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Amir in stable health condition

Amiri Diwan urges people to obtain verified news from official sources



KUWAIT: The health condition of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is stable and he is taking necessary medication, the Amiri Diwan Minister said Wednesday. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah called in a statement on the public to verify news with regards to HH the Amir's health, obtaining such information only from official sources.

The minister prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow HH the Amir with good health and rapid recovery. Earlier on Wednesday, Sheikh Mohammad had said HH the Amir was admitted to the hospital due to an emergency health problem to receive the necessary treatment and undergo medical examinations. He confirmed the health condition of HH the Amir is stable. — KUNA

Assembly approves housing laws, amends handicapped law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly on Wednesday unanimously passed the second and final readings of two laws aimed at accelerating the process of

building homes for Kuwaitis by reducing the waiting period, which now reaches more than 15 years. The Assembly also passed key amendments to a law providing welfare to handicapped Kuwaitis by adding two new categories of non-Kuwaitis who are relatives of citizens. In the session that ended late Tuesday, the Assembly passed in two readings an important law to bring the chamber of commerce and industry under the supervision of the ministry of commerce and industry. The chamber, which is controlled by the elite business community, has been functioning as an independent entity.

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Crown Prince meets Pak PM



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Pakistani Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations and means to boost cooperation in various fields, as well as prominent issues of common interest and latest developments in the region. — KUNA (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Blinken calls Sheikh Salem

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a phone call from US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, where they discussed the dangerous developments in Gaza Strip and ways to stop the Zionist occupation's crimes against Palestinians. Sheikh Salem stressed on Kuwait's firm stand by the Palestinian people, calling for the need to stop the ongoing killing in Gaza immediately, to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and to work to ensure that the conflict does not expand, including finding effective ways to end the dangerous deterioration that threatens the security of the region as a whole. Blinken also offered his sincere condolences to Sheikh Salem over the passing of his mother. — KUNA

Erdogan calls Bibi 'butcher of Gaza'

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday branded Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "the butcher of Gaza" and accused him of spawning anti-Semitism across the world. He has branded the Zionist entity a "terrorist state" and called Hamas "a liberation group". "Netanyahu has already written his name in history as the butcher of Gaza," Erdogan said in nationally televised remarks. "Netanyahu is endangering the security of all Jews in the world by supporting anti-Semitism with the murders he committed in Gaza. Statements made by the Netanyahu administration diminish our hopes for the humanitarian pause to be transformed into a lasting ceasefire," Erdogan said. — AFP

Zionists kill 2 boys; 5 babies found dead

RAMALLAH: An eight-year-old boy and a teenager were killed by the Zionist army on Wednesday in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, according to the Palestinian health ministry. The ministry said in a statement that "Adam Al-Ghul, eight years old, and Bassem Abu el-Wafa, 15 years old, were killed by bullets from the occupier".

CCTV footage circulating online and on television news shows a boy being struck by a bullet and falling in the street, sending other children fleeing. Other images show a teenager also being hit by a bullet and fall-

ing, then appearing to call for help as more shots hit the ground around him and other people run for cover. The teenager can be seen struggling on the ground in apparent agony for at least half a minute.

An official with the Palestinian Red Crescent told AFP that the boy and the teen had been on a side street of central Jenin's main thoroughfare, an area theoretically off limits to the Zionist military as it is under the sole control of the Palestinian Authority. Asked about the deaths by AFP, the army said it was "verifying" the information.

The army added that it had carried out an overnight raid in the Jenin refugee camp in which it "killed two high-ranking terrorists". The Red Crescent reported having provided aid to six Palestinians

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JENIN: A rescuer and residents check the damage of a house following a Zionist raid in this occupied West Bank city on Nov 29, 2023. — AFP

Full Gaza truce urged; UN warns of catastrophe

GAZA: Efforts intensified Wednesday to extend a halt in deadly violence in Gaza as a truce was set to expire, with a source saying Hamas was willing to free more Zionist captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. A current cessation of hostilities was scheduled to end early Thursday after a six-day pause in a conflict sparked by deadly Hamas attacks that prompted a devastating Zionist military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was due to travel to the Zionist entity on Wednesday to push for an extension of the pause in fighting, while UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres demanded a more lasting ceasefire. Gazans are "in the midst of an epic humanitarian catastrophe," Guterres said, after seven weeks of bombing that have left buildings levelled and inhabitants short of food and water. "Intense negotiations are taking place to prolong the truce — which we strongly welcome — but we believe we need a true humanitarian ceasefire," he told a UN



RAMALLAH: A newly released Palestinian child prisoner gestures during a welcome ceremony following the release of prisoners from Zionist jails on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP

Security Council meeting.

Sixty Zionist captives and 180 Palestinian prisoners have been released under the truce agreement to the joy of their relatives — but Wednesday also saw fresh reminders of the tragic stakes of the conflict. The Zionist army said it was investigating a report by Hamas' armed wing that a 10-month-old baby, his four-year-old brother and their mother had all been killed in Gaza in Zionist strikes.

Continued on Page 6

UAE to pump CO2 into rock to capture carbon

FUJAIRAH: High in remote mountains in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, a new plant will soon take atmospheric CO2 and pump it into rock — part of attempts to target planet-heating emissions without abandoning fossil fuels. Using novel technology developed by Omani start-up 44.01, the solar-powered plant will suck carbon dioxide from the air, dissolve it in seawater and inject it deep underground, where it will mineralize over a period of months.

The new site on the Gulf of Oman is funded by state oil giant ADNOC, whose CEO Sultan Al-Jaber is president of the UN's COP28 climate talks and chairman of Masdar, a renewable energies company. The first CO2 injection is expected during COP28 which starts on Thursday in nearby Dubai, and where the debate over hydrocarbons will be a key battle between campaigners and the oil lobby.

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Kuwait, Pakistan sign MoUs, agreements in multiple fields

Pakistan keen on bolstering ties with Kuwait: Kakar



First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (right) receives Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday. — KUNA photos

In my view

Netanyahu and Bond: Licensed to kill!

By Prof Abdullah Yousef Sahar



Since the establishment of the modern state after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, two people have been granted a license to kill: James Bond and Benjamin Netanyahu! The difference between the two men; however, is that the first was acting and intended to kill supposedly bad guys, while the second one was provided with a license for real mass slaughtering. If the James Bond was acting with the endorsement of the Hollywood establishment, then Netanyahu was honored with that fatal license by the American verification stamp!

The license to mass murder innocents, obtained by the Zionist entity Prime Minister, was given on the basis of the "Anti-Semitism" catchword. By this mishmash slogan, what so called Zionist entity has gained is the absolute right to dominate the region as a legitimate political entity based on religious myths!

Is it reasonable for the international community to accept his reality? It is really dreadful that after nearly four centuries since the Treaty of Westphalia, that had laid the first stone for the nation - state, an exception is merely donated to the Zionist oligarchy to impose an exclusive religious state. Alas, it could be said that the exception is given based upon fanatic interpretation of the "the chosen people", which legitimizes Netanyahu's license to kill.

With its religious myth, the US has free handed Zionist entity unlimited authority to seize the land of indigenous citizens, then expel them or imprison them under the restrictions of the filthiest detention camps in the world, and finally exterminate them!

Is it reasonable, after a long series of human rights treaties, war crimes conventions, and international norms, that many Western countries are indeed granting a "complimentary" killing license for Netanyahu to ethnically cleanse the region of Palestinians in order to seize their lands?

These and other questions must be raised and politically debated with complete impartiality and without any need of much ado. The ruling apparatus in the United States of America and many of the world countries that support the Zionist entity, especially in the so-called civilized world, must confront their people with a transparent answer regarding contradictory and incorrect political positions that they are taking on the side of war criminals led by Netanyahu and his fanatic gangsters.

The most important question; however, that must be addressed in this human predicament is: will the license to kill innocents that was granted to Netanyahu has future repercussions? This license, unfortunately, will definitely pave a wide way for every political entity to honor itself with the same right to kill by utilizing the same justifications that have been capitalized by Netanyahu and those who support him.

Ultimately, if the James Bond films were produced for entertainment with an indirect projection about the hidden intelligence conflict, the current horrific political scene is actually embodied in the images and voice of the innocent and the oppressed that will never fade away. Furthermore, if the profits from the James Bond movie went to the film producers and actors, there is no doubt that the current Netanyahu's license to kill, that he freely obtained, will be very costly to the civilization and turn its dialogue to just hypocritical lips service. The license to kill that some countries granted to Netanyahu in order to kill the people of Gaza undoubtedly will have an anxious future and fearful ramifications on world peace, as well as promoting the law of the jungle instead of the law of the United Nations. Therefore, if Netanyahu and his gangsters are not held responsible as war criminals, it is better for the United Nations to replace the first sentence of its charter from "We the people of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," to "we are the killers determined to slaughter you and enslave the succeeding generations".

Note: Prof Abdullah Yousef Sahar is professor of International Relations, Kuwait University



Kuwait and Islamic Republic of Pakistan sign Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between the foreign ministries of both countries on Wednesday.

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait and Islamic Republic of Pakistan signed on Wednesday several agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to bolster cooperation in various fields. This came after the meeting between First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar. Prior to the signings of agreements, Sheikh Talal Khaled and Prime Minister Kakar held a meeting reviewing all possible venues to boost ties between Kuwait and Pakistan.

The two officials also touched on issues pertaining to region and the world, expressing desire to coordinate efforts to achieve global peace and security.

Following the meeting, the two officials oversaw the signing of several agreements and MoUs focusing on the fields of environmental protection, sustainable development, as well as cultural and technical cooperation. An MoU between the foreign ministries of both countries was also signed to expand cooperation, coordination and dialogue.

The Pakistani prime minister also met with Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Minister of State of Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Acting Minister of Public Works and the Head of the honorary mission Dr Jassem Al-Ostad, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Rogbah, Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah, Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Upon arrival, the Pakistan premier was received at Kuwait International Airport by Dr Jassem Al-Ostad, senior state officials, and the ambassadors of the two countries.

Prime Minister Kakar said, during an interview with KUNA, that the Kuwaiti leadership showed keen interest to develop and further strengthen the relationship between Kuwait and Pakistan. Kakar added that both countries needed to be more engaged, stating, "We are taking up this opportunity to develop this relation with the Kuwaiti people and

government. There are many areas we can expand ties, ranging from agriculture, food security, IT to defense and mining. There are many areas where mutual interest can converge," he said.

On the current agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), Kakar said, "There were more than a dozen MoUs in different sectors from IT to agriculture to water interventions. We are expecting that they are not the last ones. It is just the beginning of a new era."

On economic relations, he said when it comes to demography, Kuwait is a small nation, but holds an utmost important role in the region and global affairs. "And a huge transformation is taking place currently to modernize Kuwaiti economy and diversifying its investment portfolios," he said. "The region is opening up and the region is awakening and I feel Kuwait has got a pivotal leadership role to play in that," he pointed out. Prime Minister Kakar's visit to Kuwait coincided with the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. — KUNA



Kuwait National Library's team at the 46th edition of Kuwait International Book Fair.

Book Fair visitors explore Kuwait history through digital ecosystem

KUWAIT: Visitors to the 46th edition of Kuwait International book fair explored Kuwait digital archive, first launched on Dec 30, 2020, which aimed to preserve Kuwait's history and heritage morally, intellectually, and materially through a digital ecosystem. The visitors were briefed on all sources and documents that discussed

many fields in Kuwait's history, in the National Library of Kuwait. The project's main aim is to preserve the country's history and documents as well as allow researchers and those who are interested to have access, saving it for the next generations in all different means of information, visual, readable and audible. — KUNA



An old manuscript on display.



National Library of Kuwait team at the book fair.

KU graduates attend Gulf Youth Program

MANAMA: Graduates from Kuwait University's College of Administrative Sciences, namely Dima Al-Habishi, Sarah Al-Ghanim, Shahad Al-Sunayyen and Sumaya Al-Shammari, actively participated in the Gulf Youth Program "Tomorrow's Skills". The program, held in cooperation with youth organizations across Arab Gulf countries and in coordination with the GCC General Secretariat, is taking place from Nov 18 to Dec 1 in Bahrain.

Habishi, a distinguished alumna of the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, shared insights into the program's impact, highlighting the diverse and enriching workshops attended by her and her colleagues. The workshops primarily focused on the pivotal role of youth in accelerating development goals and overcoming challenges. Habishi emphasized the crucial role of the younger generation in shaping the future and actualizing developmental objectives.

She stressed the program's significance in realizing the aspirations of Gulf youth, equipping them with essential skills to navigate their futures and actively participate in the developmental processes unfolding in Gulf countries.

The "Skills of Tomorrow" initiative encompasses a variety of workshops led by academic experts in skills development, panel discussions featuring experienced speakers engaging with youth to exchange experiences and information, as well as discussion sessions involving specialists and academics. The program also facilitates direct interactions between youth leaders and a diverse group of young participants.

Notably, the ministry of youth affairs in Bahrain has curated complementary programs with the objective of identifying urban, developmental, historical, and heritage projects within the kingdom. These additional initiatives aim to provide a broader understanding of Bahrain's urban and cultural landscape, offering participants a comprehensive experience beyond the formal program structure.

The active involvement of graduates from Kuwait University's College of Administrative Sciences in "Tomorrow's Skills" underscores the commitment of Gulf youth to actively engage in shaping their communities and contributing to the broader developmental agenda of the Gulf region.



KUWAIT: KIB team poses for a group photo. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Culinary delights draw Kuwait's food lovers to 'FoodBuzz' festival

KIB sponsors event to bolster SMEs • Kuwait Times issues special edition on KIB

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The FoodBuzz festival took place at Al-Hamra Tower on Wednesday, drawing a diverse crowd eager to enjoy the weather and indulge in a diverse array of culinary delights. The event was sponsored by Kuwait International Bank (KIB), reflecting a commendable initiative to bolster small businesses in the region.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Marwa Marafie, Manager of the Marketing and Corporate Communications Department at KIB, said: "At Kuwait International Bank, we have always been supporters of Kuwaiti small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurial projects, as part of our comprehensive social responsibility program and community engagement initiatives. We are delighted to maintain an active presence at FoodBuzz, as we have extended our sponsorship of the iconic food and beverage festival for the third year in a row."

She added: "During the latest edition of the festival, we saw remarkable participation from entrepreneurs and visitors alike, which contributes to supporting the SME sector in Kuwait and benefiting the local economy at large."

Marafie noted the theme for KIB's booth at the festival this year revolved around recycling. "It provided us with a great opportunity to engage the festival's visitors in conversations around sustainability and driving positive change," she said, adding, "As part of our booth, a newspaper stand dedicated to a special Kuwait Times edition focused on KIB's long list of achievements as a 'Bank for Life'."



People flock to FoodBuzz festival.



Food lovers enjoy the weather and indulge in a diverse array of culinary delights at 'FoodBuzz' festival at Al-Hamra Tower on Wednesday.



A visitor reads Kuwait Times at KIB booth.



Marwa Marafie, Manager - Marketing and Corporate Communications Department at KIB



A visitor reads KIB's latest news in Kuwait Times newspaper.



Technology sector can push growth: CITRA official

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Omar Al-Omar said that the information and communications technology sector has great potential to push the rate of economic growth in the country through the improvements in efficiency and increases in productivity.

Al-Omar was delivering a speech on behalf of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Fahad Al-Shula during the Gulf Information and Communications Technology conference which was launched on Wednesday with the participation of many government agencies. The conference will last for two days. Al-Omar said that investment in this sector con-



Omar Al-Omar addresses the conference.

tributes immensely to the development of other related sectors as it works to improve public services and the emergence of innovative information institutions. He added that one of the most important goals of information and communication technology is that it will help strengthen security and preservation of systems and information.



Delegates attend the Gulf Information and Communications Technology conference. — KUNA photos

He explained that information and communications technology is linked to the development of societies in the present era and is the most important means of transforming societies to more devel-

oped ones. The progress in information technology has become one of the most important areas that has witnessed tremendous development and has changed the way we live and work, he added.

Primary healthcare conference in Kuwait on Dec 6

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced that the fifth Kuwait Primary Healthcare Conference will be held on Dec 6 and 44 scientific lectures will be held during the conference to be presented by an elite group of lecturers from inside and outside Kuwait. The conference will be held under the patronage of the Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, director of the Central Department of Primary Health Care in the Ministry Dr Dina Al-Dabaib.



Dr Dina Al-Dabaib

In a press statement on Wednesday, she said the three-day conference will address very important topics in the field of primary healthcare and the latest medical developments, in addition to the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing the role of the primary healthcare. Dr Al-Dabaib indicated that the conference will include a poster competition section and the entries will be evaluated by a specialized jury in person and virtually, and prizes will be awarded to the best scientific posters. She called on primary healthcare doctors to register for the conference. — KUNA

Temperatures to drop further over next two days

KUWAIT: Meteorologist Issa Ramadan said that the country is affected by a relatively low cold wave and as a result, the temperatures will drop further over the next two days.

Ramadan said: "The winter season is gradually approaching, but it will be relatively cold during next December in Kuwait. Light to moderate northwest winds will last for several days, including the weekend, and the maximum temperatures could range between 19 and 23 degrees Celsius and the minimum between 8 and 16 °C, between the wilderness and suburbs areas," he explained. He clarified that scattered clouds will appear at times, but with little rain during the weekend until the end of next week, as the weather will be semi-stable and relatively cold, as well as moderate during the day and cold at night, especially in the wild areas," he added.

Children first building block in Kuwait's renaissance: Forum

'First Child's Talent' forum vows to protect children's rights



Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah honors one of the participants.



Children participate in the event.

KUWAIT: The Women's Voluntary Association for Community Development affirmed its commitment to continuing its work to promote and protect children's rights, noting that the State of Kuwait pays great attention to its children as they are the first building block in building its renaissance.

Chairperson of the Society's Board of Directors, Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, said in a press statement on Wednesday, following the opening ceremony of the "First Child's Talent" Forum, that Kuwait was keen to protect the rights of the children based on con-

stitutional principles, so it enacted the law on the basic rights of the child and protecting him/her from all forms of violence. Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah pointed to Kuwait's commitment to the international treaties, agreements and covenants to which it has acceded, the most prominent of which is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as it established the Family Court to address and settle family issues and disputes and to ensure that its members are not affected by these disputes especially children.

She added that despite this, there are still some children exposed to domestic violence, so the association is keen to

hold awareness meetings and seminars in cooperation with civil society organizations to educate families and combine governmental and community efforts to prevent and address violence and promote children's rights.

She explained that the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals touch the lives of children and constitute a comprehensive approach to meeting their needs, protecting them from harm, and securing the environment in which they live. They seek to ensure the dignity of children and their right to live without fear or violence a priority on the inter-

national development agenda as they included a clear goal, which is to end all forms of violence against children.

Secretary of the Association, Dr Mona Al-Qattan said in her speech that the forum aims to highlight children's talents, confirm their importance in shaping their personality, encourage parents and urge them to let the children practice their hobbies and talents. Al-Qattan said the forum also aims to empower families and workers in the field of childhood, raise community awareness to develop the child's capabilities and to work to raise the level of care. — KUNA

Art Therapy: Healing through art

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Words for some people might be an inadequate manner of describing personal emotions or experiences, which gave rise to a non-verbal way of expression, known as art therapy. Through painting, sculpting, dancing, playing music or even cooking, one can find a chance to mentally and emotionally heal.

These forms of art, which are used for therapeutic purposes, allow people to surrender their souls to a creative and deep subconscious process that connects them with themselves and helps them reach a fair level of self-awareness and understanding. Alaa Naeem, an art therapist, explained what art therapy is in a conversation with Kuwait Times.

Art therapy isn't about creating aesthetically beautiful pieces of art. It's more about the process than the quality of the end product. "You don't have to be an artist to go through art therapy," Naeem said. She believes that art therapy is beneficial and necessary for all kinds of people. It can be practiced by people who suffer from mental disorders such as anxiety, depression,



Alaa Naeem



Art therapy room in Naeem's studio.



Naeem immersed in her art.



Naeem's clients in an art therapy.

borderline personality disorder or schizophrenia.

It can also be practiced by anyone who's simply suffering from boredom, stress or lack of self-awareness. She believes that through the release of emotions, art therapy has the power to let everyone cultivate their inner knowledge, where they become capable of building confidence in themselves, analyzing their emotions and thoughts, reflecting on them and becoming more aware of how to better deal with them.

Naeem's sessions usually start by her trying to learn about her client's background, spotting the source of pain that motivated them to visit her, then setting a plan of different kinds of art exercises that vary depending on each person's personality, interests, skills and the problem they are facing now. The conclusion of the session is the most significant phase of the process, Naeem explained. The piece of art that the client creates is very important, as it becomes more of an emotional piece that the client connects with through all their senses, where it is an accurate reflection of how the process was and how they benefited from it.

Naeem explained that every client she deals with has a distinctive journey of their own, which makes her unlock a new healing method with everyone she meets. She believes that people have wisdom within them, and when everyone allows themselves to trust the process, it flows

very naturally for them. She highlighted being astonished every time she starts a session with something in mind, and it turns out completely different, as the client seems very aware of what they want to get out of the session by choosing the right tools for themselves.

She emphasized that if a person is facing a deep problem, they must be consistent in art therapy, because they need time and support to start noticing a positive change in their behavior. The involvement of the therapist in this process is important to guide them, by helping them understand why exactly they chose this medium and what kind of emotions did it help them release. Every little detail matters in the process, because it's a hint and cue for Naeem to analyze and interpret this person's unspoken issues or feelings based not only on what they say, but also on their body language reflected in their gestures, facial expressions and even body posture.

A few people expressed how art therapy sessions with Naeem made them feel. "Art therapy made me think more of the little child inside of me; it healed my inner child and also made me think way beyond logic and more into the soul," said one. "I felt I moved a mountain of pressure and anxiety — more relaxed and happy," said another. "You certainly don't have to be an artist, and what you put on paper will mean something to you regardless," a third said.

KRCS delegation visits Rafah crossing to monitor aid flow

CAIRO: A delegation from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), headed by the Society's Vice President Anwar Al-Hasawi visited the Rafah land crossing on Tuesday to monitor the entry of Kuwaiti humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. Al-Hasawi said in a statement to KUNA that the purpose of the visit is to supervise the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent in preparation for its delivery to the people of the Strip who deserve it. Al-Hasawi added that during the visit, the delegation followed the entry of 35 trucks loaded with 490 tons of emergency humanitarian medical and relief aid to be delivered.

He pointed out that during the visit, the delega-

tion will inspect the wounded and injured who were evacuated from Gaza to Al-Arish hospitals to determine their needs to provide them with the necessary relief aid. Al-Hasawi explained that the delegation will be briefed on the ground about the possibility of establishing a Kuwaiti field hospital inside Sinai near the border with Gaza and equipping it with the required equipment and adequate number of beds to accommodate the increasing number of injured people as a result of the Zionist aggression.

The total aid provided by Kuwait to the Gaza Strip until Tuesday amounted to about 1,300 tons, which included medical and food supplies, tents and chairs, in addition to about 40 ambulances equipped with full medical equipment under the cooperation protocol signed by the Kuwait Red Crescent and its Egyptian counterpart at the beginning of this month.

Meanwhile, the 30th plane within the Kuwait relief air bridge took off Tuesday heading to the Egyptian city of Al-Arish, carrying 10 tons of winter necessities to be delivered to Gaza Strip. — KUNA



A delegation from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society visits the Rafah Crossing to follow up on the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.



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India hopes cloud seeding can wash away deadly smog

Russia ramps up attacks in Donetsk

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RAMALLAH: Newly released Palestinian prisoner Rouba Assi is carried by supporters during a welcome ceremony following the release of prisoners from Zionist jails. — AFP

‘Welcome back’: Joy in West Bank as freed prisoners return

Palestinians held in Zionist prisons without charge nearly double to 2,070 since Oct 7

RAMALLAH: A red keffiyeh scarf around her neck and a beaming smile on her face, Rouba Assi fell into her friends' arms after being freed from a Zionist prison. "I missed you so much," said the 23-year-old activist, as the crowd around her hoisted her to their shoulders, chanting "Welcome back! Welcome back!"

Her parents, still in visible disbelief at her release after six months in a Zionist jail, could not take their eyes off her. In the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday night, as every evening since Friday, crowds gathered to welcome home the latest group of Palestinians freed under a prisoner-hostage exchange deal struck between the Zionist entity and Hamas.

And on Tuesday, like every other night, the arrival of the white bus carrying the freed prisoners was greeted with an explosion of joy in the Palestinian territory. "I'm really happy. I feel like I'm in a movie," said

Mohammad, a young man from Hebron, who declined to give his last name. "It's crazy. The Palestinian prisoners are back in Palestine."

Victory signs

Like many others, Mohammad had come to follow the bus bringing Palestinian detainees released by the Zionist entity in return for some of the roughly 240 people taken captive by Hamas during its raids on Zionist communities and army bases Oct 7, which left around 1,200 people dead. In response, the Zionist entity launched a relentless air and ground military campaign in Gaza, which killed more than 15,000 people.

But the truce facilitating the prisoner-hostage exchanges has largely silenced the guns on both sides for six days now. It is set to remain in effect until at least Thursday morning and could be extended further.

Mohammad filmed with his phone as a

group of smiling young women just freed from prison saluted the crowd with a "V" for victory sign and danced in front of the bus. Some people sported the colors of various Palestinian movements — among them the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Fatah party of president Mahmud Abbas — but the green flag of Hamas was the most popular. "We are Mohammed Deif's people!" the crowd chanted at one point, referring to the elusive leader of Hamas's armed wing, one of the alleged masterminds of the Oct 7 attack.

To those in the crowd — albeit smaller than previous nights — forcing the Zionist entity to free 180 Palestinians so far constitutes a major victory, but the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group notes that roughly 3,300 others have been arrested since Oct 7. The majority appear to be held in administrative detention — that is,

a form of incarceration without charge or trial that authorities can renew indefinitely.

Unfair justice system

Under international law, the practice of administrative detention is supposed to be used only in exceptional circumstances. But, as Zionist and international human rights groups document, it has become more the norm in the West Bank. Even before Oct 7, smoldering tensions and violence in the West Bank had led to a three-decade high in administrative detentions.

Then, according to the Zionist human rights organization HaMoked, the total number of Palestinians in administrative detention went from 1,319 on Oct 1 to 2,070 on Nov 1 — close to a third of the total Palestinian prisoner population. There are more than 7,000 Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails.

The Zionist entity's critics contend that even those charged with specific crimes face a skewed, unfair justice system. Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to the Zionist military courts, unlike the half-million Jewish settlers who live in their midst. These courts have in some years churned out convictions at a 99 percent rate, a state of affairs that raises questions about the due process afforded to Palestinians.

On a hill overlooking Ofer prison, dozens of people waited for hours to watch the release, some warming themselves near fires. Others in cars and on motorcycles cruised around nearby housing blocks. All the while, the waiting Palestinians and the Zionist soldiers stationed around the prison and along the route kept a wary eye on each other as a Zionist drone whirred overhead. — Agencies



JENIN: Eman Sabbagh, mother of Mohammad Sabbagh who was killed by the Zionist forces on Nov 9, looks out of the bullet-cracked window at the family's home in the Zionist-occupied West Bank on Nov 18, 2023. — AFP photos



Eman Sabbagh sits with two of her murdered son's children at the family's home in Jenin.

Violence bleeds through generations in West Bank's Jenin

JENIN: In the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, heavily pregnant Madleen Sabbagh fears years of violence are bleeding through the generations after her husband was among the latest to be killed.

Seven months pregnant, sitting at a window overlooking the densely populated Jenin refugee camp, Sabbagh said she stopped eating after her husband was shot in the heart earlier this month. According to the family Mohammed Sabbagh, 30, had been standing beside his brother at the very same window during a raid by Zionist forces when he was hit by a sniper.

The couple already had three children and Sabbagh, 24, said: "Certainly as a mother I am concerned about their safety. They are my children and I am their mother. But now, I am a mother and a father for them." The family operates a beauty salon which in happier times hosted wedding receptions, but the windows are now dotted with bullet holes.

Hundreds of Palestinians including militants, bystanders and children have been killed this year during Zionist raids in Jenin, considered a

hotbed of militancy by the Zionist entity.

The Sabbagh family is among many in Jenin to have had relatives — the vast majority of them men — killed in Zionist raids. The women of those families bear the consequences for a lifetime, and they reverberate through the generations. "This is not a life," said Eman Sabbagh, Mohammed's mother. "Those who are martyred are the lucky and blessed ones."

Sirens wail

Jenin's refugee camp was a focal point of the Palestinian uprising against the Zionist occupation, known as the Second Intifada, in the early 2000s. In 2002, the army laid siege to the camp for more than a month amid fierce fighting that saw hundreds of homes levelled and 52 Palestinians and 23 Zionist soldiers killed. Posters of young Palestinian men killed fighting Zionist forces in Jenin camp plaster the walls, which are pockmarked with bullet holes.

As the Sabbagh children played, they did not react to bursts of gunfire from the funeral of a 21-year-old who died from wounds sustained in a recent Zionist raid. Multiple Jenin residents told AFP that years of violence are having a significant impact on society, particularly with regards to mental health.

"Most of the children can't sleep at night and their mothers stay awake too, as the children scream whenever sirens wail," said Majd Abu Salameh, who works at a local women's center. "When you walk in the camp, you only see children," she said. "It affects

us because we are losing the breadwinners and only the elderly remain, while their younger children have either left the camp or were martyred."

Empty bed

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Arab-Zionist war, and peace talks with Palestinian leaders have been moribund for years. Some have taken up arms against Zionist forces, including teenagers such as Yamen Jarar, who was killed on Nov 3.

Dozens of photos of 16-year-old Jarar — named after a relative who was also killed — sit beside his empty bed. "He always wanted to become a martyr, just like others would love to travel, for example," said his mother Jihan Jarar. "He didn't like what is happening," she added, "and when someone is fervently attached to their homeland, you can't hold them (back)."

One of her two surviving sons stared at pictures of his brother in the living room, his eyes watering as his mother said she did not want another "martyr" among her children. Samihah Zued, Yamen Jarar's grandmother, described the cascading effect of grief and hardship on the family.

"They struggled to pay their sons' school fees and keep them in pocket money, she said. "This leads to a certain reaction," she said. "When there is no school and nothing else to do, how would young men react then?" — AFP

Zionist army says investigating report of hostage deaths

JERUSALEM: The Zionist army said Wednesday it was investigating a report by Hamas's armed wing that a 10-month-old baby hostage, his four-year-old brother and their mother had all been killed in Gaza. The military was "assessing the accuracy of the information", it said in a statement. "Hamas is wholly responsible for the security of all hostages in the Gaza Strip," it added. "Hamas's actions continue to endanger the hostages, which include nine children."

The Bibas family are among the highest-profile hostages seized in the Hamas attacks on the southern Zionist entity on Oct 7, due to the age of baby Kfir. The statement from the Zionist military came after the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, announced that Kfir, his brother Ariel and their mother Shiri had been killed in a Zionist bombing in the Gaza Strip before the current pause in fighting went into effect. It made no mention of the boys' father Yarden.

A statement released on behalf of relatives by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum said they could only wait for further information. "Our family has learned of Hamas's latest claims. We are waiting for the information to be confirmed and hopefully refuted by military officials," they said. The military wing has previously claimed that 60 hostages had been killed in Zionist bombings.

The family were being held by a Palestinian faction other than Hamas, army spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a briefing a few days ago. Dana Siton, Shiri's sister, added that their lives were in "immediate danger ... each passing day endangers them". In one previous case, Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian militant group allied with Hamas, has announced the death of a hostage who was later released alive. — AFP

International

Russia ramps up attacks in Donetsk

56 Russian assault waves launched at Avdiivka; Ukrainian defenses firmly holding on: Kyiv

KYIV: Russian forces were ramping up attacks in eastern Ukraine on Wednesday, Moscow and Kyiv said, as they vie to secure elusive territorial gains before the end of the year. Despite the frontlines having barely shifted in 2023, fighting has remained intense, with the nearly encircled industrial town of Avdiivka the latest major flashpoint.

Russia launched a renewed bid to capture the war-battered town last month and analysts suggest Moscow's forces have made incremental gains, though at an enormous human cost. "The enemy has doubled its artillery fire and airstrikes. It has also intensified ground infantry attacks, and is using armored vehicles," said Oleksandr Shtupun, a spokesman for Ukraine's army.

Improving weather conditions — following intense storms across southern Ukraine and Russia earlier this week — had enabled Russia's forces to intensify their assaults and use drones again, he said. Oleksandr Tarnavsky, the Ukrainian commander responsible for the area, also said Russia had "significantly increased" its activity around Avdiivka. He said Russian forces had carried out nearly 20 airstrikes, launched four missiles, thrown 56 assault waves at his forces, and fired more than 1,000 artillery rounds.

'Holding the line'

Avdiivka sits in a strategically important indent in the Russian frontlines of the Donetsk region, with Russia's troops surrounding the town on almost three sides. But Ukraine has so far held off the Russian bombardment and British intelligence said that recent weeks had "likely seen some of the highest Russian casualty rates of the war so far."

Ukraine's fortifications on its southern edge are just five kilometers (3 miles) north of Donetsk city, the capital of a region Moscow claimed to have annexed last year. Kyiv has also maintained control of an eight-kilometer wide strip of land — and a vital supply road — stretching from the city to the northwest. On Wednesday, Ukraine's Tarnavsky said his forces were "firmly holding the line along the Avdiivka front."

Around 50 kilometers (30 miles) north, Russia's military claimed separately it had taken control of Khromove, a small village on the outskirts of Bakhmut. "Troops, supported by aviation and artillery fire, improved their positions along the front line and liberated the village of Artemovskoye," Russia's defense ministry said in a daily briefing, referring to the village by a

previous version of its name. AFP was unable to verify either side's claims.

Both Moscow and Kyiv also said they had downed enemy drones and missiles overnight. Ukraine is bracing for Russia to increase its attacks on its energy infrastructure in a repeat of Moscow's tactics last winter, which saw millions left without power and heating for hours in sub-zero temperatures.

The national energy company Ukrenergo reported a shortage of electricity on Wednesday as it scrambled to reconnect thousands of villages to the power grid following storms earlier this week. Ukraine's air force said it downed all 21 drones and two of three X-59 guided missiles that Russia had fired at its territory overnight. The third missile did not reach its target, it added.

Poison plot

Russia said it downed a Ukrainian drone flying towards the capital Moscow and another over the southern Rostov region, the military headquarters for its invasion. It said there were no injuries or damage caused by falling debris.

The Kremlin on Wednesday also responded to Ukrainian claims that Moscow had poisoned the wife of its military intelligence chief. Marianna Bu-



DONETSK: A resident is seen by the door of her flat damaged by recent shelling in Donetsk, Russian-controlled Ukraine, on Nov 28, 2023. — AFP

danova, the wife of Ukraine's spymaster Kyrylo Budanov, was hospitalized with heavy metals poisoning, in what intelligence figures in Kyiv allege was a brazen assassination attempt.

"Ukraine blames Russia for everything. Even its own existence, it seems to me," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Wednesday in

response to the allegations. On the diplomatic front, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday told a NATO meeting that Washington and its allies remained steadfast in their backing for Ukraine, as doubts escalate over the West's commitment to continue backing Kyiv as the war appears to have ground to a stalemate. — AFP

Pakistan court acquits former PM Sharif

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan high court on Wednesday quashed a graft conviction against three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who returned from self-imposed exile last month to launch a political comeback. Sharif is currently on bail appealing several convictions for corruption in an attempt to clear his name ahead of elections scheduled in February, with his primary opponent Imran Khan in jail. "I had left all the matters to Allah and Allah has honored me today," Sharif told reporters outside the Islamabad High Court.

An official of the Islamabad high court confirmed the acquittal in one case, and Sharif is still appealing a second conviction over investments in steel companies. Sharif was jailed for 10 years in 2018 for corrupt practices linked to his family's purchase of upscale London flats. He was ousted and barred from politics for life in 2017 for failing to declare parts of his income.

Sharif, who has been prime minister three times but has never completed a full term, has always maintained that the charges were politically motivated. His political fortunes have risen and fallen on his relationship with Pakistan's military establishment — the country's true kingmakers who have ruled directly for more than half of its history and continue to enjoy immense power. "Now everything is moving in favor of Nawaz Sharif," said political analyst Hasan Askari. "This appears to be a political game managed by powerful personalities and institutions," he told AFP.

Sharif's fortunes changed when Khan had a spectacular falling out with the military. The former cricketing superstar was later jailed in connection with several cases he says are designed to keep him from contesting elections next year. Nawaz Sharif's younger brother Shehbaz came to power in a coalition that ousted Khan. — AFP

1 confirmed killed as US military craft crashes off Japan

TOKYO: A US Osprey military aircraft crashed on Wednesday off a Japanese island, killing one crew member and leaving five unaccounted for, the coastguard said, in the latest incident involving the tilt-rotor military aircraft. One unconscious person had been found in the sea near the scene of the crash off the island of Yakushima but was later "confirmed dead in hospital", the coastguard said in a statement.

It also revised downwards an earlier statement to say that six crew had been on board instead of eight. An emergency management official in the Kagoshima region where the crash took place said police had received information that the aircraft had been "spewing fire from a left engine". The US military in Japan, where it has around 54,000 personnel, was not immediately available for comment.

The coastguard said it has mobilized patrol ships and aircraft around Yakushima, which lies south of Japan's southernmost main island of Kyushu. Japanese broadcaster NHK reported that the Osprey was on its way from the Iwakuni US base near Hiroshima in the Yamaguchi region headed for the Kadena base further south in Okinawa.

NHK also cited defense ministry sources as saying that the aircraft was a CV-22 Osprey belonging to the US Yokota air base in Tokyo. Government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno said Japan was "aware of information that the US military's Osprey fell out of radar (contact)" near Yakushima Island. "The government is confirming the extent of damage and



GOTEMBA: This file photo taken on March 15, 2022 shows a US Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey aircraft landing during a joint exercise with Japan. — AFP

will prioritize saving human lives," Matsuno told reporters.

Troubled history

The Osprey, developed by Bell Helicopters and Boeing and which can operate like a helicopter or a fixed-wing plane, has suffered a string of fatal crashes over the years. In August, a crash in northern Australia killed three US marines among the 23 on board.

The Boeing MV-22B Osprey crashed on Melville Island, north of Darwin during a military exercise for locally based troops. At the time the cause was unclear. Four US Marines were killed in Norway last year when their

MV-22B Osprey aircraft went down during NATO training exercises.

Three Marines were killed in 2017 when an Osprey crashed after clipping the back of a transport ship while trying to land at sea off Australia's north coast. In 2016, an MV-22 Osprey crash-landed off Okinawa, prompting the US Marines to temporarily ground the aircraft in Japan after the accident sparked anger among locals. And 19 Marines died in 2000 when their Osprey crashed during drills in Arizona.

There have been multiple other crashes of US military aircraft in recent years. This month five US service members were killed when a helicopter crashed into the Mediterranean during a training exercise. — AFP

Assembly approves housing laws...

Continued from Page 1

The Assembly passed the first reading of the two housing laws two weeks ago. The first law regulates power of attorney in real estate with the aim to free unsold houses held under power of attorney for long periods. The second law imposes annual fees on land allocated for housing purposes but held unused for long periods.

MPs said the main aim of the two laws is to bring down skyrocketing prices of land and homes to allow Kuwaitis to be able to build houses with the help of

soft loans from the government. Head of the Assembly housing committee MP Fayeza Al-Mutairi said the Assembly will continue passing new housing legislations with the aim of reducing the waiting period for citizens to own their homes. "We need to completely end waiting periods, which now reach over 15 years," he said.

The law for handicapped welfare was first enacted in 2010 and head of the committee for the handicapped MP Saud Al-Asfour said the amendments aim at removing the negative aspects of the law. Rapporteur of the committee MP Hani Shams said two new categories have been added — Kuwaiti mothers taking care of their non-Kuwaiti children and citizens taking care of their non-Kuwaiti relatives like husbands, wives and up to second-degree relatives. Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun then adjourned the Assembly until Dec 12.

the accusations against his son. The Zionist army declined to comment immediately on the matter.

Meanwhile, five premature babies have been found dead at a hospital in Gaza City during a pause in fighting between the Zionist entity and Hamas, the health ministry said Wednesday. Before a temporary truce in the seven-week war came into force on Friday, several hospitals in the northern Gaza Strip had been targeted by Zionist raids, with some evacuated on the orders of the Zionist army.

Gaza health ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra told AFP Zionist soldiers had blocked access to the intensive care unit at Al-Nasr pediatric facility, and doctors were finally "able to get into the ward on Tuesday night". There, Qudra said, "the occupation (Zionist) forces left five premature babies" who were found "partly decomposed". "The soldiers forbade the families from going near" the newborns before Tuesday, he said.

The Zionist army said it was unable to immediately comment on the matter when contacted by AFP. Earlier this month, the world followed the fate of 39 premature babies trapped in another major Gaza City hospital, Al-Shifa, which was besieged and ultimately raided by Zionist forces. Eight of the infants died due to a lack of electricity to run their incubators, the health ministry said. Another 31 were evacuated, most of whom went on to Egypt for treatment. — AFP

Full Gaza truce urged; UN warns...

Continued from Page 1

As the pause in hostilities brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States entered its sixth day, a source close to Hamas told AFP on condition of anonymity the militant group "informed the mediators that it is willing to extend the truce for four days". Under that arrangement, "the movement would be able to release (Zionist) prisoners that it, other resistance movements and other parties hold during this period, according to the terms of the existing truce," the source added.

Speaking after a NATO meeting in Brussels, Blinken said he would be "focused on doing what we can to extend the pause so that we continue to get more hostages out and more humanitarian assistance in". Zionist media reported that the country's government had received a list of the new group of captives to be freed on Wednesday in the last round of releases under the current truce terms. There was no official confirmation.

On Tuesday, militants freed 12 captives from Gaza — 10 Zionists plus two Thais. The Zionist entity in turn released a further 30 Palestinians,

sparking joyous scenes in the West Bank. Those exchanges followed the extension of an initial four-day truce period. Hamas has released more than 20 other captives outside the scope of the truce agreement, mostly Thais.

On Wednesday, Hamas said it had handed over two more women captives with Russian citizenship to the Red Cross in Gaza in a gesture to the "efforts" of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some of the captives in Gaza are in the hands of another Palestinian militant group, Islamic Jihad. Its spokesman Musab Al-Breim told AFP on Tuesday that "the war is now continuing in indirect negotiations with the (Zionist) occupier". He said his group and Hamas were "committed" to respecting the truce agreement "as long as the occupier does so, and we are ready to pursue a political route to make the occupier pay".

The World Food Program has warned that Gaza's population faces a "high risk of famine if WFP is not able to provide continued access to food". Conditions in the territory were "catastrophic", the agency's Middle East director Corinne Fleischer said. A spokesman for the UN children's agency UNICEF said aid entering Gaza under the truce deal was "not even enough for triage", or emergency care.

An estimated 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza have been forced to leave their homes so far, more than half the territory's population, according to the United Nations. — AFP

Zionists kill 2 boys; 5 babies...

Continued from Page 1

wounded by gunfire during the raid. Since the Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity and its ensuing war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, violence in the West Bank has flared, with nearly 240 Palestinians killed by either soldiers or Zionist settlers, according to the health ministry.

Also on Wednesday, the Zionist army arrested a 12-year-old boy in the Jalazone refugee camp in the West Bank city of Ramallah, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group said. The boy would become the youngest Palestinian prisoner in Zionist detention, with nearly 200 women and males aged 18 or under released in recent days under an agreement pausing fighting between the Zionist entity and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Mahmud Ghawanmeh, father of Karim Ghawanmeh, told AFP that via his brother, Zionist soldiers had summoned him to bring in his son. "I thought I would be with him for his interrogation, but the officer told me to go back home," he added, without specifying

UAE to pump CO2 into rock...

Continued from Page 1

"We believe this volume of rocks here in the UAE has the potential to store gigatons of CO2," ADNOC's chief technology officer Sophie Hildebrand told AFP during a tour of the facility this week. "ADNOC has committed \$15 billion to decarbonization projects," she added, declining to say how much was spent on the Fujairah plant. The UAE is the world's seventh largest oil producer, and plans to invest \$150 billion by 2027 to expand its oil and gas production capacity.

Oil producers are throwing their weight behind carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology as a global warming solution despite criticism from climate experts who caution it is insufficient to tackle the crisis. With little investment and few projects in operation around the world so far, the technology is currently nowhere near the scale needed to make a difference to global emissions.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says the existing fossil fuel infrastructure — without the use of carbon capture — will push the world beyond the desired limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. At the plant in Fujairah, one of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms, giant fans extract CO2 directly from the surrounding atmosphere. — AFP

International

India hopes cloud seeding washes away deadly smog

Method risks being 'wasteful expenditure of public funds': Critic

NEW DELHI: Indian scientists are preparing cloud seeding technology to clean poisonous smog in the capital with rain, but environmental critics fear it is an expensive distraction from tackling root causes. It is the latest measure aimed at alleviating the toxic smog choking the lungs of 30 million residents of New Delhi and its surrounding territories — consistently ranked as the world's worst capital for air quality.

Breathing the poisonous air has catastrophic health consequences. Prolonged exposure can trigger strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory diseases, according to the WHO. The average city resident could die nearly 12 years earlier due to air pollution, an August report by the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute said. The Delhi government has had to announce

not shown any adverse effect wherever it has been tried". Authorities are waiting for clearances from various government bodies and favorable weather conditions before they can put the seeding plan into action, he said.

But it comes with a hefty price tag. Exact costs have not been made public, but Indian media suggested it could be as high as 10 million rupees (\$120,000) to seed 100 sq km. Environmental scientist Bhavreen Kandhari said cloud seeding was an "ineffective approach" to the pollution problem. "It risks becoming a wasteful expenditure of public funds and valuable time," she told AFP.

Smog in Delhi is caused by a melange of factory and vehicle emissions, exacerbated by seasonal agricultural fires. Eye-stinging pollution worsens during winter from October to February — when colder air traps pollution — and residents are advised to wear face masks outside at all times.

India is not the first. China extensively uses cloud seeding technology, spending billions of dollars to modify the weather to protect agricultural regions or improve air quality ahead of big events. Other countries have also invested in the technology, including Indonesia and Malaysia. Scientists in western India have successfully tried cloud seeding, which resulted in a 20 percent boost in rainfall, Tripathi said.

But Sunil Dahiya, an analyst with the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, said artificial rain was not a "definitive solution" to air pollution. "The relief it provides is fleeting, as the cessation of rain allows the re-entry of polluted air masses, swiftly elevating air quality back to hazardous levels," Dahiya told AFP. Dahiya said emissions have to be reduced at their source for any long-term solution to the problem. "Redirecting our efforts to this strategic approach is crucial for sustained and meaningful improvements in air quality," he said.

But Tripathi said it was a technology "worth trying", especially since other measures had failed. Delhi set up its first smog tower two years back with much fanfare, a giant fan system sucking in air, but the \$2 million structure has been lying defunct with experts saying its impact was limited to a mere 50-metre radius. "When you have very little respite from very high pollution, and no other method works ... what do you do?" Tripathi said. — AFP



AMRITSAR: Men exercise amid heavy smoggy conditions at a park on Nov 23, 2023. — AFP

Sachchida Nand Tripathi, a professor of sustainable energy engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at Kanpur, said airplanes equipped with seeding equipment or ground-mounted guns would be used to induce rainfall. "Even very modest rain is effective in bringing down pollution," he told AFP. Levels of PM2.5 pollutants — cancer-causing microparticles that enter the bloodstream through the lungs — often hit more than 30 times the World Health Organization's danger limits.

emergency school closures, and ban construction and entry of diesel vehicles into the city in a bid to improve the air quality.

But with these efforts bearing little result, the government has asked IIT Kanpur to prepare cloud seeding. The weather modification, also known as "blueskying", involves releasing common salt — or a mixture of different salts — into clouds. The crystals encourage condensation to form as rain. Tripathi said cloud seeding has produced positive results, and "has

Family of last Afghan held in Guantanamo calls for his release

KABUL: The family of the last Afghan held at the US detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba called for his release on Wednesday at a press conference in Kabul. Muhammad Rahim was one of hundreds of suspected militants captured by US forces during the United States' "war on terror" and held in the secretive prison.

US authorities faced accusations of torture and abuse against prisoners at the facility, where many were held without charge or the legal power to challenge their detention. Most of the inmates have been released over the years, including senior Taliban leaders, but Rahim remains. "I urge the American authorities and leaders to release my son," said Rahim's mother Safoora Bibi, breaking down in tears.

Rahim's family said he was arrested in Pakistan in 2007. The US government transferred Rahim in 2008 to Guantanamo Bay, according to a Pentagon announcement cited by Amnesty International at the time. The CIA accused him of being a close associate of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden.

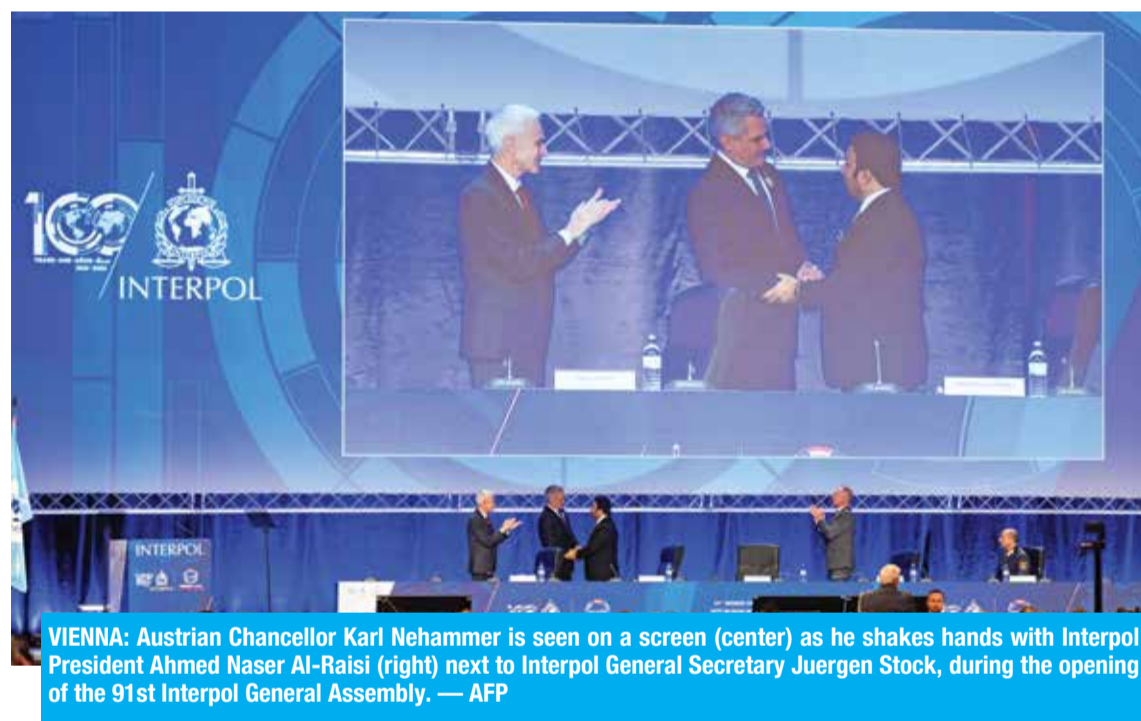
His family said they still do not know why he was arrested. Rahim's uncle Muhammad Ali called on Afghanistan's Taliban authorities to work for his release. "We want the Islamic Emirate to listen to us, they are now the government," he told reporters, using the Taliban's formal name for Afghanistan. "They should serve their people, we call on them as well to tell the United States to release him."

In June last year, Afghan Asadullah Haroon was freed from Guantanamo Bay after 15 years following negotiations between Washington and Taliban authorities. US President Joe Biden's administration has been working to reduce the number of detainees and eventually shut down Guantanamo Bay, which lies on the island of Cuba but is under US jurisdiction.

"We see in social media that Pakistanis and nationals of other countries who were prisoners in Guantanamo Bay have been released and handed over to their respective governments," said one of Rahim's children, Muhammad Ismail. "We have a government too and want him to be handed over to this government so that if he has indeed committed any crime, this government can punish him." — AFP



KABUL: Safoora Bibi displays pictures of her son Muhammad Rahim who is one of the last Afghans held at the Guantanamo Bay US detention center in Cuba during a news conference held at her home on Nov 29, 2023. — AFP



VIENNA: Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer is seen on a screen (center) as he shakes hands with Interpol President Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi (right) next to Interpol General Secretary Juergen Stock, during the opening of the 91st Interpol General Assembly. — AFP

Interpol fights crime and controversial image, 100 years on

VIENNA: As Interpol marks its centenary, it faces the tricky task of nabbing criminals while ensuring that its famous red notices are not abused to snare dissidents. This week, more than a thousand police and law enforcement leaders from around the world are attending Interpol's general assembly in Vienna, where it was founded.

"We've been growing from 20 member countries in 1923 to 196 today," Juergen Stock, Secretary General of the Lyon-based agency, told AFP. With its famous red notices, Interpol "makes sure there is no safe haven for criminals, whether it's the physical or the online world," the 64-year-old German said. But the organization has had to step up controls after abuse of the notices led to criticism.

Mafia and tattoos

As a global hub for information sharing, Interpol helps member countries "connect the dots across continents" by identifying and locating criminals, explained Stock. Interpol's database boasts 125 million police files and receives about 16 million searches per day. Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic — who was captured in 2008 after almost 13 years on the run — and French serial killer Charles Sobhray are among Interpol's most spectacular coups. The global police body has also helped Italy in recent years crack down on the country's wealthiest and most powerful mafia: the 'Ndrangheta.

In May, Interpol launched an unprecedented campaign to identify 22 women believed to have been murdered in Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands. By making previously confidential information public, Rita Roberts, who was killed in 1992, was finally identified this year after a family member recognized her tattoo.

Tightened controls

Notwithstanding its successes, Interpol's red notice system has been regularly accused of being

misused by member states to hunt down political dissidents. Shortly after taking office in 2014, Stock decided to tackle the problem head-on by setting up a team of about 40 experts to vet notices for wanted suspects before they are published. "We are scanning the geopolitical situation around the world and doing these compliance checks," said Stock, stressing the system's "robust mechanism".

In 2022, just 1,465 notices were rejected or cancelled before publication, compared to a total of some 70,000 valid notices. "If a case is predominantly political or has a military or religious component, Interpol is out and we are taking that very seriously," Stock insisted. Moreover, he has introduced "a new refugee policy" to protect those who have been granted refugee status.

'Underfunded organization'

A handful of countries are currently under Interpol's heightened scrutiny, including Russia, which has been unable to directly send messages to other member countries since its invasion of Ukraine. However, due to the lack of a "globally accepted definition on terrorism", mistakes can occur, acknowledged Stock.

French journalist Mathieu Martiniere, who recently published an in-depth investigation into Interpol with his German colleague Robert Schmidt, told AFP that "the situation has improved, but more than a hundred innocent people still slip through the net every year and can be extradited and then imprisoned." A major problem Interpol faces is a "lack of human resources in an underfunded organization." The election of Emirati general Ahmed Naser al-Raisi — who is being investigated in France for complicity in torture — as Interpol's president in 2021 has also raised concerns.

The journalists' book, which was published in October, also examines when the Nazis took control of the organization after the annexation of Adolf Hitler's native Austria. Interpol's president at the time, Austrian Ernst Kaltenbrunner, was sentenced to death at Nuremberg and executed in 1946. Until earlier this year, the names of Interpol's Nazi presidents were omitted from the website in order to "whitewash history", said Martiniere. Stock said that was an unintentional oversight, which has since been rectified. — AFP

India's G20 presidency and the dawn of a new multilateralism

By Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. It is a moment to reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', 'One Earth, One Family, One Future.' As we undertook this responsibility last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress.



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi

Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve — the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it.

Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive — these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles.

Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80 per cent of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit,' convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative. Inclusivity also infused India's domestic approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democracy.

Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader developmental aims, aligning with G20's mandate.

At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complementary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly.

In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions.

Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030.

Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasized the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order.

Gender equality took center stage in the Declaration, culminating in the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development.

The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past.

During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war.

I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalized multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere. As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come.

Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023

Zain Kuwait and SACGC host session on AI innovations

Under Innovation Nation initiative, presented by Google Cloud's Dr Chawki Tawbi



Dr Chawki Tawbi with Zain officials and employees.



The session covered AI and data innovations.

KUWAIT: Under their strategic partnership to empower tech innovation and support entrepreneurs, Zain and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) have jointly hosted an insightful session that discussed the innovations and capabilities of artificial intelligence technologies. The session, which also focused on how entrepreneurs can use AI to drive growth and success for their startups, was presented by Google Cloud expert Dr Chawki Tawbi.

This step came under the umbrella of Zain and SACGC's recently signed MoU, which focuses on a number of strategic pillars and sustainable goals like supporting tech innovation, empowering entrepreneurs and startups, encouraging creativity, investing in the digital skills of young people, and more.

During the session, Dr Chawki Tawbi covered an overview of Google Cloud and its leading role in empowering digitization around the world. He also discussed some of the most notable cloud computing solutions offered by Google

Cloud, especially those that are based on AI technologies. Dr Tawbi then went on to explain what Generative AI is, how it dominated the tech scene recently, and how to utilize the capabilities of such revolutionary technologies to open up entire new opportunities for startups.

In addition, Dr Tawbi presented a live demo of some AI use cases, giving the attendees a close-up view of advanced AI applications. Another special session was also held for Zain employees, where the Google Cloud expert shared the best tips for using AI tools to increase effi-

ciency, enhance workflows, and be more productive at the workplace.

Dr Chawki Tawbi is a Senior Partner Sales Engineer at Google Cloud. He is a Data and AI Lead and is a Google GenAI Ambassador for Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. Dr Tawbi has more than 25 years of experience in Data, AI and Business Automation across various industries and geographies.

He founded and led a Data Science Center of Excellence in the MEA region, responsible for helping CDOs and Business Leaders in setting-up and ex-

cuting Data and AI strategies. He is a board member of several universities and a lecturer in the Data and AI space. This session came under Zain's Innovation Nation initiative, under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, especially within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas. The initiative mainly targets the youth, and centers around a number of pillars, including entrepreneurship, investment, startup acceleration, supporting inventors, fostering innovation, and more.

Big Tech in charge as ChatGPT turns one

WASHINGTON: A year after the history-making release of ChatGPT, the AI revolution is here, but the recent boardroom crisis at OpenAI, the super app's company, has erased any doubt that Big Tech is in charge.

In some ways, the discreet reveal of ChatGPT on November 30 last year was the revenge of the geeks, the unsung researchers and engineers who have been quietly building generative AI behind the scenes. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, a well-known figure in technology circles, but still little known beyond that, with the release of ChatGPT made sure that this unheralded AI tech would get the attention it deserves. ChatGPT became the fastest adopted app in history (since taken over by Meta's Threads) as users marveled at the generation of poems, recipes—or whatever the internet could muster—in just seconds. Altman's gamble catapulted the 38-year-old Stanford dropout to household name stardom—making him a sort of philosopher king of AI with world leaders and tycoons hanging on to his every word. With AI, "you're in the business of making and selling things you can't put your hands on," said University of Washington historian Margaret O'Mara and author of "The Code", a history of Silicon Valley. "Having a figurehead of someone who can explain it, especially when it's advanced technology, is really important," she added.

Altman's devotion to AI can often seem quasi-religious. OpenAI's acolytes are confident that the world will be a better place if they are given free



Sam Altman has become sort of philosopher king of AI.

rein (and cash) to build artificial general intelligence - AI at the same level or beyond the capabilities of the human mind.

But the high costs of that sacred mission forced an alliance with Microsoft, the world's second biggest company, which operates with profit, not altruism, as its goal. Microsoft pledged \$13 billion for OpenAI earlier this year, and Altman redirected the company on a money-making trajectory to help justify the investment. This eventually sparked this month's boardroom rebellion by those—including OpenAI's chief scientist—who believe that the money-makers should be kept at bay.

There is "religious fundamentalism at play here," venture capitalist Dave Morin said in a podcast for The Information after Altman was unceremoniously fired from OpenAI only to be reinstated five days later. The AI research community have "almost deified this technology," he added.

When the battle erupted, Microsoft defended Altman and OpenAI's young staff all backed him too, aware that the future of the company came with the revenues that kept the computers humming, not lofty ideas on how AI should or should not be used.

This tension between AI saving the world or ruining it has marked the year since the ChatGPT launch. Elon Musk, for example, signed a letter calling for a pause in AI innovations to only months later start his own company, xAI, joining an increasingly crowded market.

Google, Meta and Amazon have all weaved promises of AI into their company announcements and invested in AI startups. Killer robot or magic wand, corporations in all sectors are signing up to try AI, usually through their cloud providers, Microsoft, Google or Amazon or from OpenAI.

"The time from learning that generative AI was a thing to actually deciding to spend time building applications around it has been the shortest I've ever seen for any type of technology," said Rowan Curran, an analyst at Forrester Research. But fears remain rife that bots might "hallucinate," churning out false, nonsensical or offensive material so company efforts are modest for now.

One attempt is the AI agent, a sort of amped up chatbot that can help office workers trowel through emails, write memos, or have more fun while instant messaging. Software programmers vaunt the powers at developer collaboration platform Github.

"It's about being able to get the benefits of AI broadly disseminated to everyone," Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said this month. The rush to AI ramps up fear of dangers such as human extinction, and societal concerns like bias, job displacement and disinformation on an industrial scale. — AFP

US third quarter growth revised up to 5.2%

WASHINGTON: US economic growth was stronger than estimated for the July to September period this year, government data showed on Wednesday, due to higher investment and government spending than originally expected.

The world's biggest economy saw GDP growth of 5.2 percent at an annual rate in the third quarter, said the Commerce Department in a report. Analysts had anticipated the rate to hold steady and the revision is markedly above the initial estimate of 4.9 percent released last month.

"The update primarily reflected upward revisions to nonresidential fixed investment and state and local government spending," said the Commerce Department. It added that these were "partly offset by a downward revision to consumer spending."

The US economy has proven more robust than expected as the central bank rapidly hiked interest rates last year to fight inflation—drawing predictions of a possible recession. But resilient consumer spending, supported by a strong job market, has helped to stave off a downturn so far.

Overall in the third quarter, the acceleration in gross domestic product growth reflected increases in consumer spending, private inventory investment. While third quarter data "showed extraordinary strength," Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said the trend ahead—especially in consumption—will be key.

She expects economic activity to continue expanding but that the pace "should slow quite significantly in the fourth quarter." "We anticipate a deceleration in household spending, not only on payback for an unusually strong third quarter but also from the cumulative effects of monetary policy tightening," she said in a note.

Meanwhile, US retailers reported Tuesday a solid start to the US holiday shopping season with more than 200 million people hitting stores and online vendors over a key five-day stretch. The period includes "Black Friday," the day after the US Thanksgiving holiday, and "Cyber Monday," both known for heavy promotions designed to entice robust spending on gifts.

"The five-day period between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday represents some of the busiest shopping days of the year and reflects the continued resilience of consumers and strength of the economy," said Matthew Shay, president of the National Retail Federation (NRF). The NRF estimated total turnout during the five-day stretch was 200.4 million, up nearly four million from the year-ago level. Top gift items included clothing and accessories, toys, gift cards and video games, the NRF said. Consumer goods experts had predicted a decent but unspectacular holiday shopping season, with a still-strong labor market offset somewhat by consumer inflation that has moderated in recent months. — AFP

Amazon releases its own AI chatbot 'Q'

WASHINGTON: Amazon on Tuesday released its own AI chatbot intended for businesses, about one year after ChatGPT took the world by storm.

"Q" will be available only to Amazon's AWS cloud computing customers and will be in direct competition with OpenAI's ChatGPT as well as Google's Bard and Microsoft's copilots that also run on OpenAI's technology. Chatbots targeted at businesses have become the main battleground for generative AI, a year after ChatGPT wowed the world with its ability to churn out expert and human-like content instantaneously.

Costing \$20 monthly per user, Amazon Q will perform a variety of tasks including summarizing uploaded documents and answering questions about specific data sitting on a company's servers.

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy plugged Amazon Q as a more secure version of an AI chatbot in which access to content will be more closely controlled. This was designed to reassure companies that have been put off by the technology's tendency to churn out incorrect or inappropriate answers, sometimes



called hallucinations. "If a user doesn't have permission to access certain data without Amazon Q, they can't access it using Amazon Q either," Jassy said in a post on X.

AWS CEO Andrew Selipsky insisted that cloud customers using Q could also limit their chatbots to a very limited and predetermined source of data. While presenting the company's latest AI developments, Selipsky also took a veiled swipe at Microsoft.

For AI tasks, Microsoft, AWS's biggest rival, depends on OpenAI, the company that suffered an embarrassing boardroom dustup this month that saw CEO Sam Altman fired and rehired five days later. Selipsky said the tumult showed that businesses needed to depend on a variety of AI providers. "You need a real choice? The events of the past 10 days have made that very clear," Selipsky said at the event in Las Vegas. — AFP

Business

Saudi wealth fund scoops up 10% of London's Heathrow airport

Spanish giant Ferrovial leaves the hub after almost two decades

LONDON: Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is to buy ten percent of London's Heathrow airport from Spanish infrastructure giant Ferrovial, whose departure from the hub after almost two decades leaves Qatar as its biggest shareholder.

Ferrovial late Tuesday said it was offloading its 25 percent stake for nearly £2.4 billion (\$3.0 billion), with the other 15 percent going to French private equity group Ardian. Heathrow, which is one of the world's busiest airports, is owned by the consortium FGP Topco Limited, which going forward is set to be led by Qatar Investment Authority, with an existing 20-percent stake.

Ardian will be the second biggest player, while Riyadh's Public Investment Fund (PIF) will join China Investment Corporation at ten percent, around the level held by other members of the consortium. It is yet to be seen if the UK government will intervene in the sale. Last week, the Conservative administration headed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was "minded" to review the proposed sale of the Telegraph Media Group to an Abu Dhabi-backed investment fund on public interest grounds.

Announcing Ferrovial's exit, the head of its airport business, Luke Bugeja, said in a statement: "Over the last 17 years, we have been contributing to

Heathrow's transformation, together with our fellow shareholders, achieving some excellent milestones throughout our long-term role as investor.

"We are very pleased to have made Heathrow one of the world's most connected airports and the busiest airport in Europe." The specialist in transport infrastructure management operates a vast portfolio of global assets, including airport interests in Turkey and New York. Heathrow was not seen as a core asset by Ferrovial. It bought its stake in Heathrow in a 2006 takeover and initially held 56 percent of the hub, before gradually reducing its interest.

Heathrow recently said it recorded its highest-ever September passenger numbers of more than seven million, which also marked the first time it exceeded pre-pandemic traffic figures. Ferrovial said it remains "fully committed to advancing its airport business", which includes a 50-percent stake in three other UK hubs—Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton. It owns also 60 percent of Turkey's Dalaman Airport and a 49-percent stake in the new Terminal 1 at JFK Airport in New York. This summer, the firm angered Spain's government by relocating its headquarters to the Netherlands in a decision it said would give it access to cheaper credit and make it more attractive to investors ahead of a planned US stock listing. — AFP



HEATHROW: A British Airways aeroplane takes off from the runway at Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 in west London. — AFP

Austrian property tycoon's Signa to file for insolvency

VIENNA: Rene Benko's real estate giant Signa—whose vast portfolio includes New York's iconic Chrysler building—on Wednesday announced it would initiate insolvency proceedings, marking the spectacular downfall of the self-made Austrian tycoon. Benko—one of Austria's richest men—founded Signa in 2000 and has grown it into a property and retail conglomerate.

The company said it would file for court protection as it undergoes restructuring. "Despite considerable efforts in recent weeks, the necessary liquidity for an out-of-court restructuring could not be sufficiently secured, so Signa Holding GmbH is applying for restructuring proceedings with self-administration," the company said in a statement.

Signa—who owns Berlin shopping gallery KaDeWe—said its retail investments "did not bring the expected success" with the sector under "severe economic pressure" in Europe. It also cited a "negative impact on business development in the real estate sector in recent months". As the sector is hit by higher borrowing costs and surging material prices, a growing number of developers are filing for bankruptcy. Several Signa projects, including the construction of a landmark high-rise in the German city of Hamburg, have ground to a halt.

Signa said it would initiate insolvency proceedings at a Vienna court on Wednesday. "The aim is the orderly continuation of operational business operations within the framework of self-administration and the sustainable restructuring of the company," it added. The restructuring proceedings fall under insolvency proceedings in Austria. Since 2000, Benko, 46, has aggressively grown Signa. With offices

in Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Switzerland, Signa has holdings worth 27 billion euros (\$29 billion) and projects worth 25 billion euros in development, according to its website.

At one point, the company reportedly tried to attract investors with slogans like "It was never so boring to get rich". But the developments of recent weeks—when the trouble the company is facing started to come to light—have caused the estimated value of Benko's fortune to be slashed from \$6 billion to \$2.8 billion, according to Forbes. Earlier this month, Thailand's Central Group took control of another prestigious Signa asset, the historic British department store Selfridges.

The online e-commerce unit Signa Sports Unit has also initiated insolvency proceedings for

several of its subsidiaries and has decided to drop its listing on the New York Stock Exchange to reduce costs. Benko's undertakings have run into trouble in the past. The leading German department store chain Galeria Karstadt Kaufhof, which Signa purchased in 2019, filed for bankruptcy in 2020 amid the coronavirus pandemic, and the chain decided to close 52 stores at the start of the year.

In 2012, Benko received a 12-month suspended jail sentence over an Italian tax case, after a court found him guilty of bribing Croatia's former prime minister Ivo Sanader with 150,000 euros to intervene with the Italian tax authorities. Born to a middle-class family in Innsbruck, Benko worked with a friend renovating attics as a teenager before dropping out of school and founding Signa. — AFP



HAMBURG: Picture taken in Hamburg, northern Germany, shows the suspended construction site of the Elbtower, a project by Signa group, that was expected to be one of Germany's tallest buildings and was halted at the end of October 2023. -- AFP

Cambodia scraps \$1.5 billion coal project

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: Cambodia is scrapping plans for a \$1.5 billion coal project as crunch climate talks get under way in Dubai, the country's energy minister told AFP on Wednesday. Keo Rottanak said Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet would announce the cancellation on Thursday.

Phnom Penh would instead consider building a terminal for importing liquefied natural gas (LNG). "Cambodia is fully committed to doing whatever it can to achieve net zero by 2050," Rottanak said in a text message. "Our first stop before that is at least 70 percent renewables by 2030 with energy efficiency and electrification programs as part of the integrated strategy." The 700 megawatt Botum Sakor plant had been planned on land in a protected reserve along the southwest coast of Koh Kong province. Its cancellation will be announced by the prime minister

during a groundbreaking ceremony for a hydropower dam in the same region, Rottanak said, and is intended to send a message to countries at the COP28 discussion. Nick Marx at the forest and wildlife conservation NGO, Wildlife Alliance in Cambodia welcomed the "great" news, and said the decision should be followed by others. "If we are going to avert the disasters that lie ahead, all countries must play their part," he told AFP. Cambodia had previously pledged it would not develop new coal plants, though it said it remained committed to existing plans, including the Botum Sakor facility and another in the country's north. The two-unit Botum Sakor plant had been due to come online around 2025, according to Global Energy Monitor's coal plant tracker.

In December 2021, the country published its roadmap to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It includes a pledge to boost renewables, which already account for much of its electricity generation thanks to hydropower, as well as investments in LNG import, storage and infrastructure.

Coal generated 35.5 percent of Cambodia's electricity in 2022, according to the country's electricity authority, with hydropower accounting for nearly 54 percent. — AFP

SUV sales 'offset' carmakers' electric gains: Greenpeace

SEOUL: A sharp rise in sales of gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles by the world's three largest carmakers has offset any climate gains from the companies' transition to electric vehicles, Greenpeace said on Wednesday. The fleets of SUVs produced by Toyota, Volkswagen, and Hyundai-Kia have all posted sales increases of more than 150 percent over the past decade, meaning the companies are moving "in the opposite direction" of global efforts to curb CO2 emissions, the environmental advocacy group said in a new report.

Released a day before the United Nations COP28 climate summit is set to open in Dubai, the analysis dovetails with separate research published earlier this month by the Global Fuel Economy Initiative expert alliance, which found the trend toward bigger SUVs was preventing motor sector emissions reductions. "The world's biggest automakers are charging full speed ahead with SUV manufacturing, pushing the planet further toward climate disaster," said Erin Choi, a Greenpeace activist focused on the East Asia region.

The Greenpeace report said that SUVs emit approximately 12 percent more carbon dioxide than sedans—but global sales of SUVs have "more than doubled" over the past decade. Volkswagen SUV sales have soared by 270.5 percent over the last 10 years, while Toyota SUV sales have risen by 158.1 percent and Hyundai-Kia sales by 152.4 percent, the group said. Sales of SUVs for the South Korean automaker, which has pledged to use only renewable electricity by 2045, account for more than 52 percent of total sales, Greenpeace added. Greater CO2 emissions from SUVs stem not just from the tailpipe exhaust of those on the road but also from the "industry-wide carbon footprint by increased steel consumption" due to manufacturing bigger and heavier vehicles, the report said.

"It's time for the auto industry to stop greenwashing," said Choi of Greenpeace. "Hyundai, Volkswagen and other automakers must reduce the size of their SUV fleets at the same time that they electrify." Asked about the report, Hyundai said it was expanding its fleet of "fully electric SUV vehicles" that include Kia's EV5 and the recently launched EV9. —AFP

Banks could face rules on climate risk reporting

BASEL: The international bank regulatory body on Wednesday launched a process to develop rules for lenders to report their climate-related risks in a bid to boost transparency and financial stability. The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision said it aims to "promote a common disclosure baseline for climate-related financial risks across internationally active banks" as it issued a preliminary proposal for qualitative and quantitative public disclosure of climate-related risks and sought comments from stakeholders. It suggested a target date of 2026 for implementing disclosure rules, after the expiration of temporary rules adopted by the International Sustainability Standards Board.

Insurers are already confronted with the growing cost from more frequent and destructive weather events, but the Basel Committee said lenders face similar risks as borrowers encounter difficulties repaying loans. It also said banks face risks linked to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Transition risks include the societal changes arising from a transition to a low-carbon economy," said the consultation paper.

Other factors include "changes in public sector policies, innovation and changes in the affordability of existing technologies or investor and consumer sentiment towards sustainable consumption and production practices." The paper called disclosure requirements a fundamental component of a sound banking system, providing market participants with meaningful and comparable information.

It said qualitative information relating to exposure to climate-related financial risks may help to ensure that bank disclosures are sufficiently comprehensive and meaningful. While acknowledging that the accuracy, consistency and quality of climate-related data is still evolving, the Basel Committee said "disclosure requirements will accelerate the availability of such information and facilitate forward-looking risk assessments by banks." It said it plans to incorporate a reasonable level of flexibility into a future disclosure framework, including which elements would be mandatory and which subject to national discretion. Banks have come under regular criticism from climate activists for their reporting of their efforts to reduce the carbon imprint of their physical operations and in their lending and investments. — AFP

Vietnam approves global minimum tax on MNCs

HANOI: Vietnam approved on Wednesday a global minimum tax on multinationals, pushing more than 100 foreign companies including electronics giant Samsung to pay a higher rate. In 2021, more than 130 nations that account for 90 percent of the world economy agreed to bring in a global minimum tax rate of 15 percent to end big corporations shopping for low rates.

Vietnam's corporate income tax is already 20 percent, but it currently offers preferential rates to large foreign investors. On Wednesday, almost 94 percent of lawmakers in Vietnam's national assembly agreed to introduce the new rate of 15 percent. Le Quang Manh, head of the finance and budget committee, warned the country would need to introduce new incentives to remain an attractive destination for foreign companies. "It is necessary to have new investment support policies... so that companies can feel safe about the investment environment in the country," Manh said, according to the national assembly's official website.

According to Vietnam's tax bureau, around 122 foreign-invested multinational groups in the country will be affected by the increase, which is scheduled to come into force at the beginning of next year. Vietnam has become an increasingly important destination for some of the world's top companies—including Samsung and Apple supplier Foxconn—as concerns mount over tensions between the US and China. Many have expanded into the country as part of a "China plus one" strategy. —AFP



Business

OECD trims global growth forecast, warns of war risk

Latest economic outlook projects a soft landing for world economy

PARIS: The world economy is likely headed for a soft landing next year, the OECD said Wednesday as it pared back its growth forecast, but warned the Zionist entity-Hamas conflict could throw a spanner in the works. In its latest economic outlook, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development trimmed its forecast for global growth this year to 2.9 percent, down from the 3.0 percent it forecast in September.

The grouping of developed industrialized countries said it sees global growth slowing to 2.7 percent next year, unchanged from its previous forecast, which the OECD noted would be the lowest annual rate since the global financial crisis, aside from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. A rebound to 3.0 percent growth in 2025 is contingent on inflation slowing further and Asian economies maintaining their fast pace of growth. "The broad picture for the world economy over the next two years is one of a moderate slowdown followed

by eventual normalization, with growth returning to near-trend rates, and inflation converging back to central bank targets by 2025," said the OECD. The OECD's chief economist, Clare Lombardelli, said in her introduction to the report that they "are projecting a soft landing for advanced economies, but this is far from guaranteed."

The OECD still sees near-term risks to its forecast tilted to the downside. It pointed to the heightened geopolitical tensions due to the Zionist entity war on Gaza as "a key source of near-term uncertainty" for the global economy.

"If the conflict were to intensify and broaden within the wider region, there are much stronger risks that could slow growth and push up inflation," said the OECD, which advises its 38 member countries on economic policy. While the OECD had already projected a temporary but pronounced slowdown for Zionist entity, it said the broader direct effects from the conflict for the world economy have so far been "relatively

limited". The slowdown in global growth is being driven by higher interest rates brought in by central banks to slow inflation, but growth should rebound as rates begin to come down along with inflation beginning next year.

The OECD raised its growth forecasts for the US economy by two tenths of a percentage point for this year and 2024, to 2.4 and 1.5 percent respectively. It sees a modest pick up to 1.7 percent growth in 2025. Despite growth nearly stalling in the eurozone last quarter, the OECD held onto its estimate of 0.6 percent growth this year, but trimmed the 2024 forecast to 0.9 percent.

It sees Britain's economy slowly gathering steam with growth rising to 0.5 percent this year, 0.7 percent in 2024 and 1.2 percent in 2025 as the country gradually recovers from a cost-of-living crisis. Japan is also expected to experience a slowdown next year, with growth slowing from 1.7 to 1.0 percent before edging up to 1.2 percent in 2025. The OECD marginally increased its fore-



In its latest economic outlook, the OECD trimmed its forecast for global growth this year to 2.9 percent.

cast for growth in China to 5.2 percent this year. But the world's second largest economy is still expected to see growth slow to 4.7 percent in 2024 and 4.2 per-

cent in 2025 as gloomy consumers save rather than spend amid weak job creation and financial stress brought on by a real estate crisis. — AFP



NBK warns customers against using unsecured Wi-Fi

KUWAIT: Reflecting its keen endeavors to promote financial literacy among different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues supporting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). This campaign disseminates messages to raise community awareness about essential security precautions when using public Wi-Fi networks, whether at shopping malls, public areas, coffee shops, or restaurants. It also highlights how to steer clear of the risks of fraudulent messages, fake ads, hacking of banking apps, advising customers to beware of suspicious transactions and report them, as well as to adhere to banks' guidelines and Central Bank's circulations.

NBK is keen to warn customers of all types of fraud risks and the misleading methods followed by fraudsters. In this campaign, the bank urges customers to avoid making any banking transactions using Wi-Fi networks at public areas, as these networks are unsecured and unprotected, which makes them easily prone to hacking, as many public Wi-Fi networks can have the same name.

The bank also advised customers to use anti-virus and Internet security software for protection from hacking and viruses and securing connection. It also urged them to verify the links and ads sent by these networks, and to turn off Wi-Fi when not in use, disable auto joining of these networks, and not to save network data on their phones for automatic connection, in order to avoid any attempt to hack their phones and access their bank and personal accounts and sensitive information.

NBK makes consistent efforts to educate customers, regarding this as a crucial part of its strategy. To this end, it always uses all communication channels to advise them to keep their passwords/PINs and financial/personal account information strictly confidential, and not to share them with anyone impersonating a bank employee. NBK utilizes its tremendous capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the economy. It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution locally and regionally, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK firmly observes its social responsibilities by actively supporting all strategic campaigns like the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, which serve national economy and society.

Huawei unveils joint fellowship with ITU

KUWAIT: Huawei announced it has already brought connectivity to 90 million people in remote regions in nearly 80 countries following its pledge to the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition. The announcement was made as part of Huawei's first progress report since it joined the Coalition last year.

Dr. Liang Hua, Chairman of the Board of Huawei, made the announcement at the company's 2023 Sustainability Forum, which is themed "Thriving Together with Tech: Realizing Sustainable Development." The event also brought together Doreen Bogdan-Martin, the Secretary-General of ITU; Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Commissioner of the UN Broadband Commission for Development; as well as representatives from telecommunications ministries and regulators, including some from Pakistan and Ghana. Attendees explored how digital infrastructure can better drive sustainable development and help build a greener and more inclusive intelligent world.

"Next-generation digital infrastructure, like connectivity and computing power, are as vital to driving socio-economic development as our physical infrastructure, just like roads. This new infrastructure will be crucial to sustainable development for all of society," Dr. Liang said. "Computing is a core driver of productivity in the digital economy. Faster rollout of computing infrastructure will help speed up digital transition in many industries, and promote deeper integration of the digital and real economies. This can further promote global economic stability and sustainable development."

Further adding to Dr. Liang's comment, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, the Secretary-General of ITU, said: "Let's not choose between tech and sustainable development. We need both! Let's thrive together with tech. Let's build a digital future that advances progress for people and planet."

Huawei firmly believes digital talent is key to future technological innovation. To foster more widespread digital engagement and develop future leaders, the company has deepened its part-



Doreen Bogdan-Martin gives a keynote speech.

nership with ITU by launching a fellowship called "ITU Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme in Partnership with Huawei". The fellowship will be open for applications early next year, and will last three years. Each year, 30 young visionaries (aged 18-28) from around the world will receive support in their projects to use digital technology to drive community development.

Jeff Wang, President of Huawei's Public Affairs and Communications Department, noted: "Huawei is proud to partner with ITU for this important cause, and to see young visionaries making a tangible impact for digital inclusion all across the world. The support that participants will receive includes financial contributions to their projects, mentoring from ITU and Huawei experts, and opportunities to participate in joint events."

"Through ITU and Huawei's joint efforts, young people will learn, contribute and lead in the digital world," said Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau. "Digital is a prerequisite for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. We want youth to push the envelope on the evolving global digital ecosystem and make their transformative contributions. I thank Huawei for this great partnership, and I look forward to seeing the global impact of this innovative project."



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi Qassem Jabbar sits among children at his home on the edges of Nasiriyah, capital of Dhi Qar province.

Iraqis displaced by climate change fall into poverty

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: For the past decade, Nasser Jabbar and his children have lived in a rundown house built of grey concrete blocks at a shantytown in southern Iraq.

Drought chased the father of 10 out of the countryside, where he had been a herder and farmer, and into a life of unemployment and urban poverty. "We lost the land and we lost the water," said the father in his 40s, wearing a traditional white robe.

He spoke to AFP in his home on the edges of Nasiriyah, capital of Dhi Qar province.

Jabbar's neighborhood typifies the extreme pov-

erty that those displaced by climate change face in south and central Iraq. With declining rainfall, the country has seen four consecutive years of drought.

In the shantytown where he lives, cracked streets lined with rubble and piles of rubbish snake between houses thrown together by their inhabitants. On an empty lot surrounded by ramshackle buildings, sewers empty onto open ground as cows rest in the shadow of a low wall nearby.

Like Jabbar, many of the displaced who live here abandoned their villages after a life working in agriculture. In the old days in Gateia, Jabbar's village in Dhi Qar, he farmed five hectares (just over 12 acres) of land with his brothers. In winter, they harvested barley; in summer, vegetables.

Before leaving his fields behind for the last time, Jabbar did what he could for four years to combat the onward march of an increasingly inhospitable climate.

He dug a well, but "little by little the water



Dr. Liang Hua addressing the audience at the Sustainability Forum.

The P2C Coalition, launched by ITU, fosters meaningful connectivity and digital transformation globally, prioritizing remote communities in countries and regions that lack digital access. Huawei signed the global commitment last year, setting goals to bring connectivity to about 120 million people in remote areas in more than 80 countries by 2025. So far, Huawei has provided 2,066 training opportunities in the ITU's first P2C partner country Cambodia, in collaboration with local ministries and universities.



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi children sit in an impoverished area on the edges of Nasiriyah, capital of Dhi Qar province. — AFP photos

Oil prices rebound on mixed day for US stocks

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks rebounded Tuesday behind solid retail data and reassuring comments from Federal Reserve officials, while oil prices rose and the dollar slid. World stock markets, including in New York, have made robust gains in recent weeks on hopes that the US central bank had finished with hiking rates and could cut borrowing costs next year as inflation cools.

While Wall Street's main indices spent some time in the red, they moved higher as the yields on US government bonds fell. An indication of lower inflation expectations and borrowing costs, a drop in bond yields is generally supportive of equities. — AFP

dropped", and he had to sell off his herd of 50 goats one by one. Once in the city, he found work on construction sites carrying bricks or mixing concrete, but had to stop in the end because of back problems.

"I haven't worked for three years," he said. Now, two of his children, aged 17 and 18, support the family by carrying goods to market, earning a little less than four dollars a day.

Despite Iraq being an oil-rich country, poverty is common. In addition to drought, the authorities blame upstream dams built by Iraq's powerful neighbors Iran and Turkey for dramatically lowering water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers which have irrigated Iraq for millennia.

By mid-September, "21,798 families (130,788 individuals) remain displaced because of drought conditions across 12 governorates" in central and southern Iraq, an International Organization for Migration report said. According to the IOM, 74 percent of climate refugees resettle in urban areas. — AFP

VIRTUAL FLOATS REDUCE WASTE AT THAI FESTIVAL

Platforms used to release "Krathong" or floating basket into the Chao Phraya river at the Wat Arun temple during the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations in Bangkok.



A woman releases a "Krathong" or floating basket into the Chao Phraya river during the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations in Bangkok. - AFP photos



A man (left) releases a "Krathong" or floating basket into the Ong Ang canal during the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations in Bangkok.



A woman carrying a "Krathong" or floating basket to release into the Chao Phraya river during the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations in Bangkok.



A woman releases a "Krathong" or floating basket into the Chao Phraya river during the annual Loy Krathong festival.

Luscious greens, egg-yolk yellows and delicate oranges flickered across waterways in the Thai capital Bangkok, as virtual projections of the Loy Krathong festival's traditional offerings reduced waste at the popular event. The annual festival, celebrated on Monday, sees millions ask forgiveness from the river goddess Khongkha by releasing colorful floats into waters across Thailand under a full moon.

In recent years environmentalists have expressed concern as Bangkok's already clogged waterways are increasingly choked by the plastic and foliage "krathongs", as the offerings are known. To combat this, a Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) initiative took a fresh approach to the centuries-old tradition.

Rather than floating the elaborately constructed offerings — which include leaves, flowers, plastic, candles, incense sticks and sometimes coins — people were asked to create digital krathong. After coloring-in drawings of krathong on paper, or on their phones, attendees' sketches were scanned and then projected onto the city's Ong Ang Canal.

"The tradition still remains. But we must integrate the festival to be up-to-date, in order to create less impact and less pollution on nature," attendee Chainarong Tumapha, 27, told AFP. After coloring-in her krathong, Phattirika Kiltontiwanch agreed change was



Municipal workers collect "Krathong" or floating baskets released into the Chao Phraya river marking the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations, during a clean-up drive in Bangkok.

needed. "I'm quite concerned since the environmental issues have grown much bigger," the 23-year-old told AFP.

The BMA said about 3,700 images were projected across the nighttime waters. "We can see that it's getting a lot of attention, especially among young people," Bangkok official Pornphrom Vitsreth told AFP. But the numbers were dwarfed by Bangkokians choosing to release the more traditional floats, with officials saying that more 600,000 were

removed from the city's waters.

The BMA said polystyrene usage was down three percent from last year, with the vast majority of offerings made from natural materials. As people cast off their floats, tugs and small vessels bobbed in the Chao Phraya River, with workers scooping krathongs from the choppy waters.

The collected material will be sorted, with biodegradable elements turned into compost and plastic sent to landfill.

Near the Icon Siam luxury mall, where the krathongs were guided into the Chao Phraya by golden-painted slides, revelers enjoyed a more traditional celebration. "If we don't continue [Loy Krathong], our children and grandchildren will not see this," said 57-year-old Tanaporn Karueksom. — AFP



Municipal workers collect "Krathong" or floating baskets released into the Chao Phraya river marking the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations, during a clean-up drive in Bangkok.



"Krathong" or floating baskets that were released into the Chao Phraya river marking the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations being collected during a clean-up drive in Bangkok.



A woman takes photographs of digital "Krathong" or floating basket designs projected onto the Ong Ang canal during the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations in Bangkok.



Municipal workers collect "Krathong" or floating baskets released into the Chao Phraya river marking the annual Loy Krathong festival celebrations, during a clean-up drive in Bangkok.

Pioneer designer Iris van Herpen on fashion that goes 'beyond beauty'

For Iris van Herpen, whose radical couture dresses have attracted top musicians like Bjork, Beyonce and Lady Gaga, fashion is a way to "transform a human being". The Dutch designer, 39, spoke to AFP Tuesday as she launched an exhibition of her work, "Iris van Herpen: Sculpting the Senses", at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. The opening was attended by Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, wearing one of the designer's creations, and France's first lady, Brigitte Macron.

"Fashion can be an intellectual expression, something that goes beyond beauty," Van Herpen told AFP. "It can be connected to all the layers of life... to architecture, to science, to biology, to nature, to everything that matters," she added. Van Herpen has been a pioneer in fusing a broad range of technologies with couture.

She was one of the first to present 3D-printed dresses, and has borrowed ideas from microscopic photography, deep space imagery, architecture and many other fields. "It's a very important piece for me, because it was the first real (3D) print I made in 2010," Van Herpen said, displaying a swirling, digitally-printed white dress made from polymer and eco-leather that she designed along with architect Daniel Widrig.

"Before, I only focused on traditional crafts, but this is when I started collaborating with architects and scientists. I started not



Dutch fashion designer Iris van Herpen (right) poses during the opening of her exhibition 'Iris van Herpen: Sculpting the Senses' at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs, in Paris.

only drawing inspiration from these disciplines, but to work with them, and that really raised the level of my clothing," she added. Among the other trippy pieces are items that look like intricately detailed skeletons, shimmering dresses based on images of the cosmos, and floaty outfits that resemble plankton blooms in the sea. The perennial question for any haute couture designer: are these clothes really wearable? "Oh yeah, absolutely," Van Herpen insists. "I have a background in dance, so I really think about movement when I create, it's about a transformation of the body."

'Finesse and complexity'

Growing up in the Dutch countryside, she trained in classical and contemporary dance from a young age. That has helped her work with performers such as Beyonce and Lady Gaga. "They are very powerful women who have their own universe. Obviously when I design for them, I have to think of them in motion — they will be dancing on stage. I love thinking about their way of moving, their way of dancing."

Van Herpen has participated in haute couture week in Paris for more than a decade, and experts say she is one of the most memorable new names

of recent times. "She holds a resolutely separate place in the history of fashion," said fashion expert Cloe Pitiot, combining "finesse and complexity, but also poetry and philosophy."

Christine Macel, director of the Museum of Decorative Arts, said Van Herpen is creating a legacy to match Alexander McQueen, with whom she trained. "She has created an extremely strong and unique universe which has no imitators," Macel said. The exhibition runs until April 28. — AFP

Queen Maxima of the Netherlands looks on during the opening of the exhibition 'Iris van Herpen: Sculpting the Senses' at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs, in Paris.

New drama shines light on UK 'poltergeist' mystery

In an ordinary house in a north London suburb in the late 1970s, children levitated, objects flew across rooms, heavy furniture moved on its own and a young girl was flung from her bed. Twelve-year-old Janet Hodgson even sometimes spoke in the rasping, disembodied voice of a man who had died in the house over a decade earlier. In recordings, the ghost of Bill Watkins recounted how he died and where he had been buried, in a case that was quickly dubbed the "Enfield poltergeist".

Journalists, photographers and paranormal investigators all descended on the house to try to document the apparent haunting. Now, 45 years later, a stage play and a new Apple TV documentary exploring the goings-on at 284 Green Street have sparked fresh interest in the mystery.

Writer Paul Unwin's drama "The Enfield Haunting", starring Catherine Tate and David Threlfall, revisits the story and opens at London's Ambassadors Theatre on Thursday. He said he had no particular interest in the saga until 11 years ago, when his agent's husband suggested it might make a good play.

A few weeks later, Unwin found himself in the basement flat of paranormal investigator Guy Lyon Playfair, hearing at first hand about the events that unfolded over 18 months in 1977-78. Unwin listened to parts of the many hours of recordings that Lyon Playfair had made at the house with fellow paranormal investigator Maurice Grosse.

Remote camera

According to Unwin, as soon as Lyon Playfair pressed "play" on a recording of

the deep, gruff voice, he realized it could not be produced by a young girl—even one with ventriloquy skills, as skeptics suggested. At the same time, some of the things the voice said came across as the sort of things a child might say if they were pretending to be a ghost.



The Poltergeist House in Enfield.

Leaving the London flat five hours later, Lyon Playfair asked Unwin if he believed what he had heard. He could only reply that he "didn't know". "I went in a skeptic and came out full of shivers about some of the things he described and some of the tapes that he played me," Unwin told AFP. More than four decades on, people remain split between believing there had been real paranormal activity and that it was all the result of pranks by Janet and her older sister.

Although it seems likely that the girls faked some of the events, Lyon Playfair and Grosse remained convinced there had also been significant paranormal events in the house. Both the sisters took part in the Apple TV documentary, along with press photographer Graham Morris. The former Daily Mirror photographer

eventually came to the conclusion that "a force" was following Janet around. He used a remote camera to capture the moment she was apparently flung from her bed in the middle of the night.

'Extraordinary events'

One of the resulting photographs showed Janet lying flat in bed followed a split second later by another of her in mid-air. Morris said the sequence was taken a sixth of a second apart, so if Janet had climbed out of bed and then jumped into the air it would all have been captured on film. Unwin said he had always been interested in how duress can heighten emotions and "can lead people to believe things that are both crazy, bizarre, some really unreal".

But he stressed that his play was not a documentary. "It's what I imagine might be going on in a house where there is a working-class single mother in the 1970s who is trying to bring up two wayward girls and two other children... and the pressures that then brew," he said.

One of the things that attracted him to the story was that, unlike most ghost tales, it was not set in a vast, creaking mansion on a desolate moor. "This is a still-existing 1930s small working-class house in a street in Enfield. "This family were so ordinary and yet these extraordinary events occurred."

He declined to be drawn on any conclusions he may have drawn, explaining, cryptically, that it can all be "played both ways". "The play is my response to what I heard and the play does have a ghost in it," he said. — AFP



The 284 Green Street also called Poltergeist House in Enfield. — AFP photos

This handout photo shows De Winton's Golden Mole, a blind mole that lives beneath the sand and has sensitive hearing that can detect vibrations from movement above the surface, on Port Nolloth beach in South Africa. — AFP photos



Bashful golden mole detected in South Africa after 87 years

A golden mole that "swims" in sand has resurfaced in South Africa after 87 years in the wilderness when many specialists feared it had become extinct, researchers have said. Traces of two De Winton's golden moles have been found under the sands of a beach after a "detective novel search", said Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) senior field officer Esther Matthew on Tuesday. EWT and University of Pretoria researchers covered up to 18 kilometers (11.2 miles) of dune habitat a day as they spent months hunting for signs, said Matthew.

The blind moles are cute but excessively timid. They pick inaccessible areas to burrow homes and have extremely sensitive hearing to detect ground vibrations made by anyone who could be looking for them. The last scientific trace dates back to 1936. The team used a scent-detecting Border Collie dog, Jessie, to find traces of the moles' tunnels. There are 21 species of golden moles and the De Winton's were detected using environmental DNA samples — skin, hair and bodily excretions — taken from soil at Port Nolloth beach on the northwest coast. More than 100 samples were collected from the dunes.

Even now the researchers have not physically seen the blind mole that has an iridescent coat sheen that allows it to "swim" through sand. To finally make a connection, they have made videos and taken photos. The De Winton's golden mole was one of the top 25 animals on

a list of long-lost species drawn up by the Re:wild non-government group in 2017. Eleven have now been discovered again. Christina Biggs, a lost species specialist for Re:wild, praised the persistence of the team that found the moles. "They left no sandhill turned and now it's possible to protect the areas where these threatened and rare moles live," said Biggs.



The use of environmental DNA was a "case study on how such forward-thinking technologies can be utilized to find other lost species." The team found traces of four other golden moles in the same region. Matthew said the De Winton's are still threatened by mining and residential developments near the beaches that are their home. — AFP



A pedestrian walks past an anti-EU and anti-NATO mural painting in Belgrade, day ahead of the general and presidential elections in Serbia.

THE BATTLE FOR SERBIA'S SOUL ON WALLS OF BELGRADE



A pedestrian walks past a mural painted by an artist of the Grobarski Trash Romantizam (GTR) group, depicting Guyanese-British musician Eddy Grant in Belgrade.



A woman passes by a mural depicting the logo of Russia's mercenary group Wagner in Belgrade.



A local resident walks past a mural depicting Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic in Belgrade.

A rough - and highly contested - history of modern Serbia is written out in murals and slogans on the walls of its capital Belgrade. Portraits of war lords, rock stars and poets along with odes to its "brother nation" Russia and claims to neighboring Kosovo are among the most common found across the city.

"Kosovo is the heart of Serbia" reads one with the red, blue, and white background of the Serbian flag, echoing recent unrest there after an armed standoff at a monastery near the border. A visible pulse to the feelings on the street, the murals are everywhere in the capital - in upmarket neighborhoods, on the side of the motorways, and stencilled onto concrete apartment blocks.

"Walls become political - there has always been, to varying degrees, politics in graffiti," said Hana Suica, a researcher who is writing a book on the subject. "But in recent years, after every major event, it has increased. You can see paintings of Putin, even Trump has his portrait in town. There was also a mural depicting fighters from the Wagner group and many Russian soldiers who died in Ukraine."

On the streets, graffiti goes up only to be defaced by political foes opposed to its message. Often it is later covered again in a never-ending fight with paint. "It's a battlefield... a permanent war in which some come to desecrate the works, others come to repaint," said Suica.

'Potentially dangerous'

Belgrade's oldest mural stands a few meters high in the heart of the city. It shows a student from behind, dressed in jeans with a red notebook under his arm. The piece was created in 1984 by Cedomir Vasic, a professor at the Academy of Arts and his students as a tribute to May 25 - the birthday of Josip Broz Tito, the socialist strongman who ruled the former Yugoslavia for 35 years.

"Professor Vasic was arrested and spent a night in prison," said Ljiljana Radosevic, an art historian who specializes in graffiti. "I imagine that the police didn't really know what the murals were - it was seen as something new, something

potentially dangerous." Five years later to celebrate the ninth congress of Non-Aligned countries, the authorities allowed artists from all over the then Yugoslavia to paint murals - many of which have been integrated into the city's urban fabric over the decades.

During the 1990s marked by the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, NATO bombings, and the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, Belgrade's walls again became canvases for self-expression and political battles. Later in 2014, the punk outfit

The general and the premier

The portraits became so popular that those on the opposite side of the political spectrum adopted the style to canonise the heroes of the far right like Ratko Mladic - the Serb militia leader who was convicted of war crimes, including genocide, in Bosnia in the 1990s. According to a count by the Young Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia, there were more than 250 portraits or graffiti featuring Mladic in Belgrade in March.

The Mladic portraits are frequently

University's philosophy department. The black-and-white portrait of Zoran Dindic, the Serbian prime minister assassinated by former paramilitary fighters in 2003, sits on a sky-blue background.

Years after his death, Dindic remains controversial - loved by progressives for his unrealized vision of a modern liberal country and hated by the old guard after he handed over Milosevic to an international war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Over the years, the mural has been tarnished several times - smeared with paint



Pedestrians walk past a mural, vandalized with black paint, depicting former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic in Belgrade.

Grupa JNA began painting giant black-and-white portraits of largely left-leaning writers, poets and actors to celebrate the Belgrade's Partizan basketball and football clubs. "They wanted to show that you can be a fan and not be a horrible person, that you can contribute to the culture of Belgrade and Serbia," said Radosevic.

defaced leading football hooligans to temporarily stand guards at one of the larger paintings of the general. In early October, a human rights activist was fined 850 euros (\$926) for throwing eggs at one of the Mladic murals. Another mural that has garnered its share of attention stands in front of Belgrade

to the point that it was later repainted higher on the building to prevent vandalism, while slogans and graffiti continue to appear under the portrait. You may only see drawings, said Radosevic, "but all graffiti here is political". — AFP



Tourists take a photo of Belgrade's oldest mural in Belgrade, a piece created in 1984 by Cedomir Vasic, a professor at the Academy of Arts and his students, as a tribute to May 25 - the birthday of Josip Broz Tito, the strongman who ruled the former Yugoslavia for 35 years.



Tourists gather in front of murals on the wall of the building of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade depicting Zoran Dindic, the Serbian assassinated prime minister and "The Runner" by the painter Vladimir Velickovic (top).



A pedestrian walks past a mural dedicated to a Serbian citizen Stefan Dimitrijevic (left), who died in Ukraine fighting on the side of Russia, and a mural painted by an artist of the Grobarski Trash Romantizam (GTR) group, depicting British rock singer Joe Strummer (right) in Belgrade.



A pedestrian walks past a mural painted in colours of the Serbian flag, reading "Kosovo" in Belgrade.



A mural depicting former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic.

Sports

Glenn Maxwell's 104 keeps Australia alive in T20 series

47-ball hundred was the joint fastest alongside Aaron Finch and Josh Inglis

GUWAHATI: Glenn Maxwell smashed an unbeaten 104 as Australia pulled off a stunning chase of 223 in the third Twenty20 international against India on Tuesday to stay alive in the series with a five-wicket win.

The swashbuckling batsman struck his 100 in 47 balls and completed the win with a six and three fours from the final four balls of the 20th over in Guwahati before he flies back home. It was Maxwell's fourth T20 century as he joined Rohit Sharma with most tons in the format and the knock eclipsed a 123 by Rituraj Gaikwad in India's 222-3.

His 47-ball hundred was the joint fastest in the format for an Australian batsman alongside Aaron Finch and Josh Inglis. Australia, who won the ODI World Cup after beating hosts India in the final earlier this month, still trail the five-match series 2-1 with the fourth T20 on Friday in Raipur.

Maxwell, in his 100th T20 international and his last of the series, struck eight fours and eight sixes and put on an unbeaten 91-run stand with skipper Matthew Wade, who hit 28. "It was always going to take our best, and one of the best players that's ever played T20s for Australia played his 100th game and got a hundred, so pretty special for him," Wade said of the man of the match Maxwell.

Australia slipped to 68-3, but Maxwell, called "The Big Show" for his attacking batting, stood

firm and tore into the Indian attack despite getting cramps towards the end. Maxwell's knock brought back memories of his match-winning 201 not out in a 50-over World Cup match against Afghanistan earlier this month when he completed a miraculous chase from 91-7.

Wholesale changes

Opener Travis Head, who made the team after his match-winning century in the ODI World Cup final, attacked along with fellow opener Aaron Hardie. The left-handed Head smashed 35 off 18 balls but fell to fast bowler Avesh Khan and soon Australia lost three wickets before the Maxwell blitz.

The tourists have made wholesale changes to their squad midway into the series with Steve Smith and Adam Zampa back home. "We really needed this win, and a lot of guys are heading home so a chance for the younger ones to learn how to play in India," said Wade.

"Hopefully we can take it to the decider with another win in the next game," Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Inglis and Sean Abbott—all part of the group that won a record-extending sixth 50-over title—are to fly back home Wednesday.

Earlier India rode on Gaikwad's maiden international century and his 141-run unbeaten stand with Tinku Varma to post a mammoth total, which proved in-



GUWAHATI: Australia's Glenn Maxwell plays a shot during the third Twenty20 international cricket match between India and Australia at the Assam Cricket Association Stadium in Guwahati. — AFP

sufficient. Australia elected to bowl first and got two early wickets but Gaikwad, who hit 58 in the team's second win, took apart the opposition bowling to

raise his 100 off 52 balls. He finished with 13 fours and seven sixes in his 57-ball blitz with Varma, who hit 31 off 24 balls, playing anchor at the other end. — AFP



Tiger Woods

Tiger confident PGA-Saudi deal will be completed

MIAMI: Tiger Woods is confident the US PGA Tour merger agreement with Saudi backers of the LIV Golf League will be completed, vowing Tuesday to make the best deal for players. The 15-time major winner is among six players on the Tour Policy Board that must approve the framework deal by a December 31 deadline or risk a return to golf's civil war.

"I'm confident a deal will get done in some way, whether that comes December 31 or it's pushed back," Woods said ahead of his return to competition after ankle surgery at this week's Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas.

"All the parties are talking and we're aggressively working on trying to get a deal done. All sides understand we're working together. There are no lawsuits. Everyone's working right now with no animosity," Woods, who joined the policy board five months ago, wants a faster process.

"I'm pleased at the process and how it has evolved," Woods said. Also, frustrated at some of the slowness at the change he wanted to happen. December 31 is coming up very quickly. "We're looking at all options and trying to figure out what's the best deal for the players. There's a lot of moving parts to that," Woods said he was frustrated and shocked like many players when the PGA-LIV framework deal was unveiled by PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan in June, stunned such a major move would be made without player input—a situation Woods said won't be repeated.

"I was very surprised the process was what it was and we were very frustrated at what happened," Woods said. "We took steps going forward to ensure players were not going to be left out of the process like we were. Part of that was putting me onto the board and accepting that position."

"We can't let that happen again." Asked if he still had faith in Monahan, Woods said: "I did have faith in Jay and in what he could do going forward and what can't happen again. He understands what happened prior can't happen again and won't happen again."

Other private equity partners have pitched a deal to invest in the PGA Tour if the deal with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) falls through. "We have multiple options but we would like to have a deal done December 31," Woods said. "But there are other options out there."

How can team golf work?

Among the undecided issues is how PGA players who departed for LIV, and were subsequently banned from PGA events, could return to the tour. "As far as a pathway, we're still working on that," Woods said. "It's part of what we're trying to work through." Woods noted that equity investors want a return on their financing, adding, "We have to protect the integrity of our tour. Trying to figure all that out the past few months has been a very difficult task." Woods said his concern was making sure players had schedule protection and the competitive integrity of events was secure and what players might have to surrender to investors.

"We control what we're going to do," Woods said. "We're not going to have (decisions) without our involvement again." Woods said he could "totally understand" why Rory McIlroy quit the board, in part to focus on his game, but he has a different motive. "I can have a lasting impact on the future of golf by being on the board and being part of the future of the PGA Tour," Woods said. Woods said another matter the board is considering is team golf, which is a major part of LIV's structure. —AFP

New Zealand trail Bangladesh despite Williamson century

SYLHET: Kane Williamson struck a defiant century Wednesday but was unable to put New Zealand in control in the first Test against Bangladesh in Sylhet. The visitors reached 266-8 at stumps on the second day, still trailing Bangladesh by 44 runs in the first innings.

Williamson hit 104 off 205 balls in his 29th Test century with 11 fours, before Taijul Islam broke through his defence to bowl out the right-hander. "I mean, you just see all around the world, he's amazing and how he sort of works out different attacks, different sort of ways people are trying to get him out, different surfaces," New Zealand coach Luke Ronchi said in praise of Williamson.

"So to be able to do it the way he does and the calmness he shows in situations is awesome," Ronchi added. "He's done it a lot, but a lot of our young guys can see how he does it." Taijul was the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers with 4-89, while Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan, Shoriful Islam and Mominul Haque claimed one wicket apiece.

"I think the spinners bowled well. We could have created some more pressure. We took eight wickets in the end, so it is a good day for us," Bangladesh spin coach Rangana Herath said. Herath praised Taijul for bringing his wealth of experience to the fore.

"Taijul is always helping the attack. He is our leading spinner. He created a lot of pressure," said Herath. "He created a lot of angles. He has great experience, knowledge and understanding. I am so happy that he took four wickets today."

'Exceptional' Rahul Dravid to stay on as India coach

NEW DELHI: Rahul Dravid will stay on as coach of India, the country's cricket board said on Wednesday, having led the hosts to the final of the World Cup earlier this month. It was "unanimously agreed to further the tenure" of the 50-year-old former skipper, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

"The board acknowledges Mr Dravid's instrumental role in moulding the Indian team and commends his exceptional professionalism," it said. Dravid's contract had expired after the World Cup, which ended on November 19 with India's defeat to Australia.

Dravid was appointed in November 2021 for a two-year period. "The last two years with team India have been thoroughly memorable," said Dravid. "Together we have witnessed the highs and lows, and throughout this journey, the support and ca-

'Petty' sibling rivalry fires up rising star Lee at Australian Open

SYDNEY: Australia's newest golf star Min Woo Lee says that his rivalry with better-known sister Minjee Lee will fire him up as he chases a fourth DP World Tour title this week in Sydney. The Perth-born siblings will both be in action at the Australian Open because the men's and women's events take place at the same courses at the same time.

The 25-year-old Min Woo has long been in his sister's shadow, with the 27-year-old Minjee winning two majors and consistently one of the best players in women's golf. But the colourful Min Woo is enjoying the best year of his career and has broken into the top 40 in the world for the first time.

He won in Macau last month on the Asian Tour and carried that red-hot form into last week's Australian PGA Championship, where he triumphed by three strokes for a third title on the DP World Tour, formerly the European Tour.

He finished tied fifth at the US Open in June and



SYLHET: New Zealand's Henry Nicholls (L) plays a shot as Bangladesh's Jakir Hasan (R) tries to catch a ball during the second day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet on November 29, 2023. — AFP

Glenn Phillips scored 42 runs to boost Williamson in their 78-run sixth-wicket partnership—which dug the visitors out of a hole after they lost the top half of their batting order for 175 runs. Occasional left-arm spinner Mominul forced Phillips to give a catch at slip, ending their partnership. Williamson took a single off Nayeem to complete his hundred off 189 balls, drawing him level with Don Bradman and Virat Kohli in terms of Test centuries.

Ronchi remained confident of New Zealand's tail wagging. "We've still got two wickets in hand and hopefully tomorrow morning we come back," he said. "And the guys left can put some more runs on the board and get us closer to the Bangladesh

maraderie within the group have been phenomenal. "I am genuinely proud of the culture we have set in the dressing room." His team of support staff, including batting coach Vikram Rathour and bowling coach Paras Mhambrey, have also been retained. The BCCI did not say how long the new term would be, with India now eyeing the Twenty20 World Cup in June next year as they attempt to break their painful drought in global tournaments.

"Mr Rahul Dravid's vision, professionalism and unyielding efforts have been important pillars in team India's success," Roger Binny, president of the BCCI, said. "As head coach of the Indian cricket team you are always under immense scrutiny and I extend appreciation to him not only for embracing the challenges but for thriving in them." India, captained by Rohit Sharma, remained unbeaten in 10 matches coming into the World Cup final in Ahmedabad. But they lost by six wickets to an Australia side who extended their record of World Cup titles to six.

India last won a global title with the 2013 Champions Trophy and their last World Cup triumph came in 2011 at home. Dravid, nicknamed "The Wall" or "Mr Dependable" for his classic batting and rock-solid defence, is expected to lead the team on their tour of South Africa next month.



SYDNEY: Australia's Minjee Lee (R) walks with her caddy after a practice round at the Australian Golf Club in Sydney on November 29, 2023, ahead of the Australian Open golf tournament starting on November 30. — AFP

has earned playing rights for the PGA Tour in 2024. Speaking ahead of the Australian Open, which is co-sanctioned by the DP World Tour, Min Woo told reporters in Sydney that it was a mostly healthy rivalry with his older sister. "I get a little pissed off when she wins the week after because I got the light on me for

score, definitely." Taijul redeemed himself for dropping Williamson at midwicket on 63 by taking the wicket of the former New Zealand captain and Ish Sodhi (0) in successive overs. Daryl Mitchell earlier rode his luck to reach 41 before he was stumped by Nurul Hasan, off Taijul's bowling. Mitchell, who put on 66 runs with Williamson for the fourth wicket, had nicked pacer Shoriful while batting on four.

But Bangladesh did not review the caught-behind appeal, which was turned down by the on-field umpire. New Zealand bowled out Bangladesh for 310 on the first ball of the morning when Tim Southee trapped last man Shoriful leg-before for 13. — AFP



Rahul Dravid

Before retiring as a player in 2012, Dravid scored 13,288 runs in 164 Tests, second only to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar for India and fourth overall in the world rankings. Dravid and almost all his World Cup players took a break after the tournament.

Suryakumar Yadav is captaining a second-string India against Australia in a five-match T20 series. Former batsman VVS Laxman is coaching the team, which leads the series 2-1. Laxman has stood in whenever Dravid takes a break. — AFP

a little bit and then four days later or like a week later, she's holding a trophy," he said. "We're happy for each other. We want to only do well and inspire kids and keep playing good golf."

"So it's not that bad of a sibling rivalry, but a little petty—from me usually," Min Woo's win in Brisbane last week was also notable for his colourful celebrations, when he put on a chef's hat at the 17th hole—before victory was sealed—at Royal Queensland Golf Club. A beaming Min Woo, who appears to relish being in the limelight, also led the crowd in a "thunder-clap". "I still have to ask my caddy where he got the chef hat on 17," he said this week.

Like her brother, world number five Minjee is also chasing a maiden victory at the Australian Open, where there is an equal split between men and women for prize money. Their busy schedules mean that the siblings do not get much proper time to catch up.

But Minjee has watched her brother's recent success with pride from afar—even if she's loth to admit it. Typical siblings. "I'd never say it to his face, but he plays really well and I'm always really proud of him," she said after winning on the LPGA Tour on the same day that he secured his PGA Tour card for 2024. "Over the past year he's been playing great," she added in Sydney this week. —AFP

Sports

Last-gasp Mbappe penalty earns PSG Champions League draw with Newcastle

French champions will join in Dortmund in their final group game

PARIS: A 98th-minute Kylian Mbappe penalty earned Paris Saint-Germain a 1-1 Champions League draw with Newcastle United on Tuesday that keeps the French club in a position to qualify for the last 16 and leaves their opponents in serious danger of a group-stage exit.

It looked as though Newcastle—who won 4-1 when the sides met at St James' Park last month—were going to leave Paris with all three points in the Group F encounter thanks to Alexander Isak's 25th-minute opener.

PSG had run out of ideas by the time they were gifted an opportunity to salvage a draw in injury time when the VAR decided a Tino Livramento handball in the box was worthy of a penalty. Mbappe made no mistake, and PSG hold onto second place in the group behind Borussia Dortmund, who won 3-1 away to AC Milan and are through to the last 16.

The French champions will join them with a win in Dortmund in their final group game, while Newcastle now have to win at home to Milan and hope PSG slip up. "I feel it is a poor decision," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said of the penalty. "It is hugely frustrating for us because at that moment you know how little time there is left in the game, but there is nothing we can do about it now."

Howe's side would have been out with

a defeat, so at least they remain in contention, while avoiding a third defeat in five group games allows PSG to hold off the threat of a first elimination from the Champions League before the last 16 in the Qatar era.

"We should have won, without a doubt. I think it was a very complete performance from us," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "We were better than Newcastle but that's football," he added before claiming he had not seen the crucial penalty incident.

"I don't dedicate myself to looking at VAR decisions. I am only dedicated to improving my team." PSG have regularly struggled to impress in the Champions League in the last decade, but never as much as this season, and Mbappe's late goal—his 17th of the season—got them out of jail.

Mbappe, wearing the captain's armband with Marquinhos missing, often struggled to impact the game as he found himself squashed in between Newcastle defenders Kieran Trippier and Jamaal Lascelles.

The visitors set up to thwart the hosts and the tactic mostly worked, at least after PSG almost went in front inside nine minutes. Achraf Hakimi linked up with Randal Kolo Muani down the Paris right before driving into the box and delivering

a low centre for Mbappe, whose back-heeled attempt was saved by Nick Pope.

Isak opens scoring

PSG were not helped by another shaky performance from their Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, which has become a worrying trend. It was his poor pass out which led to Hakimi losing possession in the 12th minute, allowing Miguel Almiron to cross for Isak to fire over in a first warning.

The Premier League side then went in front when Livramento ran unchallenged across the edge of the box to set up Almiron for a shot that Donnarumma could only parry out to the feet of the grateful Isak. Newcastle then served a reminder of why they boasted the joint-best defence in England last season alongside champions Manchester City, as they sat back and denied Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele and Kolo Muani the space they crave.

But PSG also squandered chances, with Mbappe setting up Dembele for a shot that was blocked in first-half stoppage time, while the latter was denied by Pope diving at his feet shortly after the restart. Pope made a superb stop in the 66th minute to deny substitute Bradley Barcola after he was set up by Mbappe.

PSG then appealed furiously for a



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe tries an acrobatic shot during the UEFA Champions League 1st round, day 5, Group F football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Newcastle United at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris.—AFP

penalty when Hakimi was knocked off balance by Anthony Gordon, but a VAR check concluded there was nothing worth a spot-kick, and a claim for handball against teenager Lewis Miley moments later was also dismissed.

Pope saved again from Mbappe in the

87th minute, but Newcastle's resistance was finally undone when the Polish VAR official called referee Szymon Marciniak across to the monitor to review a possible handball by Livramento. The award was harsh, but Mbappe snapped up the chance to equalise.—AFP

Kante keeps holders Urawa alive in Asian Champions League

SAITAMA: Japan's defending champions Urawa Red Diamonds stayed alive in the Asian Champions League on Wednesday after retiring striker Jose Kante scored a 90th-minute winner to sink China's Wuhan Three Towns.

Urawa were heading for a group-stage exit until Guinean Kante struck from the edge of the box to give them a 2-1 win in his last home game before hanging up his boots after next month's Club World Cup. The result means Urawa can still reach the knock-out phase, but they will have to win their final group game and hope results elsewhere go their way.

Kante, who announced his intention to retire on Monday, said the goal was the way he "wanted to finish" his last game at Saitama Stadium. "I'm very excited about the game and about the goal and the three points," said the 33-year-old.

"It was really important for us to win." Urawa, who beat Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal to win their third Asian title in May, started the game knowing they could not catch South Korea's Pohang Steelers, who had already qualified as Group J winners.

Urawa's only route to the knock-out round was to finish as one of the three best runners-up from the East zone's five groups. Danish defender Alexander Scholz gave them the lead with a 37th-minute penalty, but they lost two players to injury on the stroke of half-time.

Forward Toshiki Takahashi was stretched off with a head injury, but he was conscious after being taken to hospital. Brazilian Davidson scored a 68th-minute equaliser for Wuhan, who also needed to win to stay alive in the competition.

But Kante pounced on a loose ball and slammed it home



SAITAMA: Urawa's Jose Kante (C) scores the winning goal in the 90th minute during the AFC Champions League group stage football match between Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds and China's Wuhan Three Towns FC at Saitama Stadium in Saitama on November 29, 2023.—AFP

for Urawa's late winner, giving the defending champions something to play for in their final game away to Vietnam's Hanoi FC on December 6. "November has been a tough month for us," said Urawa goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa, whose team had lost their last four games in all competitions. "We haven't had the results we were looking for, but we were determined to win the last game here at home."

Pohang beat Hanoi 2-0 in the group's other game. Wuhan and Hanoi were both eliminated. South Korea's Jeon-

buk Hyundai Motors moved a step closer to the knock-out round with a 2-1 win over Hong Kong's Kitchee.

The result keeps Jeonbuk in second place in Group F, behind Thailand's Bangkok United. Japan's Ventforet Kofu and Australia's Melbourne City shared a six-goal thriller in a 3-3 draw that puts both teams on eight points. Also in Group H, China's Zhejiang moved to six points after a 3-2 win over Thailand's Buriram United, who are also on six points.—AFP

for Jurgen Klopp and his team.

Having won their previous three outings in Group E despite massive changes to the lineup each time, Liverpool need only avoid defeat at home against LASK of Austria in order to secure progress before their final match away to Union Saint-Gilloise in Belgium next month.

Indeed they will qualify regardless provided the Belgians do not win in Toulouse at the same time, but there is also a chance the Reds could wrap up top spot in the group—that would ensure they advance straight to the last 16 rather than having to participate in an extra round of play-offs.

While Liverpool sit just two points off the top of the Premier League, LASK are third in the Austrian Bundesliga, five points behind leaders Red Bull Salzburg. Their biggest threat is likely to come from goal-scoring midfielder and captain Robert Zulj, but it would be an enormous shock if they took anything from their trip to England.

West Ham are in a similar position to Liverpool, knowing a win this midweek will take

them through from Group A but that they could qualify regardless if results elsewhere go their way. The Hammers will be in northern Serbia to take on TSC Backa Topola, a team they defeated 3-1 in London in September but who have just claimed a notable 4-0 win away at domestic league leaders Partizan Belgrade.

David Moyes's team are level atop their group with Freiburg and will qualify for the knockout phase come what may as long as the Germans avoid defeat at home to Olympiakos of Greece.

Ajax revival

Brighton and Hove Albion will extend their first ever European adventure into the new year if they get the better of AEK Athens away in Group B, which would be a measure of revenge after they lost 3-2 when the sides met in England in September.

Roberto De Zerbi's side looked up against it when they followed that by drawing 2-2 in Marseille, but they have since beaten Ajax twice to find themselves eyeing the next round.

Kuwait Equestrian Federation to open third edition league

KUWAIT: Kuwait Equestrian Federation is preparing for the opening of its third edition of the local league, scheduled to start its first round on Friday by local clubs riders. International judge Nabila Al-Ali who is secretary of KEF said: "The federation is ready for the first round, as local clubs riders prepared well for the event amid expectations the season will see very strong competition between several riders."



Nabila Al-Ali

She said each round of the league will take place in two consecutive days, and at the end of the league championship the rider with the highest number of points will be declared champion. Competitions will have heats for professionals, amateurs and juniors. It is worth mentioning that rider Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi won the first two championships and expected to be tough to beat as he trained well and participated in international championships.

Beaten Europa League finalists in 2022, Rangers have a chance to qualify this Thursday if they win at home to Aris Limassol of Cyprus in Group C. Rangers have an impressive record at home in the Europa League, winning seven and drawing one of their last eight matches there in the competition.

They did lose 2-1 away to Aris in October, but that was before the appointment of Philippe Clement as manager, since when they are unbeaten. "It is a massive game at Ibrox on Thursday where we need to get three points to put us in a good position in the group and that is all our main focus now," captain James Tavernier said after Sunday's 1-1 draw at Aberdeen.

Marseille and last season's runners-up Roma can also qualify, but Ajax need to beat the French club away to keep alive their chances. It has been a dreadful season so far for the Dutch giants, although they are undergoing a revival domestically, with three wins and a draw in their last four games since John van't Schip became coach.—AFP

Liverpool set to clinch place in Europa knockouts

PARIS: Liverpool and their Premier League counterparts West Ham United and Brighton can all clinch spots in the knockout phase of the Europa League this Thursday with a round of group games to spare, while troubled Ajax face elimination from the competition.

The Anfield side could have already wrapped up their place in the next round earlier this month, but they succumbed to a 3-2 defeat by Toulouse amid a euphoric atmosphere in France, albeit only after having a last-gasp equaliser ruled out by the VAR. That victory was celebrated, understandably, by Toulouse and their supporters as one of their greatest ever results, but it should go down as nothing more than a minor setback

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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

Change of Name

I, Sakina, holder of passport number: L9644390, do hereby change my name to Sakina (as given name) Khedawala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known as Sakina Khedawala and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

#4567- 28-11-2023

I, Huzefa, holder of passport number: M2312749, do hereby change my name to Huzefa (as given name) Khedawala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known as Huzefa Khedawala and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

#4567- 28-11-2023

Barca, Dortmund, Atletico, Lazio into Champions League last-16

Spanish champions now have 12 points while Porto locked on nine



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Spanish defender #03 Alejandro Balde fights for the ball with FC Porto's Portuguese forward #10 Francisco Conceicao during the UEFA Champions League first round group H football match between FC Barcelona and FC Porto at the Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys in Barcelona. — AFP

PARIS: Barcelona, Borussia Dortmund, Atletico Madrid and Lazio all qualified for the knockout phase of the Champions League on Tuesday. Manchester City bounced back from 2-0 down to beat RB Leipzig with both teams already qualified, while Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle drew 1-1 and both need a result on matchday six to go through.

Atletico Madrid booked their place with a sumptuous volley from defender Mario Hermoso and two own goals firing them to a thrilling 3-1 win over Dutch champions Feyenoord. "I am very happy for the players. Today, we knew how difficult our opponent would be," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone to Movistar.

That left Atletico with 11 points in Group E ahead of 10-point Lazio, who had a tense wait after playing earlier and needing a Feyenoord defeat to confirm their place. Veteran Italian striker Ciro Immobile shot the Italian side into the last-16 in

a 2-0 win over eliminated Celtic in Rome, leaving Feyenoord to join the Europa League.

In Group H, Barcelona came from behind to beat Porto 2-1 as Portuguese duo Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix both netted to turn the game on its head after Brazilian winger Pepe opened for Porto. "It was a final and we won it ... we've put the club in the last-16, which is where it deserves to be," Cancelo told Movistar. The Spanish champions now have 12 points while Porto are locked on nine alongside Shakhtar Donetsk, who beat Antwerp 1-0 in Hamburg.

Newcastle pay the penalty

Borussia Dortmund secured their spot in the last-16 with a 3-1 win at AC Milan, who are starting early elimination in the face. Marco Reus' early penalty and second-half strikes from English teenager Jamie Bynoe-Gittens and Karim Adeyemi se-

cured passage into the next round with a match to spare for Dortmund.

There was late drama at the Parc des Princes when a 98th-minute Kylian Mbappe penalty earned Paris Saint-Germain a 1-1 draw with Newcastle United. It looked as though Newcastle—who won 4-1 when the sides met at St James' Park last month—were going to leave Paris with all three points in the Group F encounter thanks to Alexander Isak's 24th-minute opener.

PSG had run out of ideas by the time they were gifted an opportunity to salvage a draw in injury time when the VAR decided a Tino Livramento handball in the box was worthy of a penalty. Mbappe made no mistake from the spot, and PSG hold onto second place in the group behind Borussia Dortmund.

"I'm feeling very flat, but very proud of the players and their commitment levels," said Newcastle coach Eddie Howe to TNT Sports. — AFP

Haaland hits 40 in CL as Man City beat Leipzig

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland became the fastest player to score 40 Champions League goals as Manchester City came from 2-0 down to beat RB Leipzig 3-2 on Tuesday. The defending champions were on course for their first European defeat at the Etihad since 2018 when Lois Openda took advantage of shambolic defending to score twice in the first half.

Haaland reduced City's arrears before goals from Phil Foden and Julian Alvarez secured top spot in Group G. "The first half was the worst I've seen us," admitted Foden. "Came out second half, played a lot better and changed the game. This team has got a great mentality for that."

City have now won 27 of their last 29 Champions League home games since they last tasted defeat. Leipzig have been regular victims during that run and were humbled 7-0 on their last trip to the Etihad in March. But Guardiola headed down the tunnel at half-time shaking his head at what he had seen from the European champions.

City dominated possession and territory but were undone by two moments of carelessness from the normally reliable Manuel Akanji and Ruben Dias. The in-form Openda showed his poise after Akanji let the Belgian latch onto a long ball from Leipzig goalkeeper Janis Blaswich to finish past Stefan Ortega.

Haaland uncharacteristically snatched at a great chance to equalise as the Norwegian blasted over and Rico Lewis was also wayward with a clear sight of goal. But as City camped in the Leipzig half, one more long ball caught out Guardiola's men as Dias dived in and Openda galloped clear to score his 13th goal of the season.

"We conceded too much defensively. You



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland headers the ball during the UEFA Champions League Group G football match between Manchester City and RB Leipzig at the Etihad Stadium, in Manchester. — AFP

have to win your duels," said Guardiola. "We reacted really well second half and yeah we are first in the group so very satisfied with the reaction." Guardiola responded at the break as Nathan Ake replaced Dias.

But it was not until two more changes with the introduction of Jeremy Doku and Alvarez that the comeback commenced. Alvarez played a part in City's first goal as he fed Foden, who played in Haaland to net his 40th Champions League goal in just 35 appearances on 54 minutes.

Foden then stroked home Josep Gvardiol's pass from the edge of the box 20 minutes from time. Leipzig thought they had retaken the lead when

Liverpool loanee Fabio Carvalho slotted into the far corner, only to be flagged offside.

And City had the final say when Doku found Foden at the by-line and his low cross was controlled and finished by Alvarez for his fourth goal in as many Champions League appearances this season. "Jeremy changed the rhythm of our game and Julian close the box is a special player," added Guardiola. "Phil, Julian and Erling have an incredible sense of (how to score a) goal." Leipzig had already secured their place in the last 16 but now risk facing the likes of Barcelona or Real Madrid in the knockout stages. — AFP

Bucks, Kings and Celtics advance

MIAMI: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points and Damian Lillard added 32 as the Milwaukee Bucks beat Miami 131-124 on Tuesday to reach the knockout rounds of the NBA In-Season Tournament. On the final night of group-stage play in the NBA's inaugural version of a World Cup, the Bucks won the East Group B crown at 4-0, taking the top Eastern Conference seed in the fight to reach next month's semi-finals in Las Vegas.

The quarter-finals will find Boston at Indiana and New Orleans at Sacramento on Monday, with New York at Milwaukee and Phoenix at the Los Angeles Lakers next Tuesday. Boston routed Chicago 124-97 to win East Group C and advance while New York, second behind Milwaukee in Group B, beat Charlotte 115-91 and advanced as a wildcard based on superior point differential over Cleveland 42-29.

Sacramento edged Golden State 124-123 to win West Group C, rallying from 24 points down in the second quarter to advance. The Warriors knew they had to win by 12 points to win the group on a point differential tiebreaker and took a 72-55 half-time lead before the Kings, led by 29 points from De'Aaron Fox, rallied late to trim the margin then swipe the triumph.

"We still wanted to win the game, it counts for the regular season, but we knew what the number was," Fox said. Phoenix took a West wildcard spot when Minnesota beat Oklahoma City 106-103 while New Orleans won West Group B when the Dallas Mavericks downed visiting Houston 121-115.

At Miami, the Bucks opened a 15-2 lead, Miami answered with a 16-4 run, then Milwaukee closed the first quarter on a 12-4 spurt for a 31-22 lead. "We started out great, but it's hard," Middleton said. "You're just not going to knock a team down in the first five minutes. They did a great job coming back. We did a great job keeping our composure and finding a way to close this thing out."

At New York, Julius Randle scored 25 points and grabbed 20 rebounds while Immanuel Quickley had 23 points off the bench to spark the Knicks. Boston needed a lopsided win to advance and got it as Jaylen Brown scored 30 points, grabbed eight rebounds and passed off six assists to lead the hosts over Chicago. Jayson Tatum added 21 points and Al Horford had 16 points, nine rebounds and six assists for the Celtics. — AFP