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US vetoes Gaza ceasefire bid

Kuwait condemns veto, denounces extremists' protest in occupied Jerusalem

Amir's health stable



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

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

GAZA: The Zionist entity bombarded targets in Gaza on Saturday after the United States blocked an extraordinary UN bid for a ceasefire in the war with Hamas. Washington's veto was swiftly condemned by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, whose health ministry put the latest death toll in Gaza at 17,700, mostly women and children.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah on Saturday expressed Kuwait's robust condemnation of applying the veto right at the UN Security Council against the draft resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. In a statement to KUNA, Sheikh Salem expressed deep concern at the UNSC's failure to respond to the decision by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to refer to Provision 99 of the UN Charter to draw the international community's attention to the situation in Gaza that constituted a threat to the global humanitarian order and signaled a prospect of collapse of international security and peace.

"The ceasefire and protecting civilians in Gaza Strip are a pending humanitarian demand that must be heeded as soon as possible," Sheikh Salem stated, also expressing concern that the failure to pass the resolutions would lead to granting a "new permit to the occupation forces to continue the operations of killing, annihilation and displacing the brotherly Palestinian people".

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GAZA: Mourners stand by shrouded bodies of relatives killed following Zionist strikes at Khan Yunis' Nasser hospital in the southern Gaza Strip on Dec 9, 2023. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Erdogan slams 'Zionist council'

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday denounced the UN Security Council after the United States vetoed a ceasefire resolution for Gaza. "Since October 7, the security council has become a (Zionist) protection and defense council," Erdogan said. "Is this justice?" asked Erdogan, adding that "the world is bigger than five," a reference to the five veto-wielding nations in the UN Security Council. "Another world is possible, but without America," the Turkish leader said. — AFP

Iran: Reviving nuke deal 'useless'

TEHRAN: Iran said Saturday that attempting to revive its landmark nuclear deal with world powers that was effectively scrapped by former US president Donald Trump was increasingly "useless". "Today, the more we advance, the more the JCPOA becomes useless," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a speech to students at the University of Tehran. "Because (Iran's) red lines have sometimes been ignored by the other side, we are not currently on the path to return to the agreement," he said. — AFP

Sydney bakes in hottest day

SYDNEY: A heatwave scorched Australia's eastern coast and sent temperatures in Sydney to a three-year high Saturday as firefighters battled runaway bushfires. Sydney city center's Observatory Hill weather station reached 40 degrees Celsius in the afternoon — the hottest since Nov 2020, according to weather bureau data. In Richmond on Sydney's far western fringes, the thermometer crept up to 43.8C. More than 70 bushfires and grass fires burned across New South Wales, with over a dozen out of control in the late afternoon, the state's rural fire service said. — AFP

Alarm over 'apocalyptic' Gaza situation

PARIS: Aid charities have sounded the alarm about an "apocalyptic" situation in Gaza after more than two months of war between the Zionist entity and Hamas, warning of starvation and an outbreak of disease. In a video conference with journalists this week, international organizations depicted a bleak picture of what Save the Children called the "horrors" unfolding in the Gaza Strip. "The situation in Gaza is not just a catastrophe, it's apocalyptic... with potential irreversible consequences on Palestinian people," said

Bushra Khalidi of Oxfam, another UK-based charity. "(Zionist) safe zones within Gaza are mirage," she added.

Only 14 of the 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip are currently functioning in any capacity, according to UN humanitarian agency OCHA, and little aid is reaching those in need. "Those who survived the bombardment now face imminent risk of dying of starvation and disease," said Alexandra Saiegh of Save the Children. "Our teams are telling us of maggots being picked from wounds and children undergoing amputations without anesthetic," lining up by the "hundreds" for a "single toilet" or roaming the streets in search of food, she added.

After a week-long pause in hostilities, during which Hamas exchanged captives for Palestinians held in

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OPEC pushes against fossil fuels phaseout

DUBAI: China said on Saturday it saw progress in reaching a climate deal at a key United Nations summit in Dubai, despite a last-minute push by the OPEC oil cartel to resist a phaseout of fossil fuels. OPEC drew outrage from green-minded countries and activists when it joined Saudi Arabia and called on members to block an emerging declaration that would seek to wind down extraction of

the oil, coal and gas which are fueling the climate emergency.

But China, the world's largest oil importer, played down the row and said it was working to find a solution that was "acceptable to all parties". "I think we've already had some progress on this issue and I believe we will have more progress in resolving this very soon in the coming few days," China's climate negotiator Xie Zhenhua told reporters at the COP28 climate conference. "Because if we do not, if we do not resolve this issue, I don't see much chance in having a successful COP28," he said.

The OPEC oil cartel said Saturday there was no "single solution" to the

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Rockets fired at US embassy in Baghdad

BAGHDAD: Salvoes of rockets were launched early Friday at the US embassy in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, the mission said, the latest in a flurry of such attacks amid the Zionist-Hamas war. "A multi-rocket attack was launched at US and Coalition forces in the vicinity of Union III and the Baghdad embassy complex" without causing any reported casualties or damage, a US official said.

On Friday, there were a further five attempted strikes against US and coalition troops. Drone or rocket attacks were launched twice against the Ain al-Asad airbase in western Iraq and three bases in Syria were targeted, according to a US military official speaking anonymously, reporting "no casualties and no damage". The United States "strongly" condemned the attacks and called on Iraq to bring the perpetrators to justice, the State Department said in a statement.

"The many Iran-aligned militias that operate freely in Iraq threaten the security and stability of Iraq, our personnel, and our partners in the region," spokesman Matthew Miller said in the statement. The US embassy said "two salvoes of rockets" were fired at the mission

compound in Baghdad at around 4:15 am (0115 GMT). "Indications are the attacks were initiated by Iran-aligned militias," said a US spokesperson.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani warned that attacks on embassies undermine the country's security and called on security forces to bring those responsible to justice. An Iraqi security official said "three Katyusha rockets targeting the American embassy fell close to the Green Zone", near the river Tigris. There are roughly 2,500 US troops in Iraq and about 900 in Syria as part of efforts to prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State group. Pro-Iran groups have justified their attacks by pointing to American support for the Zionist entity. — AFP



GAZA: People gather in front of a burning building after it was hit by a Zionist strike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Dec 9, 2023. — AFP



DUBAI: Climate activists raise banners during a joint 'Climate Justice' and 'Cease-fire Now' march at the United Nations climate summit on Dec 9, 2023. — AFP



Local

10th edition of Qout Market kicks off

Diverse array of 40 participating projects featured

KUWAIT: The tenth edition of Qout Market kicked off on Saturday at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, featuring a diverse array of 40 participating projects. The market showcased various sections, including restaurants, booths for youth projects, fine arts exhibits by Kuwaitis, a dedicated area for children and a special section highlighting the Palestinian Heritage Center. This edition marked a vibrant convergence of culinary delights, artistic expressions and cultural heritage.

The market seeks to empower the small food producer, the craftsperson, the artist, the small-scale farmer and the musician looking for an audience. Small businesses are provided the opportunity to perform at their finest and engage with a captive audience. The market takes place on Saturdays in an urban location. The upcoming Qout Markets are scheduled for January 6, February 3 and March 3, promising continued opportunities for the community to explore and engage in a rich tapestry of experiences.

Established in 2013, Qout Market emerged from modest origins with a distinct purpose: To draw attention to, nurture and showcase the remarkable diversity within the local artisan community. From the outset, it beckoned to inquisitive visitors eager to explore novel experiences, forge connections, and immerse themselves in the vibrant atmosphere created by passionate creators.

Since its inception, Qout Market has transcended its humble beginnings to become an integral part of the social calendar, capturing the attention of both local residents and visitors from the broader region. Serving as a microcosm of Kuwait's cultural tapestry, the market carefully selects vendors not only for their outstanding products and dedication but also for their embodiment of a shared sense of community.

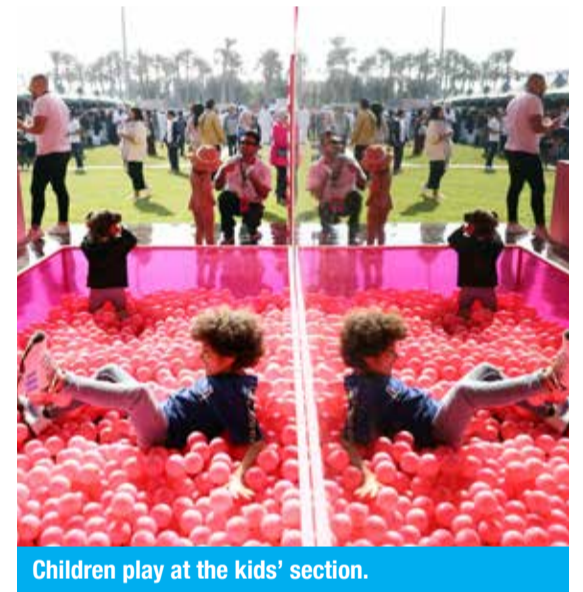
At its core, Qout Market weaves together the threads of local farm produce, artisanal delicacies, and crafts, complemented by a street food section that celebrates the culinary richness of the local food community. The inclusion of a dedicated children's section underscores the market's commitment to providing an inclusive space for all, fostering not just commerce but a shared experience that reflects the heart and soul of Kuwait.



KUWAIT: The tenth edition of Qout Market begins at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. The market showcased various sections, including restaurants, booths for youth projects and fine arts exhibits by Kuwaitis. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwait Times and Kuwait News content creators Zainab Dashti and Dhoha Al-Issa.



Children play at the kids' section.



Latifa Alajlan debuts at Art Basel with Franklin Parrasch Gallery

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti-born visual artist and activist Latifa Alajlan makes her mark on the art world with Franklin Parrasch Gallery. Alajlan is a recent graduate of the School of The Art Institute of Chicago, who now resides in New York, where she crafts thought-provoking works that bridge the gap between conservatism and liberalism. Drawing inspiration from her native culture, surroundings and lived experiences, Alajlan seeks to ignite a dialogue on women's empowerment.

Through gestural abstraction technique, her artworks explore her journey in discovering her identity as a modern woman within a society deeply rooted in religious history. With strokes of paint, Alajlan emphasizes femininity and autonomy, and by layering patterns influenced by the ornate designs of mosques onto her canvases, she invokes the earthly materials and historical significance of the Middle East and the globe. Kuwait Times spoke to her to learn more about this exceptional artist who hails from Kuwait.

Kuwait Times: Can you provide us with some background information about Latifa Alajlan as an artist?
Alajlan: I am an emerging artist from Kuwait, based in New York City. I recently graduated from the School of The Art Institute of Chicago (MFA), and now I am represented by New York-based Franklin Parrasch Gallery. This is a very unique experience for me as an



Renouncement

artist showing in a fair for the first time. As a Kuwaiti artist, I am proud to be showing with Franklin Parrasch at Art Basel, Miami Beach.

Kuwait Times: What themes or concepts do you explore in your artwork, and how are they reflected in your Art Basel debut?

Alajlan: Drawing with paint and graphite, creating calligraphic marks, and then adding oil skins with thick layers of stenciled patterns from the ornament of mosques from Kuwait and architectural buildings around the region that I have seen and



Latifa Alajlan with her artwork

experienced in places of worship. The grotesque textures of the paint have been applied with my hands, creating an intimate relationship with me and the painting rather than using a brush, as if I am the creator of all. The oil paint mixed with mica creates a thick, sand-like bodily layer.

Kuwait Times: Have there been any specific influences or inspirations behind your artworks?

Alajlan: I draw inspiration from the Gutai movement, the Baghdad Modern Art group and the women of the New York School.



One



Latifa Alajlan

Local

Zain Smart Home welcomes visitors at the Mirzam Expo

Company sponsors expo's biggest season yet, supports it for 4th year running

KUWAIT: Continuing to support national initiatives that foster creativity and innovation in the community, Zain has announced its platinum sponsorship of the new season of Mirzam Expo, Kuwait's top interior design and home decoration event. The company's support to this project comes for the fourth year running, and this year's event is anticipated to be the biggest in the expo's history. Over 300 booths are set to be featured, covering over 30 categories for interior design, home furnishing, decoration, and more.

The announcement was made at the press conference held at Andalus Complex, attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Mirzam Expo Founder and Organizer Farah Al Humaidhi, along with representatives of sponsors and participants. The conference took the attendees in a tour through Mirzam's journey, covering its success story from the past, present, and beyond.

At the conference, Zain shared its plans for joining the event's all-new season through its special booth, the Zain Smart Home. Located at Hall 6 in the Kuwait International Fair in Mishref, the Zain Smart Home was designed to resemble a miniature house, giving visitors a close-up view to experience the company's latest smart home solutions and products, along with accessories from the world's biggest brands.

Mirzam's huge success in the past editions drove Zain to continue supporting it, as the company prides

itself for being a top supporter of homegrown projects that foster creativity and innovation in the community. In addition, being Kuwait's top digital service provider that serves the biggest family of subscribers, Zain was keen on adding value to the expo by offering the best world-class smart home solutions.

The Zain Smart Home was designed as a miniature house with several rooms and halls that mimic those of real houses, giving visitors a unique experience to try out the company's latest smart home solutions with real-world use cases, allowing them to choose the best products that serve their home-planning needs. The booth is set to feature security solutions, surveillance cameras, sensors, smart lighting, home appliances, gaming consoles, accessories, and much more.

This year, Zain has also collaborated with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy to promote the ministry's latest campaign, Waffer, for raising awareness of energy conservation. The company has dedicated a section of its booth for the ministry's team, who will provide informative advice and valuable consultation to visitors on how to implement sustainability tools and practices in their existing or future homes.

The fourth season of Mirzam Expo is anticipated to be the biggest in its history, with over 25,000 sqm of space across three halls in the Kuwait International Fair, Mishref. Over 300 booths covering over 30 categories will serve all visitor needs for interior design, home furnishing, decoration, and more. The



Al Khashti and Al Humaidhi with Zain officials at the press conference.

expo will also offer exciting draws, valuable prizes, and other entertainment programs to the crowds throughout its period.

Mirzaam is the biggest event of its kind in Kuwait, gathering decoration experts, designers, suppliers, professional contractors, and specialists that

offer all services and needs related to designing and decorating homes, offices, commercial projects, and more. The event also features many panel discussions, seminars, and other programs that reveal the secrets of the art of interior design and discuss the latest decoration trends.

World marks UDHR's 75th anniversary

KUWAIT: The world marks on December 10 the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the most significant international legal document on human rights: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document in the history of human rights. The declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

The declaration, with all its 30 articles, is the basis of all laws bearing on human rights, with its first article stating that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Kuwait, as part of the international order, adopted several texts and articles in its 1962 constitution that comply with the UDHR and related international charters.

It has even adopted a set of pieces of legislation, laws, and arrangements that reflect the country's observation of international commitments in the human rights domain. In this regard, Chairman of the National Diwan of Human Rights, Jassem Al-Mubarak, stressed the importance of the UDHR to the protection of all people from human rights violations and highlighted and addressed relevant challenges.

Speaking to KUNA, he said the international community needs an executive will to apply relevant conventions to what is going on in the Gaza Strip, lamenting that the UDHR, human rights conventions, and the United Nations (UN) Charter are not observed due to double standards. He condemned the Zionist occupation's aggression on the Palestinian territory as a genocide and war crime against humanity, right under the nose of the international community.

He added that human rights are the basic rights



Chairman of the National Diwan of Human Rights Jassem Al-Mubarak

and freedoms of all people, regardless of any other considerations such as gender, race, religion, language, political opinion, national and social origin, or economic or social situation. In this context, Kuwait has approved and endorsed a set of international agreements and conventions targeting the elimination of racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, he remarked.

Kuwait has consequently enacted a package of laws, legislation, and policies pertinent to these international conventions and has always cooperated with international human rights agencies in order to promote and protect human rights in the country. Furthermore, Kuwait has always been keen on implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015 and are mainly based on the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and human rights treaties and conventions.

Kuwait's new development vision is chiefly meant to create an encouraging infrastructure and legislative business environment with human development regulations aiming at establishing values, safeguarding society's identity, and ensuring justice, political participation, and freedoms. Kuwait also established a permanent national committee for compiling re-

ports and following up on human rights recommendations, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprising all state bodies. It further created a National Diwan of Human Rights, an independent body supervised by the cabinet and aiming at promoting and protecting human rights and disseminating the respect of public and private freedoms as per the constitution and international agreements endorsed by the State of Kuwait.

At the international level, Kuwait has emerged as a peace-loving country that defends civilians' rights and hosts summits and conferences with a view to supporting needy and affected countries. This has thus earned Kuwait distinguished status in its relations with the UN, which, consequently, picked Kuwait as a humanitarian hub and the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a humanitarian leader.

In the same context, during its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council between 2018 and 2019, Kuwait did its utmost in the field of human rights, mainly including Resolution 2401 adopted on February 24, 2018, regarding Syria's ceasefire and humanitarian aid access, along with Resolution 2440 that defined a mechanism for delivering relief aid to Syria. The UNSC also adopted Resolution 2417, which was tabled by the States of Kuwait, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Cote d'Ivoire, condemning the starving of civilians as a war tactic and the illegal denial of humanitarian access to the civilian population.

As part of its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and defending the legitimate rights of Palestinians, Kuwait submitted a draft resolution aiming at proving international protection for the Palestinian people, but it was vetoed. In another achievement, the UN General Assembly reelected Kuwait as a member of the Human Rights Council between 2024 and 2028, which comprises 47 member states. It was first elected during the period from 2011 to 2014. The membership is mainly based on states' contributions to promoting and protecting human rights and voluntary undertakings and commitments. — KUNA

Kuwait's admission boosts ties among SCO member states

TOKYO: Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Zhang Ming, has affirmed Kuwait's admission into the organization as a dialogue partner, which contributes to boosting ties among member states. Kuwait can play a pivotal role in enhancing cooperation among the SCO member countries, uniting efforts in the face of challenges and threats, and boosting regional commercial, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation, as cited by a statement released by the State of Kuwait Embassy in China.

Other SCO objectives are ensuring member states' commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and adherence to the United Nations charter and international laws, particularly those that aim at safeguarding global peace and security, establishing partnerships among the States, protecting their sovereignty, and respecting nations' right to determine their destiny, in addition to making headway at the political, social, economic, and cultural levels.

Zhang affirmed that Kuwait is keen on maintaining balanced and various partnerships with states and international organizations and cooperation, in particular with the SCO countries, to attain common goals. The SCO, established in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, currently groups eight member states (Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Russia, China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and India), as well as four countries as observers (Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus, and Mongolia).

Kuwait, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Maldives, signed a memorandum of understanding to join the body as dialogue partners last May. The SCO, the largest regional organization globally, aims at establishing a multi-polar global order that conforms to the norms of international law and mutual respect principles that serve each state's interests. — KUNA

Authority keen on developing youths' leadership skills

KUWAIT: The General Authority for Youth confirmed on Saturday its keenness to support and develop the leadership skills of Kuwaiti youths through education and training programs and engage them in local and external activities and forums that contribute to expanding and refining their knowledge in all aspects. This came in a speech delivered by the spokesperson of the Youth Authority, Asrar Al-Ansari, at the conference to support and develop leadership skills among youth and the Sustainable Development Goals, held by the international non-profit organization AISEC at the cultural center of the American University of the Middle East to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its work.

Al-Ansari added that the Youth Authority has been organizing training programs and workshops on the development of leadership skills. She explained that the Authority relies on building partnerships with local and international entities that are directly related to youth, and this was reflected in its participation in the activities of this one-day conference.

She pointed out that the countries of the world are experiencing unprecedented challenges in several issues, especially climate change and environmental pollution caused by the technological revolution and others, which require the presence of skilled, knowledgeable, and visionary young leaders to work with governments to mitigate their effects. 10 speakers, young leaders from several countries, will present their successful experiences in science. More than 130 young men and women are participating in the conference from various Arab countries. — KUNA



MARIB: Aid supplies donated by a Kuwaiti charitable organization is lined up to be distributed to internally displaced Yemenis, on the outskirts of the northeastern city of Marib in this file photo. — AFP

9-year humanitarian campaign in Yemen

ADEN: Kuwaiti charities have launched a slew of relief and development ventures in Yemen's health, educational, and utility sectors as part of the nine-year-old humanitarian campaign, "Kuwait on your side." The latest fruits were a maternity and child hospital, named after the late Kuwaiti philanthropist Adel Abdulkhaleq Al-Nouri, and a medical oxygen plant with a daily output capacity of 300 cylinders.

These two projects were inaugurated during a visit to Yemen by leading Kuwaiti charitable figures between November 28 and December 8. The delegation included the head of the relief committee at the Kuwait Relief Society and the Director General of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Society, Jamal Al-Nouri, and the head of the Kuwait Relief Society in Ye-

men, Mahmoud Al-Mesbah, accompanied by the undersecretary of the Maarib governorate, Abedrabbo Al-Meftah, along with other local officials.

Raed Ibrahim, chairperson of the Yemeni Al-Tawasol Development Institution, said in a statement to KUNA that the 20-bed hospital, with state-of-the-art equipment, includes an emergency ward, specialized clinics, a laboratory, a pharmacy, operation rooms, intensive-care, and premature baby sections. The Kuwaiti delegation had also inaugurated the complex, "the Amir of Humanity," including a four-story clinic, a technology institute, and various workshops, the construction of which was funded by the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Society.

For his part, Al-Meftah praised Kuwait's philanthropic activities in various Yemeni regions since the 1960s of the past century. Kuwait was among the first states that backed Yemen in general and, in particular, Marib, which hosts relocated Yemenis from several other regions, he said. Jamal Al-Nouri affirmed the dire need for Kuwaiti assistance in Mar-

ib, swamped with difficulties due to the inflow of millions of relocated people.

The Kuwaiti delegation had proceeded to Taiz, where they laid the cornerstone of a settlement named Kuwait Village to house the displaced. The project featured 40 residential units, a mosque, a school, and a clinic. In Hadramot, the delegation opened two hospitals, the construction cost of which was estimated at some 418,000 dollars. In Lahj province, the Kuwaiti Relief Society and the local administration inaugurated a water project for 10,000 people living in ten villages.

The venture featured a huge storage tank, solar energy-powered pumps, and a distribution network. Elsewhere in Abyan, the Kuwaiti delegation visited a school renovated with Kuwaiti financial contributions. During their visit to Shabwa province, they inspected a project for drilling four water wells. Local officials heaped praise upon Kuwait, namely the charities, and the Kuwaiti visitors pledged continuing aid for the nation. — KUNA

DGCA clinches deals, MoUs at ICAN2023

RIYADH: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has signed agreements and MoUs with a number of countries on the sidelines of the 15th ICAO Air Services Negotiation (ICAN2023), held in Riyadh. Speaking to KUNA, DGCA's Acting Director General Emad Al-Jluwi said Kuwait's participation in the conference, held from December 3-7, proved fruitful, considering that partaking in the event was a good opportunity for national air carriers to broaden the scope of their operational network plans and keep abreast of rapid air transport advancement.

For his part, DGCA's Air Transport Department Director Abdullah Al-Rajhi told KUNA that the agency had clinched aviation transport deals and MoUs with Ethiopia, Togo, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Gabon, the Seychelles, Nigeria, Turkey, Russia, Italy, Iceland, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Suriname, and Haiti during the ICAN20. The 15th ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)'s ICAN2023 concluded in Riyadh earlier in the day. The five-day event is the world's largest platform for countries to negotiate aviation transport arrangements and agreements.

In another development, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) reaffirmed its commitment to creating a sufficient air transportation infrastructure that complies with contemporary international standards. On International Civil Aviation Day, which is observed on the anniversary of the Chicago Convention, which was signed on December 7, 1944, Deputy Director-General of Civil Aviation Saad Mohammed Al-Otaibi made this announcement to KUNA.

Al-Otaibi added that the DGCA has chosen a strategy that is both future-proof and compliant with the policies of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), highlighting the significance of bolstering the domestic workforce and increasing state revenue from this industry. He emphasized how crucial it is for Kuwait to take part in the festivities on this day in order to represent civil aviation. — KUNA

Arab and Islamic team pushes Washington for Gaza ceasefire

Draft UNSC resolution blocked by US veto

WASHINGTON: A joint delegation of the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation called on the US to change its mind regarding a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where Zionist occupation forces have killed over 17,000 Palestinians and injured at least 46,000 others. This came during a press conference held by the delegation late Friday ahead of a meeting at the US Department of State to look into how to halt the aggression on Palestinian territory.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan underlined the need to stop immediately the ongoing aggression on Gaza, regretting that the international community does not give priority to this matter. He also stressed that there should be a reliable roadmap for establishing a Palestinian state, urging Washington to exert more effort to shore up a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave.

The Saudi foreign minister also called for an immediate increase in humanitarian and relief aid to the population of Gaza. Following the press conference, US Secretary Antony Blinken met with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in advance of his meeting with the broader Arab and Islamic delegation. They reiterated the importance of preventing the conflict from spreading and committed to continuing close coordination on ongoing efforts to facilitate the safe return of all remaining prisoners while sustaining humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.

OIC denounces failure

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Hussein Taha of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Saturday denounced the failure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to adopt a draft resolution for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He warned in a press statement that failure during this critical time would certainly allow the Zionist occupation to keep escalating its aggression on the Palestinian people.

"The UNSC's failure negatively reflects on its role in maintaining international peace and security, protecting innocent civilians, and putting an end to this aggravating humanitarian tragedy as a result of the continuation of the atrocious Zionist aggression on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip," he said.

Kuwait strengthens ties with China, Iran and South Korea

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban received ambassadors of China, Iran, and South Korea to Kuwait separately to discuss ways of strengthening trade cooperation with the three friendly countries. The meeting with China Ambassador Zhang Jianwei focused on ways to increase bilateral trade volume and promote economic and investment cooperation, according to a statement from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



KUWAIT: A handout photo released by the Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA), shows humanitarian aid bound for the Gaza Strip through Egypt loaded in a military aircraft at the Kuwait International Airport. — AFP

However, the OIC chief lauded all the countries that backed the UNSC's draft resolution, reiterating the necessity of continuing efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire, ensure humanitarian aid to the Palestinian enclave, and provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

A draft UNSC resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire between the Zionist occupation forces and the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip was blocked by a US veto on Friday. Thirteen UNSC members voted for the draft put forward by the United Arab Emirates, while the US voted against and the United Kingdom abstained. More than 96 UN member states backed the draft, which aimed to force both parties to the conflict to meet their obligations under international humanitarian

law, notably those relating to the protection of civilian populations.

The Arab League regretted on Saturday the failure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to adopt a draft resolution for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip or to take a correct stance to halt the aggression on the enclave. "Regrettably, the UNSC was prevented from taking the correct ethical position to stop this crazy aggression," the League's Secretary-General Ahmad Abul-Gheit said in a post on the social networking site (X), formerly Twitter. However, he voiced gratitude to the 99 countries that jointly adopted the draft resolution at the UNSC regarding a ceasefire in Gaza, along with the 13 UNSC members that believe in respecting international law. — KUNA

Al-Aiban, also minister of state for youth affairs, highlighted the need to activate the agreements and MoUs signed with China on trade, economics, and investment cooperation. The meeting also dealt with the prospects of joint investment and the possibilities of Kuwait taking part in the gigantic projects being implemented by the Republic of China in the Arabian Gulf region, the statement noted. During his meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Toutouchi, the minister discussed distinguished relations with the Islamic Republic and ways to strengthen

trade, economic, and investment cooperation.

Both sides reviewed the investment opportunities in Iran in the areas of food, agriculture, and animal wealth, as the statement pointed out. In his meeting with South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Jeong Byeong-ha, the minister reviewed the progress of the joint ventures and investments being implemented by South Korean companies in Kuwait. Both sides underscored the importance of reactivating the joint economic commission and convening a meeting by commission in the near future. — KUNA



Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban receives ambassadors.— KUNA

EU commends Kuwait's progress in women's empowerment

KUWAIT: The European Union (EU) has applauded progress made by Kuwait in several domains, including women's empowerment, and looks forward to further cooperation and coordination in global human rights affairs. This came in a statement sent by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs to KUNA following the fourth round of unofficial human rights dialogue between Kuwait and the EU, held in Brussels earlier.

During the event, both sides exchanged views on human rights' developments in Kuwait and the EU, it said, adding that the Kuwaiti side, including officials of the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, justice, information, and social affairs, as well as several other state bodies, had expounded on the country's human rights efforts. The EU congratulated Kuwait on having been elected as a member of the UN Human



Assistant Foreign Minister for human rights, Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah with EU human rights officials.— KUNA photos

Rights Council in 2024-2026, said the statement. Both sides agreed to convene the next round of dialogue in Kuwait in 2024, it added. — KUNA



The 4th round of unofficial human rights dialogue between Kuwait and the EU, held in Brussels.



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NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump (C) speaks to members of the media as he arrives at the New York State Supreme Court during the civil fraud trial against the Trump Organization, in New York City. — AFP

US appeals court upholds most of gag order imposed on Trump

'People can speak violently or attack me in any form, but I am not allowed to respond, in kind'

WASHINGTON: A US federal appeals court on Friday upheld most of a gag order imposed on former president Donald Trump in his election interference case. "We do not allow such an order lightly," said Judge Patricia Millett, who wrote the unanimous opinion issued by a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

"Mr. Trump is a former President and current candidate for the presidency, and there is a strong public interest in what he has to say," Millett said. "But Mr. Trump is also an indicted criminal defendant, and he must stand trial in a courtroom under the same procedures that govern all other criminal defendants."

The appeals court slightly narrowed the gag order issued by the district court judge who will preside over Trump's trial for allegedly conspiring to overturn the 2020 election won by Democrat Joe Biden. Judge Tanya Chutkan had barred Trump,

the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, from publicly attacking the special counsel who brought the historic case against him, other prosecutors, court staff or potential witnesses ahead of his March trial.

The appeals court removed the gag order on Trump making comments about Jack Smith, the special counsel, but barred him from publicly attacking potential witnesses, other prosecutors, court staff or their family members. "Mr. Trump is free to make statements criticizing the current administration, the Department of Justice, and the Special Counsel, as well as statements that this prosecution is politically motivated or that he is innocent of the charges against him," Millett said. Trump has repeatedly called Smith "deranged" and attacked his colleagues as "thugs," while publicly accusing Chutkan of being biased against him.

'Threats and intimidation'

Arguing against the gag order, Trump's lawyers said it was unconstitutional and runs counter to First Amendment protections guaranteeing free speech. The appeals court said it recognized the importance of the First Amendment but "many of former President Trump's public statements attacking witnesses, trial participants, and court staff pose a danger to the integrity of these criminal proceedings."

"Former President Trump's words have real-world consequences," Millett wrote. "Many of those on the receiving end of his attacks pertaining to the 2020 election have been subjected to a torrent of threats and intimidation from his supporters." Trump condemned the appeals court ruling in a post on his Truth Social platform.

"People can speak violently and viciously against me, or attack me in any form, but I am not allowed to

respond, in kind," he said. "What is becoming of our First Amendment, what is becoming of our Country?" The 77-year-old Trump is also the target of a gag order in his current New York civil fraud trial after a flood of online abuse.

Judge Arthur Engoron slapped the gag order on Trump on October 3 after he insulted the judge's principal law clerk on Truth Social and has fined him a total of \$15,000 for two violations. Trump and his two eldest sons are accused in that case of inflating the value of their real estate assets to receive more favorable bank loans and insurance terms.

Trump additionally faces federal charges for alleged mishandling of top secret documents after he left the White House, and has been indicted for racketeering in Georgia on accusations that he tried to overturn the 2020 election results in the southern state. — AFP



AUSTIN: The Travis County 459th District Court is seen prior to an emergency hearing in Cox v Texas. Kate Cox, a 31-year-old mother-of-two from Dallas-Fort Worth, sued the state of Texas, in order to get an abortion for a pregnancy. — AFP

Texas court halts ruling allowing abortion under strict law

AUSTIN: The Supreme Court of Texas late Friday temporarily blocked an emergency abortion for a woman whose fetus was determined to be not viable, in a closely watched case underlining the legal perils facing both doctors and patients when it comes to the procedure. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton petitioned the high court to block Kate Cox, a 31-year-old mother of two, from terminating her pregnancy after a district judge ruled a woman with a potentially life-threatening pregnancy can obtain an abortion. Texas has some of the strictest abortion laws in the nation, prohibiting it even in cases of rape or incest.

District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble on Thursday said that Cox, who is 20 weeks pregnant, should be permitted to have an abortion under a medical exception provision of the Texas law that allows the procedure when a woman's health is at risk.

But Paxton, a conservative Republican, objected to the finding, saying the "activist" judge's order does "not insulate hospitals, doctors or anyone else, from civil and criminal liability for violating Texas' abortion laws." The Texas Supreme Court ordered a stay late Friday, according to a copy of the ruling released by Cox's lawyers, temporarily halting the district court's decision.

CNN, the Houston Chronicle and the New York Times reported on the high court ruling. "While we still hope that the Court ultimately rejects the state's request and does so quickly, in this case we fear that justice delayed will be justice denied," attorney Molly Duane from the Center for Reproductive Rights, which represented Cox, said in a statement following the high court's stay. "We are talking about urgent medical care. Kate is already 20 weeks pregnant. This is why people should not need to beg for healthcare in a court of law." The Centre for Reproductive Rights said it believed the Texas case was the first in which a woman was asking a court for an emergency abortion since Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973. — AFP

UN Security Council debates escalating Guyana-Venezuela row

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council met behind closed doors on Friday to discuss the fast-escalating row between South American neighbors Venezuela and Guyana over a disputed oil-rich region. World leaders called for calm as Venezuela decried joint US-Guyana military exercises as a "provocation" and vowed to push ahead with its "recovery" of the Essequibo region, which both neighbors claim as their own.

Guyana says Venezuela's move on Essequibo, disputed for more than a century, "threatens international

peace and security". Delegates left Friday's meeting — which took place at Guyana's request — with roses offered by Ecuador, chair of the Council this month. None made statements to reporters.

Fears of the conflict blowing up have deepened after Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government held a controversial referendum Sunday on the fate of Essequibo. Two days after the vote, Maduro proposed a bill to create a Venezuelan province in Essequibo and ordered the state oil company to issue licenses for extracting crude in the region.

The region has been administered by Guyana for more than a century and is the subject of border litigation before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. It makes up about two-thirds of Guyana's territory and is home to 125,000 of the country's 800,000 citizens, but is also claimed by Venezuela.

Controversy has simmered since 2015 when US oil giant ExxonMobil, operating under licenses from Guy-

ana, discovered vast oil reserves in the area. "Guyana and ExxonMobil will have to sit down with us face-to-face sooner rather than later," Maduro said Friday during a ceremony in front of the Miraflores presidential palace, where he showed a map of Venezuela that included Essequibo as official territory.

Washington provoked an angry response from Caracas on Thursday by announcing via the embassy in Georgetown that it would hold joint "flight operations within Guyana" as part of "routine engagement and operations to enhance security partnership" with its ally.

"This unfortunate provocation by the United States in favor... of ExxonMobil in Guyana is another step in the wrong direction," Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said on social media. In response, Guyanese Vice-President Bharrat Jagdeo said Venezuela "is not going to succeed, now or ever" at taking the region. — AFP

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International

French court convicts six teens for role in beheading of teacher

No defendant will serve jail time, according to a youth court judgement

PARIS: A French court on Friday convicted six teenagers for their role in the 2020 beheading of a teacher by a radicalized Islamist near Paris, in a case that horrified the country. The prison sentences range from 14 months to two years, but all are suspended or commuted and no defendant will serve jail time, according to a youth court judgement read at a public hearing after behind-closed-door proceedings.

Samuel Paty, a 47-year-old history and geography teacher, was stabbed and then beheaded near his secondary school in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine on October 16, 2020. Lawyers representing Paty's friends and family hit out at the leniency of the sentences, describing them as "not fitting" and sending "a bad signal".

"A man beheaded in the street is not nothing," said Virginie Le Roy, a lawyer representing members of Paty's family. She described his family's "anger", "disappointment" and "incomprehension". Paty's attacker, 18-year-old Chechen refugee Ab-



French lawyer Virginie Le Roy

doullakh Anzorov, was shot dead at the scene by police. He murdered Paty after messages spread on social media that the teacher had shown his class cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) from the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

The trial was held behind closed doors given the

young ages of the defendants at the time of the events. Five of the teens on trial, who were 14 or 15 at the time of Paty's murder, were being tried for criminal conspiracy with intent to cause violence. They were accused of having been on the lookout for Paty and identifying him to the killer in exchange for money.

Four of them received suspended sentences of between 14 and 18 months. The fifth was sentenced to two years in prison, but 18 months of that was suspended and the teenager will be released with an electronic tag for the remaining six months.

"You passed on to the assailant the description (of Paty's) physical appearance and clothing" and the teacher's "usual route" when leaving the school, the presiding judge told the youth. "You recruited other students to point out" Paty to Anzorov and keep watch for when he left the school, added the judge.

A sixth teenager, a girl who was 13 at the time, was accused of false allegations for wrongly saying that Paty had asked Muslim students to identify themselves and leave the

classroom before he showed the cartoons. She was not present in the class. She received an 18-month suspended sentence.

The court pointed to the role of her "persistent lie" about Paty in the events leading to his murder. Lawyer for the defendants Antoine Ory called the sentences "just", while admitting they could "never be equal to the infinite and eternal suffering of the civil parties".

Paty had used the Charlie Hebdo magazine as part of an ethics class to discuss free speech laws in France, where blasphemy is legal and cartoons mocking religious figures have a long history. His killing took place just weeks after Charlie Hebdo republished the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) cartoons.

After the magazine used the images in 2015, Islamist gunmen stormed its offices, killing 12 people. In October, another teacher, Dominique Bernard, was killed in Arras in northern France by a young radicalized Islamist. — AFP

Mahsa Amini's family blocked from leaving Iran for EU prize

PARIS: The family of Mahsa Amini, the Iranian Kurdish woman who died in custody, have been banned from travelling to France to collect a top rights prize awarded posthumously, their lawyer said Saturday. Amini died aged 22 on September 16, 2022, while being held by Iran's religious police for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Her family and supporters say she was killed. Iranian authorities claim she died in custody from a previously undisclosed medical condition. In October, the European Union awarded its top rights honour, the Sakharov Prize, to her and the global movement her death triggered.

On Saturday her family's lawyer in France, Chirinne Ardakani, told AFP that Amini's parents and

brother had been "prohibited from boarding the flight that was to take them to France for the presentation of the Sakharov Prize". She said the family had been banned from leaving Iran despite having a valid visa, and their passports had been confiscated.

Ardakani said Iranian authorities "have never been so mobilized to prevent the families of the victims from speaking to the international community". Mahsa Amini's death triggered mass protests in Iran.

It also generated a global movement known as "Woman, Life, Freedom", calling for the end of Iran's imposition of a headscarf on all women and an end to the Muslim cleric-led government in Tehran. Iranian security forces have cracked down on the protests domestically, killing hundreds, and have executed dozens for allegedly participating in what officials have called "riots".

The "Woman, Life, Freedom" campaign continues in cities around the world, with frequent demonstrations in which Amini's photo is held aloft. The Sakharov Prize, which comes with a 50,000-euro (\$53,000) endowment, was to be handed over in a European Parliament ceremony on December 13. — AFP



ISTANBUL: (FILES) A protester holds a portrait of Mahsa Amini during a demonstration in support of Amini, a young Iranian woman who died after being arrested in Tehran by the Islamic Republic's morality police, on Istiklal avenue in Istanbul. — AFP

Tributes pour in for Palestinian poet killed in Gaza

GAZA: Tributes poured in for Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer on Friday after friends said he was killed in a strike on Gaza. Alareer was one of the leaders of a young generation of writers in Gaza who chose to write in English to tell their stories, with friends describing his defiance in the face of the Zionist army's assault on the Gaza Strip.

They said the poet had vowed to "throw (his) pen in the soldiers' faces" as a last resort if his house was stormed. "My heart is broken, my friend and colleague Refaat Alareer was killed with his family," Gazan poet Mosab Abu Toha wrote on Facebook. His killing came as Zionist entity conducted further

strikes on Thursday evening in the north of the Gaza Strip, pressing on with its war to destroy Hamas in retaliation for the group's October 7 attack.

Alareer had said a few days after Zionists began its ground offensive in October that he refused to leave northern Gaza, the centre of the fighting at the time. "The whole family had asked him to leave because it was so dangerous, but he always replied 'I'm only an academic, a civilian, at home. I'm not leaving,'" his friend Mohamed Al Arair, a history teacher in Shejaiya to the east of Gaza City, told AFP.

Writing on X, formerly Twitter, Alareer documented daily life under Zionist entity bombardment in Gaza. "We are enveloped in thick layers of gunpowder and cement," he posted in one of his last messages, on December 4. "Many are still trapped in Shejaiya including some of my children and family members," he wrote the same day.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza, so he chose to stay in his house," his friend Arair said, describing how others had left for the south only to be killed

by Zionist forces. "Refaat's assassination is tragic, painful and outrageous. It is a huge loss," his friend Ahmed Alnaouq wrote on X.

'If I must die'

Alareer was a professor of English literature at the Islamic University of Gaza, where he taught Shakespeare among other subjects. Soon after the October 7 Hamas attack - in which Zionist officials say 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed on the Zionist side and around 240 kidnapped - Alareer triggered outrage during a BBC interview by calling it "legitimate and moral" and "exactly like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising", the broadcaster said.

The 1943 uprising saw hundreds of Jews launch a futile revolt against their Nazi oppressors, with 14,000 Jews killed during and immediately after the uprising. Alareer also rejected accounts of Hamas militants raping victims of the October 7 attack, writing on X: "ALL the rape/sexual violence allegations are lies. Zionist uses them as

smokescreens to justify the Gaza genocide."

More than 17,400 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Anger over the accusations of rape and other sexual violence has grown in recent days.

Zionist doctors and officials say the allegations are backed up by evidence including witness accounts and forensic investigations. Alareer was one of the co-founders of the "We are not numbers" project, which pairs authors from Gaza with mentors abroad who help them write stories in English about their experiences.

The Literary Hub website paid tribute to him, while author and journalist Ramzy Baroud wrote on X: "Rest in peace Refaat Alareer. We will continue to be guided by your wisdom, today and for eternity." In November, Alareer published a poem on X entitled "If I must die" that was shared tens of thousands of times. It concludes with the words: "If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a tale". — AFP

US vetoes Gaza ceasefire...

Continued from Page 1

He reiterated Kuwait's unwavering stand that calls for pursuing all possible political and diplomatic efforts to meet the humanitarian needs for the unarmed Palestinian civilians who have been facing flagrant Zionist aggression, according to the responsibilities accorded to the UNSC with respect of safeguarding the globe's security and peace.

On Friday, the ministry of foreign affairs condemned and denounced the Zionist occupation authorities' permission for extremists to organize a provocative march in occupied Jerusalem in a fresh shameful act that aims at changing the historical and legal status of the city and its holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The ministry said in a press release that Kuwait is opposed to such acts that reflect the absurdity, provocation and disrespect of the Zionist occupation and those extremists of Muslims' sentiments, as well as their covert measures to carry out their mischievous schemes against these holy sites. The ministry warned of the consequences of such violations that defy international legitimacy resolutions and international law, underlining the significant role and responsibility of the UNSC and the international community in halting such unacceptable acts.

A Zionist strike on the southern city of Khan Yunis killed six people, while five others died in a separate attack in Rafah, the Gaza health ministry said Saturday. It added that, over a 24-hour period, 71 dead and 160 wounded had arrived at Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah after persistent bombings. Gunfire was heard and flashes of light that silhouetted palm trees were seen overnight in the city's Al-Zawaida district.

The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, said it fired rockets Saturday towards Reim in the Zionist entity. Vast areas of Gaza have been reduced to rubble and the UN says about 80 percent of the population has been displaced, with dire shortages of food, fuel, water and medicine reported. At Nasser hospital in the central city of Khan Yunis, an AFP correspondent saw a child on a makeshift stretcher and others simply sitting on the floor waiting to receive care. Outside, firefighters poured water onto the flames of a burning building partly destroyed by a Zionist strike.

Violence has also surged in the Zionist-occupied West Bank. Zionist forces shot dead six Palestinians Friday in a raid on a refugee camp in the West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. The ministry said those who lost their lives included a 14-year-old boy and an 18-year-old. It said they had been killed "by bullets from the occupation in the Al-Fara refugee camp" near Tubas.

Guterres triggered the rare Security Council vote by invoking a measure unused in decades. He sought the council's endorsement of a ceasefire because, he said, rapidly deteriorating conditions make it "impossible for meaningful humanitarian operations", with potentially irreversible implications for regional peace and security. The United States on Friday vetoed the Security Council resolution. US envoy Robert Wood said it was "divorced from reality" and "would leave Hamas in place able to repeat what it did on October 7".

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he "holds the United States responsible for the bloodshed of Palestinian children, women and elderly people" in Gaza after the US veto. Avril Benoit, head of the Doctors Without Borders charity, described the US veto as a "sharp contrast to the values it professes to uphold".

There was anger, too, at a residential area of Rafah destroyed in a Zionist strike. "What resolution did the Security Council ever approve and was implemented for our cause and Palestinian people?" Mohammed al-Khatib asked from among the rubble. Hamas denounced the veto as "a direct participation of the occupation in killing our people". Iran, which backs Hamas, warned about the possible "uncontrollable explosion in the situation of the region" after US move.

Many of the 1.9 million Gazans displaced by the war have headed south, turning Rafah near the Egyptian border into a vast camp. One of only two partially operating hospitals in Gaza's north, Al-Awda, "is surrounded by (Zionist) troops and tanks, and fighting is ongoing in its vicinity", the UN said. Nearby in Jabalia district, the soil in front of shuttered shops has been dug up and turned into a cemetery where men buried more bodies.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby reiterated Washington's calls for the Zionist entity to do more to protect civilians. "And we're going to keep working with our (Zionist) counterparts to that end," he said. Washington provides billions of dollars in military aid to the Zionist entity. — Agencies

Alarm over 'apocalyptic'...

Continued from Page 1

Zionist jails, the Zionist entity pressed its bombing and ground offensive, vowing to eliminate Hamas. Its army published a map it said was intended to enable Gazans to "evacuate from specific places for their safety if required". Hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled northern Gaza seeking shelter in the south, only to report that they are being bombed there too.

"There are simply no safe spaces in Gaza, and we've seen this since the (Zionist) directive... calling on people to flee northern Gaza to the south," said Shaina Low of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "(Zionist) directives coercing Palestinians in overcrowded areas in southern Gaza, with no guarantees of safety or return, blatantly violate international humanitarian law."

Sandrine Simon of the Medecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) charity recounted how a colleague was wounded in the southern city of Khan Yunis "when a tank attacked a school where he had taken refuge". "It took him hours to reach a hospital", where "exhausted" nurses were desperately trying to care for hundreds of patients lying on the floor. "Gaza's hospital are becoming morgues. That's unacceptable," said Simon.

Doctors Without Borders president Isabelle De-

fourny told a similar story. "We are working in Al-Aqsa hospital, receiving an average of 150 to 200 war wounded patients daily... since the first of December." On one day this week, "they received more dead than wounded patients. The hospital is overflowing, the morgue is overflowing, fuel and medical supplies have reached critically low level," said Defourny.

The situation is also dire at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis where "20 percent of the patients arriving... are already dead", she added. "And among the dead, 70 percent are women and children." Defourny spoke of "indiscriminate carnage". "(The Zionist entity) has shown a total disregard for the protection of Gaza's medical facilities," she said.

UN agencies have repeatedly warned of a deteriorating health and food conditions in Gaza, a breakdown of public order if no ceasefire is secured. The World Food Program has said the risk of "famine" is high, while the World Health Organization have warned civilization was collapsing in Gaza. "Given the living conditions and lack of health care, more people could die from disease than bombings" in Gaza, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

He warned of a number of illnesses and diseases, including acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, skin rashes and chicken pox, that have emerged due to overcrowding and the lack of food, water, basic hygiene and access to medication. "The situation is eroding the people's dignity as they cannot clean themselves nor clean their children," Chiara Saccardi of Action Against Hunger told the video conference, as she called for a ceasefire in Gaza and the dispatch of urgent aid. — AFP

OPEC pushes against fossil...

Continued from Page 1

energy transition. "There is no single solution or path to achieve a sustainable energy future," said a speech by OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais to the UN meeting in Dubai. "We need realistic approaches to tackle emissions, ones that enable economic growth, help eradicate poverty and increase resilience at the same time," said the speech read by head of the OPEC research division Ayed Al-Qahtani.

Canadian climate minister Steven Guilbeault told AFP he was "confident" that the final text would contain language on fossil fuels, which emit planet-heating greenhouse gases. Guilbeault is among a group of ministers who have been tasked by COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber — who is CEO

of the UAE state oil giant ANDOC — to shepherd the negotiations and find an agreement by Tuesday, when the summit is due to end. "Different groups are talking and trying to understand on what we could agree but it's still quite an embryonic conversation," he added.

Spanish ecology transition minister Teresa Ribera, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, said it was "quite a disgusting thing" for OPEC countries to be "pushing against getting the bar where it has to be". French Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said the OPEC statement left her "stunned" and "angry".

Dramatically scaling up the deployment of renewable energy while winding down the production and consumption of fossil fuels is crucial to achieve the global goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. "1.5 is not negotiable, and that means an end to fossil fuels," said Tina Stege, climate envoy for the Marshall Islands, which chairs the High Ambition Coalition, a broad group of nations ranging from Barbados to France, Kenya and Pacific island states. — AFP

International

Washington, allies to 'stand up' for stability in Taiwan Strait

US and its allies increase 'freedom of navigation' crossings by naval vessels



WASHINGTON: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan speaks during the daily briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

SEOUL: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Saturday Washington and its Asia allies would "stand up" for stability across the Taiwan Strait, and reiterated their commitment to freedom of navigation in the disputed South China Sea.

His comments came during a joint briefing with his Tokyo and Seoul counterparts, after a trilateral meeting in South Korea. Late last month the top diplomats of South Korea, Japan and China—North Korea's key ally and Washington's rival—reaffirmed the need to hold a trilateral summit at the "earliest" possible time.

The United States and its Western allies have increased "freedom of navigation" crossings by naval vessels in both the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, to reinforce that both are international waterways, angering Beijing. "We will continue to stand up for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and freedom of navigation in the east and South China Seas," Sullivan told reporters in Seoul, alongside South Korea's Cho Tae-yong and Japan's Takeo Akiba.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has moved

to strengthen ties between Seoul and long-standing ally Washington to counter rising threats from nuclear-armed North Korea. He has also sought to resolve differences with Japan, another close US ally and Seoul's former colonial ruler.

In August, the three allies said a "new chapter" of close three-way security cooperation was beginning after a historic summit at Camp David in the United States. Beijing had lodged complaints over a statement released at the summit at the time, in which the three nations criticized China's "aggressive behavior" in the South China Sea, which it claims most of.

China also claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory, vowing to seize it one day, and officials in Washington—Taipei's most important ally—have cited 2027 as a possible timeline for an invasion. In April, South Korea's Yoon said tensions over Taiwan were due to "attempts to change the status quo by force".

The comment resulted in a diplomatic tit-for-tat with China, which is South Korea's biggest trading partner. Last month, Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing made efforts

to organize a trilateral leaders' summit. The last such meeting was in 2019. Washington warned in November that military ties between North Korea and Russia were "growing and dangerous" and called on China to restrain Pyongyang. On Saturday, Sullivan also said the three allies have launched "new trilateral initiatives" to "counter the threats" posed by North Korea, including "deepened collaboration" among their coast guards.

The allies' defence chiefs had earlier agreed to activate a real-time data-sharing operation on North Korean missile launches, starting this month. The North successfully put a military spy satellite into orbit in November—with Seoul saying Pyongyang did so with Moscow's help.

North Korea soon after said its eye in the sky was already providing images of major US and South Korean military sites. Washington, Tokyo and Seoul have led a chorus of global condemnation of the North for violating multiple UN Security Council resolutions, which bar it from tests using ballistic technology, used in both missiles and space launch rockets. — AFP

Philippines accuses China of shooting water cannon on boats

MANILA: The Philippines accused the Chinese coast guard on Saturday of using water cannons to "obstruct" three government boats delivering provisions to Filipino fishermen near a reef off its coast. The incident happened near the China-controlled Scarborough Shoal, a flashpoint between Manila and Beijing, which claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea. The National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea said in a statement that "Chinese Coast Guard ships utilized water cannons to obstruct and prevent" government vessels from delivering fuel and food supplies to fishing boats.

The multi-agency task force said it "vehemently condemns the illegal and aggressive actions carried out by the Chinese Coast Guard and Chinese Maritime Militia". But Chinese state television said the country's coast guard had used "control measures in accordance with the law" against the Philippine vessels that had "intruded" into waters around the shoal.

China snatched control of Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines in 2012 following a tense stand-

off. Since then, Beijing has deployed patrol boats that Manila says harass Philippine vessels and prevent Filipino fishermen from reaching the lagoon, where fish are more plentiful.

Scarborough Shoal is 240 kilometres (150 miles) west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and nearly 900 kilometres from the nearest major Chinese land mass of Hainan. Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which China helped negotiate, countries have jurisdiction over the natural resources within about 200 nautical miles (370 kilometres) of their shore.

'Significant damage'

The incident drew international criticism of China and its coast guard. US ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson condemned China's "aggressive, illegal actions" against the Philippine vessels. Japan's envoy Kazuhiko Koshikawa expressed serious concern "about the dangerous actions" by the Chinese coast guard. Videos released by the Philippine Coast Guard showed China Coast Guard ships shooting water cannon at Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) vessels and hitting them with the powerful blasts of water.

One boat's communication and navigation equipment sustained "significant damage", the task force statement said. Some Filipino crew also experienced "severe temporary discomfort and incapacitation"

after Chinese vessels used what was believed to be a "long-range acoustic device", it said.

The mission to distribute fuel and food to more than 30 fishing vessels near the shoal was "ongoing", the task force said, accusing the Chinese coast guard of deploying inflatable speed boats to "drive away" the fishermen. "To prevent the distribution of humanitarian support is not only illegal but also inhumane," the task force said.

Aerial surveillance by the BFAR also showed a floating barrier had been reinstalled across the entrance to the shoal and was being guarded by Chinese boats, the Philippine Coast Guard said. Filipino fishermen reported that the China Coast Guard installed the barrier early Saturday, the task force said.

That comes after Philippine coast guard personnel in September cut a Chinese-installed 300-metre-long barrier in the same area, setting it adrift and sparking a diplomatic row. The Philippines and China have a long history of maritime incidents in the contested South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars of trade pass annually.

That is despite the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling in 2016 that China's claims over the waters have no legal basis and its construction of artificial islands in disputed waters was illegal. Beijing refused to take part in the proceedings and has ignored the judgement. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have claims to the sea. — AFP



Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni

Sacked Burundi PM gets life in prison for trying to overthrow govt

NAIROBI: Burundi's Supreme Court sentenced ousted prime minister Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni to life in prison on Friday on charges including attempting to overthrow the government and threatening the life of the president, a judicial source said.

Bunyoni, whose trial opened three months ago, was prime minister from mid-2020 until September 2022 when he was fired, days after President Evariste Ndayishimiye had warned of a "coup" plot against him.

He was "sentenced to life imprisonment (on charges)... including plotting against the head of state to overthrow the constitutional regime", a judicial source told AFP on condition of anonymity. The army general was also accused of using witchcraft to threaten the life of the head of state, undermining national security, destabilising the economy and illegal enrichment, among other charges. He had pleaded not guilty to all charges and said he should be acquitted because of a lack of evidence. The court, which met in the political capital Gitega, also ordered the authorities to confiscate four houses and buildings as well as a land parcel and 14 vehicles belonging to Bunyoni, the judicial source said. Five others in the dock including the two main co-defendants, a police colonel and a senior intelligence agent, received "sentences ranging from three years to 15 years," the source added.

The seventh defendant, a driver, was acquitted, according to the same source. Chief Justice Emmanuel Gaterese delivered the verdict on Friday afternoon, with the court sitting in session at the prison where Bunyoni was detained. Bunyoni was arrested in April in Burundi's economic capital Bujumbura on the eve of his 51st birthday. A former police chief and internal security minister, Bunyoni was seen as the head of a cabal of military leaders known as "the generals" who wielded the true political power in Burundi. A close ally of former president Pierre Nkurunziza, Bunyoni was an influential figure in the ruling CNDD-FDD party since it took power in 2005. He had long been seen as de facto number two in the regime since a 2015 political crisis. Ndayishimiye took power in June 2020 after Nkurunziza died of what the Burundian authorities said was heart failure amid widespread speculation he succumbed to COVID-19. He has been hailed by the international community for slowly ending years of Burundi's isolation under Nkurunziza's chaotic and bloody rule. But he has failed to improve a wretched human rights record and the country of 12 million people remains one of the poorest on the planet. In 2015, Nkurunziza oversaw a crackdown on political opponents and made Burundi a global pariah amid turmoil after he launched a bid for a third term in office, in violation of a peace deal that ended a bloody civil war in 2006. — AFP

Philippines arrests suspect over Catholic mass bombing

MANILA: A member of a pro-Islamic State militant group has been arrested over the bombing of a Catholic mass in the southern Philippines, a military commander said Saturday. The man—identified as Jafar Gamo Sultan—was detained during a hunt for four suspects believed to be behind the attack on worshippers in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city, which was besieged by militants in 2017.

Four people were killed and 50 wounded in the bombing last Sunday that was later claimed by the Islamic State group. Brigadier-General Yegor Rey Barroquillo said surveillance footage appeared to show Sultan carrying the explosive device hidden in a bag into the Mindanao State University gymnasium, where worshippers had gathered for the service.

Barroquillo, who commands the 103rd Brigade of the Philippine Army, which is involved in the search for the assailants, said one of Sultan's relatives, a man called "Omar", was also wanted over the attack. Sultan was arrested during an operation on Wednesday, said Barroquillo—the same day that police identified two other men, Kadapi Mimbasa and Arsani Membisa, as suspects.

All four men belonged to the Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute group and were suspected of being "part of a cell" that carried out the attack, Barroquillo said. The military has described the bombing as a possible revenge attack for their deadly operations against militant groups in the region.

Militant attacks on buses, Catholic churches and public markets have been a feature of decades-long unrest in the region. Manila signed a peace pact with the nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in 2014, ending their deadly armed rebellion. But smaller bands of Muslim fighters opposed to the peace deal remain, including militants professing allegiance to the Islamic State group. Communist rebels also operate in the region. — AFP



HARARE: Party supporters hold placards as they protest outside the home of recalled Member of Parliament for Mavuku-Tafara constituency, Munyaradzi Kufahakutizwi of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) opposition party, in Harare on December 9, 2023 after his candidature was disqualified by the courts in the current by-elections held in Zimbabwe. — AFP

Zimbabwe start by-elections with oppn in turmoil

HARARE: Zimbabwe started a series of by-elections on Saturday with the opposition in turmoil after being excluded from voting lists. Zimbabwe's election commission said on X, the former Twitter, that polling stations had opened at 7:00 am, without giving details.

Nine by-elections were due to be held but most opposition candidates were taken off electoral lists by courts in a chaotic runup to voting. Residents said no voting was held in a Harare district where one of the by-elections was scheduled because the ruling ZANU-PF's candidate had won unopposed.

A nationwide election in August saw President Emmerson Mnangagwa seal a new term and his ZANU-PF secure 177 of the 280 national assembly seats with the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change taking 104.

But two months later, 14 CCC lawmakers were kicked out of parliament and nine by-elections ordered. The other five seats are decided by proportional representation. An obscure political figure, Sengezo Tshabangu, declared himself the CCC's "interim secretary general" and that the 14 were no longer party members and could not keep their seats.

CCC leader Nelson Chamisa protested that Tshabangu was not a party member and that no expulsions had been agreed. But the parliament speaker from ZANU-PF still ordered new elections. Courts have ruled this week, confirmed by the Harare High Court on Saturday, that the opposition candidates could not stand again in their old seats. — AFP

More East African soldiers withdraw from DR Congo

GOMA: About 250 South Sudanese soldiers left Goma on Friday, the latest group from an East African Community (EAC) regional force to withdraw from the strife-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo after Kinshasa refused to renew its mandate.

The seven-nation EAC first deployed troops in the violence-plagued region in November 2022, at the invitation of the DRC authorities, to free areas taken by the resurgent M23 rebel group. But the future of the deployment was thrown into doubt after President Felix Tshisekedi and local residents accused the force of cohabiting with the rebels rather than forcing them to lay down arms.

AFP reporters saw early Friday a group of South Su-

danes soldiers leaving the provincial capital of North Kivu, Goma. The soldiers took off from Goma airport around 5:20 am local time (0320 GMT), bound for Juba. A source from the EAC said the South Sudanese contingent left in three rotations throughout the day.

Ugandan and Burundian soldiers should also leave in the coming weeks, the same source said, with the regional force's withdrawal expected to be complete by January 7. Last Sunday, nearly 300 Kenyan soldiers who were also part of the East African force—whose mandate ended on Friday—left Goma.

"The last component to leave will be the headquarters" of the regional force, the EAC said in a statement. Outside of the EAC force, Burundian and Ugandan forces are also deployed in DR Congo under bilateral agreements with Kinshasa.

Rebel resurgence

Rebels from M23 (the Movement of 23 March) re-emerged in North Kivu in late 2021, seizing large swathes of the province with backing, according to several Western countries and independent UN experts,

from neighbouring Rwanda, another EAC member—although Rwanda denies this. Kenyan soldiers began arriving in Goma a year later, at the invitation of the DRC authorities. All but the Burundian contingents of the East African force were later accused by Kinshasa and locals of colluding with the rebels.

Late last month, the EAC said the DRC, which is a member of the bloc, had decided not to renew the force's mandate beyond December 8. Kinshasa is hoping to replace the EAC soldiers with security forces from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which the DRC is also a member.

Fighting continues between M23 and the DRC army, supported by militia who call themselves "patriots". Numerous armed groups and other militias have been active for three decades in the east of the DRC, a legacy of the regional wars that erupted during the 1990s and 2000s. A United Nations mission, known as MONUSCO, has also been present in DR Congo since 1999 and comprises some 14,000 peacekeepers. But it, too, is deeply unpopular due to perceptions that it has done little to stop violence. — AFP



GOMA: Members of the South Sudan People's Defence Force of the East African Community Regional Force (EAC-RF) prepare to leave the Democratic Republic of Congo at Goma airport on December 8, 2023. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2023

EU strikes deal on landmark AI law

'Historic' rules to regulate artificial intelligence models such as ChatGPT

BRUSSELS: EU member states and lawmakers clinched a deal on Friday on how to draft "historic" rules regulating artificial intelligence models such as ChatGPT — after 36 hours of negotiations. Meeting in Brussels, negotiators nailed down curbs on how AI can be used in Europe, which they said would not hurt innovation in the sector nor the prospects for future European AI champions.

"Historic! With the political deal on the AI Act sealed today, the EU becomes the first continent to set clear rules for the use of AI," declared the EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton.

"The AI Act is much more than a rulebook — it's a launchpad for EU startups and researchers to lead the global race for trustworthy AI," he added. The "AI Act" has been rushed through the European Union's legislative process this year after the chatbot ChatGPT, a mass-market gateway to generative AI, exploded onto the scene late 2022. Although ChatGPT's ability to create articulate essays and poems was a dizzying display of AI's rapid advances, critics worry about how the technology can be misused.

Generative AI software, which also includes Google's chatbot Bard, can quickly produce text, images and audio from simple commands in everyday language. Other examples of generative AI include Dall-E, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, which can create images in nearly any style on demand. Negotiators initially failed to agree after marathon talks that began on Wednesday lasted 22 hours and ended with only a deal to resume talks the next day. Exhausted negotiators then restarted talks at 0800 GMT on Friday.

There had been no real deadline but senior EU figures were desperate to secure a deal before the end of the year. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, first proposed the law in 2021

to regulate AI systems based on risk assessments of the software models. The higher the risk to individuals' rights or health, for example, the greater the systems' obligations.

The law will still need to be formally approved by member states and the parliament, but Friday's political agreement was seen as the last serious hurdle. "The AI Act is a global first. A unique legal framework for the development of AI you can trust," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a social media post, welcoming the deal. "And for the safety and fundamental rights of people and businesses. A commitment we took in our political guidelines — and we delivered. I welcome today's political agreement." The EU is not alone in its worries over AI.

US President Joe Biden issued an executive order on AI safety standards in October and, while Europe is on track for the first broad law covering the sector, Chinese legislation specifically regulating generative AI came into force in August this year.

One of the main stumbling blocks during negotiations was how to regulate general-purpose AI systems such as ChatGPT. Some member states feared too much regulation would hurt the growth of European champions like Germany's Aleph Alpha or France's Mistral AI.

French digital minister Jean-Noel Barrot said France would "carefully analyze the compromise" agreed and ensure that it "preserves Europe's capacity to develop its own artificial intelligence technologies". The agreement includes a two-tier approach, with transparency requirements for all general-purpose AI models and tougher requirements for the more powerful models.

Another sticking point had been over remote biometric surveillance — basically, facial identification through camera data in public places. Governments



BRUSSELS: European Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager and European Commissioner in charge of internal market Thierry Breton hold a press conference on artificial intelligence (AI) following the weekly meeting of the EU Commission in Brussels in this April 21, 2021 file photo. — AFP

wanted exceptions for law enforcement and national security purposes. While the agreement has a ban on real-time facial recognition, there will be a limited number of exemptions.

But not everyone was happy with the agreement. "Regrettably speed seems to have prevailed over quality, with potentially disastrous consequences for the European economy," said Daniel Friedlaender, Europe chief at CCIA, one of the main tech lobbying groups.

"It might even end up chasing away the European champions that the EU so desperately wants to empower," said CCIA Europe's policy manager, Boniface de Champris.

The EU will be able to monitor and sanction those who violate the law through a new body called the EU AI office that will be attached to the commission. The office will have the power to slap a fine worth seven percent of a company's turnover or 35 million euros, whichever is larger. — AFP

Record number of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP28

DUBAI: NGOs may have slammed the record number of fossil fuel lobbyists at UN climate talks in Dubai, but the industry won't be browbeaten, with the OPEC cartel hosting a chat on "climate initiatives" and one of the heads of the "Big Oil" majors sparring with activists.

Activists were already up in arms over the appointment of Sultan Al-Jaber, the head of Emirati national oil company ADNOC, as president of COP28. The oil-rich hosts made no secret of their desire to give the fossil fuel industry a voice at the talks where the fate of oil, gas and coal is at the heart of deliberations. On Tuesday, the umbrella group Kick Big Polluters Out (KBPO) claimed 2,456 people tied to fossil fuel interests have signed up to COP28 — about four times the number from last year's UN talks in Egypt.

If taken as a group they outnumber "every country delegation" apart from the UAE and Brazil, which will host COP30 in 2025, the coalition said. But Majid Jafar, CEO of Emirati firm Crescent Petroleum, said the United Arab Emirates was actually trying to be "inclusive", not only to "have all industries present but really having the Global South frame the debate upfront."

The UAE turned the UN talks into the largest COP ever, with more than 80,000 registered participants ranging from government officials to an array of businesses and climate activists. Under new UN rules, attendees had to provide information about their employer and their relationship — financial or otherwise — with the entity applying for accreditation on their behalf. "Do you really think Shell or Chevron or ExxonMobil are sending lobbyists to passively observe these talks?" said Alexia Leclercq, co-founder of the NGO Start: Empowerment.

"Big Polluters' poisonous presence has bogged us down for years, keeping us from advancing the



DUBAI: A metro train approaches Expo City station, the venue of the COP28 United Nations climate summit, in Dubai on December 6, 2023. — AFP

pathways needed to keep fossil fuels in the ground," Leclercq said.

According to KBPO, France brought TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne, Italy included a team from Italian energy giant ENI, while the European Union brought employees of oil giants BP and ExxonMobil. Pouyanne was approached by an activist asking him about reports that TotalEnergies has been "party to the bullying and intimidation" that resulted in communities in Uganda signing over their land. "You think this is true?" Pouyanne replied, according to video footage posted on X, formerly Twitter. "We act in Uganda according to a code of conduct."

When asked in a separate video released by NGO 350.org his reaction to the detention of seven students opposed to an oil pipeline project in Uganda, Pouyanne said his team in the country was in contact with the authorities to get their release. Pouyanne had already been ambushed by activists at COP27 in Egypt.

Exchanges were much more cordial in other

second-largest economy, boasts trains that travel 220 miles an hour (350 kilometers an hour).

The Democrat also took the chance to lash out at his likely rival in the 2024 election, Republican Donald Trump, for failing to improve US infrastructure while he was president.

"He likes to say America's a failing nation," said Biden. "Frankly he doesn't know what the hell he's talking about." Major rail projects are part of the infrastructure investment plan that Biden pushed through shortly after taking office, which allocated \$66 billion for passenger trains. This is the largest sum allocated to passenger rail since the formation of Amtrak in 1971. The quasi-public company was set up to relieve private freight of the burden of passenger transport, and now operates inter-city rail lines across the country. "This will be truly transformational for US passenger rail," Amtrak executive vice-president Laura Mason told AFP.

The funding will create new lines and extend existing ones, boost services, upgrade stations and build modern, faster trains. A line between San Francisco and Los Angeles is in the works, which like the LA-Las Vegas service which will receive up to approximately \$3 billion. The shuttered line connecting New Orleans, Louisiana with Mobile, Alabama is due to reopen almost 20 years after it was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Trains played a crucial role in expansion across the



WASHINGTON: Laura Mason (right), executive vice president for capital delivery at Amtrak, walks on a platform at Union Station in Washington, DC. — AFP

western United States in the 19th century, but today's network is "skeletal," Jim Mathews, the head of the US Rail Passengers Association, told AFP.

Train service in the densely populated north-eastern United States is relatively regular but crossing the country from east to west takes between two and two-and-a-half days. "You'll have

Shell eyes \$6bn in Nigeria offshore, gas investments

ABUJA: Oil giant Shell sees \$6 billion in investment opportunities in Nigeria, especially in offshore, gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects, the country's presidency said in a statement on Friday. Nigeria, the continent's top economy and major oil producer, is seeking to attract more foreign investment since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu came to office in May with a raft of economic reforms.

After meeting with Tinubu in Abuja, Shell representative Zoe Yujnovich announced an "imminent" \$5 billion investment in the Bonga North offshore project and commitment to another \$1 billion over the next 5 to 10 years in gas and LNG, according to a presidency statement.

Shell remains committed to investments in Nigeria, "particularly as the company refocuses its investment to key into new and existing opportunities in the Deepwater and Gas sector," the statement said. Tinubu, a former Lagos governor, said he was committed to overcoming roadblocks to investment for the energy sector.

"We are very focused on resolving all investment-related issues," the Nigerian leader said in the statement. "There is no bottleneck that is too difficult for us to remove in our determined march toward making Nigeria the African haven for large-scale investment in all key sectors."

OPEC member Nigeria has seen its oil output on the decline in recent years due to widespread theft from pipelines and attacks and high operating costs deterring on-shore investors. A new law, the Petroleum Industry Bill, passed in 2021 after years of debate and delays aimed to bring more foreign investment in the oil sector with amendments to regulations, royalties and taxes. — AFP

Biden unveils \$8.2bn plan for first US high-speed train

LAS VEGAS: Train enthusiast Joe Biden unveiled a \$8.2 billion plan Friday to get America's creaking rail network back on track, including its first ever high-speed link between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Slow, infrequent and often non-existent, trains have long been the poor relation of cars and planes in the United States. But the US president, who used the train between his Delaware home and Washington so much as a US senator that he was nicknamed "Amtrak Joe," visited Las Vegas to announce a series of federally funded rail upgrades.

"You have no idea how much this pleases me," Biden said at a union center in the gambling hub.

The plan would "put our nation back on track with the fastest, safest and greenest railways in the world." Biden's administration hopes to complete the Vegas-to-LA rail link by 2028. It is designed to slash the current five-hour car journey to two hours and 40 minutes — part of a larger ambition of doubling passenger numbers on America's railways by 2040. Biden highlighted the fact that China, the world's

to change trains in Chicago," Mathews said. "And if you want a sleeping compartment, you have to book that months in advance." It's not just a question of repairing tracks and building new trains, but also "changing how people move, and how do we encourage mode shift out of cars, out of airplanes, onto trains," said Mason from Amtrak. — AFP

Business



NBK collaborates with two globally renowned airlines, Qatar Airways and British Airways.



A group photo during the ceremony.

NBK partners with Qatar Airways, British Airways to launch NBK Avios Visa Card

The first-of-its-kind prepaid card in the region

KUWAIT: With its commitment to providing exceptional banking experiences through outstanding products and services, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has unveiled the NBK Avios Visa Signature Prepaid Card in partnership with Qatar Airways Privilege Club and British Airways Executive Club. This Visa prepaid card, the first of its kind in the MENA region, reflects NBK's commitment to innovation.

plication and will earn Avios on every transaction made with the prepaid card. Members can choose to redeem their Avios for rewards of their choice including flights, upgrades and more with their chosen loyalty program.

Among key benefits of the NBK Avios Visa Signature Card, when the customer chooses Qatar Airways Privilege Club as the preferred airline loyalty program, include bonus on first usage and renewal of the prepaid

card, accelerated opportunity to earn Avios on international spends and flight bookings with Qatar Airways, the opportunity for tier fast-track to Silver or Gold tier and much more. If a customer chooses British Airways Executive Club as the preferred airline loyalty program, they will benefit from bonus on first usage and also renewal of the prepaid card, accelerated opportunity to earn Avios on international spends and flight bookings with British Airways and much more.

Applying for the card is easy and convenient with NBK Mobile Banking App, allowing customers to quickly start enjoying seamless online transactions. Once added to the digital wallet, the card is instantly ready for use.

Commenting on this launch, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO of Consumer and Digital Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We're excited to join forces with two of the prominent airline industry leaders to unveil a first of its kind prepaid card in the region, jointly



co-branded with Qatar Airways and British Airways and powered by Visa — offering distinct benefits to our valued customers. "The introduction of this new prepaid card reflects NBK's dedication to delivering an impeccable banking experience to its customers. By providing an unmatched array of travel rewards and benefits, this card is designed to cater to the diverse needs of customers, especially in the highly popular travel sector," he added.

Al-Othman emphasized that NBK consistently strives to cultivate strategic partnerships with leading global institutions across all sectors. This approach not only solidifies the bank's leadership but also enriches the customer's banking experience. He highlighted that the bank works around the clock to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of our clients. Additionally, the bank strives to cater to customer preferences, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to offering the best and most advanced products and services.

Senior Vice President, Eastern Regions at Qatar Airways, Marwan Koleilat, said: "Qatar Airways is globally recognized for its award-winning products and services and with Privilege Club we strive to build the same sentiment among our members from all around the world by providing them with products and services that enhance their lifestyle and travel experiences. As part of our strategy to collaborate with exceptional and innovative partners, we are joining forces with National Bank of Kuwait to offer members the best collecting and spending opportunities. We look forward to seeing our Privilege Club members in Kuwait ben-

efiting from the NBK Avios Signature Card launched in collaboration with NBK, British Airways and Visa."

Colm Lacy, British Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, said: "The Avios currency will give Middle Eastern consumers more exclusive travel benefits, bringing them one step closer to their next flight or holiday. We're pleased to partner with National Bank of Kuwait to bring the new co-branded credit card to market and give consumers more opportunities to convert their daily expenses into exciting rewards."

"We're excited to partner with National Bank of Kuwait to launch this first-of-its-kind Visa card in the MENA region. The NBK Avios Visa Signature Card is designed to enhance the travel experience of cardholders who will enjoy convenient and secure payments at our more than 130 million merchants worldwide. As a prepaid card, it will help drive financial inclusion so more consumers can enjoy the benefits of digital commerce. We remain committed to collaborating with our local partners to deliver innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our cardholders and reward them when shopping and paying with their Visa card," Dr Saeeda Jaffar, Visa's SVP and Group Country Manager for GCC.



Mohammed Al-Othman: We are dedicated to providing an exceptional banking experience that reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering state-of-the-art services to our customers. We work around the clock to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of our clients.



Al-Othman (right) and Marwan Koleilat on the sidelines of the ceremony.

With this new co-branded card, NBK has collaborated with two globally renowned airlines, Qatar Airways and British Airways, to provide exclusive rewards and benefits to its customers. Marking the launch of this new prepaid card, NBK held a signing ceremony at its headquarters with Visa, Qatar Airways and British Airways, which was attended by NBK executive management, Marwan Koleilat – Senior Vice President, Eastern Regions at Qatar Airways along with his team, Nicole Crowdey, Global Partnerships Manager at IAG Loyalty along with her British Airways team, Visa's Dr Saeeda Jaffar, SVP & Group Country Manager – GCC, and Michael Berner, Head of Merchant Sales and Acquiring for CEMEA.

The NBK Avios Visa Signature Card empowers customers to collect Avios, the rewards currency for Qatar Airways Privilege Club and British Airways, on their everyday payments. Members can opt for their preferred airline loyalty program at the time of the ap-

plation and will earn Avios on every transaction made with the prepaid card. Members can choose to redeem their Avios for rewards of their choice including flights, upgrades and more with their chosen loyalty program.

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Al-Othman with Visa, Qatar Airways and British Airways officials.



MADRID: Spain's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Affairs Nadia Calvino poses for pictures as she arrives before the first weekly cabinet meeting of the new government, at La Moncloa Palace in Madrid. -- AFP

Once bane of big tech, Vestager's star wanes

BRUSSELS: Margrethe Vestager is preparing to return to her day job as the European Union's competition chief after a hard-fought and ultimately unsuccessful bid to lead the bloc's lender. She stepped down temporarily in September after entering the race to become the next head of the European Investment Bank but lost out on Friday to Spanish economy minister Nadia Calvino.

After the EU selected Calvino, Vestager, 55, said she would "resume" her duties at the European Commission, the EU's executive arm. Vestager's star has waned in recent years following a series of setbacks in EU courts against some of the world's biggest companies, including Apple. It wasn't always thus.

The former Danish minister was once one of the best-known EU officials. Her name and face were recognizable beyond the Brussels bubble, and she was known for hitting tech companies with hefty fines. She was even once in the running to become president of the European Commission. Her tough stance towards US firms earned her the ire of former president Donald Trump, who reportedly told Vestager's boss in 2018: "Your tax lady... she really hates the US." True to form, she later quipped: "I've done my own fact-checking on the first part of that sentence. I do work with tax and I am a woman so this is 100-percent correct." —AFP

US unemployment ticks down; job market robust

WASHINGTON: The United States saw its jobless rate dip in November while hiring rose more than expected, government data showed Friday, fueling optimism that the world's biggest economy may achieve the elusive goal of avoiding recession, while also taming inflation. The economy added 199,000 jobs, said the Department of Labor, and unemployment fell to 3.7 percent. Wage growth accelerated to 0.4 percent from the prior month but held steady from year-ago levels. Although employment appears to be heating up, analysts noted the underlying state of the labor market has been weakening. The figures could also be revised downwards.

The latest hiring uptick comes on the back of October figures that were temporarily bogged down due to strikes by auto workers and in Hollywood. "Employment growth is below the average monthly gain of 240,000 over the prior 12 months but is in line with job growth in recent months," said the Labor Department. The figures are closely watched by markets and the Federal Reserve as policymakers ponder how to handle interest rates in order to fight stubborn inflation. The central bank is due to

announce its next rate decision at the end of a policy meeting next week. President Joe Biden, who is running for reelection next year, lauded the low unemployment and overall drop in inflation. "But I know prices are still too high for too many Americans. So my top economic priority is to lower costs for hard-working Americans," he added in a statement.

"Payroll gains were inflated by returning strikers in November, but the underlying pace of job growth has slowed in recent months," said Nancy Vanden Houten, lead US economist at Oxford Economics. By some estimates, headline growth was boosted by about 30,000 on the return of auto workers.

Resilience in income gains is also expected to support consumption during the holiday season. Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics, said she continues to expect a cooling in the labor market as the effect of higher interest rates flows through the economy. She added that the latest data is unlikely to change the Fed's outlook and she expects the central bank to cut the benchmark lending rate, probably by mid-2024.

"Overall, the labor market remains strong, with job growth still robust and the unemployment rate at extraordinarily low levels," said Farooqi. All key metrics in the November employment report exceeded expectations, said Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic. While markets have rallied strongly in the past month on rising expectations that the Fed would start to cut rates in the first quarter, she added: "This delivers a reality check to financial markets." —AFP

UK watchdog probes partnership between Microsoft, OpenAI

LONDON: Britain's competition watchdog announced on Friday that it was looking into whether a partnership between US tech giant Microsoft and artificial intelligence developer OpenAI resembles a merger.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said it was seeking comments from "the parties and interested third parties". It wants to know if the partnership "including recent developments" has "resulted in a relevant merger situation and, if so, the impact that the merger could have on competition in the UK".

Microsoft announced at the end of November that a representative of the software titan had been given a seat on the startup's board as an observer. That came just days after OpenAI was thrown into turmoil on November 17 when the company's board fired CEO Sam Altman only to hire him back a few days later when staff and investors rebelled.

The CMA explained that criteria that meets a "relevant merger situation" can include "the acquisition of a minority shareholding or, in some circumstances, commercial arrangements such as outsourcing arrangements". The CMA recently noted that the rapid development of AI presented both opportunities and risks for competition and consumer protection, and emphasized "the need for sustained competition" between players in the sector. In a statement sent to AFP, Microsoft president Brad Smith said: "Since 2019, we've forged a partnership with OpenAI that has fostered more AI innovation and competition, while preserving independence for both companies."

"The only thing that has changed is that Microsoft will now have a non-voting observer on OpenAI's board, which is very different from an acquisition such as Google's purchase of DeepMind in the UK. "We will work closely with the CMA to provide all the information it needs," he added.

The CMA in October approved Xbox maker Microsoft's \$69-billion acquisition of Activision Blizzard, whose video games include "Call of Duty" and "Candy Crush", after earlier blocking the deal over competition concerns. —AFP



ARLINGTON: A man walks past a "now hiring" sign posted outside of a restaurant in Arlington, Virginia, on June 3, 2022. -- AFP

Moody's changes Gulf Bank's outlook to 'Positive'

Rating agency affirms the long-term deposits ratings at 'A3'



Dalal Al-Dousari

KUWAIT: Moody's Investors Service, the international credit rating agency, has affirmed the A3 long-term deposit ratings of Gulf Bank and changed the outlook to "Positive" from "Stable". Moody's has affirmed the Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) and the Adjusted BCA of Gulf Bank at bal, long-term and short-term foreign and local currency Counterparty Risk Ratings at A2/P-1, and long-term and short-term Counterparty Risk Assessments at A2(cr)/P-1(cr).

In their recently published press release, Moody's mentioned that the affir-

mation of Gulf Bank's ratings reflects the Bank's strong asset quality, sound profitability, loss absorption capacity and healthy liquidity buffers. These strengths balance the bank's borrower and depositor concentration risks. The affirmation also takes into consideration Moody's unchanged assumption of the very high probability of support from the Government of Kuwait (A1 stable) for Gulf Bank's depositors in times of stress.

Positive outlook

According to Moody's, the change of

Gulf Bank's outlook to positive captures their expectation that the Bank's strong asset quality, recovering profitability and stronger capital position, if sustained could drive an upgrade of Gulf Bank's ratings and assessments. Commenting on Moody's Bank credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations said: "We are very pleased to receive the affirmation of Gulf Bank's A3 long-term deposit ratings and the "Positive" change of the Bank's outlook by Moody's Investors Service. This is an international ac-

knowledge of Gulf Bank's sound capitalization, improving profitability and strong asset quality "

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally as it is rated 'A' by three major credit rating agencies. In addition to Moody's Investor Services recent affirmation and outlook change, Gulf Bank has a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at "A" with a "Stable" Outlook by Fitch Ratings, and a Long-term Foreign Currency Rating of "A+" with a "Stable" Outlook by Capital Intelligence Ratings.



Burgan Bank reveals Kanz Account draw winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced on Saturday the names of the Kanz Account monthly draw winners, who will each take home a KD 2,000 cash-prize. All Kanz customers who maintain a minimum balance of KD 200 for at least one week before the draw date, are included in the draw, and their chances of winning increase with higher deposits.

The 20 lucky winners are:

- Waleed Arif Arif
- Reda Alsayed Bahgat
- Mohammed Akaram Mohammed
- Ralph Ghasan Zein
- Waleed Saleh Al-Ali
- Naser Mohammad Al-Zoabi
- Catherine de Guzman Pine
- Eman Mohammad Hussain
- Suad Ramadhan Ali
- Abdullah Fawaz Al-Abdullah
- Adel Saad Al-Salahat
- Dong Suk Seo
- Zainab Naser Kamal
- Adel Ali Al-Hazem
- Ghada Atieh Zarbul
- Ansely Castelino
- Mousa Bakhesh
- Ranjith Kumar Nair
- Ahmad Majeed Al-Baqsumi
- Ahlam Zrhaib

In addition to the monthly draw of Kanz Account, Burgan Bank also offers a semi-annual KD 500,000 prize and a mega annual prize of KD 1,500,000. Kanz Account is accessible to any individual and can be opened in Kuwaiti Dinar or in major currencies (USD, EURO, GDP) with a minimum KD 200 requirement for account opening.

Nigeria loads first crude at huge new Dangote refinery

LAGOS, Nigeria: Nigeria's huge oil refinery built by Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote received its first crude deliveries, the company said on Saturday, in the latest step to starting up the delayed megaproject.

Billed as Africa's largest of its type, the 650,000 barrel-per-day Dangote refinery could be a game changer for Nigeria's economy when fully operational by helping ending the country's reliance on fuel imports. Dangote Petroleum Refinery received an initial shipment of one million barrels of crude from Agbami deepwater field and began loading on Friday, the company spokesman said Saturday.

The initial run will be for production of diesel and aviation fuel before moving on to petrol output.

Dangote gave no date for the actual start of refinery production. Though one of Africa's largest oil producers and the continent's top economy, Nigeria relies almost totally on imported fuel and diesel because of a lack of refining capacity. Nigeria swaps crude worth billions of dollars for petrol that it had subsidized for years to keep prices cheap for its domestic market.

Fuel imports and subsidies caused a huge drain on foreign exchange when Nigeria was struggling with dwindling oil revenues and foreign currency shortages. "Dangote Petroleum Refinery can meet 100 per cent of Nigeria's requirement of all refined products, gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and aviation jet, and also have surplus of each of these products for export," the company said in a statement.

The facility sits on 2,635 hectares (6,500 acres) of land at the Lekki Free Zone on the edge of Lagos city and cost an estimated \$19bn, according to local media. The refinery, first scheduled to open in 2021, was officially inaugurated by then president Muhammadu Buhari earlier this year and was supposed to begin operations in June. Since coming to office in May, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has ended the long-standing fuel subsidy and floated the naira currency in economic reforms he says will attract foreign investment and build long term growth.

The former Lagos governor has called on Nigerians to be patient with his reform program as the initial impact saw fuel prices soar, a sharp fall in the value of the naira and an increase in the cost of living. — AFP

Xi says economic recovery 'still at critical stage'

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping said that China's economic recovery is "still at a critical stage", state broadcaster CCTV reported Friday, as sluggish domestic activity and property sector woes drag on a post-pandemic rebound.

The world's second-largest economy expanded a moderate 4.9 percent in the third quarter, slightly less than Beijing's five percent target, which is one of the lowest in years. "At present, the country's economic recovery is still at a critical stage," Xi said at a meeting of China's Communist Party Politburo, the country's top decision-making body, according to CCTV.

Xi urged measures to boost the economy, saying that "the development situation facing the country is complex, with increasing adverse factors in the international political and economic environment". "It is necessary to focus on accelerating the construction of a modern industrial system, expand domestic demand, (and) prevent and defuse risks," said Xi. Xi also emphasized the need to shore up "self-reliance" in key science and technology sectors, and to "accelerate the construction of a new development layout".

Officials have struggled to sustain a recovery from the impact of the COVID pandemic, even after removing draconian containment measures at the end of 2022. Exports rose in November for the first time in seven months, officials announced Thursday, although the reading compares with a low base from last year when the impact of COVID policies were being felt the most.

Chinese exports — long a key growth driver — had largely been in decline since last October except for a short-lived rebound in March and April. A surprise drop in imports in November highlighted weak consumer activity at home.

Ratings agency Moody's on Tuesday downgraded the outlook on the country's credit rating to negative from stable, citing "broad downside risks to China's fiscal, economic and institutional strength".

Beijing's finance ministry said in response it was "disappointed with Moody's decision", adding that such concerns about China's economy were "unnecessary".

In throes of German budget crisis, Scholz rejects benefit cuts

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Saturday firmly rejected any cuts on social benefits as his crisis-mired coalition struggled to agree on a budget for 2024. Germany is in the throes of a budget crisis after a bombshell court ruling last month on debt rules upended the government's spending plans. The constitutional court's ruling sets a "very difficult task" for the government, said Scholz at his Social Democratic Party's congress.

As he battles to wrest a deal with coalition partners the Greens and liberal FDP party, Scholz underlined that he would not accept welfare reductions. "In such a situation, there will be no cuts on the welfare state in Germany," he said. The chancellor did not provide any detail on the talks, but said he wanted to "convey the confidence that we will succeed" in getting a deal.

Pledges made so far at COP28 climate talks

PARIS: The COP28 climate talks in Dubai have seen a flurry of announcements promising action on global warming, led by its big-spending, oil-rich host the United Arab Emirates. The first five days of the negotiations mobilized over \$83 billion dollars and saw 11 pledges and declarations for climate action, the COP28 presidency said Friday.

But observers have warned that the headline-grabbing promises could distract from the real battles on fossil fuels and negotiating a formal COP28 deal. As pressure builds in talks held during the hottest year on record, here are some of the developments so far.

Day one of the meeting saw the launch of a landmark "loss and damage" fund to help vulnerable countries cope with the increasingly costly and damaging impacts of climate disasters. The UAE and Germany pledged \$100 million each and France \$109 million, along with \$50 million from Britain, \$25 million from Denmark and \$17.5 million from the United States, the world's biggest historical polluter. Campaigners said the US offering was woefully inadequate.

The total committed as of Friday was around \$726 million, according to the COP28 presidency. That still



An employee produces building material processing equipment at a factory in Nantong, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on December 5, 2023. — AFP

necessary". But woes in the property sector — another traditional engine of growth — have exacerbated worries. China's vast real estate sector is mired in a deep debt crisis, with some of the nation's biggest developers owing hundreds of billions of dollars and facing going out of business.

Authorities are on edge as debt fears stoke buyer mistrust, send home prices plummeting and, crucially, threaten to infect other sectors. Construction and real estate account for around a quarter of China's gross domestic product. Ting Lu, chief China economist at Japanese bank Nomura, said Thursday that property woes remained "the single largest drag affecting China's economy".

"Despite the multitude of stimulus measures announced recently, we believe it is still too early to call the bottom," he said in a note. Deflation in China accelerated in November, official data showed Saturday, underlining the difficulties the world's second-largest economy faces in reviving slowing demand. The figures came after President Xi Jinping said Friday that the Asian giant's post-pandemic recovery was "still at a critical stage."

The consumer price index, the main gauge of inflation, fell 0.5 percent year-on-year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

NBS official Dong Lijuan said in a statement that the decline was linked to "downward fluctuations in the prices of energy and food". The corresponding figure for October was a decline of 0.2 percent. While deflation suggests goods were cheaper, it poses a threat to the broader economy as consumers tend to postpone purchases in the hopes of further reductions.

A lack of demand can then force companies to cut production, freeze hiring or lay off workers, while potentially also having to discount existing stocks — dampening profitability even as costs remain the same. The NBS also said producer prices sank for the 14th consecutive month, sliding three percent year-on-year compared to 2.6 percent the previous month. Dong attributed the decline to "a rebound in international oil prices which weakened demand for some industrial goods". — AFP

Germany's top court found that the government had broken a constitutional debt rule when it transferred 60 billion euros (\$65 billion) earmarked for pandemic support to a climate fund.

The ruling blew a huge hole in spending plans, forcing the government to adopt an emergency budget for 2023, and sending it scrambling for a new plan for 2024. Current projections show that the coalition needs to make up a 17-billion-euro gap, and the opposition conservatives, as well as Scholz's junior coalition partner FDP have demanded reductions on welfare spending.

Economy Minister Robert Habeck of the Greens has meanwhile said he wants "all projects that we have conceived" to go ahead. Amid the standoff, Scholz's SPD parliamentary group admitted earlier this week that it would no longer be possible for parliament to adopt 2024's budget this year.

But Scholz and his coalition partners are still striving for a political deal by year's end, which could then be put to parliament in early 2024. — AFP



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stands on stage after giving a speech during the party congress of his social democratic SPD party in Berlin on December 9, 2023. — AFP

falls short of the \$100 billion a year that developing nations — which have historically been the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions — have said is needed to cover losses from natural disasters and rising seas. Meanwhile, the Green Climate Fund, focused on support developing countries in their climate action, saw a boost of \$3.5 billion to its second replenishment, with a \$3 billion promise from the United States. Other new pledges for the GCF at COP28 were from Australia, Estonia, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland.

At least 128 countries had by Friday committed to tripling renewable energy capacity worldwide by 2030 and doubling the annual rate of energy efficiency improvements. G20 nations, which account for nearly 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, paved the way for a deal when they endorsed the renewable energy goal in September. Supporters want the pledge to be included in the final outcome of the talks and it currently appears in a draft published on Friday, which is still subject to negotiations before the meeting is due to wrap up on Tuesday.

The US committed to phasing out its existing unabated coal plants as it joined the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA) Saturday. On Tuesday, it was joined by the UAE. Abatement generally means when the emissions from a power plant or factory are captured before going into the atmosphere.

The PPCA has picked up 10 new members so far during the talks, with over 80 percent of OECD and EU countries now committed to the alliance. Global CO2 emissions from coal-fired power plants reached

a new high in 2022 and the US has the world's third-biggest capacity behind China and India.

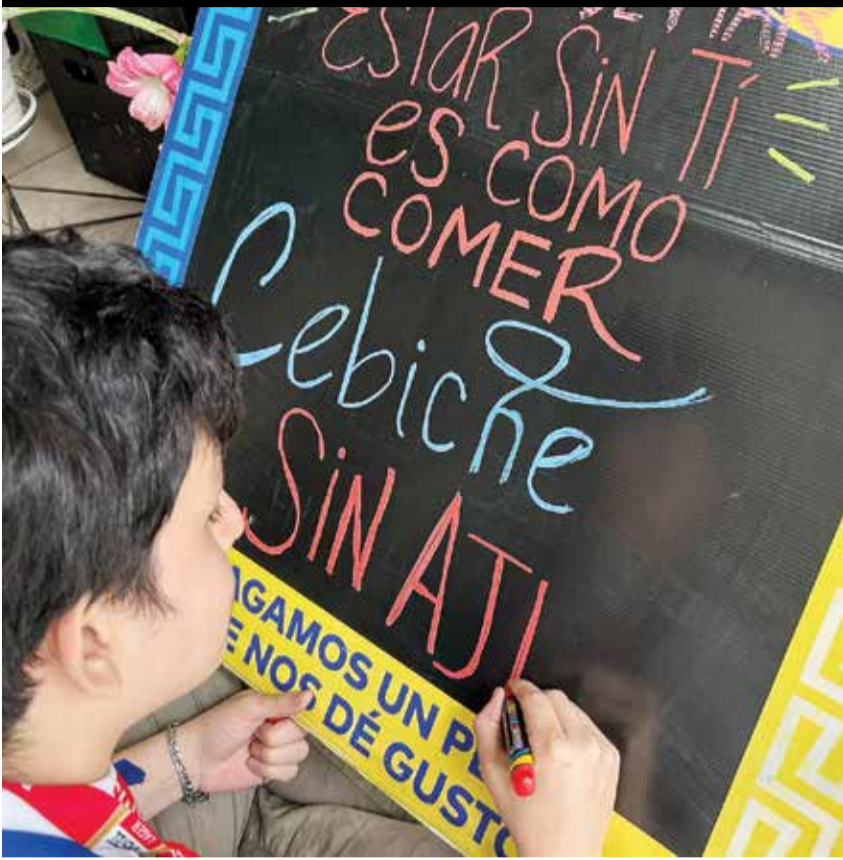
Colombia became one of the largest fossil fuel producers to join the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, a movement led by climate-vulnerable island nations to end new development of coal, oil and gas.

More than 20 countries led by the US called Saturday for the tripling of world nuclear energy capacity by 2050. While nuclear generates almost no greenhouse gases, the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011 dealt it a severe blow. But experts and activists point to the fact that new nuclear plants can take decades to come online, while renewable energy is significantly faster.

More than 140 countries have agreed to prioritize food and agriculture systems in their national climate plans. The non-binding declaration was welcomed by observers, with food systems estimated to be responsible for roughly a third of human-made greenhouse gases.

But some criticized it for lacking concrete goals — and for not mentioning fossil fuels or signalling any shift to more sustainable diets. Over 130 countries have signed a declaration to "place health at the heart of climate action". It called for governments to step up action on climate-related health impacts like extreme heat, air pollution and infectious diseases. Almost nine million people a year die from polluted air, while 189 million are exposed to extreme weather-related events. — AFP

UNESCO names Peruvian ceviche to Intangible Heritage list



A waiter writes on a board a rhyme that reads "Being without you is like eating ceviche with no spice" at a restaurant in Lima.



Peruvian Chef Roberto Madrid serves a traditional sea bass ceviche at his restaurant Aroma de Mar (Aroma of the Sea) in Lima. — AFP photos

The United Nations cultural agency on Wednesday declared Peruvian ceviche — an ancient marinated seafood dish — part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage. The food, which can vary regionally based on what types of fish are available, was first eaten in the area now known as Peru starting more than 2,000 years ago, according to local anthropologists. UNESCO announced the designation on X, formerly known as Twitter: "New inscription on the #IntangibleHeritage List: Practices and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche, an expression of Peruvian traditional cuisine."

The news came during this week's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Botswana, where Italian opera singing, Bangladeshi rickshaw painting, Uzbek ceramic crafts

and several other customs and traditions were also named to the intangible heritage list. The Peruvian government cheered ceviche's addition to the list, with the culture ministry saying it "recognizes all the people involved in the chain of this dish, including artisanal fishermen along the coast and in the Andes and the Amazon, and the farmers and chefs."

According to chef Javier Vargas, head of Peru's Association of Seafood Restaurant Owners, there are at least 1,000 different ways to prepare ceviche. The dish, central to Peruvian cuisine, can be made with fish caught from the sea, with river and lake trout in the mountains and with pirarucu or tilapia raised in jungle lagoons. Each region also uses its own vegetables, spices, herbs and citrus to mix in and serve with the fish, which is often raw. — AFP



Peruvian Chef Roberto Madrid prepares a traditional sea bass ceviche at his restaurant Aroma de Mar (Aroma of the Sea) in Lima.



Peruvian Chef Roberto Madrid prepares a traditional sea bass ceviche at his restaurant Aroma de Mar (Aroma of the Sea) in Lima.



Andean red onion and Peruvian fresh corn are seen while Peruvian Chef Roberto Madrid prepares a dish of traditional sea bass ceviche at his restaurant Aroma de Mar (Aroma of the Sea) in Lima.



Peruvian artisan fisherman Cesar Melgarejo prepares a traditional ceviche for himself and colleagues with grey mullets (lisa in Spanish) caught in the early morning, while floating in the Lima Bay.



Common cilantro is seen while Peruvian Chef Roberto Madrid prepares a dish of traditional sea bass ceviche at his restaurant Aroma de Mar (Aroma of the Sea) in Lima.



Peruvian artisan fisherman Cesar Melgarejo prepares a traditional ceviche for himself and colleagues with grey mullets (lisa in Spanish) caught in the early morning, while floating in the Lima Bay.



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UNESCO recognizes art of Italian opera singing

The UN cultural agency on Wednesday added to its list of intangible global heritage Italian opera singing, an art "transmitted only orally" between maestro and pupil that attracts students globally. "This is an official confirmation of what we already knew: opera singing is a world excellence," Italy's Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano said in a statement after UNESCO's decision.

Opera originated in Italy, home to Scarlatti and Verdi. It was sung by Italian patriots and some of the world's greatest arias came from the peninsula. Italian opera is "a physiologically controlled way of singing that enhances the carrying power of the voice in acoustic spaces such as amphitheatres and churches", UNESCO said.

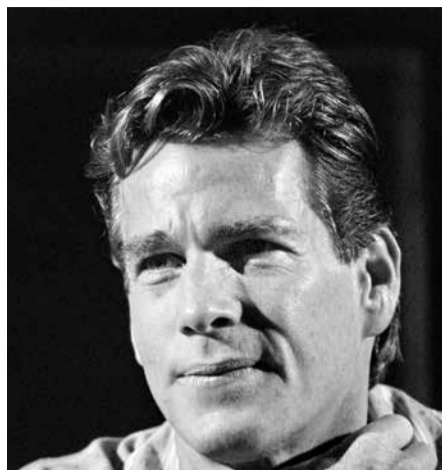
The art is associated with specific facial expressions and body gestures and involves a combination of music, drama,

acting and staging. It also "promotes collective cohesion and sociocultural memory" as well as being "a means of free expression and intergenerational dialogue", UNESCO said.

After various experiments with musical theatre in the 16th century, opera came into being around 1600 in Florence, with the founding of an academy promoting an innovative combination of sung text and music. The first great composer of opera is considered to be Italy's Claudio Monteverdi, who lived from 1567 to 1643. Today there are around 60 opera houses across Italy — a global record — while opera singers such as 20th-century tenor Luciano Pavarotti have been venerated as major stars. — AFP



Lifestyle



A portrait taken on September 6, 1984 shows US actor Ryan O'Neal giving a press conference during the presentation of his film "Irreconcilable Differences" during the 10th American Film Festival of Deauville.



A photo taken on July 22, 1982 shows US actress Farrah Fawcett (right) accompanied by her husband actor Ryan O'Neal (center) and US singer and actress Liza Minnelli (left) during a night out at "Manoa" in Monaco.



US actors Ryan O'Neal (right) and Ali MacGraw, the stars of the 1970 film "Love Story," pose March 24, 2002 at the 74th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California.



Actor Ryan O'Neal arrives for the 61st annual creative Emmy awards at the Nokia theatre in Los Angeles, California, on September 12, 2009.—AFP photos

'Love Story' star Ryan O'Neal dies at 82

Actor and heartthrob Ryan O'Neal, the Oscar-nominated star of "Love Story" who also appeared in "Paper Moon" and "Barry Lyndon," has died, his son said Friday. He was 82. "This is the toughest thing I've ever had to say but here we go. My dad passed away peacefully today, with his loving team by his side supporting him and loving him as he would us," Patrick O'Neal wrote on Instagram.

O'Neal, whose smoldering looks and perfect jawline made him the ideal leading man, was also known for his tu-

multuous decades-long relationship with actress Farrah Fawcett. After years of television roles in the 1960s, O'Neal's big break came in 1970's "Love Story," a box office phenomenon that earned him an Oscar nomination -- one of a grab-bag of nods for a film now credited with becoming a template for the "chick flick" genre. Two years later he was paired with Barbra Streisand for the screwball comedy "What's Up, Doc?," another hit with US audiences that further increased his profile.

Over the following years, O'Neal

played a jewel thief in "The Thief Who Came To Dinner" and starred opposite his daughter Tatum O'Neal in Peter Bogdanovich's 1973 hit "Paper Moon" -- bagging a Golden Globe nomination in the process.

In 1975 he appeared in Stanley Kubrick's "Barry Lyndon," a picaresque historical drama that is better thought-of now than it was five decades ago.

"As a human being, my father was as generous as they come," Patrick O'Neal wrote. "And the funniest person in any room. And the most handsome

clearly, but also the most charming. Let-tha combo. "He loved to make people laugh. It's pretty much his goal. Didn't matter the situation, if there was a joke to be found, he nailed it. He really wanted us laughing. And we did all laugh. Every time. We had fun. Fun in the sun." O'Neal was married and divorced twice before he began a stormy, but enduring, relationship with "Charlie's Angels" star Fawcett.

The couple were together for almost 20 years from the late 1970s, but split in 1997 reportedly after she caught him in

flagrante with another actress.

They reunited in 2001 until her death at the age of 62 in 2009. O'Neal told British journalist Piers Morgan that watching "Love Story" -- in which a rich kid falls in love with a working class girl who later dies -- was upsetting. "I lost Farrah to cancer, and I just wonder (why) that played out that way for me," he said. "One was just a big deal and so successful, and then in real life it was just the opposite, a tragedy."—AFP



The Hollywood Sign is pictured during a ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the first time it was lit, in Los Angeles.

Time of the sign: Hollywood landmark hits 100

The landmark word has loomed over Tinseltown since before movies started talking, becoming a symbol of the entire film industry. For the first time in decades, the Hollywood sign -- at least a little bit of it -- was illuminated on Friday to celebrate its 100th birthday.

her own life by plunging from the top of the letter H in 1932.

Hooray for... realtors?

The sign, a must-see for any film buff or tourist visiting Los Angeles, initially read "HOLLYWOODLAND", having been constructed in 1923 as an ad-

on their hands, stepped in and offered to fix it up.

But the last four letters had to go -- the sign was to represent the whole town, not just a fashionable property patch, and by 1949, the newly restored sign simply read "HOLLYWOOD".

Mr Nice Guy

Three decades of baking sun and occasional storms took their toll on the 50-foot (15-meter)-high wooden letters.

Eventually, the first O reduced to a lower case "o" and the final O toppled down completely. Enter one Alice Cooper -- the chicken-bothering father of shock rock -- who led a campaign to restore the sign to its former glory, donating \$28,000. Eight others, including actor Gene Autry, Playboy founder Hugh Hefner and singer Andy Williams, kicked in the same, each sponsoring a letter.

(Cooper is the first O, Autry was the second L, Hefner got the Y and Williams snagged the W). The replacement letters are a tad more compact, just 44 feet high, but made of steel, although they remain characteristically off-kilter. The Hollywood Sign Trust said last year the repainting it carried out in time for the 100th anniversary used almost 400 gallons (1,500 liters) of paint and primer. Friday night's lighting was purely symbolic, Hollywood Sign Trust chairman Jeff Zarrinam said, with just a little stretch of the second L cutting through the gloom. Unlike most global landmarks, the Hollywood sign is not usually lit up at night, partially because of objections from people who live nearby. But, said Zarrinam, it might start shining again.—AFP

vertisement for an upscale real estate development. During its first decade, it was routinely lit by thousands of bulbs, with "HOLLY", "WOOD" and "LAND" illuminated in turn as a beacon of the desirable homes on offer below.

By the 1940s, the letters were looking a little ragged. The Los Angeles Times reported vandals or windstorms had damaged the H, before locals decided they had had enough and asked the city to tear it down. The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, recognising that they had a blockbuster trademark



The nine-letter sign is officially a centenarian but, as with many an aging grande dame in Hollywood, looks as fresh as ever. Like the actors and actresses it looks down on, the sign has been in its fair share of films.

Directors who want to let their audience know a movie is set in Los Angeles have an easy establishing shot, while a filmmaker who wants to signify the destruction of America can set their special effects team loose on the sign.

It has also seen real life tragedy: British-born actress Peg Entwistle took

Led by Taylor Swift's \$1bn tour, 2023 concerts set new record

Led by Beyonce and Taylor Swift, whose "Eras Tour" was the first to bring in more than \$1 billion, ticket revenues from the top 100 concert tours of 2023 jumped to a record \$9.17 billion, industry magazine Pollstar said Friday.

Total sales for the 2023 tours (stretching for a year starting from mid-November 2022) skyrocketed 46 percent as compared to the previous year, which was also a record. "2023 was a colossus, the likes of which the live industry has never before seen," Pollstar said on its website.

All metrics showed increases: the average revenue from a concert was up 53 percent to \$2.37 million; total ticket sales rose 18 percent to 70 million; and average ticket prices were up more than 23 percent to \$130.81.



This combination of file pictures shows US singer-songwriter Beyonce and US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift.—AFP

Swift's tour broke new ground, becoming the first in history to surpass the symbolic \$1 billion mark in ticket sales in 60 dates from March to November 2023. But Pollstar predicted that the pop megastar, named Time magazine's Person of the Year on Wednesday, could pass the \$2 billion mark by the time the tour eventually wraps up. The only one to have come close to a billion up till now was Elton John, whose marathon "Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour" -- 328 dates over five years -- raked in \$939 million.

Beyonce took in \$579 million over 56 dates for her "Renaissance Tour" for second place in 2023, while Bruce Springsteen, Coldplay and Harry Styles rounded out the top five. Pollstar noted that this was the first time in 15 years, when Madonna and Celine Dion dominated the rankings in 2008, that two women were at the top of the rankings, calling it "an extremely positive sign for this industry."

"The duo not only smashed the glass ceiling but created a more inclusive roof in their wake," Pollstar said. The outlook for 2024 appears to be promising, with more concerts from Swift, Springsteen and Coldplay, plus tours from the Rolling Stones, Foo Fighters and Carrie Underwood.—AFP



British poet Benjamin Zephaniah

British poet Benjamin Zephaniah dies aged 65

British poet Benjamin Zephaniah, who famously rejected an honor from Queen Elizabeth II over Britain's empire and links to slavery, died on Thursday at the age of 65, his family said. The Rastafarian poet and writer, whose work was greatly influenced by the music and poetry of Jamaica, also turned his hand to acting when he appeared in series six of the hit show "Peaky Blinders" as the character Jeremiah Jesus.

"It is with great sadness and regret that we announce the death of our beloved husband, son and brother in the early hours of this morning 7th December 2023," his family said on Instagram, adding that he had been diagnosed with a brain tumour eight weeks ago. In 2003 he snubbed an Order of the British Empire (OBE) award from Queen Elizabeth for services to literature, which Zephaniah said prime minister Tony Blair had recommended.

He said the award's name reminded him of his ancestors' "brutal" suffering at the hands of their white masters. "I get angry when I hear that word 'empire'; it reminds me of slavery, it reminds (me) of thousands of years of brutality—it reminds me of how my forefathers were raped and my forefathers brutalised," he said at the time.

Born in 1958 in the central English city of Birmingham, where "Peaky Blinders" is set, Zephaniah was the son of a Barbadian postman and a Jamaican nurse. He was dyslexic and left school at the age of 13, unable to read or write, and as a young man served a prison sentence for burglary. His first writings used dub poetry, a Jamaican style of work, and after moving to London in his twenties he began to establish himself as a poet. His first book of poetry, "Pen Rhythm", was published in 1980.

'True pioneer'

In 2008, The Times daily included him in a list of Britain's top 50 post-war writers. The life-long vegan's first book of poetry for children, "Talking Turkeys", was a surprise best seller in 1994, requiring an urgent reprint after just six weeks. He went on to publish four gritty novels about the lives of teenagers, credited with getting young people into reading by providing material they could relate to.

Zephaniah's family said he had been a "true pioneer and innovator." "He gave the world so much. Through an amazing career including a huge body of poems, literature, music, television, and radio, Benjamin leaves us with a joyful and fantastic legacy," it said. "Thank you for the love you have shown Professor Benjamin Zephaniah," it added.—AFP

French Actor Depardieu accused of sex assault



Gerard Depardieu

A fellow actor filed a sexual assault complaint against Gerard Depardieu in September, prosecutors said Wednesday, adding to a string of allegations targeting the French star. Helene Darras said that Depardieu assaulted her while filming a movie in 2007, Paris prosecutors said, confirming a report from broadcaster France 2. Investigators were studying the complaint, which likely falls under France's statute of limitations, to decide whether or not to launch a probe.

Depardieu's lawyer Christian Saint-

Palais could not immediately be reached for comment. "It took me a year to go from talking about what happened (in the media) to the criminal complaint," Darras told AFP. "Walking through the door of a police station, telling an officer someone touched your intimate parts, it's not easy, you need time to think about it," she added.

The actor told France 2 that Depardieu groped her when she was aged 26 and appearing as an extra in the film "Disco". He "ran his hand over my thighs and my buttocks" then "said

straight out: 'Do you want to come to my dressing room?'," she added. Darras said she rejected his alleged advances, but "that didn't change anything," she went on. "He kept groping me between takes".

The actor said she "couldn't give a damn" if the allegations are too old to be investigated. Darras "wanted to respond to the defense that plays down our allegations by saying they're 'just' witness accounts," she told AFP.—AFP

'Dance is beautiful': Kenyan slum reaches for ballet stars



Members of the Dance Centre Kenya (DCK) perform during the production of the 'Nutcracker', a classical ballet traditionally performed in the Christmas period, at the Kenya National Theatre in Nairobi. — AFP photos



Dancers of the Dance Centre Kenya (DCK) perform during the production of the 'Nutcracker'.

Bravian Mise hits a series of grand jetés—leaping like a gazelle across the cramped living room—and pirouettes during an exhaustive rehearsal at his home in a Kenyan slum. The 13-year-old has been practicing ballet for four years and is among a hundred or so children who have been rehearsing for months to perform Tchaikovsky's Christmastime favorite "The Nutcracker" in Kenya's capital Nairobi. The famous ballet tells the story of young Clara, who receives a painted wooden nutcracker shaped like a soldier for Christmas.

At night, the toy comes to life and fights against a mice invasion until the nutcracker-turned-prince defeats the evil mouse king and carries the little girl to his magical kingdom far, far away. "I had never heard of this ballet before performing in it," Bravian says, a smile plastered on his face. "I love dancing, I dance because it's beautiful."

Before the curtains open, dancers are put through their paces by Cooper Rust, an alumnus of the School of American Ballet, and director of Dance Centre Kenya—a non-profit giving lessons to underprivileged young-

sters in the city. "It is important to show the world that ballet is not just for one type of person," the American instructor, a former professional ballerina, told AFP. "Ballet is about skill and talent, and drive and passion, not socio-economic background."

Lofty dreams

Despite Kenya's burgeoning dance scene, the country does not host a professional ballet company. "We are getting there," counters Rust. But a lot needs to be done, and funding is a constant problem. At the Nairobi National Theatre, the young troupe made up of children aged between seven and 17 executes perfect arabesques to live music by a Kenyan orchestra.

For nearly two hours, they dominate the stage, working their way through an assemblage of colorful costumes and accessories. By the time they execute the famous Russian dance, the crowd is utterly won over. A beaming Bravian savors the moment.

Nothing predestined his journey to the stage. The schoolboy lives with his brother, sister and parents in Kuwinda, a ramshackle shanty town west of Nairobi. He, like around

Dancer Lavender Orisa, 17, performs during the production of the 'Nutcracker'.



5 0

and his transport to rehearsals is catered for—which would be unaffordable otherwise.

'An inspiration'

Bravian does his daily exercises in a small room, undisturbed by the loud music from a nearby bar. "It's much harder for children who come from poor backgrounds, they have to work harder to succeed," Bravian's mother, Rehma Mwikali, told AFP, watching admiringly as her son danced. "I am so proud of him, he will make it." Despite the difficulties, Bravian is optimistic: "One day I will be a professional dancer." But the young dancers have a long way to go. More than a thousand children have enrolled in Dance Centre Kenya since it started in 2015 but only one—Joel Kioko, who now lives in the United States—has gone professional.

But Rust is determined to change that. "Our school is not even nine years old, and it takes 10 years to train a dancer," said Rust, expressing optimism that other students will also go pro.

Many of the youngsters hope to one day join the ranks of hallowed ballet stars. Lavender Orisa, who received a scholarship last year to study at the English National Ballet School in London, grew up in the Nairobi slum of Kibera. "Coming from Kibera, it was impossible for me to imagine one day dancing in London," said the 17-year-old, who is now back in Nairobi to finish high school. "People tell me I am an inspiration to them," she told AFP. She already has a major supporter in Rust, who said her student has the potential to pursue an "international career in ballet".—AFP

Members of a classical orchestra play as dancers perform during the final rehearsal before the production of the 'Nutcracker'.



Dancer Lavender Orisa, 17, performs during a rehearsal for the 'Nutcracker'.



Students of the Dance Centre Kenya (DCK) react while waiting to take the stage during the production of the 'Nutcracker'.



Members of the Dance Centre Kenya (DCK) gather during a break in the production of the 'Nutcracker'.

'Appetite for drumsticks': First prey found in a tyrannosaur stomach

Prey has been discovered inside the stomach of a tyrannosaur skeleton for the first time, scientists said Friday, revealing that the mighty dinosaurs had an "appetite for drumsticks" when they were young.

The skeleton of the Gorgosaurus, a member of the tyrannosaurid family that also includes the T-Rex, sheds light on how these dinosaurs grew from fairly slender juveniles into gigantic, bone-crushing, apex-predator adults, they added.

The Gorgosaurus — which means "dreadful lizard" — was around six years old when it died more than 75 million years ago, according to a new study in the journal *Science Advances*. The fossil was discovered in 2009 at the Dinosaur Provincial Park, east of the Canadian city of Calgary. But when they got the skeleton back to the lab, the scientists noticed something strange.

The study's lead author, Francois Therrien of the Royal Tyrrell Museum, told AFP they were amazed to "discover the remains of the last meal of this young tyrannosaur still preserved in place". What was most surprising, he added, was that the small leg bones sticking out of the tyrannosaur's ribcage belonged to two young, bird-like dinosaurs called Citipetes.

Citipetes are thought to have had feathers, wings and a beak and walk on two feet, somewhat resembling modern-day cassowaries, Therrien said. They are far smaller than the massive plant-eating dinosaurs that adult tyrannosaurs had been known to eat. Study co-author Darla Zelenitsky, a paleontologist at the University of Calgary, told AFP that this particular "fussy eater" used its sharp teeth to carve itself only the legs of the two baby Citipetes.

"This teenage Gorgosaurus seems to have had an appetite for drumsticks," she said. The discovery also offers a rare



This image shows Julius Csotonyi's artistic representation of a Gorgosaurus, a species of tyrannosaur, feeding on Citipetes.

clue into how tyrannosaurs grew from one-metre-long at birth to some of the biggest predators to have ever walked the Earth. "This fossil is the first solid evidence that tyrannosaurids drastically changed their diet as they grew from teenagers to adults," Zelenitsky said.

Young tyrannosaurs had slender heads and legs, sharp knife-like teeth for dissecting carcasses, and could probably run quite fast to catch their turkey-like prey.



This image shows statues of juvenile and adult Gorgosaurus, a species of tyrannosaur.—AFP photos

These youths probably looked more similar to the velociraptors depicted in the movie "Jurassic Park" than the giant T-Rex, Zelenitsky said. But at roughly 11 years old, as the tyrannosaurs hit their middle-age, their bodies grew almost ten times in size, ending up weighing more than 3,000 kilograms (6,600 pounds).

Their heads broadened and their teeth thickened into what Therrien called "killer bananas" capable of

crunching through huge bones.

This transformation was driven by a change in diet, as the dinosaurs ditched the drumsticks of their youth and started preying on giant plant-eating dinosaurs.

These kind of drastic dietary changes are not necessarily rare in the animal kingdom — crocodiles and Komodo dragons start out eating insects before switching to rodents and eventually large mammals, Therrien said. — AFP

Sports

New Zealand thump Bangladesh

Phillips guides nervy New Zealand win in 2nd Test

DHAKA: Glenn Phillips scored an unbeaten 40 under pressure as New Zealand beat Bangladesh by four wickets in the second Test on Saturday to finish the two-match series level. Set a chase of 137 in Dhaka, the visitors reached 139-6 an hour into the fourth day's final session with Phillips, who made 87 in the first innings, receiving able support from Mitchell Santner. Santner capped in on a fine all-round performance with 35 not out after his 3-51 earlier with the ball.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz claimed 3-52 and Taijul Islam chipped in with 2-58 before Phillips and Santner, who shared 70 in their unbroken seventh-wicket stand, denied Bangladesh their hopes of a first Test series win over the Black Caps. "It was a bit of a scrape there, nice to come out on the right side of it," said New Zealand captain Tim Southee. "The guys just trusted their game. On this pitch, you can still play your way," he added. "At times, Bangladesh showed it as well. It was a matter of time before one had your name on it."

Bangladesh struck early as Shoriful Islam removed Devon Conway for two before the spinners came into action. Mehidy dismissed Henry Nichols for three and Tom Latham for 26 between Taijul's wickets of Kane Williamson (11) and Tom Blundell (two). Mehidy's consistent bowling was rewarded when he forced an edge from Daryl Mitchell (19) at slip. "The bowlers did a great job," Bangladesh skipper Najmul said. "In the first match, we played really good cricket. This game we had our opportunities, but we couldn't take them."

'Mattered a lot'

Earlier, Ajaz Patel took 6-57 for his fourth five-wicket Test haul and Santner complemented with his left-arm spin to help New Zealand bowl out Bangladesh for 144 runs in the second innings. Re-summing on 38-2, Bangladesh began aggressively but



DHAKA: Bangladesh's wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan (2nd right) unsuccessfully appeals for leg before wicket (LBW) against New Zealand's Glenn Phillips (2nd left) during the third day of the second Test cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand on December 8, 2023. — AFP

managed just 106 runs in 27 overs during the fourth day's extended opening session. Zakir Hasan was the only batsman to put up a fight, top-scoring with 59 before the Kiwi bowlers wrapped up the innings. Patel brought Zakir's defiant innings to an end, forcing him to top edge at slip after Santner removed Nayeem Hasan for nine.

New Zealand had an eight-run lead in the first in-

nings with Phillips guiding the side to 180 from a precarious 46-5, in reply to Bangladesh's 172. "That eight runs mattered a lot," Phillips said. "We pride ourselves on fighting for as long as possible. Our spinners bowled incredibly." Fifteen wickets fell on the opening day before rain washed out the entire second day and the opening session of the third. Bangladesh won the opening Test in Sylhet by 150 runs.—AFP



Ali Al-Kharafi

Kuwait's Kharafi shines in 'Jump Saudi' tourney

RIYADH: Ali Al-Kharafi, a Kuwaiti equestrian, led the third race of "Jump Saudi" showjumping championship at Al-Janadriyah - a cultural and heritage site near Riyadh, on Friday. He finished the four-star category of the speed-against-time race, 1.4 m-high hurdles, in 60.92 seconds.



دورة عبدالعزيز المساعيد لقفز الحواجز
ABDULAZIZ AL MASAEEED SHOW JUMPING TOUR

Ukraine's Alisa Danilova and Saudi Arabia's Mishari Al-Harbi came second and third, respectively. The first week of the championship - for the one-star and four-star categories, kicked off yesterday and continues until Sunday with equestrians from 17 countries taking part.

In another development, Rider Fawaz Al-Subaiee won the title of the first day of the Late Abdelaziz Al-Mudaeed (Dean of Kuwait journalism) show jumping tournament being held at Kuwait Riding Center in Subhan. Al-Subaiee was first in the sev-

enth heat at the height of 135 cm followed by riders Ghazi Al-Juraiwi, Abdulrahman Al-Fuzaiee, Hala Al-Mulla and Fawaz Al-Rashed.

Nick Channing won the heat of 125 cm height, leaving behind Hussein Al-Kharafi, Hamad Al-Hajiri and Ghazi Al-Fulajji. Chairman of the Organizing Committee Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Musaeed said there are more than 350 riders competing in the tournament. He said the tournament is being run on the point system to ensure total transparency and give all riders the opportunity to compete.

County cricketers faced racist abuse: UK report

LONDON: Several cricketers who played for English county side Essex were subject to racist abuse and discriminatory treatment, according to an independent report released on Friday. References to players' ethnic, racial and religious origins were "entirely normalized and tolerated behavior" within the dressing-room culture between the mid-1990s and around 2013, according to the summary report by barrister Katharine Newton, which does not name players.

The county began an investigation in 2021 after allegations of discrimination were made by former Essex players Jahid Ahmed, Maurice Chambers and Zoheb Sharif. The findings relating to Essex come after a damning report in June by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket revealed "widespread" discrimination in the English game. The ICEC was established in 2021 following a racism scandal centred around the treatment of Pakistan-born bowler Azeem Rafiq at Yorkshire.

Newton said in her report conclusions that: "Those at the receiving end of this treatment were too scared to speak up for fear of damaging their prospects of selection and progression. "In any event, there were no effective mechanisms for raising such concerns." She said one of the players was given the nickname "bomber" following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. She also found that the phrase "curry muncher" was "commonly used" in the dressing room to describe individuals of South Asian heritage.

One player "was repeatedly subject to racist treatment" by another player who offered him bananas "in a manner which was unequivocally racist". Her report found a lack of understanding of the needs of Muslim players at Essex and that a former chairman used racist language during a board meeting. The club were last year fined £50,000 (\$62,600) and reprimanded after admitting two charges relating to that meeting.—AFP



Amateurs League spreads awareness about cancer

KUWAIT: The Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) announced the launch of the sixth Kuwaiti Amateurs Football League in order to spread awareness about cancer diseases and limit their risks with early detection so as to increase their chances of recovery. CAN's board and executive committee member, Dr

Hussa Al-Shaheen, said the league is being run in cooperation with Haidoo Academy, the sports arm of CAN, and the Public Authority for Sport for the fifth year under the patronage of senior sports commentator Khalid Al-Harban.

The initiative is aimed at promoting awareness of cancer diseases. CAN seeks to diversify its activities in a way that suits all groups of society. Dr Al-Shaheen lauded the efforts of sports commentator Al-Harban, adding that his agreement to sponsor the events comes out of his belief that sports discipline oneself and inspire enthusiasm and collective work, which leads to stronger social bonds. Head of Haidoo Academy, Abdullah Al-Saleh, said CAN is honored to launch this sports event.

News in Brief

Champions Ahly drop points

JOHANNESBURG: CAF Champions League title-holders Al Ahly dropped points for the second successive weekend when held 0-0 at home by Chabab Belouizdad of Algeria on Friday. After an away draw against Young Africans in Tanzania six days ago, the record 11-time African champions were expected to collect maximum points from the Group D match in Alexandria. But a defiant Belouizdad defense, backed by former Algeria goalkeeper Rais M'Bolhi, contained an Ahly attack including Mahmoud Kahraba, Hussein El Shahat and South African Percy Tau. The result was a major boost for Belouizdad, who conceded an added-time goal to lose away to Medeama of Ghana last weekend. Medeama could not achieve back-to-back home victories, however, as they surrendered the lead in a 1-1 draw against Young Africans in Kumasi. — AFP

Hamilton deplores FIA probe

PARIS: Mercedes' star driver Lewis Hamilton on Friday hit out at the conflict of interest probe opened and then closed by motor sport's governing body, the FIA, into the team's boss Toto Wolff and his wife Susie. Speaking at a press conference in Baku, Hamilton condemned a "disappointing week", in which "the governing body of our sport has sought to question the integrity of one of the most incredible female leaders we ever had in our sport, Susie Wolff, without questioning, without any evidence". The seven-time world champion added that it was an "unacceptable situation" and that the FIA had simply contented itself to close the matter by saying "I'm sorry" at the end". On Thursday, the FIA announced that it had ended a short-lived investigation into a potential conflict of interest believed to centre on the Wolfs. — AFP

Russia: IOC rules 'discriminatory'

MOSCOW: Russia denounced Friday the "discriminatory conditions" imposed by the International Olympic Committee for Russian athletes to take part in the Paris 2024 Games, requiring them to compete as neutrals and not actively support the Ukraine offensive. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) earlier on Friday allowed Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate as neutrals. "The conditions are discriminatory, they are going against the principles of sport," said Russian sports minister Oleg Matytsin. "They are damaging the Olympic Games themselves, and not Russian sport. The approach is unacceptable." He still said that those athletes that can fulfil the conditions will go to Paris. — AFP

Patriots hold off Steelers rally

NEW YORK: Tight end Hunter Henry celebrated his birthday with two touchdowns as the New England Patriots snapped their five-game NFL losing streak with a 21-18 upset of the Pittsburgh Steelers on Thursday. Henry hauled in two touchdown passes from quarterback Bailey Zappe in the second quarter as the Patriots raced into what turned out to be a decisive 21-3 lead at a frigid Acrisure Stadium in Pittsburgh. The Steelers threatened to reel in the New England lead after moving to within three points early in the fourth quarter, but the rally ran out of steam as New England hung on for only their third win of a disappointing season. "We started fast, put some points on the board and played from ahead, which is what we've been wanting to do," Henry, 29, said after the victory. "We were desperate to score some touchdowns and I was able to come up big tonight. I couldn't have done it without the other guys though." — AFP

Everton move out of relegation

LIVERPOOL: Everton struck three times in the final 11 minutes to climb out of the Premier League relegation zone despite a 10-point deduction as Newcastle were stunned 3-0 at Goodison Park. Dwight McNeil, Abdoulaye Doucoure and Beto scored the goals as the Toffees' fine form continued despite the blow of being hit by the toughest sporting sanction dished out in Premier League history for breaches of financial rules. Newcastle were made to pay for two uncharacteristic errors by England international Kieran Trippier as fatigue hit the injury ravaged Magpies in the closing stages. McNeil pounced to smash into the top corner 11 minutes from time before Doucoure secured a fifth win in seven games for Everton. — AFP

Evert reveals cancer recurrence

LOS ANGELES: Eighteen-time Grand Slam champion Chris Evert has been diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer and is undergoing treatment, she said in a statement on Friday. "While this is a diagnosis I never wanted to hear, I once again feel fortunate that it was caught early," Evert said in a statement released through ESPN, and also shared on her feed on the X social media platform. "Based on a PET CT scan, I underwent another robotic surgery this past week. Doctors found cancer cells in the same pelvic region. All cells were removed, and I have begun another round of chemotherapy." Evert, 68, said in January of 2022 that she had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Her younger sister, Jeanne Evert Dubin, died of the same disease in February of 2020 at the age of 62. Evert said she would step away from her commentating work with ESPN and "will be unable to join my colleagues when ESPN makes its return to Melbourne for the Australian Open next month." — AFP

Sports

Man City handed brutal reality check: Guardiola

Manchester City face lowly Luton

LONDON: Pep Guardiola says Manchester City's recent Premier League slump has delivered a much-needed reality check as he prepares for Sunday's match at lowly Luton. Guardiola said he and his treble-winning players had enjoyed being stroked "like a cat" for too long during their period of domination and they "needed a shake". City were outplayed at Aston Villa in their 1-0 defeat on Wednesday — a result that extended their winless run in the Premier League to four games and pushed them down to fourth in the table. Guardiola's men, chasing an unprecedented fourth consecutive top-flight title, are now six points behind leaders Arsenal.

"As a manager I sometimes need that, I need that challenge," Guardiola told a press conference on Friday. "I think for everyone it is good. I think it's necessary to live that. For a long time, we've lived like a cat (strokes head) and (known) how good we are. "We need it to say 'Guys this business — it's terrible'. You are unbeatable and then, oh my God, you cannot win one game — from nothing. "Maybe for myself first, I need that challenge to prove myself, that I'm a good manager, to help the players overcome that situation.



Manchester City's Spanish head coach Pep Guardiola

"For the players it's a good challenge to say 'Aston Villa were miles better than all of us, so imagine the other ones'," Guardiola, whose team won the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup last season, admitted City could miss out on qualifying for next season's Champions League. "We have to work hard," he said. "As soon as we realize (it) we come

out of here quicker. "The club needed it. One month ago I thought the club needed a shake, to be shaken. The bad results can help you to live that."

City will have influential midfielder Rodri back at Kenilworth Road after he completed his latest ban. The Spaniard has now missed four games through suspension this season and Guardiola's side have lost them all. Guardiola again overlooked Calvin Phillips when selecting his side at Villa Park, fuelling further speculation the England midfielder could leave the club in January. Phillips has failed to establish himself at the Etihad Stadium since his move from Leeds in 2022.

Guardiola said: "I don't know what will happen. I feel so sorry for my decisions for him. He doesn't deserve for one second not to have minutes but it's just that I visualize things and struggle a little to see him." Kevin De Bruyne, who has been out since undergoing hamstring surgery in August, has been named in City's squad for the Club World Cup later this month but it is not yet clear if he will be fit to play. Guardiola said: "Maybe it is a little bit early, but I don't know." - AFP

Crisis-club Lyon look to start the fightback against lowly Toulouse

PARIS: Floundering Lyon will look to stop the rot when they host fellow Ligue 1 strugglers Toulouse on Sunday, with the home team six points from safety. After losing 3-0 on Wednesday to Marseille, in the match reorganized after the attack on their team bus as it arrived at the Stade Velodrome, Lyon have no manager and three defeats since their sole win of the season on November 12.

Interim coach Pierre Sage has replaced Fabio Grosso, after the Italian, who suffered serious head injuries in the bus attack, was dismissed last week for the poor results. With still no permanent appointment in sight, results on the pitch have not improved, with Lyon remaining on seven points and shipping six goals in the two subsequent games. "You just need to look at the standings to know we're in danger... But I don't think there's no hope left. We have a duty to work and try and pick up points," said Sage after Wednesday's loss.

Their first home game since Grosso's departure sees Toulouse, who sit just above the relegation play-off spot, visit the Groupama Stadium in what is already a key clash in the battle to avoid the drop this season. Six points separate the sides, and if the seven-time Ligue 1 champions are to avoid an astonishing relegation they desperately need to start picking up points, especially from the teams around them in the table.

After Nice, PSG?

Following their first defeat of the season at Nantes last weekend, Nice welcome fifth-placed Reims on Sunday as the Aiglons seek to keep pace with leaders Paris Saint-Germain. Florent Mollet's first-half winner was the first time Nice have gone behind in a match this term, but the game was overshadowed by the fatal stabbing of a Nantes supporter prior to kick-off. Francesco Farioli's side have been outstanding in defense, conceding a miserly five goals in 14 outings, but have failed to shine at the other end with just an average of one goal per game. With PSG playing the day before and having the chance to open up a seven-point gap, it would be the perfect moment for Nice's attack to spark into life against the top half's joint-second most porous defense.

Nantes will have designs on making it two in two against Ligue 1's top two when they visit the capital on Saturday but, in order to do so, face the unenviable task of keeping Kylian Mbappe quiet. The 24-year-old superstar already has 15 goals this campaign, more than double the total of his closest competitor in the scoring charts, and will want to use the match as a springboard before PSG's crunch Champions League tie at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday. The Gabonese striker was Marseille's marquee summer signing and now aged 34, he is redefining that form that made him one of Europe's most feared strikers. He was back to his brilliant best on Wednesday as he served up two assists and a goal during his side's 3-0 win in their rescheduled match against Lyon. — AFP



TURIN: Napoli's Brazilian defender #05 Juan Jesus (top) fights for the ball with Juventus' Serbian forward #09 Dusan Vlahovic during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Napoli on December 8, 2023. — AFP

Juventus overcome champions Napoli

TURIN: Defender Federico Gatti grabbed his second goal in as many matches as Juventus saw out a 1-0 home win against champions Napoli on Friday to go top of Serie A. The centre-back rose highest shortly after the break to nod in the only goal of a closely contested match between two of Italy's footballing powerhouses. Victory in Turin sends Juventus to top spot in the table, although Inter Milan will have the chance to restore their two-point lead when they host Udinese on Saturday.

"Winning this evening was very important, because we put Napoli at -12 and that is a great result," said Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri to DAZN. "As for dreams and the Scudetto, we need to keep improving step by step, especially when we make too many mistakes," he added. Fifth-placed Napoli had the better of the opening exchanges and looked the more likely side to break the deadlock in the first half. Matteo Politano fizzed one just past the Juve goal on nine minutes and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia had the best early chance just before the half-hour mark.

Excellent hold-up play by Victor Osimhen sucked in the hosts' defense before he squared to his Georgian teammate, who uncharacteristically

snatched at the chance and ballooned it over the bar. Then, 11 minutes later Giovanni Di Lorenzo looked certain to open the scoring after a defensive mix-up, but Wojciech Szczesny flew off his line to make a fine one-handed save to keep things level. The home team started the second half strongly and Dusan Vlahovic rattled the post on 49 minutes, following good play by Manuel Locatelli and Weston McKennie.

Two minutes later, Andrea Cambiaso collected a Napoli clearance and swung the ball into the box and onto the forehead of Gatti, whose towering header at the back post was enough to separate the sides. It was the 25-year-old's second consecutive winning goal for Juventus, after his 94th-minute strike at Monza last Friday. Szczesny nearly turned villain when his miskick was headed back to Osimhen who stole in ahead of the 'keeper before rolling the ball into an empty net, only to be denied by the linesman's flag with 20 minutes remaining.

Despite Napoli pressure at the end, the Old Lady held on comfortably to see out the victory. Coach Walter Mazzarri nonetheless saw positives in the defeat. "The lads played a great game, I think they dominated the match, forced Juventus to defend in their own area for almost the entire second half," he said. But Gatti's third goal of the season, the most of any Serie A defender this term, remained the difference as Napoli endured already their fifth loss of the campaign, one more than they had in 2022-23. — AFP

Today's matches

English Premier League	
Everton v Chelsea beIN Sports HD 1	17:00
Fulham v West Ham United beIN Sports HD Xtra 1	17:00
Luton v Manchester City beIN Sports HD 2	17:00
Tottenham v Newcastle beIN Sports HD 1 beIN 4K HDR	19:30
Spanish League	
Atletico de Madrid v Almeria beIN Sports HD 3 beIN Sports 2 FR	16:00
Granada v Athletic de Bilbao beIN Sports HD 3	18:15
Cadiz v Osasuna beIN Sports HD 3	20:30
Barcelona v Girona beIN Sports HD 1 beIN Sports 1 FR	23:00
Italian League Serie A	
Frosinone v Torino beIN Sports Fr 5 HD max	14:30
Monza v Genoa AD SPORTS Premium 1	17:00
Salernitana v Bologna AD SPORTS Premium 1	20:00
Roma v Fiorentina AD SPORTS Premium 1 beIN Sports 2 FR	22:45

Messi, Argentina to face old foe Chile in Copa America

MIAMI: Lionel Messi and Argentina will get the chance to avenge their defeats to Chile in the 2015 and 2016 Copa America finals after being grouped with their old rivals in the draw for next year's tournament on Thursday. Reigning Copa America champions Argentina will defend their title in the United States next summer in an expanded 16-team tournament which features 10 South American teams and six qualifiers from the CONCACAF region.

Argentina, winners of last year's World Cup, will kick off the tournament on June 20 in Atlanta against either Canada or Trinidad & Tobago, who meet in a playoff next year to determine one of two remaining CONCACAF slots. The Argentines will then face Chile in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on June 25 in a repeat of the 2016 Copa America Centenario final held at the same venue. Argentina, beaten by Chile in Santiago on penalties a year earlier in 2015, also lost the 2016 final on spot-kicks, with Messi blazing his penalty over the bar. The Argentine captain later announced a shortlived retirement from international football after the defeat, before reversing the move and continuing his career.

The world champions will wrap up their Group A campaign in familiar territory for Inter Miami' Messi, facing Peru in Miami on June 29 in their final first-round game. Elsewhere, Mexico were drawn in a Group B alongside Ecuador, Venezuela and Jamaica, while the United States face Uruguay, Panama and Bolivia in Group C. Five-time world champions Brazil, beaten in the 2021 final on home soil by Argentina at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, have a potentially tricky group containing Colombia, Paraguay and either Costa Rica or Honduras. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, **Sarafraz** Backapatna Sulaiman (passport No. T8277581) do hereby change my daughter's name from Amani, (Passport No. T8282959) to Amani (as given name) Sarafraz (as surname) for all purposes. She will henceforth be known in the name Amani Sarafraz and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all her documents. **7-12-2023**

I, **vinod kumar** panchal holder of indian passport no. p6279413 having permanent address v p o kherwara near sitamata temple udaipur rajasthan residing in kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: given name vinod kumar and surname lohar.

#4570 7-12-2023

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Salah's 200th goal lifts Liverpool

Man Utd suffer embarrassing 3-0 defeat against Bournemouth



LONDON: Liverpool's Egyptian striker #11 Mohamed Salah (center) watches as his deflected shot beats Crystal Palace's English goalkeeper #01 Sam Johnstone for their first goal during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool on December 9, 2023. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's shambolic season took another turn for the worse in a 3-0 home defeat to Bournemouth as Liverpool went top of the Premier League on Saturday. Jurgen Klopp admitted the Reds were fortunate to win 2-1 at 10-man Crystal Palace after Jordan Ayew's harsh red card changed the game late on.

Bournemouth's fine form continued as the Cherries secured their first ever victory at Old Trafford in style on a day United's season hit a new low. Erik ten Hag's men had risen to sixth thanks to six wins in eight Premier League games. But a dreadful display put the Dutchman's

position back under the spotlight ahead of a likely exit from the Champions League at the group stage in midweek.

Dominic Solanke put Bournemouth in front after just five minutes when he turned home Lewis Cook's cross. Solanke hit the post and Antoine Semenyo came close as Bournemouth continued to have the better of the chances. But they had to wait until 68 minutes to double their lead when Philip Billing rose to head home Marcus Tavernier's cross. Marcos Senesi then set the seal on a famous victory as Andoni Iraola's men moved 10 points clear of the relegation zone thanks to a fourth win in five games.

Liverpool 'lucky'

Klopp said he had never seen a side play so badly for 76 minutes and still emerge victorious as Liverpool fought back to maintain their title challenge. Palace were denied a first-half penalty by a VAR intervention but were awarded a spot-kick early in the second period as VAR spotted a foul on Jean-Philippe Mateta by Jarell Quansah. Mateta converted the penalty, but the Eagles were undone by two controversial yellow cards shown to Ayew.

Liverpool took advantage of the red card within seconds as Mohamed Salah's deflected shot brought up his 200th goal

for the club. Substitute Harvey Elliott then fired home a 91st-minute winner from outside the box to take Liverpool a point clear of Arsenal at the top of the table. "I'm a very happy manager in this moment, but I know we were lucky as well," said Klopp. "If you only win your really good games, you have no chance to be really successful, that's how it is, and obviously today was not a really good game from us. For 76 minutes it was a really bad performance."

The Gunners can go back top later on Saturday if they can end third-placed Aston Villa's run of 14 consecutive home Premier League wins. At

the bottom of the table, Chris Wilder kickstarted his second spell in charge of Sheffield United with a 1-0 win over Brentford. James McAtee scored the only goal as the Blades' second victory of the season edged them to within two points of safety.

Burnley remain off the bottom on goal difference after holding on for a 1-1 draw at Brighton. Wilson Odobert put the Claret's ahead, but Simon Adingra rescued a point for Brighton, who remain eighth. Nottingham Forest eased the pressure on manager Steve Cooper by ending a four-game losing streak with a 1-1 draw at Wolves. — AFP

Thunder top Warriors in overtime; Bulls add to Spurs slump

LOS ANGELES: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 38 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder harried Golden State into an NBA season-high 29 turnovers in a thrilling 138-136 NBA overtime victory on Friday. In front of an ecstatic crowd in Oklahoma City, the Thunder opened a 10-point lead in overtime on rookie Chet Holmgren's three-point play with 1:52 remaining. The Warriors cut the deficit to two points with less than a minute to go but couldn't get over the hump. The game was one of 13 on the slate on Friday, before Saturday's showdown between the Los Angeles Lakers and Indiana Pacers for the first NBA Cup.

San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama notched another milestone, scoring 21 points and grabbing 20 rebounds, but it didn't prevent the Spurs from falling to a franchise record-equalling 16th straight defeat, 121-112 to the Chicago Bulls. The 19-year-old French phenomenon became the youngest player in NBA history to record a 20-point, 20-rebound game, surpassing Dwight Howard who was a few days closer to his 20th birthday when he did it in 2005.

In other games, Philadelphia's reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid scored 38 points and grabbed 14 rebounds to propel the 76ers to a 125-114 victory over the Atlanta Hawks despite a late injury scare. The Cameroonian big man appeared to injure his left knee, going down hard in the lane in the waning minutes. He was slowed but stayed in the game, draining a turnaround jumper to extend the Sixers' lead to four points with two and a half minutes to go.

It was part of a 15-0 scoring run that saw the Sixers pull away. Tyrese Maxey, who finished with 30 points, drilled a three-pointer in the burst capped by De'Anthony Melton's dunk. Embiid downplayed the injury after the game. "I just twisted it," Embiid said. "So we are going to talk about it and see how it feels. But I don't know. I should be fine." In Oklahoma City, Stephen Curry's three-pointer put the Warriors up by three with 19 seconds left in regulation. Holmgren, fouled on a three-point attempt, calmly drained three free throws to tie it at 118-118 with 7.7 seconds left.

Turnovers and fouls

Curry missed a last-gasp three-pointer and they went to the extra session. Curry scored 10 of his 34 points in overtime, but the Warriors couldn't overcome the 29 turnovers that led to 35 Thunder points. "It's turnovers and fouls, that's what it comes down to," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "We're good enough to win the championship, I believe that. But if we're going to just turn the ball over, throw the basketball to the other team, and foul, then we're going to lose." In Denver the reigning champion Nuggets suffered their first home defeat of the season, falling 114-106 to the Houston Rockets — who fended off a late Nuggets surge to win for the first time on the road.

The Dallas Mavericks led wire-to-wire in a 125-112 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers, but saw Kyrie Irving exit in the second quarter with a foot injury. Irving was down after being fouled when teammate Dwight Powell, going for the rebound, fell hard onto his lower leg. In Boston, Derrick White scored 30 points and Kristaps Porzingis returned from a four-game injury absence to add 21 in the Celtics' 133-123 victory over the New York Knicks.

Jayson Tatum added 25 points, six rebounds and five assists for the Celtics. Jaylen Brown scored 17 before he was ejected after getting two quick technicals in the fourth quarter. Brown, apparently irked by a foul call, said something to draw a technical. Subbed out of the game, he continued jawing and was handed a second technical and tossed for the first time in his career. In Orlando, Franz Wagner scored 27 points and Paolo Banchero added 24 for the Magic, who handed the Detroit Pistons a 19th straight defeat 123-91. — AFP



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander



FRANKFURT: Bayern Munich's English forward #09 Harry Kane vies for the ball with Frankfurt's Portuguese defender #24 Aurelio Buta and Frankfurt's Brazilian defender #35 Tuta during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Eintracht Frankfurt and FC Bayern Munich on December 9, 2023. - AFP

Bayern thrashed 5-1 by Frankfurt

BERLIN: Bayern Munich suffered a jolt to their title defense, losing their first league game of the season 5-1 in Frankfurt and handing Bayer Leverkusen the chance to open a six-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga. In a wet and wild contest in Frankfurt, the hosts raced into an extraordinary 3-0 first-half lead, with Omar Marmoush, Junior Dina Ebimbe, and Hugo Larsson scoring the goals as Dino Toppmoller's side outmuscled a timid Bayern.

Joshua Kimmich dragged Bayern back into the match just before half-time but French midfielder Ebimbe had other ideas, capping a scintillating counter-attack after a mistake by Dayot Upamecano to make it four. Ansgar Knauff added a fifth to put the game out of reach for Thomas Tuchel's side to complete a memorable performance for Frankfurt, who become the first team to score five goals against

Bayern in the first 60 minutes of a league game since Frankfurt themselves, in 1975.

Leaders Bayer Leverkusen travel to third-place Stuttgart on Sunday on a weekend when six of the Bundesliga's top seven face each other. Union Berlin won their first game since August 26 with a 3-1 victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach ensuring a winning start in the Bundesliga under new coach Nenad Bjelica. The Croatian coach ran down the touchline to join the celebrations with his players as the team climbed to 15th.

Elsewhere, Werder Bremen arrested a four-game winless slump with a 2-0 win over Augsburg, secured by Niklas Stark's first-half strike and Marvin Ducksch's, midway through the second. Heidenheim edged out Darmstadt with a 3-2 win in a meeting of two of the newly-promoted strugglers. Jan Schoepner scored twice for Heidenheim, which leaves Darmstadt winless in seven Bundesliga games. Freiburg sneaked a 1-0 win in Wolfsburg ahead of the day's headline clash between Borussia Dortmund and RB Leipzig. — AFP