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Crown Prince fully supports govt

Finance minister: Govt-Assembly cooperation must continue to serve citizens



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday, on behalf of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, an invitation from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to attend the extraordinary session of the Arab Summit to be held in Riyadh on Nov 11. Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud handed the invitation to HH the Crown Prince. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa said he received a message on Tuesday from HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying he totally supports the government to "work and achieve". Based on the message, received through acting speaker Mohammad Al-Mutair, Essa said he understands that there is only one government running the country and he supports this government.

In surprising statements made on Sunday, Essa had called on the government to resign because he thought that it had lost the confidence and trust of the leadership after HH the Crown Prince said in his opening speech of the new term of the Assembly last week that he was not fully satisfied with the work of the government and the National Assembly as well.

In a separate statement, Mutair said he met with HH the Crown Prince early

Tuesday and it was evident from the meeting "HH the Crown Prince's keenness of pushing the two authorities (the government and the Assembly) for more achievement and productivity to meet the aspirations of the people".

Mutair added "HH the Crown Prince will be fully satisfied with the performance of the two authorities when they achieve the largest number of issues that concern the nation and citizens". Mutair said after the meeting with HH the Crown Prince, he became more convinced that this was the meaning of the speech at the Assembly's opening session and nothing else. MP Essa also said the message he received from HH the Crown Prince means the Kuwaiti government has the support and blessing of HH the Crown Prince.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah said on Tuesday cooperation with the National Assembly should continue for the service of the nation and citizens. Jarallah, in

a statement, said he will meet members of the Assembly's finance and economy committee on Thursday to discuss a government proposal to increase pensions of retirees. This proposal, he added, is at the behest of the political leadership and will be approved in the next parliamentary session once completed.

Jarallah said the government will also propose improving living conditions of public and private sector workers, and that teams from the ministry and Public Institute for Social Security are preparing the ground for these proposals. The minister also underlined the importance of economic reforms to guarantee the sustainable financial status of the state, as well as achieving justice and equality among citizens. "The government approach will encourage citizens to work in the private sector, which is a major element in the national economy," Jarallah said.

Gaza 'graveyard for children' amid 'vortex of pain': UN

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday warned that the bombarded Gaza Strip was becoming a "graveyard for children", as he urged an immediate ceasefire. "The unfolding catastrophe makes the need for a humanitarian ceasefire more urgent with every passing hour," he told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York.

"The parties to the conflict — and, indeed, the international community — face an immediate and fundamental responsibility: To stop this inhuman collective suffering and dramatically expand humanitarian aid to Gaza," he said. "The nightmare in Gaza is more than a humanitarian crisis. It is a crisis of humanity."

Guterres also deplored the killings of media workers. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 36 journalists and media workers have been killed. "More journalists have reportedly been killed over a four-week period than in any conflict in at least three decades," Guterres said, adding that 89 UN aid workers have also been killed. Guterres was formally launching a recently announced \$1.2 billion UN humanitarian appeal to help 2.7 million Palestinians over the entire Gaza Strip and parts of the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Aid trucks have been coming into Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah border crossing, but the level remains well below that of before Oct 7, with the Zionist entity saying it needs time for security checks of vehicles. One restriction is that they are not bringing fuel. "Without fuel, newborn babies in incubators and patients on life support will die," Guterres said. "The way forward is clear."

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Zionist entity threatens to intensify war

GAZA: The Zionist entity's deadliest ever war in Gaza entered its second month Tuesday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed there would be no ceasefire until Hamas releases its 240 captives. The Zionist entity has vowed to destroy the Islamist group over its shock Oct 7 attack, launching a campaign in the Gaza Strip that has killed more than 10,300, mostly civilians, said the Palestinian territory's health ministry.

Netanyahu also said the Zionist entity would assume "overall security" in Gaza after the war ends, while allowing for possible "tactical pauses" before then to free captives and deliver aid to the besieged territory of 2.4 million people. Since the attack, the Zionist entity has relentlessly hammered targets in Gaza with more than 12,000 air and artillery strikes and sent in ground

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians pull a child from debris following Zionist bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 7, 2023. — AFP

Activists demand Gaza ceasefire at Statue of Liberty

NEW YORK: Hundreds of US Jewish activists peacefully occupied New York's Statue of Liberty on Monday to demand a ceasefire by the Zionist entity and an end to the "genocidal bombardment" of civilians in Gaza. Dressed in black T-shirts emblazoned with the slogans "Jews demand ceasefire now" or "Not in our name", the protestors unfurled banners reading "The whole world is watching" and "Palestinians should be free" at the base of New York's iconic landmark.

The huge copper statue sits on Liberty Island at the entrance to New York Harbor. "The famous words of our Jewish ancestor Emma Lazarus etched into this very monument compel us to take action supporting the Palestinians of Gaza yearning to breathe free," Jay Saper of Jewish Voice

Continued on Page 6



NEW YORK: Activists from Jewish Voice for Peace occupy the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty calling for a ceasefire in Gaza on Nov 6, 2023. — AFP

Trump clashes with judge at civil fraud trial

NEW YORK: A combative Donald Trump took the stand on Monday in the New York civil fraud case threatening his real estate empire, clashing repeatedly with the judge and denouncing the trial as a "disgrace". One year out from an election he hopes will return him to the White House, the 77-year-old Trump became the first former US president to testify as a defendant in a court case in more than a century.

Trump had a number of heated exchanges with Judge Arthur Engoron and lawyers for the New York attorney general's office during his daylong appearance in a Manhattan courtroom, prompting the judge to tell him at one point to "please, just answer the questions, no speeches".

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Kuwait Speaker urges more Gulf Arab unity amid regional unrest

Sheikh Talal stresses larger GCC-level cooperation on security

DOHA/MUSCAT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Tuesday called for greater unity among Gulf Arab states given the current developments in the region, saying such a measure was necessary to bring common aspirations to fruition.

At a time where we "watch with agony" the continued acts of destruction committed by Zionist forces against the Palestinians, which include mass killings that constitute "genocide," the Kuwaiti top lawmaker told a gathering that joined him with his counterparts from the six member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Qatari capital.

He slammed Zionist entity's "persistence" in its "aggressive and malicious" ideologies, saying the Zionist entity forces' "acts of violence" remain unabated as they continue to impede the delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, subsequently dashing even the faintest of hopes for peace in the region.

Kuwait's Speaker said that Zionist entity continues to get "unlimited backing" in its war against the Palestinians, emphasizing the need for an immediate humanitarian truce in Gaza that would pave the way for the delivery of aid there. Arab states remain vociferous in their support for the



DOHA: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun addresses the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) meeting in the Qatari capital.



MUSCAT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah arrives in Oman. — KUNA photos

Palestinians, he reiterated, saying peace in the region largely hinges on the end of Zionist entity violence and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled

Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed Tuesday that the meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council interior ministers in Muscat will produce a number of decisions that will strengthen the process of joint Gulf security cooperation. This came in a statement by Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to KUNA after his

arrival in Oman to participate in the 40th meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers. Sheikh Talal was received at the airport by the Omani Minister of Interior and the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman, Ambassador Mohammad Al-Hajri. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Acting President of Kuwait Audit Bureau Adel Al-Sarawi on Tuesday. — KUNA

Workshop discusses UN reports on rights of people with special needs

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Society for Guardians of Persons with Disabilities held a workshop on Monday to discuss UN reports on rights of people with disabilities. The workshop included a group of specialists in matters concerning people with special needs, presented by trainer Adel Al-Qallaf, who shed light on several issues. The most important topics mentioned in the workshop include recognizing human rights standards, the system for protecting human rights and defining obligations towards human rights.

Qallaf began with a hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on human rights:

"Do not kill a child, a woman, an elderly person, a hermit in a hermitage, or damage a palm tree or destroy a building." He then spoke about international humanitarian law, which includes the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of the wounded and sick in the field, the drowned, prisoners of war and civilians during times of war.

Qallaf highlighted human rights, stating they are fundamental standards that people cannot live without in dignity, and that individuals and societies cannot grow without them. He included individuals with special needs in his speech, indicating that they have the right to all their rights equally with other individuals at all levels,



Adel Al-Qallaf

whether educational, professional, social, cultural, economic and other aspects. Qallaf also mentioned Article 1 of the United Nations Charter for the year 1945, which states the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people and encourages this without discrimination based on gender, language or religion, and without distinction between men and women.

Burgan Bank to sponsor DAI's Cultural Season

KUWAIT: In continued support of Kuwait's arts and culture scene, Burgan Bank announced that it will be sponsoring select workshops among Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah's (DAI) 28th Cultural Season, which is set to bring its audience a diverse and vibrant range of events and hands-on experiences for six months between October 2023 and March 2024. This sponsorship comes as part of Burgan Bank's comprehensive social responsibility strategy and committed efforts to inspire positive change across society.

Commenting on the DAI sponsorship, Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank, said: "We are delighted to extend our ongoing support to DAI in their exemplary pursuit of cultivating the realms of arts and culture within Kuwait. With each ensuing season, DAI continually pushes the limits of creativity by engaging diverse segments of the community in Kuwait's rich cultural heritage, motivating us to reinforce our support for this distinguished organization." "As part of our multi-faceted social responsibility program, we remain dedicated to supporting all cultural events and



Kholoud Al-Feeli



Amricani Cultural Center

initiatives that aim to broaden society's perspective and enrich their experiences by offering arts and culture in an engaging context that appeals to the different audiences," added Al-Feeli.

During DAI's 28th Cultural Season, Burgan Bank will be sponsoring a range of workshops this year and next. For 2023, the workshops include Contemplations on the Quran by Dr. Ali Al-Yaqoub, which will be held between the 14th and 16th of November, and The Art of Arabic Calligraphy by Jassim Mearaj, which will be organized from the 12th to 14th of December. Meanwhile, for 2024, The Skills of Speed Reading and Mind Mapping workshop by Maria Shoukry will be held between the 15th and 17th of February and The History of the Mamluks workshop by Bethany Walker will be organized from the 2nd to 4th of March. It serves to note that Burgan Bank's commitment to preserving and showcasing Kuwait's rich cultural heritage manifests in various efforts, on top of which is its people-centric Burgan Sidra initiative that draws its inspiration from the symbol of Kuwaiti culture, the Sidra tree, and the unique national talents who continue to put Kuwait on the global map of cultural destinations.

KIB to manage real estate portfolio for Zakat House

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it has won a tender to manage the real estate portfolio for Zakat House Kuwait. This important achievement reflects the leadership of the Bank's Property Management Department in providing comprehensive and distinguished real estate services to all customers. This comes in line with KIB's commitment to its vital role and its reliance on its accumulated expertise in managing and developing portfolios in the governmental sector and other diverse portfolios.

Commenting on the occasion, Yousef Al-Ojail, Manager of Property Management at KIB, said: "This tender is a testament to the confidence placed in KIB by Zakat House Kuwait as a reliable and trusted partner. The Zakat House real estate portfolio, which will be managed by KIB, includes a group of investment commercial properties located in different areas across Kuwait."

Al-Ojail praised the high levels of expertise and professionalism exhibited by the KIB Property Management team, as well as their impressive track record of achievements and successes over the past years. He also mentioned that he will work on developing the assets of this portfolio, increasing its annual revenue and income. This will involve various tasks such as maintenance work, supervision of maintenance companies for the properties within the Zakat House portfolio, attracting bids from these companies, contract-



Yousef Al-Ojail

ing with them, disbursing their payments, and overseeing issues related to properties and tenants. He emphasized the importance of keeping clients informed about all details and updates by preparing comprehensive monthly reports on revenues and expenses for each property separately and evaluating the properties at the end of each year.

Pointing out its long history in asset management, Al-Ojail highlighted that his department was established in 1976 with the aim of providing comprehensive and integrated services for various types of properties at competitive prices. These include commercial complexes, residential buildings, and properties owned by various customer segments. He explained that the tasks of this management include property marketing and management, collecting rents through advanced technological methods, preparing accounting reports, providing maintenance and legal services, and conducting public auctions as requested by property owners.

It is worth noting that KIB consistently strives to provide innovative services and products to a wide range of customers, especially through its entirely new digital real estate platform, KIB Aqari, which it recently launched. This platform is designed for those interested in buying, selling, and renting properties and is backed by the property appraisal request service, which was digitally introduced for the first time in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: The Palestinian Cultural Center in cooperation with the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Kuwait and the Women's Cultural & Social Society organized an exhibition titled 'Humanity Calls' to highlight the plight of the Palestinian people in Gaza and pledge solidarity with them in their resistance against Zionist aggression, at the Women's Cultural and Social Society in Khaldiya. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Kuwait-Turkey trade volume jumps 33% to reach \$1.064 billion in 2022

Turkish Embassy hosts Turkey-Kuwait delegation and B2B meetings



KUWAIT: Dignitaries pose for a group photo during the Turkey-Kuwait Delegation and B2B meetings hosted by the Turkish Embassy in Kuwait on Tuesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban highlighted the remarkable growth in the volume of trade exchange between Kuwait and Turkey in 2022. The trade volume reached approximately \$1.064 billion, marking a substantial increase of 32.9 percent compared to the previous year.

Speaking at the opening of the Turkey-Kuwait Delegation and B2B meetings hosted by the Turkish Embassy in Kuwait and attended by 100 Turkish businessmen on Tuesday, Aiban emphasized the positive trajectory of their relationship, attributing it to the expanding economy, trade, and investment ties between the two countries. He underscored Kuwait's commitment to enhancing the business environment in the country. This includes streamlining company establishment procedures, reducing the time and effort needed for licensing, and making the entire process digital. "Kuwait has also improved transparency and simplicity in its business-related laws and regulations. Additionally, financial support for small and medium enterprises has been extended, fostering entrepreneurship and employment opportunities through the National Fund for Development," he noted.

Aiban stressed the government's focus on the private sector, seen as a key driver of economic growth. "The government is eager to attract foreign investors, allowing them to benefit from the incentives provided by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority," he said.

The minister pointed out that various challenges, such as global political stability, food security, climate change and commitments to sustainable green development necessitate increased efforts and dedication in collaboration between Kuwait and Turkey. "We realize that there are many investment opportunities available between the two countries that require strengthening joint efforts to achieve them, and we are here today to exchange ideas, experiences and expertise," he said.

Turkish Minister of Trade Omer Bolat lauded the strong and thriving relations between Turkey and Kuwait, emphasizing their growth in investments, trade, and economic exchange. These ties have flourished, underscoring the substantial economic partnership between the two countries. Kuwait and Turkey have developed a robust and mutually beneficial trade re-



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban (right) with Turkish Minister of Trade Omer Bolat during the Turkish-Kuwaiti trade delegation and B2B meetings in Kuwait on November 7, 2023.

lationship, with significant investments being made in various sectors. The praise from the Turkish trade minister reflects the deepening economic cooperation and the positive impact it has had on both countries, fostering a climate of collaboration and trade expansion.

Bolat pointed out that the volume of Turkish exports to Kuwait amounted to more than \$600 million, and 427 Kuwaiti companies invest about two billion dollars in Turkey. "Leading Turkish companies in the field of contracting are implementing about 50 projects in Kuwait with a total value of about \$9 billion," he pointed out.

Simultaneously, concerns were expressed regarding the distressing situation in Gaza due to Zionist attacks, with unprecedented levels of violence and loss of life. Condemnation was voiced for this tragic event, along with wishes for the recovery and healing of the injured. The hope for a two-state solution in the region was emphasized.

Bolat noted that Turkey and Kuwait have played a pivotal role in their journey, serving as a gateway to the Gulf, and from Turkey as a gateway to Central Asia and Europe. The two countries have developed strong bonds of friendship, rooted in deep brotherhood.

"Trade and economic ties between Kuwait and Turkey have continued to flourish. Mutual trade has seen remarkable growth, with prospects for further ex-



Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez

pansion. Kuwaiti companies have made large investments in Turkey worth billions of dollars, confirming the depth of the economic partnership between them. This enduring friendship is greatly respected, and we extend our sincere thanks for the support and close friendship between Kuwait and Turkey," he said.

Additionally, Bolat indicated that the collaboration extends to various projects, including tourism, where Kuwaiti tourists have also shown interest in investing in Turkish real estate. "On the defense levels, 18 Turkish armed drones were bought by Kuwait, and there is a legendary project for Kuwait, in addition to the current projects," he revealed.

Meanwhile, Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez expressed her country's eagerness to foster increased cooperation and bilateral trade exchange with Kuwait, emphasizing that trade and investment relations between the two nations are set to play a pivotal role in their future partnership. The ambassador highlighted the substantial growth in the volume of trade between the two countries, signifying an upward trajectory in commercial transactions across various sectors.

President of the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) Mustafa Gultepe provided insight into the Turkish business delegation, comprising 37 companies spanning various sectors. He noted the Exporters Council boasts a membership of over 110,000 from 27 sectors and 61 export councils, adding that their active participation in numerous international conferences reflects the council's commitment to expanding trade relations with various countries, including Kuwait.

Kuwait hails heroic sacrifices, resilience of Palestinian women

JEDDAH: Kuwait reiterated its support to the Palestinian people and Palestinian women in particular for their resilience, heroism, bravery and continuous sacrifices amidst horrendous crises under Zionist entity occupation. Delivering a speech at the international conference titled "Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment," Kuwait's delegation chief and Assistant Foreign Minister for human rights, Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah on Tuesday said, "as we convene to examine the status of women in Islam, Palestinian women live through tragic circumstances prompted by horrific Zionist entity occupation aggression against Gaza."

The conference, held in Jeddah, is jointly organized by Saudi Foreign Ministry and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation General Secretariat. She said this aggression is a breach of humanitarian international laws as it systematically targets civilians with 70 percent of victims are women and children. Al-Sabah went on to say that since the establishment of the modern state of Kuwait it had relied on the principles of the Islamic religion, principles that had guaranteed the rights of women. She stated that the beliefs and traditions of Kuwaiti people distinguish women as an essential and active partner in society. Therefore, the 1962 constitution inscribes the rights of Kuwaiti women, and marks equality between men and women.

On role of modern Kuwaiti women, Ambassador Al-Sabah explained that echoing what was



Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah

stipulated in the 2035 vision in regards to women empowerment, around 58 percent of national workforce are women; 48 percent of private sector, and 60 percent of public sector.

Additionally, women take up 28 percent of positions of leadership, claiming a notable role in the decision making process. Around 47 percent of leadership roles in the Defense Ministry are occupied by women, as well as 43 percent of military engineering positions. The Kuwaiti diplomat also took note of women's multiplied presence in certain careers including police force, diplomacy, oil sector, judiciary and the banking sector.

Ambassador Al-Sabah stated that Kuwait had taken a leap in global indices on gender gap issued by the World Economic Forum, and came third on Arab world level in women peace and security index. The conference is being held amidst critical conditions as the Islamic religion is being subjected to grotesque attempts aiming to defile it and false claims of it marginalizing Muslim women, commented Al-Sabah. As such, the conference's axes have been intricately designed to address the status of women in relation to society as a whole and individuals, to clear the name of Islam and eradicate misconceptions.

Al-Sabah took the opportunity to affirm that Islam reinforced principles of equity between men and women, in duties, responsibilities, penalties and fate. The Kuwaiti ambassador extended her thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting the conference, sponsored by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and commended OIC for their efforts. The conference, launched on Monday concludes on Nov 8, aims to shed light on achievements of Muslim women across the ages as well as highlight their contributions to development of member states. It seeks to put forth a roadmap on legal reformations, and political initiatives to reinforce justice and empowerment, as well as adopt comprehensive document titled, "Jeddah Document for Women in Islam." — KUNA

NBK holds training program jointly with INSEAD School

KUWAIT: Pursuing its endeavors to build a dynamic and agile workforce to drive its long-term progress and promote sustainable human capital, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized an intensive training program for developing leadership in all divisions, in cooperation with INSEAD Business School, one of the world's most reputable business schools.

The opening ceremony was attended by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO. The attendees also included Faisal A Al-Hamad, CEO - Global Wealth Management, Mohamed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology, Ahmed Bourisly Head of Corporate Banking Group.

The program titled "Leading Customer-centric Digital Transformation" aims to develop and enhance leadership skills, with a particular focus on team leadership and strategy execution, in a way that enables them to keep pace with the fast-paced challenges facing the banking industry, and taking on future leadership positions to sustain NBK's long-standing success, which aligns with its long-term strategy.

The program's Module 1, which was held on Nov 6 and Nov 7, was themed "Fast Changing Banking World" highlights the significant challenges facing the banking industry due to digital disruption, and change management skills, developing and enhancing leadership skills, with a particular focus on self-awareness, team leadership, change management and strategy execution.

The program also covered a number of key topics including: framing and building a powerful customer-centric strategy by leveraging innovative digital approaches, data and technologies, The Three Trans-



Emad Al-Ablani

formational Shifts (Digital Experience Makeover, Digital Proposition Pivot and Engaging Customers and Selling More Effectively). It also covers Developing an Innovative Mindset in an Agile World, Group Work, Driving Transformation Through Data-driven Strategies, Understanding and Leveraging Key Enablers for a Successful Transformation.

The program also helps participants in understanding how to create outstanding customer experiences by leveraging digital tech and data, and learning how to leverage data and analytics to analyze your competitive landscape, measure the success of digital activities.

Speaking on this, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "The leadership development program is an important part of the bank's consistent strategy to develop human capital and ensure readiness for the fast-paced changes taking place in the banking industry." "At NBK,

we firmly believe that leadership development is instrumental to sustain our long-term business growth at all levels. Therefore, training and development initiatives are at the heart of our strategic plans."

"Developing executives has always been the main focus, as NBK's training model enhances leadership skills based on a consistent vision of how we understand leadership and what we expect from leaders. It also reflects the unique needs of leaders and is supported by rigorous scientific research to determine the essential knowledge and skills for effective and comprehensive leadership in order to serve employees' training needs. Joerg Niessing, Senior Affiliate Professor at INSEAD and program director of "Leading Customer-centric Digital Transformation" added "I'm very much looking forward to the program with executives from NBK to discuss digital strategy in the age of disruption. Digital strategy isn't just about adapting to the future: it's about shaping it, one innovative idea at a time creating opportunities that drive sustainable success."

As one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools, INSEAD offers participants a truly global educational experience. INSEAD's business education and research spans the globe with locations in Europe (France), Asia (Singapore), the Middle East (Abu Dhabi) and North America (San Francisco).



The bank's executive management in a memorial photo during the launch ceremony.

Panel discussion on domestic violence held

KUWAIT: The committee on the Rights of Family at the National Diwan for Human Rights held a discussion panel to discuss Law No 16 of 2020 regarding protection from domestic violence and its implementing regulations, which were issued by Resolution No 904 in September this year, according to a release issued by the National Diwan for Human Rights on Tuesday.

At the beginning of the discussion session, Counselor Huda Al-Shayji, member of the Board of Directors of the National Diwan for Human Rights and Head of the Committee on the Rights of Family, confirmed that this discussion is the beginning of coordination with the governmental and private sectors concerned with this law and will be followed by many programs that will be implemented in partnership with civil society. Relevant organizations will introduce the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and to follow up on its implementation.

Al-Shayji also mentioned that the Law Establishing the National Diwan for Human Rights No. 67 of 2015 granted the committees working in the Diwan terms of reference with bracing and protecting human rights and working to spread respect for all kinds of freedom.

In addition to preparing legal studies related to enhance the protection of human rights, with recommendations regarding the preparation of new legislation, reviewing current legislation and submitting proposals to amend them, as well as clarifying the extent to which all laws to be issued are consistent with the basic principles of human rights.

Regarding the importance of the family in the Diwan law, Counselor Al-Shayji stated that family is the building core of any society. Therefore, the Kuwaiti legislator, when addressing the system of the Diwan and its committees, was keen to require the establishment of the Committee on the Rights of Family and assigned it with several responsibilities in the implementing regulations of the law, including those related to the discussion held by the Committee on the Rights of Family at the Diwan which is (studying laws and legislations related to family rights and reviewing their reliability with the basic principles of human rights and submitting proposals regarding them to the Council, as well as organizing courses and programs to teach and spread the culture of human rights) In addition to other specialties specified by the implementing regulations of the Diwan Law.

Leeds University, Kuwait academia discuss challenges of education

British Council seeks to expand academic links between Kuwait, UK

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The British Council organized an academic meeting between Leeds University and private and public higher education institutions to share experiences regarding the development and leadership structures of expanding institutions.

Anthony Skinner, Country Director at the British Council, said: "We are delighted to have Leeds University with us, sharing their insights on academic leadership, and we are pleased to have such a strong representation from local sectors in Kuwait." He emphasized that the dialogue has been informative for both sides, and as the British Council aims to foster international links between Kuwait and the UK. "We hope that this will lead to further discussions, potential opportunities and partnerships for the development of institutions in the UK and Kuwait."

Skinner mentioned that the initiative has been well received by both private and public universities in Kuwait. "This is the first in a series of discussion events. Others will be held in December, where we will focus on quality assurance, and in January, we will discuss AI and how the UK is responding to AI-related challenges," he explained.

Dr Rhona Riley, Associate Professor of Cardiac Physiology and Deputy Director of Student Education at the Leeds Institute of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Medicine, said: "We were invited to conduct a seminar about academic leadership, discussing higher education structures in the UK and how to apply them here. Kuwait is looking to strengthen and diversify its economic structure by expanding universities and training to become self-sufficient in all areas, beyond relying solely on energy resources. The general idea is that local solutions should be delivered by local people. In Kuwait, development issues are not well understood, and local development should be driven by the local population, as is the case in all countries. Self-reliance is a vital part of development."

Dr Arezou Harraf, the Head of the Department of Business Studies at Box Hill College, commented: "I think this is a good initiative because it brings together leaders from private universities in Kuwait and benchmarks them against international institutions. It provides an opportunity for everyone to dis-

Dasman Diabetes Institute hosts school visit

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, recently received a group of students from the International British School. The students were provided with diabetes prevention lectures by the diabetes educators and nutritionists as well as physical activity training by the medical fitness team at the institute to raise the students' awareness. In addition, the students were taken on a general tour at the institute to brief them about the ongoing activities and projects at DDI.

Holding such events and activities stems from DDI's mission statement, where health promotion and awareness are a priority for the Insti-



KUWAIT: The speakers during the academic meeting organized by the British Council.



Dr Piruthivi Sukumar



Anthony Skinner



Dr Rhona Riley

cut common problems and create a framework for addressing those problems in an informative format."

Dr Piruthivi Sukumar, Associate Professor and Pro Dean in the International Faculty for Medicine and Health at the University of Leeds, said: "The British Council recognized that many universities have emerged, and any organization needs leaders to develop them, especially in academics. In the past, universities had prominent professors as leaders, but leadership is different from being a professor. Leaders need to work with people, have financial skills, management skills and more. Developing academic leaders is a challenge, even for the UK, and it is a

significant challenge for new universities in Kuwait."

Dr Sukumar said they identified the importance of hearing from experienced university leaders to establish effective leadership structures to transfer knowledge. Regarding sharing structural experiences, he said, "Leadership development is not just about managing and delegating tasks. A true leader inspires people to buy into their vision, so all can benefit from it."

Dr Sukumar revealed there are flaws in the current system, and they are discussing their problem-solving experiences so that local universities in Kuwait can benefit from them.



tute. Since its establishment in 2006, the Institute has been organizing and taking part in many events and campaigns to shed light on diabetes

and its related conditions. This is in accordance with the Institute's belief that, Prevention is better than cure.



ICSK holds blood donation drive

KUWAIT: School is a place where values are cultivated and lives transformed. The Indian Community School, Kuwait has always prioritized social responsibilities and is committed to the welfare of the community. With the motive of encouraging young leaders to become ambassadors of humanity, a spectrum of activities is conducted throughout the academic year. These activities not only foster empathy and hone leadership skills but also enable the children realize how their actions can have a positive impact on the world.

Continuing our culture of being trendsetters in various curricular and co-curricular fields, The Indian Community School, Kuwait takes pride in being the first ever Indian School in Kuwait to organize Blood Donation Drive. The drive conducted on Wednesday, 1st November 2023 aimed at raising awareness about the importance of blood donation and dispelling myths regarding it. The event was graced by a highly passionate team of medical staff of 13 nurses led by Dr Eman Monir, Central World Bank, Kuwait. The team was welcomed with great reverence and pride by the staff and the students.

The inaugural function began with the Islamic prayer invoking the blessings of the Almighty. Motivating the students to be life-saving donors in the future, Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK presented a cordial welcome to the gathering. Dr Eman Monir, in her address, threw

light upon how each blood donation contributes significantly to the country's health care system.

Vote of thanks proposed by Susan Rajesh, Vice Principal of ICSK Senior drew curtain on the inaugural ceremony and stated the commencement of the blood donation drive. 165 members of the ICSK family comprising of parents and staff registered to be donors and contribute to the noble cause. Maliha Tanwar Alam, student of class XII voluntarily donated blood and set an example for her schoolmates to follow. The overwhelming amount of support displayed by the parents, students and staff of ICSK family during the blood donation drive was an uplifting and inspiring experience for the young pillars. A photograph of parent-donor along with their ward was taken to capture the precious moment.

Students of each class were provided with an opportunity to witness the proceedings of blood donation that giving them an insight into the benefits of blood donation, the procedure involved and the medical conditions required. They appreciated the unwavering support and dedication of the medical team who work tirelessly to save the lives of the people. Each donor was thanked profusely for their spirit and generosity and for being exemplary figures for others.

One blood donation can save as many as three lives and the power to save lives is in the palm of our hands. With the notable participation of the parents, students and faculty members, the blood donation drive led by Chief Coordinator, Dr Waseem Pathan was a resounding success. With new milestones to achieve in its journey, the Indian Community School, Kuwait will continue to take initiatives to serve humanity and the world at large.



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Philippine city rises from ruins a decade after typhoon

Ukraine president says 'not the time' for elections

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KHAN YUNIS: Rescuers and people search the home of Palestine TV journalist Mohamed Abu Hatab, who was killed along with family members in a Zionist strike on Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 2, 2023. — AFP photos

Palestinian journalist death toll climbs to 32

Syndicate calls on UN to hold Zionist entity accountable for crimes against journalists

GAZA: A Palestinian journalist was killed in a Zionist air strike in the Gaza Strip and another was wounded, the official Palestinian news agency reported Tuesday. Mohammad Abu Hasira was the latest among dozens of journalists killed since Zionist forces began bombarding Gaza following a Hamas attack on settler communities and army bases south of the entity.

He "was killed in a Zionist bombing that targeted his house located near the fishermen's port west of Gaza City," said the WAFA news agency, where he worked. WAFA reported that Abu Hasira "and 42 members of his family, including his sons and brothers" were killed in the strike. The Hamas-run news press service in the Gaza Strip said the bombardment that killed Abu Hasira took place overnight between Sunday and Monday, but that his body was only found in the rubble on Tuesday.

On Thursday, the official Palestinian TV station said one of its correspondents in the Gaza Strip was killed in a Zionist air strike in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestine TV accused the Zionist entity of carrying out a "deliberate assassination" of Mohammed Abu Hatab as it bombed his family home in Gaza's Khan Yunis, in the south of the territory, on Thursday.

Sources at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis said at least 11 people were killed in the strike. A statement from the TV station

said an air strike hit Abu Hatab's apartment shortly after his arrival. It asserted that the attack "is a bloody message to terrorize Palestinian journalists," intended to stop them from "conveying the suffering of the Palestinian people and exposing the crimes of the occupation".

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said Monday that at least 37 journalists and media employees (32 Palestinians, four Zionists, one Lebanese citizen) had been killed since the start of the war.

'March of coffins'

On Tuesday, The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS) delivered a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Zionist crimes against journalists in the Gaza Strip, and the targeting of their homes and families, calling on the UN chief to hold the Zionist entity accountable for its crimes through the International Criminal Court (ICC), according to WAFA.

The letter was delivered to the United Nations office in Ramallah following the "march of coffins" with the participation of dozens of journalists who carried empty coffins with pictures of the 31 Palestinian journalists killed during the Zionist entity's 32-day-long brutal and sweeping air, land and sea bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip.

"Historically, the (Zionist) occupation

forces have been targeting Palestinian journalists systematically, as since the year 2000 more than 80 journalists have been killed by the (Zionist) occupation forces, more than 40 percent of them have been killed this month," said the letter.

It said that the Zionist occupation forces have been taking advantage from impunity and committing cruel crimes against journalists, ignoring the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists. The letter called on the United Nations "to take concrete action ... to provide protection to Palestinian journalists and hold Zionist occupation leaders accountable through the International Criminal Court for perpetrating crimes against journalists."

Zionist 'intimidation'

In a separate incident, a journalist with Lebanese Al-Mayadeen television channel filed a police complaint against a Zionist journalist who she alleged had "intimidated" her. Hana Mohamed said Zionist journalist Haim Etgar confronted her at a post office after allegedly impersonating a postal employee and "threatening" her.

"This is not the first time that this journalist has chased Arab journalists and intimidated them," she told AFP. "When a journalist gives himself the authority to question another journalist like a policeman it legitimizes racist at-



Relatives bid farewell during the funeral of Palestine TV journalist Mohamed Abu Hatab.

tacks on anyone," Mohamed said.

Etgar posted on his Instagram account a video of him following Mohamed out of the post office to her car, asking about her take on the war, Mayadeen's coverage and accusing her of broadcasting "fake news," such as that the Zionist army is using chemical weapons.

"We tried to ask questions, as always politely and without physical contact," Etgar wrote, alleging that Mayadeen was affiliated with Hezbollah, the militant group in Lebanon. "We didn't get answers." There was no indication from police as to whether they were launching an investigation following the complaint. — Agencies

Broad push, narrow achievements from US on Gaza war

WASHINGTON: One month into the Zionist war on Hamas, the achievements of US-led diplomacy have been small or subtle, but both supporters and critics say that is partly by design. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, completing his second whirlwind crisis tour, insisted that all leaders he spoke to wanted "American leadership." "Every country I talk to is looking for us to play a leading role with our diplomacy to try to make progress on all of these different aspects of the crisis," Blinken told reporters Monday in Ankara.

But leaders in the Arab world, and many elsewhere, have called for a ceasefire, an idea not backed by the United States, which says the Zionist entity has the right to respond. The Zionist entity has been pounding the besieged Gaza Strip since Oct 7 when Hamas men infiltrated through the Zionist-Gaza border and attacked army bases and settler communities. The attacks left 1,400 people dead, according to Zionist officials. More than 10,000 people were killed in Zionist strikes since then, including more than 4,000 children, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Blinken instead called on his latest trip for "humanitarian pauses" to let aid into the impoverished Gaza Strip, which is run by Hamas and has been under a Zionist blockade since 2007. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not back Blinken's idea but the White House said that President Joe Biden again raised "tactical pauses" in a telephone call Monday.

The United States has highlighted some progress in alleviating the plight of Gaza residents, including by persuading the Zionist entity partly to restore water and electricity. US diplomats also negotiated the reopening of the Rafah crossing from Egypt, although the 476 trucks that have

crossed are fewer than the number that went each day before Oct 7. A primary goal for Blinken has also been to prevent the spread of the war to additional fronts — particularly Lebanon, where Iranian-backed Hezbollah is far better armed than Hamas. While US officials have not claimed a win, some observers saw a long-awaited speech Friday by Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah as holding off on more direct confrontation.

Eyes on deterrence and public

James Jeffrey, a veteran US diplomat who led efforts against the Islamic State group under former president Donald Trump, said that Blinken set out with a mission foremost to prevent escalation by pro-Iranian forces and secondly to assuage outraged public opinion. "So I would say that Blinken achieved his goal on this trip," said Jeffrey, now chair of the Middle East program at the Wilson Center.

He said that the ferocious Zionist response in Gaza in itself served as a deterrent to Hezbollah and Iran, telling them "we will do the same and worse to you" if there is escalation. But he said Zionist tactics complicated the second US goal of addressing public opinion as Blinken was "trying to get the Zionists to let other things be in the news."

Blinken wanted to "help Arab states with their own populations, and frankly to help Biden domestically, by emphasizing that America is all in on avoiding civilian casualties and taking the lead on humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza," Jeffrey said. "There it's a tough lift, because, frankly, the (Zionists) are not as helpful as they should be," he said.

Just 'earning miles'

Diana Buttu, a former legal advisor to Palestinian negotiators with the Zionist entity, scoffed that Blinken could not even achieve humanitarian pauses, considering how much the Zionist entity relies on Washington. "If Blinken were traveling commercially, he would be earning lots of miles — and that's it," she said.



TEL AVIV: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (right) looks on as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken gives statements to the media on Oct 12, 2023. — AFP

"He's playing this game of trying to appease the Arab states and the rest of the world, while at the same time giving (the Zionist entity) the green light," she said. "To say that somehow the US doesn't have a say in the billions of dollars that it gives is to downplay the role of the US," she said.

Blinken and Biden have voiced support for the Zionist entity, despite their pre-Oct 7 criticism of Netanyahu's hard-right government, and both Democratic and Republican lawmakers have backed increasing assistance following the Hamas attacks. Jon Alterman, the director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that the United States has always faced criticism in the Arab world and doubted that US officials believed it was irreversible.

The Zionists in their campaign against Hamas "are moving further away from their neighbors, they're moving further away from much of the world, and the US is trying very hard to diminish that gap," he said. "It strikes me as very typical diplomacy. It's always slower and more partial than you'd like it to be," he said. — AFP

EU boosts funds for Jordan as war rages in Palestine

BRUSSELS: The EU on Tuesday announced more than 900 million euros in aid for Jordan after European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen met King Abdullah II for talks dominated by Zionist war on Gaza. Von der Leyen thanked the Jordanian king for "his critical stabilizing role in the region," amid fears that the attack, which has left more than 10,000 dead, could spill over to other countries. The two leaders did not hold a press conference after the meeting.

On social media however, Von der Leyen said the talks included the Zionist military offensive against Gaza in response to the Oct 7 attacks by Hamas, which controls the Palestinian territory. Jordan is among countries in the region that fears a mass exodus from Gaza. "I reiterated my position on no forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza and the EU's support for a two-state solution," Von der Leyen said.

A statement said "discussions focused on recent developments and the need to avoid a negative spill-over in the region, where Jordan plays a key stabilizing role". It said the EU support package was worth 902 million euros (\$963 million) — 402 million euros in grants and 500 million euros in European Investment Bank loans. Von der Leyen said the money was to bolster "Jordan's reform process and modernization of its economy".

The bulk of it was to go to improving water supplies in the parched kingdom, while other funding would go to youth education and tourism schemes and improving energy efficiency. The announcement came a day after the bloc said it was increasing humanitarian aid for Gaza by 25 million euros, bringing the total to 100 million euros. — AFP

International

Ukraine president says 'not the time' for elections

Senior advisor dies after birthday gift explodes

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Monday he doesn't believe it is the right time for elections as debate intensifies on holding a vote in 2024 while the country fights against Russia's invasion. All elections including the presidential vote set to take place next spring are technically cancelled under martial law that has been in effect since the conflict began last year. "We must decide that now is the time of defense, the time of battle, on which the fate of the state and people depends," Zelensky said in his daily address.

He said it was a time for the country to be united, not divided, adding: "I believe that now is not the (right) time for elections." The frontline between the warring sides has remained mostly static for almost a year despite a much-touted Ukrainian counter-offensive, with Russian forces entrenched in southern and eastern Ukraine. Officials from the United States and Europe — Kyiv's key allies — are reported to have suggested holding negotiations to end the grinding 20-month-old conflict. But Zelensky has fiercely denied that Ukraine's counter-offensive has hit a stalemate, or that Western countries were leaning on Kyiv to enter talks.

The United States and other supporters have publicly maintained they are ready to back Kyiv with military and financial aid for as long as it takes to defeat Russia. Global attention has turned to the Middle East since the Oct 7 Hamas attack on the Zionist entity — and Zelensky has come under increasing pressure.

The president, who was elected in 2019, said in September that he was ready to hold national elections next year if necessary, and was in favor

of allowing international observers. Voting could be logistically difficult due to the large number of Ukrainians abroad and soldiers fighting on the front.

Zelensky's approval rating skyrocketed after the war began, but the country's political landscape has been fractious despite the unifying force of the war. Former presidential aide Oleksiy Arestovych has announced that he would run against his former boss, after criticizing Zelensky over the slow pace of the counter-offensive.

Advisor killed

Ukraine has been fighting an uphill battle against systemic corruption as part of reforms urged by the West for membership in institutions like the European Union. Ukrainian prosecutors said Monday they had formally notified two senior defense officials that they are suspects in a large-scale fraud case involving the purchase of military uniforms.

Also on Monday, a close advisor to the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian army, General Valery Zaluzhny, was killed when a grenade among his birthday gifts exploded, officials said. "My assistant and close friend, Major Gennadiy Chastiakov, was killed ... on his birthday," Zaluzhny said, adding that police had identified a fellow soldier who gave the fatal gift.

Chastiakov was showing his son one of the grenades moments before the explosion, Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said. "At first, the son took the munition in his hands and began to turn the ring. Then the serviceman took the grenade away from the child and pulled the ring, causing a tragic explosion," Klymenko said. — AFP



This handout photo by Ukrainian Presidential Press Service on Nov 3, 2023, shows Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky awarding a unit of the Armed Forces with the battle flag during a visit to a training center. — AFP

UK's Sunak makes pre-election pitch in first King's Speech

LONDON: Charles III delivered the first King's Speech in 72 years Tuesday, formally opening the UK parliament with a run-down of his government's legislative plans as an election looms. From a golden throne in the House of Lords, the 74-year-old monarch outlined Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's wish list of new laws that reinforced dividing lines with the main opposition Labour Party.

Several dozen protestors outside parliament chanted "Not my king" and "What a waste of money," as Charles addressed lawmakers in the diamond-studded Imperial State Crown, a long crimson robe and Royal Navy uniform. The 10-minute speech came as the Tories, in power since 2010, trail Labour by double-digits in most opinion polls before a general election widely expected next year.

The ceremonial address was Charles's first as head of state, although he had a dry run deputizing for his mother Queen Elizabeth II in May last year. It was also Sunak's first since succeeding Liz Truss, who took over from Boris Johnson as prime minister just two days before the queen's death and lasted only 49 days in office.

"It is mindful of the legacy of service and devotion to this country set by my beloved mother, the late Queen, that I deliver this, the first King's Speech in over 70 years," said Charles, beginning the speech. In it, Sunak made law and order a key election battleground by proposing tougher sentencing guidelines around life terms and an end to early release for some violent sexual offenders. He also underlined differences that he is drawing with Keir Starmer's center-left Labour



LONDON: Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla travel in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach past protesters holding "Not My King" placards on Nov 7, 2023. — AFP photos

party over the environment and energy.

The speech proposed a law granting new licenses for oil and gas projects in the North Sea annually that Sunak says will reduce Britain's reliance on foreign energy and create jobs. Charles, who has devoted his life to environmental causes, delivered the announcement expressionless in keeping with the convention that the monarch is above politics.

Sunak had already announced a rollback of green energy policies in September, positioning himself as a champion of motorists in a bid to turn around his party's fortunes. Labour has said it will not award any new oil and gas exploration licenses and has pledged instead to boost investment in green energy.

Rituals

Sunak also included a phased smoking ban, which he announced at last month's Tory conference, and reforms to home ownership laws. The King's Speech



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Britain's main opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer arrive to the House of Commons Members' Lobby.

signifies the start of a new parliamentary year and was last delivered by a male monarch in 1951 — although not in person as Charles's grandfather, King George VI, was unwell.

It indicates the types of laws the government hopes to get through parliament in the next 12 months. Although a Tory defeat at the next election is far from a foregone conclusion, owing to their sizeable parliamentary majority, a loss would mean much of the legislation never seeing the light of day.

"The problem for Sunak is he's running out of time, the public are both bored and angry at Conservative governance," said Richard Carr, an associate professor in public policy and strategy at Anglia Ruskin University.

Tuesday's state opening saw the sovereign travelling to the Houses of Parliament by carriage from Buckingham Palace. Some 1,400 members of the armed forces, 124 horses and marching bands took part in the pro-

ceedings, which included a 41-gun salute.

Princess Anne, Charles' sister, rode in the procession, performing the ceremonial role of the King's "protector", formally known as Gold Stick in Waiting. As is tradition, an MP was ceremonially held "hostage" to ensure the king's safe return.

Royal bodyguards ritually searched the basement of the Palace of Westminster for explosives — a legacy of the failed attempt by Catholics to blow up parliament in 1605. A parliamentary official known as Black Rod had the door of the lower chamber House of Commons slammed in her face, a tradition that symbolizes parliament's independence from the monarchy.

The monarch led a procession through the House of Lords, parliament's unelected upper chamber, before giving the speech there to assembled lords and ladies in red robes, plus invited members of the elected Commons. — AFP

Gaza 'graveyard for children' amid...

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A humanitarian ceasefire — now. All parties respecting all their obligations under international humanitarian law," he said. Guterres again voiced alarm about the "clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing." "Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law," he said.

Meanwhile, the UN rights chief is visiting the Middle East amid rising concerns over the Zionist

entity's escalation in Gaza, his office said Tuesday. Volker Turk was on Tuesday in Egypt at the start of a five-day visit to the region, and was planning to visit the Rafah crossing to Gaza on Wednesday, his office said in a statement. Turk will visit Amman Thursday, and has also sought access to the Zionist entity, the occupied West Bank and Gaza, it added.

"It has been one full month of carnage, of incessant suffering, bloodshed, destruction, outrage and despair," Turk said in the statement. "Human rights violations are at the root of this escalation and human rights play a central role in finding a way out of this vortex of pain." Turk's visit to the region "takes place against the backdrop of the ongoing, extremely serious human rights and humanitarian crisis", his office said. — AFP

hundreds of thousands of Muslims, and has so far avoided any violence related to the conflict, though tensions are palpable in certain spots such as university campuses.

But opinions are not monolithic in either community. A liberal segment of American Jewish youth — Jews vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party — has unleashed harsh criticism of the Zionist entity, which it accuses of perpetrating "genocide" on Palestinians in Gaza. They also denounce President Joe Biden's military and diplomatic support for the Zionist entity, which has engaged in a month-long bombardment of the Palestinian territory.

On Saturday, tens of thousands of demonstrators, some brought by JVP, gathered in Washington to call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, and to denounce US policy of support for the Zionist entity. In late October, thousands of protesters, many gathered by JVP, occupied the huge Grand Central station in Manhattan with the same demands. Separately, thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters, including some from US Jewish organizations, shut down the Brooklyn Bridge, leading from Manhattan to the multicultural and fashionable borough across the East River. — AFP

Zionist entity threatens to...

Continued from Page 1

forces that have effectively cut the strip in half, with soldiers and tanks tightening the encirclement of Gaza City. The Zionist entity has air-dropped leaflets and sent text messages ordering civilians in northern Gaza to flee south, but a US official said Saturday at least 350,000 civilians remained in the worst-hit areas.

Clutching one of her toddlers, Amira Al-Sakani recounted the repeated Zionist air drops of flyers telling civilians to head south. On the way, Sakani said she saw "bodies of martyrs, some in pieces, people abandoning their cars and cattle to walk." "Our life is tragic; we don't want war... we want peace. Enough is enough. We are tired."

The suffering in Gaza has been immense, with entire city blocks levelled and bodies in white shrouds piling up outside hospitals where surgeons have had to operate on bloodied floors by the light of their phones. Following the latest heavy strikes Tuesday on Gaza, hundreds of residents fled towards the south, while Zionist tanks were on the side of the road behind sand banks.

Military analysts warned of weeks of grueling house-to-house fighting ahead in Gaza, from which the Zionist entity withdrew in 2005 and where it launched its last

land incursion in 2014. "Hamas has had 15 years to prepare a dense 'defense in depth' that integrates subterranean, ground-level and above-ground fortifications," said Michael Knights of the Washington Institute think tank. The Zionist entity's top ally, the United States, has backed it in its war on Hamas but also urged restraint and facilitated some aid deliveries and the flight of several hundred refugees with second passports through the Rafah crossing with Egypt. Fresh departures from Gaza were announced Tuesday, with Romania saying 103 of its citizens and their family members have received permission to leave via Rafah.

Hundreds of Palestinians who hold foreign passports were waiting on Tuesday in Gaza to escape through the Rafah crossing into Egypt. While most still queued nervously, the first arrivals were seen on the Egyptian side where paramedics transferred an injured woman on a stretcher into an ambulance to rush her to a hospital. Tuesday was set to mark the fifth day on which Gaza's sole land crossing not controlled by the Zionist entity has opened in the past week, to wounded Palestinians as well as foreigners and Palestinian dual nationals.

Netanyahu, speaking to ABC News on Monday, stressed the war would continue until the Zionist entity had restored overall control of Gaza. "(The Zionist entity) will, for an indefinite period... have the overall security responsibility," he said. "When we don't have that security responsibility, what we have is the eruption of Hamas terror on a scale that we couldn't imagine." — AFP

Activists demand Gaza ceasefire at...

Continued from Page 1

for Peace (JVP), the gathering's organizer, said in a statement, referring to the 19th-century activist who helped Jewish refugees fleeing to New York from Europe.

The statement quotes Lazarus's poem "New Colossus", which is engraved on the statue's base as an ode to US immigrants. Participants from the Institute for Middle East Understanding demanded "an end to the Zionist entity's genocidal bombardment of Palestinian civilians in Gaza." "As long as the people of Gaza are screaming, we need to yell louder, no matter who attempts to silence us," said photographer Nan Goldin, standing alongside several local elected officials, some with strong roots in the political left.

New York City, a famed melting pot of migrants, has been rocked for the past month by dueling pro-Zionist entity and pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The city is home to some two million Jews and

Trump clashes with judge at...

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"This is not a political rally," the New York Supreme Court justice told the 2024 Republican presidential nomination frontrunner. Trump accused the judge of being "very hostile" and denounced New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought the case against him, as a "political hack." "I think this case is a disgrace," he said. "It's

election interference." At one point, a visibly angry Engoron told Trump's lawyer, Christopher Kise, to "control your client". Engoron slapped Trump with \$15,000 in fines earlier in the trial for violating a partial gag order imposed after he insulted the judge's law clerk on social media.

Trump, his eldest sons Don Jr and Eric, and other Trump Organization executives are accused of exaggerating the value of their real estate assets by billions of dollars to obtain more favorable bank loans and insurance terms. Dressed in a dark blue suit with an American flag on his lapel, Trump denounced what he called a "crazy trial" brought by Democrats "coming after me from 15 different sides." — AFP

International

Philippine city rises from ruins a decade after typhoon

'I am now able to laugh again, but I will never forget them'

TACLOBAN, Philippines: Filipino widow Agatha Ando has learned to laugh again in the decade after Super Typhoon Haiyan smashed into the central Philippines, killing more than 6,000 people and leaving millions homeless. Fierce winds tore apart houses and toppled trees as tsunami-like waves whipped up by the storm obliterated mostly poor coastal communities on Nov 8, 2013.

minders of the devastation in Tacloban, the capital of Leyte province. Tacloban bore the brunt of Haiyan's fury and had to be rebuilt almost from scratch.

Now, it looks like any other Filipino city, with traffic-clogged streets and bustling restaurants. An 18-kilometer (11-mile) seawall has been built along the coast to protect it against future storm surges. "I think we have fully recovered," Mayor Alfred Romualdez

disasters. But that did not prepare the country for one of the strongest typhoons on record.

Haiyan unleashed winds of up to 315 kilometers (195 miles) an hour that flattened towns and cities across a 600-kilometre (370-mile) stretch of central islands. Coastal houses and buildings thought safe enough to be used as evacuation centers on Leyte and Samar islands were swamped by storm surges up to

maps used by government agencies are also updated regularly, weather alerts are issued earlier and in local languages, and pre-emptive evacuations are standard practice. "The mindset has changed," said Edgar Posadas, a director at the Office of Civil Defense in Manila.

Posadas said local governments now used their own funds, food packs and rescue personnel instead of relying on the national government, enabling them to respond to disasters more quickly. The changes have been credited for lowering death tolls since Haiyan.

In December 2021, Super Typhoon Rai damaged or destroyed nearly twice as many houses as Haiyan, but the death toll was less than 500, UN and government data show. "Experience really is the best teacher," weather services chief Juanito Galang said.



TACLOBAN: This photo shows a ship lying next to stripped trees and building rubble and debris in Tacloban city's Anibong district, Leyte province on Nov 14, 2013 (top) and a view of the same street ten years later on Oct 9, 2023 (bottom).

People walk past destroyed houses and dead bodies littered along a road in Tacloban city's Jan Jose district on Nov 10, 2013 (top) and a view of the road ten years later on Oct 12, 2023.— AFP photos



Agatha Ando, a survivor of Super Typhoon Haiyan, sweeps her family's mass grave where the remains of her husband, three of her siblings, and four children who were killed in the disaster are buried.

Prayers for victims

Many of the people killed in Tacloban were living near the sea in flimsy shacks made of wood and corrugated iron sheets. The government has since demolished many of the slum areas and moved around 14,000 families to relocation sites out of reach of storm surges.

While the concrete houses are safer than the shanties, some of the sites still lack running water. Rosie Boaquena, 63, moved to one 13 kilometers (8 miles) from downtown Tacloban, but two of her sons chose to stay in a one-room shack by the sea to be closer to their jobs. "One of my sons sells fish so he would need to leave (the relocation site) at midnight to pick up the fish, but there is no night-time public transport," she said. Ando was also allocated a house in a hilly development, but she hasn't spent a single night there. Instead, she rebuilt her house on the same plot of land near the sea where she has lived all her life and has many memories. On Wednesday, Ando will mark the anniversary of Haiyan like she does every year, gathering family and neighbors near the mass grave to pray.

Six of her relatives are still missing, presumed dead, and one of her sons was left permanently disabled from the storm. "We didn't know what a storm surge was back then," she said. "Now, whenever there's a typhoon, we immediately evacuate." — AFP

Ando's husband and three of her siblings refused to leave their homes in Tacloban City that were less than 100 meters (109 yards) from the sea and died along with four children when water and debris crashed over them. In the aftermath, their mangled bodies were hastily wrapped in wet blankets and a scavenged tarpaulin, and buried a few meters from where Ando's house now stands. "I am now able to laugh again, but I will never forget them," said Ando, 57, who survived because she heeded official warnings to go inland before the storm hit. Ten years on, the family's mass grave is one of the few visible re-

told AFP during a recent visit to the city of around 280,000 people. As the Philippines prepares to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Haiyan, Romualdez said survivors had "moved on" from the disaster. "But I don't think they'll ever forget," he said.

'A lot of lessons learned'

Scientists have long warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world becomes warmer because of human-driven climate change. The Philippines, which typically endures more than 20 major storms a year, has plenty of experience dealing with

five meters high. About 6,300 people were killed and a decade later more than a thousand are still missing. Over four million people were left homeless.

"I feel in terms of the national government, in terms of the local government, there were a lot of lessons learned," said Romualdez. "But I would say that there are still many, many more lessons we still have to learn and we have to institutionalize."

Since Haiyan, the country has invested in early warning systems, mass text messaging technology and public apps to identify potentially dangerous areas, disaster and weather officials told AFP. Hazard

"We have guaranteed the seizure of the most populated (prison) centers we had in Venezuela," Ceballos said, noting that the 1,228 inmates housed in Vista Hermosa will be "temporarily" moved to other prisons in the country. The Ministry of Penitentiary Services published images of inmates sitting in rows in the patio of the prison, their torsos uncovered and their hands cuffed.

Authorities began their seizure of the prisons on September 20, taking control of Tocoron prison in the state of Aragua. Inside that prison, authorities found restaurants, a pool, a nightclub and a zoo, as well as reggaeton studios where prisoners would film music videos and upload them to YouTube.

Raids followed on Tocuyito jail, the largest prison in

the country and located in the central-northern state of Carabobo, and the Puente Ayala jail, in the eastern state of Anzoategui. In nearly all the prisons, authorities said they found arsenals of weapons used in crimes committed outside of prison walls.

Last Friday, security forces in armored cars rolled into the La Pica penitentiary in the eastern state of Monagas, where they said gangs had been running an "extortion center." The five prisons had close to 8,000 inmates: 1,600 were in Tocoron, 2,000 in Tocuyito, 1,511 in Puente Ayala and 1,496 in La Pica, according to official figures. President Nicolas Maduro called for the application of a "strict regime" in the prisons: "Iron hand, maximum discipline and a penitentiary system freed from gangs." — AFP

which was brutally put down by then military strongman Chun Doo-hwan, with some 200 killed, according to official estimates. He then became the first foreigner to pass South Korea's medical license exam in 1987.

'American, but Korean'

"I am originally American, but Korean. And I have a lot of love from my hometown in Korea and everything in my life is invested in Korea," the 63-year-old, who was awarded Korean citizenship in 2012 in recognition of his contributions to the country.

After his father was badly injured in a car accident and died while being transported to a hospital in 1984, he has worked tirelessly to bring better ambulances to Korea, designing a much-used domestic model. His medical work also expanded to North Korea, where he tried to "help eradicate tuberculosis" in the reclusive nation, fondly recalling working with "very knowledgeable" North Korean doctors. It was "very shocking" for North Koreans to see an American — Pyongyang's sworn enemy — speak perfect Korean, he recalled. His work in the nuclear-armed country as a doctor has bolstered his beliefs that geopolitics should not be allowed to trump humanitarian need. "There should be much less sanctions which stop humanitarian aid. I think that is a mistake," he said.

Linton first dabbled in politics in 2013 when he worked on the transition committee for then-president elect Park Geun-hye. But he says the stakes are higher this time, calling his new job "the most important thing in my whole life." He is a staunch defender of President Yoon, saying the country's top leader had been misjudged by much of the public. "He's not a (professional) politician," he said, adding there was "poor understanding how hard he is working". After his two-month stint with the party ends, there is speculation in Korean media he will run for parliament — if successful, he would become the country's first Caucasian lawmaker.—AFP

Venezuela takes control of fifth gang-run prison

CARACAS: Venezuelan authorities on Monday took control of a fifth gang-managed prison as part of a plan to dismantle "criminal structures" embedded in penitentiaries, authorities said. The Vista Hermosa Penitentiary, in a mining region of the southern state of Bolivar, "is already taken" by state forces, Interior Minister Remigio Ceballos told official channel VTV.

'Blue-eyed Korean' tasked with shaking up Seoul politics

SEOUL: South Korea-born American doctor John Linton is on a mission no other foreigner has ever undertaken in ethnically homogenous South Korea: trying to shake up the country's highly confrontational politics. Born in rural Jeolla province, Linton is nicknamed the "blue-eyed Korean" and speaks the language perfectly, albeit with a strong regional accent.

He is well-known domestically thanks to his family's deep-rooted ties to the country, going back four generations. His great-grandfather first came to Korea as a missionary in 1895, he told AFP, and the family never left — his grandmother, and father were also born in the country. "I was born in 1959 after the Korean War," Linton, whose Korean name is Ihn Yohan, told AFP. "Basically I grew up in the village. So I'm a country boy from Jeollado with a different looking face." Apart from a few years stateside, including for his medical residency in New York, Linton has spent his entire life in Korea, graduating from Seoul's prestigious Yonsei University and then leading the institution's International Health Care Center for decades. But now he's taken on a new challenge: he's been put in charge of the ruling People Power Party's "Innovation Committee," tasked with revamping the staid institution and making the party more competitive by appealing to younger voters.

Changing Korea

It's no easy task: two years into his term, President Yoon Suk Yeol is stuck with approval ratings hovering in the low 30s, with both the top leader and the party particularly unpopular with young Koreans. Moreover,



SEOUL: Seoul-based American physician John Linton (center), Korean name Ihn Yohan, who is in charge of the ruling People Power Party's (PPP) innovation committee, attends a meeting with his PPP committee members at the party's headquarters on Nov 3, 2023. — AFP

South Korean politics is notoriously adversarial, with many former presidents being prosecuted and jailed for corruption after leaving power — and later pardoned. Linton is confident he can be a force for change. "I have received so much from this country ... Now it's my turn to give back," he said. His own appointment "shows you how much Korea changed," he told AFP. "We will chart a new direction and make it more pluralistic," he said.

Stories about the Linton family have long captivated the South Korean public for their century-long contributions and love for the country. Linton's grandfather, William Linton, tried to raise international awareness of the country's independence movement against Japan's colonial rule and was later awarded the order of merit. His father, Hugh Linton, was a Korean War veteran, serving as a captain in the US Navy. Linton himself acted as an interpreter for foreign press during a civilian uprising for democracy in the city of Gwangju in 1980.

Korean Air crew death linked to cosmic radiation

SEOUL: Korean Air said Tuesday it "strictly manages" cosmic radiation exposure for its flight crew, after a landmark decision ruled an air steward's cancer death was akin to an industrial accident. The ruling by the state-run Korea Worker's Compensation and Welfare Service — issued last month and sent to AFP Tuesday — found the cancer death of a male flight attendant, who had flown for the flag-carrier for 25 years, resulted from cosmic radiation exposure.

Flight crews are exposed to higher levels of naturally occurring cosmic radiation as the shielding effect of the Earth's atmosphere decreases at higher altitude. The attendant, identified by his surname Song, spent nearly 1,022 hours on board a plane each year with nearly half of his flights covering long-haul routes to the Americas and Europe. Such routes expose flight crews to more cosmic radiation because they involve flying over the North Pole, where such radiation is higher due to Earth's magnetic field. Song was diagnosed with stage four stomach cancer in April 2021 and died a month later. Korean Air declined comment on the panel's decision but denied any wrongdoing. "Korean Air strictly manages individual data, and crew members can check their accumulated amount of cosmic radiation exposure, which is updated on a monthly basis," the company said in a statement to AFP. The company limits the radiation exposure to "less than 6mSv a year", it said, which is "a lot stricter than the legal maximum radiation exposure standard of up to 50mSv a year".

While the panel was considering the case, Korean Air denied there was any correlation between the plaintiff's cancer and cosmic radiation, saying that it limited annual radiation exposure to under 6mSv for its crews. But the panel rejected the airline's claim, saying it was possible the plaintiff had been exposed to "more than 100mSv of accumulated radiation" and that the measuring method deployed by the Korean Air could have downplayed the actual amount of radiation. The ruling is the first time that an official labor body in South Korea has recognized the correlation between cosmic radiation and cancer for flight attendants as an industrial death. Korean Air's grasp of the issue is "understated" because it uses an old measuring method, labor attorney Kim Seong-hyun who represented the Song family told AFP.—AFP

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Saudi Aramco profits down 23% on lower oil prices, cuts

Oil giant key driver of kingdom's reform program 'Vision 2030'

RIYADH: Energy giant Saudi Aramco on Tuesday posted a 23-percent year-on-year drop in profits for the third quarter, the result of lower oil prices and production cuts. The drop from \$42.43 billion last year to \$32.58 billion "principally reflects the impact of lower crude oil prices and volumes sold", the firm said in a statement to the Saudi stock exchange.

It follows a drop in net profit for Aramco, one of the world's richest companies, of 19.25 percent in the first quarter and 38 percent in the second quarter compared to 2022. Aramco is the jewel of the Saudi economy and main source of revenue for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sweeping economic and social reform program known as 'Vision 2030', which aims to shift the Gulf kingdom away from fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, owns 90 percent of Aramco's shares.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted oil prices to skyrocket, peaking at more than \$130 per barrel. Aramco reported what it described as record profits for last year totaling \$161.1

billion, giving the kingdom its first annual budget surplus in nearly a decade. Prices this year are estimated to be around \$85 per barrel, Riyadh-based firm Jadwa Investment said in a report in late October. Analysts say the kingdom needs oil to be priced at around \$80 per barrel to balance its budget, though that could be thrown off by production cuts and ramped-up spending.

Saudi Arabia in April announced it was slashing production by 500,000 barrels per day, part of a coordinated move with other oil powers to curb supply by more than one million bpd in a bid to prop up prices. In June, the Saudi energy ministry announced a further voluntary cut of one million bpd which took effect in July.

That cut will last through December, the ministry confirmed on Sunday. The kingdom's daily production is now approximately nine million bpd, far below its reported daily capacity of 12 million bpd. Oil prices have ticked up in response to the war that erupted after Hamas militants staged the deadliest attack in Zionist entity's history on October 7, killing

more than 1,400 people and taking over 240 hostages, according to Zionist entity officials. The Zionist response marked by relentless aerial bombardment has killed more than 10,000 people in Gaza, the Hamas-run health ministry announced on Monday.

"Traders are concerned that the violence could intensify and spread, possibly pulling in state actors and threatening oil supply," Jadwa Investment said in its October report.

"We think these fears are overdone, but appreciate that miscalculation or over-reach by one or more of the parties involved could see containment unravel very quickly." It remains "a major question" how the war might affect Saudi production, said Herman Wang, associate director for oil news at S&P Global Commodity Insights.

"Absent the Zionist entity-Hamas war, all the signals coming out of Riyadh on oil policy were about remaining cautious and disciplined with production cuts, to keep that floor under prices with the outlook on Q1 demand looking less rosy," Wang said. "That obviously would continue to constrain Aram-



co's production and limit its exports — and we've seen the impact that has had on its most recent GDP figures, which showed a contraction year-on-year."

The national statistics authority announced last week that GDP was off 4.5 percent for the third quarter compared to last year, with oil activities down 17.3 percent and non-oil activities growing by 3.6 percent. — AFP



MANILA: The Philippines' inflation rate slowed sharply in October, as harvests boosted the supply of rice and vegetables in the market and took the steam out of food costs.

Philippine inflation slows as harvests boost food supply

MANILA: The Philippines' inflation rate slowed sharply in October, as harvests boosted the supply of rice and vegetables in the market and took the steam out of food costs. Consumer prices rose 4.9 percent on-year last month, the Philippine Statistics Authority said, well down from September's 6.1 percent.

The biggest driver of the rise was food, which was up 7.1 percent, but that was almost three percentage points down from the month before, with rice and vegetables slowing the quickest.

"Rice inflation slowed down following the onset of peak harvest and import arrivals," Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a statement. "The stable supply of vegetables as harvest season comes likewise resulted in a slower inflation rate of the commodity."

But Balisacan warned that the El Nino weather phenomenon, which was expected to bring below-normal rainfall across the country in the coming months, could be detrimental for crops. "It is important to ensure that the most vulnerable sectors of the society are protected and provided assistance, especially while... we expect El Nino to affect local and global food production," he said.

HSBC economist Aris Dacanay said he expected the central bank to keep rates steady at its next meeting, scheduled for November 16, "but remain hawkish in tone". The central bank took off-cycle action last month, raising rates 25 basis points to 6.5 percent, citing expectations for "an elevated inflation path over the policy horizon".

It has increased rates by 450 basis points since May 2022. Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said Monday there was "no justification for higher interest rates" given the easing inflation, Bloomberg reported. The inflation reading will come as welcome news for President Ferdinand Marcos, who saw a double-digit drop in his approval rating in a recent poll, with surging prices the top concern among those surveyed.

Marcos sparked criticism in September when he imposed a temporary price cap on rice, which some economists warned could distort the market and lead to shortages. Last week, the president handed over the role of agriculture secretary to a fishing tycoon, having held the position for more than a year and failed to rein in commodity prices. — AFP

OpenAI sees a future of AI 'superpowers on demand'

SAN FRANCISCO: ChatGPT maker OpenAI on Monday moved to entice developers with lower prices and the ability to easily tailor artificial intelligence "agents" to help with anything from laundry advice to contract negotiations.

Dreams of the benefits of generative AI — along with fears of the technology's risks — have been hot topics in the tech world since ChatGPT made its blockbuster debut a year ago.

"We will be able to do more, to create more, and to have more," Open AI chief executive Sam Altman told developers at a gathering in San Francisco. "As intelligence is integrated everywhere, we will all have superpowers on demand." More than 2 million developers are building on the OpenAI platform, while more than 100 million people use ChatGPT weekly, according to the San Francisco-based startup. "About a year ago, November 30, we shipped ChatGPT as a low-key research preview," Altman said.

"That went pretty well," he quipped. The launch of ChatGPT ignited an AI race, with contenders including Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Meta. Altman has testified before US Congress

about AI and spoken with heads of state about the technology, as pressure has ramped up steadily to regulate it to control for risks such as AI's potential use in bioweapons, misinformation and other threats.

President Joe Biden issued an executive order last week on regulating artificial intelligence, aiming for the United States to "lead the way" in global efforts at managing the new technology's risks.

The order directs federal agencies to set new safety standards for AI systems and requires developers to "share their safety test results and other critical information with the US government," according to the White House. The world's first major summit on AI safety took place last week in the UK, with political and tech leaders discussing possible responses to the society-changing technology.

Altman announced a "Turbo" version of OpenAI's leading software along with reduced pricing in moves that could fuel the spread of the technology. "It's a smarter model," Altman said of ChatGPT-4 Turbo. "We decided to prioritize price first, but we're going to work on speed next."



OpenAI is rolling out the ability to create custom "agents," called "GPTs," capable of handling specific tasks such as business negotiation advice, tips on removing stains from laundry, help with homework, and tech support, it said in a blog post.

"Anyone can easily build their own GPT — no coding is required," OpenAI said. "You can make them for yourself, just for your company's internal use, or for everyone." Later this month, OpenAI will launch a GPT "store," and plans to add a way for developers to make money based on how many people use their GPTs, according to the company. "I'm really looking forward to Turbo and everything else that you have coming," Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella said after

joining Altman on stage.

"We love you guys. You guys have built something magical." Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in OpenAI and has woven the company's technology into its offerings, including search engine Bing.

OpenAI's latest moves should make it easier to create conversational AI interfaces in apps or at websites, opening the option up to more companies, according to Insider Intelligence principal analyst Yory Wurmser. "Artificial intelligence is nothing but digital brains inside large computers," OpenAI cofounder and chief scientist Ilya Sutskever said at a recent TED AI conference in San Francisco. And the day will come when those digital brains "will become smarter than us." — AFP

IMF raises China 2023 growth forecast to 5.4%

BEIJING: The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday raised its 2023 economic growth forecast for China, citing stronger consumption and recent policy measures announced by Beijing. After a tough year for the world's number-two economy, there have been flickers of life in recent weeks, with third-quarter expansion coming in more than expected.

The Fund said it saw gross domestic product expanding 5.4 percent this year, compared with a previous estimate of 5.0 percent, while it lifted its outlook 2024 to 4.6 percent from 4.2 percent.

Gita Gopinath, First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, told a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that the upgrade reflected "a strong post-reopening rebound in domestic demand, particularly consumption". The economy grew 4.9 percent in July-September, slower than the previous quarter but a lot better than expected and a little shy of the government's goal of "around five percent" for the year — one of its lowest targets in years.

China's economy expanded just 3.0 percent last year — well below the official target of 5.5 percent — as it was choked by draconian COVID-19 measures. A string of below-par economic data in the first half — which came despite the lifting of zero-COVID curbs at the end of 2022 — led the government to unveil a number of targeted stimulus measures aimed at supporting key sectors, particularly the troubled property industry.

And in October Beijing said it would issue one trillion yuan (\$137 billion) of sovereign bonds to boost infrastructure spending. Gopinath said the new forecast were made "reflecting stronger than expected growth in the third quarter and the new policy support that was recently announced".

But she warned that the Fund expected "weakness in the property sector to continue, and external de-



This aerial photo taken on November 7, 2023 shows cranes and shipping containers at Lianyungang port in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

mand to remain subdued". The country's key real estate sector generally accounts for around a quarter of GDP, but the industry has lurched from one crisis to another in recent years, with major firms crippled by mountains of debt. Meanwhile, China's exports fell at a faster pace than predicted in October, data showed Tuesday, as the world's second-largest economy is buffeted by faltering global demand and a sluggish domestic recovery.

Beijing has sought to boost business activity in a country grappling with a major property crisis and weaker consumption since officials abolished their strict zero-COVID policy at the end of last year.

Exports — long a key driver of the growth — sank 6.4 percent year-on-year last month, according to the General Administration of Customs. The reading was much worse than the 3.5 percent drop forecast in a Bloomberg survey of economists and slightly heavier than September.

Apart from a brief rebound in March and April,

exports have been in constant decline since last October. "Export growth remained sluggish as the economic momentum in the United States and Europe slowed," said Zhang Zhiwei of Pinpoint Asset Management, adding that external demand was likely to remain weak in coming months.

Imports, however, rose 3.0 percent, bucking a forecast drop of 5.0 percent and notching the first month of on-year growth since late last year. The rise in imports could be a signal that domestic demand in China is recovering from months of weakness.

But Zhang told AFP that the October "positive surprise" in imports alone is not sufficient to determine whether domestic demand is improving, pointing to other indicators such as retail sales. "Nonetheless as fiscal policy has turned more proactive, a recovery in domestic demand is likely in coming months," said Zhang. China recorded moderate growth in the third quarter as Beijing looks to achieve its official goal of "around five percent" expansion for 2023. — AFP

Business

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait real estate activity remains soft in Q3; sales pick up marginally

Subdued market activity likely to continue near term

KUWAIT: Kuwait's real estate activity remained muted in Q3 2023, amid elevated residential valuations and higher borrowing costs, though sales did log their first quarterly increase since the final quarter of last year. Price increases in general have slowed over the last year, even turning slightly negative year-on-year in Q3 for the first time since 2018. More stable sales in the past two quarters suggest market activity may be bottoming out, though any pick-up going forward is unlikely to be a vigorous

tial sector and higher funding costs — growth in installment (i.e. home) loans to individuals and loans to property firms has slowed sharply this year. Activity has also been weighed down by investment shifts driven by higher interest rates and the uncertain pace of housing sector reforms and initiatives to improve the residency law and the supply of housing (outstanding housing applications reached 91K in September), for example.

Residential sales continued to trend lower at KD

until December 2006), easing some pressures on the housing waiting list estimated at around 91k by the end of September 2023. Alongside this, state-run Kuwait Credit Bank approved loans of KD 186 million in Q3, the highest since Q2 2022, under the government's housing program, while loans disbursements picked up 4.3 percent q/q to KD 115 million.

Investment sales (i.e., individual apartment units and apartment buildings) came in at KD 212 million in Q3 (-15.6 percent y/y; +6.1 percent q/q), with September seeing the lowest level of monthly activity in both value and volume since December 2020. For investors weighing up the risk-return, the higher interest rate environment has increased the appeal of fixed income and deposits at the expense of real estate. Investors may also be unclear about demand from expatriates since they are a key driver of apartment usage in the investor sector. Having said that, with expatriate inflows on the rise so far in 2023, the prospects appear better than they were last year.

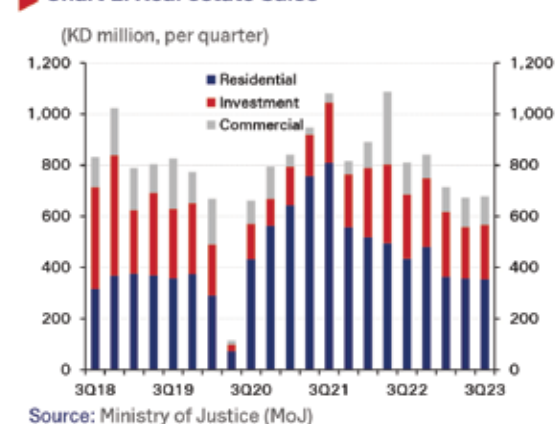
Lastly, commercial sales growth remained volatile, with sales at KD 111.4 million during Q3 2023, slightly lower than the previous quarter's sales despite double digit growth in transaction volumes, supported by renewed strong sales in the Sabah Al-Ahmad coastline area, which has benefitted over the last two quarters from the shift in attention to the Al-Ahmadi governorate from the inner-city areas (Kuwait City and Hawally).

Real estate price growth has trended lower in 2023, according to NBK's real estate price index, which is based on Ministry of Justice weekly transaction data. In Q3, year-on-year price growth turned slightly negative (-0.7 percent y/y), a first decline since Q1 2018, on the back of lower investment sector real estate prices (-1.7 percent y/y), while residential prices saw an uptick on a quarterly basis (especially in Kuwait City and Hawally). In fact, the increase in residential valuations helped push the overall real estate price index up on a quarterly basis (+2.8 percent q/q), offsetting essentially no change in the investor segment index.

Subdued market activity

Real estate sales activity is expected to remain subdued in the near term, amid continued high res-

Chart 1: Real estate Sales



Source: Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Chart 2: Residential sales



Source: MoJ

Table 1: Real estate sales

	Quarterly Average		Quarterly Sales/ Transactions					Change in 3Q23, %	
	2021	2022	3Q22	4Q22	1Q23	2Q23	3Q23	q/q	y/y
Sales (KD million)	921	907	810	840	714	672	678	0.9	-16.3
Residential	692	482	434	480	363	358	354	-0.9	-18.4
Investment	188	275	252	269	254	200	212	6.1	-15.6
Commercial	40	151	124	91	96	114	111	-2.3	-10.4
Number of transactions	2415	1473	1,272	1,368	1,085	1,029	1,045	1.6	-17.8
Residential	2124	1091	911	982	760	729	740	1.5	-18.8
Investment	271	342	331	364	306	280	254	-9.3	-23.3
Commercial	19	40	30	22	19	20	51	155.0	70.0
Average transaction Value (KD '000)	381	616	637	614	658	653	649	-0.6	1.9
Residential property	326	442	477	489	478	491	479	-2.4	0.5
Investment	694	803	760	738	831	715	836	17.0	10.0
Commercial	2098	3745	4145	4142	5061	5704	2185	-61.7	-47.3

Source: Ministry of Justice, NBK calculations

one. The prospects for a stronger 2024 would improve in the event that policymakers prioritize implementation of already-tabled housing initiatives.

Real estate sales saw a small uptick in Q3 2023, coming in at KD 678 million (+0.9 percent q/q), helped by an increase in investment sales (+6.1 percent q/q), while residential sales continued to decline, albeit at a moderating pace (-0.9 percent q/q). On a year-on-year (y/y) basis, real estate sales were still down 16.3 percent, but the pace of decline has slowed across all segments. Continued subdued sales activity reflects high valuations in the residen-

354 million in Q3 2023 (-0.9 percent q/q; -18.4 percent y/y), declining for a third consecutive quarter, though the rate of decline appears to be easing. Residential sector demand has been subdued amid high house prices and more circumspect purchaser appetite against a backdrop of higher borrowing costs. On the supply side of the market, there have been further housing distributions by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. This includes distributions in the South Saad Al-Abdullah city, comprising 24,509 housing units (22,153 residential plots), with a total of 6,992 citizens already assigned units (applicants

idential valuations and borrowing costs. However, prospects for a turnaround are better than they were a year ago, with sales more stable recently following steep declines previously. Meanwhile, the current interest rate tightening cycle looks at or close to its peak — a US Fed rate cut could also materialize before the end of 2024 — potentially spurring credit demand, while possible government/parliamentary moves to pass the draft mortgage law, amend the residency law and accelerate the disbursement of plots/houses (and reduce the backlog of housing applicants) would positively affect the real estate market.

Gulf Bank hosts cybersecurity workshop

KUWAIT: In its ongoing commitment to staying ahead in the realm of cybersecurity, Gulf Bank has successfully concluded an intensive workshop for senior leadership within its executive management team. The workshop featured the participation of three international experts in the field.



Mai Dashti

Mai Dashti, Assistant General Manager of Information Security at Gulf Bank, affirmed the bank's unwavering commitment to staying ahead of the rapid advancements in cybersecurity. This commitment encompasses addressing emerging threats, understanding attack methods, and implementing effective defense strategies. She emphasized Gulf Bank's dedication to maintaining the highest standards of security and protection for all its banking transactions. This dedication is clearly reflected in the substantial investments made in cutting-edge technological solutions, integral to the bank's digital transformation journey and a fundamental component of its five-year strategy for 2025.

Dashti emphasized the bank's proactive approach to adapting to challenges and changes in the digital landscape. Gulf Bank achieves this through continuous training, adherence to the latest policies, and robust protection programs. This commitment aligns



Gulf Bank's senior leadership with international experts on cybersecurity.

with the bank's pledge to provide a secure and flexible work environment for all banking transactions.

Furthermore, she noted the bank's efforts to organize periodic training courses and workshops on information security and cybersecurity, tailored to meet the requirements of employees from diverse departments, including executives. Gulf Bank places significant emphasis on the paramount significance of data privacy and security. To uphold the highest standards of data privacy and security in all its operations, the bank prioritizes training initiatives focused on privacy and security.

In conclusion, Dashti affirmed Gulf Bank's proactive stance in addressing cyber risks and ensuring the security and integrity of customer data and transactions. This commitment is demonstrated through strategic investments in human resources and continuous development of advanced systems and technologies

in the field of information security. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Australia raises rates to curb stubborn inflation

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank raised the key interest rate to a near 12-year high on Tuesday to tame stubbornly high inflation. The Reserve Bank of Australia lifted the cash rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 4.35 percent, its highest level since December 2011.

It was the first tightening in five months and also the first under the stewardship of Michele Bullock, who took over as central bank governor in September. She had been widely expected to act after the latest data showed annual inflation running at a hotter-than-expected 5.4 percent in the three months to September 30. "Inflation in Australia has passed its peak but is still too high and is proving more persistent than expected a few months ago," Bullock said in a statement.

She signaled that the prospect of any further rise is in the balance, a softening of the bank's previous warnings that further tightening "may be necessary" to rein in prices. "Whether further tightening of monetary policy is required to ensure that inflation returns to target in a reasonable timeframe will depend upon the data and the evolving assessment of risks," she said.

The central bank said returning inflation to 2-3 percent by late 2025 is nevertheless a priority and it "will do what it is necessary" to get there. The hike was the latest of a string of increases that began in May 2022 as the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine fanned inflation and led the bank to push up the key interest rate from its previous rock-bottom 0.1 percent. — AFP

Office giant WeWork files for bankruptcy

WASHINGTON: Beleaguered shared office giant WeWork, which has been in dire financial straits for years, announced Monday that it had filed for bankruptcy in a bid to negotiate down its debt.

The coworking company said its bankruptcy impacts operations in the United States and Canada, but "global operations are expected to continue as usual." The bankruptcy filing was a stark turn of events for the New York-based company, which was once a startup darling promising to reshape the office sector globally. It at one point attracted huge infusions from investors, including SoftBank and venture capital firm Benchmark. WeWork was considered the most valuable US startup as recently as 2019, worth \$49 billion.

But elusive profitability, the rise of telecommuting, a drop in tenants and years of massive costs have hit the company hard. In early August, WeWork warned the US stock market regulator (SEC) that it feared for its survival: "Substantial doubt exists about the

company's ability to continue as a going concern." Nonetheless, the company put a positive spin on the bankruptcy news.

"Now is the time for us to pull the future forward by aggressively addressing our legacy leases and dramatically improving our balance sheet," WeWork chief executive David Tolley said in a statement.

"We defined a new category of working, and these steps will enable us to remain the global leader in flexible work." In practical terms, Chapter 11 proceedings enable a company to renegotiate its debt with creditors and present a plan to reorganize its business, while remaining under the protection of the law for a period that can extend over several years.

WeWork hopes to negotiate a "significant" reduction in its debt. In particular, the group hopes to "terminate the leases on a number of locations" that are not making enough money, pointing out that the owner companies "have received advance notice." Ratings agency S&P said November 1 that WeWork was in "selective default" after failing to meet conditions set by debt holders.

WeWork had been a celebrated star in the sharing economy, laying down a mammoth footprint in the commercial real estate sectors of major cities around the globe. But investors tired of its messianic then-chief executive Adam Neumann, massive operating costs and lack of profits in 2019, when it



WASHINGTON: People work at tables inside of the "WeWork" co-operative co-working space in Washington, DC. — KUNA

tried to go public. The flamboyant Neumann, who started WeWork in 2010, was axed after the initial public offering failed.

WeWork's slide only accelerated during the Coronavirus pandemic, which led to office closures and the rise of work from home. The company has scrambled to sell off part of its business, renegotiate leases and shut branches, but it still lost more than \$1 billion in the first half of 2023. WeWork's down-

fall also severely destabilized the Japanese SoftBank Group and its Vision Fund, which had invested heavily in the company, thereby denting the visionary image of its CEO, Masayoshi Son. WeWork eventually did go public in 2021 through a special purpose acquisition company. WeWork's shares were worth just 80 cents at the close of trading on the New York Stock Exchange on Monday evening, for a market capitalization of \$44.5 million. — AFP

Business

ABK honored with 'Best Retail Bank 2023' by Int'l Business Magazine

Muqames: Recognition highlights our determination to provide best services, solutions

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded Best Retail Bank 2023 by International Business Magazine. This recognition is a testament to ABK's exceptional performance and commitment to excellence in delivering a wide range of services and innovative solutions to its valued customers.

The award ceremony took place on Nov 4, 2023 at Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai attended by Mohammed Talib Behbehani, Head of Private Banking, along with a group of ABK employees, where the Bank was recognized for its strong reputation as a stable and trusted banking institution.

"We are honored to receive the Best Retail Bank Award 2023 from International Business Magazine," said Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK. "This recognition highlights our determination to provide customers with worthwhile financial services and solutions. I would like to emphasize that this is a result of our team's hard work, who consistently strive to exceed expectations."

ABK has worked diligently to build a solid reputation through its unwavering dedication to customer satisfaction and the provision of reliable financial solutions. This esteemed recognition is a reflection of the bank's commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.

ABK's comprehensive suite of products and services has played a significant role in securing this accolade. By offering a diverse range of options designed to meet the unique needs of their customers, ABK has positioned itself as a one-stop financial solution provider. The bank has also been recognized for its customer-oriented services, which have been instrumental in cementing its position as a leading retail bank. ABK has continuously introduced innovative and popular services to enhance convenience and accessibility where the bank's customer-centric approach has garnered immense appreciation and loyalty from its clientele. Additionally, one of the key factors contributing to ABK's success is its impressive net interest. ABK's strategic approach to managing its assets and investments has resulted in a ro-



Loai Muqames

bust and sustainable income stream, demonstrating the Bank's strong financial performance and stability.

Furthermore, ABK has exhibited growth in market share over the past two years, further solidifying its position as a top retail bank. ABK's success in expanding its market reach depicts its ability to effectively identify and meet the evolving needs of its customers in a competitive business landscape.

ABK's commitment to doing so is evident in its numerous enhancements, such as the Alfouz draw account. With the recent increase in the number of draws and prizes, ABK has created even more opportunities for customers to win. The introduction of the new KD 20,000 monthly draw and the exceptional KD 100,000 quarterly draw demonstrates ABK's endeavor to provide customers with unmatched benefits.

The Alfouz account has already gained strong traction in the market, thanks to its attractive prizes, such as the mega annual draw for a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years and the KD 10,000 weekly prize. With the exciting additions, ABK continues to show appreciation for customer loyalty and create an enticing proposition for individuals to join the Alfouz family.

Muqames concluded by expressing his gratitude to International Business Magazine for recognizing ABK's efforts and achievements. He said, "The bank



ABK receives the Best Retail Bank 2023 award by International Business Magazine.

remains determined to deliver innovative solutions, maintain strong financial performance, and consistently place customer satisfaction at the forefront." Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients. ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

Nintendo lifts annual profit forecasts

TOKYO: Japanese gaming giant Nintendo raised its annual forecasts on Tuesday after strong first-half sales of its new "Zelda" and "Mario" franchise games for the ageing Switch console. Helped by a weaker yen, Nintendo expects net profit to decline 3.0 percent to 420 billion yen (\$2.8 billion) for the 12 months to the end of March, up from a previous estimate of 340 billion yen.

Operating profit is now expected to be roughly flat at around 500 billion yen, up from a previous projection of 450 billion yen, while sales will dip 1.4 percent, according to the new forecasts.

"Each title released this fiscal year has sold well, with 'The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom' posting sales of 19.50 million units, and 'Pikmin 4' posting sales of 2.61 million units," Nintendo said in a statement. "The April release of 'The Super Mario Bros. Movie' positively impacted sales of Mario-related titles," the Kyoto-based firm added.

For the April-September period, net profit jumped 17.7 percent to 271.3 billion yen, with sales climbing 21.2 percent to 796.2 billion yen. The Switch is in its seventh year—quite old by console standards—but "the Mario movie led to a significant turnaround", Hideki Yasuda, an analyst at Toyo Securities, told AFP ahead of the results. A "Mario Red" edition of the Switch console and new Switch game "Super Mario Bros. Wonder", both released in October, are selling well, he added.

"The Super Mario Bros. Movie"—a joint project of Universal, Nintendo and Illumination studios—is the second attempt to bring Mario to the big screen, after an ill-fated, live-action movie in 1993.

Nintendo said on Tuesday they will "release new



TOKYO: People look at merchandise on display at a Nintendo store in central Tokyo on November 6, 2023. The Japanese gaming giant is expected to announce second quarter earnings on November 7. — AFP

offerings so more consumers keep playing Nintendo Switch even longer and we can maximize hardware sales" for the current fiscal year.

President Shuntaro Furukawa said in an interview with the Nikkei business daily published last month that he "cannot give anything specific" about the successor to the Switch. "We are still working on titles for the Switch for the year ending March 2025," he said. Yasuda said hit content such as the Mario movie and new Zelda and Mario games are "continually being produced".

The Zelda game, featuring the exploits of Princess

Zelda and the elf-like warrior Link, became a smash hit, selling more than 10 million copies in its first three days. It had sold 125 million copies worldwide since its first edition in 1986, before the latest one came out. But "Pikmin definitely contributed (to the results) in the first half", Yasuda added.

Nintendo released "Pikmin 4", a popular game featuring plant-like creatures called Pikmin first published in 2001, on the Switch in July. The company released "Detective Pikachu Returns" in October and "Super Mario RPG" will be out in November. — AFP



DHAKA: Garment workers and activists take part in a protest in Dhaka on November 7, 2023. — AFP

Bangladesh garment workers reject 56% pay rise

DHAKA: Bangladesh raised the minimum monthly pay for the country's four million garment workers by 56.25 percent on Tuesday, a decision immediately rejected by unions seeking a near-tripling of the figure. The South Asian country's 3,500 garment factories account for around 85 percent of its \$55 billion in annual exports, supplying many of the world's top fashion names including Levi's, Zara and H&M.

But conditions are dire for many of the sector's four million workers, the vast majority of whom are women whose monthly pay starts at 8,300 taka (\$75). Workers have gone on strike to demand a near-tripling of their wages, with violent scenes in recent days, while employers offered 25 percent.

The minimum wage is fixed by a state-appointed board that includes representatives from the manufacturers, unions and wage experts. "The new minimum monthly wage for garment factory workers has been fixed at 12,500 taka (\$113)," Raisha Afroz, the board secretary, told AFP. The figure was immediately rejected by unions, which have been demanding a 23,000 taka minimum.

Unions say their members have been hard hit by persistent inflation, which in October reached nearly 10 percent, and a cost of living crisis partly triggered by the taka depreciating about 30 percent against the US dollar since early last year. "This is unacceptable. This is below our expectations," said Kalpona Akter, head of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation.

The panel normally sits every five years and in 2018 raised the basic minimum from 5,000 taka to 8,000. Garment workers also get at least 300 taka per month as an attendance fee.

Earlier Tuesday, police fired tear gas at thousands of workers who set a bus on fire outside Dhaka, as tensions rose ahead of the announcement. Police said violence broke out in the industrial city of Gazipur as about 6,000 workers walked out of their plants and staged protests.

"They torched a bus. We fired tear gas to disperse them," Gazipur industrial police unit chief Sarwar Alam told AFP. Police said around 600 factories that make clothing for many major Western brands were shuttered last week and scores were ransacked as the worst wage protest in a decade hit major industrial areas and a suburb of the capital. — AFP

China owed more than \$1tn in Belt and Road debt: Report

BEIJING: China is owed more than a trillion dollars through its Belt and Road project, making it the biggest debt collector in the world, a report said this week, with an estimated 80 percent of the loans supporting countries in financial distress. Beijing says upwards of 150 countries stretching from Uruguay to Sri Lanka have signed up to the BRI, a vast global infrastructure push unveiled by President Xi Jinping a decade ago. The first decade of the initiative saw China distribute huge loans to fund the construction of bridges, ports and highways in low and middle-income countries.

But much more than half of those loans have now entered their principal repayment period, said a report released Monday by AidData, a research institute tracking development finance at Virginia's College of William and Mary. That figure is set to hit 75 percent by the end of the decade, it added.

Crunching data compiled on Chinese financing of almost 21,000 projects across 165 countries, AidData said Beijing had now committed aid and credit "hovering around \$80 billion a year" to low and middle-income

nations. The United States, in contrast, has provided \$60 billion to such countries a year.

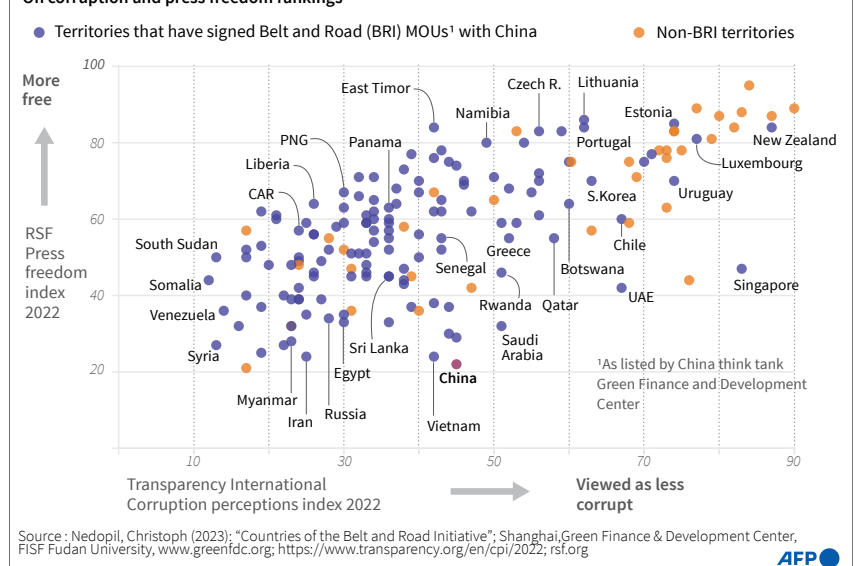
"Beijing is navigating an unfamiliar and uncomfortable role—as the world's largest official debt collector," the report said. "Total outstanding debt—including principal but excluding interest—from borrowers in the developing world to China is at least \$1.1 trillion," AidData said.

AidData, it added, "estimates that 80 percent of China's overseas lending portfolio in the developing world is currently supporting countries in financial distress". Proponents of the BRI praise it for bringing resources and economic growth to the Global South. But critics have long pointed to opaque pricing for projects built by Chinese companies, with countries including Malaysia and Myanmar renegotiating deals to bring down costs. And AidData said China has in recent years suffered reputational damage among developing countries, with its approval rating falling from 56 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2021.

But China is "learning from its mistakes and becoming an increasingly adept crisis manager", the

Belt and Road signatories with China

On corruption and press freedom rankings



study said. Beijing is seeking to de-risk the BRI by bringing its lending practices more in line with international standards, it stressed.

But also among those methods are "increasingly stringent safeguards to shield itself from the risk of not being repaid", it said. That includes allowing key BRI lenders to pay themselves principal and interest due by "unilaterally sweeping" borrowers' foreign currency reserves held in escrow.

"These cash seizures are mostly

being executed in secret and outside the immediate reach of domestic oversight institutions... in low- and middle-income countries," it said.

"The ability to access cash collateral without borrower consent has become a particularly important safeguard in China's bilateral lending portfolio." At a major summit in Beijing last month marking the project's tenth anniversary, Xi said China would inject more than \$100 billion of new funds into the BRI. — AFP



Samyla Trujillo, 14, shows a sweater with Korean Idols to Mikel Caballero, 17, at her grandmother's house in Havana.



Korean stamps and pictures are seen at the San Fan Con square in Havana.



A Cuban student takes classes at the Korean Cultural Center and Language School in Havana.



Young Cuban fans of popular Korean K-Pop music gather in Havana's San Fan Con square. - AFP photos



A young Cuban fan of popular Korean K-Pop music wears a custom at the San Fan Con square.

K-POP SEDUCES YOUTH IN COMMUNIST CUBA, BIRTHPLACE OF SALSA

In Cuba, the home of salsa, young people are being seduced by a music phenomenon from a place that could hardly be more geographically — or ideologically — remote. K-pop, the South Korean sensation that has already swept over much of the rest of the world, has made it to the shores of a communist isle that once banned the music of the Beatles.

"I am myself (with) K-pop. I can free myself," said aficionado Mikel Caballero, a 17-year-old who like many of his peers, spends hours each week perfecting the carefully choreographed paces of South Korean sensations like BTS and Blackpink. Since Cubans gained access to the mobile internet just five years ago, much has changed in a nation where the one-party state nevertheless retains a firm grip on many aspects of life.

There are ride and food-delivery apps, social media, and access to some entertainment sites such as YouTube. Some Cubans now celebrate Halloween, one of the most quintessential festivals of the United States — which has held sanctions against Caribbean nation for more than six decades.

'I like everything'

Caballero's friend Samyla Trujillo has been a K-pop devotee for the last four of her 14 years on Earth. "When I saw BTS... I told myself: 'I want to dance like them,'" Trujillo told AFP, her hair dyed bright red in homage to the fashion of her idols. "And then, when they showed me Black-



A young Cuban fan of popular Korean K-Pop music wears a custom at the San Fan Con square.

pink, I thought: 'Ooh, they're girls, I want to be like them!'"

She has posters and T-shirts plastered with K-pop artists' faces, and watches K-dramas with subtitles. In the house she shares with her grandmother in the capital Havana, Trujillo regularly transforms the lounge into a dance floor for her and Caballero to practice the steps for their K-pop routines.

It is serious business: one day, Trujillo — who was in a traditional Caribbean dance troupe as a child — hopes to become Cuba's first home-

grown K-pop idol. For Trujillo and Caballero both the dream is to go to Seoul one day. "I like everything from there," the 17-year-old told AFP with bright eyes. Cuba has diplomatic ties with fellow-communist nation North Korea, but not with its democratic neighbor to the south.

'Completely new'

Alejandro Achin, 21, said K-pop "is a completely new experience" for Cubans, who are "used to always the same rhythm, the same routine" of salsa and Reggaeton. In 2019, Achin



Young Cuban fans of popular Korean K-Pop music dance at the San Fan Con square.

realized a personal dream of performing in Seoul after winning an amateur K-pop competition with his group in Havana. For Hohyun Joung, who teaches at a South Korean cultural and language center which opened its doors in the Cuban capital last year, K-pop has a universal appeal that transcends politics.

"In Korean songs... most of them express the concerns of young people, what they think, their concern about the future," the South Korean national told AFP. The center where she teaches with four Cubans has 150 students and

not enough space to admit more as the appetite for everything South Korean just keeps growing.

Student la Gonzalez, 20, has been learning Korean at the center for several months and gets excited every time she recognizes a word in some of her favorite K-pop songs. "Korean is not difficult. There are difficult parts, but when you really love what you're doing, you invest impetus and passion and you can learn," she told AFP. — AFP



A Cuban student looks at Korean dolls at the Korean Cultural Center and Language School in Havana.



Young Cuban fans of popular Korean K-Pop music gather in Havana's San Fan Con square.



Young Cuban fans of popular Korean K-Pop music dance at the San Fan Con square in Havana.

Four charged with theft of gold toilet from English stately home

Four men are facing charges in relation to the theft of an 18-carat gold toilet that was stolen from an English country house, prosecutors said on Monday. The fully functioning convenience, dubbed "America" and valued at £4.8 million (\$5.9 million), was stolen from Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, near Oxford, southern England, in September 2019. It was one of the star attractions of an exhibition by Italian artist

Maurizio Cattelan at the palace, home to the dukes of Marlborough and birthplace of Britain's former prime minister Winston Churchill. The 18th century stately home is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which decides on whether to bring cases to court in England and Wales, said the four men - aged between 35 and 39 - would appear in court in Oxford on November 28.

James Sheen, 39, is facing one count of burglary, one count of conspiracy to transfer criminal property, and a further charge of transferring criminal property.

Michael Jones, 38, is facing a charge of burglary while Fred Doe, 35, and Bora Guccuk, 39, are both accused of conspiracy to transfer criminal property, a CPS statement read. Visitors were able to book time slots to use the precious metal privy but only for

three minutes at a time, to limit queues.

More than 100,000 people used it during the year it was on display at New York's Guggenheim Museum. British police at the time said thieves broke into Blenheim Palace during closing time and made off with the toilet, ripping it from its plumbing and causing "significant damage and flooding". — AFP



Lifestyle



A spiral-shaped galaxy called "Hidden Galaxy", also known as IC 342 or Cadwell 5, captured by Euclid telescope.



Galaxies belonging to the Perseus Cluster and others further away, captured by Euclid telescope.



An irregular-shaped dwarf galaxy called NGC 6822, which is located 1.6 million light-years from Earth, captured by Euclid telescope.



A globular cluster called NGC 6397 located about 7,800 light-years away, captured by Euclid telescope.

EUROPE'S EUCLID SPACE TELESCOPE RELEASES FIRST IMAGES

The first images from Europe's Euclid space telescope were released on Tuesday, showing a nebula resembling a horse's head, never-before-seen distant galaxies and even "circumstantial evidence" of elusive dark matter. Euclid blasted off in July on the world's first-ever mission aiming to investigate the enduring cosmic mysteries of dark matter and dark energy. It will do so partly by charting one third of the sky—encompassing a mind-boggling two billion galaxies—to create what has been billed as the most accurate 3D map of the universe ever.

After joining fellow space telescope James Webb at a stable hovering spot around 1.5 million kilometers (more than 930,000 miles) from Earth, Euclid started sending back its first observations. European Space Agency chief Josef Aschbacher said in a statement that Euclid's first five images were "awe-inspiring and remind us of why it is essential that we go to space to learn more about the mysteries of the universe".

They include an image of the Horsehead Nebula and part of the famous Orion constellation, as well as spiral and "irregular" galaxies. But Euclid project scientist Rene Laureijs told AFP that the most exciting for the team was an image of the Perseus Cluster, a massive distant collection of more than a thousand galaxies. Lurking in the background of the cluster is more than 100,000 additional galaxies, some of which are 10 billion light years away and have never been seen before, according to the ESA.

'Dark universe detective'

Jean-Charles Cuillandre, another scientist working on Euclid, told AFP that Euclid is different to other space telescopes because it takes in a very wide field of view, "like never before seen in the history of astronomy." In comparison, the Webb telescope "looks at the sky through the eye of a needle," he said. This wide view means it can capture such broad images extremely quickly—the five new images only took around eight hours of the telescope's time.

Images from another 16 hours—making up a full day—will be released in January. The ESA has dubbed Euclid its "dark universe detective," charged with investigating why 95 percent of the universe appears to be made up of dark matter and dark energy, which we know very little about.

"Dark matter pulls galaxies together and causes them to spin more rapidly than visible matter alone can account for; dark energy is driving the accelerated expansion of the universe," explained ESA science director Carole Mundell. Euclid's early images have already pointed towards "circumstantial evidence" of dark matter, according to Laureijs.

plan to plot out a 3D map—the third dimension being time. Laureijs said the map would allow people to "walk through a part of the sky and go 10 billion years back in time".

But that will have to wait for future data releases over the planned six-year mission. It has not been all smooth sailing for Euclid. When the scientists first started their observations, they found



Stellar nursery called "Horsehead Nebula" and part of constellation Orion are seen in this undated handout image.

For example, he said it was "surprising" that Euclid did not spot stars trailing globular cluster NGC 6397, a collection of hundreds of thousands of stars. "One of the theories is that there might be dark matter around the globular cluster, which keeps all the stars together," Laureijs said.

Walk back in time

By capturing light that has taken 10 billion years to reach Earth's vicinity, Euclid also hopes to better understand how dark energy has driven the universe's expansion since the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago. Once Euclid has collected enough data, the scientists

that cosmic rays were disturbing the telescope's extremely sensitive fine guidance sensor. The spacecraft's software had an algorithm that was "fooled" by the cosmic rays, Laureijs said.

However the team on the ground managed to upload a new algorithm to the spacecraft. "Now it works flawlessly," Laureijs said. There was also a problem with sunlight reflecting off a thruster boom which required rotating the telescope a little, he added. A series of scientific papers analyzing what is in the five new images will be published soon, according to the ESA.—AFP

Glimpses of the 'galactic zoo': Five new Euclid images

The first images from Europe's Euclid space telescope released Tuesday range from a well-known nebula to never-before-seen galaxies 10 billion light years away, illustrating its wide-lens view of the universe. Here are the five images—described by Euclid scientist Jean-Charles Cuillandre as "a range of objects from the galactic zoo in terms of diversity, colors and shapes"—starting with the closest to Earth and moving out into the cosmos.

Horsehead Nebula

A giant red horse seems to rear its head against a background of swirling stars, some still being formed in a stellar nursery. The Horsehead Nebula—also known as Barnard 33—is 1,375 light years away. The horse's head is in fact dark clouds in front of ultraviolet radiation coming from Sigma Orionis, which is the eastern star on the belt of the Orion constellation. The Horsehead Nebula has been observed before, but the European Space Agency's Euclid telescope is the first to deliver such a complete view in just an hour, thanks to its wide lens. Scientists hope that by scouring through Euclid's observations of the nebula, they will find previously unseen Jupiter-sized planets, as well as stars still in their infancy.

Globular cluster NGC 6397

At 7,800 light years away—but still in our Milky Way galaxy—this cluster is a collection of hundreds of thousands of stars bound together by gravity. "Currently no other telescope than Euclid can observe the entire globular cluster and at the same time distinguish its faint stellar members in the outer regions from other cosmic sources," Euclid Consortium scientist Davide Masari said in a statement.

Scientists hope to use Euclid's observations to spot stars trailing such globular clusters as they travel through our galaxy. "The surprising thing is that we don't see these stars trailing," Euclid project scientist Rene Laureijs told AFP. "One of the theories is that there might be dark matter around the globular cluster, which keeps all the stars together," he said. The ESA hopes Eu-

clid will shed more light on dark matter and dark energy, which are thought to make up 95 percent of the universe but remain shrouded in mystery.

An irregular galaxy

Not all galaxies are pretty spirals like our own. Images of the irregular dwarf galaxy NGC 6822, some 1.6 million light years from Earth, have been captured before, including by the James Webb Space Telescope. However Euclid is the first to be able to capture the whole galaxy in barely an hour. As is often the case in the early universe, this galaxy's stars are low on metal, and the scientists hope that analyzing them will shed light on how galaxies evolve.

The 'hidden galaxy'

The spiral galaxy IC 342 earned the nickname the "hidden galaxy" because it can be difficult to spot behind the disc of our own Milky Way. It is relatively nearby—in galactic terms at least—some 11 million light years from Earth. However Euclid's infrared vision was able to peer through the dust to spot never-before-seen globular clusters, ESA said.

Perseus Cluster

ESA described this image as "a revolution for astronomy". It depicts the Perseus Cluster, which contains a thousand galaxies some 240 million light years away. But in the background there are more than 100,000 additional galaxies, some 10 billion light years away, ESA said. Many of those distant galaxies have never been spotted before. Laureijs said it was "very exciting" when the team saw the image for the first time and found low-level light coming not from the cluster, but from stars left over from collisions between galaxies. That these stars were not being pulled back into the galaxies could suggest the presence of dark matter, he said. Laureijs emphasized that this remains "circumstantial evidence," and that future research could reveal more about dark matter's distribution throughout the universe.—AFP



US singer Barbra Streisand performs onstage during the Grammy Awards Show at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.--AFP photos



US singer Barbra Streisand and US actor James Brolin attend the "And So It Goes" premiere at Guild Hall in East Hampton, New York.



Barbra Streisand presents an award during the 91st Annual Academy Awards.

Streisand's new memoir says she's 'still hurt' by insults over looks

Superstar Barbra Streisand is capping her storied career with a nearly 1,000-page memoir out Tuesday, musing on her childhood, Broadway breakout and storied Hollywood love life. The long-awaited "My Name is Barbra" hits the shelves November 7, with the 81-year-old artist and EGOT winner—that's Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony—dishing on her decades in the entertainment business. Across 992 pages Strei-

sand, beloved for her voice as well as her myriad acting roles including "Funny Girl," "A Star Is Born" and "The Way We Were," discusses the pressures of the industry and double standards for women artists: "sometimes I felt like my nose got more press than I did," she writes.

"I wish I could say none of this affected me, but it did. Even after all these years, I'm still hurt by the insults and can't quite believe the praise,"

writes Streisand in excerpts published in People magazine. "I guess when you become famous, you become public property. You're an object to be examined, photographed, analyzed, dissected . . . and half the time I don't recognize the person they portray. I've never gotten used to it, and I try to avoid reading anything about myself."

She also discusses her high-profile romances with former husband Elliott Gould—with whom she shares a son,

Jason—as well as Marlon Brando and Canada's former prime minister Pierre Trudeau. "Deep down, I, too, wanted romance, but I had let my work take over. I tended to use work as a substitute for relationships," she writes.

For a quarter-century now she's been married to actor James Brolin. "Jim and I met at a point in my life when I had basically given up on finding someone. And frankly, I was all right with being on my own. I had my son, I had

great friends to keep me company, my work was fulfilling, and I loved my new house in Malibu overlooking the ocean," she writes. In doing press for the memoir Streisand has said penning her life's story herself has been "the only way to have some control over my life." "This is my legacy," she told the BBC. "I wrote my story. I don't have to do any more interviews after this."—AFP

Lifestyle



A person looks at Jean-Michel Basquiat's 'Self Portrait as a Heel, Part Two' with an estimated value of \$40,000 - \$60,000 during Sotheby's fall preview in New York. — AFP photos



People look at Joan Mitchell's 'Sunflowers', estimated at \$20,000,000 - \$30,000,000

Picasso, Monet and... Ferrari? New York auction houses eye monster sales

A \$120 million Picasso, a \$40 million Monet and even a \$60 million Ferrari: New York's major auction houses are looking to move billions of dollars' worth of art — and a very special car — on a crisis-proof market this season. Against a backdrop of wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as worldwide inflation, the two titans of the sector — Sotheby's and Christie's — will be moving a host of big-ticket lots, though they may still have a hard time topping last year, when total sales hit a record \$16 billion.

Sotheby's, owned by the French-Zionist billionaire Patrick Drahi, could come away with the lion's share of this year's proceeds after its autumn sales from November 7-15 in New York, one of the top global hubs of both art and finance. Its rival Christie's, which belongs to the Artemis holding group of fellow French billionaire Francois Pinault, is putting between \$720 million and \$1 billion in lots under the hammer in the coming days.

Fifty years after his death, Pablo Picasso is expected to be one of the blockbusters this season with the sale of a major work: "Femme a la montre", or "Woman with a Watch". The depiction of the French painter Marie-Therese Walter, one of Picasso's muses, could fetch as much as \$120 million, according to pre-auction estimates.

Landau collection

The painting is part of Sotheby's special sale this week of the collection of the



A person looks at Pablo Picasso's 'Compotier et guitare' during Sotheby's fall preview in New York.

wealthy New York patron of the arts Emily Fisher Landau, who died this year at the age of 102. Also included in the collection are works by Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol. For the Landau collection alone, Sotheby's is hoping to net around \$400 million. Julian Dawes, the house's head of impressionist and modern art, called the Picasso canvas "a masterpiece by every measure".

"Painted in 1932 - Picasso's 'annus mirabilis' - it is full of joyful, passionate abandon yet at the same time it is

utterly considered and resolved," he said. Walter was considered Picasso's "golden muse", and features in another of his works going under the hammer on Thursday at Christie's: "Femme endormie", or "Sleeping Woman", estimated to sell for \$25-\$35 million.

In 2021, the auction house sold another Picasso featuring Walter for \$103 million. Christie's is also selling "Untitled (Yellow, Orange, Yellow, Light Orange)", a prized 1955 canvas by Rothko, the American abstractionist who died in 1970. Emily Kaplan, the auction house's

head of sales for 20th century works, told AFP the piece was expected to go for "around \$45 million".

Representing the Impressionists, a major work by Claude Monet — "Le bassin aux nymphéas" (1917-1919), one of his many paintings of water lilies — is also up for sale by Christie's, which has declined to reveal its pre-auction estimate. At Sotheby's, Monet's "Peupliers au bord de l'Epte, temps couvert" (1891), a depiction of poplars along the river Epte, is expected to fetch \$30-\$40 million on Monday.

Italian legend

One of the highlights of the fall sales, however, will not be a painting or a sculpture, but a car. The luxury automobile subsidiary RM Sotheby's will auction off a 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO on Monday for a price of "more than \$60 million", one of its managers, Michael Caimano, told AFP. Owned by an American collector for 40 years, it is expected to be the most expensive Ferrari 250 GTO ever sold — one of the Italian legends was purchased in 2018 at RM Sotheby's for \$48 million.

If it matches the estimate, it would also be the second-most expensive car ever sold, behind one of only two examples of the Mercedes 300 SLR Uhlenhaut Coupe from 1955, sold for 135 million euros (\$144 million) by RM Sotheby's and Mercedes-Benz at a confidential auction in 2022 at the German



A painting by Claude Monet 'Le Moulin de Limetz (The Mill at Limetz)' during Sotheby's fall preview.

manufacturer's museum in Stuttgart. "Whatever happens in the financial markets, a car of this caliber is a collector's item, a unique opportunity in the life of a collector," said Caimano, comparing it to a work of art that one "can touch, smell and hear".

Auction houses are enjoying a healthy art and luxury goods market, driven by China and showing no signs of a slowdown, said Kelsey Reed Leonard, head of contemporary art sales at Sotheby's. Even one of the sector's smaller houses, Phillips, will offer "Le 14 juillet", or "The 14th of July", by the French cubist painter Fernand Leger next Tuesday for \$15-\$20 million. — AFP



A person looks at Gerhard Richter's 'Abstraktes Bild' during Sotheby's fall preview.



A person looks at Pablo Picasso's painting 'Femme à la montre', estimated at \$120 million dollars, during Sotheby's fall preview.



A 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO, the most valuable car ever offered at auction, is displayed at a preview at Sotheby's in New York.

Fake Bollywood video highlights AI worries in India

A fake video of a Bollywood actor purporting to show her wearing a low-cut top has triggered calls for AI regulation in India, where past false social media posts have stoked sectarian divisions. Rashmika Mandanna told her 4.7 million followers on X, formerly Twitter, that she was "really hurt" after a manipulated video showing her face on the body of another woman was widely circulated on social media, sparking outrage from government and fellow Bollywood stars.



"We need to address this as a community and with urgency before more of us are affected by such identity theft," Mandanna wrote, calling it "extremely scary" how vulnerable all are to technology being misused. Social media

is hugely popular in India, the world's largest democracy, but inflammatory posts peddling lies have stoked political divides and have been accused of inciting deadly religious riots.

In 2018, a prominent female journalist and critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was harassed when edited videos of her face placed on top of naked women were widely circulated. Like much of the world, artificial intelligence is not regulated in India and the government has put the onus of blocking online misinformation on social media platforms.

Staged videos peddling disinformation and fanning sectarian tensions garner millions of views in India, which has seen rising Hindu radicalization under Modi's government. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, India's information technology minister, wrote on X on Monday that such deep fake videos were "dangerous and damaging" forms of misinformation, but warned that they must "be dealt with by platforms".

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan called it a "strong case" for action. Mandanna added that she was thankful for "my family, friends and well-wishers who are my protection and support system". "But if this happened to me when I was in school or college, I genuinely cant imagine how could I ever tackle this."

Videos with manipulated images have proliferated online worldwide, damaging reputations. Some 96 percent of deep fake videos online are non-consensual pornography, and most of them depict women, according to a 2019 study by the Dutch AI company Sensity. — AFP

UK climate activists target 'Rokeby Venus' painting

Climate protesters on Monday smashed the glass cover of the "Rokeby Venus" painting by Spanish artist Diego Velazquez at London's National Portrait Gallery, in the latest protest against fossil fuels. Two Just Stop Oil protesters in their twenties attacked the painting that suffragette Mary Richardson slashed in 1914, the group said in a statement. "At around 10:45 am (1045 GMT) Hanan, 22, and Harrison, 20, used safety hammers to smash the glass covering the Rokeby Venus," said the group, which is demanding a halt to all new oil and gas projects in the UK.

"They then addressed the gallery by saying: 'Women did not get the vote by voting; it is time for deeds not words. It is time to Just Stop Oil.'" The Metropolitan Police confirmed on X (formerly Twitter) that two Just Stop Oil activists had been arrested for criminal damage.

"The glass protecting a painting at the National Gallery has been vandalized," it said, adding that more activists were slow marching on Whitehall, the road that hosts many UK government buildings. Hanan, a student from London, said: "Over 100 years ago, the suffragette Mary Richardson attacked the Rokeby Venus portrait for the unjust imprisonment of Emmeline Pankhurst. Today I have used similar methods in the fight for climate justice." The gallery said the pair "appeared to strike" the glass protecting the painting

with "what appeared to be emergency rescue hammers" and that the room was cleared of visitors.

"The painting is now being removed from display so it can be examined by conservators," it added. The Rokeby Venus was completed between 1647 and 1651 and depicts the goddess Venus lying on a bed gazing into a mirror held up by her son Cupid. In 1914, in a protest against the imprisonment of fellow suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, Richard-

son left seven slashes on the painting, though all were successfully repaired.

Just Stop Oil protesters have conducted regular protests around the UK, blocking traffic and disrupting sporting and cultural events. They have also targeted the National Gallery before. Last year protesters glued their hands to the frame of the painting "The Hay Wain" by English artist John Constable. — AFP



Metropolitan Police officers stand with Just Stop Oil climate activists after they were detained after taking part in a slow march to disrupt traffic, on Whitehall in London on November 6, 2023. - AFP

Sports

Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka at World Cup after Mathews 'timed out' row

Result sealed Sri Lanka's exit from the semi-final race

NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka batsman Angelo Mathews became the first player to be given "timed out" in the 146-year history of international cricket on Monday in a fiery World Cup clash won by Bangladesh. Chasing 280 for victory, Bangladesh rode on a 169-run stand between Najmul Hasan Shanto (90) and skipper Shakib Al Hasan (82) to reach their target with three wickets and 53 balls to spare.

The result sealed Sri Lanka's exit from the semi-final race but Mathews' dismissal overshadowed the result after he was adjudged "timed out" for taking longer than the regulation two minutes to take strike when he arrived at the crease to bat.

The dismissal contributed to a tense atmosphere. Shanto and Sri Lanka's Sadeera Samarawickrama were involved in a verbal exchange and had to be separated by the umpires. Later, Sri Lankan players surrounded the umpires demanding a ball change as the game got away from them. Mathews had come into bat after the fall of Samarawickrama in the 25th over but was unable to secure his helmet strap tightly enough, an action which delayed the resumption of play. As a result, Shakib appealed for the wicket.

On-field umpires Marais Erasmus and Richard Illingworth talked to both teams before the decision was upheld. The 36-year-old Mathews reluctantly trudged off with most spectators appearing bemused by the decision. Shakib was later voted man of the match. "I appealed and the umpire asked me if I was serious, whether I would take it back or not. I said no. If it is in the rules then it is out and that is exactly what happened," said Shakib.

"It's in the laws. I don't know if it's right or wrong. I had to make sure my team wins so what-

ever I needed to do I had to do it." Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Mendis said the umpires should have used "common sense". "When Angelo came to the crease there were like five seconds left for him to be ready and he found out that his helmet strap came out," said Mendis. "It was an equipment failure so I'm disappointed that the umpires couldn't react there and apply common sense."

Shakib's decision to appeal for the wicket caused widespread dismay. "Mathews' dismissal was not good for the spirit of cricket," said Sri Lanka century-maker Charith Asalanka.

'Pathetic'

Former South African fast bowler Dale Steyn writing on X, formerly Twitter, said: "Well, that wasn't cool". Ex-India batsman Gautam Gambhir described the episode as "absolutely pathetic". According to laws of cricket, after the fall of a wicket or the retirement of a batsman, the incoming player must be ready to receive the ball within two minutes. The Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians said there have been six instances of "timed out" in first-class cricket.

"There have been no instances recorded in List A or Twenty20 cricket until Mathews," they wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. The vastly-experienced Mathews was playing in his 225th one-day international on Monday in a career which has yielded 5,900 runs. He has also played 106 Tests and 78 Twenty20 internationals. When Bangladesh batted, Mathews took on Shakib with the ball and got the left-hander to play a loose shot into the air only for Asalanka, who hit 108 in Sri Lanka's 279 all out, to drop the catch. Shakib and Shanto took on the bowlers in a 169-run third-wicket



NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana (front) dives to field the ball as Bangladesh's captain Shakib Al Hasan watches during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

partnership before Mathews broke through with his medium-pace and sent back Shakib.

He pointed to his wrist as a send-off. Mathews also dismissed Shanto to trigger a collapse as Bangladesh lost three more wickets before they reached their target. Earlier the left-handed As-

lanka hit his second ODI ton to rebuild the Sri Lanka innings after they had slipped to 135-5 following the exit of Mathews.

The match had been given the green light despite smog-choked New Delhi being ranked as the planet's most polluted major city. — AFP

WCup 'timed out' dismissal row divides cricket

COLOMBO: Cricket's "timed out" controversy split the game on Tuesday as Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan headed for home nursing a broken finger and battered reputation. Shakib was branded "disgraceful" by Sri Lanka batsman Angelo Mathews after he became the first player in the 146-year history of international cricket to be given timed out.

Mathews had exceeded the two minutes allowed for a batsman to take strike as he attempted to secure the strapping on his helmet. Shakib, who on Tuesday was ruled out of the rest of the tournament with a broken finger, refused to withdraw the appeal, explaining: "I had to take a decision to make sure that my team wins and whatever I had to do, I have to do it".

"I think Shakib will also be asked the question of whether a batsman like Mathews needed to be dismissed like this at that time," Bangladesh's former ODI captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain wrote in Dhaka's Prothom Alo daily on Tuesday. However, India's veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle said the issue was not about cricket's rules. "Let us leave the spirit of cricket out of this," Bhogle wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

'There are laws'

"It is a weak argument often used by those that are ignorant or at the wrong end of a mistake. There are laws and you play within them." "Beyond that, how to play the game is an individual choice. Mathews and Sri Lankan fans can be disappointed and angry but, as per the laws of the game, he was out."

Ex-Bangladesh captain, turned match referee, Raqibul Hassan backed Shakib. "Shakib made an appeal and the umpires gave their decision—as long as it is within the laws, I don't see any problem," Hassan told AFP. But former Bangladesh opener Javed Omar criticized Shakib for not withdrawing his appeal. "The rule was set so that no one could take any unfair advantage," said Javed, who played 40 Tests and 59 one-day internationals for Bangladesh. "Mathews was not taking any advantage here. Shakib should have avoided this controversy." Many on social media reminded Mathews how he led his team during the controversial "Mankad" run-out of England's Jos Buttler in 2014 — where a bowler runs out the non-striker in their delivery stride if the batsman is out of his crease.

'Bunch of two-year-olds'

Mathews defended his actions at the time, saying it had been taken "after two warnings", adding that "even after the warnings it kept happening and clearly they were taking advantage." But Bangladeshi cricket journalist Manjur Morshed from Jamuna TV, pointing to the 2014 "Mankading" incident, as well as Sri Lanka's refusal to shake hands after Tuesday's match, said a sense of fair play was missing.

"Mathews is not the right person to give a lecture on sporting spirit," he said. Chasing 280 for victory, Bangladesh rode on a 169-run stand between Najmul Hasan Shanto (90) and Shakib (82) to reach their target with three wickets and 53 balls to spare on Tuesday. Ironically, Shakib was dismissed by Mathews who marked the breakthrough by pointing at an imaginary wristwatch on his arm. Sri Lankan social media users were critical of Bangladesh players, but they also faulted their own team for not shaking hands with their opponents after losing. One fan, Kokila de Silva wrote on X: "What a shameful bunch of two-year-olds." — AFP

Sri Lanka court restores sacked cricket board

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Court of Appeal quashed the sports minister's decision to sack the country's cricket board and restored the expelled officials on Tuesday pending a full hearing. The court accepted a petition by board president Shammi Silva challenging minister Roshan Ranasinghe's move on Monday to dismiss the Sri Lanka Cricket board and appoint an interim committee.

"The restoring of the board is for two weeks, when the court will hear the case again," a court official said. Board officials said Silva was due to return to work after securing an order that prevented the interim committee—headed by former skipper Arjuna Ranatunga—from continuing in office.

The government has also appointed a cabinet committee to address "outstanding issues" of the board. The minister's action followed a humiliating defeat by India at the World Cup. Ranasinghe has been at loggerheads with Sri Lanka Cricket—the richest sports organization on the financially stricken island—for months



COLOMBO: President of Sri Lanka's cricket board Shammi Silva (R) checks his phone at the Sri Lanka cricket board office in Colombo on November 7, 2023. Sri Lanka's Court of Appeal quashed the sports minister's decision to sack the country's crisis-ridden cricket board and restored the expelled officials on Tuesday pending a full hearing. — AFP

over allegations of widespread corruption.

The country's 1996 World Cup-winning skipper Ranatunga had vowed to clean up the board and rebuild the national team after taking over on

Monday. "Sri Lanka Cricket had become known as the most corrupt institution in the country," Ranatunga said on Monday. "I want to change that image." — AFP

S Korean Olympic medallist hit with travel ban

SEOUL: Olympic silver medallist Nam Hyun-hee has been barred from leaving South Korea, police said Tuesday, as a high-profile fraud probe into her ex-fiance drags in the former fencer. The 42-year-old, who won silver at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, was questioned by Seoul police on Monday over possible involvement in her former fiance's fraud charges.

The case has dominated headlines in South Korea for weeks because of

its murky nature and revelations about the pair and their relationship. Nam's former fiance, Jeon Cheong-jo, was arrested last week on charges of swindling at least 15 people out of 1.9 billion won (\$1.45 million).

The 27-year-old Jeon has told local media that the majority of the money was spent on Nam, including buying her a new Bentley and repaying her loans. A police station in the Songpa district of Seoul told AFP that Nam

was subject to a travel ban as part of the ongoing investigation.

"We plan to proceed with the investigation swiftly," police said in a statement to AFP. The case first came to public attention last month when Nam announced her engagement, giving a magazine interview with her fiance in which they said Jeon was the son of a wealthy family in the casino industry.

However, local media quickly revealed—citing court documents—that Jeon was legally a woman and had been convicted previously of fraud. Underlining how the case has captivated South Korea, mangled English and Korean phrases used in leaked text messages sent by the fiance to

Nam have become top-trending memes online. Former fencer Nam—who also won bronze at the London 2012 Olympics—has since broken off the engagement, saying that she was deceived and had been unaware of her ex-partner's criminal past. But a couple who reportedly fell victim to a fraud exceeding 1.1 billion won have lodged a lawsuit against Nam, identifying her as Jeon's alleged accomplice, according to local reports.

The lawsuit prompted the ongoing police probe, reports say. Since her retirement in 2019, Nam has been operating a fencing club that provides lessons in the upscale district of Gangnam in Seoul. — AFP

Without a Fight wins Melbourne Cup as Zahra triumphs again

MELBOURNE: Without a Fight beat heavy favourite Vauban on Tuesday to win the Aus\$8 million (US\$6 million) Melbourne Cup, with jockey Mark Zahra claiming back-to-back victories in a dominant ride. The seven-year-old gelding stormed clear in the final 100m to hold off Soulcombe and outsider Sheraz in a thrilling finish to the gruelling 3,200-metre (two-mile) handicap at Flemington.

Without a Fight had firmed to third favourite at \$8.00 just before the race. The Irish-trained Vauban, priced as the \$5.50 favourite and with Ryan Moore—one of the world's top jockeys—aboard, finished 14th in the so-called "race that stops a nation".

Second favourite Gold Trip, the horse Zahra steered to victory last year, faded to 17th on a hot day. "That's unbelievable, he was just an absolute gem today," said Zahra, who won the recent Group 1 Caulfield Cup on Without a Fight and opted to stay with him rather than move back to Gold Trip. "I was following Alenquer... in front of him was Gold Trip and in front of him was Vauban. I just thought I'd stay here. They all made their moves and it opened up for me," he added. "I was on a horse that you could just sit on, he has an electric turn of foot and he just pulled me all the way to the line."

Zahra is the ninth jockey to ride back-to-back Melbourne Cup winners and Without a Fight became



MELBOURNE: Attendant Stephanie Hateley throws a bucket of water over the winning horse Without a Fight in the 6 million USD Melbourne Cup horse race at the Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne on November 7, 2023. — AFP

the first horse to clinch the Caulfield Cup-Melbourne Cup double since Ethereal in 2001. "An extraordinary ride. He got him onto the rail from a wide gate, relaxed, switched him off and pretty confident probably

the (last) 800 metres the way he was travelling," said co-trainer Sam Freedman, who hails from one of Australia's most prominent racing families. "He's a freak," he said of the horse. "He was excellent." — AFP

Sports

Olympic champion Semenya 'not ashamed' to be different

Semenya case set for ECHR Grand Chamber final ruling

LONDON: Double Olympic champion Caster Semenya said she is "not going to be ashamed because I am different" as she focuses on her long-running dispute with athletics authorities. The South African, who is classed as having "differences in sexual development (DSD)" but has always been legally identified as female, has refused to take drugs to reduce her testosterone levels since athletics' governing body introduced the rules in 2018.

As a result, she has been barred from competing at her favourite distance of 800m. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) agreed on Monday to rule on the case of Semenya.

The 32-year-old won a lengthy legal battle in July against the Swiss government at the Strasbourg-based international court, which ruled she was the victim of discrimination. But Swiss authorities, supported by World Athletics, had announced their intention to take the matter to the ECHR's Grand Chamber, whose rulings are binding.

Semenya said in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday that she is focused on "winning battles against the authorities" rather than competing, with next year's Paris Olympics not in her plans. "For me I believe if you are a woman, you are a woman, no matter the differences you have," she said.

"I have realised I want to live my life and fight for what I think and I believe in myself. I know I am a woman and anything that comes along with it just accept it." She added: "At the end of the day, I know I am different. I don't care about the medical terms or what they tell me. Being born without a uterus or internal testicles—those don't make me less of a woman. "Those are the differences I was born with and I will embrace them. I am not going to be ashamed because I am different."

Semenya, who won Olympic 800m gold in



Caster Semenya

2012 and 2016 and is a three-time world champion over the distance, said last week she had achieved all she wanted to on the track and is now focused on her battle with the sport's authorities.

'Inclusivity, diversity'

"My future is to fight injustice, fight for inclusivity and diversity," she said. "For me, I'm not going to allow leaders who come for the selfish means into our business to destroy it. I'm about empowering women and making sure they have a voice." The ruling by the ECHR in July was largely symbolic as it does not call into question the World Athletics ruling and does not pave the way for Semenya to return to competi-

tion without taking the medication.

World Athletics introduced the DSD regulations to create a level playing field in women's events ranging from 400m to one mile. Semenya was forced to move up to the 5,000m, a distance in which she failed to reach the final at last year's world championships in Eugene, Oregon.

In March this year, the federation amended the rules. DSD athletes now have to reduce their amount of blood testosterone to below 2.5 nanomoles per litre, down from the previous level of five, and remain below this threshold for two years. World Athletics also removed the principle of restricted events for DSD athletes, meaning regulations now cover all distances. — AFP

What's gone wrong for Erik ten Hag at Manchester United?

LONDON: Manchester United are in desperate need of a win at FC Copenhagen in the Champions League on Wednesday as they battle to avoid an embarrassing group-stage exit. The three-time European champions sneaked past the Danish side 1-0 at Old Trafford last month thanks to a last-gasp penalty save from goalkeeper Andre Onana.

Heavy defeats by Manchester City and Newcastle have since ramped up the pressure on manager Erik ten Hag, which was only eased slightly by a 1-0 win at Fulham on Saturday. United are third in Group A, six points behind leaders Bayern Munich and one adrift of Galatasaray.

If they fail to win in Copenhagen, Galatasaray could be in a position knock United out when the sides meet in Istanbul on November 29. AFP Sport looks at what has gone wrong for Ten Hag in his second season at Old Trafford.

Recruitment

United fans have frequently voiced intense frustration at the running of the club by the Glazer family, but Ten Hag has still enjoyed a huge transfer budget. More than £400 million (\$497 million) has been spent in the past three transfer windows, with few obvious successes.

Former Ajax winger Antony, bought last year for £86 million, has rarely lived up to his huge price tag, scoring just eight goals in 55 appearances. Mason Mount, like Antony, has regularly



Erik ten Hag

found himself on the bench in recent weeks just months after a £55 million move from Chelsea, and has yet to score for his new club.

Onana's penalty save against Copenhagen was atonement for costly errors against Bayern and Galatasaray as United lost their opening two group games of a Champions League campaign for the first time. One of the criticisms aimed at Ten Hag is that he has been too reliant on the Dutch market, which he knows well. Eight of his signings have previous experience of playing in the Eredivisie but many of them have struggled with the extra demands of playing for one of the world's biggest clubs in the Premier League.

Injuries

Ten Hag is frequently criticized for failing to impose an identity and style of play, nearly 18 months into his reign, but he has been hampered by injuries to key players. United performed impressively in the Dutchman's first campaign in charge, ending a six-year trophy drought and finishing third in the

who lifted Spain higher and someone who changed attitudes," she said. "There were consequences, I received threats and I neither asked for this (kiss) nor initiated it."

Rubiales has repeatedly insisted the kiss was consensual. The kiss has had widespread ramifications in Spain, leading to a shakeup of the management of the women's team and sparking demonstrations by feminist and student groups. "Many of us have become aware of what the word 'feminism' really means. We, as women footballers, have experienced the fight for equality up close.

"We were called capricious. People said we wanted to be paid like the boys, but that wasn't true." The top scorer in the history of the Spanish women's team says she is "very angry" at those who point out that women's football "does not generate as much income as men's football." "We know," she said. "And we are not asking for the same as them, all we want is some basic essentials like a minimum wage. "And if I have to keep fighting to change things, then I will," the 33-year-old added. — AFP

also a look at the future of what the kid can be."

Endrick, reportedly bought by Real Madrid for a 72-million-euro transfer fee, is fresh off scoring a clutch brace as his current club, Palmeiras, came back from three goals down to beat league leaders Botafogo 4-3 on Wednesday.

Five-time World Cup winners Brazil will face Colombia away on November 16 in Barranquilla and arch-rivals Argentina on November 21 at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium. Diniz, who won the Copa Libertadores on Saturday in his second job as coach of Rio club Fluminense, largely overhauled Brazil's attack with Neymar sidelined by a knee injury. Also in line for their senior debuts are Brighton forward Joao Pedro, 22, Atletico Mineiro's Paulinho, 23, and Porto's Pepe, 26. In a surprise move, Diniz left out Tottenham striker Richarlison, a starter at the 2022 World Cup.

Besides 31-year-old Neymar—sidelined for several months by a knee injury sustained on October 17 in Brazil's 2-0 loss to Uruguay at their last 2026

Premier League. This season, long-term absences for Luke Shaw, Tyrell Malacia and Lisandro Martinez, as well as injuries to Raphael Varane and Aaron Wan-Bissaka, have stretched his defensive resources to breaking point.

In a further headache for the former Ajax manager, midfielder Casemiro has been ruled out for "several weeks" with a hamstring injury. Veteran centre-back Jonny Evans, brought back to the club as defensive cover, believes the absence of so many players has destabilized the squad. "I think the manager's found out difficulties having to sort of work on the team, on tactics and having to change the personnel quite a lot with only two days in between games," he said.

Misfiring stars

Manchester United's marquee players have failed to deliver this season, with Marcus Rashford, Casemiro and Bruno Fernandes all well below par. Rashford's decline is the most stark—he has just a solitary goal in 14 matches, compared with 30 for the club last season, when he found a new level.

Ten Hag says the England forward is "very motivated to put things right" but he desperately needs his main man to find form quickly. Brazilian international midfielder Casemiro, 31, has failed to match the high standards he set during an impressive first season at United.

Casemiro is top scorer, with four goals in all competitions, but he has struggled with the defensive side of his game, leaving a leaky defence even more vulnerable. Portugal midfielder Fernandes has often cut a frustrated figure and has not been a consistent creative force for a side that have managed just 12 goals in 11 Premier League games this season. Ten Hag will hope his late winner against Fulham on Saturday sparks a revival for the player he made captain in July. — AFP



Jenni Hermoso

World Cup qualifier—Brazil will also be missing their captain, Manchester United midfielder Casemiro, ruled out for several weeks with a hamstring injury.

Brazil squad

Goalkeepers: Alisson (Liverpool, ENG), Ederson (Manchester City, ENG), Lucas Perri (Botafogo)

Defenders: Emerson Royal (Tottenham, ENG), Carlos Augusto (Inter Milan, ITA), Renan Lodi (Marseille, FRA), Bremer (Juventus, ITA), Gabriel Magalhaes (Arsenal, ENG), Marquinhos (Paris Saint-Germain, FRA), Nino (Fluminense)

Midfielders: Andre (Fluminense), Bruno Guimaraes (Newcastle, ENG), Douglas Luiz (Aston Villa, ENG), Joelinton (Newcastle, ENG), Raphael Veiga (Palmeiras), Rodrygo (Real Madrid, ESP)

Forwards: Endrick (Palmeiras), Gabriel Jesus (Arsenal, ENG), Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal, ENG), Joao Pedro (Brighton, ENG), Paulinho (Atletico Mineiro), Pepe (Porto, POR), Raphinha (Barcelona, ESP), Vinicius Jr (Real Madrid, ESP). — AFP

Al-Arabi lose to Bahrain's Al-Rifaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Al-Arabi Football Club, lost to Bahrain's Al-Rifaa (2-1) in the fourth round of the Asian Football Confederation Cup. Bahrain scored the first goal in the first half of the match that was held at Khalifa Sports City Stadium. Al-Rifaa scored its second in the second half while Al-Arabi scored its lonely goal in the second half also.

Al-Arabi dropped to third place with 4 points while Al-Rifaa topped the group with 10 points. Iraq's Zawraa in second with 7 points while Lebanon's Al-Najma is last with just one point.

News in Brief

PSG fan stabbed

MILAN: Hooded attackers stabbed a Paris Saint-Germain supporter ahead of the French club's Champions League match at AC Milan, Italian police said Tuesday. The unnamed French man was "seriously injured by two stab wounds in the leg" in Milan on Monday night and taken to hospital, police said in a statement. The Corriere della Sera newspaper said the man was 34 years old and his life was not in danger. "AC Milan condemns every form of violence: football for us is passion, not hate. Sport is supposed to unite, not divide," said Milan in a brief statement. Witnesses told police the clash happened between around 50 Milan fans and French supporters who were in the lively Navigli area of the northern Italian city. Video images on social media shared by Italian news sites show a group of men on a canal side known for its cafes, bars and nightlife. — AFP

Russia appeals IOC suspension

LAUSANNE: Russia's Olympic body on Monday launched an appeal against its suspension by the International Olympic Committee at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the sports tribunal said. The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) on October 12 for violating the territorial integrity of the membership of Ukraine by recognizing illegally annexed territories. ROC has recognized regional organizations from four Ukrainian territories annexed since Russia's invasion began in 2022. CAS said in its appeal to the Swiss-based court that the Russian Olympic Committee "requests that the Challenged Decision be set aside and that it be reinstated as a (National Olympic Committee) recognized by the IOC, benefiting from all rights and prerogatives granted by the Olympic Charter". The sport court said the arbitration proceedings had already begun with both parties exchanging written submissions before a panel of arbitrators is created. — AFP

Giants' Jones out for season

NEW YORK: New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones will miss the rest of the NFL season after suffering torn knee ligaments in his team's defeat to Las Vegas at the weekend, the Giants confirmed on Monday. Jones exited Sunday's 30-6 defeat to the Raiders at the Allegiant Stadium in Nevada early in the second quarter after collapsing with no player near him. The 26-year-old had been hurt at the end of the first quarter after being sacked by the Raiders' Maxx Crosby, but carried on playing. Giants coach Brian Daboll told reporters on Monday that an MRI scan had revealed torn knee-ligaments. "We got the MRI back; he has a torn ACL," Daboll said. The injury ends what has been a miserable season for Jones, who only returned to the line-up on Sunday after a three-game absence due to a neck injury. Prior to that, Jones completed just two touchdown passes and finished his season with six interceptions. — AFP

Neville appointed Portland coach

LOS ANGELES: Former Inter Miami manager Phil Neville was named as the new head coach of the Portland Timbers on Monday as the team bid to return to Major League Soccer's elite. Former Manchester United and England defender Neville replaces Gio Savarese, who was sacked by the club in August after six seasons. Neville, 46, was axed by Miami in June with the club languishing at the foot of the Eastern Conference, shortly before the arrival of Lionel Messi. "I am massively excited about the challenge ahead, and from the very first moment I met the staff I knew it was the right opportunity for me, the right club for me and the right city for me," Neville said in a statement. Timbers general manager Ned Grabavoy said Neville was the "right person to lead this team forward." — AFP

Brazil phenom Endrick gets first call-up at 17

RIO DE JANEIRO: Seventeen-year-old rising star Endrick, hailed as one of Brazilian football's great hopes, got his first call-up for national team duty Monday as coach Fernando Diniz seeks to replace injured star Neymar. Endrick, who is set to join Real Madrid when he turns 18 in July 2024, could make his senior international debut in Brazil's World Cup qualifiers against Colombia and Argentina this month, making him the youngest player to receive a call-up for the Selecao since Ronaldo in 1994.

"He's a player with the potential to be a great talent," Diniz told a news conference, announcing his squad. "This call-up isn't pressure. It's a reward, and

Jackson treble fires Chelsea to chaotic victory over nine-man Spurs

Pochettino given a largely warm reception by Tottenham fans



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English defender #15 Eric Dier scores but the goal is disallowed following a VAR review, due to an offside, during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

LONDON: Chelsea ended nine-man Tottenham's unbeaten start to the Premier League season as Nicolas Jackson's hat-trick inspired a 4-1 win in a chaotic clash filled with VAR drama on Monday. Blues boss Mauricio Pochettino was able to savour a sweet victory over Tottenham on his first return to the club since his sacking in 2019.

But the Argentine's revenge mission was overshadowed by an incredible litany of controversial incidents including red cards for Tottenham duo Cristian Romero and Destiny Udogie. Dejan Kulusevski had given Tottenham an early lead, but Romero was dismissed for a foul that led to Cole Palmer's equalizer from the penalty spot before half-time.

Referee Michael Oliver and the over-worked VAR officials sent off Udogie soon after the break for his second booking. Both teams had goals disallowed by VAR, while Tottenham's misfortune also included losing England playmaker James Maddison and Dutch defender Micky van de Ven to first-half injuries.

Chelsea finally made the most of their numerical advantage when Senegal striker Jackson netted

three times in the closing stages to hand Tottenham their first defeat in 11 league games. Ange Postecoglou's team remain in second place, one point behind leaders Manchester City, while Chelsea moved up to 10th place after their first win in three league games.

"There will be a forensic study of every decision out there, I think that is the way the game is going and I don't like it," Postecoglou said. "If you look at all that standing around we did today, maybe people enjoy that sort of thing but I'd rather see us playing football."

Pochettino was given a largely warm reception by Tottenham fans in recognition of a five-year reign that included taking them to their maiden Champions League final. But there could be no doubting his pleasure at inflicting a first league defeat on his former employers this term, especially given the extraordinary circumstances of one of the Premier League's most incendiary matches.

"The technology is there and we need to accept. Many things happen on the pitch and you need to verify and check," Pochettino said. "We

deserve the credit. Tottenham are doing fantastic but tonight we were the better team." Tottenham had made the perfect start in the sixth minute when Kulusevski unleashed a powerful shot that deflected in off Levi Colwill.

Chelsea seige

Tottenham were fortunate not to be reduced to 10 men when Udogie was only booked after VAR looked at his reckless two-footed lunge on Raheem Sterling. Sterling and Tottenham's Son Heung-min both had goals disallowed by VAR for handball and offside respectively.

An already heated encounter approached boiling point after Romero escaped a red card for kicking out at Colwill. It was a short-lived reprieve for Romero as the Tottenham defender saw red in the 33rd minute.

When Moises Caicedo's blast from the edge of the area beat Guglielmo Vicario, VAR ruled Jackson was offside but still came to Chelsea's aid. As the VAR check went on, Romero's challenge on Enzo Fernan-

dez just before Caicedo's shot was adjudged to be a penalty, with the defender dismissed for his studs-up follow-through on the Chelsea midfielder's shin.

Palmer's spot-kick was almost saved by Vicario but it had enough power to elude his grasp as it went in via the post. Udogie had flirted with a red card earlier in the game and he finally got his marching orders in the 55th minute for a crude lunge on Sterling.

That set the stage for a Chelsea seige as Spurs played a high defensive line, allowing the visitors to get behind them. Chelsea landed the knockout blow in the 75th minute when Sterling raced away down the right and his cross was slotted home by Jackson from 10 yards.

Even then, Tottenham commendably kept fighting and Eric Dier was denied by a VAR-ruled inches wide and Sanchez saved from Son. The carnage climaxed in stoppage-time when Jackson fired home from Conor Gallagher's cross, then ran clear to condemn Tottenham to a rare defeat. — AFP

Swiatek thrashes Pegula to win WTA Finals

CANCUN: Poland's Iga Swiatek thrashed Jessica Pegula to win the WTA Finals on Monday, sealing her return to world number one. Second seed Swiatek dominated Pegula from start to finish to clinch a 6-1, 6-0 victory in a 59-minute masterclass.

The 17th win of Swiatek's career ensures that the four-time major singles champion from Warsaw will finish the season as world number one for a second straight year. "The team that's been with me the whole season, we had many ups and downs," a jubilant Swiatek said after her win.

"This is for sure an up. We will for sure have many more if we keep working like that," added Swiatek, who lost just 20 games across the tournament — a new record. Pegula had few complaints about her defeat after an error-strewn display. "It just was one of those days where I felt like I was going for too much," Pegula said. "And she was just playing super solid."

Swiatek, 22, had beaten outgoing world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals on Sunday. Sabalenka took over the number one ranking from Swiatek following the US Open in September.

Pegula defeated Swiatek in the two players' previous meeting in Montreal in August, and had impressed on her way to Monday's final, which had been shunted back 24 hours after wet weather washed out play on Saturday.

But the 29-year-old American from New York never looked capable of pulling off a repeat of her Canadian victory against three-time French Open champion Swiatek, who was sharper in every facet of her game.

The Polish star dominated on serve, and pulled Pegula all over the court with whipped groundstrokes that left her opponent flailing.

Pegula also struggled on serve, being broken five



CANCUN: Poland's Iga Swiatek (L) and US' Jessica Pegula wearing Mexican hats, pose on the podium with their trophies during the awards ceremony at the end of the WTA Finals Championship women's singles final tennis match in Cancun, Mexico. — AFP

times while coughing up 23 unforced errors compared to Swiatek's six.

Swiatek — who gave up only one break point opportunity in the entire match, which Pegula was unable to convert — sealed victory in the sixth game of the second set when the American pulled a backhand return long.

Swiatek took control of Monday's contest early on, breaking Pegula in the fourth game for 3-1 before holding and breaking again for a 5-1 lead. She served out to love to claim the first set and then carried that momentum into the second set.

She broke Pegula twice in the first three games of the second set, and then held comfortably for a 4-0 lead. Pegula — who won just seven points on first serve through the match — suffered another break to leave Swiatek on the brink.

Loud cheers erupted for Pegula when she finally managed to earn her first break point of the match on Swiatek's serve. But Swiatek quickly got it back to deuce and then moved to match point by crushing a forehand winner with Pegula stranded, before wrapping up victory on the next point after another errant groundstroke from the American. — AFP

Edwards stars as Wolves end Celtics run

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Edwards scored 38 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves ended the Boston Celtics' unbeaten start to the season on Monday while James Harden made a losing start in his Los Angeles Clippers debut. Edwards' points tally included eight in overtime to help Minnesota claim a 114-109 win over a Celtics team who owned the last undefeated record in the league prior to the game.

"I let my team down in the last quarter by missing two shots; I said to myself I've got to make up for it by taking over in overtime," Edwards said after the win. Jaden McDaniels gave Edwards offensive support with 20 points, including a jump shot with 16 seconds remaining that effectively sealed victory for Minnesota.

"We're the dynamic duo," Edwards quipped. "I trust him. I give him the ball whenever he wants; he's the reason we won tonight." Elsewhere Monday, new Clippers recruit Harden finished with 17 points and six assists but could not prevent his new team falling to a 111-97 road defeat to the New York Knicks.

The 34-year-old former NBA Most Valuable Player was one of five Clippers players in double figures but Tyronn Lue's star-studded lineup were out-gunned by the Knicks' R.J. Barrett and Julius Randle, who combined for 53 points.

Clippers coach Lue liked what he saw from Harden despite his team's defeat. "I thought James was really good," Lue said. "It's going to take him a little time to get in game shape, we understand that. But his presence on the floor was definitely felt." New York ran away with the game in a one-sided fourth quarter, outscoring the Clippers 35-21 for a win that sees them improve to 3-4 in the Eastern Conference.

Wembanyama struggles

In other games on Monday, Indiana gave rising

San Antonio Spurs star Victor Wembanyama a reality check in a 152-111 drubbing. Wembanyama had earned rave reviews after posting 20 points against Toronto on Sunday and 38 points in a victory over Phoenix last Thursday.

But the 19-year-old's hot hand went stone cold in Indianapolis, with the French teenager shooting just 3-of-12 from the field to finish 13 points. Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said only two of his players — Keldon Johnson and Zach Collins — had performed well.

"They were the only guys on our team who showed consistent, decent play," Popovich said. "A lot of that had to do with Indiana — they were on fire and jumped on us." Asked about Wembanyama's contribution, Popovich added: "He moved well. But like I said — only two guys played decently." In Miami, meanwhile, LeBron James scored 30 points against his old club, but the Los Angeles Lakers were edged out 108-107 by last year's NBA Finals runners-up.

A James layup and a free throw got the Lakers to within one point with 2min 39sec remaining in the fourth quarter. But Miami's defense kept the Lakers scoreless for the remainder of the contest and Cam Reddish missed a potential game-winning jump shot with four seconds remaining as the Heat held on for the win.

In Philadelphia, reigning MVP Joel Embiid erupted for 48 points as the Sixers cruised to a 146-128 defeat of the Washington Wizards, who are bottom of the Eastern Conference with just one win in six games. Embiid was in imperious form for the Sixers, making 17-of-25 from the field while draining a perfect 14 out of 14 from the free throw line. The Sixers improved to 5-1.

In the Western Conference meanwhile Steph Curry's sizzling start to the season continued as the Golden State Warriors defeated the Detroit Pistons 120-109. Curry is averaging more than 30 points a game in the league this season and added another 34 in Monday's win. The Warriors improved to 6-2 to remain in third place. In Denver, the defending NBA champion Nuggets produced a scintillating second-half comeback to sink the New Orleans Pelicans 134-116. — AFP