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MP Mudhaf files to grill PM

Lawmakers urge premier to face interpellation in public debate



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah



Muhahal Al-Mudhaf

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Muhahal Al-Mudhaf on Thursday filed to grill HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah over allegations that he failed to implement contents of the historic address of HH the Amir delivered in June 2022 and that he refused to answer questions sent by MPs. The lawmaker also charged there was uncertainty and confusion about the public policies of the prime minister.

The grilling will be listed for debate on the agenda of the Nov 28 regular session of the National Assembly. However, the premier can demand to delay the debate for two weeks. After the grilling, MPs can file a non-cooperation motion against the prime minister, which if approved by a simple majority of elected members, will go to HH the Amir, who

will decide whether to dismiss the prime minister or dissolve the National Assembly.

In his grilling, MP Mudhaf said the address of HH the Amir, delivered on his behalf by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in June last year, was historic and very important, because the political leadership reemphasized on the democratic experience of Kuwait and paved the way for fundamental political reforms.

Mudhaf claimed that the prime minister has backtracked on the commitment to implement the contents of the address, ignoring it in the government's address at the opening of the new term of the assembly on Oct 31. He insisted that political reforms are extremely essential, as they set the stage for other reforms. Mudhaf also charged that public policies adopted by the prime minister have been characterized with uncertainty, ambiguity

and confusion. He also said the prime minister has refused to answer a host of questions sent to him by several lawmakers under the pretext that they were unconstitutional.

Several MPs called on HH the Prime Minister to face the grilling and accept a public debate in the National Assembly, adding that the premier should not send the grilling to the Assembly's legal committee or to the constitutional court to rule if the grilling is in line with the constitution. MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said the prime minister should debate the grilling and refute the allegations during a public debate in the Assembly.

MP Mubarak Al-Tasha said the prime minister and his government should abide by the rule of the constitution and accept the grilling. MP Jenan Bushehri called on the premier to face the grilling, saying this is a victory for Kuwait's democracy.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister warns price gougers

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban instructed on Thursday ministry teams to impose fines against owners of shops who hike prices. Aiban said during a meeting with executives at the commercial supervision and consumer protection departments that inspectors should impose the toughest penalty against shop owners who violate the law and increase prices because of the recent rise in pensions. "You are the first line of defense who protect citizens from greedy merchants," he said. — KUNA

Zour refinery fire 'controlled'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) said that a fire which erupted at Al-Zour refinery was extinguished, affirming that production continues as usual. KIPIC indicated that operations to transport ultra-low-sulfur fuel to electrical power units and other facilities were uninterrupted. KIPIC had earlier announced a limited fire had erupted in Unit 12 of the refinery, with no injuries reported. — KUNA



An Emirati man walks beneath photovoltaic panels at Al Dhafra Solar PV IPP project on Nov 13, 2023. — AFP

UAE inaugurates solar plant

AL DHAFRA: The United Arab Emirates inaugurated on Thursday one of the world's biggest solar plants, two weeks before the oil-rich Gulf state hosts UN climate talks. The Al Dhafra plant, south of the capital Abu Dhabi, stretches over 21 sq km of desert, an area about one-fifth the size of Paris. — AFP

Kuwait grapples with rain havoc, schools closed

KUWAIT: In response to the rainy weather affecting Kuwait since Wednesday, Kuwait Fire Force has been actively managing reports with no injuries recorded, the fire department said in a press release. The reports primarily involved vehicles stranded on flooded roads and rainwater accumulation in some areas, including houses with basements. The fire force successfully addressed these incidents, rescuing several individuals.

The meteorological department predicted rainy conditions to persist until midnight on Thursday, gradually decreasing from Friday dawn and resuming on Sunday. The ministry of public works acknowledged rainfall overwhelmed the rainwater network's capacity, confirming that teams

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KUWAIT: Lightning strikes over Kuwait City during a thunderstorm on Nov 15, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zionists search Gaza hospital as civilians trapped

GAZA: Zionist forces were searching building to building at Gaza's main hospital Thursday as Hamas said the military had "destroyed" parts of the compound where deep concern has mounted for the up to thousands of Palestinians trapped inside. Soldiers raided the Al-Shifa hospital a day ago in the hunt for a command center they say

the militants built below the complex, a charge denied by Hamas and leaders of the hospital that has become a focal point of the war.

Ashraf Al-Qudra, spokesman for the health ministry in Gaza, told AFP Zionist troops "destroyed the radiology service, and bombed the burns and dialysis departments". "Thousands of women, children, sick and wounded are in danger of death," he said. Before the Zionist entity first sent troops into the hospital complex on Wednesday, UN agencies estimated that 2,300 patients, staff and displaced civilians were sheltering at

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WASHINGTON: A demonstrator places flowers on white-shrouded body bags representing victims in the Zionist-Hamas conflict in front of the White House on Nov 15, 2023. — AFP

Biden and Xi meet, restore military ties

WOODSIDE, California: US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed at their first summit in a year on Wednesday to restore military communications between the two countries, even as Biden went off script

by saying he still considered Xi a "dictator". The leaders shook hands and strolled around a garden at a historic California estate during four-hour talks aimed at preventing growing tensions between the world's largest economies from spiraling into conflict.

They also agreed that China would crack down on the production of ingredients for fentanyl, responsible for a deadly epidemic of opioid abuse in the United States, with Xi saying he "sympathizes" with US victims of the deadly drug, which has ravaged

communities across the country. But Xi and Biden remained far apart on the wider flashpoint of Taiwan, with the Chinese president telling his US counterpart to stop arming the island and that reunification was "unstoppable". Beijing claims sovereignty over the self-ruling democracy and has not ruled out seizing it by force.

The two leaders had not met in person since they held talks in Bali in Nov 2022, and relations nosedived after the United States shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon in February this

year. But Biden told a press conference at the Filoli estate that his talks with Xi, whom he has known since 2011, were "some of the most constructive and productive discussions we've had".

The United States would compete "vigorously" but "responsibly" with an increasingly assertive China "so it doesn't veer into conflict or accidental conflict," Biden said. "He and I agreed that each one of us could pick up the phone, call directly and we'll be heard immediately."

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Local

Holy Quran memorizing competition concludes under sponsorship of Amir

PM awards winners, honors judging and award committee



KUWAIT: The closing ceremony of Kuwait's International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran and its Recitation was held Wednesday in the presence of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, under the auspices of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The ceremony was attended by Minister of Information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, senior state officials and several ambassadors to Kuwait.

Mutairi delivered a speech in which he thanked HH the Amir and praised him for patronizing this competition. He also thanked HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister for the efforts made in such competitions.

HH the Prime Minister honored the judging committee and the award committee, in addition to honoring and congratulating the winners, while conveying the greetings and congratulations

of HH the Amir. HH Sheikh Ahmad expressed gratitude and appreciation for the outstanding efforts put into organizing the competition.

In the competition results, Abdul Ajeem Haji from Kenya secured the first place in the Quran memorization category with perfect recitation and Tajweed. Mohammed Shuwea from Yemen achieved the second place, Ahmed Shakhmamiyov from Russia claimed the third place, and Mohammed Hassan from the United States earned the fourth place. Meanwhile, Nadi Mohammed from Egypt secured the fifth place.

In the Quran memorization category with 10 recitations, Mohammed Al-Jad from Cameroon took the first place, Abdul Hakim Abdul Rahman from Somalia secured the second place, Abdulaziz Al-Drouqi from Libya earned the third place, Ziad Ibrahim from Jordan came fourth, and Ahmed Al-Hadda from Yemen claimed the fifth place.

In the category of recitation and intonation, Abdul Basset Wraich from Morocco took the first place, Abdul Rashid Abdur from Pakistan secured the second place, Hassan Abdallah from Tanzania earned the third place, Fateh Babu from Algeria came fourth, and Youssef Al-Ainati from Kuwait claimed the fifth place.

In the recognition of young Holy Quran memorizers, Abdul Rahman Atiya from Libya achieved the first place, Abu Na Omar from Cameroon secured the second place, Ayman Dirham from Yemen earned the third place, Mohammed Abdul Hameed from Pakistan came fourth, and Abu Al-Fadl Basming from Iran claimed the fifth place.

In the technical branch award for the best website for Quranic institutions, Abdul Rahman Al-Badri from Algeria took the first place. Fahad Al-Sabai from Saudi Arabia received the award for the best Quranic application. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah awards winners of the Holy Quran competition. — KUNA photos

Zain employees visit Holy Mosque in Makkah

KUWAIT: Continuing its annual tradition of fostering spiritual growth and strengthening bonding beyond the workplace, Zain successfully organized the 19th umrah trip for its staff. This special journey to the Holy Mosque in Makkah was joined by many employees and their family members. The trip served to reinforce the Zain family's sense of unity and deepen the bonds of belonging and affection among its members.

This trip, which comes for the 19th year, falls under Zain's internal communications strategy, which caters to a

wide range of personal and professional aspects of employees' lives. The solid strategy encompasses a plethora of programs and initiatives that center around many pillars, such as health and sports, spiritual and cultural, and recreational and social programs.

This initiative returns annually to reflect Zain's unwavering commitment towards its human resources. Every year, the company receives positive feedback and high interaction from employees who participate in the Omrah trip, with praise from them and their accompanying family members for the smooth journey and spiritually rich experience.

The company continues to work on identifying and implementing the best initiatives and programs to interact with employees in and outside of the workplace environment. These programs in-

clude spiritual and religious visits, Holy Quran recital competitions, awareness campaigns, and cultural programs. Other initiatives include health-oriented campaigns like seasonal vaccination drives, blood drives, periodic checkups, sports competitions, as well as cultural sessions, informative workshops, and much more.

From time to time, Zain brings the best experts from a wide variety of fields to hold special talks for employees to widen their horizons and enrich their knowledge. The company believes that active and ongoing communication with its staff elevates their workplace experience and positively impacts their productivity levels. Zain considers its workforce the main reason behind its success and leadership in the market and will always foster their growth and cater to their needs.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and his Omani counterpart Bader Al-Busaidi sign bilateral deals. — KUNA

Kuwaiti, Omani FM's hold talks

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah on Thursday received his Omani counterpart Bader Al-Busaidi, holding talks on bilateral relations and efforts to propel ties to greater levels. Both top diplomats agreed that bilateral relations have made tremendous headway as of late, proving equally beneficial to the Gulf Arab neighbors, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Current happenings around the world were among the topics dis-

cussed, chief among them the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, while the ministers collectively underlined the need to provide the Palestinians with maximum protection at a time when the Zionist occupation forces have stepped up their "acts of aggression", they said.

Kuwait and Muscat are "equally" committed to ensure that the Palestinians fulfill their rights to statehood, based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state, added the statement. The talks also yielded a number of new bilateral deals, running the gamut from environment and trade to education, it said. — KUNA



MAKKAH: Zain employees and their families during the trip.

Kuwait UN mission holds seminar on Duchenne disease

NEW YORK: Kuwait's permanent envoy to the United Nations Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai relayed the General Assembly's intent on naming September 7 World Duchenne Awareness Day to raise awareness on Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD). This was during a seminar organized by Kuwait's permanent mission to the UN late Wednesday at its headquarters in New York, with the attendance of specialists in rare diseases.

Bannai stated that this initiative is a signifier of the collective commitment to facing one of the rarest diseases affecting children all over the world. This is not merely an awareness campaign, asserted the ambassador, but it is a vow of protecting the integrity and rights of all infected children, indicating that around 20,000 cases are diagnosed annually. The Kuwaiti diplomat pointed out that the initiative corresponds to sustainable development goals through as it pursues bridging inequality for those with rare illnesses. The initiative aims to bolster communities with mitigating abilities, via a curriculum that



NEW YORK: Kuwait's permanent envoy to the United Nations Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai attends the seminar. — KUNA

brings together health, education, economic stability, equality and sustainable societal development towards a more comprehensive world.

Bannai expressed his gratitude for the World Health Organization (WHO), as its partnership is instrumental to transcending national borders and cultural gaps. He further added that the attendance of rare

disease specialists is an invaluable opportunity to gain from their knowledge and expertise that have made tangible changes in people's lives. Bannai reaffirmed the UN General Assembly's commitment to human rights for all, including the 300 million people infected with rare illnesses via guaranteeing equal opportunities and unrestrained participation in society. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adarsh Swaika called on Dr Saad Al-Barrak, Deputy PM and Minister of Oil and Economy and Investments. Discussions pertained on deepening of bilateral economic and investment cooperation, particularly hydrocarbon cooperation.

Local

Effects of boycott of pro-Zionist brands in Kuwait on franchisees

Power of consumer choices shaping new narrative, local businesses benefit

By Faten Omar and Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The recent situation in Gaza has sparked widespread concern, leading to a significant response from the Kuwaiti population – the initiation of a boycott. This protest aims to express solidarity with the people of Gaza and register disapproval of the events unfolding in the region. The ongoing boycott has raised questions about its impact on the parent companies supporting the Zionist entity, prompting discussions on its effectiveness. Kuwait Times interviewed experts to delve into the implications.

Fahad Al-Arbash, Head of the Kuwait Union of Restaurants, Cafes, and Catering Companies, highlighted the negative impact of the boycott on franchising, foreseeing future and long-term consequences. According to him, franchise restaurant owners will find it challenging to recover losses during the boycott, as they require 4-6 months to cover monthly running costs. Arbash emphasized the significance of “word of mouth”, stating that negative marketing can be potent, especially during a boycott. Trust in family and friends’ opinions can significantly affect a business.

Even if a franchise is Kuwaiti-owned, Arbash explained that it still contributes to the parent company’s profit. The parent company provides recipes, employee training, selects decorations and packaging, and even influences marketing strategies. Arbash, drawing from his experience as a former franchise restaurant owner, revealed the financial ties, explaining that a percentage

of monthly sales, in this case, 4 percent, goes to the parent company. This financial link raises concerns as part of the profits indirectly supports the enemy.

On the positive side, Arbash confirmed that local restaurants experienced a sales increase of 20-30 percent post-boycott. Customers show a strong tendency to choose local alternatives due to better quality and lower prices.

Economist Mohamed Ramadan added insights, acknowledging the likelihood that franchisees, despite being Arab-owned, maintain a certain relationship with the parent company supporting the Zionist entity. He criticized claims by some franchisees that they don’t contribute financially to the supporting parent company as deceptive.

Ramadan stressed the need for business transparency, allowing consumers to make informed choices based on truth. While he believes boycotts can pressure parent companies to reconsider their support for the Zionist entity, he doubts it will entirely sever business relations unless sustained on a global scale.

Assistant Vice President for External Research and Professor Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra noted Kuwait’s unique position as one of the few countries in the region that has not normalized relations with the Zionist entity, making the boycott easier. She acknowledged challenges in convincing people, especially in the West, due to media influence. However, she observed a growing counter-voice in media supporting Palestinians.

Ghabra said Kuwaitis have been boycotting

any company that shows any support to the Zionist entity in committing the genocide in Gaza. “Kuwaitis are committed to the boycott. We have seen several stores, cafes and restaurants empty,” she said, despite confusion about what products to target. She recommended referring to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) website for guidance. “The BDS movement has three goals — to put pressure to end the occupation and dismantle the apartheid wall, to achieve full equality for Palestinian citizens, and the right of return for Palestinians,” she explained.

Ghabra highlighted the awakening of the younger generation to the history of occupied Palestine, with students showing increased interest in understanding and questioning the events, especially in light of the recent conflict and the second Nakba. She underscored the importance of educating students about the media’s role in controlling narratives, focusing assignments on the genocide to raise awareness.

Research by Edelman has indicated that 64 percent of global consumers make purchasing decisions based on a brand’s political or social stance. Brands are now expected to reflect human values and speak out on perceived injustices. Reina El-Khatib, a branding expert, emphasized the significant damage to brands supporting the Zionist entity, with people now associating them with “bloody hands”. She cautioned against underestimating the impact of boycotts, as every individual can contribute to making a difference.

Khatib noted the shift in the perception of



Haneen Al-Ghabra



Mohamed Ramadan

brands from mere sellers to entities with distinctive psychological features, known as “brand humanization”. She highlighted the dilemma faced by brands, forced to reflect their values on social and political issues due to the rise of social media and online debates.

In conclusion, the boycott in Kuwait, while affecting franchisees negatively, has boosted local businesses. The debate surrounding the ethical considerations of supporting parent companies indirectly contributing to the Zionist entity remains complex. The global landscape is changing, with consumers expecting brands to take a stance on social and political issues, and the impact of such boycotts, if sustained, can potentially reshape corporate affiliations on a broader scale.

WASD honors Kuwaiti envoy

LONDON: The World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD) has honored Kuwait’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Bader Al-Awadhi for his pioneering contribution to achieving and supporting sustainable development in various parts of the world. This came during the 20th annual World Association for Sustainable Development conference on Monday, held over two days in London with the participation of international researchers, policy-makers, academics and experts.

WASD chose Awadhi among the sustainability pioneers for his support of WASD programs during 2023 and his efforts in following the UN’s

sustainable development agenda, in addition to various development projects around the world. Head of the sustainable development department at Kuwait Technical College Dr Randa Bahman, and Assistant Professor at Gulf University for Science and Technology Dr Omar Gibreel, were also among the honorees that contributed to the WASD program.

The UN set 17 sustainable development goals to achieve a better and more sustainable future by 2030, and the goals address global challenges, including poverty, inequality and climate change. WASD aims to promote exchange of knowledge, experience, information and ideas among academics, scholars, professionals, policy makers, industry and students to improve the mutual understanding of the roles of science and technology in achieving sustainable development all over the world. — KUNA



LONDON: WASD honored Kuwait’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Bader Al-Awadhi, Head of the sustainable development department at Kuwait Technical College Dr Randa Bahman and Assistant Professor at Gulf University for Science and Technology Dr Omar Gibreel.

GCC adopts Dec 2030 target for operation of Gulf railway project

MUSCAT: The head of Kuwait’s delegation to the Gulf Transport Ministers Meeting Ahmed Al-Saleh said on Thursday that the meeting agreed to consider December 2030 as the target date for the implementation and operation of the railway project among the members of the Gulf Cooperation. This came in a statement made by Saleh to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after participating in the 25th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Transport and Communications of the GCC in Muscat, representing Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Public Works Jassim Al-Ostad.

Saleh added that the meeting adopted several recommendations for the Gulf project, the most important of which is determining the target date for the completion of the railway project, following up on the progress of work by the General Secretariat, continuing to provide the Gulf Railways Authority with updated data for the works periodically and securing the financial, technical and operational resources necessary for the project.

Saleh described the meeting as “fruitful”, as it witnessed a clear desire from all representatives of GCC countries to complete the project at the agreed times in implementation of the vision of the leaders of the Gulf.

Additionally, the meeting approved the budget for



MUSCAT: GCC ministers of transport and communications committee members. — KUNA

the Gulf Railways Authority for the year 2024 and endorsed administrative, financial and accounting regulations along with procurement and storage regulations. Several recommendations emerged, including the adoption of a unified regulatory framework for conducting indicative tests of ballast water on ships in GCC ports and waters.

Saleh urged GCC states to leverage the regulatory framework in their applications, emphasizing the importance of General Secretariat registration in the International Maritime Organization. The meeting also addressed the land transport strategy of GCC states and the executive regulations of the unified law for international road transport among GCC states. — KUNA

Kuwait’s 21st Gaza aid plane heads to Egypt

KUWAIT: The 21st relief aid plane for the Gaza Strip departed Kuwait to Al-Arish, Egypt, carrying 40 tons of medical aid and necessities. Some 22 charitable societies contributed to the current batch of the relief aid campaign for Palestine. Deputy Director General of the Kuwaiti Relief Aid Society and general coordinator of the support for the Palestine campaign Omar Al-Thuwaini said donors and official state entities had contributed immensely to the relief aid air bridge launched by Kuwait since the early days of the current brutal Zionist occupation aggression against the Gaza Strip.

The current flight includes a variety of relief aid materials in addition to four ambulances to be delivered to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, said Thuwaini, who added that the Egyptian Red Crescent Society would be handling the delivery of material to Palestinians partners within Gaza. He noted that the volume of Kuwaiti relief aid thus far had reached 150 tons of medical, food and shelter supplies, in addition to 18 ambulances. — KUNA



KUNA Director General elected VP of FANA

ABU DHABI: Dr Fatma Al-Salem, Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), was elected Wednesday as Vice President of the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) to be the first woman in the Arabian Gulf to occupy this post. This came during the 50th general assembly meeting of FANA in Abu Dhabi under the theme of “the impact of artificial intelligence on news agencies’ action”, in which Salem took part. The assembly witnessed the handing over of the federation’s rotating presidency from Saudi News Agency (SPA) to the UAE’s WAM.

The conferees stressed the importance of cooperation between Arab and international news agencies to enhance communication and share expertise and knowledge mainly in light of increasing use of artificial intelligence and its broad applications. During the meeting, the conferees reviewed the latest techniques and methodologies as well as concepts at news agencies, in addition to the 2023-24 report on FANA’s activities and training courses offered to the FANA staff.

Additionally, directors general of FANA shared ideas and views on how to reach a joint mechanism of cooperation as well as information to improve media and journalism, in addition to discussing proposals to promote relations between the Arab and global news agencies. They underlined the importance of upgrading the professionalism level of news agencies’ staff and offering news in a credible and transparent way mainly those related to Arab causes. The conferees continued the assembly’s meeting on Thursday to review the activities of the FANA Secretariat General and training courses as well as proposals, awards, memos and others. — KUNA



Dr Fatma Al-Salem

Kuwait wins presidency of Aviation Met Group

CAIRO: Kuwait has won the presidency of the Aviation Meteorological Group affiliated with the International Civil Aviation Organization during its 11th meeting held at the organization’s regional headquarters in Cairo. Amira Al-Azmi, Head of the Navigation Forecasts Department at the Kuwaiti Civil Aviation Administration, stated in a statement to KUNA on Wednesday that the participating delegations unanimously selected her as the first woman to hold this position in the Middle East.

She added that the choice represents an achievement and recognition of Kuwait’s role in fulfilling its responsibilities in regional and international forums, emphasizing Kuwait’s leadership in this field. Azmi explained that Kuwait’s presidency of the group will last for four years, underscoring Kuwait’s commitment to activating the mechanisms of collaboration and coordination among member states during this period. Expressing her joy at assuming this position, especially as the first woman to chair this group in the Middle East, Azmi highlighted that the group specializes in monitoring all aviation meteorological services provided by member states. Additionally, it offers consultations and technical support in the same field. She noted that the group also works to coordinate between regional and other areas to ensure compliance with the technical standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization and its future plans. The regional office for the Middle East, affiliated with the International Civil Aviation Organization, was established in 1953 with its headquarters in Cairo. Its objective is to continue developing aspects of safety and security in aviation and to affirm the continuity of air transport safety. — KUNA



Amira Al-Azmi

KU conference focuses on study of Kuwaiti society

KUWAIT: The Center for Historical Studies at the College of Arts organized its inaugural conference with the theme "The Age of Interdisciplinary Studies: New Approaches, Theories and Approaches to the Study of History, Politics and Literature in Kuwaiti Society." The event took place on Tuesday and Wednesday at the conference hall in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The conference aimed to highlight recent advancements in academic studies across literary, social and scientific fields, focusing on the study of Kuwaiti society. Against the backdrop of significant developments in historical, literary and political studies related to Kuwait, the conference made a direct contribution to showcasing these emerging theories and approaches within the scientific community. Its goal was to strengthen scientific research pathways and foster knowledge exchange among various scientific and academic disciplines.

Dr Khaled Al-Batini, President of the Center for Historical Studies, delivered the opening speech, followed by Dr Abdullah Al-Jasmi, Assistant Dean for Planning, Consulting and Training, who spoke on behalf of Prof Dr Abdul Mohsen Al-Madaj, Acting Dean of the College of Arts.

The first day featured a keynote lecture by Mansour Bu Khamseen. The initial session, titled "The Historical Development of the Urban Environment in Kuwait", included presentations by Dr Abdullah Al-Najdi on the Construction Council and the Kuwaiti government from 1952 to 1963, Dr Dalal Al-Sayer on "Building the Pan Arab Dream: The Arab Engineer and the Building of Kuwait's Architectural Modernism", and Dr Abdulmuttalib Al-Balam on the architectural perspective of the Old Kuwait plan.

The second session, "Historical Studies in the Light of New Approaches, Approaches, and Theories", comprised presentations by Dr Talal Al-Rushoud on the intellectual class in Kuwait in 1950, Dr Issa Dashti on the role of Kuwaiti ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah in supporting the British during the First World War, Dr Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Habib on "The Roots of the Division of Shiite Societies in Kuwait: Causes and Consequences (1908-1925)", and Dr Munther Al-Sabbagh on Japanese companies in Kuwait during the period between World War I and II.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A heron is pictured at a beach in Kuwait City on Nov 15, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Mural commemorates 60 yrs of Kuwait-Pak diplomatic ties

Artwork at Mishref Co-op third after two in Mubarakiya



KUWAIT: Pakistani Ambassador Malik Mohammad Farooq cuts the ribbon to inaugurate a mural symbolizing the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Pakistan at Mishref Cooperative Society. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: The Pakistani Embassy inaugurated the third artistic mural in collaboration with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) as part of its activities commemorating 60 years of diplomatic relations with Kuwait.

Pakistani Ambassador Malik Mohammad Farooq said during the opening at Mishref Cooperative Society that the mural symbolizes cultural closeness between the two friendly nations. He mentioned that having the mural in a residential area serves as a continuous reminder of the exceptional relations between both countries in various fields.

This marks the third mural unveiled for this occasion, with two others in Souq Mubarakiya. The contents of the mural represent traditional Pakistani art known for vibrant colors and depictions of birds, such as doves symbolizing freedom and peace and peacocks representing beauty and the love of life.

Dr Mohamed Al-Jassar, Secretary-General of NCCAL, praised the artistic murals, emphasizing

their aesthetic contribution to Kuwait's residential areas. He highlighted the collaboration between NCCAL and the Pakistani Embassy in bringing distinguished Pakistani artists for the project, enhancing the visual appeal of lively areas like Mubarakiya.

Dr Ameera Al-Hassan, Head of UN-Habitat GCC Office, noted that placing these murals in public spaces in Kuwait aims to improve the overall appearance and utilize empty spaces in residential and vibrant areas like Mubarakiya. She mentioned the murals include Quranic verses and expressive phrases such as "Love for Kuwait and Pakistan in the heart". The event was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat and several heads of diplomatic missions in Kuwait. — KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat, Pakistani Ambassador Malik Mohammad Farooq and heads of diplomatic missions in Kuwait in front of the mural at Mishref Co-op.

Raku firing held at Ceramic House

KUWAIT: During the Contemporary Arab Ceramics Festival that commenced on Monday with Arab participation, ceramists employed the Japanese technique of raku firing at a workshop at The Ceramic House on Wednesday. As part of the ongoing festivities, participating ceramists utilized a specialized kiln for raku firing, placing their ceramic pieces inside as a stage in the ceramic production process.

Raku firing is considered one of the ancient arts traditionally practiced by the Japanese during tea ceremonies, where attendees are presented with ceramic pieces that they color and retain as keepsakes. The festival runs until Friday. — KUNA



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UK Sikhs feel overlooked, uneasy after Canada killing

Sanchez gets new term despite amnesty row

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GAZA: Patients and internally displaced people are pictured at Al-Shifa hospital on Nov 10, 2023 before the Zionist raid. — AFP

‘Raise your hands’: How Zionists raided Al-Shifa

Army yet to prove Hamas running command center at Gaza’s biggest hospital

GAZA: Hours after Zionist troops launched a night-time raid on Gaza’s biggest hospital, soldiers interrogated patients in the compound’s courtyard while other Palestinians stood stripped to their underwear. “All men 16 years and above, raise your hands,” a soldier shouted in accented Arabic through a loudspeaker at those sheltering inside Al-Shifa hospital, which has been at the center of fierce urban combat for days.

“Exit the building towards the courtyard and surrender,” the soldier ordered, according to a journalist who visited the embattled hospital several days ago for interviews and was trapped inside because of the fighting outside. About 1,000 male Palestinians, their hands above their heads, were soon led into the vast hospital courtyard, some of them stripped naked by Zionist soldiers checking them for weapons or explosives, the journalist told AFP.

Hours later, some 200 remained in their underwear, forced to stand beside tanks used in the military incursion into the medical facility. The army labeled the raid a “precise and targeted” operation against Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that launched the deadly October 7 attacks on the Zionist entity.

Since their raid on the facility, the military is yet to produce any evidence to back their claim of Hamas running a command center beneath the hospital. “Before entering the hospital, our forces encountered explosive devices and terrorist squads, and fighting commenced in which terrorists were killed,” the military said of the battle preceding the raid.

Witnesses have described conditions inside the hospital as horrific, with medical procedures performed without anesthetic, families with scant food or water living in corridors, and the stench of decomposing corpses filling the air. As Zionist forces raced through the corridors, hundreds of young men emerged from different wards, including the maternity section, which was hit in a strike a few days ago, the journalist reported. Soldiers fired warning shots as they moved from room to room looking for Hamas militants, he said, adding the troops were also searching women and children, some of whom were in tears.

Tanks in hospital complex

On Oct 7 about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, died in the attack on the Zionist entity. Around 240 hostages were taken back into Gaza, according to Zi-

onist officials. In Gaza, more than 11,300 people, also mostly civilians, have been killed in the intense Zionist bombing campaign and ground invasion since, health officials in Gaza said.

In the hospital incursion, the journalist said Zionist troops entered the main emergency department and other wards. The Zionist army, in a statement early Wednesday, said they were targeting Hamas “in a specified area” of the facility. Soldiers were still questioning wounded people and their companions on Wednesday afternoon, as they moved between hospital departments, the journalist at Al-Shifa said.

The army said it had delivered incubators, baby food and medical supplies to the hospital, which AFP was not able to verify. The journalist said soldiers were handing out drinking water to some of the displaced people who had taken shelter at the hospital during weeks of warfare. “Our medical teams and Arabic speaking soldiers are on the ground to ensure that these supplies reach those in need,” the army said.

Gaza’s Hamas government accused the Zionist army of committing a “war crime and crime against humanity”. Over the past few days, the Zionist en-

tity has encircled Al-Shifa in north Gaza, charging that tunnels under the facility were being used as hideouts by Hamas commanders. The White House said that US intelligence sources corroborated the Zionist claim that Hamas and another militant group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, had buried an operational “command and control node” under Al-Shifa. Sabrina Singh, deputy spokesperson for the Pentagon, said the US was confident of the Zionist allegation despite having no one on the ground in Gaza to confirm it.

Hamas has denied those charges and stressed the suffering inside the besieged facility that, like other hospitals, has been without electricity or fuel for generators amid the Zionist siege of the Palestinian territory. The United Nations said earlier that at least 2,300 people — patients, staff and displaced civilians — were inside and may be unable to escape because of the fierce fighting. Citing the health ministry in Gaza, UN humanitarian agency OCHA said 40 patients had died in Al-Shifa on Tuesday. The hospital director Mohammad Abu Salmiya said that 179 bodies had been buried in a mass grave inside the complex. — Agencies

Labour frontbench rebellion in UK Zionist-Hamas vote

LONDON: Labour leader Keir Starmer was hit by a string of resignations from his frontbench in the House of Commons on Wednesday night, after facing a rebellion from his MPs over his refusal to back a ceasefire in Gaza. The vote calling for the ceasefire was defeated by 293 votes to 168, but eight of Starmer’s frontbenchers resigned from the frontbench after supporting the amendment.

Labour MPs had been ordered to abstain on the vote and were told instead to back Starmer’s position calling for longer “humanitarian pauses” rather than a ceasefire. Starmer said he regretted that party colleagues had not backed his position, but that he wanted to be clear about where he stood.

“Much more needs to be done in this regard to ease the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding in Gaza,” he said in a statement after the vote. “Leadership is about doing the right thing. That is the least the public deserves. And the least that leadership demands.”

High-profile frontbencher Jess Phillips, who was one of the most senior Labour MPs to resign, said she was quitting with a “heavy heart”. “On this occasion I must vote with my constituents, my head, and my heart which has felt as if it were breaking over the last four weeks with the horror of the situ-



LONDON: Protesters hold placards and flags as they chant slogans during a rally in support of Palestinians, outside of the Houses of Parliament on Nov 15, 2023. — AFP

ation in (the Zionist entity) and Palestine,” she said in a letter to her party leader.

The row over the Starmer’s stance on the Zionist war on Hamas has escalated in Labour in the past week. Starmer — who looks set to become Britain’s next prime minister at an election expected next year, according to polling — has refused to call for a permanent ceasefire.

Instead, the former human rights lawyer has called for a humanitarian pause to Zionist bombardment

“Under the prevalent conditions, proposals to unilaterally create ‘safe zones’ in Gaza risk creating harm for civilians, including large-scale loss of life, and must be rejected.” The Zionist entity has for more than a month been calling on the population in northern Gaza to evacuate south, as it pushes ahead with its war against Hamas in the Palestinian territory.

Thursday’s statement, signed by nearly a dozen heads of UN agencies — including humanitarian affairs, human rights, migration, refugees, children, and health — highlighted that the “intense hostilities and large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure” had already displaced nearly 1.6 million people in Gaza.

The UN has criticized the Zionist entity’s calls for civilians in Gaza to evacuate to so-called safe zones in the south, warning that nowhere in the overcrowd-

ed territory is currently safe. “None of the humanitarian organizations we represent has been involved in preparing for the arrival of displaced people in any prospective ‘safe zone’ — or ‘humanitarian zone’ — in Gaza,” Thursday’s statement said.

The organizations were all committed to providing assistance and protection, they said, but warned that “without the right conditions, concentrating civilians in such zones in the context of active hostilities can raise the risk of attack and additional harm.” “No ‘safe zone’ is truly safe when it is declared unilaterally or enforced by the presence of armed forces.” The signatories said they could not take part in establishing zones “unless fundamental conditions are in place to ensure safety and other essential needs are met”. — AFP

Gaza locked in new ‘total communication blackout’: UN agency

GENEVA: The head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said he feared for civil order in the Gaza Strip after it was hit with a new communications blackout on Thursday. “Gaza is again in a total communication blackout, and ... it is because there is no fuel,” UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini told a press conference in Geneva.

The Palestinian telecom company Paltel confirmed the blackout, saying on X, formerly Twitter: “We regret to announce that all telecom services in Gaza Strip have gone out of service as all energy sources sustaining the network have been depleted, and fuel was not allowed in.”

Lazzarini said he was worried that a communications blackout could heighten panic in the Gaza Strip and erode the last traces of public order. The day after a previous communication blackout, “there were groups of hundreds of people who basically went into our warehouse and took whatever was available,” he said. “These are signs of a situation when you have a blackout and you cannot communicate with anyone anymore ... that triggers and fuels even more the anxiety and the panic.”

“This can provoke or accelerate the last remaining civil order that we have in the Gaza Strip. And if this completely breaks down, we will have difficulties to operate in an environment where you do not have a minimum of order.” He said UNRWA staff would be hindered further in providing services in the Gaza Strip if the blackout remains, if they cannot communicate with one another.

“But if the fuel comes, I would expect that we will have a resumption of communication services,” he said. Lazzarini also said he worried there was a deliberate attempt under way to paralyze his agency’s operations in the Palestinian territory. “I do believe there is a deliberate attempt to strangle our operation and paralyze the UNRWA operation,” he said, citing the siege imposed by the Zionist entity on the Gaza Strip. — AFP

UN chiefs reject proposals to create ‘safe zones’ in Gaza

GENEVA: The heads of numerous United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations said Thursday they would not take part in Gaza “safe zones” declared by only one side in the conflict.

“As humanitarian leaders, our position is clear: We will not participate in the establishment of any ‘safe zone’ in Gaza that is set up without the agreement of all the parties,” they said in a joint statement.

International

Sanchez gets new term despite amnesty row

Amnesty needed to 'heal wounds' opened by Catalan independence push: Sanchez

MADRID: Pedro Sanchez won the backing of Spain's parliament on Thursday for another term as prime minister, with the country divided over his decision to grant Catalan separatists an amnesty in exchange for their crucial support in a vote of confidence. Sanchez, in office since 2018, won the backing of 179 lawmakers, three more than the absolute majority of 176 in the 350-seat parliament after an often tense two-day debate.

His Socialist party finished second in an inconclusive July general election but he reached deals with several smaller parties to back re-establishing his minority coalition government with hard-left party Sumar. To win the support of two Catalan separatist parties, he agreed to grant amnesty to hundreds of people facing legal action for their role in Catalonia's separatist movement over the past decade.

Among the beneficiaries is Carles Puigdemont, who headed the regional government of Catalonia when it staged a failed secession bid in 2017. Puigdemont organized referendum that was banned by the central government, followed by a short-lived declaration of independence that sparked Spain's worst political crisis in decades.

Puigdemont fled to Belgium to avoid prosecution. An amnesty would allow him to return to Spain, while many Spaniards consider him an enemy of the state. Sanchez, who has made a career out of making political gambles, defended the amnesty during the parliamentary debate, arguing it was constitutional and needed to "heal the wounds" opened by the wealthy northeastern region's independence

push. "We will guarantee the unity of Spain through dialogue and forgiveness," the 51-year-old added.

'Political corruption'

Critics argue the amnesty is a self-serving measure to allow Sanchez to remain in power and accuse him of trampling on the rule of law. "Adopting measures that go against the general interest in exchange of personal benefit is political corruption," the leader of the conservative Popular Party (PP), Alberto Nunez Feijoo, said during the debate.

The PP won most seats in the July election but fell short of a majority and Feijoo was unable to get support from other parties to win his investiture vote in September. The leader of the far-right Vox party, Santiago Abascal has called the amnesty deal a "coup d'etat". Several polls show over half of all Spaniards oppose the amnesty, that has prompted a wave of nationwide protests.

Hundreds of thousands of people took part Sunday in different protests, answering a PP call to take to the streets. Thousands have congregated each night for over a week outside the Socialist party's headquarters in Madrid in rallies organized by the far-right. Some protests have turned violent. Fifteen people were arrested at the protest on Wednesday night following scuffles with police.

No 'blank cheque'

In a sign of the tensions, over 1,600 police were deployed on Wednesday and Thursday for the parliamentary debate, according to the interior ministry. Sanchez — one of Europe's



MADRID: Spain's acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (left) celebrates after winning a parliamentary vote to elect Spain's next premier on Nov 16, 2023. — AFP

longest serving Socialist leaders — also outlined some of his economic plans for his new term on Wednesday.

These include making public transport free for young people and the unemployed, and continuing to link pension hikes to in-

flation. But he will likely struggle to pass legislation since the various leftist and regional parties slated to back him on Thursday have radically different ideologies.

A spokeswoman for leftist Basque independence party Bildu, Mertxe Aizpurua,

warned Thursday that her party's yes vote for Sanchez would not be a "blank cheque". Feijoo, the leader of the PP, said Sanchez will have to negotiate support for each bill he seeks to pass and will not really be "in control" of the government. — AFP

UK's Cameron makes surprise visit to Ukraine

KYIV: British Foreign Secretary David Cameron vowed to maintain military support for Ukraine during a surprise visit to Kyiv announced on Thursday, with the West's attention focused on the Middle East. Former prime minister Cameron was in Kyiv and also visited the southern port city of Odesa on his first trip abroad as foreign minister of the UK, which has been a staunch ally of Ukraine since Russia invaded.

"We will continue to give you the moral support, diplomatic support, the economic support, but above all, the military support, that you need not just this year, and next year, but for however long it takes," Cameron said during a meeting with Zelensky. "Russia thinks it can wait this war out, and that the West will eventually turn its attention elsewhere. This could not be further from the truth," he added in a separate statement.

His visit, nearly two years into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, came with global attention shifting to the Zionist attack on Gaza. Zelensky thanked Cameron for making the trip while the world's attention was on the middle east. "Now you know the world is not focused on the situation on our battlefield in Ukraine and dividing the focus really does not help," he told Cameron in a video distributed by the presidency.

Drone barrage

He added that the two men had had a "good meeting" that focused on "weapons for the front line, strengthening air defense, and protecting our people and critical infrastructure". Cameron's backing for Ukraine came with concern building among Kyiv's allies over minimal military advances in recent months.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine has made any significant territorial gains for a year, and Kyiv's top army commander said that fighting had ground to a stalemate. But there are growing reports that Ukrainian forces have gained a foothold on the eastern bank of the Dnipro river in the south of the country, which Kyiv hopes could

pave the way for substantial Ukrainian advances towards Crimea.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry also said Cameron had attended talks with his counterpart Dmytro Kuleba on issues related to weapon deliveries, arms production, and maritime security in the Black Sea. The Foreign Office said Cameron had visited the port of Odesa on Thursday — the second day of the visit — and hailed new measures to insure cargo ships utilizing Ukraine's ports despite Russian military threats.

"This step will be of great importance for Ukraine's export earnings and its economic recovery," said Cameron, according to a Ukrainian Foreign Ministry statement. Zelensky meanwhile hailed efforts to restart shipping routes on the Black Sea after Russia earlier this year exited a deal safeguarding grain exports from Ukraine's ports. "We have been able to provide such protection to the western part of the Black Sea, which now enables our maritime export corridors to operate," he told representatives of countries on the Black Sea.

Cameron earlier met with Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna, London said, to discuss Ukraine's aspirations



KYIV: This handout picture by Ukraine Presidential press-service shows President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) welcoming British Foreign Secretary David Cameron. — AFP

to join the US-led NATO alliance. "The UK is clear that Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO and is working with Allies to smooth the path to Ukraine's accession by removing the need for a Membership Action Plan,"

Cameron was cited as saying. The announcement of Cameron's visit came as Ukraine's air force said air defense systems had downed 16 Russian attack drones overnight, as well as one cruise missile. — AFP

Kuwait grapples with rain havoc...

Continued from Page 1

are tirelessly working to remove excess water from roads. Ministry spokesman Ahmed Al-Saleh assured continuous coordination with the civil defense and relevant authorities to promptly address any reports. The rain, varying in intensity across regions, prompted Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Jassem Al-Ostad to lead a meeting in preparation for the rainy season.

All private and public schools were closed on Thursday with classes held online. Vocational training institutes and Quranic schools were also closed, but Kuwait University said classes will be held in person.

Biden and Xi meet, restore...

Continued from Page 1

The separate move to restore high-level US-China military-to-military communications, which China severed after then-US House speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, was "critically important" to avoid possible conflicts, Biden added.

The two sides also agreed to hold talks on artificial intelligence and to deepen cooperation on climate change ahead of the COP28 conference in Dubai next month. But a day of painstakingly choreographed diplomacy ended with a not-so-diplomatic remark as Biden walked offstage after his press conference. When a reporter asked if he would still say Xi was a dictator as he had in June, a remark that prompted an angry response from Beijing at the time, Biden replied: "Well look, he is. He's a dictator in the sense that he's a guy who's running a country, a Communist country, that's based on a form of government totally different than ours."

Diplomats had spent months trying to get the talks

Kuwait Meteorological Department's Director Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi reported varying rainfall levels across the country. Salmiya recorded the highest at 38 mm, followed by Jabriya (28 mm), Kaifan (26 mm) and others. The ministry of defense issued a statement warning campers and herders to not approach or touch any foreign objects discovered during outdoor activities and report them on the emergency number 112.

Anticipating thunderstorms and heavy rain in some areas, Qarawi advised caution on Thursday due to low visibility caused by dust-raising winds. The weather is expected to improve over the weekend, with a chance of rain returning on Sunday. Qarawi recommended monitoring the meteorology website and official smartphone app for real-time updates and weather warnings during fluctuations. — KUNA

to happen, and then arranging the smallest details at the exclusive estate, which featured in the US television soap opera "Dynasty" in the 1980s. Xi appeared to brush off the comment, telling an audience hours later that growing US-China ties were vital to both countries. "I believe that once the door to China-US relations is opened, it will not be closed again," he said. "China is ready to be a partner and friend of the United States."

The carefully cultivated symbolism of the day saw red carpet handshakes, delegations sitting on either side of a huge table, and culminating with Biden and Xi taking the air in the grounds. They also shared a working lunch of herbed ricotta ravioli and tarragon chicken with gold rice pilaf. Xi and Biden waved at reporters during their garden walk, and Biden had raised two thumbs up when asked how the talks went.

The Chinese leader had earlier warned that "turning their back on each other was not an option," and said that "Planet Earth is big enough for the two countries to succeed". Biden and Xi also discussed the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, on which their countries have found themselves backing opposing sides. But Xi also had tough words for Biden after the talks, particularly on the subject of Taiwan. — AFP

Zionists search Gaza hospital as...

Continued from Page 1

Al-Shifa without enough food, water and fuel for generators. Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs on Wednesday expressed in the strongest terms Kuwait's condemnation of Zionist occupation forces' storming of Al-Shifa Hospital that threatened the lives of patients and medical teams. In a statement to KUNA, the ministry added this move is a "blatant violation of international laws and norms", mainly the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding the protection of civilians. The incursion of the hospital is a new crime committed by the Zionist occupation forces that targets the lives of people, property and vital services, it added.

The Zionist occupation forces' targeting of unarmed Palestinian people, hospitals and other civil facilities is considered a new escalation and a blatant breach of international and international humanitarian law, the statement elaborated. The ministry renewed Kuwait's call for the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities and act to halt the continued crimes committed by the Zionist occupation forces in the Gaza Strip and provide international protection to the unarmed Palestinian people.

The Zionist entity has vowed to eradicate Hamas in retaliation for the attacks of Oct 7. The Zionist military says 51 of its troops have been killed in Gaza since fighting began. But with the Hamas government media office saying the death toll from the offensive has now topped 11,500, including thousands of children, calls for a truce are mounting.

Gaza's 36 hospitals have been caught in the war, with more than half rendered non-functioning by shortages, combat and damage, the UN has said. The Red Crescent said a "violent attack" was underway on Gaza's Al-Ahli hospital, which was hit by a

deadly strike on Oct 17. Hamas blamed the blast on the Zionist entity. "(Zionist) military tanks besiege Al-Ahli Baptist hospital in Gaza, and violent attack is underway. (Red Crescent) teams are unable to move and reach those who are injured," the group said on social media.

The UN Security Council on Wednesday set aside deep divisions over the conflict to agree a resolution calling for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses" in fighting. The resolution — which passed with abstentions from the United States, Britain and Russia — called on Hamas and the Zionist entity to protect civilians, "especially children". The Zionist entity has agreed to temporary localized pauses in fighting, but has rejected calls for a broader ceasefire.

The Zionist entity has concentrated its heavy bombardment and ground offensive in Gaza City, announcing this week the seizure of the parliament building, government offices, Hamas police headquarters and key port. The health ministry in Gaza argued Wednesday the Zionist military did not find any weapons when it raided the hospital.

The death and suffering in the densely populated coastal territory has prompted growing concern for Gaza's civilians, who have fled south to try to escape the heaviest combat. Gaza City's Al-Quds Hospital was evacuated during fighting in the area, forcing patients to make their way south to other facilities. "We were in pain along the road... I feel pain in the knee," said Ahmad Abou-Sabra, wounded evacuee. "The situation was bad, and the distance. We stayed in the army (checkpoint) for more than two hours," he told AFP at a Palestinian Red Crescent hospital in Khan Yunis.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk pointed to what he called serious allegations of international law violations in the Zionist-Hamas war and suggested an international investigation was needed. "Where national authorities prove unwilling or unable to carry out such investigations, and where there are contested narratives on particularly significant incidents, international investigation is called for," he said in a briefing to UN member states in Geneva. — AFP

International



SMETHWICK: Sikh women prepare food to be served to worshippers in the community kitchen of Guru Nanak Gurdwara.— AFP photos



Sikh worshippers queue in the Main Darbar Sahib prayer room in the gurdwara.

UK Sikhs feel overlooked, uneasy after Canada killing

Community demand probe into UK activist death, say they are 'no threat' to British interests

SMETHWICK: Britain's Sikh population, whose ancestors first migrated from the Punjab more than a century ago, have long been admired as a model of integration and for maintaining a strong identity. Lauded in their country of origin and beyond for their valor, industriousness and charity, Sikhs took those values to Britain, which during the country's imperial past praised them as a martial race.

They won accolades for standing up to rioters in London in 2011, for charity work during the coronavirus pandemic, and most recently for feeding the hungry during the cost-of-living crisis. "We don't often complain," Jas Singh, adviser to the Sikh Federation UK, which represents some 500,000 Sikhs in the UK, told AFP at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Smethwick, near Birmingham in central England.

But the tight-knit community is now appealing for help to address long-term issues such as racism and a lack of representation in politics and culture. "We still need help just like everybody else," said Kulbinder Kaur Gakkhal, an education administrator at the Smethwick gurdwara, one of the oldest and largest in Europe. "The fact that we only have two Sikh MPs. Given our numbers, we should have maybe six or seven. Across the civil service, there's very low Sikh representation — in the police, in education," added Jas Singh. "This is a wall of discrimination that we face," he added. Despite official figures showing



A portrait of late Sikh activist Avtar Singh Khanda is hanging on a wall in the Panjab Broadcasting Channel television station studio, where he previously worked.

a 169 percent rise in attacks on Sikhs in 2021/22, there is no approved definition for anti-Sikh hate crimes in the UK.

Fresh worries

A statue outside the gurdwara paying tribute to the many Sikhs who fought with the UK in the world wars is frequently vandalized, said Gakkhal. "They have security cameras and information that's led them to know who's done it. But the authorities aren't

able to pinpoint, so it's a shame," she added.

But it is an Indian crackdown on the Khalistan movement, which wants an independent Sikh state in India, and its wider global fallout that has left many in the community particularly concerned. New Delhi has banned the movement as a security threat and taken a particular interest in those close to Amritpal Singh, a firebrand Sikh leader who was arrested in April in India after a month-long manhunt.

In February, hundreds of his supporters, some carrying swords and guns, had pushed past barricades outside a police station near Amritsar, demanding the release of an aide held inside. Protests were held around the world over the manhunt, including in London, where Avtar Singh Khanda — a friend of Amritpal Singh — was accused by Indian media of pulling down an Indian flag.

The 35-year-old activist, who was never named by UK police as a suspect, died on June 15 after suddenly falling ill with blood cancer. His funeral at the Smethwick temple, which has pro-Khalistan flags flying outside, was attended by thousands.

Shockwaves

The announcement by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in September that there were "credible allegations" linking India to the killing of another pro-Khalistan activist in Toronto on June 18

sent shockwaves through the Sikh diaspora. India strenuously denies any links, but the announcement prompted Khanda's family and friends to demand a coroner's inquest into his death. "I don't know what investigation they did, but it would have only taken a few hours," Amit Singh, a volunteer at Smethwick-based Punjab broadcaster PBC, told AFP.

"The community feels that they definitely didn't take anything seriously. Until an investigation occurs, doubt will remain," added Singh, who was with Khanda shortly before he was taken to hospital. The High Commission of India in London did not reply to an AFP request for comment on the case.

According to Jas Singh, more broadly there was now "a high level of apprehension and fear" among Britain's Sikhs, "especially those who travel back to India". "There is extra security at the gurdwara. It's disappointing that the police and the authorities have not reached out to the community," he added.

He believes the UK government's desire to secure a trade deal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has led them to ignore the community's concerns. "Not only do we have their silence, but we also have them going the other way with (UK Prime Minister) Rishi Sunak announcing pro-Khalistan extremism as an issue. "Sikhs have no arrests, no pending cases, no threat or risk to British interests," he added. — AFP

Myanmar scam city empties out as war approaches

YANGON: A town in northern Myanmar notorious for gambling, prostitution and online scams is emptying out as war approaches, prompting thousands of residents to flee. Ethnic minority groups last month launched an offensive against the military across northern Shan state, capturing several towns in what analysts say is the biggest challenge to Myanmar's ruling junta since it seized power in 2021.

Long caravans of people are now snaking out of the lawless town of Laukkai, sleeping rough in the rugged hills near the border with China as the armed alliance closes in. "We could see artillery shells passing over our heads," said Aug Aung, a construction worker who fled the town last week, after his employer ran out of food thanks to soaring prices. "After about two weeks (of nearby fighting), they couldn't provide food because things got very expensive," he told AFP by phone, requesting that he be identified with a pseudonym.

Kyaw Kyaw, a car mechanic who also asked AFP to withhold his real name, joined the exodus around the same time, hoping somehow to make the journey of hundreds of kilometers (miles) back to his home city of Mandalay. "Hundreds of people were stuck and sleeping on the roadside," he said. Three people were injured by artillery shells fired from Laukkai, he said, as the military pounded the region with airstrikes last week. "We even felt the ground shaking. People were very scared."

Sin City

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing made a name for himself in Laukkai in 2009 when, as a regional commander, he expelled the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), one of the armed ethnic minority groups that is once again closing in on Laukkai. The military installed a militia that got rich producing drugs and selling a potent cocktail of gambling and sex to visitors from across the Chinese border.

Access to the remote town is tightly controlled, but an AFP correspondent who visited under militia rule a decade ago described rival gangs making arrests at gunpoint on streets overshadowed by towering casinos full of Chinese gamblers. The boom times attracted migrant workers such as Kyaw Kyaw, who said he had been earning around \$400 a month as a car mechanic before he decided to flee.

Brothels and drugs abounded on the streets but newcomers like him were told to keep a safe distance from the latest illicit industry to blossom in Laukkai — online scam compounds. The centers are staffed by thousands of trafficked citizens from China and other countries who are forced to work swindling their compatriots online, analysts say. The scammers groom potential victims for weeks before cajoling them into ploughing money into fake investment platforms and other ruses. The UN said this year that at least 120,000 people could be trapped in scam compounds in Myanmar. The scams anger China, a major ally and arms supplier of the junta, and Beijing has repeatedly asked Myanmar's military to crack down on them.—AFP



SEOUL: A student arrives after being given a lift by police to sit for the annual college entrance exam on Nov 16, 2023. — AFP photos

South Koreans sit key exam as flights halted

SEOUL: More than half a million students in South Korea sat the crucial national university entrance exam Thursday, with authorities taking extraordinary measures, including halting flights, to minimize distractions. The nine-hour test, which was taken by 504,588 pupils this year, is crucial for securing spots in top universities. It is also considered key to elevated social status, lucrative careers, and even marriage prospects. Enormous pressure placed on students in South Korea's ultra-competitive education system has been blamed for teenage depression and suicide rates that are among the highest in the world. "I'm nervous and trembling because what I've been studying for three years ends with this exam today," Lee Min-yup told AFP before going to take the test at Kyungbock High School in central Seoul.

The importance of the test was reflected by the aggressive measures authorities were taking to prevent any disturbance. To reduce noise disruption during the listening portion of the English test, Seoul's transportation ministry imposed a nationwide ban on all aircraft takeoffs and landings outside of emergency situations. The ban was implemented for a duration of 35 minutes, from 1:05 pm to 1:40 pm local time (0405 to 0440 GMT).

With the exception of aircraft in distress, all airborne planes were required to maintain an altitude higher than 3,000 meters (10,000 feet) during the restricted time. More than 90 flights had to be rescheduled because of the exam. Public offices and major businesses were requested to adjust their opening hours to 10:00 am or later to alleviate traffic congestion and ensure that students arrived on time for the nationwide exam, which started at 8:40 am.

The stock market also opened an hour later than usual. Police cars and regional government officials were on standby to help students running late for the exam reach their test sites in time. This year's test also marked the first time that test-takers were allowed to



People pray at the Jogyesa Buddhist temple the night before students sit for the annual college entrance exam.

take the exam without wearing masks since the pandemic began. Those with suspected COVID symptoms were still permitted to take the exam, but were asked to wear masks and have their lunches in designated separate areas.

'Killer questions'

Outside Kyungbock High School early Thursday, some test-takers appeared visibly nervous, with others running late for the exam arriving on motorcycles that had been designated as emergency convoy vehicles by the authorities. High school freshmen and juniors gathered outside the entrance of the venue to show their support.

They chanted phrases including "Success in Suneung", using the local name for the exam, while waving banners adorned with messages such as "Strive for a perfect score in Suneung". "Since I'm not the one taking the exam today, I can smile like this, but I think next year I'll have a somewhat sad expression," Lee Dong-yun, a high school student who came out to cheer for the exam-takers, said.

Relatives also showed up to express their support for their children, with some even bringing their dogs along. Images from local media showed exam-takers kissing their pets before entering the venue. "Right now, for them this is everything," Lee Jong-hwa, mother of one of the exam-takers, said. "At this moment it's too much of a burden for them", she added.

For this year's exam, authorities dropped so-called "killer questions" — which cannot be answered by simply studying the curriculum taught at public schools — in a bid to reduce reliance on expensive private cram schools. "In accordance with the Ministry of Education's measures to reduce private education, so-called 'killer questions' were excluded," Jeong Moon-seong, a university professor who supervised the exam's administration this year, told reporters Thursday morning.

"Questions of suitable difficulty were selected evenly to ensure that (students) can demonstrate their understanding based solely on the content covered in the public education curriculum," he added. South Korean households spent more than \$20 billion on private education for primary, middle and high school students last year, according to Statistics Korea. — AFP

600 Rohingya refugees arrive in Indonesia

BIREUEN: About 250 desperate Rohingya refugees reached western Indonesia on a decrepit, overcrowded wooden boat Thursday, bringing the total number reported by local officials to have arrived this week to nearly 600. The boat holding the members of the persecuted Myanmar minority, many barefoot and some pleading for help, sat just off the coast in the archipelago nation's Aceh province.

Some made a dash for shore after residents refused to let them land, collapsing to the sand and begging for the vessel's exhausted passengers to be allowed to disembark. The mostly Muslim Rohingya are heavily persecuted in Myanmar and thousands risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys, often in flimsy boats, to try to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

Men, women, children and babies could be seen looking to shore as angry locals told them not to land the boat, which some on board said had sailed from Bangladesh. Young men on board held their arms out in exasperation as the open-topped boat listed to one side through overcrowding.

The local Acehese delivered food to the boat in the hope those on board would decide to move on, according to Mukhtaruddin, village head of Pulo Pineung Meunasah. The passengers, however, were insistent after almost three weeks at sea.

After climbing down ropes to swim to shore and remonstrate with the Acehese, one Rohingya man covered in plasters lay on the sand barefoot, shirtless, appearing almost lifeless. The rest of Thursday's arrivals were still waiting on the boat about 100 meters (110 yards) from the beach, Mukhtaruddin said.—AFP



PINEUNG: Newly arrived Rohingya refugees are stranded on a boat as the nearby community decided not to allow them to land after providing water and food on Nov 16, 2023. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2023

Emirates airline announces order for 15 Airbus A350-900s

Deal represents 'another solid step forward in agreement between Emirates and Airbus'



JEBEL ALI: Emirates Flight Training Academy Cirrus Aircraft SR22 and Diamond DA42 propeller planes along with an Embraer Phenom 100 are displayed on the tarmac during the 2023 Dubai Airshow at Dubai World Central - Al-Maktoum International Airport in Dubai. — AFP

DUBAI: Dubai-based Emirates on Thursday announced an order for 15 long-haul Airbus A350-900s, bringing to 110 the number of additional aircraft the company has ordered at this year's Dubai Air Show. "The A350-900s will add to our fleet mix and we are pleased to announce additional orders for this aircraft type," Emirates chief executive Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said in a statement.

"We plan to deploy our A350s to serve a range of new markets including long-haul missions of up to 15 hours flying time from Dubai." The deal is worth \$6 billion, the statement said, and all-told Emirates has committed to spending \$58 billion on new aircraft at this year's event in Dubai, the statement said.

On Monday, Emirates announced a much larger order, worth \$52 billion, for 55 777-9s, 35 777-8s and five 787 Dreamliners from Airbus' US-based rival Boeing. Its sister airline flydubai, a budget carrier,

separately ordered 30 Boeing 787-9s valued at \$63 billion — its first wide-bodied, or large-capacity, planes as it looks to expand to new routes.

Christian Scherer, chief commercial officer for the European aerospace firm, said in a statement that Thursday's deal represented "another solid step forward in the longstanding relationship agreement between Emirates and Airbus".

He added: "Just as the A380 established itself at the heart of Emirates operations, we are equally proud of what the A350 will do in the years to come." As of the end of last month, Airbus had received more than 1,000 orders "from leading carriers around the globe" for A350s, the manufacturer said.

Emirates has now ordered 65 A350s, the first of which is expected to join the airline's fleet in August 2024. The airline will continue receiving A350 deliveries until 2028. Along with the Boeing order announced on Monday, Emirates will have "a total order book of 310 wide-body aircraft", the airline said.

"Emirates' orders this week are all carefully planned to support our future growth and the Dubai economic vision," Sheikh Ahmed said. Aircraft purchases announced at the biennial Dubai Air Show have underlined the aviation industry's post-pandemic recovery and bullishness about the future.

It is the first edition of the event since Emirates returned to profitability. Last week Emirates Group announced record half-year net profits of 10.1 billion AED (\$2.7 billion), up 138 percent from a year earlier. Emirates posted a \$5.5 billion loss in COVID-ravaged 2020-2021, its first in more than three decades, after grounding its fleet and making heavy layoffs. Its losses shrank to \$1.1 billion in 2021-2022. — AFP

— AFP

Sun and New York Post, storied dailies The Times and Wall Street Journal, and big-hitting television networks like Fox and Sky have turned the Murdoch family into some of the world's most influential figures. At Wednesday's shareholders' meeting, Murdoch — whose outlets have been accused of pushing the rise of populism in Britain and the United States, symbolized by Brexit and the ascent of Donald Trump — fretted about free speech. "There is no doubt that we should all be concerned about the suppression of debate by an intolerant elite who regard differing opinions as anathema," he said.

The Murdoch family transition comes as Fox News navigates choppy waters. In recent years, Fox News has faced allegations of disseminating disinformation about COVID-19 and promoting the false notion that the 2020 presidential election won by Joe Biden over Trump was rigged to ensure the Democrat's victory.

That notion fueled angry Trump supporters on January 6, 2021 when they stormed the US Capitol in a deadly outburst of violence. In April, Fox News reached a \$787.5 million settlement in a defamation case brought by voting technology firm Dominion that alleged the network knowingly aired false claims linking its machines to a conspiracy to undermine the election. — AFP

instead we will focus on developing a sustainable growth model for Cloud Intelligence Group under the fluid circumstances," Alibaba said.

The company's sales for the quarter ending in September came in at 224.8 billion yuan (\$31 billion), in line with predictions by Bloomberg analysts and down from 234.1 billion yuan in the previous quarter. Alibaba is a key player in China's expansive digital economy and the operator of a major online shopping platform. The Hangzhou-based group's performance is considered a barometer of domestic consumption, which has flagged in recent months. The firm has faced new headwinds in recent years, as Beijing has imposed tighter restrictions on the domestic tech sector, while weak consumer spending saw it record its third consecutive quarter of single-digit revenue growth earlier this year. — AFP



LONDON: (FILES) Australian born media magnate Rupert Murdoch (C) flanked by his sons Lachlan (L) and James (R) arrive at St Bride's church on Fleet Street in central London on March 5, 2016. — AFP

announced in September that he would still watch broadcasts "with a critical eye" and they could expect to sometimes see him in their offices "late on a Friday afternoon."

The Australian-born Murdoch rose from local news in Adelaide to amassing a stable of legacy newspapers in Britain and the United States before launching into broadcast media. Aggressive tabloids like The

multiple businesses as a result of our strategic reorganization," CEO Eddie Wu said in a press release on Thursday, referring to a major restructuring plan announced by the group this year.

Announced in late March, the plan involved splitting the group into six distinct entities that will be able to separately pursue funding through public listings. But on Thursday the company said it would call off the spinoff of one part of its business, its Cloud Intelligence arm, in light of "the recent expansion of US restrictions on export of advanced computing chips".

"We believe that a full spin-off of Cloud Intelligence Group may not achieve the intended effect of shareholder value enhancement," the company said in its earnings release. "Accordingly, we have decided to not proceed with a full spin-off, and

Media mogul Murdoch says he'll stay 'active' after passing torch

NEW YORK: Conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch on Wednesday pledged to maintain an "active role" in the business as he handed control of his global empire to son Lachlan, amid questions about how Fox News will handle next year's presidential election. After decades running a sprawling news operation in Australia, Britain and the United States, the 92-year-old Murdoch officially became chairman emeritus at News Corp at a shareholders' meeting on Wednesday.

He will formally pass the baton to 52-year-old Lachlan — who is believed to share his father's conservative leanings — at Fox Corp on Friday. But the formidable tycoon made it clear he was not disappearing entirely from the media scene.

"I hope to continue an active role in the company," Murdoch told shareholders, adding that Lachlan will now be the company's "sole Chair." He had already told Fox employees when the transition was

Alibaba cancels cloud service spinoff over US chip restrictions

SHANGHAI: Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba said Thursday it was cancelling a planned cloud service spinoff announced this year over US chip restrictions, as it reported results for the third quarter of 2023 that were in line with market expectations.

The company saw a 9 percent year-on-year increase in Q3 revenue, it said Thursday, following several difficult years and despite a broader economic slowdown. "Alibaba Group delivered a solid quarter, marked by renewed momentum and energy across



Hamad Alfarhan, Ajar Kuwait Country Manager and Abdul-wahab Almutawa, CEO and Founder of Tasleeh.

Ajar partners with Tasleeh to streamline property management

KUWAIT: Ajar, the largest Property Management platform in Kuwait, has announced a strategic partnership with Tasleeh, an all-in-one digital solution offering 24/7 assistance to property owners and tenants. Ajar, which prides itself in providing solutions for seamless rent collection, automated contract management, and enhanced tenant relationships, is now set to offer an even more comprehensive solution for landlords. With Tasleeh's expertise in property requirements and services covering areas such as HVAC, electrical, and plumbing, the partnership is poised to elevate property management to the next level.

The new partnership ensures that Ajar's clients can easily request property maintenance assessments, receive maintenance contract quotations, and submit maintenance requests to their maintenance company directly through the platform.

Hamad Alfarhan, Ajar Kuwait Country Manager, commented on the collaboration, saying, "This partnership is the result of listening to our customers' requests that directed us towards building Ajar as a one-stop-shop solution for all matters related to making property management as seamless as possible." Echoing this sentiment, Abdul-wahab Almutawa, CEO and Founder of Tasleeh, remarked, "This partnership is part of Tasleeh's expansion strategy to reach Kuwait's mainstream clients and offer our high-quality services to the masses through trusted platforms like Ajar."

Both Ajar and Tasleeh anticipate that this partnership will reshape the landscape of property management and maintenance services in Kuwait, delivering unparalleled convenience and efficiency to landlords and tenants alike.

Business

Stocks drop as rate-hope rally fades

Slowing US inflation lit a fire under global equities this week

LONDON: Major Asian and European stock markets fell Thursday as investors took a breather and cashed in on a recent rally following better-than-expected US inflation figures. Slowing US inflation lit a fire under global equities this week, cementing traders' views that the Federal Reserve would no longer need to hike interest rates and even fuelling talk of cuts next year.

The rally has faded, however, even if Wall Street managed to extend gains Wednesday. "Market optimism appears to be cooling off after a bumper period of gains for equity markets, built on growing expectations that the Fed are finished with their historic tightening process," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

"With markets now pricing a mere one-percent chance of another hike, markets are now more concerned with the timing of the first rate cut and the pace of easing," Hong Kong, which jumped almost four percent Wednesday, led losses Thursday as it gave up one percent, while Tokyo and Shanghai were also in the red. London and Paris were down nearing the half-way stage, though Frankfurt climbed.

Biden, Xi hold talks

Focus was also on US President Joe Biden and his much-anticipated talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. Biden described the talks as the "most constructive and productive" of their relationship, as the two sought some common ground after years of tensions. "We've made some important progress, I believe," he told reporters. The meeting in California resulted in



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past an electronic board showing the rate of the Japanese yen versus the US dollar along a street in Tokyo on November 15, 2023. - AFP

agreements on several issues including high-level military communications and artificial intelligence. Long-running tensions between the two global superpowers have weighed heavily on markets, with investors concerned about the impact on trade and geopolitics. Later, Xi told US business leaders that China was "ready to be a partner and friend of the United States".

There was little major reaction to news that

US lawmakers had passed a stop-gap budget bill Wednesday to keep federal agencies running for another two months, averting a painful shutdown of the government that many had warned could deal a blow to the economy. On the corporate front, shares in Burberry tumbled more than nine percent after the British luxury fashion house warned over future profits as global demand for high-end clothing weakens. - AFP

"All New Yorkers have a basic right to clean water, yet PepsiCo's irresponsible packaging and marketing endanger Buffalo's water supply, environment, and public health," James said in a statement. "No one should have to worry about plastics in their drinking water, plastic garbage littering their scenic riverfront, or plastic pollution harming wildlife."

PepsiCo said the company is "serious" about plastic reduction and has been "transparent" in its efforts. "This is a complex issue and requires involvement from a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, municipalities, waste-reduction providers, community leaders and consumers," a PepsiCo spokesperson said.

"PepsiCo has been working in New York to address the needs of communities, including advocating for New York bottle bill improvements and extended producer responsibility bills. We have worked effectively with a variety of communities across the country and remain committed to doing so."

A survey by James' office found that Pepsi-

Co's plastic packaging was by far the greatest source of Buffalo River plastic pollution, three times as abundant as the next contributor (McDonald's), according to the suit.

The plastics "cause wide-ranging harms to the public and New York State," said the suit, which points to the presence of microplastics in both humans and fish. Health-related problems "include early puberty in females, reduced sperm counts, altered functions of reproductive organs, obesity, altered sex-specific behaviors and increased rates of some kinds of cancers," said the suit.

The lawsuit acknowledges company statements pledging action to reduce plastic pollution, but depicts PepsiCo as repeatedly falling short of pledges. Further, the suit says PepsiCo has not chosen alternatives to single-use plastics to any significant degree in the New York market. In contrast, PepsiCo has announced refillable and returnable glass and plastic programs in international markets including Mexico and Germany, according to the suit. - AFP

Kenya gets nearly \$1bn loan from IMF

NAIROBI: The International Monetary Fund said Thursday it had agreed a \$938-million loan for Kenya, which is grappling with a liquidity problem and historically high debt levels. East Africa's economic powerhouse is facing a host of challenges, including depleted government coffers, skyrocketing inflation and a plunging currency that has sent debt repayment costs soaring.

The impact of the Covid pandemic as well as the Ukraine war and a record drought in the Horn of Africa region have all taken a serious toll. The nation of some 53 million people had accumulated more than 10.1 trillion shillings (\$66 billion) in debt by the end of June, according to Treasury figures, equivalent to around two-thirds of gross domestic product.

Kenya also has a \$2-billion eurobond repayment due next year. "This uncertainty is exerting substantial pressure on liquidity, primarily due to the sizeable eurobond maturing in 2024," the IMF said in a statement.

President William Ruto has said Kenya will pay the first instalment of the eurobond repayment worth \$300 million next month. The new loan deal must still be approved by an IMF board meeting in January. It would immediately unlock \$682 million for Kenya, the IMF said.

"The economy has displayed resilience, with real GDP expanding by 5.4 percent in the first half of 2023, primarily due to a robust recovery in the agriculture sector following the return of rains," it added.

Overall inflation remains stubbornly high, at an annual rate of 6.9 percent in October, and food and fuel prices have continued to climb. The cost of servicing public debt, mainly to China, has soared as Kenya's currency has slumped to record lows.

Ruto has introduced a range of new and increased taxes to help replenish government coffers, despite pledging during last year's election campaign to help ease the financial hardship of ordinary Kenyans. - AFP

PepsiCo sued by NY state over plastic pollution

NEW YORK: New York state sued PepsiCo on Wednesday, pointing to the soda giant's plastic waste as a scourge of waterways and blasting the company's "misleading" statements on the environment. The civil suit, filed by New York Attorney General Letitia James in the state Supreme Court, seeks a finding that PepsiCo contributed to a "public nuisance" in the Buffalo River; the imposition of financial penalties and compensatory damages on the company; and an order that PepsiCo cease the sale of single-use plastic on goods that do not warn of the environmental risks.

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	890	878	895	866	29	20,722,257	-12	-1.35%	-14.48%	860	895	12.8	1.66	3.8%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	242	247	249	240	9	19,992,216	5	2.07%	-16.88%	245	248	12.0	1.14	3.8%	1.31
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	144	145	146	143	3	13,978,463	0	0.00%	-19.06%	143	147	15.1	0.55	2.5%	1.11
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	165	164	168	162	6	4,726,875	0	0.00%	-21.37%	158	165	17.2	0.62	4.6%	1.35
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	698	704	706	692	14	52,091,333	10	1.44%	-5.91%	689	704	17.3	1.79	2.4%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	601	596	606	585	21	8,041,541	-3	-0.50%	-20.83%	593	616	36.5	2.37	1.0%	1.20
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	125	124	128	122	6	3,378,645	0	0.00%	-18.42%	123	125	7.3	0.58	4.0%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	200	204	206	190	16	8,138,434	9	4.62%	-13.92%	195	206	153.9	0.89	14.2%	2.03
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	109	107	110	106	4	7,584,459	-1	-0.93%	-4.46%	101	110	27.1	0.62	0.0%	1.01
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	165	184	185	162	23	89,865,107	21	12.88%	63.20%	172	186	26.7	1.25	2.2%	1.16
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	167	163	168	162	6	23,717,845	-3	-1.81%	22.56%	163	166	8.5	1.14	4.5%	1.64
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	55.9	58	58.5	55	3.9	2,874,897	2.3	4.17%	-23.23%	57.1	59.1	NM	0.37	15.7%	1.34
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	173	169	174	167	7	46,439,825	-3	-1.74%	61.18%	166	170	13.8	1.14	1.7%	1.07
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	840	840	850	814	36	2,383,675	6	0.72%	5.00E-02	838	856	17.2	1.80	1.6%	1.05
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	95	99.1	99	95.0	4.1	17,003,857	3.8	3.99%	3.21%	99	101	17.9	0.61	3.0%	0.61
501	National Industries	Financial Services	190	193	196	190	6	16,239,742	4	2.12%	-6.61%	190	194	17.8	0.92	2.4%	1.62
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,310	1,320	1,350	1,280	70	3,751,458	18	1.38%	8.64%	1,319	1,350	14.8	1.23	4.5%	1.04
506	HEISCO	Industrials	827	827	838	770	68	12,131,436	2	0.24%	34.91%	793	832	23.1	2.02	2.6%	0.91
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	619	617	630	612	18	3,722,004	0	0.00%	-22.88%	604	633	11.6	1.33	9.6%	0.96
603	Agility	Industrials	524	544	549	523	26	13,370,777	21	4.02%	-24.44%	536	566	20.2	0.73	0.0%	1.53
605	Zain	Telecommunications	481	505	530	481	49	38,237,499	24	4.99%	-10.30%	503	512	10.2	1.77	6.9%	0.63
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,097	3,045	3,150	3,006	144	901,435	-11	-0.36%	-9.17%	3,000	3,100	9.1	3.39	12.4%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	168	169	170	166	4	1,212,941	4	2.42%	-16.75%	167	171	NM	0.74	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,214	1,124	1,214	1,111	103	3,122,571	-69	-5.78%	-40.84%	1,100	1,204	19.9	7.48	6.9%	1.47
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	77.0	78	78.0	76.4	1.6	11,613,734	0.9	1.17%	2.24%	76.6	79.0	8.3	0.88	6.4%	1.37
821	Warba Bank	Banking	173	177	179	172	7	8,438,117	5	2.91%	-22.42%	169	188	24.6	0.96	1.6%	1.14
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	501	517	517	495	22	3,030,157	16	3.19%	31.55%	490	519	12.5	1.48	2.4%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	443	438	443	433	10	3,960,769	3	0.69%	18.38%	435	445	35.3	1.82	3.4%	0.67
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	176	177	178	174	4	963,034	2	1.14%	-5.85%	176	178	13.8	1.49	6.7%	0.42
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,745	1,731	1,788	1,641	147	1,525,721	-5	-0.29%	-15.64%	1,700	1,770	22.0	5.59	5.0%	0.91
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,150	1,082	1,150	1,071	79	1,360,553	-68	-5.91%	34.41%	1,069	1,123	11.5	3.94	6.4%	0.69

* As of end of week closing

After rescue deal, Siemens Energy unveils massive loss

Siemens Energy expects a net profit of 1 billion euros next year

FRANKFURT: Siemens Energy reported a 4.59-billion-euro (\$5-billion) annual loss Wednesday, dragged down by a crisis in its wind power unit, a day after a government-backed rescue package was unveiled for the German group. The company's huge loss in the 2022-2023 financial year was far larger than a loss of several hundred million euros the year before.

While large parts of its wide range of businesses, such as those related to gas and power grids, were healthy, the results were hit by the crisis in its Gamesa wind power subsidiary. Gamesa has faced long-running technical problems with its onshore wind turbines, which have cost huge sums to fix.

"The wind business remains a major challenge and has led to the net loss in 2023," said the company. Gamesa is only expected to break even in financial year 2026, and it will impact the group's performance in the "near to mid-term," it said. Still, Siemens Energy expects to return to a net profit of 1 billion euros next year. Revenue in its past financial year rose 7 percent to 31 billion euros, and it said it expects to post similar growth the following year. Siemens Energy runs its financial year from October to September, and the annual results were announced a day after a 15-billion-euro, state-backed rescue deal was unveiled after weeks of talks.

The deal involves providing "guarantees" to Siemens Energy to allow it continue financing major long-term projects. The economy ministry announced it would grant the company 7.5 billion euros worth of guarantees, and others involved in-

cluded private banks as well as the larger Siemens conglomerate, which is a major shareholder in Siemens Energy.

Siemens Energy was spun out of Siemens in 2020. In 2022, Siemens Energy spent 4 billion euros to take full control of Gamesa, which was already having difficulties. Siemens Energy shares jumped 8.8 percent Wednesday on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange but they remain down 35 percent for the year.

Sales, at 77.8 billion euros, increased 11 percent on the previous year. For 2024, however, the group expects revenue to grow in a range of between four and eight percent. This cautious assessment is mainly due to the "Digital Industries" division, whose work includes supplying technologies for automation.

After growing strongly in the past financial year, Siemens expects sales growth of just zero to three percent in this unit in 2024. The company said in a statement that it expected "destocking" in this area at the start of the financial year.

However, in the second half of the year, "global demand in the automation businesses, especially in China, will pick up again," it added.

Analysts were positive about the results, with Deutsche Bank saying in a note that Siemens "beat on all metrics" in its fourth quarter, and the 2024 outlook "confirms the group's resilience and strong strategic positioning". Its shares rose more than six percent on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange.

The Smart Infrastructure division, which deals with areas like data centres and battery makers,



CUXHAVEN: (FILES) A worker stands next to rotor hubs of wind turbines at the Siemens Gamesa factory in Cuxhaven, northwestern Germany, on January 31, 2023, on the sidelines of the visit of the German Economy minister at the plant. — AFP

expects revenue growth in the coming year between seven and 10 percent, down on the previous year's figure.

The unit dealing with railways also expects sales growth to slide next year, and to come in between eight and 11 percent. — AFP

German train drivers' strike causes disruption

FRANKFURT: A strike by German train drivers caused widespread disruption on the country's rail network Thursday, as their union pushes for improved working conditions. The drivers began the 20-hour walkout late Wednesday and it is due to last until 6:00 pm (1700 GMT) on Thursday, the latest industrial action to hit Europe's top economy.

Only 20 percent of long-distance trains were running while local trains were "unable to operate at all" in some regions, said Achim Stauss, spokesman for rail operator Deutsche Bahn. At a Berlin station, passenger Christine van der Koelen criticised the drivers for their "excessive" demands.

"At the end of the day, the parties have to negotiate" but "I find it problematic that we, the passengers, have to put up with this," she added. The strike was called by the GDL union after a first round of pay talks with rail chiefs broke down. The union is seeking a 555 euro (\$600) a month salary increase, a tax-free, 3,000-euro bonus to cope with inflation, and a reduction in working hours from 38 to 35 a week.

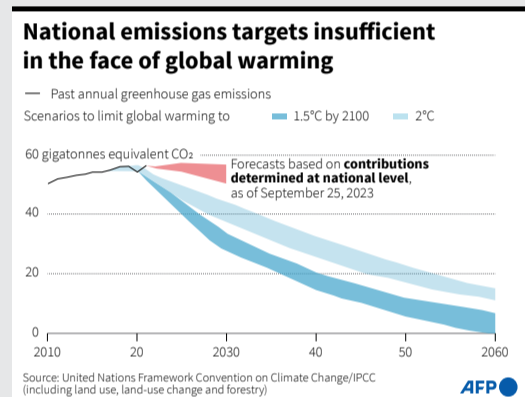
This agreement would run for 12 months, with more negotiations to follow after that. Deutsche Bahn has offered an 11 percent pay increase as well as an inflation bonus of up to 2,850 euros, but has re-



FRANKFURT: Commuters walk at the main station of Frankfurt am Main, western Germany on November 16, 2023, as German train drivers' union GDL called for a 20-hour strike after failing to reach agreement on pay increases. — AFP

jected reduced working hours as excessive. The union represents about 10,000 staff in its talks with Deutsche Bahn, according to the operator.

Earlier this year, a series of strikes by a larger transport union, EVG, on the rail network caused widespread disruption. — AFP



Rich nations 'likely' met \$100bn climate finance goal: OECD

PARIS: Wealthy nations likely met their goal of providing \$100 billion in annual climate finance to poorer nations last year—two years later than promised and only a fraction of the "extensive needs", the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said Thursday.

The OECD report comes ahead of the UN's COP28 climate negotiations later this month in Dubai, where finance will be a major sticking point. The OECD is tasked with monitoring official figures on the pledge to help developing countries fund their energy transitions and resilience in the face of accelerating climate impacts.

In 2009, richer countries promised to reach \$100 billion annually in funding for these priorities by 2020. Failure to meet the target on time has damaged trust in international climate negotiations.

In the most up to date figures, the OECD said richer countries reached \$89.6 billion in total funding for 2021. "Based on preliminary and as yet unverified data, the goal looks likely to have already been met as of 2022," said OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann in the foreword to the latest report.

But he added experts estimate that developing countries will need to spend about a trillion dollars a year by 2025 for climate investments, rising to roughly \$2.4 trillion each year between 2026 and 2030. "Although public finance can only contribute a share of these extensive needs," Cormann said, international donors would be crucial in helping to boost overall funding.

He said that currently finance from rich countries was not effective enough in attracting additional private sector investments and funding. Finance focused on adaptation that countries must embark on to prepare themselves for an array of increasing climate impacts was also lagging, he said. Adaptation measures can include building coastal defences, or helping farmers become more resilient to increasingly ferocious floods, droughts and other climate extremes.

Action is 'stalling'

Many developing economies least to blame for the greenhouse gases that stoke global warming are among the most exposed to the costly and destructive effects of worsening weather extremes and rising seas. World leaders meeting at the climate talks in the United Arab Emirates will face a tough reckoning over financial solidarity between rich polluters and vulnerable nations, as a failure to cut planet-heating emissions threatens the Paris Agreement's global warming limits.

Adaptation is a key priority for developing countries and wealthy governments have promised to double adaptation finance by 2025, to \$40 billion a year. But as the world warms, climate change impacts increase and so too do the costs of preparing for them.

Earlier this month, a report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) projected that overall annual funding that developing countries need to adapt to climate impacts this decade had increased to as much as \$387 billion. At the time, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned action was "stalling" even as the need to protect people increases. — AFP

NBK raises awareness on the risks of unknown links

KUWAIT: Reflecting its constant commitment to support initiatives aimed at raising community awareness and to promote financial inclusion and raise financial literacy among all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is urging customers to ignore and refrain from clicking unknown links, and to deal only with trusted links, to avoid fraudulent attempts to steal their banking and personal information.

This awareness comes within NBK's ongoing

support of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this campaign, NBK aims to raise customers' awareness on the risks of "unknown links" received through different channels, whether by phone, e-mail, or even when browsing websites, as these links may be fraudulent, leading to stealing their banking information.

Seeking to increase awareness among all segments of society, NBK intensifies sharing posts, news and video clips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as reposting "Let's Be Aware" campaign and related CBK's communications.

Through its awareness messages published on different platforms, NBK highlights the various emerging fraudulent techniques used by scammers to steal



bank account information, whether via e-mail, SMS, phone calls, or suspicious fake ads, advising customers to deal only with trusted links and refrain from clicking links with unknown sources.

NBK harnesses its tremendous capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to ensure the widest exposure for the messages of this awareness campaign.

Spectre of war paralyses Lebanon's hospitality sector

BYBLOS: Bartender Richard Alam has poured hardly any drinks at his pub in Lebanon's seaside city of Byblos, where once-busy streets have emptied of customers scared by border tensions during the Zionist entity-Hamas war.

Four years into an economic meltdown, Lebanon's restaurants, cafes, hotels and shops face yet another challenge: Keeping afloat during the Zionist entity-Hamas war and related hostilities on the Lebanon-Zionist entity border.

Gaza-based Hamas militants attacked southern Zionist on October 7, triggering retaliatory Zionist bombing and a ground offensive in Gaza. Since then, Lebanon's southern border has seen deadly escalating skirmishes, mainly between Zionist entity and Hamas ally Hezbollah.

The fighting has so far been limited to the south, but some Western and Arab countries have advised their citizens to leave Lebanon, fearing a broader conflict.

Byblos, on Lebanon's northern coast, "relies on tourists", Alam said, wearing a bow tie and a suit. "Our work has gone down from at least 40 to 50 tables a day to... seven at most."

Nearby, customers are also scarce at Mona Mujahed's souvenir shop, usually

bustling with tourists and locals alike. But there has been "no work, no money", Mujahed, 60, said, sipping coffee in front of her shop where souvenirs sit untouched on the shelves.

'War ruined everything'

Many domestic visitors fearful of war have also cut back on expenses, hitting restaurants, cafes, bars and shops hard. Since 2019 Lebanese have suffered from a financial crisis branded by the World Bank as one of the planet's worst since the 1850s. It pushed most of the population into poverty, and forced half of all restaurants, cafes, pubs and nightclubs to close down, said Tony Ramy, who heads an industry syndicate.

Ramy said the sector was just recently beginning to recover, after expatriate visitors flocked back to Lebanon over the summer following the coronavirus pandemic, the economic collapse and a catastrophic explosion at Beirut's port in 2020.

"We had just turned the page on four difficult years with renewed momentum, but unfortunately the war ruined everything," said Ramy, of the restaurant, cafe, nightclub and pastry shop owners' syndicate.



BYBLOS: People walk past souvenir shops at the almost deserted old market in the historical port city of Byblos. Four years into an economic meltdown, Lebanon's restaurants, cafes, hotels and shops now face yet another challenge. — AFP

"Since October 7 we have seen a dramatic decrease in clientele... (dropping) by up to 80 percent on weekdays and 30 to 50 percent on the weekend," he said. "No one knows if the situation in the south will deteriorate and no one can plan for anything," he said, warning of the potential for "huge losses".

Cross-border skirmishes have killed at least 88 people in Lebanon, mostly Hezbollah combatants but also 10 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

In northern Zionist entity, nine people including six soldiers have been killed, according to official figures. Lebanon's national carrier Middle East Airlines (MEA) has slashed flights, and passenger numbers from the region to Beirut have dropped by 54 percent compared to last year, said the airline's spokesperson Rima Makkawi. MEA passengers from Europe have also dropped by 30 percent compared to the same period last year, she added. — AFP



Baritone Mattia Olivieri, performing as Riolobo, takes part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



Dancers take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



Dancers take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas", sung in Spanish, at the Met Opera in New York.--AFP photos

For the first time in nearly a century, the Metropolitan Opera in New York City will stage a performance in Spanish on Thursday, as the company works to expand its appeal to wider audiences. "Florencia en el Amazonas" is a magical realist telling of an opera diva's journey to South America to find her long lost lover, a butterfly hunter who disappeared in the jungle. The protagonist Florencia Grimaldi—played by soprano Ailyn Perez, the daughter of Mexican immigrants—boards a steamboat in the early 20th century en route to Manaus, home of the legendary opera in the heart of Brazil's Amazon. "It's wonderful to have a new work that people don't know as well," said director Mary Zimmerman of the opera that premiered in 1996 in Houston. In an interview with AFP, Zimmerman said that opera-goers tend to prioritize the classics: "Opera loves its traditions."

But even if "people like that to visit the old friend," she said, "they should make new friends too." The opera composed by Mexico's Daniel Catan, his third, was commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera. Its libretto is by Marcela Fuentes-Berain, who also is Mexican, and studied with the beloved pioneer of magical realism, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The opera is relatively new but has elements of romanticism, Zimmerman said. "It's melodic, it's lush, it sounds like Puccini," she said.

The opera also centers on the eternal dilemma of career versus love, with three types of women setting sail on the "El Dorado" ship, amid a set of abundant vegetation and rich fauna. Along with the diva who has achieved fame but sacrificed love, there is Rosalba, a journalist writing a biography of the opera star and who does not want love to divert her path, and a woman embroiled in a spat with her lover. But a violent storm upends the ship—and with it the once staunch principles of its passengers.

'Dream come true'

Latinos are well represented among the cast: Along with the star Perez, Gabriella Reyes, the daughter of Nic-



Soprano Ailyn Perez, performing as Florencia Grimaldi, takes part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".

New York's Met stages Spanish opera for first time in nearly a century

araguan immigrants, plays Rosalba. Spanish mezzo-soprano Nancy Fabiola Herrera and Guatemalan tenor Mario Chang also have roles, while Riccardo Hernandez, who was born in Cuba and raised in Buenos Aires, designed the sets. "Everyone feels the warmth of Latin America," says Reyes, who as a student chose an aria from "Florencia" for her graduation exam.

"The orchestra had to order the scores because they didn't already have them," she says with amusement. "But

it's thanks to this aria, and this piece, that I have my career," she told AFP. Reyes says it's the second time she's played Rosalba, but it's still "a dream come true." "Singing with Latinos in Spanish comes from my soul in a different way than when I sing in Italian," she says.

'Urgent and profound'

"Florencia" is the third opera in Spanish that the Met has produced over its long and storied history. In 1926, the Met staged "La vida breve" by Manuel de

Falla, 10 years after it produced "Goyescas," from the Spanish composer Enrique Granados. Catan's opera is one of several new features at the Met, which for several years has been aiming to reach younger, more diverse audiences.

It kicked off its season with "Dead Man Walking," an operatic adaptation of the acclaimed book by the nun Helen Prejean about her relationship with a death row inmate whose execution she witnessed. And earlier this month was the Met premiere of "The Life and Times

of Malcolm X," a mesmerizing musical biography of the civil rights leader, who was assassinated in 1965.

These operas "deserve to stand alongside the masterpieces of centuries past," said the Met's director, Peter Gelb. "They have urgent and profound things to say to us about the world we live in today."—AFP



Gabiella Reyes, performing as journalist Rosalba, and baritone Michael Chioldi, performing as Alvaro, take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



Mezzo-soprano Nancy Fabiola Herrera and baritone Michael Chioldi, performing as the feuding couple Paula and Alvaro, take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas", sung in Spanish, at the Met Opera in New York.



Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley, performing as the ship's captain, takes part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



A dancer takes part in the curtain call during a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



Performers take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".



Dancers take part in a dress rehearsal of "Florencia en el Amazonas".

Super-fan Giorgia Meloni opens Rome Tolkien exhibition

In her youth she dressed up as a Hobbit. As Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni formally opened a Rome exhibition Wednesday about "Lord of the Rings" author J.R.R. Tolkien. Marking 50 years since the British academic died

and since the publication of first Italian edition of "The Hobbit", the exhibition was conceived and promoted by Italy's culture ministry—with the enthusiastic support of the prime minister. Meloni, 46, often talks about how she has loved since her childhood Tolkien's magical tales about good battling evil—a feeling shared by many on the far-right.

In her 2021 autobiography, Meloni recalled how she and fellow members of the youth wing of the post-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) used to dress up as "Lord of the Rings" characters, called together by the horn of

the warrior Boromir. Long before the story was turned into blockbuster movies, she chose to dress up as Samwise Gamgee, the best friend and trusty side-kick of Frodo Baggins, whose quest to destroy the ring and its evil powers are at the centre of the books.

Sam is not a king, or a magician, or warrior elf, "he is just a hobbit, he works as a gardener. Yet without him Frodo would never have accomplished the mission," Meloni wrote. "He knows that it will not be his deeds that will be sung about in the future, but it is not for glory that he risks everything," she added.

Many academics have written about the fascination of the far-right with Tolkien. The world of Middle Earth is a pre-industrial, feudal world, where the values of fraternity, chivalry, tradition and national identity hold sway over faceless industrialization.

"He was a convinced Catholic who glorified the value of tradition, of the community and of the history to which he belongs—a true conservative, one might say," Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano said in September.

His department has sponsored the exhibition at a cost of 250,000 euros,

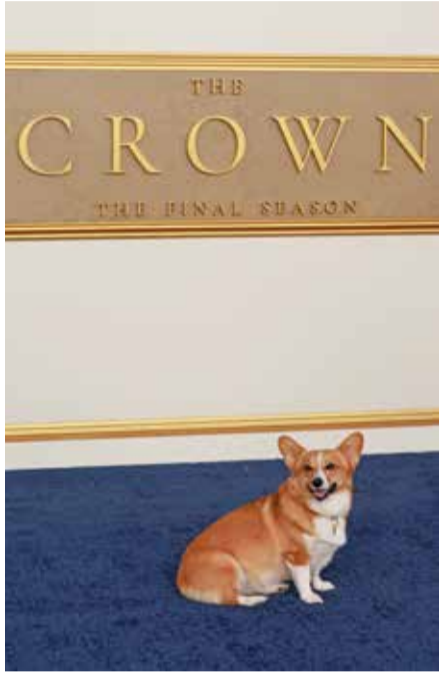
according to La Repubblica newspaper. But many note that he was also popular with the hippies in America in the 1960s, perhaps by offering a vision of a purer world.

The Rome exhibition promises to tell "the human journey, the academic work, the narrative power, the poetic strength" of the writer. "Tolkien: Man, Professor, Author", runs from November 16 to February 11 at the National Gallery for Modern and Contemporary Art.—AFP

Lifestyle



British actress Olivia Colman poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the World premiere of the television series "The Crown - Series 3" in London.



A Welsh Corgi is seen during the Los Angeles Premiere of Netflix's "The Crown", Season 6 Part 1, at Westwood Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles.

END OF AN ERA: 'THE CROWN' CONCLUDES WITH DIANA'S DEATH

Netflix's acclaimed series "The Crown" chronicling the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, draws to a close from Thursday, focusing on a subject still highly sensitive to the British monarchy — the death of Princess Diana. The sixth and final season of the award-winning but often-criticized show created by Peter Morgan is being released in two parts. The first five episodes will premiere on Thursday, followed by the final five on December 14, culminating 60 hours of narrative that began in 2016.

The drama covers the late queen's journey from her 1947 marriage to Philip up to the early 2000s introduction of Kate Middleton, the current Princess of Wales. This season depicts the final weeks of Princess Diana's life, following her tumultuous divorce from the now King Charles III, leading up to her tragic demise on August 31, 1997. Pursued by paparazzi, the BMW carrying Diana and her lover Dodi Al-Fayed crashed at high speed into a pillar in Paris' Alma tunnel, killing her, Fayed and driver Henri Paul.

The royal family took years to recover after criticism of their reaction to the loss of Diana, whom Tony Blair famously dubbed "the people's princess". "It's a very sensitive subject because it was such a significant event in the life of the monarchy and the royal family, and because people related to Diana are still very much alive, most notably her now-adult sons William and Harry," royal historian Ed Owens told AFP. "It's the seminal moment that the series has been building up to since series one. The question remains whether Peter Morgan is a friend or an enemy

of the monarchy. "This series will give us a fuller understanding of whether he thinks it is an institution that has made big mistakes and which needs to modernize. Or whether it's an institution that has managed to modernize successfully since 1997."

Massive responsibility

The final season notably recreates Queen Elizabeth's rare live televised address from Buckingham Palace on September 5, 1997, paying tribute to Diana and addressing the widespread public grief. Imelda Staunton, who portrays the monarch in the last two seasons following Claire Foy and Olivia Colman, expressed feeling "a massive responsibility" with this scene. "It was an incredibly powerful address to the nation which many people remember," the actress said.

"The significance of that was not taken lightly by anyone involved, and I spent a lot of time listening to recordings of the real speech, as I needed to be as accurate as I could be with the extremely sensitive subject matter." A media figure and celebrity friend, Diana gained global popularity by displaying empathy towards the less fortunate. She remains a figure of immense admiration beyond the UK, casting a shadow over the image of Charles and his wife Queen Camilla, who has struggled to fully overcome her reputation as a marriage wrecker.

The season is nervously anticipated by those close to royalty — the family itself has never commented on the series — while early revelations about Lady Di's portrayal as a ghost have already sparked accusations of



(From left) English actor Dominic West, English actor Marcia Warren, Australian actor Elizabeth Debicki, English actor Imelda Staunton, Welsh actor Jonathan Pryce and English actor Lesley Manville pose on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the World Premiere of "The Crown (Season 5)" in London. - AFP photos

disrespect. This isn't the first time "The Crown" has faced criticism, especially as it appeals to Netflix's younger audience who are learning about some events for the first time.

Over the seasons, it has been accused of suggesting infidelities by the queen and Prince Philip, portraying the current king as an unfaithful husband and even suggesting Charles's desire for his mother's abdication in the 1990s. Last year, Netflix added a disclaimer clarifying the show was a work of fiction.

Annie Sulzberger, who led the documentary research for the series, acknowledged the sensitivity surrounding Diana in an interview with The New York Times. "People who lived through Diana's death feel a sense of ownership over that history, a sense of participation, which can color their perception of it," she said. "With recent history, you're constantly battling with people's intimate and personal perspectives." — AFP

Aniston, Schwimmer, Kudrow add tributes to 'Friends' co-star Perry

"Friends" stars Jennifer Aniston, David Schwimmer and Lisa Kudrow paid their own personal tributes to the late Matthew Perry on Wednesday, mourning their beloved but troubled co-star after his shock death last month. Perry, who played Chandler Bing on the hit TV sitcom from 1994-2004, died at the age of 54, having struggled for decades with addiction and related serious health issues. "Oh boy this one has cut deep," said Aniston, who played Rachel on the show about six close-knit friends navigating adult life in New York.

"He was such a part of our DNA. We were always the 6 of us. This was a chosen family that forever changed the course of who we were and what our path was going to be," she wrote on Instagram. Aniston accompanied her post with a screenshot of a text message she received from Perry, in which he wrote: "Making you laugh made my day." "It says it all," explained Aniston. Schwimmer, who played Ross on the show, posted a favorite photo of himself and Perry, adding: "Now it makes me smile and grieve at the same time."

"Thank you for ten incredible years of laughter and creativity," he wrote. Perry was found unconscious in a hot tub at his house in Los Angeles last month. First responders were unable to revive him. The cause of Perry's death is not yet known. An initial post-mortem examination was inconclusive, and the results of toxicology tests have not yet been released.

Perry spoke openly about his decades-long battles with addiction and serious health problems. Celebrity news website TMZ reported that no illicit drugs were found at his home, although several medications were discovered including anti-depressants and anxiety medication.

Referring to Perry's health issues, Kudrow wrote on Instagram: "Thank you for showing up at work when you weren't well and then, being completely brilliant." Kudrow, who penned the foreword for Perry's brutally honest 2022 memoir, concluded: "Thank you for all I learned about GRACE and LOVE through knowing you." — AFP



Cast members from "Friends" (from left) David Schwimmer, Lisa Kudrow, Matthew Perry, Courtney Cox Arquette, Jennifer Aniston, and Matt LeBlanc, pose for photographers at the 54th Annual Emmy Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California.

Jimmy Kimmel to host Oscars for fourth time

Late-night comedian Jimmy Kimmel is returning — again — to host the Oscars for a fourth time, organizers said Wednesday. Kimmel will preside over Hollywood's biggest awards show for the second consecutive year, after television ratings rebounded at last year's well-reviewed ceremony. "I always dreamed of hosting the Oscars exactly four times," joked Kimmel, in a statement issued by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and broadcaster ABC.

Oscars executive producers Raj Kapoor and Katy Mullan hailed Kimmel as "one of the all-time great Oscars hosts," praising his "perfect blend of humanity and humor." The 96th Oscars will be held on March 10 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. Kimmel previously hosted the show in 2017 - a ceremony that ended with the infamous mix-up that saw "La La Land" accidentally named best picture - and 2018.

He was brought back for the 2023 edition. Kimmel was widely viewed as a safe pair of hands — much needed, as the previous year's ceremony had featured Will Smith slapping Chris Rock on stage for cracking a joke about his wife. The ceremony in March kicked off with Kimmel being lowered onto the stage as two US Navy jets flew over the theater, and at one point featured the host accompanied to the podium by a miniature emotional support donkey. — AFP



TV host Jimmy Kimmel speaks on stage during the 95th Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Lips like Kali: Indian goddess inspired Rolling Stones logo

One of the world's most famous symbols of a band — the ruby red tongue and lips of the Rolling Stones — was inspired by the Indian goddess Kali, Mick Jagger has told Indian media. Britain's Victoria and Albert Museum, which holds the original artwork in its collections, calls it "one of the world's most instantly recognizable symbols of rock and roll". But the inspiration was rooted in the tongue and lips of the Hindu goddess Kali, frontman Jagger told the Times of India in an interview printed Wednesday.

Kali, usually depicted as a four-armed lady in blue with a long tongue sticking out from red lips, is worshipped by Hindus as the goddess of destruction and time. "My brother was an early traveler to India. He would give me some books to read," Jagger said, the newspaper reported, who interviewed him while on a trip to Mumbai.



"In 1969, I was looking for an image that would be an eye-grabbing thing, and I saw this image of a disembodied tongue of Kali. I thought it would be an inspiration. Then, designer John Pasche created this modernistic version of the tongue logo." While in Mumbai, Jagger watched England thrash Pakistan and send them crashing out of the Cricket World Cup with a convincing 93-run on Saturday.

Jagger shared photos on social media of him standing in front of an idol of Kali. British artist John Pasche was commissioned to produce the logo after Jagger saw his designs, earning £50 for his troubles. Two years later he got another £200 in recognition of the logo's success. In 2008, the Victoria and Albert Museum bought the original artwork from him for £50,000.

The Rolling Stones formed in London in 1962, and went on to become the world's biggest rock band. Last month the band released "Hackney Diamonds", the first since the death of drummer Charlie Watts in 2019, and their first studio album of new music since 2005's "A Bigger Bang". — AFP



French singer Edith Piaf poses at her home in New York in September 1946. — AFP photos



French singer Edith Piaf plays the song "Un monsieur me suit dans la rue" at her home in New York in September 1946.

After Beatles, AI to bring Edith Piaf voice back to life for biopic

A new biopic on the life of Edith Piaf will use artificial intelligence to allow the French star to narrate her own story, Warner Music and her estate said on Tuesday. "Edith" is "in the final phase of development", sources close to Warner Music France said, but no release date has been scheduled. The unveiling of the "innovative and revolutionary technological project using AI to re-create her voice and image", the statement said, comes 60 years after Piaf's death.

It also follows the success of the Beatles' latest release "Now And Then" which, with a little help from AI, last week soared to the band's first UK number one single in 54 years. Artificial intelligence helped isolate the late John Lennon's vocals from a tape he recorded in 1978, two years before he was murdered.

The two surviving Beatles, Paul McCartney, aged 81, and Ringo Starr, 83, finished "Now And Then" last year, including the late George Harrison's guitar parts recorded in 1995. For the singer of French classics "La vie en Rose" and "Non, je ne regrette rien", AI will be fed hundreds of voice and image clips, some more than 80 years old, to re-create her unique style and "further enhance the authenticity and emotional impact of her story". Original recordings will be used for her greatest hits, Warner said. The 90-minute film will move between Paris and New York from 1920 to 1960 and be narrated by the singer's voice, including hitherto unknown "aspects of her life". — AFP

AI images of white faces are now 'hyper-real': Study

Images of faces generated by artificial intelligence (AI) can now appear more real than pictures of real people — as long as they are white, a study said on Monday. AI is now so good at depicting white people that the images are "hyper-real", said the report in the journal Psychological Science. But AI tends to depict people of other ethnicities with white features because the data used to train the algorithms is biased, said lead author Amy Dawel from the Australian National University (ANU).

"If white AI faces are consistently perceived as more realistic, this technology could have serious implications for people of color by ultimately reinforcing racial biases online," she said. The authors said it was vital to educate the public about the hyper-realism of today's AI to avoid misinformation and online scams. The researchers used 200 pictures - 100 AI-generated and 100 real humans - and asked 124 participants which were AI and which were genuine.

Of the five faces most often identified



as human, four were AI. Of the top five judged as AI, four were human. The researchers ran another experiment to try to understand why this was the case, asking more than 600 people to rate various qualities of the images - attractiveness, familiarity, image quality. Clear differences remained between AI and real images, said the researchers, but the participants were either misinterpreting the details or missing them entirely.

For example, participants tended to judge faces as human if they were more proportional, less memorable and more familiar - but these qualities were more prominent in the AI images. The researchers used the data based on these perceptions to program a model that was able to accurately identify more than 90 percent of the faces. "However, we can't rely on these physical cues for long," said Dawael. "AI technology is advancing so quickly that the differences between AI and human faces will probably disappear soon." — AFP

Lifestyle



'King of Lake Ohrid'

The fight to save a Balkan trout

Along the picturesque shores of Lake Ohrid, things have taken on a frantic pace at the Lin Hatchery in Albania's Pogradec, as a team of specialists races to release the final batch of newly spawned trout this season. The hatchery specializes in breeding the "Ohrid Trout"—an indigenous species in the

area has seen large amounts of development along the banks.

Known as "Koran" in Albania and "Ohridska pastrmka" in North Macedonia, the Ohrid Trout has long been a staple in the lake's crystal-clear waters. "It doesn't matter what Albanians or Macedonians call it," said fisherman Artan Male. "They all agree: this fish,

have increased operations at fisheries to produce 1.7 million hatchlings this year alone. "You have to take care of everything. You have to respect schedules and dates. Any mistake could be fatal and could lead to the death of the small fish," said Kopi Bici, who works at the hatchery.

The work to repopulate Lake Ohrid along its Albanian shoreline is a year-round affair. From December 1 to early March, fishing is prohibited in Lake Ohrid to prevent the disruption of the trout's breeding cycle. During this period, a group of around 60 specially trained fishermen are authorized to cast nets to help harvest the eggs of the females and the sperm of the males.

"Mixed with fresh water, this fertilizes the eggs," said Martin Jace, who oversees Albania's Fishermen's Association. The fertilized eggs are then allowed to incubate, followed by the hatching of the larvae that are then carefully raised to the fry stage, which live for six months in the freshwater of the breeding centre's ponds before being released back into the lake.

The cycle from egg to a newly spawned trout is a delicate journey with every step of the process carefully monitored, including oxygen levels, food intake, and water temperature. But there is still a risk of death to the spawns. This year, to produce 1.7 million spawns, farmers and fishermen recovered 200 kilograms of eggs to produce just 3,000 kilograms of adult fish.

'Our babies'

To bring the young fish back into the lake, employees from the hatchery

brave Ohrid's choppy waters and often heavy showers to release the spawns. "These are our babies, and they need to be in good physiological condition to withstand their new life in the lake," said Jovan Bale, as he scooped up young fish at the hatchery's pond and that are later placed in plastic containers filled with water.

The fish are then transported to the edge of the lake, hoisted onto a boat and released into its deeper waters.

Time is of the essence during the trip—the containers that carry the new spawns are stuffed with the young fish, meaning there is little oxygen for the hatchlings.

"It's a race against time, the fish have to be released very quickly. Any delay would be fatal. If the water heats up and they lack oxygen, they die," said Jace, adding that the cool waters during October and November were optimal to release the spawn.

But any effort to preserve the trout's population will likely be futile if the underlying issues threatening the fish and the lake's other 145 endemic species are not addressed. "If we don't want to lose the Ohrid trout forever, we need to join forces," said Blerina Turshina, a chef at a restaurant in Tushemisht on the Albanian side of the lake.

The trout remains a culinary delicacy in the area and has attracted tourists from across southeastern Europe who are keen to sample the tasty, red-spotted fish, which has long been rumored to have been a favourite of the late Queen Elizabeth II. "Grilled or baked, with onions, spices and nuts or with a white lemon sauce, [the trout] is the king of dishes," said Turshina.



Technicians check Ohrid trout "Koran" fingerlings in a hatchery before being released back into the lake Ohrid in Albania's Pogradec.--AFP photos



A chef prepares for cooking an Ohrid trout "Koran" fish in Albania's Pogradec.

And in a region where nationalism is often at a low boil, fights over the fish's true origins have been known to be a topic of conversation—something Turshina and others are quick to laugh off. "It doesn't matter," said Turshina. "It's the Ohrid trout".—AFP



Technicians and fishermen release Ohrid trout "Koran" fingerlings back into the lake Ohrid in Albania's Pogradec.

ancient lake that has struggled for years to maintain a healthy population amid habitat destruction, overfishing, and rampant pollution. Albania and Northern Macedonia, which both border Lake Ohrid, have signed agreements to ensure the trout's survival, as a major uptick in tourism in

which needs neither a passport nor an identity card to cross borders, is known as the King of Lake Ohrid, one of the oldest in the world."

'Any mistake could be fatal'

To maintain the population, Albanian public and private organizations

Frozen library of ancient ice tells tales of climate's past

How was the air breathed by Caesar, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) or Christopher Columbus? A giant freezer in Copenhagen holds the answers, storing blocks of ice with atmospheric tales thousands of years old. The Ice Core Archive, housing 25 kilometers (15 miles) of ice collected primarily from Greenland, is helping scientists understand changes in the climate. "What we have in this archive is prehistoric climate change, a record of man's activities in the last 10,000 years," glaciology professor Jorgen Peder Steffensen of the University of Copenhagen told AFP.



Joergen Peder Steffensen, professor of ice core related research at the Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, holds part of an ice core sample in the University of Copenhagen's ice core repository in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Blocks of ice have been his passion for 43 years—and it was while drilling into Greenland's ice sheet that he met his wife Dorte Dahl-Jensen, also a top expert in the field of paleoclimatology. Steffensen has since 1991 managed the repository, one of the biggest in the world, with 40,000 blocks of ice stacked on long rows of shelves in large boxes.

The frozen samples are unique, made up of compressed snow and not frozen water. "All the airspace between the snowflakes is trapped as bubbles inside (and) the air inside these bubbles is the same age as the ice," Steffensen explained.

The repository's antechamber is similar to a library's reading room: this is where scientists can examine the ice they have withdrawn from the main "library", or storage room. But they must be quick: the temperature in the antechamber is kept at -18 degrees Celsius (-0.4F) -- decidedly balmy compared to the -30C (-22F) in the storage room.

Here, Steffensen removes a block of ice from a box. Its air bubbles are visible to the naked eye: it's snow that fell during the winter of year zero. "So we have the Christmas stuff, the real Christmas snow," says Steffensen with a big grin, his head covered in a warm winter bonnet with furry ear flaps.

Bedrock

A team of researchers brought the first ice cores to Denmark in the 1960s from Camp Century, a secret US military base on Greenland. The most recent ones date from this summer, when scientists hit the bedrock on eastern Greenland at a depth of 2.6 kilometers, gathering the oldest ice possible. Those samples contain extracts from 120,000 years ago, during the most recent interglacial period when air temperatures in Greenland were 5C higher than today. "The globe has easily been much warmer than it is today. But that's before humans were there," Steffensen said. This recently acquired ice should help scientists' understanding of rising sea levels, which can only be partly explained by the shrinking ice cap. Another part of the explanation comes from ice streams, fast-moving ice on the ice sheet that is melting at an alarming rate.

"If we understand the ice streams better, we can get a better idea of how much the contribution will be (to rising sea levels) from Greenland and Antarctica in the future," Steffensen said. He hopes they'll be able to predict the sea level rise in 100 years with a margin of error of 15 centimeters—a big improvement over today's 70 centimeters.—AFP



Insulated boxes containing ice core samples lay on shelves in the University of Copenhagen's ice core repository in Copenhagen, Denmark.--AFP photos



Environmental scientists search for snails known as "Escargots de Quimper" in Brest, western France.--AFP photos

Snail-by-snail: French city in painstaking operation for tram

They are small, protected, and in absolutely no hurry to move. The presence of the rare Quimper Snail, whose habitat is restricted to areas of northwest France and northern Spain, has caused a major headache for developers seeking to lay down a new tram route in the northwestern French city of Brest. Conservation workers are now picking through undergrowth to individually remove protected snails blocking the planned tram route—one by one.

"Here's a little one!" shouted Oriane Jossier and after just a few minutes of looking during an evening operation. The small Quimper snails, which live in western Brittany and northern Spain, have given property developers in the region cold sweats since football club Stade Brestois had to abandon a planned training centre in 2012. Campaigners also attempted to enlist them against a project to build a gas-fired power plant in mainland France's westernmost department Finistere.

When laying out the city's second tram line, Brest authorities found "it was impossible to avoid all Quimper snail habitats," said Caroline Francois-Even of Biotope, an agency that develops environmental studies. Instead, the city decided to move as many snails as could be found from the planned route over four rainy evenings in November, just before the gastropods enter hibernation.

In the first operation last week, 92 snails and two black-and-yellow fire

salamanders—another protected species—were brought to a new habitat nearby. "By protecting the snails, we're also protecting its habitat and a whole range of species that live there," said Biotope ecologist Timothee Sherer.



This photograph taken in Brest, western France shows a snail known as the "Escargot de Quimper".

Workers have set up tarps to prevent the snails from inching back onto the construction site. Bretagne Vivante, a Brittany-wide environmental group, believes Brest is "making an effort" to "sort out the problem in a gentle way," said Jean-Noel Ballot, one of the organization's managers. As well as the snails, planners have had to contend with 75 protected species from orchids to small birds, newts and bats along the tram's route.—AFP

Which Park Ji-min? US outlet's BTS error prompts online outrage

A US entertainment news site has sparked anger and drawn ridicule after an apparent K-pop blunder, posting a photo of BTS megastar Jimin instead of a Korean actress with the same name. In a post on social media platform X viewed more than 100,000 times, Deadline Hollywood links to its coverage of France's Cesar Academy's annual Revelations list, which flags up-and-coming acting talents. This year, the list includes Korean-born, France-based actress Park Ji-min, who has gained recognition for her powerful performance in "Return to Seoul," a 2022 adoption drama directed by French-Cambodian filmmaker Davy Chou.



This combination image of two file photos shows South Korean K-pop boy band BTS member Jimin (left), whose legal name is Park Ji-min, during a photo session in Seoul; and Korean-born, France-based actress Park Ji-min (right) during a photo session in Paris.

The article and the post on X, formerly Twitter, however, feature a photograph of BTS star Jimin, whose legal name is Park Ji-min, prompting a torrent of criticism on the platform, including from BTS fans. "It took me a second to google the cast of 'Return to Seoul' - you should make a habit of visiting google especially when you're not acquainted with the artists you're writing about," X user @zetoaye replied to the Deadline tweet.

Another user, @613tangerine_, wrote: "This is not only unprofessional but disrespectful to the actress as well." "Correct the information and image," the user added. One BTS fan pointed out that while the Deadline article correctly described the actress as a woman, they still posted a photo of BTS's Jimin, who is male. "You guys even wrote 'her' in the article and still used a picture of the wrong person," wrote the fan, whose X handle is @sugassshadowal.—AFP

Sports

Rohit the 'genuine hero' of India's run to World Cup final

Rohit batted selflessly against the new ball: Atherton

MUMBAI: Virat Kohli and Mohammed Shami starred as India beat New Zealand to reach the World Cup final but Nasser Hussain believes captain Rohit Sharma has been their "real hero" of the tournament. Unbeaten hosts India defeated New Zealand by 70 runs in Mumbai on Wednesday to make it 10 wins out of 10 this World Cup as they booked a place in Sunday's final in Ahmedabad.

Kohli scored a record 50th one-day international hundred in an imposing total of 397-4 that also featured Shreyas Iyer's rapid 105 off 70 balls before Mohammed Shami cleaned up with a stunning seven-wicket haul.

But it was 36-year opener Rohit, on his Wankhede Stadium home ground, who set the tone with a 29-ball 47 after winning the toss. Hussain said Rohit, appointed India's white-ball captain in December 2021, deserved plenty of credit for India's run to the final.

"The headlines will be about Kohli, about Shreyas, about Shami. But the genuine hero of this Indian side, the man who has changed the culture, is Rohit Sharma," Hussain told Sky Sports. The former England captain, himself born in Madras (now Chennai), added: "It's one thing coming in the group stage, but can you do it again, can you play fearless cricket in a semi-final?"

"Their skipper went out there and showed everyone, showed his dressing room that they're going to carry on in exactly the same way." Kohli may be the tournament's leading batsman with 711 runs, but Michael Atherton—another ex-England captain—said the manner in which Rohit, who has

now scored 550 in this World Cup himself, batted on Wednesday was telling.

'Sending a message'

"For a team who have occasionally blinked when the critical moment has arrived in recent ICC events, often tip-toeing through an innings, Rohit led brilliantly, as he has throughout a campaign where he has eschewed personal milestones and batted selflessly against the new ball," Atherton wrote in The Times.

"It was not the number of runs that he scored, but the message he sent in getting India off to a flyer, making 47 in only 29 balls, that was vital. Don't go into your shells, he was saying." Yet in a match where 724 runs in all were scored, despite concerns about a used pitch, it was paceman Shami who had the final say with an extraordinary return of 7-57 -- the best by any bowler in a World Cup semi-final.

Shami was out of the India team for the first four matches of the tournament and might not have featured at all but for an injury to Hardik Pandya. Yet heading into Thursday's second semi-final between Australia and South Africa, he was the leading bowler at the World Cup with 23 wickets from six games at astonishingly low average of under 10 apiece.

England's 2019 World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan, who faced Shami during his career, said: "The level of control he has shown throughout this tournament to move the ball off the



MUMBAI: India's captain Rohit Sharma watches the ball after playing a shot during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) first semi-final match between India and New Zealand. — AFP

seam and in the air has been great to admire. "Seven for 57 in a one-day international is unheard of, particularly in a World Cup knock-out game where

there is a huge amount of pressure on him...To have someone like that at your disposal for Rohit Sharma adds more value to the strength of India." — AFP

Vu aims to close out in style at LPGA Tour Championship

MIAMI: World number one Lilia Vu and Celine Boutier take their battle for LPGA Player of the Year honors down to the wire this week at the season-ending Tour Championship in Naples, Florida. America's Vu, whose four titles this season include major crowns at the Chevron Championship and British Women's Open, regained the lead in the race for the prestigious award with a victory at The Annika on Sunday.

France's Boutier, who had moved ahead in the standings with a marathon playoff victory in Malaysia in October, said she could only be impressed by Vu's resilience. "I was just honestly very impressed (by Vu's win)," Boutier said Tuesday as golfers prepared for the season-ending event at Tiburon Golf Club.

"Being able to pull it off under the circumstances and pressure, I'm like, yeah, she deserves it. "We'll see what happens. She's had such an amazing season. Even if I don't get (Player of the Year), I'm very happy for her. It's hard to beat four wins and two majors, so whatever happens I'll be happy." Boutier, 30, needed nine playoff holes to emerge with a victory over Thailand's Atthaya Thitikul in Kuala Lumpur, and said that test—and victory in her home major the Evian Championship—stood out as highlights in a stellar year.

"I feel like playoffs are always very tough emotionally, just to be able to handle the pressure," she said, noting that the two she'd played were "very different" with the first decided in just one hole.

"Then, obviously, I think the week in Evian was not necessarily one specific shot, but just the week in general. It's just such a tough week to handle as a local player, and so just to be able to have handled it successfully that week was definitely very rewarding as well." Vu, 26, said her breakthrough 2023 campaign had been "just wild" in comparison to a disappointing 2022 season. "I don't think I expected this at all," Vu said. "I have said this before. I came in with no expectations because last year I had too many and was too hard on myself. I'm trying to enjoy every moment and be grateful I'm out here." Both players said they would focus not on the season-ending awards race but on the task at hand this week in the \$7 million tournament. Four past champions are in the field of 60, including South Korea's Ko Jin-young and Kim Sei-young, England's Charley Hull and Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn.

But New Zealand's Lydia Ko didn't qualify to defend the title she won last year. Twenty-two of the 23 LPGA Tour winners this season are in the field. That includes newly minted Rookie of the Year Ryu Hae-ran of South Korea who is among six rookies appearing in the tournament for the first time. "It's so exciting," Ryu said. "Many players want to play this week, and I was able to make it." — AFP



Burgan Bank concludes its sponsorship of 8th Flare Festival

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the conclusion of its strategic sponsorship of the 8th edition of Flare Festival, Kuwait's biggest fitness challenge, which took place at Marina Crescent. Throughout its three-day span, the event saw a massive turnout of 3,000 participants in addition to more than 7,500 visitors.

In recognition of its strategic sponsorship of such a flagship sporting event, the Flare Festival organizer honored Burgan Bank for their effort and support, in the presence of the Chairman of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah; whereby Ms Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank received the shield of honor on behalf of the Bank. On his part, Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, honored the Flare Festival winners across the different competitions.

For the three days of the event, Burgan Bank presented the crowd with many gifts and orchestrated several activities and competitions suitable for all age groups, not to mention organizing a number of competitions that were exclusive to the fitness challenges' competitors, with total cash prizes and gifts amounting in value to KD 5,000. Moreover, the Bank representatives offered flavored detox water at the Burgan booth across the event's duration, besides handing out reusable sports water bottles to encourage the audience to drink water regularly while reducing the use of harmful one-time-use plastics.

The event's sponsorship comes as an extension of the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program and commitment to embedding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles in its community initiatives. Burgan also continues its dedicated efforts to fortify Kuwait's sports culture and its support for aspiring homegrown athletic talents.

On this occasion, Al-Najadah commented: "On behalf of the bank, I would like to congratulate all of the Flare Festival winners and applaud all participants who exerted a notable effort throughout the three days of competitions. I would also like to extend my appreciation



and thank Flare Festival organizers for their dedicated efforts. We are very proud of our strategic sponsorship of Flare Festival, and we look forward to supporting Kuwait's sports culture and its aspiring talents across many more similarly successful events."

On his part, Yousef Al Shaya, CEO of Flare Fitness, stated: "We are very proud of everyone who

took part in this amazing edition of Flare Festival, from the Sponsors to the participants; and of course, we extend our genuine gratitude to Burgan Bank for the unwavering support that they have given us throughout the planning and execution phases of the event, the bank support was a huge force that enabled us to aim for excellence in every detail."

ISSF rules apply for crown prince shooting championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: His Highness The Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Fourth Annual Shooting Championship continues at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex as shooters are competing enthusiastically in efforts

to win the tournament that is important after to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual International Grand Prix and is the start of the opening of the shooting sport season for the year 2023-2024.

Treasurer at the Shooting Club and Federation Adnan Nasser Al-Ibrahim said activities of the tournament are proceeding as planned, due to the preparations the higher organizing committee made, and as the technical and administrative departments made all necessary requirements available.

He said the tournament started Wednesday as the men's and women's trap and skeet events shooting at 75 targets took place, while the 10m

air rifle for men and women finals took place. Al-Ibrahim thanked HH the Crown Prince for patronizing this annual tournament.

Meanwhile Acting Chairman of Shotgun Referees Committee Mohammad Al-Fahad said the ISSF rules apply for this tournament, which in an atmosphere that allows the shooters have a feeling of the international competitions that will be coming soon, as this is the best preparation as far as the competition strength and their wish to win the tournament.

Al-Fahad thanked KSSC board members for their efforts that made Kuwait Shooting among the best around the world be it in organization and shooters performance who get the best re-

sults in the name of Kuwait.

Head of the Pistol and Rifle referees Committee Khalid Al-Jurayed said competition was fierce on the first day of the tournament, as the 10m air rifle event took place for both men and women, who showed a high level, adding that club officials make sure that a suitable environment for shooters is there to enable them perform at their best.

Results of the 10m air rifle were for men: First Ali Farhan Al-Mutairi, second: Saud Duhaman Al-Subaie and third: Abdullah Irzouqi, Al-Harbi.

Women's results: First Mariam Irzouqi, second: Ritaj Al-Ziyadi and third: Rawan Al-Kandary. The tournament will continue until Saturday.

Sports

Hayes, Chelsea held to stalemate at Real as Ajax down PSG

Bayern and Roma game end in a dramatic 2-2 draw

PARIS: Emma Hayes' Chelsea were held to a controversial draw at Real Madrid on Wednesday, the day after she was announced as the new coach of the US women's national team, as Ajax saw off Paris Saint-Germain 2-0 in the Women's Champions League. When she takes over the USWNT, Hayes will become the highest paid coach in the women's game and her Chelsea side looked impressive as they drew 2-2 away to the Liga F runners-up.

A controversial late penalty brought the hosts level and a winner in injury-time for Chelsea was chalked off. "I thought we dominated the game. We went 2-1 up. Then there is the free-kick that was awarded as a penalty. Then we score a really legitimate goal with Niamh Charles, three or four yards inside," said Hayes.

"It is embarrassing. I had to check why it was disallowed... I cannot understand the decision whatsoever." The home side got off to a flyer 10 minutes in when Olga Carmona, the scorer of the only goal in the World Cup final, shot from distance and a wicked deflection off Millie Bright wrong-footed the keeper.

Despite this start, Chelsea began regularly to cause a threat with their wide play and eventually the pressure cost Madrid four minutes before the break. Ashley Lawrence crossed from the right and Niamh Charles was unmarked to head in from the edge of the six-yard box to level matters.

In the second half it was again the wide areas where Chelsea found joy, as Charles turned provider and stood a cross up for Sam Kerr to head the English champions into the lead with 16 minutes remaining. But just five minutes later, Carmona rifled home an equalizing penalty, which was awarded af-

ter a clumsy tackle by Jessie Fleming that looked to be just outside the box.

Misa Rodriguez then came to Real's rescue when she plunged to her left to deny a fine volleyed effort from 20 yards by Johanna Rytting Kaneryd. Lauren James rattled the crossbar with two minutes remaining on the clock and Kerr broke free before overrunning the ball at the crucial moment as an entertaining match came to an end all square.

The end did not come before more controversy, however, as Charles looked to have nabbed all three points for Chelsea with nearly the last kick of the match only for the goal to be disallowed. Replays showed her to be well outside, leaving coach Hayes seething with the match officials.

Elsewhere in Group D, goals either side of half-time from Rosa Kafaji and Anna Sandberg ensured a 2-1 win for Haecken at Paris FC. Julie Dufour converted a penalty three minutes after Haecken's second to halve the deficit but with half an hour remaining the French side were unable to break down the visitors.

Ajax down PSG

Ajax laid down a statement in Amsterdam by beating PSG through first-half goals from Tiny Hoekstra and Sherida Spitse. With 34 minutes on the clock, Ajax got their first courtesy of Hoekstra's acute finish after Sakina Karchaoui had blocked Nadine Noordam's initial effort.

The hosts looked to be heading into the break just a goal up until Clare Hunt took down Ashleigh Weerden and Spitse made no mistake from the spot one minute into added time. Ajax had chances to wrap the match up in the second half, with a fine in-



AMSTERDAM: Ajax's Dutch defender #11 Ashleigh Weerden kicks the ball next to PSG's French defender #28 Jade Le Guilly during the UEFA Women's Champions League Group C football match between Ajax Amsterdam and Paris Saint-Germain at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam, on November 15, 2023. — AFP

tervention by Jade Le Guilly denying Hoekstra a second when she looked sure to score, however the hosts did not need them in the end as they ran out convincing winners.

The first game Group C ended in a dramatic 2-2 draw between Bayern and Roma, thanks to a last-minute equalizer by Manuela Giugliano. A

20th-minute strike by Jovana Damnjanovic and an own goal by Elena Linari four minutes into first-half added-time had the Germans cruising at the break.

But the Italian champions fought back in the second half through Evelyn Viens' goal just before the hour mark and then Giugliano struck in the 90th minute to ensure the spoils would be shared. — AFP

Beckham says Messi at Inter Miami is 'our gift to America'

MUMBAI: David Beckham told AFP in an interview on Wednesday that his Inter Miami franchise signed Lionel Messi as "our gift to America and the MLS". Former Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder Beckham, speaking on his first ever visit to India and in his role as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, admitted he still has to pinch himself when he sees the Argentinian World Cup winner on the teamsheet in Florida.

"It's still hard to believe that when someone turns around to me and says Inter Miami have Lionel Messi in their team, you know," he said. "It's a very proud thing for me to have as an owner, to have a player like that, the best player in the world, in our team."

"We always knew that bringing Leo to America, not just to Miami, it was our gift to America and the MLS. "Because someone like that changes the game. You know, someone like that inspires another generation of soccer players."

"And that's why we wanted to bring Leo to the team. Of course, we want to win championships. Of course, we want to be the best team in the league. "But one of the reasons why we bought

him was to also inspire the next generation of soccer players in America.

"To want to be soccer players. So bringing him does that and it's an important thing for us." Former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star Messi shocked the football world when he shunned stratospheric offers from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to join Inter Miami in July, seven months after he had led Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar. The 36-year-old went on to light up Major League Soccer with some stellar performances but was unable to carry Inter Miami into the playoffs this season.

'Faces light up'

Beckham, 48, who has turned a successful playing career that included captaining England and winning the Champions League with Manchester United into a high-profile role as a rights advocate and style icon, is the co-owner of Inter Miami.

He was speaking to AFP in Mumbai before attending the start of the Cricket World Cup semi-final between India and New Zealand, in an interview for which questions had to be vetted in advance. Beckham explained that his first contact with the UN children's charity began when he was a teenager.

"My first involvement with UNICEF was when I was 17 years old in Thailand when I was there with Manchester United, and I went to a women's care centre," he said. "But obviously with my travels over the years, I've seen how young girls are getting left behind, they're not getting the same rights and the

music, the 26-year-old said he wouldn't be attending Wednesday night's party.

When he was asked if he would at least be looking forward to Sunday's race, Verstappen's lack of enthusiasm was again evident. "No. No, but I'm looking forward to trying to do the best I can, but I'm not looking forward to this," he said, pointing to the hospitality areas above the paddock.

Verstappen said he hadn't talked to the F1 organizers about his views but said he doubted his views would have an impact on them. "I don't know. I guess they still make money if I like it or not, so it's not up to me. But I'm also not going to fake it," he said.

"I just always voice my opinion in positive things and negative things, and that's just how I am. Some people like a show a bit more, I don't like it at all," he said. "I grew up just looking at the performance side of things, and that's how I see it as well. So for me, I like to be in Vegas, but not so much for racing," he added. But Verstappen said that he did understand that F1's owners Liberty Media, who are also promoters of the Las Vegas Grand Prix, had their own commercial interests. "I fully understand and you know, you can look at it two ways - business side or sports side. So, I, of course, understand their side of it as well," he said.

"But I'm just voicing my opinion on the performance side of things," he said. Many of the team and F1 sponsors have put on events around the Vegas GP this week, making for a busy schedule for the



David Beckham

same equal opportunities as the boys.

"So our focus has really been on girls in the last five to 10 years and that is the same here." Beckham said he was convinced sport could play a key role in children's lives, as it had in his own.

"It gave me the foundation to have leadership, teamwork, discipline, focus. And just to have that confidence," said the father of four children. "I've seen when I've gone into different villages around the world with UNICEF, when I take a football into this village, these children's faces light up."

"For that time when I'm playing football with them or they're kicking a football around, they forget about everything else that is going on around them that is not good." — AFP

Thompson-Herah splits with coach

KINGSTON: Five-time Olympic gold medalist Elaine Thompson-Herah has split with her coach, eight months before she attempts to defend her sprint titles at the 2024 Paris Games, her agent said Wednesday. Thompson-Herah has parted company with Shanikie Osbourne after refusing to pay what she described as "extremely excessive" terms sought by her coach. "The package proposed by (Osbourne)...was extremely excessive and without any flexibility to negotiate by the other party," Thompson-Herah's management team said.

"Collectively, we had no choice but to seek the services of another coach. "With the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France, fast approaching, Mrs Thompson-Herah is fully focused on her preparations for the season and the defense of her Olympic titles."

Thompson-Herah, 31, is the second-fastest woman in history over 100 metres after clocking a time of 10.54sec in Eugene in the US state of Oregon in 2021. Only the late 1988 Olympic champion Florence Griffith-Joyner has run faster.

Thompson-Herah has dominated women's sprinting for much of the past decade — she won the 100m-200m double at the Rio and Tokyo Olympics, as well as the 4x100m relay gold in Tokyo. However injuries hampered her 2023 season and she failed to claim an individual spot for the Jamaica team at the World Championships in Budapest in August. — AFP

Verstappen slams Las Vegas GP as '99 percent show'

LAS VEGAS: Formula One world champion Max Verstappen has blasted this weekend's Las Vegas Grand Prix as "99 percent show" and says he isn't looking forward to the race. The Red Bull three-time world champion criticized the new street course and said Wednesday he had no interest in the razzmatazz around the event.

"It's 99 percent show and one percent sporting event," said the Dutchman, when asked to evaluate the return of the sport to Vegas after a 41-year absence. "Not a lot of emotions to be honest. I mean I don't like... I just want to always focus on the performance side of things, I don't like all the things around it anyway," he said.

"I know of course there are some places that you know (it is) part of it, but let's say it's not my interest," he added. Asked for his opinion on the street track, which will take the drivers down the famous Vegas 'strip', Verstappen was blunt.

"Yeah, not very interesting...it's just not many corners to be honest," he said. After taking part in the opening ceremony, which featured a drone show and



LAS VEGAS: (L-R) Haas F1 Team's German driver Nico Hulkenberg, Alfa Romeo's Chinese driver Zhou Guanyu, Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso, McLaren's British driver Lando Norris and Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr., attend a press conference ahead of the Las Vegas Grand Prix. — AFP

drivers and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz said it was time to consider scaling back media and commercial commitments in general.

"Looking into the future, we're going to need to reconsider a bit the way we go racing at the weekends, because our schedules are getting bus-

ier and busier every year that goes by," said the Spaniard. "We are adding races to the calendar and it's getting to a point where I think sometimes everything feels a bit repetitive and everything feels a bit over-packed and we're trying maybe to overdo it a bit," he said. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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

Change of Name

I, Shaik Fathima W/o Server Ali, Holder of Indian Passport No. M6102861, R/o. D.No. 1/73, Masjid street, Obili Village & Post, Penagalur Mandal, Annamayya Dist, Andhra Pradesh., have changed my name as Adapala Santhamma (old name) to Shaik Fathima (new name) #4558 - 16-11-2023	I, Adapala Santhamma W/o A.Venkata Subbaiah (old name), R/o D.No.1/73, Obili Village and Post. Penagalur Mandal, Annamayya Dist., A.P, hereby changed my name and my husband's name as S. Fathima W/o Server Ali Mohammed (new name) #4557 - 15-11-2023
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Head breaks South African hearts



Josh Inglis

KOLKATA: Travis Head starred with bat and ball as Australia set up a World Cup final clash with India after a tense three-wicket win over South Africa in Kolkata on Thursday. Chasing a tricky 213 for victory, Australia wobbled after Head hit 62 but Steve Smith (30) and Josh Inglis (28) helped the five-time champions reach their target with 16 balls to spare in the second semi-final in Kolkata.

"It's hard to unpack all of that. I didn't move for the past couple of hours. It was a tense finish and an amazing game," said Head. As Australia reached an eighth World Cup final, South Africa were left to rue a fifth semi-final loss despite David Miller's 101.

Australia slipped to 137-5 and then 193-7 before Mitchell Starc (16) and skipper Pat Cummins (14) kept their nerve to steer the team home. Left-hand batsman and part-time off-spinner Head stood out after taking two wickets and then with his 48-ball innings laced with nine fours and two sixes.

Australia were in trouble when they were five down as spinners Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi struck in quick succession to rattle the middle-order. Maharaj bowled Head, who was dropped on 40 and 57, and Shamsi, a left-arm wrist spinner, trapped Marnus Labuschagne lbw for 18 and bowled Glenn Maxwell for one in his next over.

Australia started the tournament with two losses but registered their eighth straight win. "The way we started with the bat and ball was the turning

point, we always had to play catch-up," said South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma.

'Ruthless Australia'

"The conditions combined with the quality of the Australia attack. They were ruthless and exploited every bit of advantage, and really put us under pressure." Starc led the bowling charge with figures of 3-34 and Cummins also picked three wickets to bowl out South Africa for 212 in 49.4 overs.

Left-arm quick Starc struck in the first over to send back Bavuma, who had said he was not "100% fit" at the toss, for a fourth-ball duck. Josh Hazlewood claimed the wicket of in-form Quinton de Kock for three as Cummins took a stunning catch.

De Kock, who will quit one-day international after the World Cup, ended with 594 runs including four centuries to sit behind the tournament's leading batsman Virat Kohli (711). The new-ball bowlers kept up the attack with the wickets of Aiden Markram (10) and Rassie van der Dussen (six) as South Africa slumped to 24-4 and were 44-4 when rain interrupted play.

Klaasen and Miller hit back after the 45-minute rain break as the two put on 95 runs but Head broke through to bowl Klaasen for 47. Head trapped Marco Jansen lbw on the next delivery to be on a hat-trick, which was saved by Gerald Coetzee, who put on a 53-run partnership with Miller.

The left-handed Miller smashed eight fours and five sixes in his 116-ball knock. The final is on Sunday at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP



Mitchell Starc



KUWAIT: Players vie for the ball during a World Cup qualifier between Kuwait and India at Jaber Stadium on Nov 16, 2023.



India beat Kuwait in World Cup qualifier

KUWAIT: India opened its second round of FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers with a 1-0 win against Kuwait at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in Kuwait on Thursday. Apart from Kuwait, Qatar and Afghanistan are the other two teams that are a part of Group A with India.

Manvir Singh scored the decisive goal after super sub Lallianzuala Chhangte made a brilliant run on the left flank and passed it into the box in the 75th minute. The Blue Tigers then held onto the slim lead despite valiant efforts from Al-Azraq's frontline.

Ranked 102 in the FIFA rankings, India fancied their chances against 136th-ranked Kuwait, heading into this clash on the back of successive losses and eager to set things right under the guidance of head coach Igor Stimac. The Blue Tigers announced a strong 28-man squad, although they were without the likes of Anwar Ali and Jeakson Singh, both of whom have been an integral part of the team in recent times. Kuwait, on the other hand, was led by experienced defender Fahad Al-Hajeri, while their Portuguese head coach Rui Bento looked to marshal his troops from the dugout in front of buoyant home support.

Meanwhile, Asia's footballing heavyweights made fast starts to World Cup qualifying on Thursday with Australia, Japan and South Korea plundering 17 goals between them in big wins on home soil. The long road to the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico began in earnest in Asia with 36 teams in action Thursday.

Australia, who reached the last 16 at the Qatar 2022 World Cup before bowing out 2-1 to Lionel Messi and eventual champions Argentina, ham-

pered Bangladesh 7-0 in Melbourne. It was Australia's biggest victory since 2019 and the perfect present for Graham Arnold, who took charge for the 59th time, a record for a Socceroos coach.

Substitute Jamie Maclaren hit a second-half hat-trick in front of nearly 21,000 and it could have been even worse for Bangladesh but Massimo Luongo missed a late penalty. "Seven goals, but it could have been more, for me too, but three points and we move on," said Melbourne City striker Maclaren.

"I'm not even sure (goalkeeper) Maty (Ryan) had a save to make so proud of the team, but we obviously know the next games are going to be harder." Australia are in Group I alongside Palestine and Lebanon, who meet in Sharjah.

In Group B, Ayase Ueda also scored a hat-trick as Japan got their bid to reach an eighth straight World Cup off to an emphatic start with a 5-0 win over Myanmar. The hosts were missing injured Brighton winger Kaoru Mitoma but Feyenoord striker Ueda picked up the slack with a ruthless display of finishing in Osaka.

Daichi Kamada and Ritsu Doan also got on the scoresheet as Japan took early control of a qualifying group that also includes North Korea and Syria. Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu demanded even more from his side despite their handsome victory.

"We had chances to score more goals," said Moriyasu, who took Japan to the last 16 at the Qatar World Cup following stunning wins over Germany and Spain.

Not to be outdone, Jurgen Klinsmann went a little way towards silencing the doubters in South Korea as his side strolled to a 5-0 thumping of Singapore in Seoul. Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-min was among the goal-scorers, and it was a cracker, bending the ball left-footed into the top corner from outside the box.

Hwang Hee-chan of Wolverhampton Wanderers earlier headed home for his second goal in as many



MANILA: Tuan Hai Pham #18 of Vietnam heads the ball against Daisuke Sato #11 of the Philippines during their 2026 World Cup qualifying match. — AFP

matches for his country. "A huge compliment to the team, a very professional performance," German legend and South Korea coach Klinsmann said.

"Five-nil is a nice scoreline to read but it doesn't really show you the energy and effort you have to invest in order to get to that scoreline," he added. Also in Group C, Wang Shangyuan scored 16 minutes from time to give China a 2-1 win in Thailand and join South Korea at the top of the early standings.

China host South Korea on Tuesday. In Group F, Vietnam beat the Philippines 2-0 away. A record eight direct spots and one intercontinental playoff berth are at stake for 2026 for Asian Football Confederation sides, from nine groups of four. The top two from each group go through to the final qualifying round in Asia. Among games later Thursday, Saudi Arabia host Pakistan, Iran take on Hong Kong and Qatar play Afghanistan. — AFP

Sinner into ATP semis with Djokovic at risk of exit

TURIN: Jannik Sinner made history as the first Italian ever to reach the last four of the ATP Finals on Thursday after Novak Djokovic beat Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (7/1), 4-6, 6-1. World number four Sinner is guaranteed at least second spot in the Green Group thanks to Hurkacz, who played his only match of the season-ending tournament as a replacement for injured Stefanos Tsitsipas, claiming a set against Djokovic.

The Serbian world number one is now sweating on his semi-final place despite a second win from three matches, as his qualification hinges on the result of Sinner's final match with Holger Rune later on Thursday. "It's hard but it's what I've chosen to do. I'm happy to have won the last match of the group, the rest is out of my hands," said Djokovic to Sky Sports.

"I finished the match well, let's see what happens next." Sinner could deliberately lose against Rune and knock Djokovic out while still going through, denying the 24-time Grand Slam champion the chance of winning a record-breaking seventh Finals.

Although Hurkacz poured cold water on that notion, saying that his friend will go all out to win. "I think you're here to win matches, so that's what he's going to try to do," Hurkacz told reporters.

"He qualified himself by winning his two first matches. He's obviously a great guy. Yeah, he's been playing really amazing tennis." Being knocked out early would be a disappointing end to what has been an age-defying 2023 from the 36-year-old who won three Grand Slams and took his 1000 Masters crowns to 40, another record.

However, a win over fellow young gun Rune would give Sinner first place in the group and likely mean missing on-form Red Group leader Daniil Medvedev in the semis. Djokovic now has to hope Sinner does beat Rune, who is more rested than the Italian after only having to play three games in his match with Tsitsipas on Tuesday before the Greek dropped out of the tournament injured.

He took control at the end of the first set when he rattled off nine points in a row to take a 6-0 lead in the tie-break and then seal the set. However, he threw away his serve to love in game five of the second set and two games later looked on in disbelief as Hurkacz rammed home four consecutive aces from 15-40 down to go to within one game of drawing level.

Hurkacz easily saw out the set, drawing warm applause from the home crowd, and with the third set almost irrelevant the Pole collapsed against a visibly annoyed Djokovic. — AFP