidate whether the police's firearm use was justified. Government spokesman Olivier Veran said that there had been "at least three" calls from passengers to rail operator SNCF, which in turn alerted police. "Police, evaluating the situation to be dangerous, opened fire," he told reporters.

Nunez said the woman, a French national, had in July 2021 been arrested by a military patrol, deployed to beef up security amid attack fears, when she threatened the soldiers with a screwdriver and "made remarks with a religious content". She was detained briefly, and then committed to psychiatric care, he said.

She was never on a radicalization watchlist, Nunez said, contrary to what two police sources had claimed earlier. France's anti-terror unit is not part of the ongoing investigation of the incident, prosecutors said.

The conduct of French police has been under intense scrutiny after a string of incidents this year where individuals have been fatally shot rather than arrested for refusing to obey an order. The killing on June 27 by a police officer of 17-year-old Nahel M. during a traffic control near Paris sparked over a week of rioting which highlighted France's history of racial discrimination. In 2017, an investigation by France's civil-liberties ombudsman, the Défenseur des Droits, found that "young men perceived to be Black or Arab" were 20 times as likely to be subjected to police identity checks than the rest of the population.

Two years ago, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, among others, launched a class action against the government claiming that it had failed to address the problem of ethnic profiling by police. The problem, it said, is "deeply rooted in the policing." — Agencies



TEKNAF: Rohingya from various camps wait to meet delegates from Myanmar to discuss the possibility of repatriation on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP

Myanmar seeks taking back Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh

TEKNAF, Bangladesh: Myanmar officials arrived in Bangladesh on Tuesday to meet with Rohingya refugees as part of a long-stalled repatriation scheme now backed by China, authorities said.

Bangladesh is home to around one million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a violent 2017 crackdown by the Myanmar military that is now subject to a UN genocide probe. The stateless and persecuted minority live in overcrowded, dangerous and under-resourced relief camps, and several previous attempts to broker their return home have failed due to reluctance from Myanmar and the refugees themselves.

The team of Myanmar officials arrived at Teknaf, a river port just across from their shared border with Bangladesh, to meet with several dozen Rohingya families. "They will discuss repatriation with the Rohingya today and verify their identity," Shamsud Douza, the country's deputy refugee commissioner, told AFP. "The delegates will leave for Myanmar today but will return tomorrow." The push is part of a pilot repatriation scheme brokered in a three-way meeting between the two countries and China in April.

Under the repatriation plan Myanmar plans to accept around 3,000 refugees by December. "They are ready to accept them. But the Rohingya are not ready to go. That's the challenge," a Bangladeshi government official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. Rohingya community leaders have long said they would only return if they were granted citizenship and resettled in their own land. "We are interested to go back to our country if Myanmar takes us back to our place of origin, gives us dignity, and fulfills all our rights," Khin Maung, a prominent Rohingya leader, told AFP. "But if our rights are not given, we have questions," he said.

The Rohingya are widely viewed in Myanmar as interlopers from Bangladesh, despite roots in the South-east Asian country stretching back centuries and are stateless after Myanmar stopped recognizing their citizenship in 2015. Violence is a fact of life in the camps, with rival armed groups battling for control of territory. Malnutrition is also widespread, with the UN food agency saying a funding shortfall this year had forced it to cut rations by a third. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2023

Boursa Kuwait records net profit of KD 12.60m for first 9 months of 2023

Despite global challenges, Boursa Kuwait demonstrated remarkable resilience

KUWAIT: In a meeting of its Board of Directors on Oct 31, 2023, Boursa Kuwait announced a net profit attributable to equity holders of the parent company of KD 12.60 million for the nine-month period ended 30 September, 2023, which represented a decrease of 16.51 percent compared to the corresponding period in 2022. The decline in the net profit is mainly attributed to reduced total operating revenue as a result of lower trading activity.

The performance of the global markets continued to be adversely impacted by the geopolitical tensions and economic turmoil during 2023, with most of the GCC markets following suit despite rising oil prices. Amidst the turbulence, Boursa Kuwait promoted the Kuwaiti capital market to international investors comprising renowned investment companies and financial institutions, enhanced market efficacy and transparency, facilitated access, and raised awareness of best-in-class standards and practices.

"Despite the global economic and geopolitical challenges, Boursa Kuwait has demonstrated remarkable resilience, consistently adapting to market volatility while upholding its strategic goals of enhancing market efficiency and adopting international standards," remarked Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi.

"Boursa Kuwait strengthened Kuwait's position as a regional investment hub, building partnerships with global asset managers, communicating with global investors, and developing a strong, transparent capital market which is essential to the national economy and Kuwait's vision. I thank the Board, Executive Team, and employees for their hard work and commitment, which ensured business continuity and operational robustness amid current challenges," Al-Humaidhi added.

Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) enhanced and facilitated investor access to the Kuwaiti capital market. KCC successfully automated several processes, including omnibus account splits for AGMs and digital AGM requests. It also introduced



Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi



Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi

late confirmations for international investors, omnibus accounts, and foreign investor KYC through a global custodian, which are features exclusive to the Kuwaiti capital market in the region. Additionally, KCC ran stress tests for the CCP system to ensure that financial brokerage firms can meet settlement requirements with the Central Bank of Kuwait and local banks. Boursa Kuwait continues to work on launching ETFs and a bond and sukuk platform simultaneously with the CCP.

Boursa Kuwait CEO Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi stated that the exchange is working with its partners to implement enhancements and regulatory projects, testing participants for readiness for new products and services that will boost the market's attractiveness locally, regionally, and globally. The bourse is committed to attracting local and international retail and institutional investments, adopting best-in-class standards and practices.

Boursa Kuwait collaborates with partners to offer global tools and instruments, attract investors and investments, and improve efficiency and access. The company's 10th Corporate Day, held with the GCC Exchanges Conference, brought "Premier" Market companies and global investment firms together to communicate with investors and highlight Kuwaiti market

opportunities. Additionally, Boursa Kuwait and KCC recently concluded a London roadshow to showcase the market's latest developments to prospective investors from investment advisories, asset management firms, and global financial institutions.

Additionally, the bourse organized an initiative to empower prominent Kuwaiti asset management companies to utilize new products and services from world-renowned investment banks as well as gain expertise and knowledge and explore opportunities to collaborate and contribute to the enhancement of the Kuwaiti capital market.

Financial highlights for the period ended Sept 30, 2023

- Net profit was recorded at KD 12.60 million
- Earnings per share were recorded at 62.75 fils
- Total operating revenue came in at KD 22.50 million
- Operating profit came in at KD 14.79 million
- Total assets were recorded at KD 114.04 million
- Shareholders Equity (attributable to equity holders of the parent company) was recorded at KD 61.03 million

Boursa Kuwait plays a pivotal role in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market and the diversification of the national economy and has remained steadfast in its dedication to establishing a transparent, efficient and advanced exchange platform, which has led to the creation of a liquid capital market. Since Boursa Kuwait took over operations of the national stock exchange, the Kuwaiti capital market has undergone an unprecedented development thanks to the diligent efforts of the capital market participants and apparatus. Their focus on empowering participants and raising standards has resulted in several key initiatives, including the diversification of products and services, establishing an appealing investment platform, expanding the issuer base, and adapting rules and regulations to meet market demands.



The apparatus has also significantly enhanced the market's infrastructure and fostered an attractive investment environment, which resulted in the Kuwaiti capital market's reclassification to an Emerging Market by three prominent global index providers, and solidified Kuwait's position as a leading financial center in the region.



BP rebounds into \$4.9bn net profit in third quarter

LONDON: British oil giant BP said Tuesday it rebounded strongly into net profit in the third quarter after large accounting charges had pushed it into the red a year earlier. Profit after taxation stood at \$4.9 billion (4.6 billion euros) in the three months to September, after a net loss of \$2.2 billion the previous year, BP said in a results statement.

However, underlying replacement cost profit excluding exceptional items more than halved to \$3.3 billion. That compared with \$8.2 billion a year earlier, when it was energized by surging gas and oil prices after key producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

And it also missed market expectations of about \$4.0 billion. "This has been a solid quarter supported by strong underlying operational performance demonstrating our continued focus on delivery," said BP's interim chief executive Murray Auchincloss.

"We remain committed to executing our strategy, expect to grow earnings through this decade, and (are) on track to deliver strong returns for our shareholders." Former finance chief Auchincloss took the reins in September after ex-CEO Bernard Looney resigned unexpectedly over his failure to disclose past relationships with colleagues.

Auchincloss will now act as interim CEO while the group seeks a permanent successor. The energy major however announced a new \$1.5-billion stock buyback, but shares sank in early morning deals. BP's share price fell 4.5 percent to 502.80 pence, topping the fallers board on London's rising stock market.

"The improved quarterly performance was largely driven by higher refining margins and oil and gas production, although on an underlying basis lower oil and gas realizations and weak gas trading blotted the copybook," noted Interactive Investor analyst Richard Hunter. Looney had left BP after less than four years as CEO, having steered the energy major through a tumultuous period that included huge swings in prices owing to the COVID pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He had also come under fierce criticism from environmentalists, who have accused BP and rivals of not going far enough in transitioning away from fossil fuels. — AFP

COP28 wide open to private sector, says climate talks chief

ABU DHABI: Upcoming UN climate talks in Dubai will be open to the private sector on an unprecedented scale, the conference's chief said on Monday, calling it a chance to "reimagine entire economies".

Sultan Al-Jaber, the COP28 president and head of state-owned oil giant ADNOC, was speaking at the start of preliminary discussions in Abu Dhabi where ministers will grapple with key climate issues.

"Inclusivity is a defining principle of COP28. That includes being open to the private sector on a scale we have never seen before," Jaber said in the UAE's capital. Jaber has consistently tried to frame the climate crisis as an economic opportunity. He said about 70 ministers and 100 delegations are attending the two-day talks, more than double the usual number. "Decision-makers in finance will be with us. Key figures in tech will be with us. Leaders across every significant industrial sector of the global economy will be with us," he said. The future of fossil fuels is likely to be the biggest source of contention at the November 30-December 12 COP28 summit, along with providing help for poorer nations to cope with the effects of climate change.



COP28 President Sultan Al-Jaber delivers his remarks during the Africa Climate Summit 2023 at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) in Nairobi on September 5, 2023 in this file photo. — AFP

"I know there are strong views about the idea of including language on fossil fuels and renewables in the negotiated text," Jaber said, without elaborating. "We also need to transform international financial institutions, build carbon markets and incentivize private investment to turn billions into trillions," he added. World leaders meeting in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' commercial hub, for COP28 will also have to respond to a damning progress report on the world's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

The 2015 deal aims to limit global warming to well below two degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era, and preferably a safer 1.5C. "COP28 must deliver a robust global stocktake with a strong mitigation outcome, a comprehensive adaptation agreement, and groundbreaking solutions on finance," Jaber said. He added that "more than 20" oil and gas companies had responded to an appeal from COP28 to end methane emissions by 2030.

"And we are engaging with all high-emitting sectors — like heavy transportation, aluminium, steel and cement — to lay out credible decarbonisation plans," Jaber said. COP28 is taking place as resource-rich Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, are trying to reduce their economies' reliance on fossil fuels. — AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka is set to award a multi-billion dollar oil refinery project to a Chinese state-owned company after a rival bidder pulled out, the energy minister said Tuesday.

China set to build new Sri Lanka refinery

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka is set to award a multi-billion dollar oil refinery project to a Chinese state-owned company after a rival bidder pulled out, the energy minister said Tuesday. Kanchana Wijesekera said the gov-

ernment would shortly enter into an investment agreement with Sinopec to build the refinery next to the Chinese-run port at the southern town of Hambantota.

"There were only two bidders shortlisted and Vitrol pulled out. That leaves only Sinopec and we will finalize an agreement with them in a couple of weeks," Wijesekera told reporters in Colombo.

Sri Lanka had originally awarded the project, which has an estimated cost of \$3.85 billion, to an Indian family-owned company based in Singapore in 2019. After Silver Park International failed to start construction, the government terminated the agreement in August, re-

possessing 1,200 acres (485 hectares) of land allocated for the refinery. The nearby Hambantota deep sea port was controversially leased to a Chinese state-owned firm in 2017 for 99 years after Sri Lanka was unable to service a \$1.4 billion loan taken for the project.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt last year in an unprecedented economic crisis partly blamed on Chinese loans used to build several white-elfant infrastructure projects between 2005 and 2015. China owns 52 percent of Sri Lanka's bilateral debt, and Beijing's approval is crucial for any efforts by Colombo to restructure its outstanding loans. — AFP

Business

Fresh clashes as garment workers protest low wage in Bangladesh

Police fire tear gas and rubber bullets as crowds smash up factories

ASHULIA, Bangladesh: Bangladeshi police clashed on Tuesday with thousands of garment workers demanding fair wages for the clothing they make for major Western brands, a day after similar protests left at least two people dead. Police said tens of thousands of workers at dozens of factories had launched strikes in Ashulia and Gazipur, the country's largest industrial city, with authorities firing tear gas and rubber bullets as crowds smashed up factories and blocked roads.

Gazipur alone is home to more than a thousand plants that make clothing for brands such as H&M and Gap. "Workers hit the streets as their salaries can no longer cover rising food expenses," said Al Kamran, a senior garment union leader in Ashulia.

Bangladesh is one of the world's largest garment exporters, with the industry accounting for 85 percent of the South Asian country's \$55 billion in annual exports. But conditions are dire for many of its four million apparel workers. "Some 15,000 of the workers joined protests for a wage hike at separate places in Ashulia," Mahmud Naser, deputy police chief of the Ashulia industrial area, told AFP.

Union leader Kamran disputed those figures, reporting some 50,000 workers had downed tools in Ashulia alone, with soaring prices a key driver. The cost of some basic foodstuffs, like potatoes and onions, had more than doubled since last year, Kamran said. "House rents have also spiked. The only thing that has not increased is salaries," Taslima Akter, the head of the Garment Sramik Samhati union, has said

the compensation manufacturers are offering is "less than what a worker got in 2017" once inflation and currency depreciation were taken into account.

Police said protesters had set fire to tyres, broken windows at factories and blocked a key highway connecting the industrial area with the capital Dhaka. Officers responded by firing "rubber bullets and tear gas", said Naser, the deputy chief in Ashulia, adding there were no reports of injuries.

The protests erupted early last week, but violence escalated on Monday when tens of thousands left their shifts and staged protests in Gazipur, where a six-storey factory was torched by workers, leading to the death of one laborer. Another worker was killed during clashes between police and protesters.

Bangladesh is home to around 3,500 garment factories making clothing for some of the world's largest retailers and brands, but the basic monthly wage for workers is just 8,300 taka (\$75).

Unions said the workers vented their anger on the streets after the powerful manufacturers' association offered a 25 percent raise, ignoring demands for a new monthly minimum basic wage of 23,000 taka—nearly a threefold increase. The South Asian country of nearly 170 million has overtaken its neighbour India in per capita income, with the garment industry at the centre of its impressive growth over the past two decades. But wage protests pose a major challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has ruled the country with an iron fist since 2009. A resurgent opposition has challenged her rule as she readies for



SHAFIPUR, Bangladesh: A cargo truck burns on the street after it was torched by garment workers in Shafipur on October 31, 2023, during a protest held to demand fair wages for the clothing they make for major Western brands. — AFP

elections due before January.

Her government set up a panel this year to set a new minimum wage. Unions say that garment factory

owners—who include ministers and influential lawmakers—have played a role in fixing the minimum wage during past negotiations. — AFP

Eurozone economy shrinks in Q3, inflation falls

BRUSSELS: Economic growth in the eurozone contracted in the third quarter, data showed Tuesday, hit by the European Central Bank's painful rate-hiking campaign and Germany's weakening economy, but inflation slowed in October.

The EU's official data agency said the 20-country single currency zone's economy shrank by 0.1 percent over the July-September period, after recording only 0.2 percent growth in the second quarter.

The figures reflect the difficulties facing the eurozone including the cost-of-living crisis and concerns over the flagging demand in the global economy. Although the eurozone has weathered the shocks from the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, fears are growing over the economic effects of the Hamas-Zionist war.

The data published by Eurostat on Tuesday showed, however, the whole 27-country European Union economy—including members who do not use the euro—fared better, growing by 0.1 percent in the quarter. Germany's economy shrank by 0.1 percent in the third quarter, while Austria also recorded a contraction of 0.6 percent.

France, the EU's second biggest economic powerhouse, only grew by 0.1 percent, and Italy's economy stagnated in the third quarter, the data showed. Germany has been hit hard by elevated energy costs, a sluggish manufacturing sector and high interest rates designed to tame inflation.

Consumer price inflation in the eurozone has slowed to 2.9 percent, Eurostat data for October showed Tuesday, the lowest rate since July 2021 when it reached 2.2 percent. The figure is down from 4.3 percent in September and lower than predicted by analysts who had expected inflation to remain above three percent. The inflation rate is also now



closer to the ECB's two percent target. Despite higher borrowing costs, the ECB remains steadfast behind its mission to tame red-hot inflation.

But signs of weakness in the economy as well as ebbing price pressures prompted the ECB to leave interest rates unchanged earlier this month after raising them in each of their previous 10 meetings.

"Continued deflation in energy prices and easing food price inflation were the main drivers," Tomas Dvorak, senior economist at Oxford Economics said, adding that he expected inflation to "dip below target" in 2024. "We think the ECB will start with rate cuts already" as early as in April, he added.

Eurozone inflation is down from its peak of 10.6 percent in October last year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine which sent energy prices spiraling. Core inflation, which strips out volatile energy, food, alcohol and tobacco prices, also slowed to 4.2 percent in October from 4.5 percent in September, Eurostat said. Core inflation is the key signal for the ECB.

Belgium and the Netherlands was the only countries where consumer prices fell, by 1.7 percent and 1.0 percent respectively in October, according to Eurostat figures. Energy prices in the eurozone fell much further in October, sinking by 11.1 percent on the back of a drop of 4.6 percent the previous month. The rise in food and drink prices also slowed down, reaching 7.5 percent in October compared with 8.8 percent in September, according to Eurostat. — AFP

Gulf Bank cautions about fraudulent donation requests

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibilities and its keenness to protect and educate customers and the community, Gulf Bank continues to educate customers, and any entities that deal with banks, about the risks posed by cybercrime on their information and bank accounts. For the third consecutive year, Gulf Bank is playing a major role in supporting the Diraya "Let's Be Aware" awareness campaign: initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait in cooperation with the Kuwait Banking Association.

Echoing the campaign's message, Gulf Bank's Corporate Communications Officer, AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar, has been reminding customers and employees to cautiously handle any emails, text messages and phone calls that they receive from unknown parties, as they might be scammers impersonating another bank employee. Al-Nassar stressed on the importance of preserving their account information and data, and to completely avoid dealing with these messages and calls: to deter any cyber theft from occurring by unknown parties. He noted that banks will never ask customers for their personal information via email, text messages or phone calls; hence, this would be a clear indication of attempted theft aimed at obtaining banking information in order to steal money or personal data. Al-Nassar added that it sometimes takes just one click, on a foreign link, to expose someone's confidential banking information to theft. Al-Nassar further mentioned that it is also important to consider the increase of fraudulent activity through fake donation pages – following any disasters – as scammers may take advantage of the opportunity to mislead people and steal their money by asking them to support the needy and those affected by the disasters.

Al-Nassar advised all bank employees with the

following:

- To avoid saving confidential information such as debit card, credit card or PIN numbers on the mobile phone.
- To avoid writing the PIN on the credit card, and to avoid sharing the one-time passport (OTP) number with anyone.
- To ensure logging out of the Bank's mobile application or website immediately upon completion of transactions.
- To ensure that the antivirus software and associated files are updated.
- To type the URL into the browser instead of directly clicking or opening links in emails.
- To be careful when opening attachments and links within emails.
- To download software from known and legitimate sources only.
- To keep all systems such as security systems, applications, and operating systems updated with the latest security updates.

Al-Nassar mentioned that customer awareness is vital in preserving banking data, especially with the significant increase and usage of electronic services lately. He advises customers to always deal with the verified, original websites and licensed institutions when donating funds. The Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association, has launched the Diraya "Let's Be Aware" campaign in 2021, to acquaint bank customers with the most important banking services provided to them. This is to ensure the safety of transactions and to enhance financial inclusion, as well as monetary and economic stability – through comprehensive awareness of customers' rights and obligations. The Diraya campaign also aims to introduce the advantages of electronic financial transactions and ways to avoid the risks arising from them to achieve cybersecurity.



AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar

Climate 'loss and damage' dominates talks ahead of COP28

ABU DHABI: Setting up a "loss and damage" fund for poorer nations hit by climate change dominated preliminary talks on Tuesday one month before COP28 in Dubai, where delegates look set to tussle over the future of fossil fuels.

Around 70 ministers have gathered since Monday at the Emirates Palace, a luxurious resort in the United Arab Emirates capital Abu Dhabi, to hammer out details before next month's UN climate summit, the most important since the landmark Paris agreement in 2015.

"The main focus for the moment is clearly the loss and damage fund," said French Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher. The agreement to set up a dedicated fund to help vulnerable countries cope with climate "loss and damage" was a flagship achievement of last year's COP27 talks in Egypt.

But countries left the details to be worked out later. A series of talks this year have tried to tease out consensus on fundamentals like the structure, beneficiaries and contributors—a key issue for richer nations who want China to pay into the fund. The last round of negotiations in mid-October ended in failure, with a next round scheduled from November 3-5 in Abu Dhabi.

"We were one or two days away from an agreement" during the last round, a European negotiator said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the issue. But several disagreements, including on beneficiaries, delayed a breakthrough. "The United States does not want to put in a penny if China is a potential beneficiary," the negotiator said.

Developing nations are demanding negotiators nail down the fund's operation, governance, location, contributors and beneficiaries, and a timeline for



RETY: A picture taken in Retz, northern France, on January 16, 2023 shows the plant of Chaux and Dolomies, a French company specialized in lime production for industry. — AFP

payouts, at the November 30-December 12 COP28 summit. But many are skeptical of the willingness of rich countries to establish the fund, even temporarily, through the World Bank, which is "not fit for purpose for broader development issues," said Michai Robertson of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia does "not want any wording that would expand the list of donors beyond the developed countries", said the European negotiator. Even if these hurdles are settled by COP28, it remains to be seen how much money rich countries are willing to front. In 2009, they pledged to supply \$100 billion of climate finance every year to developing nations, but failed to meet the 2020 deadline. There are hopes the goal will be met this year.

The loss and damage fund is based on voluntary contributions and is not an "obligation", Pannier-Runacher told AFP after chairing a Tuesday session on

the fund. The French minister said an agreement must be quickly reached to avoid turning the fund into a "pretext" to delay discussions on phasing out of fossil fuels. COP28 will draw up the first official assessment of humanity's efforts to respect the 2015 agreement and its ambition to limit global warming "if possible to 1.5 degrees C" since the pre-industrial era.

For the first time, the world is flirting with the limit this year. The global climate, over several years, is considered to have already warmed by about 1.2C, accompanied by a procession of natural disasters. In recent months, the debate on the end of fossil fuels, an essential engine of global warming, has become more important than ever in the UN negotiations. In about 30 years of COP meetings, the only progress on hydrocarbons was a coal-reduction target at COP26, and there have been no decisions on oil and gas. — AFP

EU ministers back 'innovation-friendly' approach to AI

ROME: The EU's planned law regulating artificial intelligence must be based on an "innovation-friendly" approach, ministers from Germany, France and Italy said Monday, while urging more investment in the new technology.

After meeting in Rome, the economic affairs ministers from the European Union's three largest economies welcomed what would be the world's first law covering AI, expected to be agreed by the end of the year. But in a joint statement, they said it was "paramount to ensure that legislation in the EU is designed without unnecessary bureaucracy and that existing red tape is being cut".

They "reiterated their commitment for an innovation-friendly and risk-based approach, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens on companies that would hinder Europe's ability to innovate". The law would regulate AI according to the level of risk: the higher the risk to individuals' rights or health, for example, the greater the systems' obligations.

The ministers said the EU should place AI at the "core of its industrial policy", saying the technology "will have important ramifications for our industrial strength, productivity and competitiveness". During a joint press conference, however, French Finance and Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire lamented insufficient European investment.

"Europe currently invests ten times less than the United States," Le Maire said, saying the US invested 50 billion euros (\$53 billion) in AI last year, compared to the EU's five billion and China's 10 billion euros. The three ministers called for the simplification of procedures for multi-country projects, to help European start-ups. They also said they supported "a strong European venture capital ecosystem, to enable innovative firms to receive the much needed financing to further step up their growth". — AFP

Business

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's domestic credit flat in Q3

Business credit falls, but household growth picks up

KUWAIT: Kuwait's domestic credit was flat in Q3, keeping the YTD increase at a muted 0.8 percent (+1.7 percent y/y). The weakness in Q3 was mainly driven by business credit while household credit showed initial signs of a turnaround. Looking ahead, business credit growth has historically been the weakest in the fourth quarter of the year. Nevertheless, overall credit growth should improve next year on the back of a very weak 2023, sharp improvement in project awards that is already being witnessed this year, ongoing job gains among Kuwaitis, and as the shock from higher interest rates is somehow absorbed.

Business credit decreased by 1 percent q/q translating into YTD growth of

only 0.6 percent. This follows a strong 6.8 percent growth in 2022, the fastest annual expansion since 2013. Sector-wise, wide differences continued to be the case with "construction" and "trade" maintaining their solid expansion while all other main sectors were in the red. From a YTD perspective, "construction" and "trade" are up by 10 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively, while "other services", "oil/gas", and "industry" are in negative territory.

Real estate, the heavyweight sector with a 41 percent share, is broadly flat YTD. Looking ahead, growth should improve with the weak 2023 naturally opening room for a better performance in 2024, especially with the ongoing improvement

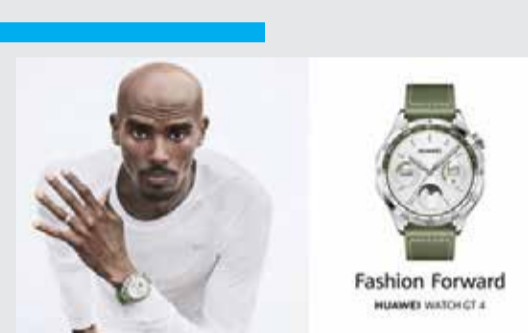
in project awards, which are up by more than 300 percent y/y in the first nine months of 2023 although from a low base last year. On the other hand, the growth in household credit improved to 0.9 percent q/q after being nil for two consecutive quarters, resulting in a 1 percent YTD increase, a major slowdown compared with the 9 percent recorded in 2022. For 2024, household credit growth should improve given ongoing job gains among citizens (+1.5 percent YTD in IH2023), salary increments, and as the pressure on debt burden ratios from higher interest rates is somehow absorbed. On a y/y basis, total credit is up by 1.7 percent through September (household +2.5 percent, business +0.4 percent).

Deposit growth weakened sharply, dragged down by private-sector and public-institution deposits. Resident deposits decreased for four consecutive months and are down by 1 percent in Q3, pulling down the YTD increase to a lackluster 0.9 percent (+1 percent y/y). This was driven by private-sector and public-institution deposits, which fell in Q3 while government deposits continued to creep higher. YTD, private-sector deposits are up by 1.4 percent, government deposits soared by 25 percent while public institutions' deposits fell by 14 percent. Within private-sector KD deposits, and for the sixth consecutive quarter, growth in time deposits (+2.3 percent q/q) outpaced that of CASA

(-5.5 percent). In fact, since March 2022, when interest rate-lift-off commenced, time deposits are up by 31 percent while CASA is down by 16 percent.

Market expects hiking cycle is done while the dot-plot calls for a final 25 bps hike; both expect cuts in 2024.

Finally, the Central Bank of Kuwait has hiked the discount rate by a cumulative 2.75 percent since March 2022, compared with a cumulative 5.25 percent increase by the Fed. While the Fed's most recent dot-plot (September) indicates one final 25 bps hike before year-end, current futures market pricing indicates that the hiking cycle is done. Both the dot-plot and market-implied pricing point to rate cuts in 2024.



Huawei is changing the game with the Huawei Watch GT 4

KUWAIT: If you're tired of blocky, dull-looking smartwatches, you'd definitely want to hear this news — Huawei has announced the new Huawei Watch GT 4 carrying the Fashion Forward mantra. This new vision for their wearable products takes the new smartwatch lineup in a style-focused direction. Most fashion or tech brands lean either towards the "Fashion" aspect or the "Technology" aspect, but they rarely offer consumers an equal balance of both. Fortunately, Huawei's new Fashion Forward manifesto signals that the brand is now addressing this gap in the market, weaving fashion and design into its wearable products. With the latest Huawei Watch GT 4, here's how the brand is planning to turn its technologies into wearable art.

Fusing trendy design

Perhaps the biggest decision dividing the wearables market now is about choosing between a smartwatch and an analogue timepiece. While these two categories have remained separate for some time, the future seems to favor smartwatches. And Huawei addresses this dilemma by blending haute couture-inspired aesthetic design with cutting-edge technology.

This is evident in the Huawei Watch GT 4. The 46mm edition of the watch in Octagon is reminiscent of classic octagonal designs adopted by iconic luxury watches. On the other hand, the 41mm's Pendant design is fashioned to resemble jewellery, giving you the confidence to take it out to formal galas or even to a casual night out with your friends.

A product of decade-long research in fashion

The road taken towards Huawei's new Fashion Forward strategy didn't happen overnight. In fact, it began almost a decade ago. In 2015, Huawei launched the first Aesthetics Research Centre in Paris, with subsequent centers opening in major fashion capitals, Milan and London. These initiatives were set up as part of Huawei's endeavor to understand the style-conscious consumer's evolving interests and concerns. These have certainly borne fruit, with Huawei having launched ground-breaking designs in their watches throughout the years. And now the Huawei Watch GT 4 offers users the fruition of years long research in material design, introducing leather and Fluoroelastomer watch straps that are durable and versatile enough for a range of activities and occasions.

Balancing fashion and function

Fashion is nothing without substance. Huawei's quest for fashion does not sideline the focus on its health and fitness features. To achieve its vision, Huawei has declared partnerships with over 100 professional institutions worldwide to carry out more than 200 collaborations.

For instance, the Huawei Watch GT 4 introduces new features like the upgraded Huawei TruSeen5.5+, which improves heart monitoring reading stability by 30 percent thanks to better intelligent algorithms. With round-the-clock readings, the improved heart monitoring feature also enhances other health and fitness features, such as its StayFit caloric management app, and sleep management, providing users with a more holistic assessment of the user's overall health.

Fashion forward future

Although Huawei's Fashion Forward announcement is recent news for us, the brand's evolution in fashion has already been widely recognized in the past few years. Huawei received the EISA award for four consecutive years for its wearables, with the most recent being awarded to the Huawei Watch Ultimate, which was named the EISA Premium Smartwatch of 2023. This year, Huawei's smart wearable products also won the 2023 iF Design Award. We can definitely look forward to a more exciting smartwatch market in the near future.

Brazil's booming agro sector draws cash, controversy

RIO DE JANEIRO: With its massive output of soybeans, beef, cotton and now corn, Brazil has become one of the world's top agricultural powers. But its agribusiness industry also faces criticism, especially over destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Here is an overview of the South American ag giant, which, more than a decade after passing the United States as the world's biggest soy and beef exporter, is set to overtake US corn exports this year and is now eyeing the cotton crown.

Brazil's agriculture ministry triumphantly announced recently the sector's output will hit a record 1.15 trillion reais (\$230 billion) this year. The country — the world's fifth-largest by surface area — is the top producer and exporter of sugar, coffee and soy.

It is also the world's top supplier of chicken and beef, and second in cotton, after the United States. Agribusiness accounts for nearly one-fourth of Brazil's economy, and half its exports in the first half of the year.

Brazil's emergence as an agricultural giant goes back to Portuguese colonial times. Fortunes were made here on a succession of commodities: sugarcane, then cotton, rubber and finally coffee, which reigned supreme for more than a century. But the turning point came in the 1960s and 70s, when Brazil's then military regime ushered in the so-called "green revolution" and encouraged the expansion of agriculture to the Amazon and Cerrado savanna.

Fueled by Chinese demand, Brazil would go on to become the dominant producer of soy, a widely used ingredient in animal feed worldwide. "Research on genetic improvements, techniques to correct soil acidity and fertilizers" — plus pesticide development — have allowed Brazil to expand soy, corn and cotton production into tropical regions, state agricultural research company Embrapa told AFP.

Brazil is able to harvest two and sometimes three crops a year, thanks to its climate and the development of zero till planting and genetically modified (GMO) crops — which today account for 80 to 90 percent of the country's soy, corn and

Sri Lanka raises taxes again to unblock IMF aid

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Tuesday announced a goods and services tax rise after the International Monetary Fund held back a bailout loan tranche because of its failure to meet revenue targets. The island nation defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt last year during an unpre-

China factory activity falls back into decline

BEIJING: China's factory activity fell back into contraction in October, official data showed Tuesday, despite Beijing announcing a raft of policies aimed at shoring up the creaking economy. The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index — a key measure of factory output — stood at 49.5 in October, below the 50-point mark separating expansion from contraction, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

The reading came after the index edged up to 50.2 in September, having shrunk for five consecutive months. "In October... the prosperity of the manufacturing sector somewhat returned to decline," the NBS said. The world's number two economy has charted an uncertain recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as weak consumption and a slow-motion housing crisis weigh on growth.

Beijing said last week it would issue one trillion yuan (\$137 billion) of sovereign bonds to boost infrastructure spending, having announced a series of targeted measures over recent months to kick-start economic activity. "The weak PMI reinforces the case for stronger fiscal policy support," said Zhiwei Zhang, president and chief economist of Pinpoint Asset Management.

"With the new bond issuance announced recently, the fiscal policy stance has turned more proactive," he said. However, "the policies in the property sector need to be fine-tuned to

avoid further damage", he added.

China's economy grew at a faster-than-expected 4.9 percent in the third quarter. But Beijing still faces an uphill battle to achieve its stated annual target of around five percent. A string of defaults has encapsulated chronic issues in its debt-laden real-estate sector, which is responsi-

ble for about a quarter of gross domestic product. State media portrayed the bond issuance as part of a push for "post-disaster recovery and reconstruction", following a year of extreme weather events. The notes will be issued in the fourth quarter of this year, according to state news agency Xinhua. — AFP



DOMINGOS MARTINS, Brazil: A worker sifts coffee beans at the Camocim coffee plantation in Domingos Martins, Espirito Santo state, Brazil. — AFP

cotton output. Production of all three has tripled in the past two decades.

But the boom has come with controversy. The agribusiness industry has helped fuel deforestation in the Amazon, which President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has vowed to halt.

Polemics over high rates of deforestation, pesticides and GMO use have hurt Brazil's brand in some places, including the European Union, which has held off ratifying a free-trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur over environmental issues. The agro sector's image has also paid a price internationally for its close association with controversial far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, who was in office from 2019 to 2022.

Lula will have to come to terms with the powerful agribusiness lobby if he wants to keep his promise to stop Amazon deforestation by 2030, after a surge in destruction under Bolsonaro. The veteran leftist, who needs the sector's help to keep the economy growing, is looking to open new markets for Brazilian produc-

ers via trade deals, notably with top buyer China. For its part, the ag sector is keen to polish its image, with international clients increasingly demanding deforestation-free products.

"Meat companies are working particularly hard to make their supply chains traceable, which is fundamental for export value," said Luiz Carlos Correa Carvalho, president of the Brazilian Agribusiness Association.

Grain producers meanwhile tout the recent adoption of a sustainable farming deal aimed at protecting the Cerrado. Environmentalists say that is not enough.

"Real progress would be zero deforestation," said Cristiane Mazzetti of Greenpeace Brazil, who called for new production models that protect biodiversity. The issue is urgent, especially since climate change is already starting to hit agricultural output. "We have to evolve toward a more sustainable model," said Britaldo Soares Filho, a researcher on environmental modeling at the University of Minas Gerais. "When agribusiness harms the environment, it's shooting itself in the foot." — AFP

The release of the funds is subject to approval by its executive board, which has not yet been granted.

"The authorities remain committed to the ambitious reform agenda... and their reform efforts have been commendable," IMF said in a statement. They noted Sri Lanka's "rapid" drop in inflation, from 70 percent in September last year to just 1.3 percent by September this year.

But the Washington-based lender of last resort has also cautioned that Sri Lanka's "full economic recovery is not yet assured". — AFP



QINGZHOU, China: This photo taken on October 27, 2023 shows a worker producing forklifts at a factory in Qingzhou, in China's eastern Shandong province. — AFP

avoid further damage", he added.

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Lifestyle

Book review

'THE HATE U GIVE' BY ANGIE THOMAS

By Ghadeer Ghloom

In Angie Thomas' novel "The Hate U Give", a multitude of issues are addressed, including resistance against oppression, humanizing marginalized communities and the wide-reaching impact of social injustice on young individuals. While the novel primarily centers on the African American community, its universal themes make it relevant to marginalized groups worldwide, thereby amplifying its impact and rendering it an essential read for those who call for justice.

Especially when it comes to the hatred that society spreads among people based on their racial biases and personal preferences, which have no basis or logic, yet which unfortunately spreads widely, reaching innocent children's minds as well. Thomas portrays

the significance of resistance through Starr, the protagonist, who takes the reader on a journey to explore societal injustice and her responsibility to find her identity and speak up for what she stands for and against, highlighting the importance of fighting against injustice.

Another significant issue tackled in the novel is humanizing marginalized communities by meticulously using relatable language that resonates with the community, allowing readers to connect with the characters, accept their differences, understand their experiences and validate their emotions. The novel also illuminates the plight of children within society, which is one of its most important features.

Through characters of tender age, Thomas draws attention to the rooted injustices that ruin societies. By doing so, she underscores how these young

individuals are subjected to harsh realities and sheds light on the profound oppression they face. Thus, the novel explores how the environment children grow up in fundamentally shapes their mind, emphasizing the impact of hate on all members of society, regardless of their age.

Who is Angie Thomas?

Angie Thomas is an American young adult author, born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. She is best known for her debut novel, "The Hate U Give", which was first published in England in 2017. The book became a New York Times bestseller. She has a BFA in creative writing and is a winner of the inaugural Walter Dean Myers Grant 2015, awarded by We Need More Diverse Books.



Angie Thomas, author of "The Hate U Give"

Asteroid dust caused 15-year winter that killed dinosaurs: Study

Around 66 million years ago, an asteroid bigger than Mount Everest smashed into Earth, killing off three quarters of all life on the planet — including the dinosaurs. This much we know. But exactly how the impact of the asteroid Chicxulub caused all those animals to go extinct has remained a matter of debate. The leading theory recently has been that sulfur from the asteroid's impact — or soot from global wildfires it sparked — blocked out the sky and plunged the world into a long, dark winter, killing all but the lucky few.

However research published Monday based on particles found at a key fossil site reasserted an earlier hypothesis: that the impact winter was caused by dust kicked up by the asteroid. Fine silicate dust from pulverized rock would have stayed in the atmosphere for 15 years, dropping global temperatures by up to 15 degrees Celsius, researchers said in a study in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Back in 1980, father-and-son scientists Luis and Walter Alvarez first proposed that the dinosaurs were killed off by an asteroid strike that shrouded the world in dust. Their claim was initially met with some skepticism — until a decade later when the massive crater of Chicxulub was found in what is now the Yucatan Peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico. Now, scientists largely agree that Chicxulub was to blame.

But the idea that it was sulfur, rather than dust, that caused the impact winter has become "very popular" in recent years, Ozgur Karatekin, a researcher at the Royal Observatory of Belgium, told AFP. Study co-author Karatekin said this was because the dust from the impact was thought to be the wrong size to stay in the atmosphere for long enough. For the study, the international team of researchers was able to measure dust particles thought to be from right after the asteroid struck.

'Catastrophic collapse'

The particles were found at the Tanis fossil site in the US state of North Dakota. Though 3,000 km away from the crater, the site has preserved a number of remarkable finds believed to be dated from directly after the asteroid impact in sediment layers of an ancient lake. The dust particles were around 0.8 to 8.0 micrometers — just the right size to stick around in the atmosphere for up to 15 years, the researchers said.

Entering this data into climate models similar to those used for current-day Earth, the researchers determined that dust likely played a far greater role in the mass extinction than had previously been thought. Out of all the material that was shot into the atmosphere by the asteroid, they estimated that it was 75 percent dust, 24 percent sulfur and one percent soot. The dust particles "totally shut down photosynthesis" in plants for at least a year, causing a "catastrophic collapse" of life, Karatekin said.

Sean Gulick, a geophysicist at the University of Texas at Austin and not involved in the research, told AFP that the study was another interesting effort to answer the "hot question" — what drove the impact winter — but did not provide the definitive answer.

He emphasized that discovering what happened during the world's last mass extinction event was important not just for understanding the past, but also the future. "Maybe we can better predict our own mass extinction that we're probably in the middle of," Gulick said. — AFP



Actors Mia Fernanda Solis, Eugenio Derbez, Jennifer Trejo and Danilo Guardiola attend the press junket for "Radical" in Los Angeles on Oct 19, 2023. - AFP photos



Mexican actor Eugenio Derbez attends the premiere of "Radical" at the Regency Bruin Theatre in Los Angeles on Oct 30, 2023.

'CODA' star Derbez returns to Mexico with school drama 'Radical'

Eugenio Derbez, the Mexican comedian who earned global acclaim in the Oscar-winning US drama "CODA," returns to his native country with a new film set at a failing school in a gang-ridden border city. "Radical" focuses on the true story — first told in a viral article in Wired magazine — of a teacher who used unconventional methods to revolutionize an under-funded primary school, and inspire its most gifted students to dream of lives outside Matamoros.

"I already had the intention of doing something dramatic, but I couldn't find the right opportunity," Derbez said in an interview with AFP. "And when the story of 'Radical' came into my hands, I said 'this is it.'" The Spanish-language movie, which hits US theaters Friday, won the audience award at the indie Sundance Film Festival earlier this year.

Derbez plays Sergio Juarez Correa, a teacher who decides to return to his hometown, in a bid to improve the lives of students growing up surrounded by drug gangs, violence and poverty. He adopts techniques not found in any teaching manual, as he tries to overcome the total lack of resources or funding of a school which, in real life, is located next to a

garbage dump in the city of Matamoros. "It's a very raw film, it doesn't disguise reality," said Derbez.

"But it is also a film that inspires. Because this teacher — despite living in those conditions, in such a violent environment, despite having everything against him and having no resources — with pure imagination, with pure ingenuity and desire to move forward, manages to change the lives of all these children."

Derbez previously played a high school choir teacher in "CODA," which won best picture at the Academy Awards in 2022. But the new role is "something very intimate, very personal," for Derbez, said director Chris Zalla. Initially "it was a panic for Eugenio," who is a major star in Mexico but is better known for comedic roles with elaborate costumes and props, he recalled. But "I think we are seeing another Eugenio," said Zalla.

'Not right'

The inspiration for the film came from a 2013 article in Wired magazine, entitled "A Radical Way of Unleashing a Generation of Geniuses". The magazine cover showed Paloma Noyola, a student of Juarez Correa's who lived next to the dump where her father worked,

but who demonstrated a special gift for mathematics. She is played in the film by Jennifer Trejo. Also depicted are Lupe (Mia Fernanda Solis), who is interested in philosophy but is under pressure from her mother to drop out of school and help raise her younger siblings, and Nico (Danilo Guardiola), who is slowly being co-opted by a local gang.

Many of the young performers in the film previously had limited experience acting in front of the camera. "Some of them lived in the conditions in which we were filming, so it was something very familiar to them," said Zalla. "It was not so much acting, more living what they knew."

Trejo told AFP that many of her friends have endured similar struggles to those of her character, Mia. "I have a friend who had to stop studying because her mother has many children that she has to take care of," she said. "That is what we see every day and we have normalized it. Well, it is something that is not right because we have to study." Guardiola added: "It's not just in Mexico — you can see it in Spain, you can see it here in the United States. It's sad." — AFP

Thailand to offer Indian, Taiwanese visa-free entry

Thailand will offer visa-free entry to tourists from India and Taiwan, the prime minister announced Tuesday, as the government seeks to rebuild the key tourism sector after it was battered by the pandemic. Indian and Taiwanese visitors will be entitled to stay for up to 30 days under the six-month trial, which will start next month.

Thailand's tourism sector accounts for almost 20 percent of overall GDP, but it has struggled to get back on its feet since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We will provide visa-free entry to India and Taiwan because a lot of their people like to travel to Thailand," Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting.

Until now, tourists from India and Taiwan have had to apply for a 15-day visa-on-arrival at immigration checkpoints, presenting a bank statement and proof of accommodation. The move comes after the government opened a similar visa-free scheme for Chinese tourists in September.

Government spokesman Chai Watcharong said authorities hoped the scheme would attract 1.4 million extra tourists, generating an additional 55 billion baht (\$1.5 billion) in income. About 1.2 million Indians visited Thailand in the first nine months of 2023 according to tourism ministry data — the fourth highest number after Malaysia, China and South Korea.

Srettha, who took power in August following months of political wrangling after a May election, has said boosting the tourism sector and stimulating the economy are among his top priorities. — AFP



Police Alabai shepherd dogs are seen riding in trucks during a military parade in central Ashgabat on Sept 27, 2019, on the 28th anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence.



In this photo taken on Oct 11, 2017, Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov presents a Turkmen shepherd dog, known as Alabai, to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during a meeting in Sochi. - AFP photos

Good Alabai? Turkmen police dog wins annual competition

A dog working for Turkmenistan's security services has won the country's "most courageous dog of the year" contest, the latest in the ultra-closed state's push to promote the national Alabai breed. Turkmenistan's leaders have put dogs and horses at the center of efforts to foster a strong national identity in the former Soviet republic in Central Asia. The country has dedicated statues and news coverage to the Alabai breed, a Central Asian Shepherd, which has been elevated to

a national symbol.

A dog named Akkhan, owned by the national security ministry won the 2023 contest, state-controlled newspaper "Neutral Turkmenistan" reported Monday. State TV broadcast video of the white-furred Akkhan and his trainer parading in front of a giant portrait of President Serdar Berdimuhamedov. The president was also shown on video surrounded by Alabai puppies in footage played on repeat.

The breed, which can weigh up to

120 kg, was embraced by the president's father, former president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who presented world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, with Alabai puppies during meetings. Rights groups rank gas-rich Turkmenistan as one of the most repressive and heavily censored states in the world.

The dog is part of the government's campaign to promote the idea of a distinct historic Turkmen nation in a part of the world long home to borderless

nomadic tribes before it was colonized by Russia in the nineteenth century. "Specialists believe that the Alabai is the only breed that has not been influenced by others, and thus preserved its ancient genetic purity," the Neutral Turkmenistan paper said in its report. A 15-metre-high gold statue of an Alabai dog was unveiled in the capital Ashgabat in 2020, and the dog has also been honored with a national holiday. — AFP

Lifestyle



A man takes photos of "Receiving Happiness" by artists Chen Zhi-Xu and Raito Low on display at Shanlong Performance Hall, a former military performance hall now turned into a tourist attraction currently exhibits artworks as part of the Matsu Biennial on Nangan island.



Chao Kai-Chih, one of the curators of "Island Perspective" for the Matsu Biennial art exhibition.



People visiting a former military power plant now turned into a tourist attraction.

A former military power plant on Taiwan's tiny Matsu archipelago is bathed in an ominous crimson light — an art installation reminding visitors of the ever-present threat of a Chinese invasion. The exhibit entitled "Your Country Needs You: Glory of 'Jun Hun'" — which means "military spirit" — is part of the Matsu Biennial which runs until mid-November. Some of the works displayed across Matsu — a chain of rocky islands located 20 minutes by boat from China's eastern coast — focus on its natural beauty.

But there were also artists, like light designer Liu Ping-yi and his partner Annie Chu, who chose to capitalize on the outlying islands' wartime history. "We wanted to use light to let the visitors return to a period in the past and understand how the soldiers and civilians lived on the island then," said Liu, who collaborated with a sound artist on the power plant installation. "I hope they can imagine what Matsu was like during wartime."

The Matsu islands were key military strongholds for the nationalist forces after they fled China in 1949 following defeat in the Chinese civil war. Sporadically shelled by China, the nationalists ramped up Matsu's fortifications, constructing underground tunnels and air raid shelters while coastal outposts had narrow openings so that soldiers could fire in the direction of the mainland.

The intermittent bombardments from the Chinese side continued until 1979, stopping only after the United States — which then had diplomatic ties with Taiwan and was providing aid to nationalist troops — switched to formally recognizing China. Today, many of Matsu's military structures are abandoned, though some of the tunnels have been restored and are open to the public.

For the biennial, an air raid shelter now carries soundtracks of the past, while a former military performance hall showcases cut-out Chinese characters strung together — taken from letters sent to servicemen and residents on the islands. A whale-shaped wire structure is



Taiwan transforms Matsu wartime strongholds into 'island museum'

erected on a beach, fashioned out of old Matsu ships with navy vessel accents. Now, "Matsu is a tourism-oriented county", said magistrate Wang Chung-ming, who takes issue with his home being labelled as a "frontline island". "Matsu needs to move towards the concept of an island museum," he said.

'Don't attack Matsu'

The outlying islands are located just northwest of the Taiwan Strait, a 180-km wide waterway and key shipping route that separates China from Taiwan's main island. Beijing — which claims Taiwan as its territory, to be taken by force one day — has held massive military exercises around it in the

past year, including one in April that saw warplanes and naval vessels simulate encirclement of the island.

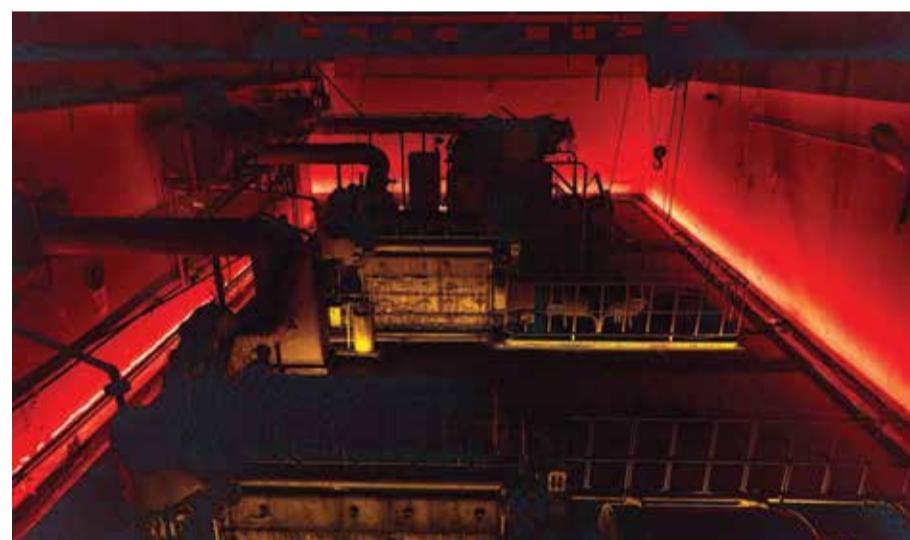
For the residents of Matsu, which was the closest Taiwanese territory to April's drills, life often goes on without skipping a beat in the face of such war games. Artist Chao Kai-chih, who helped curate the biennial's installations, said local residents are "not scared of verbal threats by China". "Come if you have the guts," he joked — before quickly switching course and quipping that if China were to invade, "you can attack a bit further — attack Taiwan, don't attack Matsu".

Growing up in Matsu under the military administration had many restrictions, said Chao, 66, describing a 9:00

pm curfew and not being allowed on the island's beaches. "We want peace, we don't want war and what we can do is to turn Matsu into an art island," Chao said. The magistrate's hope is that the biennial will bring the islands some much-needed tourism dollars, as the three-year border restrictions due to the pandemic have meant a loss in visitors and income. "Now we have to slowly restart the negotiation process from the perspective of tourism and cargo goods," Wang said. "Politically, we must follow Taiwan, but economically Matsu must integrate with the mainland." — AFP



This photo taken on Oct 12, 2023 shows "The Sea is My Land" by artist Iyo Kacaw on display at a beach currently exhibiting artwork as part of the Matsu Biennial art exhibition on Nangan island of Taiwan's Matsu Islands. - AFP photos



This photo taken on Oct 13, 2023 shows the former military Gun Hun powerplant now turned into a tourist attraction currently exhibits the artwork "After the Kerosene Lamps: Roaring and Air-raid Shelters" by artist Yujung Wang as part of the Matsu Biennial on Beigan island of Taiwan's Matsu Islands.

School's out forever in ageing Japan

Fading photos of smiling children still adorn the staircase walls at the Ashigakubo primary school, one of thousands that have shut in ageing Japan over the past 20 years. The school, which was more than a century old, was forced to close in 2009 when the last few dozen children left to join a bigger one "because they couldn't make any friends", mayor Yoshinari Tomita told AFP.

The playground was removed after becoming dangerous due to a lack of maintenance, and the swimming pool is now used by ducks and dragonflies. But the oldest part of the school, built in 1903, has been preserved, with local authorities working to bring the wooden rooms full of nostalgia back to life. Public money is available to help municipalities manage old schools and repurpose the disused buildings to best serve their communities.

'Make the residents happy'

Ashigakubo's premises host a weekly parent-child workshop and are sometimes rented for filming, co-splay events — where fans dress up as game characters — or business seminars. And the site is profitable: the town of Yokoze last year made 200,000 yen (\$1,340). Before the pandemic, it brought in even more. It can also serve as an evacuation center in the event of



Old photographs pinned on the board in a hall at the former Ashigakubo Elementary School.

a natural disaster, after being brought up to required standards in 2019.

For this town of around 7,800 residents whose finances are shrinking along with its population, the Ashigakubo school building was too valuable to do without. "I want to find ways to reuse (the school) that make the residents of the neighborhood happy," mayor Tomita said.

8,580 schools closed

Japan has the second oldest population in the world after Monaco. It has 14.4 million children under the age of 15, barely 11.5 percent of the total population and four million fewer than at the start of the 2000s. Between 2002 and 2020, 8,580 public schools

closed, according to the education ministry. Of the 7,400 of those still standing in 2021, 74.1 percent were being reused and only 2.9 percent were slated to be demolished. These figures are, however, misleading because the reuse of buildings is often only partial, as in Ashigakubo.

Turtles, records and sweet potatoes

One former school in the Kochi region had its swimming pool turned into an aquarium by a non-profit looking after turtles. Another in Mie houses a vinyl shop with about 40,000 records in two former classrooms. In the town of Namegata, the population fell by 20 percent to around 30,000 between

2009 and 2023. The number of children dropped by more than a third and the number of schools was slashed from 22 to seven.

One of Namegata's disused schools was bought by a company that has transformed it since 2015 into an agricultural leisure park, featuring farm product shops and culinary workshops. In pride of place is a museum dedicated to sweet potato, a beloved local specialty, including for desserts. "This makes the residents happy, creates jobs and continues the production of the local specialty of sweet potatoes," said Tetsuro Kinoshita, a manager at the "Namegata Farmers Village". "This is one of the exemplary cases of reusing a school in the country," said mayor Shuya Suzuki.

The ideal is to "make it something very close to the inhabitants, linked to the region, as the school has long been an emblem of the community", he said. But other old schools in Namegata, too expensive to renovate, needed to be knocked down. "This work is expensive and we cannot do it without the support of the state," Suzuki said. "And we have little time left, because the duration of the subsidies is limited. It is very difficult to manage, but we do not have any other options." — AFP



This photo taken on Sept 20, 2023 shows an image of Henry Dunant over a blackboard for events at the former Ashigakubo Elementary School.



A staff member of the town hall stands by a wall chart showing the grades students got in 2008, at the former Ashigakubo Elementary School.



This photo taken on Sept 20, 2023 shows a staff member of the town hall walking past children's artwork on the walls at the former Ashigakubo Elementary School in the town of Yokoze, near Chichibu, Saitama prefecture.



This photo taken on Sept 27, 2023 shows mannequins dressed and designed as Japanese historical figures on display at a sweet potato museum created inside a classroom at a former elementary school in Namegata, Ibaraki Prefecture. - AFP photos



An employee prepares sweet potato desserts at a workshop at the Namegata Farmers Village.

Lifestyle



Environmental scientist Zakiya Al-Afifi inspects mangrove trees in a nursery at the Qurm nature reserve in the Qurm neighborhood in the Omani capital Muscat on Oct 3, 2023.



Zakiya Al-Afifi demonstrates to Israa Al-Maskari how to measure the biomass of a mangrove tree.— AFP photos



Mangrove seedlings are pictured in a nursery at the Qurm nature reserve.

In a muddy wetland in Oman's capital, environmental scientist Zakiya Al-Afifi measures the bark of a mangrove tree, estimating its capacity to absorb the carbon dioxide that is slowly heating the planet. Standing in the leafy reserve, shielded from the fierce sun, she says the Al-Qurm forest's 80 protected hectares of mangroves could lock away thousands of tons of CO2.

"Mangroves are the richest carbon sink in the world," says Afifi, wearing boots and a white lab coat as she leads a group of university students around the swamp. If the shoreline trees and bushes have become part of efforts to cut atmospheric CO2, oil-producing Oman, on the Arabian peninsula's southeast, has led the way in this hydrocarbon-rich region.



Israa Al-Maskari, a student in environmental science, inspects mangroves in a nursery at the Qurm nature reserve.

Inspired by the late ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said, a renowned conservationist who died in 2020, the country of 4.5 million people has become the Gulf's center for mangrove restoration and preservation. Mangrove habitats can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere at a faster rate than forests and store it in their soil and sediment for longer periods. "Mangroves are recognized as one of the nature-based solutions to fight climate change," says Afifi, 41. Up to 80 tons of CO2 per hectare could be stored in Al-Qurm's above-ground biomass, and even more in the muddy sediments below, she adds.

'Maybe we will lose them'

Oman, a minor oil producer compared with its neighbors the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, is moving quickly in its project to revive the forests that once covered the country, but died

out thousands of years ago because of climatic changes. The reason for its haste is modern, man-made climate change — much of it from burning fossil fuels — which risks destroying the mangroves with higher temperatures, floods and cyclones. "If we are not going to restore more forests, it means maybe one day we will lose them" due to climate

change, Afifi says. Trudging through a murky creek north of Muscat, Badr bin Saif Al-Busaidi of Oman's environmental authority points to a dense thicket of mangrove trees. "There was not a single tree here" two decades ago, the 40-year-old tells AFP from the Al-Sawadi creek, his boots ankle-deep in water. "Now, it is a forest that stretches more than four kilometers" with 88 hectares of mangrove cover, says Busaidi.



Environmental scientist Zakiya Al-Afifi and Badr Al-Busaidi, mangrove expert at Oman's Environmental Authority, stroll along a wooden walkway at the Qurm nature reserve.

Oman revives CO2-busting mangroves as climate threat lurks

Since 2001, a restoration project

a war with nature because of climate change. "If we don't take action, we will lose these natural resources."

Sowing the seeds

Oman's restoration project has evolved slowly. At first it relied on mangrove nurseries, two of which are in Al-Qurm, growing 850,000 seedlings for transfer to coastal areas. In 2021, the conservationists tried using drones to disperse seeds, but after disappointing results they focused on the current

approach of direct, targeted planting. Oman is also helping fulfil carbon credit schemes which have become popular tools for companies seeking to offset their carbon emissions.

A single credit represents one ton of carbon dioxide removed or reduced from the atmosphere. Credits are generated through activities such as plant-

mental authority said. Carbon credits' legitimacy has come under scrutiny as the trees must grow to maturity and never burn down if they are to permanently store CO2. Monitoring and certification standards can be slack, reports have found.

Oman's carbon offsets could also be measured against its emissions,

ing mangroves or rehabilitating forests. This month, the environment authority signed a contract with Oman's MSA Green Projects Company to plant 100 million trees over four years. As part of the initiative, 20,000 hectares of land in Al Wusta governorate will be transformed into mangrove habitats, partly using artificial lakes.

Once completed, the project is predicted to eliminate 14 million tons of CO2 and generate \$150 million through carbon credit certificates, the environ-

which amounted to 71 million tons of CO2 in 2021 according to the Global Carbon Project. "Past generations didn't think much about the environment because the impact of climate change" was not as apparent then, student Israa Al-Maskari says at a mangrove nursery in Al-Qurm. "What they did, we now face so we have to save our environment for us and for future generations." — AFP

IN UK, TOURISTS DISCOVER DARKER SIDE OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

British universities Oxford and Cambridge are constantly ranked among the best in the world and celebrated for their academic excellence. But their murkier history is being brought to life for tourists, as the country increasingly grapples with its colonial past. "This is not the standard walking tour," warned guide and student Claire McCann, before leading her group onto the cobbled streets of

current UK leader Rishi Sunak, and the Labour main opposition leader Keir Starmer, have studied behind the high walls of Oxford's various colleges. But their university years are not the subject of the tour, which instead focuses on "difficult legacies" — a burning issue brought to the fore in the UK since Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests.

First stop on the tour is Oriel College, outside of which sits a statue of

ed his role in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and that he founded De Beers, which is still the world's number one diamond company.

As part of the tour, she talked about the "exploitation" in the mines, which made Rhodes a fortune and also allowed him to set up one of the most prestigious academic awards in the world. Notable Rhodes scholars include former US president Bill Clinton. "What should happen with the statue?" asked McCann.

Slavery

The "Rhodes Must Fall" campaign launched by students called for the statue's removal. But Oxford decided in 2021 that the statue would remain in place. A short walk away across the High Street is All Souls College, which McCann described as "the most exclusive college in Oxford". Dating back to the 1430s, it is one of the richest and only accepts two or three new research students per year.

"All Souls demonstrates for us how networks of prestige have historically been supported by economic exploitation and slavery," said McCann. Following the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, All Souls announced that it would no longer call its library after Christopher Codrington, a former student. When Codrington died in 1710, he left part of his fortune to the university, which according to All Souls' website came "largely" from his family's plantations in the West Indies that were "worked by enslaved people of African descent".

More than 20,000 people have participated in the walks, called Uncomfortable tours, since they started in 2018. They also exist in Cambridge and the founders hope to extend them to London and even Paris.

"Did you know that Oxford and Cambridge combined own more land than the Church of England?" asked guide Ashley Lance as she walked along the tranquil River Cam, opposite Cambridge University's sumptuous King's College Chapel. "According to a study published in 2018, Cambridge is the most unequal city in Britain," she added.

'Shocking'

Lance, 27, explained that two worlds exist in the city: One comprised of the university, with its students, professors and laboratories and the other made up of the rest of the population. Despite their rivalries — Oxford is referred to as "the other place" in Cambridge — the two universities have had much in common. Women were able to study at Oxford from 1870, but had to wait until 1920 to qualify for a degree. They were banned from libraries for a long time, for fear they would be "far too distracting" to men, explained McCann.

Oriel, founded in 1326, was the last Oxford college to open its doors to women, in 1985. In Cambridge, St John's College, founded in 1511, accepted women from 1980. But on the day the first female students arrived, a faculty official lowered a flag to half-mast and wore a black armband. "It's so shocking," said one exasperated Londoner on the tour, visiting with her daughter, Michelle Miller, an American who has just moved to Oxford with her husband, said she was interested in the lesser-known aspects of popular tourist destinations. "We didn't know there were so many controversies," the 52-year-old said. — AFP



Tour guide Devika talks with a group of people attending an 'Uncomfortable Oxford' tour outside the Rhodes Building in Oxford on Oct 20, 2023. — AFP photos



Devika shows a picture of Christian Cole to a group of people attending an 'Uncomfortable Oxford' tour outside the Sheldonian Theatre on Broad Street in Oxford.



Tour guide Oliver talks with a group of people attending an 'Uncomfortable Oxford' tour outside the Sheldonian Theatre.



Tour guides Devika and Oliver talk with a group of people attending an 'Uncomfortable Oxford' tour outside the College of All Souls in Oxford.

Oxford, which attract some seven million visitors every year.

Majestic buildings, many dating back to the Middle Ages, bear witness to the rich history of the university city, some 80 km northwest of London. Most British prime ministers, including

alumnus Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902), a colonizer who dreamed of a British Africa from Cape Town to Cairo. McCann, originally from South Africa, read a quote of Rhodes in which he described Africans as the "most despicable specimens of human beings". She highlight-

Sports

Thousands brave cold, rain to welcome rugby world champion Springboks

'This triumph has been six years in the planning'

JOHANNESBURG: Thousands of South Africans braved cold, wet weather to greet the Rugby World Cup-winning Springboks when they arrived in Johannesburg on Tuesday. Many wore green and gold, the colours of the national team, as they filled every available space at OR Tambo airport to greet the record four-time world champions.

South Africa edged greatest rivals New Zealand 12-11 in a gripping final in Paris last Saturday to achieve back-to-back titles after also winning the 1995 and 2007 title deciders. Supporters cheered in unison as captain Siya Kolisi emerged into the public area, waved at the crowd while holding the Webb Ellis Cup, and took selfies with jubilant supporters. "Thank you to the people of South Africa. We have had a long and tough 20 weeks, but it was worth it," said Kolisi, a loose forward and the first black Test captain of the Springboks.

"This triumph has been six years in the planning. Winning the World Cup in 2019 was an unexpected bonus as the ultimate goal was always to be champions in 2023." Kolisi, 32, will soon join French Top 14 club Racing 92

on a three-year contract and he told reporters he would still be available for the Springboks if selected.

"It does not matter if I am the captain or a player. The coaches will decide that. I am but one of many leaders in this wonderful team." Springbok captains have always been based in South Africa so that they can fulfil commercial and social obligations.

Head coach Jacques Nienaber, who is leaving the Springboks to join Irish outfit Leinster, said it was "an unbelievable privilege" to be in charge of the champions. "I knew most of these players when they were naughty youngsters. Many are fathers now with children. South Africa should be so proud of them.

'Special group'

"The toughest part of my job in France was telling players that they were not in the matchday 23, but they took it like men. This is a very special group." Many supporters waved signs reading "Bokke (Springboks), a bunch of winners", as loud music played in the background creating a party atmosphere. A band played the national anthem.

The latest success brought joy to a country battling unemployment, elec-

tricity, water and crime crises. Rugby is one of the three most popular sports in South Africa, but the only one to regularly deliver trophies.

The football team has not triumphed since winning the 1996 Africa Cup of Nations while the cricket side has yet to win a world title in any format. "We love them so much, they made us proud," said Excellent George, 42, who was at the airport with her Springbok-flag-holding husband Rudy.

"With our country having a lot of problems, sport, and especially rugby, bring us together," she added. Susan, a 56-year-old accountant who preferred to give only her first name, said she took a day off work to see her heroes up close.

Like many in the country she sees the team as a unifying force able to bridge racial and social divides in the country. "I just could not miss it," she said wearing a green and gold fleece jacket and flanked by a friend sporting a similar outfit.

"We have players from all backgrounds, all races, and watching those people on the field just brings us so much hope. It gives me goosebumps just to think about it," she said. "We are the world champions," said Ibrahim Peters, 35, a teacher, as he held his six-



EKURHULENI: South Africa's flanker and captain Siya Kolisi holds the Webb Ellis Cup as he leaves after the South African rugby team's arrival at the OR Tambo International airport in Ekurhuleni on October 31, 2023, after they won the France 2023 Rugby World Cup final match against New Zealand. — AFP

year-old daughter in his arms.

"It means the world to us, we go through a lot in South Africa, but those Springboks bring us all together." The champions will begin a tour of various cities on Thursday by visiting Pretoria,

Johannesburg and Soweto. They go to Cape Town on Friday, Durban on Saturday and East London on Sunday, with thousands expected to line streets and greet a team that has captured the hearts of a nation. — AFP



GALLE: In this photograph taken on July 19, 2022, Sri Lanka's cricket fan Percy Abeysekera watches the fourth day play of the first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle. — AFP

S Lanka mourns 'Uncle Percy' - cricket's one man cheer squad

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's cricket stars and newspapers Tuesday mourned the death of a beloved "super fan" who had become a one-man cheer leader and a permanent presence at international games. Percy Abeysekera, 87, died at a hospital outside the capital Colombo on Monday following a brief illness, according to his family.

Former Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene described Abeysekera as the "true 12th man for many generations of Sri Lankan cricketers". "He was there throughout my entire career, cheering us on, waving his flag and always, win or lose, making us laugh," Jayawardena said. "We will all miss you dearly 'Uncle Percy'."

Another ex-skipper, Kumar Sangakkara, said Abeysekera was as much a part of the Sri Lanka cricket set-up as the players. "From my debut till my last game Uncle Percy was a constant. His contribution to the game in Sri Lanka stands equal to any of the players that have worn the shirt," said Sangakkara.

'Cricket crazy'

Sanath Jayasuriya, a member of Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning squad, said: "It is with great sadness that I heard our beloved Uncle Percy has met his maker. "You were the first super fan and for all of us you will always be special. RIP," Jayasuriya wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Speaking after Sri Lanka's loss to Afghanistan in the World Cup on Monday, spin bowler Maheesh Theekshana said: "He was the main guy who was there when I was a kid. I saw him waving the flag, so as a team we are disappointed to hear that news."

The Daily FT newspaper said: "Percy gave his life and soul to the sport and was a legend on his own right." Abeysekera was a constant presence at Sri Lanka matches since their Test debut against England in 1982.

"I am Percy, cricket crazy, but I have no mercy for those cricketers, spectators and administrators who are lazy," the FT recalled him saying. He escorted England batsman Chris Tavare on to the pitch at the P. Sara Oval in the capital Colombo while holding a Sri Lankan flag. His grandsons are named Garfield and Sachinka, after West Indian legend Garry Sobers and Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar.

As a boy, Abeysekera saw Don Bradman play at the Colombo Oval in 1948, and nearly half a century later watched Sri Lanka defeat Australia in Lahore to win the 50-over World Cup, one of his lifetime cricketing highlights.

Former New Zealand captain Martin Crowe once handed him his man-of-the-match award and he was embraced by Virat Kohli during India's tour to Sri Lanka in 2015. — AFP

Afghanistan beat Sri Lanka to boost WCup s-final bid

PUNE: Afghanistan defeated Sri Lanka by seven wickets in Pune on Monday to record their third win of the World Cup and maintain their hopes of a semi-final place. Set 242 to win after a disciplined bowling display, Afghanistan finished on 73 and captain Hashmatullah Shahidi 58 not out, the pair sharing an unbroken stand of 111.

Afghanistan now have six points and sit in fifth place in the table, two behind New Zealand and Australia with the top four guaranteed to make the semi-finals. Victory also meant Afghanistan, who'd already beaten champions England, had won back-to-back matches at the World Cup for the first time after they defeated Pakistan by eight wickets last time out.

Prior to this edition, they had managed just one win - against non-Test nation Scotland in 2015 - from their appearances at two previous World Cups. Yet they have now beaten three World Cup winners in England, 1992 champions Pakistan and 1996 kings Sri Lanka.

'Happy and proud'

"I'm quite happy and proud of the team. I thought we performed well in all three departments," said Shahidi at the presentation ceremony. "The Pakistan game gave us a lot of confidence that we can chase down any kind of target."

Victory was set up by recalled left-arm fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi's 4-34 in 10 overs as Sri Lanka were held to 241. Shahidi and Omarzai saw their team home with nearly five overs to spare.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz was dismissed just four balls into Afghanistan's chase when bowled by Dilshan Madushanka. But Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmat Shah (62) then shared a stand of 73. Omarzai added fresh impetus with three sixes in a run-a-ball fifty while composed left-hander Shahidi ensured

All Blacks' grit inspires New Zealand against S Africa at World Cup

PUNE: New Zealand captain Tom Latham hopes to summon the fighting spirit of the All Blacks when his side face fellow Cricket World Cup semi-final contenders South Africa in Pune. Wednesday's match comes just days after South Africa edged New Zealand by a point in a dramatic Rugby World Cup final in Paris, where the beaten All Blacks had to play most of the game a man down after skipper Sam Cane was sent off.

Latham's men also suffered a narrow defeat last time out, going down by five runs against Australia after just failing to chase down a huge target of 389. "That was obviously a fantastic game of rugby," Latham told a pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"But I guess you look at the All Blacks as a whole, they played some great rugby throughout the World Cup." He added: "I think you look at the final and I guess the Kiwi way is we look to scrap the whole way, obviously faced with a little bit of adversity in terms of being down to 14 men.

"I guess it's something we talk about in our team as well — we scrap right to the end regardless of the situation. "I think we showed that the other night as well, taking the game as deep as we can and if we can do that, then hopefully that gives ourselves a good chance towards the back end of the game."

As for the match in front of his side, Latham said New Zealand would face a "really hot" South Africa, with their lone defeat so far this World Cup a shock loss to the Netherlands. The Proteas' top order has repeatedly overwhelmed their opponents, with South Africa posting 399 in their 229-run rout of reigning champions England.

"South Africa, they're running really hot at the moment," said Latham. "And they've got a lot of



PUNE: Afghanistan's players greet fans at the end of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Afghanistan and Sri Lanka at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on October 30, 2023. — AFP

the runs kept coming at the other end.

Sri Lanka, who've now lost four of their six matches, missed a couple of chances and their day was summed up when Omarzai scored the winning run after being dropped at deep midwicket. "240 was not enough on this pitch," said Sri Lanka captain Kusal Mendis.

He added: "Our bowlers did well in the first 10 overs, but the dew came and it became hard to bowl later." Victory was another triumph for Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott, with this success coming against a Sri Lanka team coached by another former England international in Chris Silverwood.

Farooqi had been recalled in place of Noor Ahmad despite the teenage spinner's three wickets against Pakistan. But on a less spin-friendly pitch, Afghanistan's judgement was vindicated as was Shahidi's decision to field upon winning the toss because

of worries about dew later in the game.

Farooqi struck throughout the innings, while off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman kept things tight with 2-38 in 10 overs. Opening batsman Pathum Nissanka made 46 but no other Sri Lankan managed more than Mendis' (39).

Nissanka was in sight of his fifth fifty in six innings this World Cup when caught behind trying to cut Omarzai. Star leg-spinner Rashid Khan then marked his 100th one-day international by bowling Dhananjaya de Silva with a superb googly that completely deceived the batsman.

Mujeeb then struck in successive balls, removing the set Mendis and Sadeera Samarawickrama (36). Farooqi's superb yorker accounted for tailender Maheesh Theekshana before he had Angelo Mathews caught in the deep off a well-disguised slower ball. — AFP

Australia vow to rebuild after Eddie Jones reign

SYDNEY: Australian rugby vowed to rebuild on Tuesday after the "bitterly disappointing" reign of Eddie Jones, who has quit as Wallabies coach following their calamitous World Cup campaign. Once a powerhouse of international rugby, Australia are in tatters after Jones announced his resignation 10 months into a five-year contract.

The Wallabies under Jones slid to ninth in the world rankings, suffered their worst World Cup ever and won just two of their last nine games. Rugby Australia on Tuesday accepted the 63-year-old's resignation as head coach and chief executive Phil Waugh said it was time to win back the fans. "We've got a lot of ground to make up and we all know that we've let down people and we need to rebuild that trust," Waugh, who previously played under Jones, told reporters. "It has been bitterly disappointing."

Jones will officially leave his post on November 25 but Waugh said they will not be in a rush to appoint his successor. Local media have linked former Wallabies pivot Stephen Larkham to the job, as well as his compatriot Dan McKellar, who is currently in charge of English side Leicester. "I think everyone is a candidate," said Waugh, adding that outgoing All Blacks boss Ian Foster would be considered if he put his hand up. "We're open to getting the right coach for our system," he added.

Jones only recently said that he was committed to Australian rugby despite overseeing their World Cup flop, denying rumours that he was about to jump ship to take over at Japan. The feisty Australian has now walked away after failing to secure backing for what he believed were much-needed reforms. — AFP



PUNE: New Zealand's Glenn Phillips attends a practice session on the eve of their 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match against South Africa at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on October 31, 2023. — AFP

power throughout the whole line-up." But he added: "We certainly know we've got a world-class bowling attack as well...It's going to be a great contest tomorrow."

South Africa, however, looked far less assured when subjected to the pressure of chasing against Pakistan last time out, suffering several stumbles before scraping a one-wicket in pursuit of 271.

"Sometimes you could look at the opposition and what they want to do, but for us, it's always been about focusing on us and what's best for us as a team," said Latham, whose side have also lost to unbeaten World Cup hosts India.

New Zealand still have injury doubts over regular captain and star batsman Kane Williamson (thumb), fast bowler Lockie Ferguson (Achilles) and all-rounder Mark Chapman (calf). "We'll get through a bit of work today and then we'll see how they pull up from a selection point of view," said Latham. "Lockie went off in the last game with a bit of an Achilles' niggle, so fingers crossed he'll be fine for tomorrow." — AFP

Sports

Murray misses match point as De Minaur jinx continues

Swiatek wins opener, Gauff thrashes Jabeur at WTA Finals

PARIS: Andy Murray missed a match point and blew a 5-2 lead in the final set to suffer his sixth straight defeat to Alex de Minaur in the Paris Masters first round on Monday. The three-time Grand Slam champion appeared poised to finally clinch a first win over Australian De Minaur after a double-break in the deciding set, but slumped to a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-5 loss.

Murray has still not won a match at Bercy Arena since lifting the title in 2016 en route to finishing as the year-end world number one. The Briton saw three set points come and go before losing the first set in a tie-break, but bounced back to level the match and then take control.

But he twice failed to serve out the match, missing a match point in the 10th game. De Minaur instead secured victory to set up a second-round tie with either Serbian lucky loser Dusan Lajovic or French wildcard Benjamin Bonzi.

Murray let slip two game points in the 12th and final game before being broken again, smashing his racquet in frustration when his exit was confirmed after three hours on court. It was De Minaur's fourth win over Murray this year.

Elsewhere on the first day of the tournament, American ninth seed Taylor Fritz swept aside Argentina's Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-4 to boost his hopes of reaching next month's ATP Finals in Turin. Fritz is 10th in the standings for the season-ending event, with the top eight to qualify.

US Open semi-finalist Ben Shelton lost 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-3 to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. American 14th seed Frances Tiafoe lost 6-3, 6-4 to Alexander Bublik. The defeat ended Tiafoe's slim hopes of reaching Turin. Karen Khachanov, the 2018 champion, progressed with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Australia's

Max Purcell. Meanwhile, world number two Iga Swiatek overcame a shaky start to defeat Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova in straight sets in her opening WTA Finals match in Cancun. In Monday's other clash, US Open champion Coco Gauff opened her tournament with a 6-0, 6-1 drubbing of Tunisia's Ons Jabeur.

Polish star Swiatek looked out of sorts in an error-strewn first set in which she trailed 2-5 before roaring back to clinch a 7-6 (7/3), 6-0 victory. The 22-year-old four-time Grand Slam champion is bidding to reclaim her world number one ranking from Aryna Sabalenka at this week's season-ending finals in Mexico. However that goal looked unlikely during a nervy opening from Swiatek, who was broken in her first service game before seventh seed Vondrousova held for a 2-0 lead. Swiatek managed to claw the break back in the fourth game to square the first set at 2-2 but then fell to pieces as Vondrousova broke for a 3-2 lead and then held to go 4-2 up.

Another shaky service game from Swiatek ended in a break of serve to leave Vondrousova in the driving seat at 5-2. But Vondrousova's game collapsed thereafter, and Swiatek broke back twice in quick succession to level the set at 5-5 before holding for 6-5.

Although Vondrousova steadied the ship to hold serve and set up a tie break, it was only a temporary reprieve. Swiatek quickly took control of the breaker and clinched the set when Vondrousova double-faulted. Vondrousova's service game went into meltdown in the second set, with Swiatek breaking her three times in a row.

Another Vondrousova double-fault left Swiatek 5-0 up, and the Pole sealed victory on her serve in the final game. "In the first part of the match I wasn't



PARIS: Great Britain's Andy Murray plays a backhand return to Australia's Alex De Minaur during their men's singles match on day one of the Paris ATP Masters 1000 tennis tournament at the Accor Arena - Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy - in Paris. — AFP

feeling like I was playing bad," Swiatek said. "I just felt like I was making mistakes on the last shots within the rally. I felt there was room for improvement but I didn't need to change a lot.

"So I just tried to be more precise, not play risky." The 19-year-old Gauff raced through the first set against Jabeur to win 6-0 in just 23 minutes and then shrugged off a lengthy rain delay to take the

second set 6-1 for a convincing win. "Ons is a great player, so I felt really unsteady the whole match even though it didn't look like that," Gauff said. "But I'm just happy to finally get a win here in this event." The WTA Finals sees eight players divided into two groups of four playing in a round-robin first phase, with the top two in each group advancing to the semi-finals on Saturday. — AFP

Three talking points from Mexican Grand Prix

MEXICO CITY: It has become so routine that Max Verstappen's achievements for Red Bull this season are almost taken for granted as he demonstrated again on Sunday, winning the Mexico Grand Prix with aplomb after starting third on the grid.

The 26-year-old Dutch world champion said his record-increasing 16th win of the season and 51st of his career was "incredible", an unarguable description made more so alongside his team-mate Sergio Perez's travails at his home event. Beyond Verstappen's metronomic consistency, however, a stirring race produced several other lessons as Daniel Ricciardo rediscovered his mojo, Lando Norris underlined his huge potential and Lewis Hamilton confirmed his and Mercedes's revival.

AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from a dramatic day:

Hamilton back in the frame

Seven days after his disqualification in Austin, Lewis Hamilton was second behind Verstappen again with a show of vim and speed that raised Mercedes' spirits and hopes of finishing runners-up in the title race. The seven-time world champion added a point for fastest lap to his personal

haul as he claimed a record-increasing 197th career podium, trimming Perez's 39-point advantage to 20 with three races remaining.

"It's swings and roundabouts," said Hamilton, whose name was chanted by the crowd. "And mostly dependent on Checo. They have the championship-winning car and he's been unfortunate. Having lost points last week, I didn't think I'd be in shooting range, but we'll give it our best shot. "Honestly, it's not going to make a big difference to my life whether I come second or third. It's more important to get the team second in the constructors' — it's a bonus if we get second in the drivers'..."

Ricciardo heaps pressure on Perez

Daniel Ricciardo rolled back the years to qualify fourth, beating Perez, and then finish seventh for Alpha Tauri, proving he has recovered from his broken hand with the team's best result of the year. At 34, the eight-time race winner is a strong candidate to replace the Mexican if Red Bull choose not to retain him, even if he has a contract for 2024. Norris may also be a possible target to run alongside his friend Verstappen.

Team chief Christian Horner weighed his comments delicately, praising one as



MEXICO CITY: (L to R) Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton, Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen, Red Bull Racing's British team member Richard Wholoverson, and Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc celebrate on the podium after the Formula One Mexico Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez racetrack in Mexico City. — AFP

"outstanding" and sympathizing with the other — Perez having retired after a first lap collision — but it is clear Perez needs strong podium finishes to keep his current job.

Norris completing the 'jigsaw'

After starting 16th and gambling on soft tyres, Norris carved through the field in style to finish fifth for McLaren, making light of a poor re-start af-

ter the red flag. It was the drive of the day including, he said, "one of the best stints I've ever had" as he confirmed his potential as a race-winner and future champion. "I know I need to put a few things together, the final pieces of the jigsaw," said the 23-year-old Briton. "Then I'll be very confident." After 12 podium finishes, a maiden victory is his next step if McLaren can keep him and deliver a winning car. — AFP

FIFA sends 'prayers' to Liverpool's Diaz after father's kidnapping

LONDON: FIFA president Gianni Infantino has sent "support and prayers" to Liverpool forward Luis Diaz following the kidnapping of his parents in Colombia. Diaz's mother has been rescued but dozens of soldiers, backed by police, are searching for his father.

"On behalf of FIFA and the global football community, I would like to extend our support and prayers to Luis Diaz, his family and his friends in these difficult times," Infantino said on Instagram. The Colombia football federation has also issued a further statement on X, formerly known as Twitter, demanding that those holding Diaz's father release him immediately, without conditions.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said after Sunday's 3-0 home win against Nottingham Forest that preparing for the game had been "the most difficult I've ever had in my life". "I didn't expect that, I wasn't prepared for it," he added.

"I don't want to make the game bigger than it was, but definitely we tried to help Luis with the fight we put in because obviously we want to help and we cannot really help. "So the only thing we can do is fight for him and that's what the boys did." Liverpool's fifth straight home Premier League win of the season moved them three points behind leaders Tottenham. Diaz, 26, who has made 11 appearances this season and scored three goals, did not feature in the squad.

Diogo Jota held aloft Diaz's number seven shirt after scoring in a tribute to his missing teammate. "How can you make a football game really important on a day like this? It's really difficult. I've never struggled with that in my life," Klopp said.

"We heard late last night about it. We spoke to Luis, he wanted to go home. Then we got the news with his mum, which is fantastic, and since then nothing really." The Colombian army said in a statement that it had set up roadblocks and deployed two motorized platoons, unmanned aircraft, helicopters and a plane with radar in the search for Luis Manuel Diaz.

Colombian authorities did not provide details about the kidnapping, but media reports said the player's father and mother, Cilenis Marulanda, were taken Saturday by armed men on motorcycles at a gas station in their home town of Barrancas, in the northern La Guajira department.

President Gustavo Petro said Marulanda was rescued in Barrancas hours later. Colombia is a country just emerging from decades of civil conflict between rival armed groups, with more than 38,000 people kidnapped, mostly for ransom.

Petro, at an event to mark the start of local elections in Bogota, said "all the public forces have been deployed" to find Diaz's father. — AFP

Arteta expects 'beautiful' return to West Ham for Arsenal's Rice

LONDON: Mikel Arteta expects Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice to have a "beautiful" return to former club West Ham in Wednesday's League Cup clash. Rice left the London Stadium to make a £105 million (\$128 million) move across London to the Gunners in the close season.

The England star captained West Ham to victory in the Europa Conference League final at the end of last season in his final game for the club he joined at the age of 14. West Ham fans have often reserved hostile receptions for former players, with Frank Lampard enduring years of abuse after his switch to Chelsea and Paul Ince lambasted following his move to Manchester United.

But on the eve of Rice's first trip back to West Ham since the transfer,

Arsenal boss Arteta said he believed the 24-year-old would be given a warm welcome. "It will be his first time back at his old club and a beautiful moment for him, I think," Arteta said on Tuesday.

"I think it is beautiful. I had a chance to do it a few times and then you really see what they think of you and what you left at the club." Arteta suggested Rice would be involved in the fourth-round tie in some way, although the Spaniard is expected to make widespread changes to rest players during a gruelling schedule of Premier League and Champions League matches. "Every time you hear him talk about West Ham and what they did for him and everybody at the club, he cannot talk any higher of them, so hopefully they will be the same way towards him," he said. — AFP



LONDON: Arsenal's English midfielder #41 Declan Rice (R) runs with the ball during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Sheffield United at the Emirates Stadium in London. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764

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

Change of Name

I, **FATEMA**, holder of Passport No. M0230843 do hereby change my name to Fatema (as given name) Bazarwala (as surname) for all purposes. I will hence forth be known in the name Fatema Bazarwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. #4553 – 30-10-2023

Messi not thinking about long-term future after claiming eighth Ballon d'Or

Haaland came second in the final voting, with Mbappe third



PARIS: This combination of photographs shows Argentinian forward Lionel Messi reacting as he receives the Ballon d'Or football award (from left) for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2021 and 2023. — AFP photos

PARIS: Lionel Messi said Monday he was not thinking about his long-term future as he sought to enjoy winning the eighth Ballon d'Or of his storied career. Messi, 36, succeeded Karim Benzema as winner of the prize, awarded on the back of his performances last season, when he inspired Argentina to glory at the World Cup in Qatar.

"The last one I won was also thanks to what we achieved with the Argentine national team in the Copa America (in 2021), but this one is much more special because it comes after we won the World Cup," Messi told various media including AFP after collecting his award at a ceremony in Paris.

"That is the trophy everyone wants to win the most, and it was a dream come true for me, my teammates and my country." He dragged Argentina to a victory in Qatar that crowned his remarkable career and allowed him to see off stiff competition for the Ballon d'Or from Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland in particular.

Haaland came second in the final voting, with Mbappe third and Kevin De Bruyne in fourth place. Former Barcelona superstar Messi scored seven times at the World Cup and was named the tournament's best player after Argentina beat France on penalties in the final in Doha.

Yet Messi, who won his first Ballon d'Or in 2009, also had an underwhelming final season at Paris Saint-Germain, before leaving to play for Inter Miami in Major League Soccer. He played down suggestions he could come back for another Ballon d'Or, possibly after the next World Cup in 2026, when he will be 39.

"I am not thinking about the long-term future. I am just enjoying the day to day at the moment," he said. "We have a Copa America coming up in the United States, where I am now, in which we are the



PARIS: This combination of pictures shows Argentine forward Lionel Messi (L) holding his 8th Ballon d'Or award and FC Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Aitana Bonmati (R) holding her Woman Ballon d'Or award during the 2023 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony.

holders, so I am looking forward to coming into that in good shape and then just see how I am getting on from there."

Messi admitted on his return to the French capital that his two-year stint at PSG had not turned out the way he imagined upon signing from Barcelona

in 2021. "Things didn't turn out as I hoped but I enjoyed the city a lot, and my kids liked it a lot and found it hard to leave," he said. "It is a spectacular city and I was lucky to live here. Football-wise it did not go the way I hoped but I prefer to remember the many good things." — AFP

Nuggets unbeaten, Curry shines in Warriors win

LOS ANGELES: Nikola Jokic bagged the 107th triple double of his career as the Denver Nuggets extended their unbeaten start to the season with a 110-102 victory over the Utah Jazz on Monday. Serbian star Jokic finished with 27 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds in another dominant performance by the reigning NBA champions, who made it four wins out of four after leading virtually from start to finish.

Denver led by 10 points after the first quarter and were always in control thereafter, stretching their advantage to 17 points at one stage in the third quarter.

Jokic's latest triple double leaves him tied with LeBron James and Jason Kidd for the fourth most triples in NBA history. Jokic received scoring support from Aaron Gordon, who posted 21 points with seven rebounds while Jamal Murray added 18 points — including a trio of three-pointers — in a comfortable win for Denver.

Lauri Markkanen led the Utah scoring with 27 points. In other games on Monday, Stephen Curry delivered his second 40-point game of the season as the Golden State Warriors routed the New Orleans Pelicans 130-102 on the road.

Curry, who scored 41 points in Friday's victory over Sacramento, was once again back to his mes-



OKLAHOMA CITY: Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets drives to the basket in the first quarter of the match. — AFP

meric best with a 42-point haul that included seven three-pointers. New Warriors recruit Chris Paul added 13 points off the bench while Moses Moody and Trayce Jackson-Davis also finished with 13 apiece.

'White hot' Curry

Zion Williamson and C.J. McCollum led the New Orleans scorers with 19 points each. Warriors coach Steve Kerr was left in awe of Curry's latest masterpiece. "He's white hot," Kerr said of Curry. "It's amazing watching him. He looks better than ever at 35. But he puts the work in every summer, keeps looking for

ways to get better — he's constantly searching for edges in his training ... just stunning to watch."

Kerr was also encouraged by his team's third straight away win following last week's opening night defeat to Phoenix. "After opening night I thought it's going to take some time, we had to get the new guys accustomed to what we do," Kerr said. "It's incredible to bring Chris Paul off the bench as your back-up point guard — he's a Hall-of-Famer and still playing at an incredible level. "It changes everything when you can start a game off with Steph Curry and then bring on Chris with a great second unit."

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard combined for 58 points as the Bucks sunk the Miami Heat 122-114. Milwaukee surged into a 25-point lead early in the fourth quarter before a ragged final few minutes allowed Miami to close the gap to just six points with 1min 22sec remaining.

Tyler Herro's 35 points led Miami while Jimmy Butler finished with 13 points. Antetokounmpo got into the Halloween spirit early by turning up to the postgame press conference dressed as the Incredible Hulk. "Obviously sometimes it's going to be a little bit sloppy," Antetokounmpo said.

"But at the end of the day that's going to happen sometimes. When you're up by 20 you've got to put them away and we weren't able to do that tonight." In Memphis, 35 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists from Luka Doncic — including six three-pointers — powered the Mavericks to a 125-110 win over the Grizzlies. The Mavericks are also unbeaten with three wins from three games to leave them second in the Western Conference behind the Nuggets. — AFP

ing MVP Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey.

Harden had been at odds with 76ers team president Daryl Morey over wanting a long-term contract. After opting into a one-year deal with the expectation of being traded, no deal for Harden materialized, leaving him calling Morey a liar and saying the ruptured relationship could never be mended.

Philadelphia, who haven't reached the NBA Finals since 2001, lost in the Eastern Conference semi-finals for the fifth time in six years last season. The Clippers reached the West Conference finals for the first time in 2021, and added Westbrook towards the end of last season after he completed a contract buyout with the Utah Jazz following his trade from the Los Angeles Lakers. — AFP

Pakistan down Bangladesh to stay alive at WCup

KOLKATA: Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed three wickets while openers Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique cracked half-centuries as Pakistan stormed to a seven-wicket victory over Bangladesh on Tuesday to stay afloat in the race for a World Cup semi-final place.

Shaheen's 3-23 helped Pakistan dismiss Bangladesh for just 204 in 45.1 overs before Zaman's 74-ball 81 and Shafique's 69-ball 68 guided Pakistan over the line for the loss of three wickets with 105 balls to spare.

The victory revived Pakistan's outside hopes of reaching the semi-finals with six points from seven matches. They still need to win against New Zealand (November 4 in Bengaluru) and England (Kolkata on November 11) and also hope other results go their way if they are to stay in the tournament.

In contrast, Bangladesh became the first side to crash out of the ten-team event with just one win from seven games. Needing to improve their net run-rate, Zaman and Shafique cruised to 128 by the 22nd over. Shafique hit nine boundaries and two sixes as he made his third half century in addition to a hundred in the tournament.

He fell leg-before to spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz while skipper Babar Azam holed out to the same bowler for nine. Zaman, who recovered from a knee injury to replace Imam-ul-Haq in one of three changes for Pakistan, smashed seven sixes and three boundaries, his 16th ODI fifty, but first after 11 innings.

He holed out to Miraz in the 28th over but Mohammad Rizwan (26) and Iftikhar Ahmed (17) remained undefeated to complete the modest chase. Miraz finished with 3-60, the only bright spot in Bangladesh's bowling.

Shaheen's 100th wicket

Earlier, Shaheen and fellow fast bowlers Mohammad Wasim (3-31) and Haris Rauf (2-36) ripped through Bangladesh. The pace trio were too hot to handle as Bangladesh struggled on a dry and slow Eden Gardens pitch.

Bangladesh, who won the toss and batted, only passed the 200-mark thanks to a solid 70-ball 56 from Mahmudullah, 45 by Liton Das and skipper Shakib Al Hasan's 64-ball 43. Shaheen struck with the fifth ball of his first over, trapping opener Tanzid Hasan right in front of the stumps and then saw Usama Mir clutch on to a flick off Najmul Hossain Shanto (four) in his next. The first dismissal gave Shaheen his 100th wicket in his 51st one-day international, making him the 21st Pakistani bowler with a century of wickets.

Pace partner Haris made it 23-3 with the wicket of veteran Mushfiqur Rahim, caught behind for five in the sixth over. It took a 79-run stand between Mahmudullah and Liton to carry Bangladesh to 102 when Iftikhar broke the stand with a soft dismissal of Liton, caught off a loose shot. Liton hit six boundaries in his 64-ball knock. Shaheen came back for his second spell to finish off Mahmudullah, bowling him with a superb outswinger that hit the top of the off stump. Mahmudullah's knock had a six and six boundaries. Shaheen joined Australian spinner Adam Zampa as the top wicket-taker at this World Cup with 16.

Shakib, who had a poor tournament with just 61 runs in five innings ahead of Tuesday's game, mistimed a hook off Rauf and was caught by Agha Salman after hitting four boundaries. Miraz hit a six and a boundary to score a 30-ball 25 but Wasim removed him and then Taskin Ahmed (six) and Mustafizur Rahman (three) in successive overs as Bangladesh lost their last six wickets for 74 runs. — AFP

Clippers get Harden from 76ers in blockbuster trade

LOS ANGELES: Former NBA Most Valuable Player James Harden will join the Los Angeles Clippers from the Philadelphia 76ers as part of a blockbuster trade involving seven players and multiple draft picks, US media reported on Tuesday. Harden, a 10-time All-Star who has won three NBA scoring titles, had yet to play for Philadelphia this season after requesting a

move in June and then voicing his frustration publicly when trade talks fell through.

According to reports, the deal will send Harden, P.J. Tucker and Filip Petrusic to the Clippers in exchange for Marcus Morris, Robert Covington, Nicolas Batum and KJ Martin. The 76ers will also receive a raft of draft picks which is expected to include a 2028 first-round selection.

Harden, 34, will team up with Kawhi Leonard, Paul George and Russell Westbrook in Los Angeles. Harden played with Westbrook in Oklahoma City in his first three NBA seasons and briefly reunited with the 2017 MVP in Houston. The trade ends the stand-off between Harden and the 76ers, who are looking to bring in another elite guard to partner with reign-