

2 46th Kuwait International Book Fair celebrates NCCAL's 50th anniversary



7 Indian rescuers in final stretch to free 41 trapped workers



8 Altman's return ushers in new era at OpenAI



16 Argentina sink Brazil as Uruguay march on



TRUCE AGREED IN GAZA

Captives to be swapped for prisoners • Gaza world's 'most dangerous place' for children



The turkey that was shown mercy...



...the children that were not.

A shame: Biden pardons turkeys on his birthday, but not 14,000 Palestinians...

By Dr Ziad Al-Alyan

I tried extremely hard not to comment on the images of a smiling Joe Biden celebrating his birthday and pardoning two turkeys on Thanksgiving and making jokes about his age. At the same event, he was characteristically confused, mixing up Britney Spears and Taylor Swift in further comments he made. There is nothing cute about these scenes while innocent children are being slaughtered daily by a war he has sanctioned.

UN statistics reveal that more than 400 children are being injured or killed on a daily basis. Every day the international community procrastinates is another 400 children being victimized. When the most influential protagonist spends a few hours on the lawn with a couple of turkeys making jokes, that's another 200 kids killed or injured! Some Americans might find these comments offensive, as Thanksgiving is an occasion traditionally celebrated and "we can celebrate any way we want".

Yes, agreed, and I would never dream of criticizing the American president's behavior or what he chooses to spend his time on. That's for the American people, unless of course the US is actively taking a significant role in the events taking place in the Middle East by directly influencing the course of events and becoming the main protagonist in this conflict.

It is under this premise that I and other Arabs give ourselves the right to hold Biden accountable to us. The bombardment still continues in Gaza, the killing of innocent civilians has not halted and the genocide continues. Meanwhile, in the US, the propaganda continues in violation of the First Amendment and the persecution of anyone who dares to stand with Palestine or utter the word "ceasefire".

The Zionist lobby has worked very hard to ensure that

peaceful protest is perceived as directing hate towards the Jewish people. The phrase "ceasefire" becomes synonymous with antisemitism and waving the Palestinian flag is analogous to waving the swastika! All of the above is a false representation of ideas with the intention of deterring people from empathizing or exercising their right to an opinion or protest against injustice.

Susan Sarandon is the latest celebrity to get cancelled recently because of her views on the Palestinian crisis. She is one of many Hollywood celebs who have literally committed career suicide by being brave enough to speak the truth. Celebrities are being harassed daily to comment in favor of the Zionist entity. Those that dare to comment in favor of Palestinians are quickly labelled as promoters of hate and antisemitic.

The rhetoric is that they have zero tolerance for antisemitism or the incitement of hate in any form. Organizations can take any measure they want against employees without the fear of repercussions by simply accusing them of antisemitism. This phrase is the ace in a deck of cards that allows them to do whatever they want indiscriminately.

I will end this article with my best birthday wishes to Joe Biden. I hope at the tender age of 81, he will discover some respect for human life outside his country's borders. I hope he listens to the 70 percent of his young electorate who believe he is mishandling the crisis in Gaza, as was published by CNN recently.

My faith is not in the president of the United States, who has been an advocate for Zionism since his early days, nor is my faith in the presidential candidates who all need Zionist support during the upcoming elections. My faith rests with the American people whose eyes have been uncovered recently: only they can positively influence their leaders to do the right thing.

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity and Hamas said Wednesday they had agreed on a four-day truce in the Gaza war during which the Palestinian group would free at least 50 of the captives they took in their deadly Oct 7 attack. In turn, the Zionist entity would release at least 150 Palestinian prisoners and allow more humanitarian aid into the coastal territory after more than six weeks of bombardment, heavy fighting and crippling siege.

The hostages to be freed are women and children, and the Palestinian prisoners are women and detainees aged 18 and younger. The process could begin Thursday at 10 am (0800 GMT) according to regional media reports. The deal — negotiated with Qatar, the United States and Egypt — is the first major breakthrough in Gaza's bloodiest ever war that has killed thousands and left much of the territory in ruins.

The head of the United Nations children's agency on Wednesday called the besieged Gaza Strip "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child," and said that the hard-won truce deal was not enough to save their lives. UNICEF's executive director Catherine Russell told the UN Security Council that over 5,300 children have been killed in Gaza since Oct 7, accounting for 40 percent of the deaths.

"This is unprecedented," said Russell, who had just returned from a trip to southern Gaza. "I am haunted by what I saw and heard." Russell welcomed a deal reached Wednesday by the Zionist entity and Hamas to free captives and pause ferocious fighting and bombardment in Gaza. But Russell said that a pause is not enough and called for "an urgent humanitarian ceasefire to immediately put a stop to this carnage."

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait aid flows to Gaza amid dire situation

KUWAIT: The latest medical shipment for the people of Gaza is a continuous part of Kuwait's medical and logistical airbridge to Gaza since the start of the Zionist occupation's aggression, Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Wednesday before the 26th humanitarian relief aid plane for the Gaza Strip departed Kuwait for Al-Arish in Egypt, carrying medical supplies and eight ambulances from the health ministry. He stressed this step is to help support the medical and technical teams in Gaza, on the directives of Kuwait's leadership, with the participation of several government ministries.

Director of the Health Communication Center and the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said to KUNA that the ministry continues its efforts to keep the airbridge flow, noting that the shipment includes several necessary and essential medical supplies and equipment. The 26th flight comes as a continuation of Kuwait's relief airbridge, which has so far carried about 640 tons of various humanitarian relief materials, equipped with 10,000 medical masks and more than 27 ambulances, added Sanad, expressing gratitude to the Kuwaiti leadership and people's efforts towards the Palestinian cause.

Director General of Kuwait Relief Society Abdulaziz Al-Obaid confirmed to KUNA that the 26th relief trip was organized due to the collapse and severe shortage



KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi walks between ambulances sent as part of relief aid to Gaza on Nov 22, 2023. — KUNA

of equipment for the medical and technical teams in Gaza. The next Kuwaiti relief flight will contain four ambulances in addition to 500 tents, given the loss of many of homes and the onset of winter, Obaid revealed, noting that heavy clothing, heating materials, blankets and other supplies will be included in the upcoming flights.

This shipment was organized by Kuwait Society for Relief and in cooperation with 24 Kuwaiti charities and governmental authorities including the health ministry, Zakat House, Public Authority for Minors Affairs and Al-Awqaf General Secretariat, supervised by the social affairs and foreign ministries. — KUNA

Oil prices fall after OPEC+ delays meeting

VIENNA: International oil prices fell Wednesday after a key ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies was pushed back from Sunday to Nov 30. The Vienna-based organization announced the postponement of the OPEC+ alliance in a brief statement, without providing any explanation. The 13 OPEC members headed by Saudi Arabia and ten partners led by Russia are due to decide on their output policy amid slumping crude prices and recent rumors of discord among alliance members.

Global crude prices shed more than five percent following the surprise announcement. At 1525 GMT, the price of the main US crude oil contract, WTI, was down 4.6 percent to \$74.21, while the main European contract, Brent, was down 4.3 percent to \$78.88. "Uncertainty is never good for financial markets,

which now have to wait longer to get clarity what OPEC+ will do next year," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo told AFP.

The postponement also signaled the existence of "different views among the group's participants", he added, confirming what two OPEC+ sources had told AFP on condition of anonymity. The alliance has postponed ministerial meetings in the past, "but never for four days" indicating difficulties to reach agreement, said Jorge Leon of Rystad Energy. With oil prices plummeting below \$80 per barrel since peaking in September, analysts expect further production cuts by the alliance.

But the great unknown is how the cuts would be implemented next year and potentially shared among members. In recent months, nine OPEC+ members including Riyadh, Moscow, Baghdad and Dubai have reduced their output. Saudi Arabia bore the brunt, voluntarily slashing production by a further million barrels a day since July.

Voicing discontent over the slump in prices, Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman recently "blamed speculators for the oil price slide" rather than weak demand, said analyst Carsten Fritsch of Commerzbank. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak on Wednesday sounded a different note, saying that "current oil prices objectively reflect the current situation". "They are at a sufficient level and, so the market is balanced. But we will discuss these issues in detail at the next meeting", he added, quoted by Russian news agencies.

Oil prices are far from the levels near \$140 a barrel reached after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Continued on Page 6

As Qatar World Cup glory fades, Arab legacy remains

DOHA: One year after the Qatar World Cup, billboards emblazoned with the tournament's official slogan, "All is now," still stand by Doha's roadsides. As the months have passed, the signs, in Qatar's trademark maroon, have steadily faded in the relentless glare of the desert sun. Calm has returned to Doha, 12 months after the gas-rich state attracted hordes of fans — and rancorous debate — for the first World Cup in the Muslim world.

At the Corniche, the shore-hugging thoroughfare through central Doha, crowds, big screens showing the action on the pitch and loudspeakers have been replaced by orderly traffic and a somnolent atmosphere. "It's very difficult to beat the World Cup. That is for sure," Jassim Al-Jassim, head of operations for Qatar's organizing committee, told AFP on Monday, one year to the day since the opening game. "This time last year it was a very, very tense day," he said. "But I think overall, we were very happy and we were very proud of what we achieved as a country."

Qatar was hit by a storm of criticism over the World Cup, but experts believe the confrontations improved Qatar's image among Arab nations and helped pave the way for neighboring Saudi Arabia to emerge as host of the 2034 World Cup.

Continued on Page 6



DOHA: Tailors work on traditional bishts in Souq Waqif on Nov 20, 2023 with a poster showing Qatar's Amir offering one to Argentina's forward Lionel Messi during the 2022 World Cup trophy ceremony last year on a mirror at the workshop. — AFP



Crown Prince receives new ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



His Highness the Crown Prince receives the credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana.



HH the Crown Prince receives the credentials of the Greek Ambassador.



HH the Crown Prince receives the credentials of the Hungarian Ambassador.



HH the Crown Prince receives the credentials of the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.



HH the Crown Prince receives the credentials of the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the new Ambassadors to Kuwait at Bayan Palace on Wednesday morning. His Highness the Crown Prince received Ambassador of Hungary to Kuwait Andras Szabo, Ambassador of Bosnia Herzegovina Nusret Tsharsha, Ambassador of Jordan Sinan Al-Majali, Ambassador of Nepal Ghana Shyam Lamsal, Ambassador of Republic of Ghana Mohammad Habib Idris and Ambassador of Greece to Kuwait Ioannis Plotas. Senior state officials attended the ceremony. — KUNA

46th Kuwait International Book Fair celebrates NCCAL's 50th anniversary



KUWAIT: Minister of Information, Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, and Chairman of the Kuwait National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (center) cuts the ribbon to inaugurate the International Book Fair on Wednesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Al-Mutairi watches the kids as they spend their time at the book fair.



Kids engaged in fun activities at the International Book Fair.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, the 46th Kuwait International Book Fair opened on Wednesday at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref.

Scheduled to run until Dec 2, the book fair marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of NCCAL. In his statement, Mutairi emphasized the enduring legacy of the book fair in enriching the minds of people, aligning with the council's strategy of organizing Kuwait's cultural movement.

Mutairi highlighted the council's active role in the significant book fair, hosting 486 publishing houses from 29 countries and presenting a collection of

171,000 books. He expressed hope that the exhibition would represent Kuwait's true identity and culture.

Muhammad Al-Mughrabi, Head of the Culture Committee, shared insights with Kuwait Times into the diverse activities planned for the book fair, targeting audiences from children to adults with offerings in literature, philosophy, history and poetry. This year's fair is set to be unique with its creative and interactive activities.

As the book fair commemorates both NCCAL's 50th anniversary and the 46th edition of the exhibition, it aims to bridge the gap between the past and the future by selecting two main personalities. According to Mughrabi, the book fair selected a historical figure — Kuwaiti poet Fahd Al-Askar — as a representative of NCCAL's 50th anniversary, honoring his poetic status. Contemporary figure Saad Al-Bazei, a Saudi critic,

thinker and translator, represents the 46th edition of the fair.

In collaboration with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Kuwait International Book Fair takes on a social cause, proposing all Arab publishing houses to allocate 3 percent of their sales profit to Gaza. Non-profit organizations are also participating and supporting this cause. Heba Al-Saadoun, Head of White Hands Volunteering Project, is collecting used books and selling them at nominal prices to fundraise for charity for Gaza.

Media expert Hamad Al-Ali, popularly known as Hamad Qalam, expressed his delight in participating in the book fair, emphasizing Kuwait as a gathering place for intellectuals from around the world. He noted the exhibition's significance in targeting all generations, with a particular emphasis on nurturing the intelligence of children at an early stage of their lives.



Large crowds through Kuwait International Fairgrounds to attend the 46th International Book Fair on Wednesday.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait Anne Koistinen with local media representatives. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Local media during the meeting with Ambassador Anne Koistinen.

New EU envoy hails Kuwait's humanitarian support to Palestine

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the European Union to the State of Kuwait Anne Koistinen welcomed journalists to the new premises of the EU Delegation to the State of Kuwait in Al-Hamra Tower, following the presentation of her credentials to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Nov 15,

2023. Koistinen said that during the presentation of her credentials, she was warmly welcomed by HH the Crown Prince. She said that she was delighted and honored to speak with him about ways to build on the strong partnership between the EU and Kuwait.

There are several areas of mutual interest to further develop EU-Kuwait relations. Koistinen said she intends to jointly enhance bilateral relations across various sectors, including political cooperation, trade and investment, energy,



Anne Koistinen

climate change, economic diversification, education, health, research and innovation, as well as regional security and stability.

"We share with Kuwait the belief that humanitarian aid is vital in supporting vulnerable people in the region and beyond. In this context, I would like to praise Kuwait for its humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza. It is worth noting the European Union is the largest international donor to the Palestinian people, and since October 16, the EU has launched a humanitarian air bridge bringing over 550 tons of humanitarian supplies for the Palestinians in Gaza. As the High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell said the EU calls for a political solution based on the two-state solution," she said, adding this is EU's

shared objective with Kuwait, building on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. "I am really sad at the tragic loss of life among all civilians and hope that peace would eventually prevail," she said.

Borrell said during his visit to Kuwait last year that the "EU is the second biggest trading partner for Kuwait, but we can still do more together". Koistinen made it clear that her mission is to translate these words into action, working in "Team Europe" spirit together with EU member states. "A strengthened partnership is beneficial both for the EU and Kuwait, with the EU being the world's largest single market, a leader in research and innovation, an important security actor in the Gulf region and the leading actor on global challenges such as climate change and digitalization.

Kuwait University's graduate students tour Zain's datacenter

Insightful field trip enriches students' understating of data and ICT



Zain hosts a group of graduate students from Kuwait University's Department of Information Science, College of Life Sciences, for a special tour of its Subahiyah datacenter.

KUWAIT: In line with its ongoing commitment to fostering a digitally skilled national workforce, Zain hosted a group of graduate students from Kuwait University's Department of Information Science, College of Life Sciences, for a special tour of its Subahiyah datacenter. The insightful visit provided the students with a firsthand understanding of Zain's cutting-edge infrastructure and its role in supporting Kuwait's digital transformation journey.

As the future of education and the economy rapidly accelerates towards digital transformation, Zain has made it a priority to contribute to upskilling young minds in data and ICT through such initiatives. The company continues to actively support programs that help prepare a national workforce that is capable in competencies demanded by today's markets like cybersecurity, digital transformation applications, and knowledge of datacenters and their infrastructures.

The insightful field trip enriched the students' understating of various topics in data and ICT. It

started with an introduction to Zain's long history of successes that started four decades ago when it became the first mobile operator in the Middle East region. In addition, the students learned about some of the best digital services and world-class solutions the company provides to the local market.

Afterwards, the students toured Zain's renowned Subahiyah datacenter, learning about its various use cases from a technical perspective. The tour covered how the datacenter's servers and other equipment are operated and managed, with an overview of cloud computing devices and the innovative technologies behind them. The students were also briefed on the best practices and procedures Zain follows, and how it implements world-class cybersecurity tools to protect data.

Zain's datacenter is the only facility of its kind in Kuwait's ICT industry that has been certified with the Tier III certification from Uptime Institute - the IT industry's most trusted and adopted global stan-

dard for the proper design, build and operation of data centers. The datacenter has also received a license to offer cloud computing services from the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) to offer the latest cloud computing services and solutions to corporate and government customers in the Kuwaiti market.

Zain continues to offer a portfolio of world-class, advanced data center solutions and cloud computing services to the local market, serving businesses of all sizes, including large enterprises, SMEs, startups, and government institutions. This comes in line with the company's digital transformation strategy that aims at empowering a more efficient business sector in the nation under the New Kuwait vision. Zain recognizes the importance of data in driving digital transformation in Kuwait. For this, the company has partnered with renowned global providers in cloud computing, data center solutions, and IT services to bring the best-in-class solutions to its business customers.



Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi delivers his speech. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Oman's ambassador pledges unwavering support for Palestine

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Kuwait celebrated on Tuesday its 53rd National Day. "Our National Day is an opportunity for us to reflect on Oman's past and draw inspiration from it for our future. This year my priority is to reaffirm Oman's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's legitimate right to freedom, dignity, and self-determination. Gaza is currently subject to brutal and random (Zionist entity) aggression," Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi said during his opening remarks.

The ambassador called on all policymakers to listen to their conscience and do everything in their power to stop this senseless war immediately and to achieve peace, to support those civilians who are suffering, and to stop the violence as well as open safe passages

MoI opens smart office building in Shuwaikh

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, opened the new citizenship and travel documents office in the Shuwaikh area on Wednesday and reviewed the services it provides to citizens and functioning of the electronic passport delivery devices.

The ministry's General Department of Security Relations and Media said in a press statement that Lieutenant General Al-Barjas confirmed during the opening that the office building is part of the construction projects included in the general plan of the ministry of interior to develop and improve security works and provide quality services to citizens.

He added that the new building is a smart and

advanced building, as it is equipped with all the services provided to citizens, including issuing travel documents and obtaining citizenship. Director General of the General Administration of Nationality and Travel Documents, Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, said that the new building is equipped with all technological means that

contribute to providing services within minutes, stressing that special services have been provided for the elderly and people with special needs. The opening was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs and Support Services Sheikh Hamoud Al-Sabah and a number of security leaders in the ministry. —KUNA



The Ministry of Interior opens the new citizenship and travel documents building in the Shuwaikh area.

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In my view

The tragedy did not begin with Alcatraz occupation and neither did Gaza!



By Prof. Abdullah Yousef Sahar

The occupation of Alcatraz Island by some Native American activists on Nov 20, 1969 for 18 months did not represent the beginning of the story of the "Red Indians", but indeed the result of a long-lasting misery of the indigenous people in North America. In fact, this incident inherited a long era of injustice, killing, displacement and the seizure of the lands of the so-called Native Americans.

This story begins when the white man came across the sea, migrating from Europe to what is now known as North America. Departing from his Judeo-Christian tradition, the new immigrant white man, who was contaminated with the diseases of religious fanaticism and hatred for others, called the indigenous people's own land the "Promised Land" in order to satisfy his greed and to confiscate the property of others. This information may be strange, but it represents a fact recorded by many in American literature that are concerned with the history of the first immigrants, who were called the Puritans.

Religious justification was utilized at the beginning for the seizure of the lands of the indigenous citizens. Subsequently, to deny their right as human beings, an anthropological justification was falsely developed to prove that the Native Americans are not civilized, but rather merely savage creatures and a vanishing race.

Furthermore, after the American government was formed, the US Congress issued some ridiculous laws which were vigorously applied, such as the Reallocation Act and the Indian Removal Act. Through these laws, indigenous citizens were forcibly displaced, in which 60,000 human beings were displaced from their homes between 1830 to 1850. Grievously, during these displacement operations, about 16,000 innocent lives were lost, and was therefore called the Trail of Tears.

This ethnic cleansing, which was carried out by cowboy gangsters with the support of the British colonization authority and continued by the American government after independence, was the engine that generated the movement to occupy Alcatraz Island in California. The descendants of the Native American used their right based on the Treaty of Fort Laramie signed in 1868, which allowed them, as indigenous citizens, to take over any vacant land.

The American authorities described this movement as an illegal occupation, and the protesters in the island were cut off from water and electricity until they were eventually forcefully evacuated. However, this movement enabled the successors of the native citizens to attract the attention of the American audience and international public opinion.

Currently, what Hamas did on October 7 does not mark the beginning of the tragic and horrific story the world is currently witnessing. The Zionist government has carried out a 75-year legacy of aggression, killing, displacement, seizure and injustice. This is another Holocaust committed by the Zionist occupation force that is killing innocent people, confiscating lands, displacing indigenous citizens, demolishing their homes, sabotaging their farms and depriving them of the minimum necessities of life. Just as the British colonizers helped the cowboy gangsters to kill Native Americans in the past, the United States today supports the Zionist entity to crush the Palestinians in their own land.

American society in particular, and the Western society in general, began to grasp this story, and perhaps some of them were surprised by it because it differs from the narrative stereotyping of the occupying Zionists who control many media and financial institutions in the Western world.

It is important for the Western world to know that Muslims and Arabs are not aggressive or terrorists as some Orientalist institutions are propagating and who are politically motivated by the myth of supremacy. The Arabs who are struggling today for their rights as human beings like the rest of the nations who gained their independence and resisted the Nazi occupier of France, the British colonizers of America, the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, the Japanese invasion of China, etc.

In order for this story not to be the beginning of a project of hatred between the Western societies and Muslims, the whole story from both sides has to be covered and told fairly. Indeed, this tragedy should be objectively examined from all aspects, which has spanned approximately 75 years, in order to see the truth as it is gleaming from the top of Alcatraz.

NOTE: Prof. Abdullah Yousef Sahar is a Professor of International Relations at Kuwait University

FOMO: A craving for belonging and connection

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: FOMO, or fear of missing out, has become a prevalent psychological phenomenon in our fast-paced era, especially with the rise of social media and constant updates on every aspect of people's lives. It stems from one's excessive desire to be included and stay up to date, leading to anxiety and uneasiness. To better understand the impact of FOMO in today's interconnected society, Kuwait Times interviewed sociologist and psychologist Dr. Mona Al-Enezi.



Dr. Mona Al-Enezi

Kuwait Times: How does the need for belonging contribute to behaviors driven by FOMO?

Dr. Enezi: First, let me explain what FOMO syndrome is and what it means. It refers to the fear of missing out on online events or social media updates, which often leads to continuously monitoring the Internet. This constant monitoring can cause anxiety and depression. It is commonly seen among celebrities and affects their mood.

Kuwait Times: Are individuals who strongly need to feel a sense of belonging more likely to make FOMO-based decisions, such as joining specific social groups or participating in activities to avoid missing out?

Dr. Enezi: Humans are social creatures by nature and need supportive communities. However, in the case of FOMO, their decisions are based on this continuous monitoring, leading them to believe that their psychological need for a supportive community is essential and legitimate. The negative aspect is that it causes them constant distress due to their ongoing fear of missing out on something on social media.

Kuwait Times: Can satisfying the need for belonging alleviate FOMO for individuals, or is it a constant struggle for those who strongly need social interaction?

Dr. Enezi: Insight into one's psychological issues helps by a big percentage. Therefore, shedding light on these topics significantly contributes to individuals recognizing their behavior and psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression. It is very important for individuals to understand themselves fully, identifying their needs and how to achieve them in order to overcome any issues related to their psyche.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: An aerial view of the Kuwait City on Wednesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

CAIT launches 'Sahel Lab'

Sahel app unlocks opportunities for citizens to share their ideas

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Minister of Communications Fahad Al-Shula and Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology Dr Ammar Al-Hussaini, CAIT launched the "Sahel Lab" initiative on Tuesday. Hussaini said the Sahel app is one of the most important projects in Kuwait's digital transformation journey. The idea of this app is to include all government services in one place and facilitate citizens' interaction with the government without the need for an agent.

Hussaini said the goal of the government's digital transformation is to provide a unique service to citizens in Kuwait. "The new concept today is 'Sahel Lab', which means to listen to what the people have to say about the Sahel app and involve them in the app's development process, because the goal of the app is to serve citizens. The idea of 'Sahel Lab' is that it is a framework under which creative ideas from Sahel app users are brought together, through which the most creative ideas are identified to develop the app," he said.

"Today, the focus is on ideas from the youth, followed by ideas from distinguished app users, developers and last but not least, government officials who interact with the public to understand their interests. The decisions made in this committee will

be implemented, so we hope that through the ideas presented today, Sahel app will reach new heights," Hussaini highlighted, delivering best regards on behalf of Shula.

Abdulkarim Ali Al-Fawzan, Head of the Digital Services Planning and Development Department at CAIT, explained to Kuwait Times that Sahel Lab collects citizens' ideas because Sahel app is citizen-centric and is going to be developed from their perspective. He further elaborated that communication with people is essential, and one of its important aspects is raising Kuwait's ranking in UN indicators. According to him, Sahel app aspires towards becoming a comprehensive electronic government application where users deal with the entire government not just specific entities.

Jassem Al-Mutawa'a, entrepreneur for technological solutions such as the Sahel application, told Kuwait Times this program was designed by citizens for citizens. "Sahel was developed by Kuwaiti youth working within the government, which demonstrated their capabilities. Today, we are opening the opportunity not only for the government but also for collaborations from outside the government, like the banking and oil sectors," he said. Mutawa'a also explained that the reason for naming the workshop "Sahel Lab" is because it includes conducting experiments for the Sahel app.



Abdulkarim Ali Al-Fawzan



Dr. Ammar Al-Hussaini



Jassem Al-Mutawa'a



Invited citizens discussing their ideas during Sahel Lab workshop.

Al-Budaiwi: GCC leaders keen on enhancing military capabilities

MUSCAT: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi said Tuesday that the Gulf leaders are interested in, and support, joint military action of the member states. This came in Al-Budaiwi's speech during the 20th session of the GCC Defense Ministers' Council held in the Omani capital of Muscat. Al-Budaiwi stressed the necessity of enhancing the Gulf march in a way that helps overcome current and future challenges and threats. He thanked Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for the Sultanate's tireless efforts aiming to strengthen joint Gulf action and achieve the GCC goals. Al-Budaiwi said that the meetings of the council aim to achieve common security, and protect the GCC countries and maintain their stability. He commended the great role by the GCC coun-



Jassem Al-Budaiwi

tries' armed forces, and their high efficiency and distinguished capabilities in performing the tasks entrusted to them. The GCC chief referred to the outstanding performance of the GCC armed forces in coordinating and managing military operations, and common training and drills, including the "integration one" to be hosted by Kuwait from November 26 until December 7. — KUNA

Nazaha holds accountability, audit workshop

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) organized a workshop on Wednesday entitled "Strengthening Accountability and Auditing Mechanisms in the Public Sector" with the participation of the Government Performance Follow-up Authority, the Audit Bureau, the Internal Auditors Association and various government agencies.

The Assistant Secretary-General for the Prevention Sector at Nazaha, Abrar Al-Hammad, said in her speech during the workshop that the ways to prevent corruption are many and numerous, the most important of which is internal audit. So the workshop aims to activate internal audit offices and control operational processes whether financial or administrative.

Al-Hammad pointed out the importance of this workshop as an important element in the process of applying good governance and raising awareness of the importance of the role of internal audit in enhancing transparency, accountability and integrity as well as enhancing the skills and knowledge of participants and developing their capabilities in the field of internal audit.

"The audit process is one of the main tributaries

of the fight against corruption, as the Kuwait Strategy for Enhancing Integrity and Combating Corruption (2019-2024) singled out the initiative to enhance and support the process of reviewing accountability standards and mechanisms in the public sector," she said adding the State Audit Institution issued the internal audit methodology, as part of its implementation of the role entrusted to it in this initiative.

Al-Hammad pointed out that Nazaha invited 72 government agencies to this workshop to participate in the actual experience of the authority, how to activate the inspection and audit office, the obstacles that can be faced, and internal audit methodologies in government agencies in accordance with best practices. She indicated that the purpose of this methodology is to support the staff of audit and inspection offices to achieve the objectives of internal audit on raising the level of transparency and reliability of financial and administrative reports, helping to improve control and risk management procedures, improving the overall performance of entities and ensuring fair and responsible dealing at all levels.



Abrar Al-Hammad



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Indian rescuers in final stretch to free 41 trapped workers



KHAN YUNIS: Palestinians bury bodies in a mass grave in Khan Yunis cemetery, in the southern Gaza Strip on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

West Bank Palestinian veterans shocked at scale of current war

‘We have entered a totally different phase from the earlier ones in the conflict’

RAMALLAH: Palestinian doctor Ahmed al-Beytawi lived through the bloody clashes of two intifadas in the occupied West Bank, but the war in Gaza has reached new levels of violence. Every day the 62-year-old doctor walks past a memorial outside the Ramallah hospital he runs honoring 22 Palestinians killed by the Zionist army in 2000 at the start of the second intifada, or uprising.

But the images of death and destruction seen since the start of the war between the Zionist and Hamas on Oct 7 are something he says he “has never seen” before. In 2000, the “bodies were piling up, the morgues were full “and we couldn’t go out” to bury them. But the latest war in the Gaza strip “is much more violent,” he said.

The Zionist entity has vowed to destroy Hamas after the Palestinian militants infiltrated across the border, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians. It launched a major bombing campaign and ground offensive in Gaza, which killed more 14,100 people, thousands of them children. More than two thirds of hospitals in the besieged Palestinian territory are out of service, there is no electricity in the morgues, and bodies line the streets. In Gaza, Beytawi’s colleagues have been digging mass graves under Zionist tank fire and even in the courtyards of their hospitals.

Former soldier Wassef Erakat, 76, who fought

in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 civil war, agrees this war is “the hardest and the most violent” he has ever witnessed. Nearly half of the homes in the coastal Gaza Strip have been destroyed in relentless Zionist bombardments, UN officials say. And some 1.5 million Gazans — more than half the 2.4 million population — have been internally displaced. But for the former artillery officer for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) the Hamas and Islamic Jihad operations against the Zionist entity are also “unprecedented” and “meticulously planned”.

Unprecedented death tolls

The information war has added a new dimension, igniting social networks. Every day, the militant groups publish videos showing their fighters firing rocket launchers at tanks or stuffing explosives into Zionist armored vehicles. The conflict has moved way beyond the stone-throwing days of the first intifada, which exploded in 1987 and ended with the 1993 Oslo accords signed by then PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and former Zionist prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

And with the increased violence, the death tolls have reached unprecedented levels. The Oct 7 attack by Hamas and allied groups on Zionist communities and army bases in the south left 1,200 people dead — the worst death toll since the cre-

ation of the Zionist entity in 1948. On the Palestinian side more people have died in Gaza in the current wave of Zionist strikes than during the two intifadas put together.

And in the West Bank, occupied by the Zionist entity since 1967, more than 200 Palestinians have been killed in Zionist fire — more than the total of the previous nine months. For the first time in two decades, Zionist F-16s are again striking the West Bank from the air. Heavily-armed Zionist troops are also again carrying out raids in Palestinian towns, maneuvers supposedly eliminated in some areas of the West Bank by the Oslo accords.

“(The Zionist entity) felt it had been victorious because of its weapons and believed it had done away with the resistance,” said Mohammed Zaghloul, recently released from prison after serving 20 years for attempted murder of Zionist soldiers. But the fierce fighting in Gaza has changed the dynamic, said the former fighter with the armed wing of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas’ Fatah movement.

“We have entered a totally different phase from the earlier ones in the conflict,” he said, highlighting the fears of the “regional ramifications” of the conflict. Once the current violence has died down however, it “could bring something politically positive” for advancing the Palestinian cause, he added. — AFP

Fighting in the Gaza Strip

Approximate areas where Zionist army ground operations have been reported, as of the evening of Nov 21
Southern limit of the area that the Zionist entity warned civilians to evacuate
Hospital



Source: Institute for the Study of War and AGU’s Critical Threats Project based on satellite image observations and statements by authorities from both sides of the conflict
Map data: OSM
AFP

Families of hostages, Palestinian prisoners emotional after truce

JERUSALEM: Families of hostages and prisoners were torn between hope and fear Wednesday following an overnight deal to free hostages held by Hamas in Gaza in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by the Zionist entity.

Under the terms of the deal, Hamas and its ally groups will release 50 hostages, all women and children kidnapped during the Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity, in exchange for the freeing of 150 Palestinian prisoners, made up of women and teenagers. But beyond the fact they would be released at a ratio of three prisoners for every hostage, little is known about how and when they would be freed — although it will happen during a four-day pause in the fighting.

The Zionist entity has published a list of 300 prisoner names eligible for release, but no such information has been released by Hamas, sparking a welter of emotions on both sides. “We are very happy that a partial release is pending,” said the Hostages and Missing Families Forum which represents the 240 or so held captive since Oct 7. “As of now, we don’t know exactly who will be released when.”

On the list of prisoners slated for release are 33 women, 123 boys under 18, and 144 young men aged 18. All are from the occupied West Bank or east Jerusalem and none had “blood on their hands”, the Zionist entity has said.

A Palestinian mother from annexed east Jerusalem said she was delighted her daughter was coming home after serving half of her 16-year sentence in a Zionist jail, but admitted she had “mixed feelings” over

the high price that secured her release.

“I cry, laugh, and tremble... I had hoped that she would come out in a deal, and this year I kept imagining her walking through the front door,” Sameera Dwayyat said of her 26-year-old daughter Shorouq. “At the same time, there is great pain in my heart. I wish she had been sentenced for 10 more years and we hadn’t lost a single child in Gaza.”

Fabricated charges

Shorouq, who is currently serving her ninth year of a 16-year sentence, is one of many prisoners who campaigners say have been unjustly tried and sentenced on unfair or fabricated charges. She was also fined 80,000 shekels (\$21,500).

She was just 18 years old when Zionist forces arrested her as she was walking home on October 7, 2015 after they shot her four times, leaving her in critical condition. She was accused of attempting to stab a Zionist settler with a knife, but her family strongly refutes the charges. “It is impossible for me to believe the (Zionist) story that my daughter stabbed a settler,” Salah Dwayyat, her father, told Al Jazeera at the time. “Shorouq is delicate and cannot harm an animal.”

Palestinian witnesses said an Zionist settler had tried to pull off her hijab while she was walking past, in a deliberate act of provocation. She pushed back and Zionist forces fired four bullets into her body, leaving her to bleed on the ground for half an hour before arresting her.

Shorouq was treated at the Ein Karem/Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, undergoing skin grafts and several operations. She had just started her first semester at Bethlehem University as a geography and history student, after obtaining a 90 percent

average in her high school results.

Another Palestinian mother from Beit Safafa was also struggling to put her feelings into words after her daughter Malak’s name appeared on the list. “I’m nervous and worried, I don’t know how to describe my feelings,” said Faatina Salman, whose daughter was 16 when she was arrested on her way to school for allegedly trying to stab a policeman in Jerusalem. “I’m afraid that something will happen to the deal, and at the same time I can’t believe I’ll be able to hold hug her after eight years in prison,” she said of her daughter who is now 23.

‘We don’t know anything’

There are at least 35 children among the hostages held captive by Hamas, 18 of them aged 10 and under, according to an AFP count, as well as more than 50 women. “We don’t know who will get out because Hamas will release the names every evening of those who will get out the next day,” said Gilad Korgold, whose eight-year-old grandson Naveh and granddaughter Yahel, three, are among seven family members held captive.

“We don’t know anything but we have to stay at home. That’s what they told us,” he told AFP, the tension evident in his voice. “Until I see them with my own eyes, I won’t believe what anyone says.” His words were echoed by Shemi Calderon, whose nephew Ofer is being held in Gaza. “We’re happy there is a deal, but they’re not here until they’re actually here,” he said.

In Tel Aviv, supporters of the hostage families expressed relief at the breakthrough, but shared deeply mixed feelings that the deal did not involve all those who had been abducted. “We are happy for everyone who is being released, but we’re still thinking about all the people who are left behind,” 42-year-old teacher Marva Tovia told AFP. “It’s really heartbreaking, I feel torn.” — Agencies

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International

Seoul suspends military deal after North Korea launches spy satellite

Launch appears to kick off a space race between two Koreas: Experts



PYONGYANG: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un visits the Pyongyang General Control Centre of the Korean National Aerospace Technology Directorate, a day after the launch of a rocket carrying the reconnaissance satellite. — AFP photos

SEOUL: North Korea said Wednesday it had succeeded in putting a military spy satellite into orbit, with state media claiming leader Kim Jong Un was already reviewing images of US military bases in Guam sent by Pyongyang's new eye in the sky. Washington, Seoul and Tokyo have slammed the sanctions-busting launch, Pyongyang's third attempt this year to put a satellite into orbit, and the first since Kim met President Vladimir Putin at a Russian cosmocrome in September.

After failed attempts in May and August, the official Korean Central News Agency reported that a rocket had blasted off late Tuesday and "accurately put the reconnaissance satellite 'Malligyong-1' on its orbit". Images in state media showed Kim watching the launch, then smiling and waving, surrounded by white-uniformed scientists and engineers celebrating the satellite's purported success.

The satellite will "formally start its reconnaissance mission from Dec 1 after finishing 7 to 10 days' fine-tuning process", KCNA said, adding that it was already transmitting images. Kim "watched the aerospace photos of Anderson Air Force Base, Apra Harbor and other major military bases of the US forces

taken in the sky above Guam in the Pacific, which were received at 9:21 a.m. on Nov. 22," according to KCNA.

Eyes and fist

Washington said the launch was a "brazen violation" of successive rounds of UN resolutions barring the North from tests of ballistic technology — used in both missiles and satellite launch rockets. In response, Seoul on Wednesday partially suspended a 2018 military deal with the North, saying it would resume surveillance operations along their border.

South Korea's military said the purported spy satellite "was assessed to have entered orbit, from comprehensive analysis of flight track information and various circumstances". But it added that "determining whether the satellite is actually operating will take time".

Speaking at Pyongyang's space launch center, leader Kim claimed the development meant the North now has "both 'eyes' overlooking a very long distance and a strong 'fist' beating a very long distance", in a possible reference to the country's banned intercontinental ballistic missiles, which it claims could hit the US mainland.

"The obstructive approach and unrealistic demands of the other party are the principal reasons why these talks could not succeed." The OLA said it tried "to negotiate a space for a meaningful change in the governance of the Oromia region" during the talks in Dar es Salaam and an earlier round also in Tanzania.

"True to form, the Ethiopian government was only interested in co-optation of the leadership of the OLA rather than beginning to address the fundamental problems that underlie the county's seemingly insurmountable security and political challenges," spokesman Odaa Tarbii said in a statement on X. The OLA had stated on November 13 that its leader, Jaal Maroo, was in Tanzania to lead the talks, and had expressed its determination to achieve a "peaceful political settlement".

Abiy is of Oromo descent but the wider community, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, has long complained of marginalization and their homeland is plagued by instability and armed violence. Since the OLA broke off and started fighting, a string of armed groups have risen up in Oromia claiming to be part of its cause, although they are only loosely tied. — AFP

Ethiopia-Oromo rebel talks end without deal

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's government said Tuesday that the latest peace talks with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), a rebel group from the country's most populous region, had ended without agreement. It was the second time Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government and the OLA had sat down this year aiming to end a five-year insurgency in the restive Oromia region.

Classified as a "terrorist organization" by Addis Ababa, the OLA has been fighting the government since 2018 after splitting from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) when it renounced armed struggle. "Due to the intransigence of the other party the talks have come to an end without an agreement," Abiy's national security adviser Redwan Hussein posted on X, formerly Twitter.

TRUCE AGREED IN GAZA...

Continued from Page 1

"For children to survive..., for humanitarian workers to stay and effectively deliver..., humanitarian pauses are simply not enough," she said. Russell said that an additional 1,200 children are believed to remain under the rubble of bombed-out buildings or are otherwise unaccounted for. "In addition to bombs, rockets, and gunfire, Gaza's children are at extreme risk from catastrophic living conditions," Russell added. "One million children — or all children inside the territory — are now food insecure, facing what could soon become a catastrophic nutrition crisis."

UNICEF estimates that acute malnutrition in children could increase by nearly 30 percent in Gaza over the next months. Also addressing the Security Council, the head of the United Nations Population Fund, Natalia Kanem, drew attention to the plight of Gaza's pregnant women, with some 5,500 expected to deliver babies under appalling conditions in the coming month. "At a moment when new life is beginning, what should be a moment of joy is overshadowed by death and destruction, horror and fear," said Kanem.

Although it promises a truce that could be extended if more captives are freed, the Zionist entity has vowed to stick to its war aim of destroying Hamas and rescuing all 240 captives held in the war zone. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose cabinet approved the truce after a marathon overnight session, told his ministers that this was a "difficult decision but it's a right decision". The cabinet's sign-off was one of the last hurdles after what one US official described as five "extremely excruciating" weeks of talks.

Hamas welcomed the "humanitarian truce" and an official of the Islamist group told AFP that "the resistance is committed to the truce as long as the occupation honors it". The Zionist entity's major bombing campaign and ground offensive in Gaza has killed 14,100 people, thousands of them

children. The Zionist entity said that, to facilitate the captives' release, it would initiate a four-day "pause" in its air assault of Gaza.

If the initial phase works, a subsequent phase could see 150 more Palestinian prisoners released in exchange for 50 more hostages, said a Zionist government document naming 300 eligible prisoners. For every 10 additional hostages released, there would be an extra day's "pause" in fighting, the document said. Hamas and Islamic Jihad group sources earlier told AFP the truce would apply to ground operations as well as air operations over southern Gaza.

The negotiations have involved the US Central Intelligence Agency, the Zionist entity's Mossad, Egyptian intelligence and leaders in Doha, Cairo, Washington, Gaza and the Zionist entity. A senior US official said three Americans, including three-year-old Abigail Mor Idan, were among the 50 earmarked for staggered release from Thursday.

Families on both sides grappled with a lack of clarity over how the releases would unfold. The Zionist entity's list of eligible Palestinian prisoners included 33 women and 123 detainees under 18. Amani Sarahneh, spokesperson for the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group, said "we don't know who will be freed first, and that's a problem for us in responding to the families". Among the Palestinians slated for release is Shrouq Dwayyat, convicted of attempted murder in a 2015 knife attack. Her mother Sameera Dwayyat said "I had hoped that she would come out in a deal" but added that her relief was tempered by "great pain in my heart" over the dead children in Gaza.

Large parts of Gaza have been flattened by thousands of air strikes, and the territory faces shortages of food, water and fuel. For now, the Zionist entity appeared to be pushing on with its offensive in northern Gaza, with witnesses reporting dawn strikes on Kamal Adwan hospital and nearby homes. Medical workers treated bloodied, dust-covered survivors as other residents fled through debris-strewn streets to safety.

The Hamas-run government said 200 people had been killed by Zionist forces in the past 24 hours. "The people are really suffering," Gaza resident Hamza Abdel Razeq said, voicing hope for some respite. — AFP



SEOUL: Customers sit near a television showing a news broadcast on the satellite launch at a restaurant on Nov 21, 2023.

Kim "stressed once again that it is necessary to operate many more reconnaissance satellites" to both increase the country's "military strike means ... as well as for self-defense". China, Pyongyang's longtime treaty ally and main economic benefactor, did not condemn the launch but said the situation was "complex and sensitive", foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a briefing. "All parties concerned should remain calm and restrained, look squarely at the crux of the problem, adhere to the general direction of a political settlement, and do more to help ease tensions," she added.

Korean space race

Seoul has been saying for weeks that nuclear-armed Pyongyang was in the final stages of preparation for another attempted spy satellite launch. Seoul's spy agency this month said Pyongyang appeared to have received technical advice from Russia in return for sending at least 10 shipments of weapons for Moscow's war in Ukraine. The North's May attempt failed due to the "abnormal" startup of its second-stage engine, Pyongyang state media said at the time, while the August

misfire was attributed to an error in the "emergency blasting system".

Putin suggested in September after his meeting with Kim that his nation could help Pyongyang build satellites. Seoul and Washington have both subsequently accused Pyongyang of shipping weapons to Russia, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warning this month that military ties between North Korea and Russia were "growing and dangerous".

The launch also appears to kick off a space race on the peninsula, experts said, with Seoul planning to launch its first spy satellite via a SpaceX rocket later this month. "Kim Jong Un demonstrated his will to have an upper hand in military superiority by attempting to launch the first military reconnaissance satellite into orbit before South Korea," said Lim Eul-chul, associate professor at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University. "Of course, it appears that there will be differences in the performance of the satellites." Successfully putting a spy satellite into orbit would improve North Korea's intelligence-gathering capabilities, particularly over South Korea, and provide crucial data in any military conflict, experts say. — AFP

Myanmar anti-junta fighters fight military for control of capital

BANGKOK: Myanmar anti-coup fighters were battling the military for control of a state capital, both sides said on Tuesday. Clashes across Myanmar have entered a fourth week, sparked by a surprise offensive against the military by an alliance of ethnic minorities along a swathe of territory near the China border.

The offensive has galvanized other opponents of the military, with clashes spreading to the east and west in what analysts say is the biggest challenge to the junta since it seized power in 2021. Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) and ethnic minority Karenni Army (KA) fighters were in "very intense fighting" with the military in Loikaw town, KNDF chairman Khun Bedu told AFP.

KNDF, KA and "People's Defence Force" fighters were "in control in many areas," he said, with-

out giving details. He said the military was fighting from positions at the main police station and other government buildings. Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said anti-coup fighters had attacked Loikaw prison on Tuesday, without giving details. Loikaw is normally home to around 50,000 people.

The United Nations has evacuated most of its staff from Loikaw due to "aerial bombardment of the town and active fighting in urban areas," a spokesperson told AFP on Tuesday. They did not say when the evacuations had taken place or how many staff had left. The "National Unity Government" dominated by lawmakers ousted in the military's 2021 coup said that a total of 228 people — UN and other NGO staff and their families — had been evacuated.

Anti-coup fighters also launched drone attacks on two airports in northern Sagaing region, hundreds of kilometers from Kayah, junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said. He did not say whether the attacks had caused casualties or damage. Fighting has raged since October 27 after the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Arakan Army (AA) launched attacks on the military near the northern border with China. — AFP

Oil prices fall after OPEC+...

Continued from Page 1

But they remain above the average of the last five years, despite concerns about demand, particularly in China — the world's biggest importer of crude. For the Saudis, however, the \$80 mark is critical as the break-even price is slightly above it, according to IMF estimates.

In the absence of an agreement, investors fear that Riyadh might put an end to their additional

cuts, Fawad Razaqada of City Index told AFP. "It's clear that they're dissatisfied with some of the other OPEC+ members who are not complying with the cuts" previously announced, he added. Russia is reportedly reluctant to implement its commitments because it needs the oil revenue to finance its war in Ukraine.

The two sources close to the discussions contacted by AFP, also mentioned "disagreements between Riyadh and African countries over quotas". Some members have said they would like to increase their production. At the last meeting in June, the United Arab Emirates obtained an increase in their volume for 2024, to the detriment of other countries such as Angola, Congo and Nigeria. — AFP

As Qatar World Cup glory fades, Arab...

Continued from Page 1

The "Gulf has moved to the center of global sports", said Danyel Reiche, a Qatar-based expert on politics and sport. The successful Saudi bid "might not have been possible if there had not been already a successful World Cup in 2022", he added.

Qatar was transformed for the tournament, with a new metro, airport expansion, upgraded roads and new hotels, plus eight world-class stadiums, at a cost of \$220 billion. It was billed as the most expensive World Cup in history but organizers reject that tag, saying much of the infrastructure expedited for the tournament was already budgeted. "The \$220 billion spent in the country for infrastructure is worth it, absolutely worth it, but it was not done solely for the World Cup," Jassim said.

Seven of the stadiums were constructed at a cost of \$7 billion, Jassim said. The venues, including the flagship Lusail Stadium, were slated to be downsized and the 40,000-capacity 974 Stadium, built from shipping

containers, was supposed to be packed up and relocated. These plans, a principal part of Qatar's World Cup offering, are on hold after Qatar stepped in to host the upcoming football Asian Cup when China, the original organizers, pulled out last year.

"The future right now for Lusail Stadium is the opening and closing ceremony of the Asian Cup," Jassim said, without elaborating on its future after the January-February tournament. Jassim also declined to give details of the "dismantling" of 974 Stadium, which will not be used in the Asian Cup, although he said an announcement would be made "very soon".

Qatar's International Media Office said the World Cup had "accelerated" the country's labor reforms and left a "lasting tournament legacy". Jassim dismissed the criticism surrounding the World Cup as "just an attack on Qatar" by people who he said "felt we were not worthy of hosting such a tournament". Hisham Hellyer, a Middle East expert, said what was viewed as aggressive targeting of Qatar had "boosted Doha's standing and image" in the region. The University of Cambridge academic said it was framed "as a campaign against Qatar for being Arab and Muslim". "When the criticism is framed in that way, then there is going to be rallying to Doha from Arab and Muslim populations worldwide." — AFP

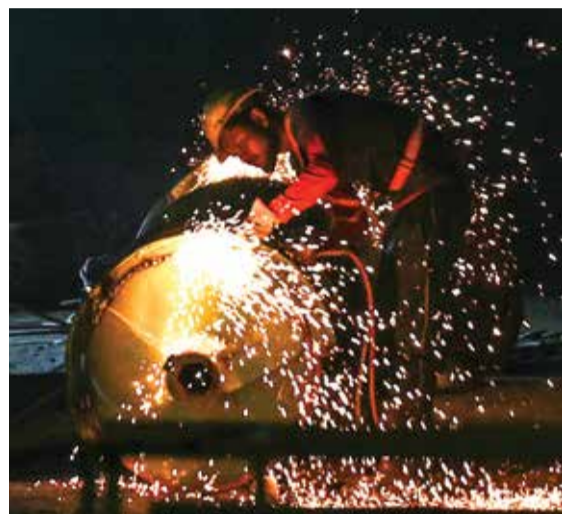
International

Indian rescuers in final stretch to free 41 trapped workers

Tunnel project 'disastrous and needs course correction': Critics

SILKYARA TUNNEL: Indian rescuers have drilled three-quarters of the way through debris towards 41 workers trapped in a collapsed road tunnel for the past 11 days, officials said Wednesday, raising hopes of a breakthrough with diggers in the final stretch.

Engineers are working to drive a steel pipe through at least 57 meters (187 feet) of the tons of earth, concrete and rubble that has divided the trapped men from freedom since a portion of the under-construction tunnel in the northern Himalayan state of Uttarakhand collapsed 11 days ago.



A rescue personnel welds a driller head during rescue operations for trapped construction workers in the Uttarkashi district of India's Uttarakhand state.

Looking into the Silkyara tunnel entrance on Wednesday, an AFP journalist could see sparks flying as workers welded metal tube sections together, with the site busy as excavators and heavy trucks brought

in equipment. Ambulances were on standby near the entrance, ready in the hope that the trapped men could soon be freed.

Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said the work was on a "war footing" as he arrived at the site on Wednesday evening. "Work is being done at a fast pace", he said in a statement, saying engineers had drilled 45 meters through the 57 meters of debris, making a sudden rapid advance after days of painfully slow progress. "If there is no blockage, we hope there could be happy news late tonight or tomorrow," Mahmood Ahmad, a road and highways ministry official involved in the operations, told reporters at the site.

'Challenging Himalayan terrain'

But a government statement also noted that "time-lines provided are subject to change due to technical glitches, the challenging Himalayan terrain, and unforeseen emergencies". Rescue efforts have been slow, complicated by falling debris as well as repeated breakdowns of crucial heavy-drilling machines.

The giant earth-boring machine last week ran into boulders, and drilling was put on hold for more than three days after a cracking sound in the roof. In case the route through the main tunnel entrance does not work, blasting and drilling have also begun from the far end of the unfinished tunnel, nearly half a kilometer (over a quarter of a mile) long. Preparations have also been made for a risky vertical shaft directly above.

On the forested hill above, rescuers have cut an entirely new track to bring heavy equipment above the men, where a machine to dig an 89-metre vertical shaft is being installed — a complex dig above the men in an area that has already suffered a collapse. The workers were seen alive for the first time on Tuesday, peering into the lens of an endoscopic camera sent by rescuers down a thin pipe through which air, food, water and electricity are being delivered.

ment," UNHCR protection associate Faisal Rahman told AFP on Wednesday.

A day earlier, 256 previous Rohingya arrivals were given a reprieve when Indonesia granted them three months of temporary shelter and moved them to the same Lhokseumawe facility. Another 36 Rohingya who arrived in East Aceh on Sunday were also moved to the same location on Wednesday, officials said. But local immigration official Izhar Rizky told AFP the shelter was "no longer suitable for use" and said it was in no condition to shelter more than 500 people.

'Rejection virus'

The recent influx is the biggest wave of Rohingya refugee arrivals to Indonesia since 2015, Ann Maymann, a UNHCR representative in Indonesia, told AFP Tuesday's late-night arrivals had spent 15 days at sea after leaving Bangladesh for Aceh, Abdul Rahman said. The engine of their vessel — which could be seen bobbing offshore — had been damaged, leaving them unable to travel elsewhere, he added.

On Wednesday, the refugees were seen huddled on a beach in Sabang — located on an island off the tip of northern Sumatra — surrounded by a yellow cordon and security officers to stop them from running away. Next to screaming babies, some children on the beach whacked the ground and built sandcastles, seemingly oblivious to the situation unfolding around them.

Later in the day the group set off on the ferry journey to mainland Aceh, with staff handing out snacks to children as one sick person was seen being transported on a stretcher and others were placed on the floor. Many Acehnese, who themselves have memories of decades of bloody conflict, have long been sympathetic to the plight of their fellow Muslims. But some say their patience has been tested, claiming the Rohingya consume scarce resources and occasionally come into conflict with locals.—AFP



SABANG: Newly-arrived Rohingya refugees rest on a beach in Sabang island, Aceh province on Nov 22, 2023. — AFP

India re-opens e-visa applications for Canadians

NEW DELHI: India opened e-visa applications for Canadian nationals on Wednesday, official sources said, two months after halting the service following a diplomatic spat over the killing of a Sikh separatist in Canada. Official sources, who asked not be named, confirmed the development to AFP without giving details. The news was also widely reported by Indian media.

Relations between India and Canada have plunged since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in September publicly linked Indian intelligence to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, allegations New Delhi has called "absurd". The Indian High Commission in Ottawa had in late October announced the resumption of

visa services for Canadians but this did not include online applications. The re-opening of e-visa services Wednesday came just hours before a virtual G20 meeting hosted by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Trudeau due to take part.

This would be the first time the leaders would meet, albeit online, since the row over Nijjar's killing. Nijjar, who advocated for a separate Sikh state carved out of India, was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder.

India has said it was willing to examine any evidence that Canadian authorities might present and temporarily stopped processing visa applications in Canada. Canada announced last month it had withdrawn 41 diplomats from India as a result of the row. Ottawa claimed that New Delhi was about to revoke diplomatic immunity for all but 21 of Canada's diplomats and their families, forcing it to pull out the others. The Indian government had also advised its nationals not to travel to parts of Canada "given the increase in anti-Indian activities." —AFP



UTTARKASHI: A general view shows the entrance of the under construction Silkyara road tunnel during rescue efforts for trapped workers. — AFP photos

'High spirits'

Though trapped, they have plenty of space, with the area inside 8.5 meters high and stretching about two kilometers in length. Bhaskar Khulbe, a senior government official overseeing rescue efforts, said he had spoken to the trapped men on Wednesday morning. "All of them are in high spirits," he said.

On Wednesday, a Hindu priest sat close to the site holding prayers for the trapped men, with rescue workers pausing briefly at a shrine erected at its entrance. The tunnel is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's infrastructure project aimed at cutting travel

times between some of the most popular Hindu sites in the country, as well as improving access to strategic areas bordering rival China.

But experts have warned about the impact of extensive construction in Uttarakhand, large parts of which are prone to landslides. "The development model in this young, fragile mountain range has been disastrous and needs course correction," environmental campaigner Priyadarshini Patel wrote in the Times of India on Wednesday. "Mega-projects are not what the Himalayas are about, culturally or geologically". —AFP



MONROVIA: People look on at the burnt out remains of a car that rammed into a crowd of United party (UP) supporters as they celebrated the new President of Liberia Joseph Boakai's election win. — AFP

3 dead after car rams supporters of Liberia's Boakai

MONROVIA: Celebrations of Joseph Boakai's presidential victory in Liberia were tragically muted after a car ploughed into a crowd of his supporters in the capital Monrovia, killing three people. The suspected driver has been arrested, police said Tuesday, without specifying whether or not they believed the act was deliberate. But it revived fears of violence in the aftermath of the election, in a country that suffered brutal civil wars between 1989 and 2003.

Liberia's foreign partners have commended the generally peaceful conduct of the election, despite some violence during the campaign and between the first and second rounds. Weah conceded defeat on Friday evening and called Boakai to congratulate him before the final results had been announced.

"The Liberia National Police has launched an investigation into a tragic incident that occurred at the headquarters of the Unity Party of Broad Street, Central Monrovia, leaving 25 persons injured", police spokesperson Moses Carter told reporters on Tuesday. He said two men and a woman had been killed, and that the suspected driver was being interrogated at police headquarters. Investigations were ongoing, he said.

Confusion

A large crowd had gathered on Monday evening in front of the Unity Party headquarters in the center of the capital to celebrate Boakai's presidential victory. The electoral commission had declared that afternoon that the former vice president and political veteran had won with 50.64 percent of the votes, compared to 49.36 percent for the outgoing president and former football star Weah. The run-off was extremely tight, with Boakai holding just 20,567 more votes than Weah out of more than 1.6 million total votes.

Suddenly, a vehicle parked not far from the headquarters flashed its headlights and then drove into the crowd, party spokesman Mohammed Ali told AFP, citing eyewitness testimonies. "We don't know who could be behind this, because we find it hard to believe that vehicle had mechanical issues or failed brakes, because we were told that it parked (nearby), flashed the bright lights on the supporters and then drove through them", he said.

Witnesses cited by local media said the crowd initially thought it was a mechanical failure, but that the driver retained control of the vehicle after passing through the crowd, stopped further away, set the car on fire and left on a motorbike that was waiting for him. The claims have not been corroborated by police. Videos posted on social media after the incident showed a large number of people on the ground. Many were bloodied, with some inert while others tried to help amid the confusion.—AFP

Food aid running out for Sudanese refugees in Chad

LIBREVILLE: The UN's World Food Program on Tuesday warned lack of funds threatened to halt food and nutrition assistance for more than a million people in Chad — including newly arrived Sudanese refugees. The organization said funding constraints emanating from a range of other crises including the wars in Gaza and Ukraine meant its capacity to help was spread too thin. It comes "as aid agencies scramble to respond to a fresh wave of refugees fleeing an unimaginable humanitarian crisis" in Sudan's western region of Darfur, WFP said in a statement.

"In just the last six months of conflict in Sudan, as many refugees have fled into Chad as had crossed the border in the preceding 20 years starting from the outbreak of the Darfur crisis in 2003," it added. The organization said it urgently needed some \$200 million of funding. "Dwindling funding and soaring immense humanitarian needs is forcing WFP into making brutal choices," it added in a stark assessment.

"In December, WFP will be forced to suspend assistance to internally displaced people and refugees from Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Cameroon due to insufficient funds. "From January this suspension will be extended to 1.4 million people across Chad — including new arrivals from Sudan who will not receive food as they flee across the border. "To ensure continued support to crisis-affected populations in Chad over the next six months, WFP urgently requires \$185 million," the organization said.

Even prior to the latest civil conflict in Chad which broke out last April, the United Nations estimated the country was hosting more than 400,000 refugees who had fled Darfur between 2003 and 2020, but that number has mushroomed to almost 900,000.

The WFP's spokesperson for western and central Africa, Djaounsede Madjiangar, branded the problem a "forgotten crisis" aggravated by the world's attention currently being largely focused upon the conflict in the Middle East and Ukraine. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) warned last Friday that Sudanese child refugees in Chad were suffering acute malnutrition, the organization having treated some 14,000 since the turn of the year with some 3,000 hospitalized.

The UN estimated that some 8,000 Sudanese entered Chad in the first week of this month alone fleeing the latest wave of violence in Darfur, where conflict has displaced more than two million. In Sudan as a whole, war has displaced more than 4.8 million people.—AFP



ADRE: Women who fled the war in Sudan await the distribution of international aid rations at the Ourang refugee camp in eastern Chad in this file photo. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2023

Altman to return as OpenAI CEO after his shock ouster

Staff threatened to quit amid speculation about OpenAI's future

SAN FRANCISCO: ChatGPT creator OpenAI announced on Tuesday that Sam Altman would return as its CEO, days after his shock dismissal plunged the pioneering artificial intelligence firm into crisis. Hundreds of OpenAI staff had threatened to quit following Altman's sacking on Friday, demanding in a letter released to the media the resignation of the board, as speculation swirled about the future of the company.

His dramatic exit also sparked intense lobbying from OpenAI's biggest investors, including tech titan Microsoft, for his return. OpenAI wrote on X that it "reached an agreement in principle for Sam Altman to return to OpenAI as CEO with a new initial board of Bret Taylor (Chair), Larry Summers, and Adam D'Angelo." "We are collaborating to figure out the details."

In the fast-moving sequence of events, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella had announced this week that he would hire Altman and members of his team to lead AI research. But Altman said on Tuesday that Nadella was backing his return to OpenAI. "With the new board and with Satya's support, I'm looking forward to returning to OpenAI, and build-



SAN FRANCISCO: Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI participates in the "Charting the Path Forward: The Future of Artificial Intelligence" at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Week in San Francisco, California, on November 16, 2023. — AFP

ing on our strong partnership with (Microsoft)," Altman wrote on X.

OpenAI, meanwhile, had said it would hire Emmett

met Shear, a former chief executive of Amazon's streaming platform Twitch, as interim CEO. Shear also took to X to welcome the news of Altman's return. "I am deeply pleased by this result, after 72 very intense hours of work," he wrote.

"Coming into OpenAI, I wasn't sure what the right path would be. This was the pathway that maximized safety alongside doing right by all stakeholders involved. I'm glad to have been a part of the solution."

Microsoft has invested billions of dollars into OpenAI, incorporating its tech into various products including its search engine Bing. Its data centers have been crucial to the development of OpenAI's ChatGPT, whose success sparked a multi-billion-dollar global race in AI research and development.

Nadella had said that "governance changes" were needed at OpenAI to avoid such disruptive surprises. "We are encouraged by the changes to the OpenAI board," the Microsoft CEO said on X Tuesday.

"We believe this is a first essential step on a path to more stable, well-informed, and effective

governance." The announcement of Altman's return appeared to cap the rollercoaster events unleashed by his firing.

The OpenAI board, which included widely respected AI researcher and company co-founder Ilya Sutskever, on Sunday stood by its decision to dismiss Altman and appointed Emmett Shear as interim CEO. But that did little to quell the outrage within the company or the unease among OpenAI's investors.

Sutskever was among the signatories of the letter from OpenAI's employees demanding the board's ouster. "I deeply regret my participation in the board's actions," he wrote on X on Monday. "I never intended to harm OpenAI."

Generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT are trained on vast amounts of data to enable them to answer questions, even complex ones, in human-like language. They are also used to generate and manipulate imagery. But the tech has triggered warnings about the dangers of its misuse — from blackmailing people with "deepfake" images to the manipulation of images and harmful disinformation. — AFP



Delegates of a Kuwaiti company attend the Qatar exhibition.

Kuwaiti firms attend Gulf forum in Doha

DOHA: A number of Kuwaiti firms and entrepreneurs are taking part in an exhibition held on the sidelines of the Entrepreneurship Conference (ROWAD 2023) currently being held in Qatar to market their innovative products and explore investment opportunities. Acting Director General of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development Mohammad Al-Furaih in a statement to KUNA underlined the importance of taking part in the third edition of the Annual Gulf Forum for entrepreneurs within the conferences activities.

UK unveils budget with election on horizon

LONDON: Britain's Conservative government launched plans Wednesday to stimulate growth and woo voters for the next general election, delivering a massive tax-cut sweetener for workers but also forecasting sharply lower growth and stubbornly high inflation. Finance minister Jeremy Hunt unveiled a huge package of 110 measures aimed at reinvigorating the ailing economy and boosting business investment by some £20 billion (\$25 billion) per year.

The speech sets the battleground for next year's expected general election as Prime Minister Rishi Sunak bids to claw back ground lost to the main opposition Labour party, having already achieved his target to halve inflation. Wednesday's budget was also set against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis which has eroded wages, sparked strikes and left millions of Britons struggling to pay bills — and handed a major boost to Labour.

The government wants to turn a corner after the COVID pandemic and spiking energy bills caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked unprecedented state intervention to support the economy and cash-strapped households.

"After a global pandemic and energy crisis, we have taken difficult decisions," Hunt told lawmakers in parliament. "We have supported families with rising bills, cut borrowing and halved inflation. "Rather than a recession, the economy has grown. Rather than falling as predicted, real incomes have risen. Our plan for the British economy is working. But the work is not done."



DOHA: People visit halls of the exhibition which was held on the sidelines of the Entrepreneurship Forum.

He also mentioned the importance of economic cooperation and entrepreneurship between GCC states in order for further development and orienting a better environment for business to encourage small and medium companies. Al-Furaih also added it was paramount that Kuwaiti company owners were present at the session of technology and innovation start-ups, a branch of the conference regulated by Qatar's Development Bank under the slogan "Together we create and innovate", where opportunity to unveil products and services was staged. Implementation manager of Home System, Eng. Manaf Abdeen said the involvement of companies in this forum is a great opportunity for Kuwaiti commerce owners to market their services ahead of the throng, reassuring their capability to compete among GCC enterprises. Technological solutions were presented by the companies as well as security systems in addition to easy solution systems for home and business owners for

better protection through the latest technologies.

Director of Smart Lock Company for Security Devices and Systems, Batoul Al-Qallaf, said the company is working towards manufacturing and supplying inventions for the industry and are specializing in emergency exit solutions in case of tragic events. Participant Mohammad Al-Saeedi from Gulf Inventors Company said "our focus is on manufacturing inventions through a process which certifies the product for the market as our products are showcased on local and international markets".

ECO founder and chief executive Jassem Al-Abouh considered this forum to be an opportunity to exchange ideas and ways to expand the companies' works to better their institutions regionally. Al-Abouh also mentioned ECO is the first environmental incubator and business accelerator in Kuwait providing services to manage sustainable operations for green office seekers. — KUNA

The most eye-catching tax cut was an overhaul in national insurance, a payroll tax paid by employees and employers that will effectively be slashed with effect from January. Chancellor of the Exchequer Hunt declared the move as the "biggest permanent tax cut in modern British history" for 29 million workers that was worth £9.0 billion per year. He will lower the main national insurance rate by two percentage points, saving someone earning £35,000 more than £450 per year.

However, Labour's economy spokeswoman Rachel Reeves blasted the move, arguing that the cut "will not remotely compensate" for taxation hikes imposed under 13 years of Conservative rule. "The British people... know that what has been announced today owes more to the cynicism of a party desperate to cling onto power than the real priorities," she said.

"The fact is that taxes at this election will be higher than they were at the last. This is the legacy of the Conservatives." In a further bid to ease the cost-of-living crisis, Hunt unveiled a series of changes to benefit payments, housing allowances and state pensions, while freezing alcohol duty.

And he confirmed a tax break for businesses, which are currently able to cut tax bills when investing in new equipment, would be made permanent. Economic activity has been sapped by a stubborn cost-of-living squeeze and a series of 14 interest-rate hikes from the Bank of England, which sought to tame inflation but this in turn ramped up the cost of loans for businesses and consumers. Hunt acknowledged Wednesday that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) fiscal watchdog has ripped up its economic forecast for 2024, when a general election is likely due, and declared increasing productivity was key.

Economic output is forecast to grow by just 0.7 percent next year, which was sharply down from previous guidance for a solid 1.8-percent expansion. However, GDP will expand by 0.6 percent this year,



LONDON: Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt leaves 11 Downing Street to present his Autumn Budget Statement at the House of Commons in London on November 22, 2023. — AFP

up from the prior forecast for a contraction of 0.2 percent. "If we want those numbers to be higher, we need higher productivity," Hunt said. The chancellor also hiked the UK minimum wage and lowered the minimum age at which it becomes payable, in a wage boost for three million low-paid workers.

Inflation slowed sharply to a two-year low of 4.6 percent in October in a sign the cost-of-living crisis is easing, yet the rate is still the highest of the G7 world's richest nations. Food inflation meanwhile remains in double digits, while households and businesses continue to pay high energy bills after the government scrapped last year's costly subsidies.

In further gloom, the OBR predicted that inflation would not fall to the Bank of England's official two-percent target until the second quarter of 2025. That is one year later than previously forecast and raises the prospect that interest rates will stay higher for longer. The BoE's key interest rate currently stands at a 15-year high of 5.25 percent. — AFP

US manufactured goods orders fell sharply in October

WASHINGTON: Orders for manufactured goods produced in the United States fell sharply in October, dragged down by a steep decline in transportation equipment orders, reversing an overall increase in September.

New orders for durable goods declined by 5.4 percent in October from a month earlier to \$279.4 billion, according to revised Commerce Department data.

This was worse than the median forecast among economists surveyed by MarketWatch of a 3.4 percent decline. "In short, durable goods surprised to the downside in October," High Frequency Economics Chief US Economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients.

She added that "companies continue to face headwinds from higher borrowing costs and tighter credit conditions that could weigh on activity." New orders for transportation equipment declined by 14.8 percent. Excluding transportation, new orders were flat in October.

At the same time, orders for civilian aircraft fell sharply by 49.6 percent - an expected reversal after a September bounce due to a large order of new planes by the budget airline Ryanair. "Swings in civilian aircraft orders tell us little about the evolving path of overall business investment," economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics wrote in an investor note ahead of the data release. — AFP

Switzerland backs CO2 storage under the sea

GENEVA: Switzerland on Wednesday laid the groundwork to export carbon dioxide (CO2) for storage under the seabed from next year, passing a key amendment to a global ocean protection agreement.

At its weekly meeting, the Federal Council government ratified the 2009 amendment to the London Protocol, it said in a statement. "From 2024, it will therefore be possible to export CO2 for storage in sub-seabed geological formations," it said. Of the three major greenhouse gases, CO2 accounts for about 64 percent of the warming effect on the climate. Carbon capture and storage, a solution aimed at helping halt climate change, involves capturing CO2 emissions at factory smokestacks, turning them into liquid and burying them underground in geological reservoirs.

"Permanent CO2 storage is crucial for achieving both national and international climate objectives," the government said. "To achieve the goal of long-term net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, Switzerland will also need to use storage sites abroad. One such option is the storage of CO2 in sub-seabed geological formations." In June, Swiss voters backed a new climate bill aimed at steering their country of melting glaciers towards carbon neutrality by 2050.

The law requires landlocked Switzerland to slash its dependence on imported oil and gas and scale up the development and use of greener and more homegrown alternatives. Building on the 1972 London convention on marine pollution by dumping waste, the tougher 1996 London Protocol prohibits all dumping, except for "possibly acceptable" wastes on the so-called "reverse list". — AFP

Sand mining in Vietnam's Mekong Delta sinks homes and livelihoods

Hydropower dams restricting the flow of sand to the delta

CAN THO, Vietnam: One summer morning, Le Thi Hong Mai's home collapsed into a river in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, where shoreline erosion caused by sand mining and hydropower dams threatens hundreds of thousands of people.

Sand—needed to produce concrete—is the world's second most exploited natural resource after water, and its use has tripled in the last two decades, according to the UN environment programme.

Vietnam's "rice bowl" delta region, where the Mekong empties into the South China Sea, is predicted to run out of sand in just over a decade. But losses to the riverbed are already devastating lives and harming the local economy.

Mai told AFP she "lost everything", including the small restaurant business attached to her house in the suburbs of Can Tho City. "I heard a bang, I rushed out and everything was gone," recalled the 46-year-old, who was sleeping close by. "I have nothing left".

Over the past two decades, hydropower dams upstream on the Mekong have restricted the flow of sand to the delta. And sand mining to feed Vietnam's construction boom is also fast depleting resources, according to a major WWF report published earlier this year.

By 2040, the amount of sediment could be reduced by up to 97 percent, a 2018 Mekong River Commission study said, with serious consequences for people living and working on the shores of the river. With less sand, river flows become lighter and faster and hit the banks at greater speed, accelerating erosion. Between 2016 and August this year, at least 750 kilometers (466 miles) of riverbank and nearly 2,000 houses in the Mekong Delta region have sunk into rivers, government figures show.

Along the Mekong, diggers and boats work

around the clock, dredging sand from the riverbed. According to Vietnam's ministry of transport, the Delta region needs 54 million cubic meters of sand for six major national highways before 2025. The river system can provide less than half, the ministry says. Important projects have already been delayed while authorities debate alternatives, including sea sand or imports from neighboring Cambodia.

In Can Tho, cows sit next to unmanned excavators, and sections of a road that will eventually run to Ca Mau province are still underwater—awaiting sand to cover them.

"We haven't had enough sand since the beginning of the year, so we don't have much to do," one worker, who declined to give his name, told AFP. Vietnam banned exports of sand in all forms in 2017.

But given high domestic demand, the amount dredged still exceeds what comes downstream, Mekong expert Nguyen Huu Thien explained. At the current extraction rate of 35-55 million cubic meters a year, there will be no more sand by 2035, according to the WWF-led study. "These are the last grains of sand we are dredging," Thien warned.

'Nowhere else to go'

In Hau Giang province, 60 kilometers from where Mai lost her home, Diep Thi Lua awoke in the middle of the night to see her front garden disappear into the water. "We all jumped out of bed after hearing a big noise," the 49-year-old told AFP. "We could feel the ground was shaking. We were so, so scared."

She said the river had widened over the decades by dozens of meters.

Since 2016, Vietnam's government has spent over \$470 million on 190 projects to prevent erosion in the Mekong Delta, according to state media. But



CAN THO, Vietnam: This photo taken on October 26, 2023 shows the site where resident Le Thi Hong Mai's house collapsed into the Hau river due to erosion in Can Tho city in southern Vietnam. — AFP

"many of these expensive structures have collapsed into the river", Thien said. A single \$4.7 million embankment built in 2016 was washed away three times between 2020 and 2022, state media reported.

Half the delta could be gone by the end of the century, Thien warned.

"After that, the delta will disappear altogether and we will have to redraw our map and rewrite our geography books." Around 20,000 households need to be resettled because of the risks, according to the General Department of Natural Disaster Prevention

and Control. The WWF puts the figure much higher, saying half a million could lose their homes.

But resettlement "requires lots of money, which our government will never have", said an official from Hau Giang province who did not want to be named. "We know that they could lose their lives, living in those high-risk areas, but we have no solutions," he said. Residents like Mai and Lua are left gripped by fear. "I have not slept well since the erosion. We have nowhere else to go. We just have to accept it," Mai said. — AFP



Nvidia revenue rockets on demand for powerful chips

SAN FRANCISCO: Nvidia on Tuesday reported that its revenue more than tripled in the recently ended quarter as companies snapped up chips to power artificial intelligence (AI). The Silicon Valley chip titan said it made a profit of \$9.2 billion on revenue that soared to \$18.1 billion, compared with \$5.9 billion in the same quarter a year earlier.

"Our strong growth reflects the broad industry platform transition from general-purpose to accelerated computing and generative AI," Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang said in an earnings release. "Nations and regional (cloud service companies) are investing in AI clouds to serve local demand, enterprise software companies are adding AI copilots and assistants to their platforms, and enterprises are creating custom AI to automate the world's largest industries."

Revenue from sales of chips tailored for data centers set a record in the quarter, hitting \$14.5 billion, according to Nvidia. Nvidia continues to ramp up production to meet demand, chief financial officer Colette Kress said in an earnings call.

Kress said new United States export control regulations aimed at China and other markets including Vietnam and parts of the Middle East are expected to cause sales of Nvidia data center chips to suffer in those markets. "We expect that our sales... to those destinations will decline significantly in the fourth quarter," Kress said.

"These regulations require licenses for the export of a number of our products." Sales of chips now requiring export licenses to China and other affected markets have accounted for a fifth to a quarter of Nvidia's data center unit revenue over the past few quarters, according to the company. Nvidia is confident strong growth in chip sales in other regions will "more than offset" what is lost in China, Kress said.

The United States last month said it was ramping up curbs on exports of state-of-the-art AI chips to China. The new rules tighten measures taken a year ago that banned the sale to China of microchips that are crucial to the manufacturing of powerful AI systems.

But calls to further close the supply chain grew after the world discovered the powers of AI with the launch of ChatGPT, a tool that debuted a year ago. Also causing alarm in Washington was news that China-owned Huawei had released a new smartphone that featured a powerful home-grown advanced chip. When announcing the beefed-up curbs, US officials insisted they were intended to close loopholes and prevent China's development of AI for military use.

Attention has been focused on Nvidia's industry leading H100 chip, which is crucial for the creation of generative AI, the technology behind ChatGPT and other powerful systems. Following the announcement, China said it was "strongly dissatisfied" and "firmly opposes" the curbs. The rules will not affect chips used in consumer goods such as laptops, smartphones and gaming consoles, though some will be subject to export licensing requirements, a statement said. Nvidia saw revenue climb in each of its divisions, including chips for high-performance gaming computers.

"Gaming has doubled relative to pre COVID levels, even against the backdrop of lack of luster (personal computer) market performance," Kress said. "We enter the holidays with the best ever lineup for gamers and creators." — AFP

The twists and turns of an OpenAI meltdown

PARIS: Silicon Valley star Sam Altman was suddenly ousted from the top spot at OpenAI as it led the race to artificial intelligence, only for the ambitious tech guru to be scooped up by Microsoft. Here's a look at the bizarre and dramatic sequence of events in the still-unfolding saga that has put the future of OpenAI in doubt, even as the technology it champions is poised to flourish.

What is Microsoft's interest?

Microsoft has been an OpenAI partner for seven years, pouring billions of dollars into the startup and weaving its innovations into Microsoft products. Computing power hosted in the cloud at Microsoft data centers has been essential to training large-scale language models, making possible OpenAI's ChatGPT released a year ago for public use. In exchange, Microsoft has infused ChatGPT technology into software like Word and Outlook sold to customers, and into its Bing search engine that has long struggled to compete with Google.

Microsoft's investments have bought it a stake in OpenAI, which remains controlled by the original nonprofit foundation. Despite that, Microsoft was not informed about the OpenAI board's decision to fire Altman on Friday and oust co-founder Greg Brockman from the board.

The reason for the shocking move remained unclear on Tuesday, but some believe it involved a fear OpenAI was moving too quickly and straying from its mission of making sure artificial intelligence ben-

efits humanity. Is an Altman comeback possible?

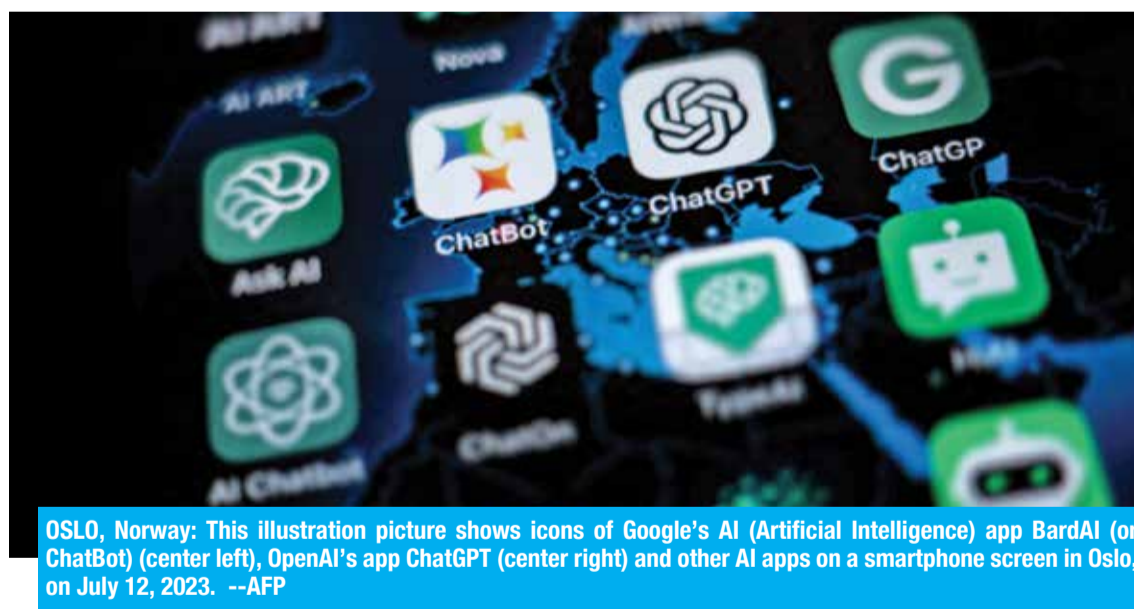
Microsoft quickly moved to hire Altman, announcing a deal to have him join the Redmond, Washington-based computing colossus to lead a new artificial intelligence team. The corporation put out word its doors are open to other OpenAI employees who want to join Altman, and many threatened in a letter to do just that if Altman didn't return. When asked in a streamed interview about the possibility of Altman going back to OpenAI, Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella said he would work with Altman where ever he ended up.

Reports have since surfaced that the OpenAI board is trying to win Altman back, and that he is open to discussing the possibility. Nadella has been adamant that "governance changes" are needed at OpenAI to avoid such disruptive surprises. OpenAI employees, meanwhile, have called for board members to resign.

Will OpenAI survive?

Nearly 700 of OpenAI's 770 employees have threatened to quit if Altman doesn't return. If that happens, it's hard to imagine the company surviving. And while Nadella has stated Microsoft remains committed to its partnership with OpenAI, the relationship has been damaged—along with the value of Microsoft's investment. Even if Altman were to return, the company seen as leading the AI race has had its momentum stalled as competitors try to close the gap.

Several start-ups have been created by OpenAI founders or engineers, such as Anthropic, Elon Musk's xAI and InflectionAI. Tech giants Google and Meta are investing heavily in their own AI models, Bard and Llama 2, which they integrate into their products. And private tech firms face competition from the open source community, which essentially make models freely available for developers to adapt and improve. — AFP



OSLO, Norway: This illustration picture shows icons of Google's AI (Artificial Intelligence) app BardAI (or ChatBot) (center left), OpenAI's app ChatGPT (center right) and other AI apps on a smartphone screen in Oslo, on July 12, 2023. --AFP

Thyssenkrupp posts loss, steel division's future in focus

FRANKFURT: German industrial giant Thyssenkrupp reported a massive annual loss Wednesday due to surging costs, as talks about a tie-up of its steel division with Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky's energy company continue.

The group recorded a net loss of two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) in the past fiscal year, compared to a net profit of 1.2 billion in the 2021-22 period. The steel-to-submarines group, which runs its business year from October to September, struggled with rising energy costs, high interest rates and a sharp fall in the prices of certain goods, most notably steel.

Its steel division, Steel Europe, has been suffering in recent years, due to low prices and competition

from Asian countries. Over the year, the division's operating profits fell 73 percent, while it took a 2.1 billion euro writedown on assets, Thyssenkrupp said in a statement. "We must continue to work hard at raising the performance of our businesses," the group's CEO Miguel Lopez said in a statement. However, he also stressed that there had been "progress with the transformation of Thyssenkrupp". As the green transition gathers pace, a major focus has been on shifting to the production of climate-neutral steel—produced without burning fossil fuels.

The group has received two billion euros in German state aid to fund a steel decarbonization project. Thyssenkrupp has for several years been trying to spin off its steel business, as part of efforts to raise additional funding to drive decarbonization. It has entered into talks with Kretinsky's EPH energy company about a potential joint-venture in the steel business, which it described as "constructive and open-ended." "The specific form of a potential joint venture is the focus of the ongoing negotiations," said the company in a statement. —AFP

Fiji PM says China may help develop ports

SYDNEY: China may help Fiji develop its ports and shipyards, the Pacific island country's prime minister said Wednesday, raising the prospect of stronger ties with Beijing in a key area of its economy. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who has been cautious about China's expanding security footprint in the Pacific, praised Beijing's record of aid to Fiji in fighting COVID-19, developing agriculture and revamping infrastructure. The modernization of Fiji's port facilities and shipyards is a "key focus" for sustainable economic development, Rabuka told parliament after meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week.

"I anticipate potential collaboration with China in that endeavor," the Fijian leader said, citing the Asian giant's "globally competitive shipbuilding" capacity. Fiji and other Pacific nations have sought to strike a delicate balance as China competes for influence in the region with the United States and its allies.

Xi pledged to help Fiji safeguard its "security and sovereignty" and to cooperate on infrastructure when he met with Rabuka on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific economic summit in San Francisco. China's foreign ministry said last week. During a visit to Australia last month, Rabuka said he preferred dealing with democratic "traditional friends" when asked about China's security role in the South Pacific.

Rabuka has also advocated the creation of a "zone of peace" in the region. China notably alarmed Western countries when it signed a secretive defense pact with Solomon Islands last year, sparking fears it could deploy military forces there. Asked about the Fijian leader's comments, Beijing described the two countries as "good friends and partners". —AFP

Fed expects interest rates to stay high 'for some time'

WASHINGTON: All members of the US Federal Reserve's powerful rate-setting committee judged earlier this month that it would be appropriate to keep interest rates high "for some time" in order to tackle inflation, minutes of the meeting released Tuesday show. On November 1, the Fed announced it was holding interest rates at a 22-year high for a second straight meeting, as it looks to bring inflation firmly down to its long-term target of two percent without damaging the strong economy.

The Fed's move raised traders' expectations that it is done hiking interest rates and is moving into a prolonged pause—although Fed Chair Jerome Powell has since said the US central bank is prepared to hike interest rates again, if needed.

"All participants judged that it would be appropriate for policy to remain at a restrictive stance for some time until inflation is clearly moving down sustainably," towards its two percent target, the Fed said in minutes of the meeting published Tuesday. Despite the Fed's decision to aggressively tighten monetary policy since March last year, economic growth has remained strong and the labor market has fairly buoyant—although it has shown some recent signs of slowing.

The strong recent economic data has increased the likelihood of a so-called "soft landing," whereby the Fed succeeds in tackling inflation without plunging the United States into recession. Economic forecasts prepared by Fed staff for the most recent rate-setting meeting on October 31 and November 1, "expected fourth-quarter GDP growth to slow markedly from its third-quarter rate," the Fed said Tuesday. —AFP

Eurozone financial stability outlook looks fragile: ECB

Tighter financing conditions, high inflation, geopolitical tensions weigh

FRANKFURT: The eurozone financial stability outlook remains fragile as tighter financing conditions, high inflation and geopolitical tensions weigh on the single currency area, the European Central Bank warned Wednesday.

The ECB has hiked interest rates at a record pace to cool surging inflation over the past year, but consumer price rises are still above the bank's two-percent target.

Higher borrowing costs, meanwhile, are taking their toll on the 20 nations that use the euro, with the European Commission last week lowering its growth forecasts for this year and next.

"The weak economic outlook along with the consequences of high inflation are straining the ability of people, firms and governments to service their debt," said ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos, in the central bank's latest Financial Stability Review. "It is critical that we remain vigilant as the economy transitions to an environment of higher interest rates coupled with growing uncertainties and geopolitical tensions."

The review warned that a recession was a "possible scenario" due to the deteriorating outlook. The full impact of higher borrowing costs on economic activity was yet to be felt,

and many sectors could face challenges as debt servicing costs rise, it said. It pointed to real estate markets, which it said were already experiencing a downturn. Banks — which had so far benefited from higher rates — could face problems as higher borrowing costs lead to falling loan demand, the review warned.

Concerns about euro area stability had been heightened by the outbreak of the Middle East war, it said. As well as the potential impact on energy markets, there was also the "potential to spark risk aversion in financial markets and undermine confidence in the real economy," it said. — AFP



ECB Vice-President Luis de Guindos says the euro zone's outlook for financial stability is fragile.

Boubyan Bank launches campaign for collection and recycling of e-waste

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has launched its campaign for collecting and recycling e-waste in a safe and sustainable manner, in collaboration with Tadwire, a specialized company in recycling e-waste. This comes as a part of Boubyan's ongoing efforts to keep up with the most important international and regional developments in sustainability, and the impact thereof on ESG aspects.

Qutayba Al-Bassam, Executive Manager - Corporate Communications Division, stated: "The campaign focuses on the collection of all electronics such as servers and PCs (all desktops and laptops), and smart devices (all tablets, smart phones, and mobile phones), as well as white goods (A/Cs, fridges, stoves, and microwaves), brown goods (TVs, radios, CD players, cassette players, monitors, and printers), wires, cables, engines, and metals of all types and sizes, in addition to generators, lawn mowers, and other heavy equipment."

"Collaboration with Tadwire comes as a leader in e-waste collection and recycling. Participation in this campaign will be open for all segments and age groups since this is a national initiative by Boubyan to join forces of the society to preserve the environment, protect the future of upcoming generations, and increase awareness so as to create a sustainable environment", Al-Bassam emphasized.

As for participation in the campaign, he stated: "All Boubyan and non-Boubyan customers can participate in the campaign by directly contacting Tadwire's professional team, who are responsible for the collection of waste, and who are well aware of how to deal safely with the same. They may be contacted by phone or WhatsApp at 55335055 or via their website: www.tadwire.com where participants can fill out the required information, or by sending an email to: info@tadwire.com

He went on to add: "Following submission of the application, a member of the team will be in touch with the participant to inform him of the acceptance of his request, and that he should collect all his electronic items to be ready for collection in as few boxes/bags as possible for ease of movement, while confirming the amount of waste, and its material so as to make the appropriate arrangement, in addition to ensuring the removal of any personal information from such equipment."

A social message

Al-Bassam added: "Upon the launch of the cam-



Qutayba Al-Bassam



paign last October, the goal was to collect 3 tons of e-waste; however, as we are already halfway - only after a month and a half - we already exceeded this number by reaching more than 3.4 tons, thus saving more than 5 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. In return, the bank will make a donation to a charitable organization to highlight the bank's social, charitable, and environmental awareness message." He went on to add: "Sustainable growth represents a main pillar in Boubyan Bank's strategy, through which the bank focuses on adopting initiatives that aim at spreading social and environmental awareness about the importance of preserving the environment and protecting it from future risks arising from the increased rate of different types of waste."

Al-Bassam elaborated: "Amid the technological advancement witnessed around the whole world, with the increased usage of digital devices that have become the main means of communication in the modern age, we now have an urgent need to dispose of such devices in a safe manner as per the best international environmental practices, owing to the hazards arising from the VOC emissions of some toxic materials used therein."

Risks of e-waste

"E-Waste is one of the most hazardous pollutants that negatively affect the environment, since such non-functional and non-usable electronics are hard to dispose of, and not biodegradable, in addition to requiring more time and efforts to dispose of. They rather turn into a hazard due to their environmental and health risks since they contain toxic, flammable, or reactive components, and since most circuits in electronics comprise of heavy metals such as zinc and lead", Al-Bassam elaborated.

On his part, the Managing Partner of Tadwire, Waleed Esbaitah, stated: "E-waste is marked by the highest growth in the world, and constitutes a hazard when dumped in a landfill, and this type of risk is now recognized. The greatest hazard associated with this type of waste is its toxicity, in addition to the metals that could seep into the ground contaminating groundwater, as well as the difficult biodegradability thereof over thousands of years. Despite the hazard it represents, e-waste is very important for greening global energy, and benefiting from its recycled economy, which is known by 'Circular Economy'."

Esbaitah went on to add: "I take pride in our collaboration with Boubyan Bank, being a leading institution that embraces sustainable development and



E-waste campaign for the collection and recycling of e-waste.

the sustainability approach, which has become a main pillar in the strategy of many institutions in line with the criteria and instruments being introduced year after year to globalize this approach in an attempt to achieve a sustainable environmental balance."

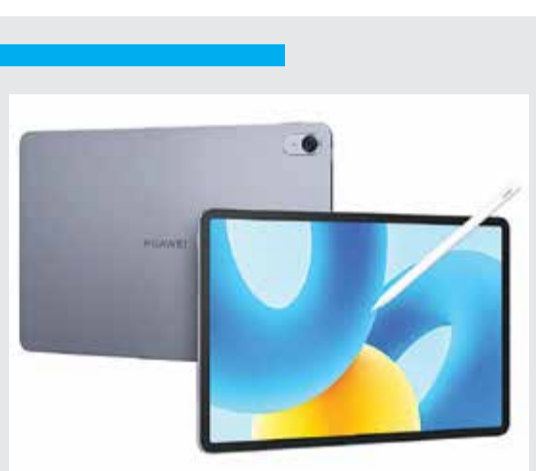
"Over the past six years, where we have been active in the recycling business, we have found a positive and increasing response in our initiative for the preservation of the environment. In the beginning, providing the service of collection and recycling of e-waste was only limited to specialized companies, but now this has extended to include individuals, schools, and non-profit organizations which provide support to our project", he added.

Proactive steps to promote sustainability

In this connection, Al-Bassam added: "Boubyan adopts a strategic pathway to successfully incorporate sustainability metrics and the implementation approach thereof, and to invest in achieving its goals, emanating from our belief in the importance of creating a positive impact on the society in a manner that guarantees the introduction of an added value to minimize expected risks."

The bank has successfully reduced its Scope III emissions due to employee commute by 3 percent. Additionally, Boubyan Bank's subsidiaries, the Bank of London and the Middle East (BLME) and the BB2 Tech Co decreased their Scope III emissions by 68 percent. In addition to the efforts towards reduction in emissions that have a negative role in climate change witnessed by the world nowadays, the bank has decreased paper consumption by 145,000 papers/year due to Lean projects.

Moreover, Boubyan took a step towards reducing the use of plastic bottles in all of its branches and main buildings, as reusable bottles were distributed to all employees of the bank, while installing water dispensers where water can be refilled, thus saving a huge amount of plastic water bottles used on a daily basis in an attempt to reduce the environmentally harmful plastic waste, and to translate the slogan of "Start with Yourself" into action.



You can order Huawei PaperMatte tablet in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Huawei PaperMatte Tablet featuring the innovative PaperMatte Display is now available for pre-order in Kuwait. The new tablet featuring the PaperMatte Display, is designed for exceptionally comfortable viewing by reducing glare and mimicking the feel of real paper. It lets you see clearly even in bright sunlight and enjoy a smooth and natural paper-like feel on your tablet. Also, the tablet will give you the same feel as writing with pen on paper with the Huawei M-Pencil.

The Huawei MatePad 11.5" Edition will be available for purchase on the official Huawei online store starting from Nov 23, 2023.

The PaperMatte Display uses nano-level anti-glare etching technology to create hundreds of millions of tiny textures on the glass surface. These textures scatter the light and prevent it from reflecting back to your eyes. This reduces light interference by 97 percent, eliminating glare from any angle. You can see clearly even in bright sunlight and enjoy a smooth and natural paper-like feel on your tablet. The display also supports a 120 Hz high refresh rate for an exquisitely vivid and smooth viewing. The PaperMatte Tablet also offers a color e-book mode that makes your screen look like a real book, displaying thousands of colors with precision and richness. So, whether watching a video, reading an e-book, or playing a game, the PaperMatte Display lets you do it all without missing any details.

The PaperMatte Display has TÜV Rheinland Reflection Free and industry-first SGS Low Visual Fatigue Premium Performance Certifications that guarantee excellent viewing performance in any situation. The SGS Low Visual Fatigue Premium Performance certification is the highest certification from SGS that measures eye strain. With a screen as comfortable as this, you can enjoy your content with peace of mind, knowing that your eye health is in good hands.

The PaperMatte Display lets you write on your tablet as if writing on real paper with the Huawei M-Pencil (2nd Generation). The textured surfaces of the PaperMatte tablet give you the right amount of friction and grip for you to write faster and accurately without slipping. The M-Pencil, with its nylon elastomer nib and a latency of just 2ms, gives you a smooth and natural writing experience. You can even change the nib to a soft white one for a more gentle feel.

PaperMatte Edition tablet comes with Huawei Notes, a powerful notetaking app that lets you do amazing things with your tablet. This app offers some cool features that make your note-taking more fun and efficient. You can zoom in on the canvas up to 15 times to effortlessly craft intricate mind maps and stunning sketches. You can also convert your handwriting to text with just a tap.

The Huawei MatePad 11.5" tablet gives you a true paper-like experience on a versatile tablet. You can read, write, draw, and enjoy movies and games on a glare-free display that feels like paper. This tablet is great for students as they can transform it into a book, a notetaking device, and an entertainment hub in no time.

Singapore economy growth beats forecast in Q3

SINGAPORE: Singapore's economy grew more than expected in the third quarter, data showed Wednesday, while officials narrowed their full-year forecast owing to subdued demand for its exports in key markets including the United States and China.

The 1.1 percent expansion in July-September was driven by the construction industry and services sector, including tourism. The reading from the trade ministry was better than the 0.8 percent growth expected and well up from the previous three months. Officials said they saw the economy growing 1.0 percent throughout 2023, against the 0.5-1.5 percent previously estimated. Since its last forecast in August, the US economy had performed better, the ministry said, but warned inflation-fighting interest rate hikes would weigh on it for the rest of the year. "However, for the rest of the year, growth in the US and eurozone is projected to moderate due to the cumulative effects of monetary policy tightening," it said. — AFP

Argentine markets surge with optimism on Milei election

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's stock market reacted with optimism Tuesday to the resounding election win by libertarian Javier Milei, despite the country being gripped by uncertainty over what changes the self-described "anarcho-capitalist" will bring.

Milei, a 53-year-old economist who has vowed to scrap multiple government departments and sometimes campaigned by waving a chainsaw from the stage, trounced Argentina's long-dominant Peronist coalition as voters punished the government for decades of economic decline.

Latin America's third-biggest economy is creating under annual inflation of 143 percent. Monday, the day after the election, was a public holiday in Argentina, delaying the market reaction.

But immediately Tuesday, the stock market opened up 20 percent and held its strong gains, eventually closing 17.7 percent higher. On the same day the president-elect also received a call from Pope Francis, who himself is Argentinian and had been the target of insulting comments from Milei, who during his campaign had accused the pontiff of "promoting communism." He later apologized.

In his congratulatory call to Milei the Pope expressed "wishes of union and progress for our country," the

president-elect's office said, while Milei noted he invited Francis to visit Argentina. Argentina's peso is strictly controlled, and the informal "blue dollar" exchange rate — seen as a barometer of panic in the country — reacted with moderation, rising slightly to 1,050 pesos to the dollar.

The rate is almost three times the official rate of 371.50, and analysts warn a devaluation is long overdue. Milei has vowed to ditch the peso for the US dollar and shut down the central bank — which he accused of rampant money printing to finance government overspending — in a bid to halt inflation.

During his campaign he said he would slash state spending and ditch about 10 government ministries, among other controversial proposals.

He later toned down some of his rhetoric, leaving uncertainty over his actual plans. While stocks reacted favorably to Milei's win, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador was less enthusiastic, comparing the election to an own goal in soccer. With all due respect, it was an own goal and I do not agree, although I respect the decision of the people with right-wing governments," he told a Tuesday news conference, without directly naming Milei.

Analysts have said that, given Ar-



BUENOS AIRES: A sign on a shop window displays the exchange rate for US dollars, euros and Brazilian reals in Argentine pesos (left top) and another offers a job for a salesperson, in the main pedestrian street of Buenos Aires, on November 21, 2023. — AFP

gentina's massive problems, any fixes are going to inevitably bring economic pain. In his first interviews on Monday after the election, Milei warned it would take up to two years to tame inflation, and laid out his plans to reform the state.

Milei said "everything that can be in the hands of the private sector is going to be in the hands of the private sector," including the state oil company YPF and state media.

The rise on Argentina's stock market was led by majority state-owned oil company YPF whose shares rose 36.5 percent after Milei's remarks.

On Monday, YPF shares listed on Wall Street were up 40 percent at

closing, dipping a little more than one percent by close Tuesday.

Milei also said he would push for the elimination of strict currency exchange controls — with analysts saying the official rate of the peso to the dollar is an expensive fiction. Asked about his dollarization platform, Milei said the priority was "to close the central bank. Then the currency will be the one that Argentines freely choose." Milei on Monday held his first meeting with outgoing President Alberto Fernandez to coordinate what the incoming leader called an "orderly and responsible" transition ahead of his inauguration on December 10. — AFP

Lifestyle



This picture shows children releasing lanterns during the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights.



This picture shows children releasing lanterns during the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights.



This picture shows a man resting after performing a traditional dance during a ceremony at the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights, in Taunggyi in Myanmar's Shan State. — AFP photos



This picture shows men standing under a hot air balloon to be released during the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights.



This picture shows a child with candles during the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights.

Myanmar fireworks festival muted as clashes spread

A brightly patterned hot air balloon spitting fireworks soared into the night sky above Myanmar's Shan state as a much-loved festival returned, but crowds stayed away from the military-backed event as violent clashes swell across the country. Tuesday marked the return of the Tazaungdaing festival to the city of Taunggyi after a three-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic and unrest following the military seizing power in 2021.

The usually riotous event sees teams load batteries of fireworks into homemade hot air balloons, with referees judging both the design of the contraptions and the magnificence of their aerial explosions. But this year's military-managed celebration was muted, with revelers staying away and a heavy presence of security personnel deployed as the junta battles coordinated attacks across the country.

Taunggyi lies towards the southwestern edge of Shan state, around 350 kilometers (220 miles) away from the state's northeast, which has seen intense fighting since an armed alliance of ethnic minority groups launched an offensive against the junta on October 27. Masked soldiers stood watch next to a signal-jamming truck in the city, and the shadows of others standing guard on the surrounding hills were silhouetted against the dusk sky.

A convoy of four-wheel-drive vehicles delivered local dignitaries — some accompanied by pro-military militia bodyguards — to the stage, where they watched hundreds of school and college students perform synchronized dances. In the spectators' area across the fence — usually packed with revelers — people sat on blankets in small scattered groups.

"There are fewer people coming this year," said Nu Nu Sein, 70. "I'm really sorry. Many more people should be

here." Launching the balloons requires teamwork and daring. Team members hold up the heavy canvas balloons and inflate them by holding flaming torches underneath. Once the balloon has filled with hot air, they attach a wooden frame loaded with fireworks, light the fuse and release the balloon.

Fighting rages

A rock band on a stage belted out old favorites, including one wistful number about pretty Shan ladies selling local delicacies on the road to the town of Muse on the China border. That road has been cut by the offensive launched last month by the alliance of

New Light of Myanmar refuted "false news" that young people were being press-ganged from the streets into serving as porters for the military. The clashes in the north have galvanized other opponents of the junta, who have launched attacks in the east and west of the country in what analysts say is



This picture taken on November 21, 2023 shows a man standing with an installation of candles during the Tazaungdaing festival, also known as the Festival of Lights.

The payload is timed to go off once the balloon has achieved a safe height, but in the past there have been injuries and even deaths from mistimed firings. On Tuesday, teams banged drums and cymbals as each balloon was launched into the sky, the clamour competing with dance music thumping from a nearby fairground.

Win Aung, 54, said he enjoyed the event, despite the thinner crowds. "We have to do it with the people we have here," he said after his team had launched their balloon. "I really enjoy playing with gunpowder... I can't stand by when this festival arrives."

ethnic minority groups across a swathe of northern Shan state. The move has hampered the junta's ability to send reinforcements to tackle the offensive, which has seized a cross-border trade hub and dozens of military outposts.

Muse previously handled a sizeable share of border commerce with Myanmar's biggest trade partner, China, and the recent blockage is denying the cash-strapped junta taxes and foreign exchange. In recent days junta-controlled media have published notices denying petrol shortages and restrictions on withdrawals at banks.

Wednesday's edition of the Global

the biggest challenge to the military leadership since it seized power.

On Tuesday the military and anti-coup fighters said they were battling for control of a state capital in the east. Anti-coup fighters also launched drone attacks on two airports in northern Sagaing region, hundreds of kilometers from Kayah, junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said. "I'm also scared coming here," said Nu Nu Sein at the festival in Taunggyi. "I was asked not to go to very crowded places." "I want all to be peaceful and happy. I wish no one had to face the situation like this." — AFP

'Parasite' filmmaker's secret debut unearthed by new documentary

Oscar-winning "Parasite" filmmaker Bong Joon-ho's first movie — about a trapped gorilla dreaming of a different life — was hidden from the world for three decades, but a new documentary has brought it to light. "Yellow Door: '90s Lo-fi Film Club" showcases Bong's formative years as an obsessive film enthusiast and aspiring filmmaker, as well as a group of quirky young South Korean cinephiles who came together in the early 1990s.

This cohort — dubbed "Yellow Door" for the color of their office entrance — included both Bong and the documentary's director, Lee Hyuk-ae. Until this year, only Yellow Door members had ever seen Bong's debut film, "Looking for Paradise," which features a stuffed gorilla locked in a basement, fantasizing about a real banana tree and battling excrement that comes to life as a worm.

Bong made the film in his own basement in 1992 and screened it for Yellow Door members later that year, turning bright red with nervousness. The film is seared in the memories of the club's other members. "I believe that the essence of Bong Joon-ho's films today can be traced back to that gorilla," Choi Jong-tae, one of the members, says in the documentary.

In an interview with AFP, Lee said he was deeply inspired by Bong's amateur debut, and revisiting it in light of the film director's subsequent rise to global prominence was a key motivation for making the documentary. "When the (final) twist was revealed in the movie, everyone present there really felt a heart-pounding sensation," he said of

the 1992 screening. "As Bong continued to accomplish things that were beyond our imagination at that time, my desire to watch his debut film (again) grew increasingly intense."

First Academy Award

One of the most recognizable figures in South Korean cinema, Bong made history in 2020 by becoming the first director from his country to win an Academy Award for his powerful satire of inequality, "Parasite". He was already well known then for his dark and genre-hopping thrillers, including the 2006 monster blockbuster "The Host" and the 2003 crime drama "Memories of Murder".

But Lee's documentary captures an earlier era of South Korean cinema, when the country's films were obscure overseas and local cinephiles were seeking new content to expand their horizons. Lee said members of Yellow Door were mostly stuck viewing poor-quality VHS tapes, which in the case of foreign films came without subtitles.

But they happily watched anyway, because they were desperate.



In this photo Lee Hyuk-ae, director of Netflix documentary "Yellow Door: '90s Lo-fi Film Club" poses during an interview with AFP in Seoul. - AFP

Bong religiously collected VHS tapes, and he meticulously analyzed Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 classic "The Godfather" by sketching cartoons of its scenes. The documentary — currently streaming on Netflix — captures light-hearted and youthful moments from the film group's early days, including blurry photographs that members took of each other. "We were a film group and the photographs (we took) were out of focus," Bong says in the documentary.

'Social misfits'

Bong majored in sociology at university and many members of the group had no formal training in cinema. One member described the cohort as "social misfits". Lee said many members of the group had been involved in student activism in the 1980s against South Korea's then-authoritarian government, but felt adrift following Seoul's political liberalization in the 1990s.

"It seems like people who were wandering aimlessly, unsure what they wanted to do but acutely aware of the places they didn't want to be, fortuitously encountered each other ... at the Yellow Door," Lee told AFP. In a way, the trapped protagonist in Bong's first movie embodied what the cohort was feeling at the time, he added.

Since then, Bong's signature films — including "Parasite", "Snowpiercer" and "The Host" — have featured basements as spaces symbolic of repression, violence and dark secrets. Yellow Door members have since followed diverse professional paths, spanning cinema, speech therapy, education and academia. But cinema has always held a special significance for Bong, Lim Hoon-ah, one of the members, says in the film. "To me, cinema was a romantic (fantasy), but (Bong) Joon-ho really thought of it as his reality," she said. — AFP



Members of K-pop boy band BTS pose for photographs during a news conference promoting their new album "BE (Deluxe Edition)" in Seoul, South Korea.

Four remaining BTS members start military enlistment process

The last four members of South Korean megagroup BTS who have yet to undertake their mandatory military service have begun the process of enlisting, the K-pop stars' label said Wednesday. All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military and, after a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year, followed by his bandmate J-Hope in April.

A third member, SUGA, started his service in September. Now, all four of the group's remaining members — RM, Jimin, V and Jung Kook — are set to soon begin their service as well, the septet's label BIGHIT MUSIC said in a statement. "We would like to inform our fans that RM, Jimin, V, and Jung Kook have initiated the military enlistment process," it said. "We ask you for your continued love and support for RM, Jimin, V, and Jung Kook until they complete their military service and safely return."

Before BTS went on a hiatus in June last year, they had bagged six No. 1 hits on the US Hot 100 chart. All seven members of the boyband have also

reached the top of the charts with solo tracks, Billboard said. Since their debut in 2013, BTS have been credited with generating billions of dollars for their country, as well as boosting the image and soft power of South Korea — now a global cultural powerhouse.

They have been invited to speak at the United Nations, and to meet US President Joe Biden at the White House. Earlier this year, the chairman of the septet's agency, Bang Si-hyuk, said that making BTS do their military service was slowing the global growth of K-pop. South Korea offers exemptions from military service to some people, including Olympic medal-winning athletes and some classical musicians, but K-pop stars are not eligible under the existing program.

And in an intensely competitive industry where artists can be easily replaced, some male K-pop stars have faced challenges in resuming their careers after fulfilling their duties. BTS's agency, HYBE — BIGHIT is a label under it — announced in September that all seven members of the group had renewed their contracts, without giving further details. — AFP

Lifestyle



Members of the British team (from left to right) Jonathan Winship, Sarah Parry and Alexander Winship pose with the trophy after winning the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.



Members of Indonesia (front left and right) cross the street as they search for rubbish in the streets during the first round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final, in which teams pick up as much rubbish as possible in a set amount of time, at the United Nations University in Shibuya ward in Tokyo.--AFP photos



Members of Morocco search for rubbish in the streets during the first round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.



A member of India sorts through rubbish at the end of the first round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.



Members of the US watch as the cigarette butts they collected are weighed after the second round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.



Members of France separate their rubbish after the second round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.



A member of Australia carries bags of rubbish after getting it weighed after the second round of the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.

Load of rubbish: Litter-hunters vie for unusual world title in Tokyo

Tokyo's well-kept streets may not be the most obvious place to do it, but competitive litter-hunters on Wednesday sifted through the Japanese capital in their first world championship. The Spogomi World Cup saw 21 countries battle it out to collect the most rubbish within a set time limit, scouring the streets in search of plastic, cigarette butts and other trash. Spogomi founder Kenichi Mamitsuka started to pick up litter on his morning runs and realized that setting targets could turn it into a fun activity.

He organized his first competition 15 years ago, taking the title from the words "sport" and "gomi"—Japanese for rubbish. He said watching the event's maiden world championship was "like a dream", but he optimistically believes it can grow to an even bigger scale. "If you form national spogomi associations, my ambition is that it could become an Olympic demonstration event," he told AFP in front of a portion of the almost 550 kilos (1,200 pounds) of rubbish collected by participants.

Armed with gloves, metal tongs and plastic rubbish bags, each team of three roamed a roughly five-square-kilometer (two-square-mile) collection area in Tokyo's bustling Shibuya district. Running, ransacking existing litter bins and shadowing other teams were all forbidden, with each team followed by a referee to enforce the rules.

In both of the morning and afternoon sessions, they had 45 minutes to hunt out rubbish and another 20 to sort it into categories. Points were awarded based on volume and type, with small items such as cigarette ends scoring highly. Australia's Petrya Williams said that her team had "found some great spots that are like treasure maps". "I think we've got it for the next round, we know where to look," she said, as she and her team-mates waited to weigh their haul.

Good habits

Each team had to earn the right to represent their country in Tokyo by winning national competitions. Reasons

for their involvement varied. Australia's Jamie Gray said his team belonged to a meditation group and "clean-up is part of our philosophy". France's team arrived with something of an advantage—

rubbish than in the competition back home". But he believes competitive collecting can "get really big", and thinks schools are a good place to start. "That's where you're going to get

believes changing the way people think about rubbish is key. He says that people thought he was "making fun of activities that contribute to society" at first. But then he began to hear stories



Members of the first-placed British team (center front), second-placed Japan (front left) and third-placed Italy (front right) pose with other participants for a group photo after the "Spogomi World Cup 2023" final.

all three members work in the refuse collection industry. "We have a flair for it," said Usman Khan, 32. At the end of the day, Britain were declared the winners after collecting 83 kg of rubbish.

South Africa's Philippe Louis de Froberville said Tokyo's relatively clean streets made it "harder to find the

your people," said the 33-year-old from Durban, who says his passion for surfing and the ocean got him involved in collecting rubbish. "If you start when you're young, you're going to want to do it when you're older and you're going to want to look after your environment." Spogomi founder Mamitsuka be-

about people getting involved and passing on good habits to their children. "It made me think that I should keep going," he added. "Our target is to have spogomi events in 50 countries by 2030."—AFP

Banksy is 'Robbie'—artist reveals first name in 2003 interview

A rare nugget of information about the famously enigmatic street art superstar Banksy emerged Tuesday when he gave his first name as "Robbie" in an unearthed 2003 BBC interview. In the interview, one of the few known to exist with the global art phenomenon, he is asked if his name "Robert Banks", to which he replies: "It's Robbie." His identity has long been the source of speculation, with some claiming his name was Robin or Robert Banks.

Banksy talks about his distinctive stenciling style in the interview, a podcast bonus part of a series called "The Banksy Story". "It's quick... I want to get it done and dusted," he is heard to say of

his work. The artist was in his 20s at the time, and was promoting the opening of his "Turf War" show in east London.

The series also contains a 2005 interview the artist purportedly gave with US broadcaster National Public Radio (NPR). In it, the host asks: "We assume that you are who you say you are, but how can we be sure?" The interviewee responds: "Oh, you have no guarantee of that at all." Banksy, known to hail from Bristol in southwest England, boasts an A-list client list and has sold his works for tens of millions of pounds at auction since achieving notoriety in the early 2000s.—AFP



Two men are sitting in front of a famous graffiti of British street artist Banksy, painted on a wall of a gas station in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.--AFP



This screenshot of a handout video taken and released by Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) shows captured iguanas at a wildlife sanctuary in Nakhon Nayok province.--AFP photos



This screenshot of a handout video shows captured iguanas at a wildlife sanctuary in Nakhon Nayok province.

Iguana invasion: Thailand rounds up rogue reptiles

Thailand has captured more than 150 rogue iguanas that were rampaging through the countryside, raiding farms and damaging the local environment, officials said. The lizards are not native to the kingdom, hailing originally from Central and South America, but are increasingly popular as pets in Thailand. Environmental concerns have been raised over the activities of the herbivorous lacertilians, which are thought to be pets that have either escaped or been deliberately released into the wild.

The Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) said Tuesday that 134 iguanas had been captured in Pattana Nikom district, Lopburi, around 160 kilometers (100 miles) north of Bangkok. A further six were discovered in Udon Thani, in the country's northeast, and 23 more elsewhere in Thailand.

"Many iguanas have been living in the wild in Lopburi province and destroying farmers' agricultural produce," a DNP statement said. "The rapidly increasing number has affected the environment and ecology systems, causing problems to local people."

The cold-blooded captives—which can grow to more than 1.5 meters (five feet) long—will be kept at wildlife centers including one in Nakhon Nayok, northeast of Bangkok. The department also said around 260 people across 61 provinces have informed officials that they own iguanas—more than 3,600 lizards in total. Earlier in the week, officials banned the import of the scaly creatures over environmental concerns. Authorities said violators will face a maximum of 10 years in jail and a fine of up to one million baht.—AFP



This screenshot of a handout video shows a captured iguana at a wildlife sanctuary in Nakhon Nayok province.

Lifestyle



This picture shows Rally the labrador therapy dog visiting people at an elderly daycare centre in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



This picture shows Rally the labrador therapy dog visiting people at an elderly daycare centre in Hong Kong.



This picture shows a therapy dog visiting people at an elderly daycare centre in Hong Kong.

Disco, dogs help Hong Kong's elderly out of post-COVID isolation

Eyes closed, hips swaying, retiree Polly Chan danced like no one was watching at a community centre in Hong Kong, where experts warn of a loneliness epidemic among the ballooning elderly population. The 71-year-old and about 30 others were part of a pilot program called "Noon-D" — for "afternoon disco" — intended to reach out to an increasingly isolated group in the fast-paced city. A self-proclaimed "rebel" who has been clubbing since she was a teenager, Chan said she struggles to express her unhappiness to her family — and finds the dance floor to be the best cure.

"I don't have many people to talk to," Chan told AFP. "When I dance, I feel very relieved." Kicked off in July, the disco sessions take place weekly at a community centre that is made over with spinning mirror balls and floor-to-ceiling shimmering tassels. Program curator Lai Sim-fong told AFP the idea was born out of workshops held with elderly Hong Kongers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the city enforced some of the world's harshest social restrictions.

"It's mainly designed to address the loneliness suffered by the elderly and

their lack of social life," she said. "Some elderly people said they avoided going outside and they observed many others had lost interest in leaving their homes." And while the disco sessions were fully booked, Lai said the program meets only a fraction of the need for socialization among a Hong Kong elderly population that can all too often feel invisible.

World's oldest city

Hong Kong is forecast to become the world's oldest city by 2050, according to the United Nations, with the population of people aged 65 and older reaching 40.6 percent. Adding to the issue is an exodus of younger people — partially triggered by a sweeping national security law Beijing imposed in mid-2020 to quell political dissent — as well as the lingering effects of the pandemic. A survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong in the first half of 2022 found that a third of the nearly 5,000 elderly respondents were suffering from at least one of three conditions — depression, anxiety and loneliness.

That poll was taken when the city was still struggling to curb a fatal coro-

navirus wave that hit seniors the worst. Another poll from later in 2022 found that among seniors whose children and grandchildren had left the city — a group classified as "left behind" — nearly 70 percent showed a tendency toward depression, while nearly 80 percent were "under a high risk of social isolation."

The number of suicides in the city hit a decade-high 1,080 last year, according to the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong, with more than 40 percent of victims aged 60 or older. "Elderly people are often less capable of seeking help and often tend to consider themselves a burden when they suffer mentally," said Samaritan chairman Heymans Wong. Caregivers should help older people to "expand their social circles", he said.

'Hidden elderly'

But doing so is easier said than done, according to Adeline Tsang, elder care director at Hong Kong's Christian Family Service Centre. She struggles to convince her wards to leave their homes. Pandemic lockdowns "affected both their cognitive and physical conditions", Tsang told AFP. "The separation anxiety

and sense of interpersonal distance have also become stronger for them since many of their young relatives have left the city in recent years," she said.

At an elderly daycare centre Tsang oversees, she enlisted a special troop of caregivers to socialize with seniors — volunteer therapy dogs. Retired driver Ho Yiu-keung, 70, melted with joy when Rally, a Labrador and former guide dog, allowed him to pet her golden hair. "It's better than hanging out with people," Ho told AFP. "They (the dogs) don't talk back." He had started going to the centre after spending much of the pandemic locked down at home, making him "feel like I was being jailed", he said.

Meeting friends, exercising, and playing mahjong at the daycare have brightened his daily life, he said, advising carers to draw out the "hidden elderly" using more fun activities. "Make them happy, make them feel that they can have some attention here, then they would be interested to come out," Ho said. — AFP



This picture shows therapy dogs visiting people at an elderly daycare centre in Hong Kong.



This picture shows a therapy dog and its handler outside an elderly daycare centre in Hong Kong.



This picture shows people taking part in an afternoon disco at a community hall in Hong Kong.



This picture shows people taking part in an afternoon disco at a community hall in Hong Kong.

Spanish rapper sentenced for 'threats' against police

A Spanish rapper who fled to Belgium after being sentenced for glorifying terrorism in his lyrics, was sentenced on Tuesday to two years in prison for making "threats" against police at a concert. Prosecutors had asked for Jose Miguel Arenas Beltran — better known as Valtonyc — to be given a four-year jail term after he urged the crowd at a concert in the southern town of Marinaleda in March 2018 to "kill" a police officer "tonight".

Video images of his comments were picked up by Spanish media after they were published on social media, sparking outrage. But the rapper reached a plea deal with prosecutors and the AUGC police union which filed the complaint against the 29-year-old singer to obtain a lower sentence in exchange pleading guilty. Prosecutors and the union did not oppose the singer's request for his sentence to be suspended but the presiding judge still has to approve the measure, said a spokesman for the court in the southern city of Seville which handled the case.

Beltran fled to Belgium in 2018 after a Spanish court handed him a three-and-a-half-year jail term on charges of glorifying terror, insulting the king and making threats in his lyrics. That sentence was over lyrics in songs published online in 2012 and 2013, at a time when he was a little-known rapper in the Balearic Islands. — AFP



Jose Miguel Arenas Beltran



'Extremely venomous' green mamba loose in Netherlands

An "extremely venomous" two-meter-long green mamba snake is on the loose in the Netherlands, police said Tuesday, warning residents to stay indoors and under no circumstances attempt to ensnare the serpent. Police in the southern Dutch city of Tilburg said they were alerted by the mamba's owner on Monday evening that "he was missing a snake."

Issuing a wanted poster with a mugshot of the coiled green mamba, police warned: "The snake is very dangerous." "The green mamba's bite is extremely venomous. If anyone is bitten, it is important to seek immediate medical attention," police added.

On the plus side, police said the green mamba "does not seek confrontation" and the cold-blooded tropical creature is unlikely to slither outside into the chilly Dutch winter. "He likes dark and warm spaces. If he finds that, he will be very passive," the statement said. — AFP

Money for something: Dire Straits legend to sell guitar collection

Mark Knopfler, the former frontman of British rock group Dire Straits, announced Tuesday he will sell more than 120 guitars and amps spanning his five-decade career at an auction next year. The sale, at Christie's auctioneers on January 31, will feature the guitar used to record the band's hit song "Money For Nothing" and famously played at the legendary 1985 Live Aid concert in London.

"The Mark Knopfler Guitar Collection" sale also comprises an array of guitars he used to write, record and perform Dire Straits' and solo tracks, Christie's said. They include Gibson, Fender and Martin instruments alongside custom-built models by renowned guitar builders Rudy Pensa and John Suhr.

"It's time to take some of these treasured six-string companions out of their cases and allow them to have new adventures with new owners," Knopfler said in comments released

by the auction house. "You can be sure I'll be sad to see them go but we've had wonderful times together and I can't play them all," he added.

'Temptation'

Knopfler founded Dire Straits in 1977 with his younger brother David, bassist John Illsley, and drummer Pick Withers. The band went on to have a string of hits, such as "Sultans of Swing", "Romeo and Juliet" and "Brothers In Arms". Knopfler has also enjoyed a solo and film soundtracks career. The 74-year-old will donate a quarter of the sales proceeds to various charities, including the British Red Cross, wildlife conservationists Tusk and children's not-for-profit Brave Hearts of the North East.

The most highly valued lot — estimated at £500,000 (\$625,000) — is an original 1959 Les Paul Standard which Knopfler acquired from Bobby Tench of The Jeff Beck Group. The Gibson Les

Paul 1983 reissue guitar used to record "Money For Nothing" is expected to fetch up to £15,000 (\$19,000).

Other notable offerings include a 2002 Fender "Mark Knopfler Signature Stratocaster", set to fetch up to £6,000, and a "Pensa-Suhr MK-1" uniquely crafted and adapted by John Suhr, valued at £6,000-£8,000. Among the more affordable lots: a mandolin previously owned by blues legend Yank Rachell, set to cost £300 to £500.

Christie's will hold a December 9-13 touring exhibition in New York, followed by pre-sale viewings at its London headquarters. Speaking to the BBC recently while recording his 10th solo album, Knopfler confided that he may use some of the auction proceeds to buy new guitars, explaining that he was "not impervious to temptation". — AFP



Sports

'Odd scheduling': India series puts dampener on Australia celebrations

'We've all split off our own different ways'

SYDNEY: Australia's World Cup winners have been denied a full-scale heroes' welcome home by a packed cricket schedule that sees them face India on Thursday at the start of a Twenty20 series, four days after meeting in the one-day final. The stunning six-wicket victory on Sunday, against previously unbeaten India in front of nearly 100,000 partisan fans in Ahmedabad, saw Australia lift the ODI World Cup for the sixth time.

But celebrations had to be scaled back by the demands of the international cricket calendar. Seven members of the triumphant ODI squad will remain for the five-match T20 series including Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith and Travis Head, who scored a century in the final.

That meant a low-key return for the rest of the one-day squad as they flew home in drabs and drabs, with smiling skipper Pat Cummins among those landing in Australia on Wednesday. It was a far cry from some of the raucous ticker-tape parades enjoyed by victorious Australian cricket teams of yesteryear.

"We've all split off our own different ways, there's T20s coming up, some guys are on aeroplanes at the moment getting home as well," wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey told reporters on arrival home in Adelaide. He added: "It's probably pretty odd scheduling now that you look at it, to win a World Cup and a few days later you're play-

ing again." India have named an almost completely different squad for the series, which starts in Visakhapatnam and then goes to four different venues, concluding in Bengaluru on December 3.

Suryakumar Yadav will captain for the first time, in the absence of Rohit Sharma, and is one of only three players retained from India's World Cup squad.

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan was much less diplomatic than Carey about the prospect of India and Australia meeting again so soon.

After Australia's veteran opener David Warner withdrew from the series on Tuesday, Vaughan wrote on social media: "As all the players who won the World Cup should. They should have been pulled out to allow them time to recover but importantly get back to Oz to enjoy the celebrations."

Vaughan, who is now a high-profile pundit, was even more forthright last week, calling the series "complete greed and overkill".

"Why can't we allow players the chance to have a moment's rest after a WC or whoever wins the chance to celebrate properly for a couple of weeks," he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The World Cup trophy has remained in India and will not be reunited with captain Cummins — who has this year also guided Australia to win the World Test Championship and retain the Ashes — until next week, The Age newspaper said. — AFP



AHMEDABAD: File photo shows Australia's Glenn Maxwell (L) and David Warner posing with the trophy after winning the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) final match between India and Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on November 19, 2023. — AFP

England's Curry suffers Six Nations injury blow

LONDON: England star Tom Curry has been ruled out of the Six Nations tournament after the flanker's club Sale revealed he needs surgery on a hip injury. Curry has been troubled by the problem since playing for England at the recent World Cup in France.

After consulting with a specialist, the 25-year-old has decided an operation in the next fortnight is the best solution. That leaves Curry with no chance of recovering in time for the Six Nations, which gets underway in early February next year.

It will sideline him for the rest of Sale's English Premiership season as well. "Tom needs a clear out of his hip that will put him out for the rest of this season. This is the only option," Sale director of rugby Alex Sanderson said on Tuesday.

"I know it sounds long-term, the season, but it's not. He is still a young lad and it's the best thing for



Tom Curry

him in the short-term to ensure he is able to be more robust moving forward to train and progress his game the way he wants to. "There has always been an element of managing his load because he will just empty the tank and drink deep for the well and this time he was doing the same thing but just not recovering and wasn't able to do it again and again.

"The red flags were out that maybe there was

given the green light despite fierce resistance from some local residents.

All England Club chief executive Sally Bolton said in a statement: "Naturally, we are disappointed by the London Borough of Wandsworth's decision." Our proposals will deliver one of the greatest sporting transformations for London since 2012, alongside substantial benefits for the local community.

"We firmly believe the AELTC Wimbledon Park Project offers significant social, economic and environmental improvements, including turning 23 acres of previously private land into a new public park, alongside hundreds of jobs and tens of millions of pounds in economic benefits for our neighbours in Wandsworth, Merton and across London.

"Given the split council decision, with the London Borough of Merton resolving to approve our application last month, our planning application will now be referred to the Mayor of London's office for consideration."

The application from the grass-court Grand Slam

something deeper here and apparently there is." The injury continued a turbulent period for Curry, who accused South Africa's Bongani Mbonambi of racially abusing him during the World Cup semi-final. World Rugby found insufficient evidence to support Curry's allegation following an investigation.

The sport's governing body has closed the case unless additional evidence comes to light. England now have to plan without Curry, who has 50 caps and was a key member of their team when available.

Curry missed the 2023 Six Nations due to a hamstring injury, while he sat out England's World Cup build-up with ankle ligament damage. A red card for a dangerous tackle against Argentina in the tournament opener resulted in a two-match ban for Curry before he returned to the team.

Sale are currently top of the Premiership after five wins in their opening six matches, but they will have to sustain their title bid without Curry. There was better injury news for England's Ben Earl on Tuesday when his club Saracens confirmed the flanker should be back from a knee injury in time for the Six Nations. Earl, who impressed for England at number eight in the World Cup, suffered the injury in Saracens' victory over Harlequins last Saturday. — AFP

NFL contenders hope to be thankful after US holiday games

WASHINGTON: Traditional US Thanksgiving NFL game hosts Detroit and Dallas will be joined by Seattle as the league's holiday kickoff Thursday features title contenders seeking crucial victories on short rest. The Detroit Lions, on a three-game win streak and atop the NFC North division at 8-2, entertain Green Bay (4-6) in the 22nd edition of the most frequent Thanksgiving Day NFL matchup.

"It's something special," Lions coach Dan Campbell said. "It's a privilege to be able to play on Thanksgiving Day. Everybody is watching. All your family. All your friends. I grew up watching it as a kid. I was fortunate enough to be able to play in it, and now to coach in one, it's special."

Thursday's other games find Washington (4-7) at Dallas (7-3), with the Cowboys owning an 8-2 edge in their most frequent Thanksgiving matchup, and San Francisco (7-3) at Seattle (6-4) in a fight for the NFC West lead.

The NFL's first-ever game on the Friday after Thanksgiving sees AFC East leader Miami (7-3) at the New York Jets (4-6). Miami, Detroit, San Francisco and Dallas boast four of the NFL's five most productive offensive units.

The Lions, 12-8 with one tie against the Packers in holiday rivalry games, have not made the playoffs since 2016 and have not won a playoff game since 1991, dropping nine in a row in the post-season. "We're trying to turn over a new leaf," Campbell said. "We're trying to do something different and find a way to do some things that haven't been done in a while. This is another one of those opportunities for us."

The Lions have not won an NFL crown since 1957. But they are off to an 8-2 start for the first time since 1962 and only one game behind Philadelphia (9-1) for the NFC top seed and first-round playoff bye. Jared Goff has thrown for 2,743 yards and 16 touchdowns with eight interceptions this season. He sparked a late rally to beat Chicago on Sunday.

"We're a resilient group. We're tough. We have a lot of courage, and we don't back down from anything," Campbell said. "Certainly we're not playing the best all the way across the board, but you can't put a price on finding a way to win tough games when things don't go your way."

"We'll keep doing what we do, preaching what we preach, keep working on the little things and it will all come together." The Cowboys, two games behind Philadelphia in the NFC East, seek a third consecutive Thanksgiving triumph. "Got to take care of your body, first and foremost, and then just being ready," Dallas offensive guard Tyler Smith said of preparing for a game on short rest.

NFL's freaky Friday

The 49ers boast the NFL's top rusher in Christian McCaffrey with 825 yards and Brock Purdy directs an attack that produces 387 yards a game while the Niners defense ranks second in forcing turnovers. Seahawks quarterback Geno Smith has a triceps bruise, although Seattle coach Pete Carroll is confident he will play on Thursday.

The NFL's new Friday game will come on an afternoon famed for US shoppers chasing discounted holiday bargains. "I haven't played on Friday since high school," Dolphins wide receiver Jaylen Waddle said.

Miami boasts the NFL's top passing attack at 291 yards a game, number two run game at 143 yards a game, and top overall offensive attack at 434 yards a game. The Dolphins are powered by Tua Tagovailoa with 2,934 yards and 21 touchdowns with eight interceptions while Raheem Mostert ranks second in the NFL with 691 rushing yards and 11 touchdowns on 131 carries.

Miami's Tyreek Hill tops all NFL receivers with 1,222 yards on 79 catches with nine touchdowns. "We're going to miss Thanksgiving with our family, so that kind of sucks," Hill said. "But we get a chance to play this beautiful game." A triumph would lift Miami level with AFC leader Baltimore (8-3) in what has become a five-team fight for a top seed and playoff bye. — AFP

Wimbledon expansion plan derailed

LONDON: Wimbledon's expansion plans have suffered a significant blow after a local council rejected their proposal to build new tennis courts on land near the All England Club. Wandsworth councillors voted unanimously to snub the proposal for 39 new courts in neighbouring Wimbledon Park in south-west London.

The seven councillors acted upon the advice of their planning chiefs despite Merton Council, in which the majority of the site is located, approving it last month. The application will now be referred to the Mayor of London's office and the All England Club remains hopeful that it will still be

O'Sullivan threatens to quit in row with snooker chiefs

LONDON: Ronnie O'Sullivan has warned he will quit snooker if he is restricted from playing non-tour events in China, saying his career is at a "crossroads". Exhibition events in East Asia are becoming increasingly lucrative but often clash with World Snooker Tour dates.

Seven-time world champion O'Sullivan and other UK-based players are contracted to play in WST tournaments and could face sanctions if they miss events. "If I can't go and do what I need to do, which is play a lot in China, I won't ever play again," he told the BBC. "So, we're at a kind of crossroads now."

"If that gets to the point where I'm not able to do that, I'm not allowed to do that, I probably won't play. I'll probably go and play Chinese 8-Ball because I still want to play snooker, I still want a cue in my hand. There's just not enough here in the UK for me to justify the effort that I put in. If someone's going to respect me and value me more, why would I not go there? It's like being in an unhealthy relationship with someone. Why would you be in that?"

O'Sullivan, who said he wanted to play snooker for many years to come, has famously derided the standard on the WST in the past, suggesting he would need to lose a limb to drop down the rankings. He still adopts that stance, claiming he is "revolted" by mediocrity.

"I don't think it's very hard to be a top-16 snooker player. I could probably get away with playing once a week for two or three hours a day," said the 47-year-old. "I find it hard to put myself in their shoes because I was in their shoes and I didn't accept top 50 as OK. I'm not a great lover for mediocrity... I find it quite revolting in some ways, when I see people accepting that. That's why I don't hang around snooker people at venues because I just don't like seeing it. — AFP

given the green light despite fierce resistance from some local residents.

All England Club chief executive Sally Bolton said in a statement: "Naturally, we are disappointed by the London Borough of Wandsworth's decision." Our proposals will deliver one of the greatest sporting transformations for London since 2012, alongside substantial benefits for the local community.

"We firmly believe the AELTC Wimbledon Park Project offers significant social, economic and environmental improvements, including turning 23 acres of previously private land into a new public park, alongside hundreds of jobs and tens of millions of pounds in economic benefits for our neighbours in Wandsworth, Merton and across London.

"Given the split council decision, with the London Borough of Merton resolving to approve our application last month, our planning application will now be referred to the Mayor of London's office for consideration."

The application from the grass-court Grand Slam



Wimbledon tennis court

included an 8,000-capacity show court on land previously occupied by Wimbledon golf course. The expansion would have allowed Wimbledon's qualifying tournament to take place on site.

That would be in line with the other three Grand Slams, with Wimbledon's qualifying event held over three miles away in Roehampton at present. — AFP



Novak Djokovic

Djokovic hoping for 'final push' for Serbia in Davis Cup

MALAGA: Novak Djokovic said Wednesday he is aiming to carry his superb form into the Davis Cup and winning the competition with Serbia this week is one of his "greatest goals". The 36-year-old great has won three Grand Slams this year, with an all-time best tally of 24 and clinched his seventh ATP Finals title on Sunday in Turin, beating both Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz. Djokovic and Serbia, who last won the Davis Cup in 2010, face Great Britain on Thursday in the last eight. "It's the last week of the season, so one final push is necessary from each one of us," world number one Djokovic told reporters.

"I couldn't be happier with the way I performed in the semi-finals and finals of Turin, so hopefully I'm carrying this kind of energy and performance lev-

el to the Davis Cup." He continued: "As I said many months ago, actually (at) the beginning of the season, the Davis Cup has been and is one of my greatest goals of this season and always is. Hopefully I will be able to contribute to win." Djokovic said he loves the Costa del Sol, where his brother lives, calling it "one of the most beautiful places in the world" but was critical of the tournament being held in the same country four years running.

Since the Davis Cup changed format in 2019 the finals have been held twice in Madrid and twice in Malaga. "(Allowing) one nation to host every year the last 8 for now three, four years in a row ... Madrid, Malaga, is too much, in my opinion," said Djokovic.

"It has to travel. This is a competition that is played globally. I feel like the Davis Cup Finals, at least if you're going to keep it (with a) final four, final eight, should travel every year. It shouldn't stay in one place more than a year." Serbia face a British team aiming to win the trophy for the first time since 2014 but shorn of former world number one Andy Murray and Dan Evans, who was crucial in reaching the finals. — AFP

Sports

Croatia secure Euro 2024 ticket, France held by Greece

Wales draw 1-1 with already-qualified Turkey in Cardiff

PARIS: Croatia clinched the final automatic qualifying spot for Euro 2024 on Tuesday as Wales were forced to settle for a play-off place, while France had to come from behind to draw in Greece. Semi-finalists at the World Cup 12 months ago, Croatia knew they would qualify for next year's European Championship in Germany with a win against Armenia in Zagreb, but any slip-up would have allowed Wales to leapfrog them into second place in Group D.

In the end it was a header two minutes before half-time by Ante Budimir that gave Croatia a 1-0 win to take them through, while Wales could only draw 1-1 with already-qualified Turkey in Cardiff. Croatia's prospects of automatic qualification had appeared in doubt when they lost to both Turkey and Wales in October, but they become the 21st and final automatic qualifier for the 24-team tournament next June and July.

"We deserve to be at the Euro and we have a lot of time now to prepare for what awaits us there," veteran captain Luka Modric told UEFA.com. Wales will now go into the play-offs next March to determine whether they qualify for a third consecutive Euro.

A draw this Thursday will decide whether they face Finland, Ukraine or Iceland in the play-off semi-finals. A victory in that would set up a final decider against Poland or Estonia, with three qualifying spots in total on offer in the play-offs. They beat Ukraine in a play-off to qualify for last year's World Cup.

Rob Page's side needed to beat Turkey on Tuesday to stand a chance of overtaking Croatia, and they went ahead through an early Neco Williams goal. However, Yusuf Yazici's 70th-minute penalty earned Turkey a draw. "That level of performance is

what we need to do. If we do that when we come back together in March we'll be ok," insisted Page.

French denied late winner

France missed out on finishing with a perfect record in Group B as they drew 2-2 with Greece in Athens. Randal Kolo Muani's opener put France, with Kylian Mbappe rested from the starting line-up, in front late in the first half.

Captain Tasos Bakasetas equalised for Greece soon after the break and Fotis Ioannidis then put them in front. However, Youssouf Fofana's powerful strike pulled France level again, and they appeared to be denied a certain winner at the death when Kingsley Coman's deflected cutback seemed to cross the goal-line before spinning back onto the post and out. But it was missed by the on-field officials, who had no goal-line technology to help them.

"This is the international level. There was no qualification at stake obviously but there could have been," French coach Didier Deschamps complained to broadcaster TF1. "To have a ground with no goal-line technology—because there isn't, because it's expensive—obviously it is incoherent, but the officials have to put up with it," he said, adding that the VAR official could not give a goal if he was "only 99 percent sure" the ball had gone in.

Dutch hit six

Greece, the 2004 Euro winners, do not qualify automatically but can still come through the play-offs. The Netherlands had already qualified from the same group before their 6-0 win over minnows Gibraltar in Faro, Portugal.

Calvin Stengs of Feyenoord scored a hat-trick,



ZAGREB: Croatia's midfielder #10 Luka Modric controls the ball during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group D qualification football match between Croatia and Armenia at the Maksimir Stadium in Zagreb. — AFP

with Mats Wieffer, Teun Koopmeiners and Liverpool's Cody Gakpo also netting. Romania and Switzerland had already qualified from Group I prior to their clash in Bucharest, which the hosts won 1-0 thanks to Denis Alibec's second-half goal.

Zionist entity, who will be in the play-offs, won 2-0 in Andorra in the same group, while Belarus beat Kosovo 1-0. The final draw for Euro 2024 will take place in Hamburg on December 2. — AFP

Ivory Coast score 9 against Seychelles for record victory

JOHANNESBURG: Ivory Coast crushed Seychelles 9-0 in Abidjan on Friday to create a record winning margin for a World Cup qualifier in Africa. Borussia Dortmund forward Sebastian Haller started the goal rush on 20 minutes and Karim Konate from Salzburg completed it five minutes into added time.

Konate and Hamed Traore scored two goals each and Haller, Ibrahim Sangare, Simon Adingra, Seko Fofana and Jean-Philippe Krasso one apiece in the matchday one Group F mismatch. Seychelles, a tourist destination off the east coast of Africa, are 195th in the FIFA rankings, 121 places below the Ivory Coast.

The seedings for the first round of 2026 World Cup qualifying in Africa meant the nine top-ranked teams were paired at home against the nine bottom ones, so it was almost inevitable that there could be some one-sided matches.

Egypt put six past Djibouti on Thursday in Group A with Liverpool star Mohamed Salah netting four times. Before the Abidjan goal deluge, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya and Algeria shared the record

with eight-goal winning margins.

While the Ivorians scored freely, fellow west Africans Ghana had to wait 96 minutes before Inaki Williams snatched the goal that earned a 1-0 win against Madagascar in Group I. The Bilbao forward possibly saved the job of under-fire Ghana coach Chris Hughton by heading a Gideon Mensah cross past goalkeeper Melvin Adrien in Kumasi.

Special goal

"This goal is very dear to me because my family was in the stadium," said Spain-born Williams after scoring his first for the country of his parents. Former Premier League manager Hughton has been under huge pressure since friendly losses to Mexico and the United States last month.

Cameroon, whose eight World Cup appearances is an African record, struggled for much of a Group D home match with minnows Mauritius before a couple of late goals completed a 3-0 win. Brentford forward Bryan Mbeumo broke the deadlock in first-half added time in Douala and Georges N'Koudou and Frank Magri netted when the visitors tired.



ABIDJAN: Seychelles' forward #07 Brandon Labrosse vies for the ball with Ivory Coast's defender #21 Evan Ndicka (R) during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Africa qualifying match between Ivory Coast and Seychelles at the Olympic Stadium of Ebimpe, northern Abidjan. — AFP

Tunisia, who have qualified six times for the global showpiece, also won comfortably at home, beating Sao Tome e Principe 4-0 in Group H in Rades. Zambia continued a revival under former Chelsea manager Avram Grant with second-half goals from Fashion Sakala and Patson Daka delivering a 4-2 Group E win over Congo Brazzaville in Ndola.

Burkina Faso, who hope to challenge Egypt for the first place and automatic qualification for the 2026 finals from Group A, suffered a setback when held 1-1 by Guinea-Bissau. Reigning African champions Senegal and South Africa are among the teams in action on Saturday, when the 26-fixture first round ends. Matchday two begins on Sunday. — AFP

Sane sees red as Germany's woeful run continues

BERLIN: Leroy Sane was shown red for lashing out at an opponent as Germany went down 2-0 to Austria in Vienna on Tuesday, continuing their woeful run just over six months from hosting Euro 2024. Goals in each half from Marcel Sabitzer and Christoph Baumgartner, along with Sane's red after making contact with the face of Austrian defender Philipp Mwene, compounded a poor night for Julian Nagelsmann's men in the friendly.

The red card, Sane's first in a professional football career spanning more than 400 games, meant Germany were forced to play catch-up for most of

the second-half with a man down. "I think the red card for Leroy just sums it all up: the frustration, the disappointment," Germany captain Ilkay Gundogan told TV network ZDF.

"At the end we made it far, far too easy for the Austrians to create and score goals. We were simply not good enough." Sane later apologised to fans and his teammates on social media, saying "despite my emotion and ambition, this can't happen to me, especially in our current situation". Nagelsmann said his side could turn things around "only with extremely hard work".

Austria forward Michael Gregoritsch described the victory as "extremely nice, extremely sweet... it was a nice conclusion to the season". The visitors have now won just three of 11 matches in 2023, a run which claimed the scalp of former coach Hansi Flick, the first manager sacked in Germany history.

Austria have now won seven and lost just one of their ten matches in 2023 while qualifying for Euro

2024, continuing an impressive run under former Manchester United coach Ralf Rangnick. Rangnick praised his troops, saying "I told them before the game to be courageous, play with pleasure and enjoy the game—and they did all three."

Gregoritsch gigantic

With eight of Austria's starting XI playing in the German Bundesliga, the home side refused to be awed by their decorated neighbours, cutting gaping holes in the visitors' backline from the opening whistle.

Freiburg striker Gregoritsch should have scored when through one-on-one with keeper Kevin Trapp after 17 minutes but the Frankfurt goalie managed to get an outstretched hand onto the shot. Austria hit the lead shortly after when the towering 1.93-metre Gregoritsch plucked a ball out of the air and fed it to Baumgartner, who put Sabitzer in space. —AFP

Southgate wants England to have quiet life at Euros

LONDON: England manager Gareth Southgate wants his side to enjoy the quiet life at the European Championship in Germany. Southgate's men will be among the top seeds when the draw for Euro 2024 is made in Hamburg in December.

The 53-year-old will be at the draw not only to see who England face in the group stage but also to learn more about where they will be based during their stay in Germany. The tournament is being regionalised for sustainability purposes, with priority given to teams whose preferred base camps are closer to their match venues.

England have registered their interest in a number of options across Germany and Southgate suggested their base will be off the beaten path. "Really somewhere where we can be a little bit on our own. We need that nice contrast of relaxation and areas where we can work," he said.

"You want to minimise travel where you can but we are really, within the FA, our staff are really good at picking those venues that I think the players will enjoy and will feel comfortable in. "You basically want to be somewhere where everything that's going on around you, you can zone out from really but somewhere with facilities that are good for working." — AFP



Gareth Southgate

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	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

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Change of Name

I, Harvinder Singh S/o Baldev Singh, Holder of Indian Passport No. W4660240, Permanent Address is Ward Number 7, Patti Nissoki, Mudki, Tehsil & Dist. Ferozepur (Pb.), India, now residing in Kuwait hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Harvinder Singh. #4562 – 22-11-2023

I, MAHABOOB BASHA SHAIK, holder of Indian Passport No L8616981, issue at Kuwait, Indian permanent address 5/46 GUNTIKDADA PALLI, PULIKUNTA, GALIVEEDU, CUDDAPAH,

ANDHRA PRADESH, 516267, INDIA, present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name MINUDDIN and Surname SHAIK.) #4561 – 22-11-2023

I, Deva Lenil, Holder of Indian Passport No. T8278498, Issue at Kuwait Indian permanent address 100, 1 Palavesa Muthan Thattu Naduvakurichi Vill, Thayyarmadam- Post, Sathankulam Taluk, Thoothukudi-Pin- 628653 Tamilnadu, India present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as

given name Deva Lenil and surname Antony Jeganraja. #4560 – 22-11-2023

I, Musthafa Kamal Malik Batcha S/o Musthafa Kamal holder of Indian Passport No. L4906329 having permanent address 8/2067,2068, KMS Nagar, Melacauvery, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur, Melakaveri, Tamil Nadu, 612002, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Nazeer Ahamed (given name) and Musthafa Kamal (surname). (C#4070) 21-11-2023

Argentina sink Brazil in World Cup qualifier as Uruguay march on

Tempers flare in the stands at the Maracana moments before kick-off



RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina's midfielder Giovani Lo Celso (C) and Brazil's defender Marquinhos (R) fight for the ball during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualification football match between Brazil and Argentina at Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina defeated Brazil 1-0 on Tuesday in an ill-tempered 2026 World Cup qualifying clash marred by pre-match crowd trouble that forced kick-off to be delayed. A 63rd-minute header from veteran defender Nicolas Otamendi secured victory for Argentina as the world champions bounced back from last week's defeat to Uruguay to beat their bitter South American rivals.

The win at Rio's iconic Maracana Stadium leaves Argentina on top of the South American qualifying standings with 15 points from six games. Brazil's third defeat of qualifying, meanwhile, leaves the five-time world champions in sixth place with seven points from six games.

"This group continues to achieve historic things," Argentina captain Lionel Messi said afterwards. "Maybe today wasn't the most important thing, but it was a nice win." Tempers had flared in the stands at the Maracana moments before kick-off, with Brazilian police seen using batons to drive back a block of Argentine fans at one end of the ground.

Several Argentina players went towards the disturbances in an apparent attempt to plead for calm, with goalkeeper Emi Martinez attempting to jump

into the seating area at one stage to confront a baton-wielding Brazilian police officer. Argentina's players led by Messi then returned to their dressing room as the clashes continued, with Messi appearing to say: "We're not playing, we're leaving." Messi later explained he had taken his team-mates off the field in the hope of cooling the atmosphere.

"We went to the locker room because it was a way to calm everything down a little," Messi said. "We went to see how our families and people close to us were doing. And then we came back." The 2022 World Cup winners re-emerged onto the field shortly before 10pm local time and the match kicked off shortly afterwards, roughly 30 minutes later than the scheduled start time.

The febrile pre-match atmosphere spilled onto the field when play finally got under way, with Brazil's Arsenal striker Gabriel Jesus being given a yellow card after just five minutes after clashing with Argentina's Rodrigo De Paul.

Tense atmosphere

The tense nature of the contest continued throughout a poor first half, with neither side cre-

ating much in the way of goalscoring opportunities in a game littered with niggly fouls. Brazil winger Raphinha was booked in the 14th minute for flinging an arm into the face of De Paul, and was lucky not to receive a second yellow five minutes later after catching Alexis MacAllister with a wild studs-up challenge.

Brazil meanwhile failed to register a single shot—either on or off target—until a 38th minute free-kick from Raphinha that deflected wide for a corner. The only shot on goal from either side in the entire first half came on 44 minutes, when Brazil's Gabriel Martinelli lashed a muffed clearance from Argentina goalkeeper Martinez back towards goal.

Martinelli's shot was heading for the net but Argentina breathed a sigh of relief after defender Cristian Romero blocked the effort on the line. Brazil started the second half more positively, with Raphinha having a shot blocked at the near post by Martinez after 54 minutes.

Martinez then rescued Argentina again, parrying Martinelli's goal-bound shot after a good run by Gabriel. But Brazil were rocked after Argentina took the lead on 63 minutes with their first attempt on target

of the match. Giovani Lo Celso swung in an inviting corner from the left and the 35-year-old Otamendi soared above Brazil midfielder Andre to head home for 1-0. A miserable night for Brazil got worse in the 82nd minute when substitute Joelinton—who had only been on the field for 12 minutes—was sent off for an off-the-ball clash with De Paul.

In other South American qualifiers on Tuesday, Liverpool striker Darwin Nunez scored twice as Uruguay easily beat Bolivia 3-0 to remain in second place in the standings, two points behind Argentina. Colombia kept up their qualification push with a 1-0 win over Paraguay in Asuncion, while Chile's problems mounted with a 1-0 defeat in Quito against Ecuador.

Colombia, who failed to qualify for the 2022 World Cup, are third in the table with 12 points. Chile however are languishing in eighth spot with just five points. In the day's other game, Peru drew 1-1 with Venezuela in Lima. The top six teams of the round-robin home-and-away qualifying tournament will earn berths at the 48-team 2026 World Cup taking place in the United States, Canada and Mexico, while the seventh-placed team goes into a play-off. — AFP

Finland stun champs Canada to reach Davis Cup semis

MALAGA: Finland eliminated reigning champions Canada with a 2-1 Davis Cup last eight triumph, buoyed by fervent support as the finals began in Malaga on Tuesday. Following their triumph in the Billie Jean King Cup earlier in November, Canada hoped to continue their success in the men's World Cup of tennis, but were ousted as Finland reached the semi-finals for the first time.

Canada's Milos Raonic eased to a 6-3, 7-5 win over Patrick Kulkovalta in the first singles rubber before Otto Virtanen kept Finland's hopes alive by beating Gabriel Diallo 6-4, 7-5. Virtanen returned alongside Harri Heliövaara to triumph 7-5, 6-3 in the decisive doubles against Alexis Galarneau and Vasek Pospisil to delight a few thousand Finnish supporters on the Costa del Sol.

"We played really great doubles today ... we played really great together," said Virtanen. Heliövaara revealed he had never even played with his team-mate in training as a doubles pairing before defeating Canada.

"We have never, ever practised even one point together before today... we went through the tactics 15 minutes before the match," he said. Neither country had their top-ranked player available, with Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime and Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori both hurt.



MALAGA: Finland's Otto Virtanen returns the ball to Canada's Gabriel Diallo during the first men's single quarter-final tennis match between Canada and Finland of the Davis Cup tennis tournament at the Martin Carpena sportshall, in Malaga. -- AFP

Raonic came flying out of the blocks with four aces to hold to love in the first game against Kulkovalta and racked up 18 in total in his straight sets triumph. The former world number three made his competitive comeback in June after nearly two years away because of injuries but his high-power serve remains as lethal as ever.

Despite a splash of Canadian red in the stands at the Martin Carpena arena being outnumbered by those in blue and white, the Canadian held his nerve in his first Davis Cup match since 2018. After breaking for a 5-3 lead in the first set and serving it out, dropping just one point on serve in the process, Raonic lost only two more in the second set of his convincing victory. — AFP

History for LeBron as Lakers advance in season tournament

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James claimed another piece of NBA history on Tuesday, becoming the first player to break the 39,000-point barrier as the Los Angeles Lakers routed the Utah Jazz to reach the knockout stage of the league's new in-season tournament.

The 38-year-old, needing just five points to reach the milestone heading into the game, etched his name into the record books with a three-pointer in the first quarter of a 131-99 Lakers win. James, who passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar last season to become the NBA's all-time leading scorer, saluted the crowd as his achievement was announced.

"I haven't really had an opportunity to wrap my head around what it means," James said of his latest scoring milestone. "There's been so many great players in this league since the beginning of time, and so many great scorers."

"To be able to be the first of anything is always pretty cool. A wild moment, for sure." James' landmark set the mood for a celebratory occasion at the Crypto.com Arena as the Lakers went on to score a wire-to-wire win and reach the in-season tournament's quarter-finals.

James finished with 17 points from 6-of-10 shooting, while Anthony Davis led the Lakers scorers with 26 points, 16 rebounds and four assists. Elsewhere,



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers is double teamed by Talen Horton-Tucker #5 and Lauri Markkanen #23 of the Utah Jazz during the first half of an NBA In-Season Tournament game at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. — AFP

Kevin Durant also passed a scoring milestone, moving up to 11th place on the NBA's career scoring list in Phoenix's 120-107 drubbing of the Portland Trail Blazers. Durant needed 14 points to overtake Elvin Hayes on the scoring charts, and duly knocked them down in a free-scoring first quarter. Durant finished with 31 points to lead the Phoenix scoring, taking his career tally to 27,331 points.

The Indiana Pacers beat the Atlanta Hawks 157-152 in a rollicking shootout to also reach the knockout stages. Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton, who said this week the new tournament gave "more juice" to early season games, scored 22 of his 37 points in the third quarter as the Pacers erased a 20-point first-half deficit. — AFP