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Zionists resume Gaza genocide

Kuwait strongly slams Zionist aggression • Palestinian death toll mounts

Amir health remains stable; fake news peddlers warned

KUWAIT: The health condition of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, the Amiri Diwan said on Saturday. In a statement, Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah also prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow good health and swift recovery upon HH the Amir.

Meanwhile, the public prosecution warned Saturday that it would take firm legal measures against any individual, group, platform or media outlet reporting or publishing news about the health of HH the Amir or the arrangements of the ruling family.

In a statement, the prosecution said it carefully followed with grave concern what has been covered by media and some in-



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

dividuals on all types of networks and outlets, detecting "false" reports about HH the Amir's health and the aforementioned arrangements. Should they be taken, the measures will be in line with Article 167 of the constitution, it noted. — KUNA

GAZA: The Zionist entity brushed off international calls to renew an expired truce Saturday as air strikes pounded targets in Gaza and Palestinian groups launched volleys of rockets. Smoke again clouded the sky over the north of the Palestinian territory, whose government said 240 people had been killed since a pause in hostilities expired early Friday and combat resumed.

Kuwait's foreign ministry on Saturday voiced emphatic condemnation and denunciation of the Zionist occupation forces' resumed aggression on the Gaza Strip. The ministry, in a press release, reiterated Kuwait's call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and back all efforts to halt this aggression that has claimed, and is still claiming, the lives of innocent people.

The Zionist occupation's continued violations of international law and international humanitarian law should be faced by a deterrence mechanism whereby the perpetrators of war crimes would be held accountable, it warned. In this context, the ministry underlined that this continued approach would undermine the peace process and the two-state solution.



GAZA: People try to comfort a woman holding the body of her baby girl killed in a Zionist strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, in the courtyard of Al-Najjar hospital on Dec 1, 2023. — AFP

It also stressed that further relief and humanitarian aid should be delivered to the Gaza Strip, calling for carrying on efforts to stop this absurd war in a sustainable manner, leading up to a comprehensive and just solution for the Palestinian cause that

includes an independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In the Zionist entity, the military's Home Front Command reported 40 missile alerts in the south and center of the country, and

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Cooling water leak at refinery

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced that cooling water began leaking out of fuel units at the Mina Abdullah refinery on Saturday morning. The refinery's teams have begun the process of gradually and safely shutting down the units while taking all relevant precautionary measures, KNPC said on X. Maintenance workers are working to fix the defect as quickly as possible and gradually restart the units to ensure export operations are not impacted, it added. — KUNA

US protester sets self on fire

WASHINGTON: A protester outside the Zionist consulate in Atlanta was in critical condition Friday after setting himself on fire, in what police said was likely an "extreme" political statement. A security guard was also injured after trying to stop the protester. The guard was burned on his wrist and leg, Atlanta Fire Chief Roderick Smith said, while the protester was in critical condition with "full thickness" burns to their body. — AFP

Zionists kill 3 journalists

GAZA: Gaza's government said three journalists were killed in Zionist raids on Friday as fierce fighting resumed after a weeklong truce. The government press office identified the three as cameraman Muntassir Al-Sawwaf, who worked for Turkey's Anadolu state news agency, his brother Marwan, who worked as a soundman, and cameraman Abdullah Darwish. — AFP

US to ban violent settlers

DUBAI: The United States is preparing to impose a visa ban on Zionist settlers involved in violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, a senior US State Department official said Friday. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken informed Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington was readying the sanctions. — AFP

Kuwait addressing climate change as renewables in focus

DUBAI: More than 110 nations pledged to triple the world's renewable energy within seven years at UN climate talks Saturday as the United States pushed to slash methane emissions and boost nuclear capacity. With smoggy skies in Dubai highlighting the challenges facing the world, leaders at the COP28 conference threw their support behind voluntary pledges aimed at ramping up alternatives to fossil fuels. A massive deployment of solar, wind, hydroelectric and other renewables is crucial to efforts to

displace demand for planet-heating coal, oil and gas and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Kuwait lends utmost significance to climate change at the state level, HH the Amir's Representative Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said on Friday. Stressing the country's involvement in global efforts to limit impacts of climate change, the Kuwaiti top diplomat pointed to programs and plans put in action to address the environmental issue, including low-carbon emission strategies in oil, transportation, industrial and agricultural sectors.

He told the COP28 summit that such plans aim at achieving sustainable growth through a circular carbon economy. Sheikh Salem also highlighted Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development's role in this regard, noting that 105 countries have benefited from a total of \$23 billion in developmental projects. Continued on Page 6



DUBAI: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah (left) attends the COP28 United Nations climate summit. — KUNA

Govt finalizes new residency law for Assembly approval

KUWAIT: The government has finalized the new residency law and prepared its amendments, anticipating its review by the parliamentary interior and defense committee, with approval expected from the full house next month. The proposal comprises 37 items across 7 chapters, outlining regulations for foreigners' entry, deportation, iqama trade and penalties.

Additionally, it grants Kuwaiti women married to foreigners the right to sponsor their husbands and children, provided they haven't obtained nationality

as per article 8, pertaining to expat women naturalized through marriage to a Kuwaiti.

The proposal mandates hotels and apart-hotels to report the residence of foreigners, while a ministerial decision will determine fees for residency permits, renewals and all entry visas. It prohibits iqama trade through exploitation, imposing penalties of up to 3 years in jail and a fine ranging from KD 5,000 to KD 10,000 for violators. Residency trade pardons fall only under the jurisdiction of the public prosecution.

Notably, amendments pertaining to domestic help allow for regular residency permits during their contract period. If a domestic helper's permit is canceled upon leaving the job, they must depart Kuwait within the stipulated timeframe unless a new residency is obtained. Transferring the domestic helper's permit requires employer approval, and staying outside Kuwait for over four months is pro-

hibited without prior interior ministry permission.

The proposed law empowers the interior minister to deport foreigners, even those with residency permits, citing reasons of public interest, general security, public morality or lack of a legal source of income. Deportation decisions may include dependents, and the deportee can be jailed for a maximum of 30 days, extendable if needed for the deportation process. The interior minister can exempt deported foreigners from fines upon leaving Kuwait.

Heads of state, members of the diplomatic corps and official employees are exempted under reciprocity. The proposal allows foreigners a temporary stay of three months, extendable for up to one year. It also states foreigners can stay in Kuwait for five years, while children of Kuwaiti women and real estate owners can stay for 10 years, and investors may be granted residency permits for 15 years.

US House ousts 'crook' lawmaker in historic vote

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers voted Friday to expel George Santos, the scandal-plagued politician who lied his way into Congress and has been indicted on charges of bankrolling his lavish lifestyle with stolen donor cash. Earning a rebuke previously reserved for traitors and convicted criminals, the New York Republican is only the third person to join Washington's rogues' gallery of ejected lawmakers since the Civil War.

He swept into the House in 2022, helping the Re-

publicans grab a tiny majority, but it quickly emerged that almost his entire backstory was a fabrication, from his education and religion to his personal history and professional experience. Santos, 35, has been indicted on dozens of federal charges of stealing from campaign donors, credit card fraud, money laundering and identity theft.

But he was ultimately doomed by a congressional ethics investigation that found "overwhelming evidence" of misconduct and accused him of seeking to "fraudulently exploit every aspect of his House candidacy". "You sir, are a crook," said Ohio's Max Miller, one of several members of Santos' own party to stand up on the House floor to denounce him in a debate on the expulsion on Thursday.

"My future former colleague is divorced from reality. He has manufactured his entire life," said



WASHINGTON: George Santos is surrounded by journalists as he leaves the US Capitol after Congress voted to expel him from the House of Representatives on Dec 1, 2023. — AFP

Continued on Page 6



Expatriates facing challenges sharing apartments in Kuwait

Strangers living under one roof as rent prices soar

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Sharing an apartment with several strangers, each coming from a different culture and background, yet trying to find harmony and peace in living together, is not easy for everyone. With high rentals of apartments that exceed the average monthly salaries of most expats, more and more of them are driven towards apartment sharing as a more economical way to live. While this solves a financial problem, it brings other problems to the fore. Kuwait Times highlights some of the most common challenges faced by expats in these circumstances.

When an Egyptian woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, first moved to Kuwait, she knew nobody except a woman who made her stay with her to share the apartment rent together. She expected a peaceful and safe environment in that place, but unfortunately that wasn't the case. She recalled an incident where her flat mate's cousin knocked on the door and asked for her permission to wait for his cousin in the living room, only to sexually harass. "I was standing in the kitchen and was surprised to find him coming from the back," she noted.

When she confronted her flat mate about the incident, she accused her of lying. "She kicked me out of the house. I left with my luggage, having no idea where I should go," she said. Even after what happened, she begged her flat mate to allow her to return to the house, because she couldn't afford staying in a hotel for the rest of the night.

When she returned, she was forced to sleep on the couch in the living room for six months, even though she paid the full price of the room she supposedly rented. Even when she finally moved to another place, she suffered from various difficulties. Most often she would notice a mysterious disap-

pearance of her personal items, such as food, clothing and shoes, only to realize later that one of her flat mates stole these from her.

Ahmed Tamer, an Egyptian man, suffered from financial constraints that didn't just prevent him from renting an apartment on his own, but even prevented him from renting a room on his own. He settled for living in a tight partitioned room half the size of an actual room — one meter wide and two meters long. "It almost feels like sleeping in a grave," he said. This partitioned area is one of six that each of his six flat mates have been allocated.

The only reason he went for this option is to avoid the conflicts that he used to face with his roommates in shared rooms due to incompatible sleeping schedules and working hours. For instance, when Tamer woke up to get ready for his morning shift, his friend would have just gone into a deep slumber after returning from his night shift. Most of the time he heard his mate shouting at him: "Turn off the light", "don't disturb me" or "don't make any noise". Sometimes it was hard for them to respect each other's space. He noted that due to stress and life pressure, these little conflicts could escalate to visiting police stations.

Tamer added that one of the common issues that he faced was also related to hygiene, as he remembered once travelling and coming back to find bugs in his apartment due to his friends' negligence of their cleaning chores.

An Indian man, who also preferred to remain anonymous, faced a different kind of challenge living among "bachelors", due to a difference in ethics and values. His flat mates used to smoke and drink, which is an illegal behavior in Kuwait. "If somebody gets caught, it's trouble for everybody," he said. Even when he tried talking them out of it, they didn't respond. Aside from the fear of getting in trouble, he



Bachelors' apartments in Kuwait.

couldn't bear this kind of lifestyle. "I hated it in the morning, when I woke up and went to the bathroom — the smell drove me mad," he said.

He is now living in an apartment with another family, which he claims is much better than living among bachelors. "The positive thing is it's really clean," he said. But the only problem is that there are more limitations, for instance not being able to bring his friends over or not being able to cook and

use the kitchen most of the time.

One might wonder why would these people accept living in such conditions? Unfortunately, due to insufficient income, many expats don't have the privilege of making the choice of staying on their own. Settling for a lack of privacy, security and hygiene is sometimes the only cost they can afford to pay in return for the very basic need of shelter and finding a stable place to stay in.



KUWAIT: Egyptian expatriates living in Kuwait wave national flags as they vote in the Egyptian presidential election at the international fairgrounds in Mishref, on December 1, 2023. Egyptian citizens living abroad are casting ballots in a vote all but certain to give incumbent Abdel Fattah El-Sisi a third term in office. In 121 countries, 137 embassies and consulates will receive Egyptians in the election's first round over the next three days, before voters at home go the polls from December 10 to 12. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwait's consul general in Milan presents credentials

ROME: Sheikh Jaber Al-Du'ajj Al-Malek Al-Sabah presented his credentials as Kuwait's new consul general in Milan and northern Italy to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He expressed pride for representing Kuwait in Milan and northern Italy, pledging to work for strengthening the friendly relations between both countries in all areas, according to a statement from Kuwait's consulate. — KUNA

Kuwait renews call for prohibiting chemical weapons

KUWAIT: Defense Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah renewed Kuwait's call for prohibiting the use of chemical weapons on a global scale. This came while the senior official was presiding over Kuwait's delegation to the 28th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, held from November 27 to December 1 in The Hague, a ministry statement noted. During his speech, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah expressed Kuwait's condemnation of the continuation of massacres committed by the Zionist occupation forces and their use of internationally prohibited weapons against the Palestinian people.

Sheikh Abdullah said, during a ceremony held in the presence of Fernando Arias, Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), that Kuwait provided support and a voluntary contribution estimated at EUR 70,000 to the trust fund of the SAB Scientific Advisory Board of OPCW for its efforts and ongoing work to permanently ban the use of chemical weapons. On the sidelines of the conference, Sheikh Abdullah met Dutch Minister of Defense Kaja Ollongren, during which they discussed means of developing cooperation between the two countries.

OPCW adopts measures

Meanwhile, the 28th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted, at The Hague on Thurs-



OPCW headquarters at the Hague.

day, a decision on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use," brought forward by 48 countries. The Conference decided that the continued possession and use of chemical weapons by Syria and its failures to submit an accurate and complete declaration and to destroy all its undeclared chemical weapons and production facilities have caused serious damage to the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention, said OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) in a press release this afternoon.

It condemned "in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, emphasizing that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, and

under any circumstances is unacceptable and contravenes international norms and standards". States Parties reaffirmed their determination to continue to take action to address threats related to chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

The decision also requests that States Parties provide support and assistance in connection with criminal investigations or criminal proceedings to national and international accountability efforts, including the UN-established International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM). As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW, with its 193 member states, oversees the global endeavor to permanently eliminate chemical weapons. The conference began on Monday and ends on Friday at the World Forum. — KUNA

Local

UAE Ambassador hails historic ties with Kuwait, underscores successful ventures

Kuwait leaders congratulate UAE president on national day

KUWAIT: The United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Kuwait, Matar Al-Nayadi, on Friday lauded the historic, deep-rooted brotherly relations with Kuwait and shed light on his country's achievements at diverse levels. In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) marking the UAE National Day, Ambassador Al-Nayadi said the warmth of the close and historic relations between the two countries emanates from the special care given by the two countries' sagacious leaders.

He underscored "the integration" between the two countries and people and continued coordination in various spheres. The high turnout at the UAE embassy ceremonial reception on the occasion has constituted evidence of Kuwait's amicable sentiments toward the UAE and its people, the ambassador said. On Kuwait-UAE trade exchanges, ambassador Al-Nayadi said they reached, last year, approximately KD 38 million (\$123.4 million), indicating that the mutual commercial exchanges had increased compared to previous years.

Regarding educational cooperation, he said that there are more than 1,500 Kuwaiti students at the UAE academies and colleges, revealing that three UAE universities have recently declared readiness to register Kuwaiti students to study medicine. Moreover, there is cooperation in the health sector, namely in human organ transplants. On tourism, he mentioned that more than 300,000 Kuwaiti citizens visited the UAE last year.

Turning to the COP28 conference on climate change that kicked off in Dubai on Thursday, he affirmed that Abu Dhabi has hosted the convention to re-affirm its advocacy of using conventional and renewable energies and support for cutting harm-

ful emissions. The message it intends to promote at the COP28 conference is that it should be seen as a gathering for the implementation of resolutions and not merely making pledges.

Abu Dhabi, he has added, has four main goals at the conference: looking into responsible energy transfer, improving people's lives by expanding cultivated lands, combating desertification, and upgrading states' funding for environmental care improvement. The last objective is summarized as "no one should be left behind," he said. Clarifying the environmental needs of communities living in secluded and remote areas such as the Amazon must be taken into consideration.

With respect to the "2023 Sustainability Year," launched by UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan early this year, Ambassador Al-Nayadi said the UAE had begun dedicating attention to environmental issues during the era of the late president Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan. This year's initiative aims at stimulating various sectors to interact with environmental initiatives, spreading awareness on environmental sustainability, encouraging communities' participation in the efforts to attain sustainable development, backing national strategies at this level, and attaining a prosperous future.

This year, the UAE "achieved" a number of projects, namely the Al-Dhafra solar energy plant with a two-gigawatt capacity, the inauguration of the fourth division of the Baraka nuclear plant, the Al-Sharjah waste plant, and signing a contract for establishing the sixth phase of the Mohammad bin Rashid solar complex with a capacity of 1,800 megawatts. He has added that the UAE considers climate change as a



United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Kuwait Matar Al-Nayadi

sphere for creating new jobs, transferring technology, and launching investments.

Moreover, the UAE has established a number of funds, namely the fund that was declared in the US with a value of \$100 million to boost energy transformation in a number of countries, and pledged a contribution of \$100 million during the COP28 conference. On the UAE's efforts to cut carbon emissions, the UAE has established a special center for utilizing carbon reduction technologies and has taken care of planting mangrove that has proven useful in decreasing such emissions and rehabilitating marine life, he said, noting that Indonesia last year declared "the mangrove coalition" to encourage nations to plant it.

He lauded Kuwait's joining the coalition last May. Elaborating, he said that the UAE embassy had

planted mangroves in Kuwait in cooperation with the Environment Public Authority. Re-touching on Abu Dhabi's nuclear project, he said the venture has entered the commercial phase, securing up to 20 percent of the UAE's electric power. It has also been linked up with the GCC power grid, he added. He gave credit for the UAE space endeavors to inspiration from the late president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan. "We continue to explore future opportunities, and there are many of them."

Amir congratulates the UAE

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, expressing sincere congratulations on the 52nd anniversary of the UAE national day. His Highness the Amir hailed the civil and development achievements the UAE has witnessed in all fields and at all levels, especially in the economic, educational, and cultural sectors.

This has reflected on the UAE's prestigious status in the regional and international arenas. His Highness the Amir related the brotherly and friendly, deep-rooted relations between the two countries, stressing the importance of boosting cooperation in all fields. He wished Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan everlasting health and wellness and his country further progress and prosperity under his wise leadership. Also, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a similar congratulatory cable to the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, on the 52nd national day anniversary. — KUNA

KPI executive VP Al-Faraj named CEO of the Year

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) is proud to announce that its current Executive Vice President - Marketing, Fadel Abdulaziz Al-Faraj, has been recognized as CEO of the Year in the energy sector by Forbes Italian's CEO Italian Awards, being the first Kuwaiti to be awarded this prestigious award. The recognition took place at a gala dinner in Milan on the 30th of November, 2023.

According to the Forbes Italia ranking, Al-Faraj was chosen among the fifteen best CEOs in Italy for "his unique perspective in leadership, in which he embraces the diversity and understanding of Q8 Italy, generating trust, and inspiring its workforce to grow professionally and personally. His integrity and commitment to sustainability has cemented Q8 Italy as not just an energy company, but a community supporter and a trusted business partner in Italy."

Al-Faraj dedicated the award to his colleagues at Q8 Italy, without their hard work, team spirit, and talent the Company would not succeed. He also thanked his family for their support in the journey. Kuwait Petroleum International President & CEO, Engineer Shafi Talib Al-Ajmi, expressed his pride in Al-Faraj's award, stating that it reflects the success of Kuwaiti International Petroleum Company (KPI) in empowering Kuwaiti nationals to take on leadership roles throughout its diverse locations in Europe and Asia, fostering a culture of excellence and achievement.

Al-Ajmi added that Al-Faraj has set a positive example as a leader who supports the national workforce and achieves goals by applying the values of the KPI particularly in enhancing trust,



integrity, and teamwork. Forbes Italy magazine supported the selection of Al-Faraj by praising his effective management of marketing, focusing on improving the company's profits, meeting customer needs, and implementing sustainability, especially through offering more eco-friendly petroleum products.

Fadel Al-Faraj is the Executive Vice President of Marketing at Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI). Prior to that, he was the Managing Director of Kuwait Petroleum Italy, which includes 3,000 fuel stations and Milazzo refinery in Sicily. His current responsibilities are to deliver the company's strategy and oversee Q8's extensive worldwide European marketing operations.

Fadel began his thirty-year career in 1992 at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's international marketing department, and then moved to Q8 where he worked in different locations and successfully led several business units, each achieving significant growth and historical operational profits. He



Executive Vice President - Marketing at Kuwait Petroleum International, Fadel Abdulaziz Al-Faraj

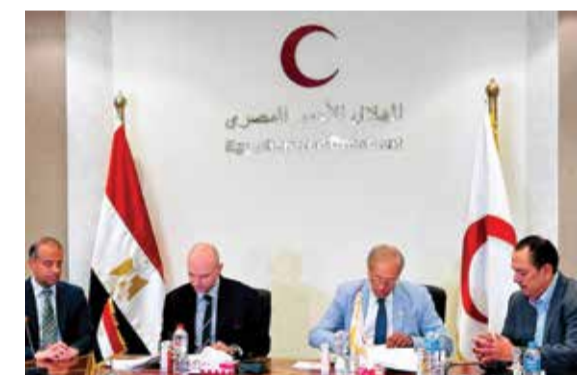
served as Managing Director of Kuwait Petroleum Northwest Europe; Managing Director of Global Businesses; and General Manager of Q8 Aviation. Fadel is also currently the Board Chairperson for our JV retail company in Vietnam, Idemitsu Q8, and the Deputy Chairperson for our JV retail company in Sweden, OKQ8.

Fadel holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Imperial College in London, UK and a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Arizona in Tucson, USA. He is married with two children, lives in Kuwait City and travels very extensively to all Q8's marketing operations.

KRCS, ERC to establish field hospital in Gaza

CAIRO: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) signed an agreement Saturday to establish a field hospital in the Gaza Strip at a cost of over two million dollars. The agreement was signed by KRCS Vice President Anwar Al-Hasawi and ERC CEO Dr Rami Al-Nazer at the headquarters in Cairo in the presence of Kuwaiti Ambassador Ghanim Al-Ghanim.

The 35-bed, 750-square-meter project will be completed within a three-week period, according to the agreement. The project is an immediate response to the disastrous and deteriorating health situation in Gaza due to occupation forces bombing multiple hospitals. KRCS' delegation visited the Rafah border crossing last Tuesday to follow



CAIRO: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) signed an agreement on Saturday to establish a field hospital in the Gaza Strip. — KUNA photos

Kuwait's low-carbon strategy in line with development plans

DUBAI: Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority, Dr. Samira Al-Kandari, said that Kuwait's 2060 low-carbon strategy was prepared based on economic pillars and in partnership with the UN Environment Program in line with the state's development plans and programs. In remarks to KUNA on Saturday, on the sidelines of Kuwait's participation in the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Expo City Dubai, she said that the Authority prepared the strategy based on its mandate by the Kuwaiti cabinet.

She pointed out that the strategy includes Kuwait's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, indicating its ability to reduce the resulting carbon emissions by 60 to 80 percent if it follows some ambitious scenarios by 2060. Moreover, she stated that Kuwait seeks to reach carbon neutrality in 2060, according to the announcement of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at COP27, by doubling carbon capture and storage projects in the industrial and oil sectors and working to reduce 7.4 percent of its total emissions in 2035.

On Kuwait's participation in the activities of the COP28, Al-Kandari noted that the Authority is participating in a pavilion in cooperation with the Kuwait Fund for Development, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, and Kuwaiti oil companies. She also pointed out that the pavilion also explains Kuwait's projects on climate change, including a biofuel project, the low-carbon strategy 2050, revegetation in environmentally degraded areas, the impact of climate change on wildlife, and other lectures from the



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah with the COP28 Kuwait pavilion delegation.



Dr Samira Al-Kandari

private sector on projects of an environmental nature and various discussion panels that suit the nature of the conference.

In another development, Representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held talks with UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs David Cameron on bilateral ties and regional issues.

During the meeting, held on the fringes of the Conference of Parties (COP28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in the UAE city of Dubai on Friday afternoon, Sheikh Salem congratulated Lord Cameron on taking up the post

on November 13. Sheikh Salem said he was looking forward to working with Lord Cameron to serve the common interests of the two friendly countries and strengthen cooperation in international arenas.

Both sides discussed the historical relations between the two countries and ways to build on the outcomes of the visit by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to London in August to realize the aspirations of both nations. The discussions also dealt with the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip and the ways to force the Zionist occupation forces into halting their crimes against the brotherly people of Palestine.

Sheikh Salem reaffirmed Kuwait's firm support for the brotherly people of Palestine in their struggle for regaining their legitimate rights, notably the right to statehood, and reaching a fair and durable peaceful solution. He underscored the need for decisive steps by the international community towards cessation of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, restoring truce, ensuring unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Strip, and preventing expansion of the conflict into other parts of the Middle East. — KUNA

the entry of 35 trucks loaded with 490 tons of urgent humanitarian, medical, and relief aid in cooperation with the ERC.

Meanwhile, Zionist warplanes bombed multiple sites in the Gaza Strip, focusing on the Khan Yunis Governorate, south of the Strip. Gunboats and artillery also participated in targeting residential areas. The Palestinian News Agency (Wafa) said Saturday that the occupation jets destroyed the Abdullah Azzam Mosque west of Khan Yunis and also targeted four houses in Al-Qarara and bombed the Al-Istiqama, Osama bin Zaid, and Othman bin Affan Mosques.

At least 190 citizens, most of them women and children, have been martyred since Friday morning after the end of the humanitarian truce, it added. For its part, the Journalists Syndicate announced that 67 journalists and workers in the media sector were killed due to the occupation's continued aggression against the Strip since October 7. — KUNA



Gaza Strip is bombed by Zionist occupation warplanes.

Kuwaiti women upholding national development strategy

NEW YORK: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah, has assured that Kuwait is keen on enabling women to partake in the nation's development strategies and decision-making. She made the remarks in an interview with KUNA during the training program held by the Kuwaiti mission to the United Nations, which focused on women's rights, peace, and stability in the region.

The event gathered Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia, and Pacific Affairs Khaled Al-Khayari. Sheikha Jawaher highlighted the importance of safeguarding women, noting that this training program plays a pivotal role in shedding light on the role that women can play in strengthening peace and security in our world. UN resolution 1325 was also touched on, considering it a center focus of global politics on all ends, she added, as our duty to society in essence leans towards the development of social, economic, and humanitarian aspects, in addition to enhancing the effectiveness of national, regional, and international efforts in preventing and helping the struggle of prompting gender inequality.

She mentioned the establishment of the Arab Women's Strategy for Peace and Security in 2020 in accordance with the Security Council resolution, which led to the establishment of the Network for Women and Peace Brokers, priding herself in being a representative in the Network since 2021. 58 percent of the national workforce in Kuwait consists of women, with the private sector holding at 48 percent and 60 percent in the public sector, she added. At the moment, Kuwait ranks third in the Arab region in the women, peace, and security index for the year 2023, as leadership roles in all sectors of the state are represented by 28 percent. — KUNA

Public works ministry lays off 283 expats

KUWAIT: The ministry of public works terminated the services of 283 non-Kuwaiti employees in the ministry, emphasizing its aim to achieve zero expatriate employees within a very short period. The ministry disclosed that, as of now, there are 242 non-Kuwaitis employed, distributed across various categories, including second and third contracts, service utilization and lumpsum salary. The ministry reiterated its commitment to implementing the provisions of Civil Service Council resolution 11/2017, which outlines the regulations for Kuwaitization of government jobs. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Photo shows the Phase 2 of Integration Ex 1 military exercise at the Peninsula Shield Force. — KUNA

Tourism, property 'core chunk of holistic approach to lure tourists'

'One Hundred and One Nights' aims to transform Kuwait

KUWAIT: As preparations are in full swing for the Kuwait Festival for Tourism and Entertainment due in January as part of Kuwait's vision to become a financial, economic, and cultural hub, several concepts come to the surface, aiming at boosting non-oil revenues, given the paramount significance of tourism. The festival to be held under the slogan "Kuwait: One Hundred and One Nights, is chiefly intended to transform Kuwait into a distinctive financial, economic, and cultural center.

The country's tourism sector should be developed and promoted with a view to raising its revenues, which could contribute to bolstering the national economy and boosting Kuwait's non-oil resources. Comparatively, the real estate sector, with all its various domains and infrastructure as a whole, has an integrated connection with the tourism sector, thus serving an all-out vision meant to transfer Kuwait into a touristic destination by means of roping in Gulf tourists.

The organizers rely on well-trained young Kuwaitis to organize such festivals and events by offering governmental services and cultural tours

and holding sports activities and exhibitions in a way that would prop up tourism in the country. Kuwait abounds in fully equipped venues for hosting touristic activities, including parks, cultural and sports centers, museums, and utilities.

In this regard, Chairman of the Union Real Estate Company Ibrahim Al-Awadhi, speaking to KUNA, said tourism is closely connected with the real estate market, and that's why they absolutely affect each other. Tourism is also linked to services bearing on property activities that offer services pertinent to the tourism sector, such as hotels and hotel apartments, he said. Growing touristic activities and festivals would unquestionably lead to drawing tourists and visitors to Kuwait, given that tourism contributes to promoting the commercial sector, as Al-Awadhi pointed out.

He underlined that any state approach to reactivating a specific sector would certainly lead to promoting the property, entertainment, and touristic sectors. But once the sectors of tourism and entertainment are developed, local companies will seek to create job opportunities, innovative visions, products, and projects, especially as the tourism sector has really become a very big source of revenues for neighboring countries, he opined.

This approach, undoubtedly, would result in boosting the gross domestic product (GDP) and easing reliance upon oil earnings for these countries, Al-Awadhi added. For his part, Chairman of the Touristic Property Committee of the Kuwait Festival Association Hani Al-Seddi, speaking to KUNA, underscored the significance of spotlighting the role of touristic properties and the tourism industry in general, since this would help in diversifying the country's income sources and raising non-oil revenues.

He regarded this as one of the most important aspects of the first edition of the Kuwait Festival for Tourism and Entertainment, due in January



Ibrahim Al-Awadhi

Hani Al-Seddi

2024. He added that there is a close and positive relationship between investment in touristic real estate and the touristic environment as a whole, as touristic properties play a significant and crucial role in flourishing tourism in Kuwait, just like other world countries.

Properties have clear-cut and tangible influence in the overall future dimensions on the way to making a local tourism industry and building a developed and prosperous economy, based on a distinctive vision of Kuwait's touristic roadmap in line with the New Kuwait 2024 Vision, he noted. Furthermore, real estate contributes to boosting rental returns thanks to growing demand and landlords' ability to capitalize on relevant opportunities to rent their facilities at higher prices during the tourist season, he said.

However, Al-Seddi emphasized that environmental suitability would lead to sustainable real estate and that traditional properties could face challenges in answering mounting environmental needs. Investment in touristic real estate is deemed to be a common option for investors to notch up great profits, with the availability of a variety of investment opportunities, he pointed out. — KUNA



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Kuwait's delegation to the working group VI of UNCITRAL meeting. - KUNA

Kuwait keen on creating legislative environment for global financial hub

VIENNA: A Kuwaiti official has affirmed Kuwait's keenness on creating the required legislative environment to be a global financial hub. This came in a statement to KUNA made by Maraheeb Al-Fahad, undersecretary of Fatwa and Legislation Department at the Cabinet and head of Kuwait's team participating in the 43rd session of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Both the government and the National Assembly

are doing their best to achieve the development plan and keep pace with developments in commercial transport, she said. Al-Fahad referred to enacting several guidelines, laws, and legislation on the International Trade Law. Kuwait's eagerness regarding this matter was apparent when the country had UNCITRAL membership, she stated.

She underlined the importance of such meetings for sharing expertise with participating countries and developing commercial and economic activities. The meetings of working group VI of UNCITRAL kicked off Monday, in which Kuwait participated with a delegation led by Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative at International Organizations in Vienna, Talal Al-Fassam. Al-Fahad and her team were also present in the meetings. — KUNA



South Korea confirms first military spy satellite in orbit

Gazans flee homes, dig through rubble as Zionist entity strikes resume

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Over 100 Rohingya refugees land in Indonesia, two more boats at sea

UN issues call to rescue hundreds of Rohingya adrift at sea

SABANG: More than 100 Rohingya refugees, including women and children, landed in Indonesia's westernmost province on Saturday, officials said, but locals threatened to push them back to sea.

Hundreds more of the mostly Muslim Rohingya from Myanmar were trapped on board another two unseaworthy vessels adrift in the Andaman Sea, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The latest arrival comes after more than 1,000 Rohingya refugees landed in Aceh last month, the biggest wave of Rohingyas to land in Indonesia since 2015. The Rohingyas are heavily persecuted in Myanmar and thousands risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys, often in flimsy boats that sail from Bangladesh, to try to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

A 19-year-old Rohingya who gave his name as Deluarsah said the group left Bangladesh in early November and spent more than 20 days at sea in dangerous conditions. "We come here with the single boat. The ocean is very dangerous," Deluarsah said, adding that he was "happy" to have landed in Indonesia.

The UNHCR urged countries around the Andaman Sea to "swiftly deploy their full search and rescue capacities" to find the other two other boats it said had suffered engine failure and were "aimlessly drifting".

"UNHCR is concerned that food and water may be running out and there is a significant risk of fatalities in the coming days? if people are not rescued and disembarked to safety," it said in a statement.

'Humanity'

Monitors say more boats are on the way despite some locals turning the often dangerously overcrowded vessels carrying Rohingya refugees back to sea and stepping up patrols along the coast. Dofa Fadhi, the head of Le Meulee village on Sabang island off Aceh, said there were 139 refugees on the latest boat, which made land at 2:30 am local time (19:30 GMT Friday), including "children, women and adult men".

"When I arrived, the Rohingya refugees

were already on the beach," he told AFP. More than half a dozen boats have arrived in Aceh since November 14 and the UNHCR commended Indonesia's "example of solidarity and humanity", which it said other countries in the region should follow.

However, Fadhi said those on board would be pushed back to sea if they were not relocated but would also be given aid in the meantime. "We, the residents of Le Meulee, strongly reject the arrival of the Rohingya refugees," he said.

"If within the time limit that we have given until this afternoon, there is no action, then we will return the Rohingya refugees back to their boat." The refugees could be seen huddled on a beach cordoned off by a yellow police line, with security forces and locals standing around them.

While local officials counted 139 refugees, Rohingya refugee Deluarsah said 124 were on board when they sailed from Bangladesh. UNHCR protection associate Faisal Rahman confirmed more than 100 refugees had landed in Sabang and would likely spend at least the night there. "We are making our best effort to secure a place" for the refugees, Rahman said.

'There will be more'

Medical aid group Mediciens Sans Frontieres also asked Indonesia and Malaysia to give the Rohingya safe refuge. "It's boat season, so there will be more boats," Paul Brockmann, MSF regional director, told AFP in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

"People don't take these journeys out of adventure. They take these journeys out of a sense of desperation, and hope for a future." More than 3,500 Rohingyas are believed to have attempted the risky journey to Southeast Asian countries in 2022, according to the UNHCR. Nearly 350 Rohingyas died or went missing last year while attempting hazardous sea crossings, the agency has estimated.

Meanwhile, the United Nations called Saturday for nations to rescue hundreds of Rohingyas it said were trapped onboard two unseaworthy vessels adrift in the Andaman



SABANG: Newly-arrived Rohingya refugees rest at a beach on Sabang island, Aceh province, on December 2, 2023. — AFP

Sea. Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, risk their lives each year in long, expensive sea journeys — often in boats in poor condition — trying to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on Saturday called on nearby countries "to swiftly deploy their full search and rescue capacities in response to reported vessels in distress with hundreds of Rohingyas at risk of perishing". The two overcrowded boats carrying about 400 passengers had experienced engine fail-

ures, and people were now "drifting in unseaworthy vessels in the Andaman Sea", the agency said, citing "various sources".

Food and water may be running out, it said, adding "there is a significant risk of fatalities in the coming days if people are not rescued and disembarked to safety". The vessels' precise location is unknown and it is unclear when, or exactly from where, they departed. Refugee camps in Bangladesh are home to about one million Rohingyas, many of whom fled neighbouring Myanmar after a 2017 military crackdown. But the conditions of the

overcrowded camps have forced many to flee again. The UNHCR's call comes during a spike in journeys to Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh — a voyage of about 1,800 kilometres (1,120 miles) — with more than 1,000 arrivals in the biggest such wave since the 2017 crackdown.

More than 3,500 Rohingyas are believed to have attempted risky journeys to Southeast Asian countries in 2022, according to UNHCR. Nearly 350 Rohingyas died or went missing last year while attempting hazardous sea crossings, the agency has estimated. — AFP

Philippines, France to pursue key defence pact

MANILA: Defence ministers for the Philippines and France vowed Saturday to pursue an agreement that would allow them to deploy troops to each other's territories, the latest such deal sought by the archipelagic nation located in the strategic South China Sea.

Speaking following a meeting in Manila, Philippine Defence Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and his French counterpart Sebastien Lecornu said they agreed to seek au-

thorization from their respective presidents and relevant agencies to start negotiations for a visiting forces agreement.

The Philippines already has similar pacts with the United States and Australia, and has agreed to start talks for one with Japan. Manila has been seeking to boost defence ties in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond in the face of China's increasing confidence in asserting its claims over the South China Sea. The agreements create the legal framework for countries to send defence personnel to each other's territory for training and other operations. "We agreed to work on shared values, shared cooperation, not only in the South China Sea but also in the greater Pacific area where France also has a presence and which we want to further

defence cooperation and presence with the other Oceanic nations," Teodoro said.

Lecornu, the first French defence minister to make an official visit to the Philippines, said the French navy already had a "high number of operations and training in the region". "We are working on an agenda of strengthening our presence in the Indo Pacific," he said, using a term used by the United States and its allies for the Asia-Pacific region.

Neither Teodoro nor Lecornu provided a timeline for the start of talks on a visiting forces agreement. It was part of a "letter of intent" signed by the pair to "raise the level of interaction and to consolidate their exchanges through practical cooperation", a joint statement said. — AFP



MANILA: French Minister for the Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu (L) shakes hands with Secretary of National Defense of Philippines Gilbert Teodoro, during a joint press conference at a hotel in Manila on December 2, 2023. — AFP

Venezuela will vote on Guyana border row despite UN court ruling

CARACAS: Venezuela said Friday it would press ahead with a weekend referendum over the fate of an oil-rich region claimed by itself and Guyana even as the UN's top court urged restraint in the worsening row.

Meanwhile, regional giant Brazil, with which both neighbors share a border, said it had "intensified" its military presence amid "concern" in Brasilia over the standoff. In The Hague, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Venezuela to "refrain from taking any action which would modify the situation that currently prevails" in the Essequibo region, which Guyana has administered for over 100 years.

The judges decided in an urgent bid by Georgetown to stop Sunday's vote, but did not mention the plebiscite in their ruling. Venezuela claimed victory, with President Nicolas Maduro saying in Caracas that Guyana and ExxonMobil, which recently found oil in Essequibo, had been dealt "a historic beating."

"On Sunday we will have a referendum," he added, waving the court ruling in front of thousands of people at the close of the campaign urging Venezuelans to vote "yes" to all five questions posed in the referendum. There was no counter-campaign.

Guyana's President Irfan Ali also welcomed the ruling, which he interpreted as meaning that "Venezuela is prohibited from annexing or trespassing upon Guyanese territory." He said in a statement Guyana was committed to pursuing a peaceful, legal resolution to the dispute, adding he was confident that in its final judgment in the matter, the ICJ "will conclude that the Essequibo is legally and rightfully Guyanese territory."

Venezuela has for decades laid claim to Essequibo, which makes up more than two-thirds of the territory of Guyana and is home to 125,000 of its 800,000 citizens. Litigation is pending before the ICJ over where the borders should lie. — AFP

Taiba Hospital Collaborates with Kuwait University for Innovative Clinic Design Initiative



KUWAIT: In a pioneering initiative, Taiba Hospital has collaborated with Kuwait University's College of Architecture to nurture young talent and revolutionize its clinics' design. This partnership involves a design competition for third-year Interior Architecture students, focusing on re-imagining several specialized clinics at Taiba Hospital.

The Challenge

Students are tasked with creating practical, thoughtfully designed spaces that adhere to global healthcare design standards and prioritize patient comfort. Recognizing that a healing environment significantly influences recovery, these designs must differ from conventional buildings, incorporating unique color schemes, materials, lighting, and ventilation suited for healthcare settings.

Faculty Insights

Dr. Hamad Al-Qabandi, from the College of Architec-



ture, highlighted the significance of this collaboration. "This real-world challenge allows our students to contribute meaningfully to patient wellbeing. Hospital design goes beyond aesthetics; it's about creating a space that alleviates anxiety and supports recovery," he said.

Strategic Goals

This competition aligns with Taiba Hospital's strategy to engage the community and foster innovation among the youth. Dr. Nabila Abdella, Chief Medical Officer at Taiba Hospital, commended the students and faculty for their dedication to creating a therapeutic environment. She emphasized the importance of integrating psychological comfort into patient care through thoughtful design.

Celebrating Young Talents

The final designs were showcased at Taiba Hospital, with detailed presentations from the students. A panel comprising the community members and hospital executives evaluated the entries, awarding the top three designs. Hawraa Abdullah clinched the first position, and all winners were recognized with certificates and gifts, celebrating their creative contributions to healthcare design.

International

Gazans flee homes, dig through rubble as Zionist entity strikes resume

'We told ourselves that the truce was going to last and were going to return home'

KHAN YUNIS: In the rubble of a house destroyed by bombs in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, a man screamed: "Where are my children?" Similar scenes played out across the devastated Gaza Strip on Friday, as residents fled their homes and rushed their dead and wounded to hospitals after hostilities resumed between Zionist entity and Hamas following the expiry of a week-long truce.

An extension to the pause in fighting — under which aid flows into Gaza had increased and scores of Zionist hostages were exchanged for hundreds of jailed Palestinian prisoners — could not be reached before the 7:00 am (0500 GMT) deadline.

As Zionist air strikes landed, Gazans poured out of their homes to head for safer areas, packing the streets with cars, pick-up trucks, tractors, mule carts, bicycles and, most of all, people on foot. In Khan Yunis, where smoke billowed across the sky, a group of men shouted "God is greatest" as they rushed through the streets carrying a body wrapped in a white shroud.

"There's bombing everywhere. We have no food, no water, no clothes. The stores are closed, it's cold, and the border checkpoint is closed," said Marwa Saleh, 47, who had sought refuge in Khan Yunis after being displaced from Gaza City in the north. "When is the world going to see us as human beings?" she asked.

'Even more fierce'

Zionist entity has vowed to destroy Hamas after its bloody October 7 attack, which killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, according to Zionist officials. In the nearly two months between the attack and the implementation of the truce a week ago, its relentless air and ground campaign against the militant group killed more than 15,000 people, also mostly civilians, according to Gaza's Hamas-run government.

Walkout, no-shows at COP28 as Zionist, Hamas war resumes

DUBAI: Iran's delegation walked out and Zionist entity's president cancelled his speech as tensions over the Gaza war spilled over at the UN COP28 climate talks in Dubai on Friday. As deadly air strikes resumed after a week-long truce, several of the world leaders gathered to discuss climate change took the chance to lament the Zionist-Hamas war that has left thousands dead.

"It is impossible not to touch on the humanitarian crisis taking place in Palestinian territories close to us," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told the environmental meeting. The incidents taking place in Gaza are a humanitarian crime, a war crime," added the Turkish leader, while the presidents of Colombia and Cuba both called the war "genocide".

The conflict first flared after Hamas militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped about 240, according to Zionist authorities, in an unprecedented attack on October 7. In response, Zionist entity vowed to eliminate Hamas and unleashed an air and ground campaign in Gaza that the Hamas government says has killed around 15,000 people, also mostly civilians.

On the day that violence returned to the Gaza Strip, with more than 100 dead in the territory, according to Hamas, scores of world leaders addressed COP28. But Zionist President Isaac Herzog did not appear for his scheduled speech, a day after his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas cancelled his planned visit to COP28.

Qatar's Amir, originally listed as one of Friday's speak-

ers, was missing from the final line-up. Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman did not attend the meeting, despite being scheduled to give the first speech. No reason was given for Friday's last-minute changes.

'War on children'

On Friday, within three hours of the truce lapsing, the Hamas-run health ministry said around 30 people had been killed across the territory, children among them. Sitting on a bed at Khan Yunis's Nasser hospital, Amal Abu Dagga wept, her beige veil covered in blood. "I don't even know what happened to my children," she said. A relative, Jamil Abu Dagga, told AFP the family had been at home when the bombs started falling. "My house was destroyed, so was my neighbour's," he said from the same hospital, his head bandaged. Another member of the family, Anas Abu Dagga, 22, said the "war has returned, even more fierce".

At the hospital reception, 10-year-old Lina Hamdan said: "We were getting ready to sleep when I heard a bomb. My brothers started screaming." In Rafah, where many Palestinians fled after being told by Zionist to leave the north of the territory, a young man rushed a badly wounded child out of a refugee camp hit by an explosion, while others could be seen pulling a motionless person from the rubble.

One of the displaced, Manal Mohammad, told AFP she was staying in a house in Rafah crammed with dozens of relatives, and did not know what more she could do. "They're bombing everywhere. Where do you want us to go?" she said.

"We told ourselves that the truce was going to last and were going to return home," she continued, but "they don't want us to live". "They tell the people, 'go to the south', and once they're there, they tell them, 'go to the west', and they bomb them."

In the north of the Gaza Strip, a fireball from a large explosion could be seen from across the border in the Zionist city of Sderot, and an AFP camera broadcast live footage of rolling clouds of grey smoke and

ers, was missing from the final line-up. Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman did not attend the meeting, despite being scheduled to give the first speech. No reason was given for Friday's last-minute changes.

'Immense suffering'

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres spoke at the World Climate Action Summit on the COP28 sidelines early in the day, as news of the deadly strikes was filtering through. "As we see in this region, conflicts are causing immense suffering and intense emotion. We just heard the news that the bombs are sounding again in Gaza," he said.

Iran's team abruptly quit COP28 in protest at Israel's presence, which delegation chief and Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian said was "contrary to the goals and guidelines of the conference", according to the official news agency IRNA.

IRNA had said late Thursday that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi would not attend COP28 and Mehrabian would take his place. Iraqi President Abdel Latif Rashid used his speech to "condemn the aggressive assault against Gaza".

"We call upon the international community to stand firm against this assault," he said. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said his country was "appalled at the tragedy that is underway in Gaza, the war against the innocent people."

"Palestine is a war crime that must be ended." When King Abdullah II of Jordan, one of the first speakers, raised the subject of Gaza, one delegate started clapping, before quickly stopping when no one else joined in. Other leaders also criticized the war but there was no mention from President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, a frontline state that shares a border with Gaza. — AFP

The truce had been brokered with the help of Qatar, backed by Egypt and the United States, but on Saturday the Zionist entity said it was withdrawing its negotiators from Doha after reaching a dead end in talks aimed at securing a renewed pause in hostilities. French President Emmanuel Macron appealed for "stepped-up efforts to reach a lasting ceasefire" to free all captives, allow in more aid and to assure the Zionist entity of its security.

The Zionist entity has unleashed an air and ground campaign that has killed more than 15,000 people, mostly civilians. Since the end of the pause, the Zionist entity's air, naval and ground forces have attacked more than 400 targets in Gaza, the army said on Saturday. The figure is roughly in line with the daily average number of strikes prior to the pause, according to military figures released previously. Warplanes hit "more than 50 targets in an extensive attack in the Khan Yunis area" of Gaza's south, the military added. International leaders and humanitarian groups condemned the return to fighting.

"I deeply regret that military operations have started again in Gaza," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on X, formerly Twitter. Fighting also resumed on the Zionist entity's northern border. The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, which like Hamas is backed by Iran, said two of its members were killed Friday in Zionist strikes on Lebanon, as its fighters resumed attacks against Zionist targets following the end of the truce.

Syria said the Zionist entity carried out air strikes near Damascus on Saturday. A British-based war monitor said the strikes on "Hezbollah sites" killed two Syrian pro-Hezbollah fighters. — AFP

fenders, and he was ousted in an overwhelming vote supported by more than 100 of his fellow Republicans. Aside from the criminal allegations, Santos has become notorious for a series of bizarre fabrications, including claiming to have worked for Goldman Sachs, being Jewish and having been a college volleyball star.

Beyond accusing the ethics committee of a "smear campaign", he has not publicly addressed the accusations in any detail. He is the sixth House member to be expelled since Congress began deliberating in 1789 and the first since 2002, when Ohio Democrat James Traficant was ousted over a bribery conviction. Republicans hold only a four-seat edge in the House and giving away one of those — with Democrats likely to recapture it in a special election — will be a considerable headache for a party that has struggled to pass legislation. — AFP



RAFAH: Palestinians walk toward safer areas following the resumption of Zionist strikes on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on December 1, 2023, after the expiration of a seven-day truce between Zionist entity and Hamas militants. — AFP

the sounds of automatic gunfire within the first 90 minutes of the truce expiring.

Speaking from an unnamed hospital in Gaza, UNICEF spokesman James Elder said in a video posted to X, formerly Twitter, on Friday that a bomb had landed "literally 50 metres (yards) away". "I cannot overstate how much the capacity of hospitals has been reduced," he said.

"We cannot see more children with the wounds of war, with the burns, with the shrapnel littering their body, with the broken bones." "This is a war on children," he added.

Marwa Saleh, the Gaza City native seeking refuge in Khan Yunis, said she and her family were civilians, and had "nothing to do with this war". "I don't want to die and I don't want to lose anyone." — AFP

Pioneering US Supreme Court justice Sandra O'Connor dies at 93

WASHINGTON: Retired US Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the nation's highest court and a noted pragmatist in an age of deep division, died Friday. She was 93. O'Connor died at her home in Phoenix, Arizona, of complications related to advanced dementia and a respiratory illness, the court announced.

"Sandra Day O'Connor blazed an historic trail as our nation's first female justice," Chief Justice John Roberts said. "She met that challenge with undaunted determination, indisputable ability and engaging candor," Roberts said. "We celebrate her enduring legacy as a true public servant and patriot."

O'Connor was appointed to the Supreme Court by Republican president Ronald Reagan in 1981 and confirmed in a 99-0 vote by the Senate. She served as one of the nine justices on the court until 2006 and wielded enormous influence as a crucial "swing vote" in a court evenly divided between liberals and conservatives.

"In virtually every area of constitutional law, her key fifth vote determines what will be the majority's position and what will be the dissent," law professor Erwin Chemerinsky said in a 2001 article. "Lawyers who argue and write briefs to the Court know that often they are, for all practical purposes, arguing to an audience of one," said Chemerinsky, now the dean of the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

Displaying a preference for pragmatism over ideology, O'Connor tended to occupy the moderate middle ground during her decades on the bench. She voted to uphold a woman's right to abortion in a 1992 ruling that was overturned by the conservative-majority court last year.

She sided with the conservative majority that blocked the 2000 Florida presidential election recount and effectively handed the White House to George W. Bush. She outraged conservatives a few years later by helping to uphold the University of Michigan Law School's right to run a race-conscious affirmative action admissions policy.

O'Connor proved the decisive vote on cases that upheld the government's neutrality towards religion, including a 2005 ruling that it was unconstitutional for the Ten Commandments to be displayed in courthouses. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a liberal, was the second woman nominated to the court — in 1993 — and there have been four other women justices since then, all of whom are currently serving on the bench.

'Trailblazer'

Sandra Day was born on March 26, 1930, in El Paso, Texas, and grew up on a cattle ranch in southeastern Arizona. A legal dispute over the family ranch stirred her interest in law and O'Connor enrolled at prestigious Stanford Law School, where she briefly dated William Rehnquist, a classmate with whom she would eventually serve on the Supreme Court.

She ultimately married another fellow student, John Jay O'Connor, in 1952. He died in 2009. Following a five-year break from work when she started a family, she served as an Arizona assistant attorney general from 1965 to 1969, when she was appointed to a vacancy in the Arizona state senate. — AFP

Zionists resume Gaza genocide...

Continued from Page 1

Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad announced "rocket barrages" against three Zionist municipalities near Gaza. According to the United Nations an estimated 1.7 million people in Gaza — around 80 percent of the population — have been displaced by eight weeks of war.

Fadel Naim, chief doctor at the Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City, said his morgue had received 30 bodies since the morning, including seven children. "The planes bombed our houses: Three bombs, three houses destroyed," Naim Al-Bel, 43, told AFP, adding he had counted 10 dead in his family and "13 more still under the rubble".

The population is short of food, water and other essentials, and many homes have been destroyed. UN agencies have declared a humanitarian catastrophe, although some aid trucks did arrive Saturday. After the truce between the Zionist entity and Hamas expired on Friday, the Zionist entity had told NGOs not to bring aid convoys across the Rafah border crossing from Egypt, the Palestine Red Crescent Society had said.

But on Saturday, in a social media post, the charity said its Egyptian colleagues had managed to send over a number of trucks. Both sides blamed each other for the breakdown of the truce, which had enabled the release of 80 Zionist captives in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners.

US House ousts 'crook' lawmaker...

Continued from Page 1

Marc Molinaro, a fellow New York Republican, while another member from the state's delegation Anthony D'Esposito called Santos a "liar". Santos, who has denied his criminal charges, allegedly used donor money for Botox treatments and the OnlyFans porn website, as well as luxury Italian goods and vacations to the Hamptons and Las Vegas, according to the committee.

A two-thirds majority of the House was needed to expel him, and while two previous attempts failed, the ethics report was enough to sway many of his de-

Kuwait addressing climate change as...

Continued from Page 1

including \$523 million for green energy in the last 10 years. Kuwait also joined the One Planet Sovereign Wealth Fund Working Group in 2017, represented by the state's investment authority, he added. Kuwait will soon present its plan, in implementation of the Paris Agreement, especially paragraph 19 of article 4 stipulating parties to strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies, he said. Kuwait has clear commitments in reaching carbon neutrality in the oil sector by 2050 and at the state level by 2060, Sheikh Salem concluded.

The nearly 200 nations negotiating a COP28 climate deal face tougher talks over the next two weeks on the fate of fossil fuels. More than half signed up to a commitment to tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, the COP28's Emirati presidency said. But major oil producers including Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and top consumer China were not on the list.

"I do need more, and I'm kindly requesting all parties to come on board as soon as possible please," COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber told delegates. "This can and will help transition the world away from unabated coal," said Jaber, who also heads the UAE's national oil company and a renewable energy firm.

Clean power advocates welcomed the commitment but said it must be accompanied by the phase-out of dirtier forms of energy. "The future will be powered by solar and wind, but it won't happen fast enough unless governments regulate fossil fuels out of the way," said Kaisa Kosonen, the head of Greenpeace's COP28 delegation.

Jaber also announced a pledge by oil and gas companies representing 40 percent of global production, including his UAE firm ADNOC and Saudi giant Aramco, to decarbonize their operations by 2050. But the pledges do not include emissions when the fuels are used by their customers, and were criticized for repackaging previous, nonbinding commitments.

The US Environmental Protection Agency announced earlier that it would tighten curbs on methane

emissions from its oil and gas industry. The new standards would phase in the elimination of routine flaring of natural gas produced by oil wells, and require comprehensive monitoring of methane leaks from wells and compression stations.

The announcement came ahead of an expected methane summit led by the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters — the United States and China — along with the United Arab Emirates at COP28. China agreed for the first time to include all greenhouse gases in its next national climate pledge for 2035 in an agreement with the United States last month.

Methane is responsible for about one-third of the warming from greenhouse gases occurring today, second only to CO2. Agriculture is responsible for a quarter of methane emissions, with most of it produced during digestion by livestock. The energy sector is the second-largest source of human-caused methane emissions. Methane "is the most destructive gas", US climate envoy John Kerry said.

While COP28 rallied behind renewables, the United States led a call by more than 20 nations for the world to triple nuclear energy capacity by 2050. In a declaration, countries ranging from Britain to Ghana, Japan and several European nations said nuclear power played a "key role" in the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by mid-century. The use of nuclear power as a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels is highly controversial, with many environmental groups warning about safety risks and the disposal of nuclear waste.

"We are not making the argument to anybody that this is absolutely going to be a sweeping alternative to every other energy source," Kerry said. "But we know because (of) the science and the reality of facts... that you can't get to net zero 2050 without some nuclear," he said. Environmental group 350.org said the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan highlighted the dangers of atomic power.

The announcements came as more than 50 world leaders took the stage at COP28 for the second day in a row, though US President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping are skipping the talks. US Vice President Kamala Harris announced a \$3 billion contribution to a global fund to help developing countries with the energy transition and the effects of climate change — its first pledge to it since 2014. "Today, we are demonstrating through action how the world can and must meet this crisis," Harris said. — Agencies

International

South Korea confirms first military spy satellite in orbit

North Korea threatens to 'destroy' US spy satellites

SEOUL: South Korea confirmed Saturday its first military spy satellite had reached orbit after a successful SpaceX rocket launch and that communication was established with ground control. Seoul's reconnaissance satellite, carried by one of Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets, intensifies a space race on the Korean peninsula after the North launched its own first military eye in the sky last week. South Korea's defence ministry said Saturday its satellite reached orbit soon after the "KOREA"-emblazoned SpaceX rocket lifted off from the Vandenberg US Space Force Base in California at 10:19 am local time (1819 GMT) Friday. "The satellite was launched 0319 Seoul time and was successfully separated from projectile 11 minutes later and put into targeted orbital trajectory," the ministry said in a statement. "We have confirmed its communications with the ground command." Reaching orbit means that South Korea now has its first domestically built spy satellite to monitor nuclear-armed North Korea.

Seoul plans to launch four additional spy satellites by the end of 2025 to bolster its reconnaissance capacity over the North. Set to orbit between 400 and 600 kilometres (250 to 370 miles) above Earth, the South's satellite is capable of detecting an object as small as 30 centimetres (11.8 inches), according to the Yonhap news agency. "Considering resolution and its capacity for Earth observation... our satellite technology ranks in the top five globally," a defence ministry official said, as quoted by Yonhap. The launch comes less than two weeks after Pyongyang successfully put its own spy satellite into orbit.

"Until now, South Korea has relied heavily on US-run spy satellites" when it comes to monitoring the North, Choi Gi-il, professor of military studies at Sangji University, told AFP. While the South has "succeeded in the launch of a military communications satellite, it has taken much longer for a reconnaissance satellite

due to higher technological hurdles", he said. Following the North's successful launch of its spy satellite, Choi said, "the South Korean government needs to demonstrate it can also pull this off".

'Destroy' US spy satellites

The nuclear-armed North's launch drew international condemnation which the North Korean leader's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong, called "absurd", declaring that her country would never relinquish its space programme. North Korea is barred by successive rounds of UN resolutions from tests using ballistic technology, and analysts say there is significant technological overlap between space launch capabilities and the development of ballistic missiles. On Saturday, Pyongyang threatened to "destroy" US spy satellites if Washington "tries to violate the legitimate territory" of North Korea, referring to its satellite programme. If the United States attempts to breach its space rights "by weaponizing the latest technologies illegally and unjustly", said a spokesperson of the North's defence ministry in a statement carried by state-run KCNA. "the DPRK will consider taking responsive action measures for self-defence to undermine or destroy the viability of the US spy satellites".

Experts have said putting a working reconnaissance satellite into orbit would improve North Korea's intelligence-gathering capabilities, particularly over South Korea, and provide crucial data in any military conflict. Since last week's launch, the North has claimed its new satellite has already provided images of major US and South Korean military sites.

It has not yet disclosed any of the satellite imagery it claims to possess. The North's launch of "Malligyong-1" was Pyongyang's third attempt at putting such a satellite in orbit, after two failures in May and August. Seoul has said the North received technical

help from Moscow, in return for supplying weapons for use in Russia's war with Ukraine.

Meanwhile, North Korea warned Saturday it would "destroy" US spy satellites if Washington tries "any attack" on its space asset, after Pyongyang launched its first military eye in the sky last week. A spokesman for the North's defence ministry said it would consider such a move a "declaration of war", according to a statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

The statement came after a US official's remark that Washington "could deny an adversary's space and counterspace capabilities... using a variety of reversible and irreversible means", referring to the North's successful spy satellite launch in late November. The US military could undermine the "effectiveness and lethality of adversary forces across all domains", Sheryll Klinkel, a spokesperson at the US Space Command, told Radio Free Asia this week.

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VANDEMBERG AIR FORCE BASE: This screen grab taken from a SpaceX video shows the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket minutes before the launch of the Korea 425 Mission at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on December 1, 2023. — AFP



TOKYO: Recovered debris, believed to be part of wreckage from a crashed US Air Force CV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, is brought ashore at a port in Yakushima-cho, Kagoshima prefecture. — AFP

Seven missing after US Osprey crash off Japan

TOKYO: Japan's coastguard said a major search operation failed again Friday to locate the main wreckage of an Osprey US military aircraft or the seven airmen still missing. The tilt-rotor CV-22B Osprey crashed on Wednesday off the island of Yakushima with eight on board, in the latest mishap involving the versatile aircraft. One man was found and later declared dead the same day, but the coastguard said as darkness fell Friday that the other seven remained unaccounted for despite a massive search.

It said in a statement that a dive search was conducted after an unidentified object was detected by sonar but that "no clues were found regarding the missing people. We have no other new information on them."

On Thursday, divers investigated other unidentified objects found by sonar in waters around 30 metres (100 feet) deep that turned out to be rocks. "Seven Airmen are in DUSTWUN status meaning 'duty status-whereabouts unknown'. At this time, we can confirm one set of remains has been recovered," US Air Force Special Operations Command said.

US unit halts flights

Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said in a statement Friday that the military unit that suffered the accident is "not conducting flight operations." It was not clear how many aircraft are affected by the halt, nor how long it will last. "All V22 Ospreys in Japan operate only after undergoing thorough maintenance and safety checks", Singh said, adding: "The safety of our service members and Japanese communities is a top priority for the United States."

Photos from the area after the incident showed what appeared to be an overturned yellow life raft and other debris including what looked like part of an aircraft rotor blade. An emergency management official in the Kagoshima region where the crash took place said police received information that the aircraft had been "spewing fire from a left engine". Broadcaster NHK quoted a local fisherwoman as saying she saw the aircraft crash into the sea, sending up a column of water as high as 100 metres.

The Osprey, which can operate like a helicopter or a fixed-wing turboprop plane, has suffered a string of fatal accidents. In August, a crash in northern Australia killed three US marines while four more died in another crash in Norway last year during NATO training exercises. Three Marines died in 2017 when another Osprey crashed off Australia's north coast and in 2000 19 Marines died when their Osprey crashed during drills in Arizona. In 2016, an Osprey crash-landed off Okinawa, prompting the United States to temporarily ground the aircraft in Japan after the accident sparked anger among locals. — AFP

Pakistan ex-PM Khan replaced as party head

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan, currently in jail facing myriad charges he says are rigged to keep him from contesting elections next year, was replaced Saturday as head of the party he founded, officials said. Khan launched the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in 1996, failing to win a single seat in an election the next year but growing rapidly to become the biggest bloc in the National Assembly following the 2018 vote, propelling him to the premiership.

He was ousted last year in a vote of no confidence brought by a coalition headed by two long-established parties that have shared power for much of Pakistan's history, when the military hasn't been in charge. Khan, who has been locked up since August while awaiting trial in several cases, including an allegation of leaking state documents, was replaced as party chairman by Gohar Khan, a barrister not related to Imran, a party official said. The change was forced after the Election Commission of Pakistan warned PTI last month they risked losing their emblem — a cricket bat — unless an internal ballot was held for party officers. Election symbols are crucial in a country where the adult literacy rate is just 58 percent, according to World Bank data.

Khan, a former international cricketer, who captained Pakistan to World Cup victory in 1992, was barred from standing in the party poll while in prison. "This is a temporary arrangement," said Syed Zulfiqar Bukhari, PTI's media spokesman. PTI is struggling against a widespread crackdown, with leading party



RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan (C), sister of Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, speaks with media outside the Adiala Jail after a special court hearing for Imran Khan, in Rawalpindi on December 2, 2023. — AFP

figures either jailed or forced to leave the party. Politicians in the South Asian country are often tangled in legal proceedings that rights monitors say are orchestrated by the powerful military, which has ruled the country directly for more than half of its history and continues to enjoy immense power.

"A PTI supporter will vote for the election symbol, for Imran Khan," political analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi told AFP on Saturday. "He (Khan) remains the moral leader of the PTI." Also on Saturday, a hearing into a graft case Khan faces at a special court inside the jail where he is held was adjourned, with his lawyers protesting that media had been barred despite another judge ordering the trial to be open. — AFP

Philippines says air strike cripples militant group

MANILA: The Philippine military said Saturday an air strike killed 11 armed Islamist militants, nearly wiping out one of several small armed groups operating in the south of the country. Acting on a civilian tipoff, two military aircraft attacked a mountainous village on the island of Mindanao, where fighters from the Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines organization were meeting on Friday, a regional military spokesman said.

Hours later, ground troops recovered the bodies of 11 Filipino militants including their alleged leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis Almorato said. "They were planning to mount attacks in the Maguindanao del Sur (province). It was a good thing we were able to foil their plan," he told AFP. He said that Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines is one of several militant groups either inspired by or linked to the Islamic State that are fighting to establish a caliphate in Mindanao, home of a large Muslim minority in the mainly Catholic Asian nation.

"They bomb buses, harass our detachments, and conduct special operations to assassinate undercover soldiers and police," he added. "Some of these groups used to have links (with the Islamic State), but now they are operating on their own in terms of their financial, logistical (requirements) and resort to extortion. "They no longer have foreign funding." The strike near Datu Hoffer Ampatuan municipality left the group with only about four members still at large, Almorato added. — AFP

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Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023

IMF to revise MENA economic outlook over Mideast conflict

'A large-scale conflict to constitute major economic challenge'

WASHINGTON: The IMF announced Friday that it will revise its economic outlook for the Middle East and North Africa region due to the ongoing Zionist entity-Hamas conflict. The conflict will have wide-ranging consequences for "both people and economies" in the region, although the extent of the impact remains "highly uncertain," the International Monetary Fund staff wrote in a blog post. It did not say if the revisions would be released ahead of its next outlook publication, which is due in January.

"A large-scale conflict would constitute a major economic challenge for the region," they said, calling on the international community to act to prevent further escalation.

In the event of a large-scale conflict, "what is certain is that forecasts for the most directly exposed economies will be downgraded and that policies to buffer economies against shocks and preserve stability will be critical," the post added.

Zionist entity resumed its deadly bombardment of the Gaza Strip on Friday after a fragile truce broke down, saying it had struck more than 200 targets in the densely inhabited Palestinian territory despite international calls for a renewed pause. The conflict between Zionist entity and Hamas

broke out on October 7. More than 15,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed across the Gaza Strip since then, according to the Hamas government's Ministry of Health, including at least 178 people on Friday alone.

Among the hardest-hit sectors in the region outside of Zionist entity and the Palestinian territories has been tourism, which the IMF said accounted for between 35 percent and almost 50 percent of goods and services exports in MENA economies in 2019. "Tourism-dependent economies like Lebanon, where hotel occupancy rates fell by 45 percentage points in October compared to a year ago, will see knock-on effects for growth," the IMF officials said.

Elevated risk due to the conflict could push up borrowing costs, with knock-on effects for highly indebted economies, they warned. In the event the conflict continues, "fragile and conflict-affected states in the region, such as Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, could experience a decline in critical aid flows, if the focus of donors shifts away," the IMF officials said.

They added that refugee flows could also increase "significantly," which would add to "social and fiscal pressures in the countries that receive them." — AFP



50 oil and gas companies pledge to cut emissions

DUBAI: Fifty oil and gas companies representing 40 percent of global production pledged to decarbonize their operations by 2050 at the UN's COP28 climate talks in Dubai on Saturday. Saudi giant Aramco and ADNOC of the United Arab Emirates were among 29 national companies to sign a non-binding agreement that also envisaged zero methane emissions and eliminating routine flaring this decade.

Aramco, the world's biggest oil company, and ADNOC, whose CEO Sultan Al-Jaber is president of COP28, had already announced similar CO2-reduction targets — which do not include emissions when their fuels are used by customers. "Whilst many national oil companies have adopted net-zero 2050 targets for the first time, I know that they and others, can and need to do more," Jaber said.

Unlike the Western oil majors, which are intensely scrutinized by the public, few large national oil companies had announced such targets. PetroChina and Brazil's Petrobras also signed up to the new accord, named the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter.

The National Oil Company of Libya, Malaysia's Petronas and Sonangol of Angola were also among the signatories, along with France's TotalEnergies, US firm ExxonMobil, and Britain's BP and Shell.

The charter is part of a set of initiatives designed to accelerate the decarbonization of the global energy industry, prepared in the year leading up to COP28. They are voluntary commitments unlike the decisions of COP28, which are taken by consensus between nearly 200 countries under the aegis of the United Nations.

Melanie Robinson, of the World Resources Institute, a non-profit research body, said the agreement showed that non-binding pledges from the industry were not sufficient to address climate change.

"This charter is proof that voluntary commitments from the oil and gas industry will never foster the



DUBAI: COP28 president Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber speaks during a meeting at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 2, 2023. — AFP

level of ambition necessary to tackle the climate crisis," she said. "We can't meet our climate goals unless governments set policies that rapidly and equitably transition our economy away from fossil fuels."

Meanwhile, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has vowed to stop building new coal-fired power plants that lack measures to cut carbon emissions. The announcement was made at the UN's COP 28 climate summit in Dubai, as Japan, heavily reliant on imported coal and other fossil fuels, aims to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

"In line with its pathway to net-zero, Japan will end new construction of domestic unabated coal power plants, while securing a stable energy supply," Kishida said on Friday, according to a transcript of his speech released by Japan's foreign ministry.

The goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 is shared by G7 members except Germany, which has a more ambitious 2045 deadline.

Kishida added Japan has already cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, and is making progress

toward the goal of a 46-percent reduction by 2030 from 2013 levels. To reduce carbon emissions, Japan is promoting the use of hydrogen and its derivative ammonia by burning it alongside gas and coal at existing power stations. Experts remain skeptical, however. Leo Roberts a researcher at climate think tank E3G, said the change was a "backdoor" to increasing the lifespan of the existing "fossil fuel infrastructure".

He added that the ammonia itself needs to be produced, "which is a whole other industry and that requires electricity to do so."

The government has also said it will restart more of Japan's nuclear reactors. After a tsunami caused a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in March 2011, Japan halted all its nuclear reactors to review and strengthen safety controls.

That left the country highly dependent on imported fossil fuels — especially natural gas, which accounts for nearly 40 percent of Japan's total electricity production, and coal, which represents around 30 percent. — AFP

Elon Musk puts X's survival in the balance

NEW YORK: Elon Musk's verbal assault on advertisers who have shunned X (formerly Twitter) threatens to sink the social network further, with the tycoon warning of the platform's demise, just one year after taking control. "If somebody's gonna try to blackmail me with advertising, go fuck yourself," a visibly furious Musk told an interviewer in New York in front of an audience of the US business elite this week.

Musk was lashing out at the advertisers who had abandoned his platform after Media Matters, a left-wing media watchdog group, warned big companies that their ads were running alongside posts by neo-Nazis. Walmart on Friday was the latest to join the exodus, following the footsteps of IBM, Disney, Paramount, NBCUniversal, Lionsgate and others. The latest controversy broke earlier this month when Musk declared a tweet exposing an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory as the "absolute truth."

Musk apologized for his tweet, even taking a trip to Israel to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but on Wednesday he targeted his anger squarely at advertisers.

"It doesn't take a social media expert to know that publicly and personally attacking the people in companies that pay X's bills is not going to be good for business," said analyst Jasmine Enberg of Insider Intelligence. "Most advertiser boycotts on social media companies, including X, have been short lived. There's a potential for this one to be longer," she added. Musk said the survival of X could be at stake. "What this advertising boycott is going to do is kill the company," Musk said. "Everybody will know" that advertisers were those responsible, he angrily added.

Even before the latest bust up, Insider Intelligence was forecasting a 54-percent contraction in ad sales, to \$1.9 billion this year. "The advertising exodus at X could accelerate with Musk not playing nice in the sandbox," said Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities. According to data provided to AFP by market data analysis company SensorTower, as many as half of the social network's top 100 US advertisers in October 2022 have already stopped spending altogether.

But by dropping X, "you are opening yourself up for competitors to step into your territory," warned Kellis Landrum, co-founder of digital marketing agency True North Social. Advertisers may also choose to stay for lack of an equivalent alternative. Meta's new Threads platform and other upstarts have yet to prove worthy adversaries for the time being, Landrum argued.

Analyst Enberg insisted that "X is not an essential platform for many advertisers, so withdrawing temporarily tends to be a pretty painless decision."

Privately held, X does not release official figures, but all estimates point to a significant drop in the number of users. SensorTower puts the annual fall at 45 percent for monthly users at the start of the fourth quarter, compared with the same period last year.

Added to this is the disengagement of dozens of highly followed accounts, including major brands such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, JPMorgan Bank and Starbucks as well as many celebrities and media personalities that have stopped or reduced usage.

The corporate big names haven't posted any content for weeks, when they used to be an everyday presence. None of the dozen or so companies contacted by AFP responded to requests for comments. In normal conditions, Twitter or X "was always much larger than its ad dollars," said Enberg. It was "an important place for brands and companies to connect with consumers and customers," she said. — AFP

Indian economy grew faster than expected in Q2

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy grew faster than expected in the July-September quarter at 7.6 percent, official data released on Thursday showed.

"The GDP growth numbers for Q2 display the resilience and strength of the Indian economy in the midst of such testing times globally," Prime Minister Modi said in a statement. "We are committed to ensuring fast paced growth to create more opportunities, rapid eradication of poverty and improving 'Ease Of Living' for our people."

The economy had recorded 7.8 percent growth for the last quarter, from April to June. Last month, the World Bank said India will stay on track as one of the world's fastest-growing economies thanks to strong domestic demand and investment helping it weather inflation and challenging global conditions.

Like other countries, India has been buffeted by global headwinds including tightening financial conditions and the effects of the war in Ukraine on global food and oil markets. Its economy nonetheless grew 7.2 percent in the last financial year, the second-highest among G20 countries.

As per World Bank estimates, India's GDP growth for the current financial year stood at 6.3 percent.

India overtook Britain last year to become the world's fifth-largest economy and recently sur-



DUBAI: India Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center) and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (left) listen to World Bank President Ajay Banga during the Transforming Climate Finance session at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 1, 2023. — AFP

passed China to become the most populous country.

The South Asian country continues to be one of the fastest growing major economies, amid western economies being squeezed by high interest rates and energy prices, and a slowdown in China.

The pace of growth was slightly slower than the 7.8 percent expansion India's economy saw in the

previous quarter, helped by the comparison with a lower base the previous year.

The manufacturing sector, which for the past decade has accounted for just 17 percent of the economy, expanded 13.9 percent year-on-year in the September quarter, compared with a revised 4.7 percent in the previous three months. — AFP

Business

Donors, recipients to control new climate fund's resources: Bhangra

COP28 hails climate damage fund, but 'needs billions rather than millions'

DUBAI: Donor countries to an ambitious new climate change fund, along with its recipients, will likely control how its financial resources are spent, World Bank President Ajay Banga said Friday. "The reality is the Bank is currently not planning to play the role of allocating the money," he told an event at the UN's COP28 summit in Dubai.

"That will be done by a governing board that needs to be created, that should have representation from the donor countries as well as the recipient countries," he added. Around \$700 million has been pledged to the new "loss and damage" fund for countries impacted by climate change since it was approved by nations attending the COP28 climate summit in Dubai. The amount so far falls well short of the \$100 billion developing nations say are needed to meet the costs of changing climate, but more pledges are expected in coming days.

The World Bank will most likely play a limited role in the loss and damage fund confined to managing its day-to-day operations, Banga said. The development lender is frequently criticized by developing countries for the outsized role that major Western economies play in its governance.

Under an unofficial agreement between Europe and the United States, the World Bank has been led since its creation by a US citizen, while the International Monetary Fund has been managed by a European. "Our job is like a trustee: We run it, we operate it, we hope to make sure the money goes the right places — because we know how to do that," Banga said of the new fund, adding that it was still in its early stages.

The loss and damage fund was hailed as a positive start to this year's COP summit in the United Arab Emirates, billed as the largest summit to date with more than 140 world leaders due to speak on Friday and Saturday. Climate finance has been a key sticking point, with wealthy nations most responsible for emissions not delivering on promises to support the vulnerable states who are worst affected but least responsible for global warming.

On Friday, Banga said the new fund would initially look to help finance "technical assistance and analytics" for countries impacted by climate change. "If this gets done well, sometime next year is when you'll start seeing money actually be put out to help countries on the ground," he added.

The launch of a climate "loss and damage" fund drew praise and hundreds of millions of dollars in pledges at the UN's COP28 talks on Thursday but also warnings that much more is needed to help vulnerable nations. "We have delivered history today," the UAE's COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber told delegates who stood and applauded after the decision's adoption in Dubai. The announcement was followed immediately by financial pledges, including 225 million euros (\$246 million) from the European Union, \$100 million from the United Arab Emirates, \$40 million from Britain, \$17.5 million from the United States and \$10 million from Japan.

After years of dragging their feet on the issue, wealthy nations backed the fund in a landmark agreement at the COP27 summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, last year. Its launch on the first day of COP28 follows fraught negotiations on the mechanics of the fund, which will be housed at the World Bank on an interim basis.

"This sends a positive signal of momentum to the world," Jaber said. He said it was "the first time a decision has been adopted on day one of any COP and the speed in which we have done so is also unique, phenomenal and historic."

"This is evidence that we can deliver. COP28 can and will deliver," he added. But the money pledged so far fall well short of the \$100 billion that developing nations — which have historically been least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions — have said are needed to cover losses from natural disasters. "The progress we've made in establishing a loss and damage fund is hugely significant for climate justice, but an empty fund can't help our people," said Madeline Diouf Sarr, chair of the Group of the 46 Least Developed Countries.



DUBAI: World Bank President Ajay Banga (left) speaks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen before a meeting on the 'Coal Transition Accelerator Initiative' at the COP28 United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 2, 2023. — AFP

The Alliance of Small Island States — among the most impacted by rising seas and other effects of climate change — said "the work is far from over". "We cannot rest until this fund is adequately financed and starts to actually alleviate the burden of vulnerable communities," it said. "Success starts when the international community can properly support the victims of this climate crisis, with efficient, direct access to the finance they urgently need," the group added.

Rachel Cleetuis, policy director of the climate and energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the financial commitments should be "in the billions, not millions." "Millions would be an insult given what's happening already around the world," Cleetuis told reporters. "We want to hear the starting point is a conversation about billions and then a plan

to scale it up by 2030 so that it meets the needs that are clearly rising," she said.

The fund will be housed in the World Bank for four years, a decision that developing nations begrudgingly accepted as the Washington-based institution is dominated by Western powers. Its board members must now be appointed and represent wealthy and developing nations, and their first steps will be critical in building up its credibility. A European diplomat said the first contributions will enable the financing of pilot projects and to test how the fund works before seeking more money "in a year or a year-and-a-half". Developed countries, the US chief among them, insisted that contributions be on a voluntary basis, and want richer emerging powers such as China and Saudi Arabia to open their wallets, too. — AFP

Nuclear power has role to play: IAEA head

DUBAI: It would be a mistake to reject nuclear power because of problems at a handful of projects, Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said in an interview with AFP. Grossi was speaking at the COP28 conference in Dubai, where 20 countries led by the United States called Saturday for nuclear power capacity to be tripled by 2050 to fight global warming.

Supporters of atomic power say it is an essential source of reliable emissions-free energy.

But detractors point to the risks and high costs of massive nuclear projects at a time when the price of renewable energies continues to fall. "There is work to do," Grossi admitted, citing the financing needs of countries that wish to extend their nuclear plants, such as Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa. Grossi said countries tempted to take the nuclear leap, including Morocco, Senegal, Kenya and the Philippines, face similar challenges. "There are statutes in some international lending organizations that exclude financing for nuclear," the Argentinian director general said.

"I think that is completely obsolete. It does not correspond to any scientific or technological criteria." The World Bank, for instance, has not financed a nuclear project since 1959. "I think, and I hope there will be an evolution" in their thinking, Grossi said.

Some environmentalists argue that with certain nuclear projects already 10 years behind schedule, they are simply too costly and will not be ready in time to respond to climate challenges. But rejecting all nuclear projects because of these setbacks would be "an error", Grossi insisted. "Look, here in the Emirates... there



DUBAI: Belgium Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (left) listens as IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi speaks during the Tripling Nuclear Energy by 2050 session at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 2, 2023. — AFP

was no nuclear here a decade ago and now there are four reactors," meeting about a quarter of the country's electricity demands.

The nuclear industry is resting much of its hopes on small modular reactors (SMR), which are less powerful but easier to construct. There are concerns that less developed countries might not have the means to keep these installations safe and avoid proliferation. "It is a legitimate question, but that is why we were created," Grossi responded, pointing to the flag of his agency, which carries atomic symbols on a United Nations blue background. "Any country wanting to develop a nuclear program must follow a full procedure and

worldwide are cutting emissions "fast enough to reach net zero by 2050", according to a report last month by consultants Accenture. Another by the Boston Consulting Group found that just 14 percent had reduced their carbon emissions in line with their own ambitions in the past five years — and only one in 10 measured them precisely.

While COP28's Emirati president Sultan Al-Jaber could not be more business friendly, experts say lingering suspicions of conflicts of interest — Jaber is also CEO of the UAE's national oil and gas company — put corporations in a complicated position.

It is not as easy to make big announcements in Dubai "where you might be in the firing line" compared with the COP26 in Glasgow, said Lascols, because the UK was "more a model pupil in terms of energy transition". "We did ask ourselves the question" whether we should go to Dubai, admitted the representative of a large French group, before deciding to press ahead "because it is important to take every chance to help move the lines". Other companies questioned by AFP took a similar stance. But corporations are also at COP28 to influence as well as sell, with a huge number of lobbyists present. And not all of them are trying to help wriggle out of responsibility for the climate.

More than 200 major corporations including the likes of Ikea, Coca-Cola, Sony, DHL, Heineken and Nestle have recently called on national leaders to set a timeline for phasing out unabated fossil fuels — without the use of controversial carbon capture and storage technologies. Many of them are also urging their energy suppliers to do the same and decarbonize their businesses. Maria Mendiluce, head of We Mean Business, which coordinated the appeal, said we need to back companies trying to do the right thing. "We tend to focus on criticizing those who are doing something... (but) we need to highlight those that are not doing anything." — AFP

draw up an agreement with the Agency," he said. "In principle, that means the risk of proliferation should not exist." For example, the Emirates had to complete 19 steps while developing its civil nuclear program, including setting up an independent supervisory body. Grossi said he does not think the dangers faced by Ukraine's reactors since the start of Russia's invasion are an argument against nuclear power, either. "The problem is war, not nuclear," he said. However, he could not hide his concern as winter approaches. "The ground will harden, the tanks can move, the rivers will freeze, we see a lot of military equipment on both sides. Yes, that obviously worries us." — AFP

Fitch upgrades Greece's rating to investment grade

WASHINGTON: The US ratings agency Fitch has upgraded Greece's sovereign debt rating to investment grade, praising the country's progress on reducing its elevated debt levels. Fitch's decision to lift its rating for Greece's long-term debt from BBB- from BB+ follows in the footsteps of S&P Global Ratings, which returned the Mediterranean country to investment grade in October. "Fitch expects general government debt/GDP to remain on a sharp downward trend, thanks to solid nominal growth, budget over-execution and a favorable debt-servicing structure," Fitch said in a statement announcing its decision.

It added that it expects Greece's debt as a proportion of economic outlook to fall to 160.8 percent this year, and 141.2 percent by 2027 — down sharply from 171.4 percent in 2022. The Greek debt crisis was sparked by reckless state spending and misreporting of fiscal data to the European Union.

When revealed by the socialist government of George Papandreou in October 2009, it caused Greece's borrowing rates to rapidly spike beyond reach. Greece endured eight years of austerity under three successive international bailouts — worth a total of 289 billion euros (\$306 billion) — in a bid to save the country from collapsing under its debt mountain of some 300 billion euros. The economic reforms demanded by Greece's creditors had a major impact, reducing gross domestic product (GDP) by a quarter over eight years and sending unemployment soaring to more than 27 percent. — AFP

COP28 puts spotlight on oil giants

PARIS: Western energy firms are the usual suspects when it comes to criticism about the sector's role in climate change, but a less visible lineup of powerful state companies dominates the industry. The UN climate talks opened on Thursday in Dubai. COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber is also the head of ADNOC, the national oil and gas company of the United Arab Emirates.

The future of fossil fuels is at the heart of the two-week conference, with countries under pressure to agree to phase out oil, gas and coal in order to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. "While attention often focuses on the role of the majors, which are seven large, international players, they hold less than 13 percent of global oil and gas production and reserves," the International Energy Agency said in a report last week.

National oil companies, or NOCs, "account for more than half of global production and close to 60 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves," the Paris-based watchdog added. The NOCs and the oil majors — which include the likes of BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell and TotalEnergies — will all be "critical to efforts to achieve net zero" emissions by 2050, the IEA said.

National companies range from Saudi Aramco, the world's biggest oil company, to Russia's Rosneft, Chinese firm CNOOC and Petrobras in Brazil. Some explore resources in their own soil while others, known as "international national oil companies", go beyond their own borders.

"These are companies that have very large-scale resources," said Ben Cahill, senior fellow on climate and energy security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). They also "generally have low production costs which means that they're likely to continue producing oil for a long time to come because they have scale and low-cost resources," Cahill added.

Their countries, such as Saudi Arabia or Russia, have a major influence on world oil prices as they can make them fall or drop by leading production cuts in their OPEC+ alliance of major producers. Their operations and products are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, but very few national companies have made climate targets. — AFP



DUBAI: France's President Emmanuel Macron speaks during a meeting on 'Forest and Ocean' at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 2, 2023. — AFP

To greenwash or do the right thing? COP28 dilemmas

DUBAI: They call the giant climate business expo running outside the COP28 United Nations talks in Dubai the "green zone". With the enormous former Expo 2020 site given over to green — and not so green — companies to trumpet their climate credentials, the private sector has never been embraced so warmly at a climate summit as it has been in the oil-rich city state. An astonishing 400,000 visitors have registered for day passes to the futuristic jamboree, with stands touting the latest carbon capture tech to a vegetable garden trying to hold up under the desert heat.

And that is not counting the 80,000 people accredited to the talks themselves. Corporate pledges have been coming thick and fast, with Dubai-based Emirate Airlines — which has its own pavilion — heralding its first flight with "100 percent sustainable aviation fuel" and BNP Paribas bank saying they were phasing out financing projects related to extracting coking coal.

Others have been more hazy. The public relations teams of big companies feel they have to "come up with something during COP", sustainable finance expert Laurent Lascols told AFP. But most of the time they recycle "something they already have on the go". But Sanda Ojiambo, assistant secretary-general of UN Global Compact, which tries to spur corporations towards sustainable development, praised the "very active and dynamic business movement that happens at COP. As long as it's credible and tangible and transparent, I think it really continues to demonstrate forward-looking discussion," she added. But only 18 percent of big firms

Business

NBK celebrates graduation of 10th cohort of trainees in Moody's credit program

NBK revamps 'Moody's Credit Curriculum – Foundation Level' program

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the graduation of the 10th cohort of trainees in the "Moody's Credit Curriculum – Foundation Level" program, organized in partnership with Moody's to develop the skills of its employees. This aligns with NBK's strategy to increase the efficiency of its employees by delivering top-notch training and development opportunities to build a dynamic and agile workforce that drives its long-term ambitions and promotes sustainable human resources.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Salah Al-Fulajji, CEO of NBK – Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK – Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO of Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK, Zaid Isam Al-Sager, Deputy Head of International Banking Group Emad Al-Ablani, GM – head of Group Human Resources, Ahmed Bourisly, GM – Domestic Corporate Banking Group and Pradeep Handa, General Manager, Foreign Corporate Oil and Trade Finance Group.

The program's content was completely revamped by Group Human Resources' learning and Development Department to keep pace with the latest changing business needs and trends. The duration was increased from 2 to 5 months, including around one month in the training halls, and 23 hours of e-learning courses, in addition to integrating workshops on the practical application of skills across the program to expand trainees' knowledge and skills.

The program that ran for 5 months received 21 trainees from various groups including Domestic Corporate Banking Group, Consumer Banking Group, Risk Management, Foreign Corporate Group and International Banking Group. The program's revamping included adopting the Blended Learning approach combining E-learning modules and



training modules focusing on accounting for bankers, business risk analysis, financial risk analysis, cash flow statement analysis, communication skills, effective visual presentation, emotional intelligence as well as behavioral skills, structural risk analysis, credit structuring, documentation and excellence in relationship management.

Commenting on this, Ahmad Darweesh Head of Learning and Development at Group Human Resources said: "The revamped "Moody's Credit Curriculum – Foundation Level" program is the best way to prepare our employees for a successful future. As the banking industry continues to evolve, it has become more important than ever to invest in our employees. We are committed to

providing our employees with the required training and development programs for a thriving career, in line with our belief that investing in our employees is an investment into our future."

"By investing in the training and development system, banks can ensure that their employees have the skills and knowledge required to face the challenges of the future," he added.

"All programs and courses delivered to employees are designed within an integrated training plan developed according to methodological and scientific standards to meet the needs of all relevant departments, in cooperation with the best banking experts and the most renowned international training agencies," he noted.

The training partnership with Moody's, which has been ongoing for 7 years now, yielding 300 graduates, translates NBK's endeavors to build a professional career for its employees by providing them with training programs delivered in partnership with leading universities and international institutions. This aims to build banking leaders and provide them with the required experience, in addition to training them to face different challenges in the banking business.

Moody's is one of the best and oldest financial corporations specializing in economic research, financial analysis and evaluation of private and government institutions in terms of strength, financial position and creditworthiness.

US manufacturing activity extended slump in November

WASHINGTON: US manufacturing activity contracted for the 13th straight month in November, with a sharper slowdown seen in employment and supplier deliveries, according to survey data published Friday. The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in worse than expected at 46.7 percent last month — in line with October's gloomy survey data.

This was below the median expectation of economists surveyed by MarketWatch, and lower than the 50 percent threshold indicating growth in the sector. "Companies are still managing outputs appropriately as order softness continues," ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore said in a statement.

"The manufacturing ISM index held steady in November against expectations of an increase," High Frequency Economics chief US Economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients.

"The manufacturing sector continues to face challenges from higher borrowing costs and tighter credit conditions," she added. Fiore from the ISM said that all five of the subindexes that make up the manufacturing index were in contraction territory last month, "up from four in October."

Canadian mining firm to suspend 7,000 workers

PANAMA CITY: Canadian firm First Quantum Minerals asked Panama's government to suspend the contracts of some 7,000 workers at Central America's biggest copper mine, due to be closed under a court ruling. The company said it had been forced to halt production after road blockades which cut off essential supplies and "has also affected our ability to maintain work activities on site."

It has therefore asked the ministry of labor to suspend the contracts of

some 7,000 employees, First Quantum said in a statement. This would allow it to stop paying wages. The mine workers' union asked the ministry to reject the company's request. On Tuesday, Panama's Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional a contract awarded to First Quantum. Trade and Industries Minister Federico Alfaro Boyd, the official in charge of negotiations with the Canadian company, resigned Thursday, warning that the Supreme Court's decision "could have serious consequences for the country."

Panama has faced nationwide protests and roadblocks since Congress approved a law in October allowing First Quantum Minerals to operate the copper mine for another 20 years, with an option to extend for another two decades.

S Africa throws port operator \$2.5bn lifeline

JOHANNESBURG: The South African government said Friday it would inject \$2.5 billion into beleaguered state logistics firm Transnet as it battles a huge backlog at ports. Tens of thousands of containers are stuck at sea off Durban port because of equipment breakdowns and many ships are now going to other countries, officials said. The National Treasury said the 47-billion-rand (\$2.5 billion) guarantee facility will help the company — which it said plays "a central role" in the economy — to meet looming debt obligations.

"The entity has suffered significant operational, financial and governance challenges in recent times and is struggling to fulfil this strategic role," the Treasury said. Transnet,



Workers assemble cars at the newly renovated assembly plant in Chicago. — AFP

The subindexes for employment and supplier deliveries both contracted at a faster rate than in October, while the index for production tipped into contraction territory, the ISM survey found.

In more positive news, the subindexes for new orders and inventories were found to be

contracting at a slower rate. The US economy "appears to be slowing dramatically," one respondent in the computer and electronic products industry told the ISM.

They added that costs were "exploding" for some inputs like cold-rolled steel, causing manufacturers to load up on these items. — AFP



Felix Tshisekedi

Inflation, joblessness weigh on DR Congo leader's economic gains

KINSHASA: President Felix Tshisekedi, who once vowed to transform DR Congo into "the Germany of Africa", has promised to create jobs if he is re-elected, after a first term marked by economic growth but soaring inflation.

The 60-year-old has presided over years of economic upturn — with more than six percent GDP growth projected for this year — and ballooning national budgets. But inflation, which is at about 20 percent this year, and stubborn joblessness are a drag on economic prosperity as the vast central African nation prepares to go to the polls on December 20. "Everything indicates that there has been considerable progress," Congolese Finance Minister Nicolas Kazadi told reporters this week.

Foreign-currency reserves have soared from about \$1 billion when the government took office in 2019, to nearly \$5 billion this year, he said. The annual budget will also swell to about \$16 billion, from \$5.7 billion in 2019, the minister added, driven mostly by mining-sector growth.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is Africa's top copper producer and the world's largest producer of cobalt — a key component of batteries used in electronics and electric vehicles.

But little wealth trickles down in the DRC. About two thirds of the 100-million population survive on under \$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank. Precise figures are scarce but most Congolese work informally. Jobs are a hot-button electoral issue — Tshisekedi has promised to create 6.4 million by attracting investors, and the main opposition candidates are also promising jobs.

"Put your trust in me and you will be satisfied," the president told supporters in the east of the country this week, referring to job creation. The World Bank expects GDP growth to reach 6.8 percent this year, driven mainly by mining. The economy grew 8.9 percent in 2022, and 6.2 percent the year before, the bank said. "The Congolese government has made extraordinary progress," said World Bank country director Albert Zeufack.

Better tax collection has helped triple the national budget over five years, he said.

But he cautioned that mining-driven growth did not deliver the level of employment needed to alleviate poverty. Tshisekedi has pushed to diversify the economy.

In 2019, he promised to make DRC the "Germany of Africa" and he has pledged to build a battery factory using domestically mined minerals. But the scheme has been slow to get going. Experts view it as quixotic, in a country with regular power cuts and little manufacturing expertise. For many, the economic growth only exists on paper for now.

"There is certainly economic growth but it's not responding to needs," said economics professor Albert Malukisa from the Catholic University of Congo. Malukisa said the problems facing the economy were severe, from scant infrastructure to rampant unemployment and inflation. — AFP

Durban handles about 60 percent of the country's container traffic, according to the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF). About 15 cargo ships carrying 40,000 containers were waiting to dock on Friday, down from a peak of more than 70,000 containers last week, SAAFF director Mike Walwyn told AFP. The improvement was however partially down to some vessels heading for Port Louis in Mauritius, rather than waiting, he added.

"What is needed urgently is to get some new equipment," Walwyn said, expressing hope that the government funds help. Transnet's huge debts mean that it cannot borrow independently on capital markets and desperately needs a lifeline, said Daniel Silke an analyst for the Political Futures consultancy. As South Africa moves towards elections next year, troubles at the firm could no longer be "swept under the carpet," he said.

"Government will want to show that some of its state-owned enterprises... are showing some turnaround signs." The extra finance is "the only way to do this for Transnet." — AFP

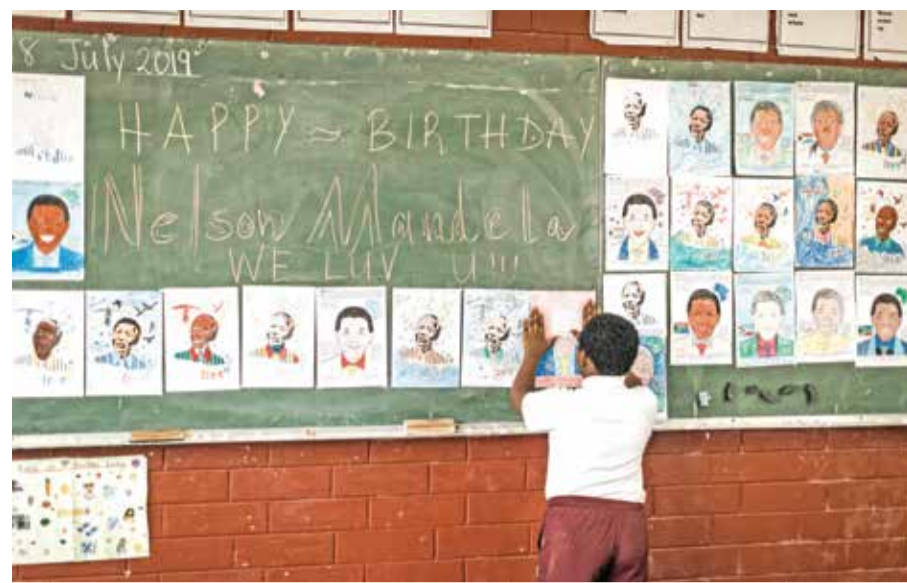
Lifestyle



This picture shows a framed image of former South African president Nelson Mandela as people pay tributes following his death, in Johannesburg on December 6, 2013.



The president of the African National Congress (ANC), Nelson Mandela gives a clenched fist to supporters upon his arrival for an election rally on March 15, 1994 in Mmabatho.



A learner from Northlen Primary school places on the chalkboard posters of former president Nelson Mandela as they mark his birthday in Durban on July 18, 2019.

10 YEARS ON, SOUTH AFRICA DEBATES WHETHER IT'S TIME TO LET GO OF MANDELA

Ten years after the death of Nelson Mandela, the fabled destroyer of apartheid remains a global icon, but in South Africa some say it is time to end Mandela-mania. A nine-metre tall (30-foot) statue of Mandela, his arms outstretched, watches over Pretoria from the Union Buildings government headquarters.

There are at least 50 other major statues, busts and murals devoted to him in South Africa and around the world, from London to the occupied West Bank, according to the Mandela Foundation. Mandela, who died on December 5, 2013, is featured on national banknotes and his "Long Walk To Freedom" autobiography remains one of the best-selling books worldwide of all time.

Robben Island, Mandela's jail for 27 years, is among South Africa's top tourist attractions. The standing of the political giant, widely known by his clan name of "Madiba", is so great that many people watching the sorry state of South Africa's economy and politics ask "what would 'Madiba' think if he were still here." Would events have been different?

Spurring South Africans to move on, the foundation on Friday opened an anniversary exhibition called simply and soberly "Mandela is Dead".

Any country with such a strong figure suffers for many years after the personality is gone from the "deep nostalgia and this hanging on to that symbol," said Verne Harris, the late president's archivist and acting president of the Mandela Foundation.

'Destructive energy'

"What we are saying in this exhibition, is that maybe that becomes a destructive energy. Maybe we need to let him go. And look for new role models."

The exhibition presentation highlights "the weight of the loss we suffered" with Mandela's death. As part of its efforts to help "process this grief", it features interactive displays that encourage visitors to say what they think about Mandela's heritage. Message boards were put up at two universities for comments. Some of the responses are startling and highlight divisions over Mandela's legacy.

Left-wing parties and many youth say the late leader should have done more to dismantle the effects of apartheid's nearly five decades of institutionalized discrimination by the white minority that tore apart society.



A picture taken on December 6, 2018 shows an oil painting of former South African president and Anti Apartheid icon Nelson Mandela on the first floor of the Rand Club in Johannesburg.

"His legacy has done nothing but keep the poor poor and the rich rich, freedom is not free," said one, written at a university in Braamfontein in Johannesburg. "If everybody doesn't strive to bring the dream of a truly free and progressive South Africa to life, then that dream dies with Mandela," added another. "So many of his dreams remain unfulfilled by his comrades," said a third. "We encourage discourse," said Foundation spokesman

Morongwa Phukubye. "We debate his legacy. His legacy isn't one of a saint."

'Sellout' or saint

Harris said foundation representatives who go to South African townships and schools pick up varied reactions. "We encounter narratives like 'Mandela was a sellout and that's why we're in so much trouble today'," said Harris.

Or, it can be "Madiba was a great

leader and it's a pity that his successors have been so poor.' 'If only Madiba had been younger when he came out of prison, maybe we wouldn't have gotten to the mess that we have'."

Harris took part in the truth and reconciliation commission created to look into the worst apartheid human rights violations. He started working on Mandela's papers in 2001, and over the years became close to the figurehead and his work on the Memory Centre that is now the foundation headquarters.

Harris said he felt "deeply ambivalent" about the anniversary. "On the one hand, I remember so strongly in the last five years of his life, thinking I just wish he would let go because I could see his life was becoming a burden to him."

"It's a hard thing to say, almost a relief. But on the other hand, I still feel not really nostalgia, it's more inspiration."

Harris said the most important lesson he learned from Mandela is that "hope is not enough". "We need a deep belief that even if the future is worse than the present we still have to keep fighting, keep doing what needs to be done. So you endure. That keeps me going a lot." — AFP



A monument made of 50 steel columns and entitled 'Release' by South African artist Marco Ciafanelli, representing the 27 years behind bars of the first black and former South African president Nelson Mandela, is seen at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site in Howick.



A sign in Durban presents a message in Zulu reading "Farewell, Father", in honor of late former South African President Nelson Mandela, on the day of Mandela's burial in his hometown of Qunu, on December 15, 2013.



People hold up balloon lamps bearing the image of late former South African president Nelson Mandela during a commemorative ceremony outside the late leader's former home in the Orlando West district of Johannesburg on December 7, 2013.



This illustration shows a logo of Rockstar Games on a smartphone screen and covers of video game series Grand Theft Auto on a TV screen in New York. - AFP

First trailer for 'Grand Theft Auto VI' on December 5

Rockstar Games said it will release a trailer next Tuesday for the first installment in a decade of "Grand Theft Auto," video-gaming's controversial blockbuster. In a minimalist post on social media, the company said that "Trailer 1" would be released on December 5 at 1400 GMT, in an image showing a sunset sky and palm trees.

Even though the post did not mention GTA specifically, this seemed to substantiate media reports that the sixth installment would be set in the fictionalized version of Miami.

Rockstar Games is known for keeping a tight veil of secrecy around its releases, never giving a date in advance contrary to general industry protocol.

Last year the studio was the victim of a hack, with over 90 images and videos appearing on social media, in what is considered to be one of the biggest leaks in video game history. It remains unclear whether GTA VI will

be released next year or in 2025 as Rockstar has a history of announcing games more than a year prior to their release. GTA V has sold around 190 million copies, according to Rockstar parent Take-Two Interactive, making it the best-selling game in the United States for the past decade based on both unit and dollar sales.

One of the most famous franchises in the world of video games, GTA has never been free of controversy, due to its sulfurous mix of violence, sex and gangster life.

Previous episodes have seen players take on roles in the Italian mafia, follow in the footsteps of "Scarface" kingpin Tony Montana, or slip into the shoes of a former gang member in Los Angeles. The series has been heavily criticized for its particularly misogynistic depictions of women, caricatures of minorities and its use of torture. — AFP

Chilean singer's alleged killer extradited, 50 years later

A retired Chilean soldier accused of torturing and killing beloved folk singer Victor Jara 50 years ago at the start of the country's military dictatorship, was extradited from the United States Friday to stand trial at home. Pedro Barrientos, 75, arrived in Chile after being expelled from the United States, where he had been living for 34 years.

He was stripped of his US citizenship after it was found he had lied to migration services. Police told AFP he arrived in Santiago Friday on a regular American Airlines flight from Miami.

Jara, 40, was arrested the day after the September 11, 1973 CIA-backed coup that overthrew Salvador Allende and installed Augusto Pinochet as dictator. Jara's body was found days later,

riddled with 44 bullets. He had been held, along with around 5,000 other political prisoners, in a sports stadium where he was interrogated, tortured and then killed.

A Florida court in 2016 declared Barrientos liable for Jara's torture and murder as part of a civil lawsuit filed by the singer's family, which was then awarded \$28 million. He was arrested in Florida last month. Chile has been seeking his extradition since 2013.

After landing in Santiago, Barrientos was taken by helicopter to a military facility where bystanders changed "Murderer, murderer!" as he disembarked in cuffs. One of Chile's most beloved folk singers, Jara became an icon for hundreds of artists who suffered human rights violations under Pinochet, and

inspired artists including U2, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.

The pacifist singer, whose lyrics spoke of love and social protest, became an icon of Latin American popular music with songs like "The Right to Live in Peace," "The Cigarette" and "I remember Amanda."

Barrientos' arrest came just weeks after Chile's Supreme Court sentenced seven retired military officers to up to 25 years in prison for Jara's kidnapping and murder. One of them, an 85-year-old, committed suicide rather than going to jail. Jara's British-born widow Joan, a human rights activist, died earlier this month aged 96. — AFP



Handout picture showing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Miami deportation officers escorting Pedro Pablo Barrientos (left) boarding a commercial flight under escort, at Miami International Airport.-AFP photos



Handout picture showing retired Chilean soldier Pedro Barrientos, being taken into a helicopter upon arriving from the United States in extradition, at Santiago's International Airport.



Climate change gets in the way of French oyster culture



Crates of Marennes Oleron oysters ready for delivery at the Chiron oyster-farming company.



A basket of Marennes Oleron oysters at the Chiron oyster-farming company.

Rising sea temperatures due to climate change are forcing oyster farmers in France's southwest to take a break from summer maturation, traditionally a key step in the production of the tasty molluscs. Starting next year, producers in Marennes Oleron, France's biggest oyster bay, will no longer be able to steep oysters in shallow clay beds in salt marshes, known as "claires", during the summer months.

Oyster farmers in this region traditionally keep oysters in the oyster beds for the final weeks before their sale, a treatment that gives them a less salty and iodine taste than if they had come straight from the sea, and earns them the "fine" label, recognized by the EU's protected geographical indication (PGI) category. But climate change is negating the effects of the oyster beds.

Scientists have found that because of fast-evaporating water, the salt concentration has become too high between early June and late August, leading to the ban during those months. Human consumption of oysters, which are animals, goes back thousands of years. They come in a wide variety of flavors and textures depending on water salinity, alkalinity, mineral content and nutrition.

"We're going to have to accept change," said Henry Schaller, a local



This picture shows a weighing device used to calibrate oysters ahead of their packaging in baskets at the Chiron oyster-farming company in L'Eguille along the Seudre river, south-western France. — AFP photos

farmer using the "claire" method for which the Marennes Oleron oyster region is famous. But the 37-year-old, in the business since 2010, said he had already cut down on summer maturation even before the new rule. "The oysters had become too salty," he said. "We had a weaker, lower-quality product."

On the frontline

The water temperature in the clay oyster beds, filled with sea water thanks

to the tides and rhythm of the ocean, can now reach 35 Celsius (95F) in the summer months, well above the comfort zone of 32C for oysters, which cannot regulate their temperature. This puts them more on the "frontline" of climate change suffering than ocean mammals or fish, said Fabrice Pernet, a scientist at the Ifremer oceanic research centre. "There is as much reason for concern for oysters as there is for corals. Their fragility is similar," he said.

Producers in the Marennes Oleron sell up to 60,000 tons of oysters per year, of which 17,000 tons are of the "fine" variety.

Rising ocean temperatures, which in July set a new world record at 20.96C, make oysters more vulnerable to disease, and expose them to falling oxygen content in the water and rising acidity. "We noticed, because of a changing climate, that the maturation could no longer be carried out in the same way," said Laurent Chiron, an oyster farmer and president of the GQHMO association that awards the industry's quality label.

According to the new rules, farmers are encouraged to go beyond the traditional winter and summer methods for oyster bed maturation, adopting a more flexible approach. "We are telling oyster farmers: based on how you perceive the climate, you can operate one maturation method or another," Chiron said.

Philippe Morandea, president of the oyster industry committee in Poitou-Charentes which includes Charente-Maritime, said he believed any impact on sales figures would be small, given that most oysters are sold for end-of-year festivities when ocean temperatures are low. — AFP



Oysters in crates ahead of their packaging in baskets at the Chiron oyster-farming company in L'Eguille.



Crates of oysters during their maturing process in an oyster bed in Marennes.



An employee separating aggregated oysters ahead of their calibration and packaging in baskets at the Chiron oyster-farming company in L'Eguille.



An employee weighing oyster baskets during packaging at the Chiron oyster-farming company.



This picture shows manager of the Chiron oyster-farming company Laurent Chiron holding a basket of Marennes Oleron oysters.



An employee placing oysters in a box during packaging at the Chiron oyster-farming company in L'Eguille.



Employees dropping crates of oysters in oyster beds for maturing in Marennes.



An oyster park along the Seudre river in Marennes, south-western France. (FP)



Crates of oysters during their maturing process in an oyster bed.

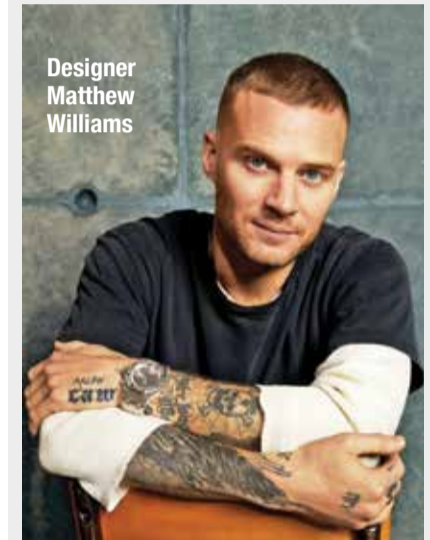
Lifestyle



Models present creations by Saudi designer Honayda Serafi during the Riyadh Fashion Week in King Abdullah Financial District KAFD in the capital Riyadh. — AFP photos

Designer Matthew Williams leaves Givenchy

Fashion designer Matthew Williams is leaving Givenchy after three years as creative director, the French luxury brand announced Friday, in the latest shake-up at the top of the luxury business. Givenchy did not name an immediate successor, saying the coming collections would be handled by its in-house team. Nor was any reason given for the parting of ways, which is effective from January 1. Givenchy CEO Renaud de Lesquen said Williams' "collections, resolutely creative and contemporary, have sparked a new dynamic and found their audience".



Williams described his time as creative director as "the dream of a lifetime" in the statement. Having worked with the likes of Kanye West and Lady Gaga, the heavily-tattooed US designer brought an element of street cred to the fabled French brand. But its parent group, LVMH, has been tight-lipped about Givenchy's sales performance under Williams. It noted the success of his "U-Lock" jacket and "Voyou" bag this year, but analysts say it failed to match the growth of other brands in the group such as Louis Vuitton and Celine. In the fast-paced and cut-throat fashion world, several high-end labels have changed their creative directors this year, including Gucci, Chloe and Alexander McQueen. — AFP

AFTER SUCCESS ABROAD, SAUDI DESIGNERS HIT THE RUNWAY AT HOME

Couturier Adnan Akbar's past clients included Princess Diana and two French first ladies, but until recently he had never staged a major fashion show in his native Saudi Arabia. The 74-year-old, dubbed the "Saint Laurent of the Middle East", was among the most decorated designers at this year's inaugural Riyadh Fashion Week. On a run-

"I think the world is seeing how creative we are, the strength of the designs that we have." But as the Saudi government extends previously unheard-of support to veterans like Adnan Akbar along with up-and-comers bringing out their first collections, it remains to be seen whether authorities can develop the infrastructure needed to support them.

2021, the kingdom spent \$7.3 billion on imported fashion goods, the fashion commission report said. With that in mind, Riyadh Fashion Week was structured to showcase local talent rather than well-known international designers. Beyond Adnan Akbar and Mohammed Ashi, who has dressed celebrities including Beyonce and Zendaya, the line-up was rounded out by Saudis with much less visibility overseas. "We are basically creating curiosity around a group of designers that have never been explored and seen from outside," said fashion commission chief executive Burak Cakmak. The fact that these designers already have "healthy businesses" at home points to the strength of the local market, Cakmak said.

"There are a lot of women in very high professions... who want to look professional, and they want to look respected, so I started designing suits and long blazers," she said. In recent years, the sidelining of the feared religious police and the introduction of previously forbidden attractions like cinemas and music festivals have created new wardrobe needs.

"Especially in a city like Riyadh, you can expect that everybody after work is spending time with friends and family outside until late hours in public spaces, which means that people are dressing differently than they would for an occasion at home," Cakmak said.

Demand for street-wear has skyrocketed among new brands, yielding sweatshirts and jackets that can be remarkably unisex for a country long known for rigid gender norms. "And they all have a local twist," Cakmak said, citing hoodies inspired by traditional Saudi thobes, the traditional white robes worn by men, and garments incorporating Arabic calligraphy. During a meet-up with investors in New York in October, one such street-wear brand - 1886 - sealed an investment deal with Turmeric Capital, whose chairman Ravi Thakran compared what's happening in Saudi Arabia's fashion industry to what he witnessed in China two decades ago. "A decade from now," Thakran said, "I believe books will be written about the colossal changes as Saudi increases its economic presence across Asia. — AFP



'Build local economy'

The Saudi fashion industry last year accounted for \$12.5 billion, or 1.4 percent of national GDP and employed 230,000 people, according to a report by the official Saudi Fashion Commission. Under the right conditions, the report argues, the industry could become "a major driver" of de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform agenda, which aims to transition the world's biggest crude oil exporter away from fossil fuels and transform it into a business, sports and tourism hub.

One challenge will be lowering the current dependence on imports. In

Projects like a new manufacturing space, the commission's first, expected to open in Riyadh next year, will help keep more of these brands' value chains in the country, Cakmak said, potentially making fashion more of a force for the non-oil economic growth authorities want to see. "Ultimately, our goal is to build the local economy," he said.

'Gap in the market'

Broader societal changes introduced under Prince Mohammed have also created new opportunities for Saudi designers. The lifting of abaya and hijab requirements combined with a push to get more Saudi women working exposed "a gap in the market", said Mona Alshebil, who contributed a ready-to-wear collection to Riyadh Fashion Week.

way set up in Riyadh's financial district, in front of a mixed-gender crowd of Instagram influencers and diplomats, models donned more than two dozen of Akbar's floor-length gowns, and one wedding dress sewn from French lace.

It was a world away from most prior fashion shows in the Gulf kingdom: small, women-only gatherings in private homes or, in one famous example, a public show that did away with models altogether, hanging dresses from flying drones. "It's a huge change, what's happening now," said Abdullah Akbar, Adnan's son and managing director of the family brand.



Guests pose and take pictures ahead of the show for the "Six&Eight" brand new fashion collection inspired by artworks of artist Alexey Sergienko depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin, in Saint Petersburg. — AFP photos

Russia's Putin honoured in Andy Warhol-inspired fashion show



A Russian clothes brand held a fashion show this week honoring long-time leader President Vladimir Putin by embellishing his face on Andy Warhol-inspired sweaters, in what one nationalist news outlet called an "unusual" display. Since Russia launched full-scale hostilities against Ukraine last year, Putin's cult of personality has burst into the mainstream, with officials effusively heaping praise on the president. The fashion show, held late on Thursday, took place in Putin's native Saint Petersburg and showcased art by Alexey Sergienko, a self-proclaimed patriot whose collection of paintings "The President is a Kindhearted Man" formed the basis for the designs.

"I was impressed when he was re-elected," Sergienko told AFP, standing in front of his piece "Putin, Star, Crown" - a kaleidoscopic grid of Putins interspersed with stars and crowns. "The crown is a reference to the past, and it's also an allusion to the fact that I knew that the president would be elected again and again," he said. "I painted this picture saying that we shall have Putin for a long time, forever," he told AFP.

Many of his works are reminiscent of American artist Andy Warhol, whose vibrant paintings of celebrities and everyday objects popularized the "pop art" movement of the late 1950s to 1960s. The event, which the ultra-nationalist television channel Tsargrad described



in a report as "unusual", featured a catwalk of models wearing a range of Putin-themed jackets, t-shirts and neck-scarves. "We came to the show as a whole family," 48-year-old visitor Andrey Nechaev told AFP. "We are very happy to be here," he added. The Kremlin's desire to galvanize support for Putin and the conflict in Ukraine has touched on almost every aspect of life, including music and the arts.

On Friday, Russia's government appointed controversial Putin-ally Valery Gergiev as maestro of the world famous Bolshoi Theatre, drawing ire from foreign musicians. Many prominent cultural figures left Russia in the wake of the assault, including bestselling author Dmitry Glukhovskiy and popular singer Zemfira. — AFP



Models present creations from "Six&Eight" brand new fashion collection inspired by artworks of artist Alexey Sergienko depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin, in Saint Petersburg.

Sports

News in Brief

Bayern-Union match postponed

MUNICH: Bayern Munich's clash against Union Berlin has been postponed due to heavy snowfall in the Bavarian capital, authorities confirmed on Saturday. The match had been scheduled to take place on Saturday afternoon but a press statement from Bayern said "security risks and the traffic situation made cancellation unavoidable". Low temperatures brought heavy snowfall across southern Germany, particularly in Munich. Prior to the cancellation of the game, the Munich transport authorities had already stopped rail connections in the greater Munich area, while traffic had largely come to a standstill. In a statement issued on Saturday, Bayern said there was an "incalculable risk for spectators" and explained "it is hardly possible to get to the Arena". "Under these conditions, it cannot be guaranteed that the security personnel and other stadium staff necessary for the game to go ahead can get to the Allianz Arena." — AFP

Dressel back in winner's circle

WASHINGTON: Seven-time Olympic gold medallist Caeleb Dressel's push for the Paris Olympics gained steam Friday with his 100m butterfly victory at the US Open in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dressel, sixth at the turn, powered home to win in 51.31sec, his first race win since the 2022 World Championships, where he cut short his campaign before stepping away from swimming for several months. Dressel, who failed to qualify for the World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, earlier this year, said the victory just confirmed the progress he'd already felt in training. "It's not something I need right now," he said of the victory. "Training's been going great, so it's a little cherry on top. It's just fun to be back." With his eyes firmly on the US Olympic trials in June and the Paris Games, Dressel said he was in a "really good spot." "Throwing up some times that probably (are) a little quicker than I thought it would be at this point in the season," said Dressel, who set the world record of 49.45sec at the Tokyo Olympics but hadn't gone faster than 51.66 since his return to competition. — AFP

Sore hip sidelines Wembanyama

LOS ANGELES: San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama was sidelined for the first time in his NBA career on Friday as the Spurs ruled him out against the New Orleans Pelicans with a sore right hip. Wembanyama played through the problem on Thursday, scoring 21 points with 12 rebounds and four blocked shots in the Spurs' 137-135 loss to the Atlanta Hawks—San Antonio's 13th straight defeat. The towering French teen downplayed the injury after the game, but said he considered it a "day to day" decision as to whether he would play. "My body in general feels as good as we can expect this many games into the season," said Wembanyama, the number one draft pick who said he's still learning to manage his fitness during the rigors of an NBA campaign. "Once the season starts, that's what I've learned, it's more maintaining," he said. "Every day we mustn't miss meals, must sleep as much as we can." — AFP

QPR boost survival bid

LONDON: QPR boosted their hopes of avoiding relegation from the Championship with a surprise 2-0 win against play-off chasing Preston on Friday. Marti Cifuentes's side made two successive victories thanks to goals from Paul Smyth and Chris Willock at Deepdale. The west Londoners had struggled in the first half, with the freezing Lancashire weather making the pitch difficult to navigate. But once they adapted to the conditions, QPR took control in the 55th minute. Smyth darted into the six-yard box to poke home Ilias Chair's in-swinging cross. Elijah Dixon-Bonner drove an effort narrowly wide as QPR kept pressing forward. And the visitors delivered the knockout blow in the 87th minute. Chair was the provider again, crossing for the unmarked Willock to slot home. Preston missed the chance to move back into the top six thanks as a third successive loss stalled the momentum from their strong start to the season. — AFP

Ruthless Harlequins rout Sale

LONDON: Harlequins climbed to second place in the English Premiership with a 36-3 demolition of leaders Sale at The Stoop on Friday. Rampant Harlequins scored five tries, two by Will Joseph, as Marcus Smith delivered an influential display for the hosts. Smith created the 43rd-minute try for Danny Care that put Harlequins in complete control, while also kicking one penalty and three conversions. It was a sweet moment for the 24-year-old, who eclipsed Sale's George Ford as the two compete for the England number 10 jersey made vacant by Owen Farrell's decision to miss next year's Six Nations in order to prioritize his mental health. A difficult night for Sale was compounded by the loss of captain Ben Curry to injury. — AFP

Celtics hold off 76ers

Tatum ejected in third quarter; Magic roll on

LOS ANGELES: Boston star Jayson Tatum was ejected in the third quarter but the Celtics clawed out a 125-119 NBA victory over short-handed Philadelphia on Friday as the Orlando Magic notched a ninth straight win. Tatum scored 21 points before he was tossed for arguing a foul call after tangling with Robert Covington with one second left in the third. Covington made the technical free throw, and two free throws awarded when Tatum's foul was upgraded to a flagrant because of contact to Covington's head.

That put the Sixers up 97-95 going into the final period. Philadelphia's reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid missed a second straight game with illness. Ailing Tyrese Maxey and injured Nicolas Batum were ruled out shortly before the game. But the Sixers pushed Boston to the finish, pulling ahead 116-115 with 2:28 remaining before Al Horford's driving basket put Boston up for good with 2:09 to go. Patrick Beverley scored 26 points, grabbed eight rebounds and handed out seven assists for Philadelphia.

De'Anthony Melton scored 21 points before he fouled out with less than six minutes to go. Jaylen Brown and Horford scored 20 points apiece for Boston, who made eight of 11 three-pointers in a sizzling 44-point first quarter, but surrendered 72 points in the first half to trail by three at the break. Tatum had received a technical in the first quarter, and when he was whistled for a foul after colliding with Covington his objections were so strong that Celtics coaches moved to steer him away from the officials.

Tatum said he was "extremely surprised" to be ejected for just the second time in his career. "I don't agree with that," he said. "One of the assistant coaches that was there with me doesn't agree. But it doesn't really matter. It's like the refs' word against ours and at that moment when they throw you out they throw you out." Horford said the Celtics had to lock back in after Tatum's departure. "We just had to get stops, get gritty," he said.

Durant milestone in defeat

In Phoenix, Suns star Kevin Durant moved to 10th on the NBA all-time scoring list but it was the Denver Nuggets who emerged with a 119-111 victory. Nikola Jokic scored 21 points and handed out 16 of the Nuggets' 38 assists and all five Denver



BOSTON: Tobias Harris #12 of the Philadelphia 76ers makes a pass around Jrue Holiday #4 of the Boston Celtics during the second half at TD Garden on December 01, 2023 in Boston. - AFP

starters scored at least 15 points. Durant came into the contest needing 17 points to pass Moses Malone (27,409 points) on the all-time scoring list.

He did so with a layup in the final minute of the first half, scoring 22 points before the break but just eight after, his 30 points taking his career total to 27,423. In Orlando, German forward Franz Wagner scored 31 points and Paolo Banchero added 28 with 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Magic, who tied a franchise record with their ninth straight win, 130-125 over the Washington Wizards. Moritz Wagner added 18 points for Orlando, who seized the lead for good in a game that featured 13 lead changes on Wagner's layup with 7:06 remaining, the basket igniting a 7-0 scoring run.

"Really proud," Banchero said, after the Magic matched their nine-game winning streaks of the

1994-95, 2000-01 and 2010-11 seasons. "Obviously the work's not done, but it shows just how hard we've been working, the chemistry we've been able to build so far. We just want to keep it rolling." In Dallas, the Memphis Grizzlies triumphed 108-94 against a Mavericks team missing Slovenian star Luka Doncic, who was away from the team after welcoming the birth of his daughter.

Desmond Bane led the Grizzlies with 30 points. The San Antonio Spurs competed for the first time this season without star rookie Victor Wembanyama, who was sidelined with a sore hip. The Spurs still managed to push the Pelicans in New Orleans, but even with relatively quiet nights for Zion Williamson and Brandon Ingram—who scored 12 and 14 points respectively—the Pelicans pulled away late for a 121-106 victory that marked the Spurs' 14th straight defeat. — AFP



RAIPUR: India's Axar Patel (2nd left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Travis Head during the fourth Twenty20 international cricket match between India and Australia at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium in Raipur. - AFP

India down Australia to clinch T20 series

RAIPUR: Rinku Singh's quickfire 46 and a spin attack led by Axar Patel helped India to a series-clinching 20-run win over Australia in the fourth Twenty20 international on Friday. India posted 174-9 thanks to Rinku's 29-ball blitz, despite late strikes by the Australian fast bowlers after the tourists elected to field first in Raipur. Axar then returned figures of 3-16 with his left-arm spin as the hosts kept down Australia to 154-7 to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

"Other than (the) toss, everything went our way," India's Suryakumar Yadav said of the victory in his first series as captain. "Winning was the big boost, especially the way the boys showed character. Everyone expressed themselves irrespective of the situation, and that's what I told them: be fearless, play your game and we'll see what happens."

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi struck on his first delivery as he bowled Josh Philippe, for eight, and finished with figures of 1-17. Axar struck in his first over to claim opener Travis Head's wicket, after his 16-ball 31 had given the tourists a quick start. After derailing the opposition's chase, the Indian spinner kept up his strikes and sent Ben McDermott and Aaron Hardie back to the pavilion. Tim David attempted to hit back but fast bowler

Deepak Chahar took the batsman down, getting him caught in the deep on 19.

Chahar claimed another victim in Matthew Short on 22 as the wheels came off the chase, before skipper Matthew Wade hit a valiant 36 not out. "We want to continue to learn about the players under the established players since the (T20) World Cup is around the corner, so depth around the squad will be key," said Wade. Earlier, the left-handed Rinku put on key partnerships including a 56-run fifth-wicket stand with Jitesh Sharma, who hit a 19-ball 35.

Ben Dwarshuis took two wickets in the 19th over and fellow left-arm quick Jason Behrendorff also struck twice in the next over to deny Rinku his fifty and check India's surge. Hardie began with a maiden over and in his second over cut short Yashasvi Jaiswal's brisk knock of 37 off 28 balls, after the left-hander mistimed a pull to get caught at mid-on. Leg-spinner Tanveer Sangha sent back Shreyas Iyer for eight and Dwarshuis made the hosts slip to 63-3 when he got Suryakumar caught behind for one.

Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made 32 after his unbeaten 123 in the previous match, and Rinku put on a quick 48-run stand, which was eventually broken by Sangha. Australia were without their ODI World Cup stars, including Glenn Maxwell, who hit a match-winning 104 not out in match three, and Marcus Stoinis. Head remains the only player from the World Cup-winning team in the Australian side. The final T20 is on Sunday in Bengaluru. — AFP

Scheffler and Spieth lead World Challenge as Tiger rallies

MIAMI: World number one Scottie Scheffler and three-time major-winner Jordan Spieth opened up a one-shot lead at the halfway stage of the PGA Tour Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas on Friday as Tiger Woods' comeback gathered pace. Scheffler produced a stunning back nine birdie spree to vault up the leaderboard before a bogey on the 18th denied him the solo lead and left him with a six-under-par 66 to move to nine under for the tournament. Scheffler was joined at the top of the leaderboard by Spieth, who shot five birdies for a bogey-free 67 in perfect conditions at Albany Golf Club.

Fifteen-time major winner Woods, who is playing his first tournament since undergoing ankle surgery in April, meanwhile bounced back from his opening 75 with a two-under-par 70 that left him in 15th place on the leaderboard at one over – 10 shots off the lead. Scheffler meanwhile was left reflecting on a

round that included eight birdies – including five after the turn – that saw him move up the leaderboard. The only blemishes were bogeys on the par-three eighth hole, and the par-four 18th.

"I got off to a good start and then hit some good shots," Scheffler said. "Then on the back nine kind of got into a nice groove there... I just hit a lot of quality shots and got some looks. That's really just what I did best." Spieth meanwhile was broadly satisfied with a solid round clouded only by his inability not to pick up more shots on Albany's par-fives. The American made birdies on the par-five ninth and 15th holes, but settled for pars on the courses three other par-fives.

Woods encouraged

"For a day where I didn't have the putter really going... it's really nice to see the rest of the game there," Spieth said. Former world number one Woods, who is hosting this week's 20-player event, was encouraged by signs of progress as his journey back from a seven-month injury layoff continued. "It was better than yesterday, for sure," Woods said. "I made a few mistakes and overall the round was better, for sure. The start was better, the middle part of the round was better... Certainly better than it was yesterday."

Bangladesh crush NZ as Taijul grabs 2nd 10-wicket haul

SYLHET: Taijul Islam grabbed his second 10-wicket haul in Tests as Bangladesh defeated New Zealand by 150 runs in the first Test in Sylhet on Saturday, taking a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. Resuming on the fifth and final day at 113-7 with another 219 runs needed for victory, New Zealand added 68 runs for their last three wickets, ending their second innings all out for 181 runs. Taijul claimed the last two wickets to finish with 6-75, adding to his 4-109 in the first innings. Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan gave Bangladesh their first breakthrough on the day, after New Zealand's overnight batting pair of Daryl Mitchell and Ish Sodhi survived nine overs.

Mitchell top-edged Nayeem to Taijul at long leg after making 58. Tim Southee and Sodhi entertained the sparse crowd with some counterpunches, putting on 46 runs for the ninth wicket in quick time, the highest partnership for New Zealand in the innings. But the runs came too late to have an impact on the outcome, as Taijul claimed the wickets of both in the space of four overs. Southee was caught by Zakir Hasan at midwicket after making 34 off 24 balls, including a four and two sixes.

Taijul brought the curtain down on an entertaining contest soon after, when Sodhi gloved a catch to Zakir at silly point. It earned Bangladesh their second Test victory against New Zealand, with the first coming at Mount Maunganui in January 2022. "Credit goes to all the players, especially Taijul, Nayeem, Shoriful (Islam), and Mehidy (Hasan)," said Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, who became the fourth Bangladesh captain to win his first match in charge.

"Everyone enjoyed this match. We weren't thinking about the result," Najmul, who scored a century in the second innings, said in the post-match presentation. Disappointed New Zealand captain Tim Southee praised the hosts and called for more from his team. "They played well. Our bowling group needs to create pressure for longer, batters need to stitch more partnerships, be better for longer," he said. The second Test of the series will be held in Dhaka between December 6 and 10. The two-match series is the beginning of a new cycle in the World Test Championship for both teams. — AFP



NASSAU: Scottie Scheffler of the United States plays his shot during the first round of the Hero World Challenge at Albany Golf Course in Nassau. — AFP

Woods admitted his body was still adjusting to tournament golf, contrasting it with practice rounds prior to this week's event. "It's different," Woods said. "I can play at home, I can walk, walk beaches, do all those things at home, but it's different when you're at game speed. "You can simulate all you want at home, and I had it the best I possibly can. We played a lot of money matches at home and tried to simulate it, but it's just different. — AFP

Sports

Juventus end Monza's unbeaten home record

Juve go top after dramatic finish

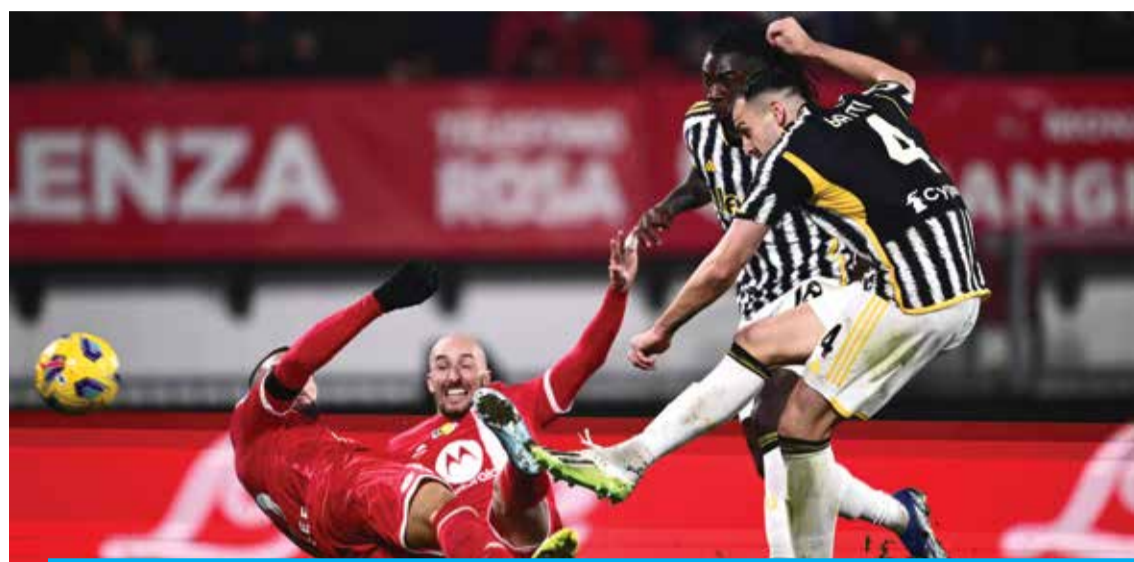
MONZA: Juventus ended Monza's unbeaten home record in Serie A this season after a thrilling finale crowned with a 94th-minute winner on Friday, meaning they leapfrog Inter Milan into top spot. Juventus' 2-1 victory was an uninspiring affair bookended by moments of great drama in the first 15 and last five minutes, with a 91st-minute Valentin Carboni equalizer, that looked to have saved Monza a draw, before Federico Gatti struck to wrestle back the spoils three minutes later.

Nine minutes into the meeting, Georgios Kyriakopoulos pulled on Federico Chiesa's shirt in the box and the referee deemed it enough to be a penalty. Dusan Vlahovic's resulting weak penalty was saved down low to his right by Michele Di Gregorio, who then leapt to his feet to fling himself back across goal and somehow claw the follow-up effort away from the face of his own net and behind for a corner.

The astonishing double-save must have still been on the minds of his teammates as Rabiot benefitted from slack marking as the corner came

in to power an unstoppable header beyond the Monza keeper in the 12th minute. The Old Lady nearly doubled the lead just after the half-hour mark when another corner found its way through to Gatti, but the defender could only send his effort over the bar on the stretch. The hosts dominated possession in the second half, but never really troubled Wojciech Szczesny in the Juventus goal as the clocked counted down to a narrow win for the 36-times Italian champions.

However, the match sparked back into life when substitute Carboni swung in a cross-shot that just evaded its target in Dany Mota and snuck in at the back post. The euphoric scenes in the ground were cut abruptly short in the fourth minute of added time when Gatti atoned for his earlier error by thumping in an emphatic winner after teeing himself up via his own fluffed shot following Rabiot's burst on the right wing. Now trailing their main title rivals by one point, Inter Milan can reclaim first place when they travel south to take on current champions Napoli on Sunday. — AFP



MONZA: Juventus' Italian defender #04 Federico Gatti scores the team's second goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AC Monza and Juventus in Monza. — AFP

Onana among EPL best goalkeepers, Ten Hag insists

NEWCASTLE: Erik ten Hag rode to the defense of under-fire goalkeeper Andre Onana on Friday as he claimed the Cameroonian's stats prove he is among the Premier League's (EPL) best. Onana's start to his United career has been riddled with high-profile errors in the Champions League that have put the Red Devils on the brink of a group stage exit. He was at fault as two Hakim Ziyech free-kicks kickstarted a Galatasaray fightback in a 3-3 draw in Istanbul on Wednesday. That took United's tally of conceded goals in their five Champions League games to 14.

But it has been a different story in the Premier League as Onana has let in just 16 goals in 13 matches. And Ten Hag pointed to figures which show the former Ajax stopper is second in the English top flight for saves made, save percentage and goals

prevented. "If you analyse it well then you see he is the second-best goalkeeper in the Premier League based on stats," Ten Hag, who championed Onana's signing from Inter Milan for £47 million (\$59 million) in July, told a press conference on Friday.

"He's doing well. Also, he knows that in the Champions League he makes some mistakes, but all over you see the first five months he is doing particularly well." United's Premier League revival after five wins in six games faces a stern test on Saturday as they travel to Newcastle. But Ten Hag quashed any suggestion that Onana's place in the side is under threat. "You have seen how he is reacting on a bad performance like in (Bayern) Munich. At Burnley (three days later) he was outstanding," added Ten Hag. "He is a strong character, he is a personality and he will deal with it."

United's recent run has taken them above Newcastle in the table into sixth. But all of their eight Premier League wins this season have come against sides in the bottom half of the table. By contrast, they have lost all four meetings against teams in the top half. And Ten Hag recognized his players need to rise to the challenge when facing strong opposition. "We



Manchester United's Cameroonian goalkeeper #24 Andre Onana

have to rise to the occasion, be our best against them because the way they play is very organized," he said on the trip to Newcastle. "I really respect them. It's a difficult team to play but it's a good challenge and I like to play against it." — AFP

Chelsea 'own worst enemies': Pochettino

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino admits his Chelsea players have been their own worst enemies during their rocky run this season. Pochettino's side were thrashed 4-1 at Newcastle last weekend in a painful setback following their impressive performances against Tottenham and Manchester City. Chelsea had demolished Tottenham before battling back to draw with champions City, but Pochettino conceded the positive vibes from those results had been erased by their meltdown at St James' Park.

The Blues' inconsistency has been a thorn in Pochettino's side since he took over in July, with only four wins in 13 league matches. Pochettino said it had been a week of soul-searching at the club's Cobham training ground as he tries to iron out his team's issues. "It was a tough week for everyone," Pochettino told reporters on Friday. "I'm very happy because the players reacted really well. We blame ourselves because our approach (at Newcastle) maybe was wrong."

"But the week was good to realize what we need to improve. We need to be more consistent and mature. I'm very, very happy so far. It was tough in training and in meetings, but sometimes this type of situation helps you to improve a lot. "The important thing is not to look at the end of the season, but to see the process and to improve every day. That's the most difficult thing always in this type of process, to be focused on today and not on tomorrow. "We beat Tottenham, had an amazing game against Manchester City, then we lose against Newcastle. We are our worst enemies and we need to be focused on us."

Speaking ahead of Sunday's Premier League clash with Brighton at Stamford Bridge, Pochettino added that he had not held back in showing his anger to the players following the surrender to Newcastle. "The players know very well how my mood was," he said. "I'm not going to act. I'm not going to show a face that I don't feel. "I think it's important the players feel the coaches in a natural way when we are angry, when we're happy we're happy. We were tough in our analysis, but tough is about telling the truth."

'Emotional' Caicedo
Pochettino has told Chelsea's Moises Caicedo to



LONDON: Chelsea's Argentinean head coach Mauricio Pochettino reacts on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge. — AFP

free his mind as the Blues boss tries to get the "emotional" Ecuador midfielder back on track. Pochettino splashed out a British record £115 million (\$146 million) to sign Caicedo from Brighton in August. But the 22-year-old's frequent 11,000-mile round trips to South America to play for Ecuador have limited the time he has been able to spend working with Pochettino and his coaching staff.

Recovering from a red card on his disastrous debut against West Ham, Caicedo has become a regular in Pochettino's side but is yet to recapture his superb Brighton form. He revealed in an interview with Chelsea's website this week that he spent much of his first 10 days in England alone in a hotel room in tears due to homesickness after joining Brighton from Ecuador's Independiente del Valle in 2021. Caicedo went on to become one of the key figures for Brighton in their rise up the Premier League, sparking a bidding war between Liverpool and Chelsea earlier this year.

"When we signed him we knew what is going to happen. He's an emotional guy, an emotional player that needs time to recover," Pochettino told reporters on Friday. "It didn't help also the international games, travelling to Ecuador, to South America. That is really tough every single month, two or three weeks then go 10, 12 days away, then come back sometimes with some injury. "It's not an excuse but it's the reality. In some situations like his, we need to give time and not to be unfair in the way that we assess him." — AFP

Hilal shock Esperance in CAF Champions League

JOHANNESBURG: Homeless Sudanese club Al Hilal shocked Tunisian giants Esperance 3-1 on Friday in a CAF Champions League second-round Group C match in Tanzania. After Yassine Meriah conceded an eighth-minute own goal, captain Mohamed Abdelrahman converted a 15th-minute penalty to give the Omdurman outfit a two-goal half-time lead. Gambian Kebba Sowe halved the deficit in the Indian Ocean port city of Dar es Salaam on 59 minutes before Senegalese Pape N'Diaye restored the two-goal advantage 12 minutes from time.

Hilal cannot play at home because of an armed conflict between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and a paramilitary unit commanded by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. After playing a qualifier in Morocco, Hilal moved to Tanzania for the group phase, and their first match there delivered an unexpected success over four-time African champions Esperance. Hilal are making a record 37th appearance in the premier African club competition and the closest they have come to lifting the trophy was finishing runners-up twice in the 1980s.

Hilal lost to Petro Luanda in Angola last weekend while Esperance won a Tunisian derby against Etoile Sahel, the only club to win all five current and past CAF competitions. Etoile host Petro on Saturday near Tunis and should they win all four teams in the mini-league will have three points. A Group D match also produced an upset as Medeama snatched a 2-1 victory in Ghana over Algerian visitors Chabab Belouizdad, quarter-finalists in the past three editions. Mamudu Kamaradin scored in the fourth minute of added time in Kumasi for the home team, who came from behind to win.

Abdelraouf Benguit netted from a 39th-minute penalty and Daniel Lomotey equalized in the final minute of the opening half. Success for Medeama came six days after a heavy loss at title-holders Al Ahly of Egypt while Belouizdad were comfortable first-round winners over Young Africans of Tanzania. Medeama are Champions League debutants who surprised Remo Stars of Nigeria and Horoya of Guinea in qualifiers. The other six second round matches are scheduled for Saturday, including Young Africans against Ahly. — AFP

Today's Matches

English Premier League		
Bournemouth v Aston Villa	17:00	beIN Sports HD Xtra 2
Chelsea v Brighton	17:00	beIN Sports HD 2
West Ham v Crystal Palace	17:00	beIN Sports HD Xtra 1
Liverpool v Fulham	17:00	beIN Sports HD 1
Man City v Tottenham Hotspur	19:30	beIN Sports HD 1
Spanish League		
Real Mallorca v Deportivo	16:00	beIN Sports HD 3
Almeria v Real Betis	18:15	beIN Sports HD 3
Sevilla v Villarreal	20:30	beIN Sports HD 3
Barcelona v Atletico de Madrid	23:00	beIN Sports HD 1
Italian League Serie A		
US Lecce v Bologna	14:30	AD SPORTS Premium 1
Fiorentina v Salernitana	17:00	beIN Sports Fr 4 HD max
Udinese v Hellas Verona	17:00	beIN Sports Fr 7 HD max
US Sassuolo v Roma	20:00	AD SPORTS Premium 1
Napoli v Inter Milan	22:45	AD SPORTS Premium 1

Classifieds

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707	Qadsiya	22515088
Rawda	22517733	Dasmah	22532265
Adaliya	22517144	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Khaldiya	24848075	Shaab	22518752
Kaifan	24849807	Qibla	22459381
Shamiya	24848913	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Shuwaikh	24814507	Mirqab	22456536
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Sharq	22465401
Nuzha	22526804	Salmiya	25746401
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764		

Change of Name

I, Bushra Mohamed Yusuf Gigani, holder of Passport No. L3084351, do hereby change my name to **Bushra Usamah Zariwala** for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **Bushra Usamah Zariwala** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

3-12-2023

I, Jawashar Basha Sarthar Kasim holder of Indian Passport No. W7992735 having permanent address O NO 13 N No 42 New Street No 10, Thiruvannamalai, Tiruvannamalai, Pin:606601, Tamil Nadu, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: given name **Jawahar Basha** and surname **Sarthar Kasim**

3-12-2023

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Arsenal extend Premier League lead

Burnley trounce 10-man Sheffield 5-0



LONDON: Wolverhampton Wanderers' English goalkeeper #25 Dan Bentley punches the ball to save from the head of Arsenal's English striker #14 Eddie Nketiah during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Wolverhampton Wanderers on December 2, 2023. - AFP

LONDON: Arsenal survived a late scare against Wolves on Saturday to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League as Burnley lifted themselves off the bottom with a 5-0 trouncing of 10-man Sheffield United. Mikel Arteta's Gunners, brimming with confidence after their 6-0 hammering of Lens in the Champions League in midweek, raced into a 2-0 lead at the Emirates within 13 minutes. Bukayo Saka opened the scoring and Arsenal doubled their lead when Oleksandr Zinchenko cut the ball back for Martin Odegaard, who picked out the bottom corner.

The home side came agonizingly close to a third goal when Gabriel Martinelli cannoned a shot off the post towards the end of the first half. But they failed

to put the game to bed and were made to sweat when Wolves forward Matheus Cunha found the top corner in the 86th minute to set up a tense finale. Despite the scare, Arsenal, last year's runners-up, held on for their 10th win in 14 league games, which moves them four points clear of champions Manchester City, who host Tottenham on Sunday.

Vincent Kompany's Burnley hammered fellow strugglers Sheffield United 5-0 at Turf Moor. Jay Rodriguez fired the home side ahead with just 15 seconds on the clock - the fastest goal of the season so far. Jacob Bruun Larsen extended their lead shortly afterwards, racing onto Dara O'Shea's long ball down the right and keeping his composure to slot past goalkeeper Wes Foderingham.

Sheffield United's task was made almost impossible when Oli McBurnie received a second yellow card for a foul on O'Shea late in the first period. Zeki Amdouni made it 3-0 in the 73rd minute with Luca Koleosho and Josh Brownhill also finding the net as the floodgates opened. Paul Heckingbottom's men are stuck on just a single win and have now conceded five goals or more on three occasions this season. But Burnley are now just two points behind 17th-placed Luton after just their second win of the season.

Luton went down 3-1 at Brentford, where Neal Maupay opened the scoring from close range early in the second half and Ben Mee made it two. Luton substitute Jacob Brown rifled a shot low beyond Mark Flekken in the 76th minute but Shandon Bap-

tiste restored Brentford's two-goal cushion just five minutes later. Everton, in action against Nottingham Forest later on Saturday, are now bottom of the league, due to a swinging 10-point deduction imposed for breaking Premier League financial rules.

Despite their predicament, Sean Dyche's men will be confident they can secure a third consecutive away win in the league. In the late match, Newcastle face Manchester United at St James' Park, where a win for either side would lift them to fifth place in the table at the expense of Tottenham. United have won five of their past six league games after a terrible start to the season but goalkeeper Andre Onana will be in the spotlight after costly errors in his team's 3-3 draw at Galatasary in midweek. — AFP



Omar Al-Medlij at the World Vet Motocross Championship.



Kuwaiti racer Medlij makes his mark on the world stage

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: What began as a playful jest transformed into a life-altering passion for Omar Al-Medlij, a Kuwaiti motocross racer, when he playfully pilfered his cousin's dirt bike. Unexpectedly smitten by the thrill of two wheels and a roaring engine, he took the plunge and purchased his own. Immersed in the exhilarating world of dirt biking, he connected with fellow enthusiasts, and guided by one of them, discovered a small motocross track in Kuwait. From that moment, Medlij's journey on the dirt tracks commenced, marked by the adrenaline rush that defines the world of motocross.

Medlij embarked on his motocross journey in 2012, showcasing a passion that eventually led him to his first race in 2015. Despite being relatively new to the competitive scene, his dedication and self-belief have driven remarkable achievements. Notably, he secured an impressive 6th place at the World Vet Motocross Championship. He noted that motocross was not widely known in Kuwait, but a turning point occurred in 2003 with the construction of several tracks, leading to a gradual increase in both tracks and races over the years.

Regarding the challenges, Medlij said: "We need open, well-maintained and watered motocross tracks in Kuwait. During the off-season from November to March or April, Kuwait closes the tracks, and we



need to practice during this period. The off-season hurdle forces riders to practice in Dubai, incurring additional costs." He called on the government and companies to support local athletes to hone their talents to represent Kuwait globally.

"My goal is to make people aware of the sport and what I've been through to reach where I am today. If 90 percent of Kuwaiti young athletes in the country get the needed support from the government, there would be a lot of achievements and the Kuwaiti flag would be raised in international races. Local talents can compete everywhere if they just got the support and someone believed in them," he added.

Medlij welcomes any beginners who are interested to learn and know more about motocross. "I welcome to guide anyone who has a dirt bike and wants to learn. When anyone contacts me, I guide him or send him to my coach Mohammad Jafaar, who is trying to promote motocross sport in Kuwait."

He advised beginners to watch, learn and be patient, pointing out that beginners must not be shy or rush to race, as it takes time and effort and a lot

of technique to be on the right track. "If you fall and break your elbow or ankle, or lose, it is all part of the experience and learning process. Motocross is not just about speed, but requires mastering balance, control and cornering skills over several years," he explained.

Medlij indicated that riders need to ride with balance when they use the front brake or turn. To learn all this stuff, you need more than five years, saying motocross is a form of off-road motorcycle racing held on enclosed, dirt-surfaced tracks. The key basics include navigating jumps, turns and obstacles, with riders competing for the fastest lap times.

"It is considered as a dangerous sport if you are not serious about learning. Mastering skills like balance, control and efficient cornering is crucial in motocross. I had a big crash when I took a jump very quickly and broke my right ankle, losing a whole season. Learning is important," he emphasized. "It is all about consistency and taking the risk, along with believing in yourself. Before a year, I finished 13 out of 45 racers. I was happy; I did not look at the 12 riders who passed me but rather where I reached."

Medlij's plea reflects a passionate desire to transcend borders and make his mark on the world stage. His call for global recognition stems from a broader mission to elevate awareness about motocross in Kuwait, highlighting that motocross bikes are more than conventional two-wheelers. "I need the world to know Omar from Kuwait. People here do not have the knowledge about the sport. I need people and sponsors to believe in the sport and that I will represent Kuwait, not to support me financially or make me famous. I need appreciation. I need sponsors to be a part of the journey and support the untapped potential within Kuwait's motocross community. I will keep chasing the dream and my goals," he vowed.

Messi leaves door open to 2026 WCup

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi is not ruling out another bid for World Cup glory with Argentina in 2026 despite acknowledging that time is working against him. Messi, who recently won his eighth Ballon d'Or, raised the World Cup almost a year ago after starring for Argentina in the final against France in Doha. The 36-year-old had suggested at the time that the tournament in Qatar would be his last and that he wouldn't be around for the next tournament which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

But having moved to Major League Soccer's Inter Miami and continued performing for the national team in qualifiers for 2026, he says the door remains open. "I'm not thinking about the World Cup and I'm not saying 100 percent that I won't be there because anything can happen. Because of my age, the most normal thing is that I won't be there. Then we'll see," said Messi in an interview with Argentina's Star+.

The Argentina captain said his focus on June's Copa America which will be held in the United States. "Maybe we'll do well at the Copa America and everything will work out for us to continue. Maybe not. Realistically it's difficult," he said of the chance of a sixth consecutive appearance in the World Cup. Messi said he would be "the first to know when I can be there and when I can't. I'm also aware that I've gone to a lesser league. But it's all about the personal side of things and the way you deal with it and how you compete."

"As long as I feel I'm well and can continue to contribute, I'm going to do it. Today all I'm thinking about is getting to the Copa America. After that, time will tell if I'm there or not. "I'm going to arrive at an age that, normally, doesn't allow me to play in the World Cup. I said I don't think I'm going to be there. It looked like after the World Cup I was retiring and it was the opposite. Now I want to be there more than ever," he added. — AFP