

5 Milei sworn in as Argentina braces for economic reforms



11 NIC honors Shift graduates in strategic partnership with Creative Confidence



13 Peace Nobel winner Mohammadi's children accept award on her behalf



16 Man City end winless run as Chelsea crash at Everton



Expat driving licenses go digital

Assembly panel approves party-like election system, scraps one-vote system

Amir's health stable

KUWAIT: The health condition of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan affairs minister Sunday. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery for HH the Amir. — KUNA



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

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced that physical driving licenses will stop being issued for expatriates from Dec 10, 2023, and that the digital license through the Kuwait Mobile ID app will solely be used. The license will be valid for one year and can be renewed through the Sahel app or on the ministry's website. The move comes on the instructions of Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the ministry said in a statement. Domestic drivers on article 20 visas and international cargo truck drivers are exempt from the digital-only license condition, the ministry said. The license's validity can be checked on the Mobile ID app, the ministry said, explaining the green color indicates that the license is valid while red indicates that it is invalid, requiring renewal through the Sahel app or withdrawal according to traffic laws, with the license holder required to visit the General Traffic Department.

The ministry clarified that when traveling outside Kuwait, expats must use driving licenses issued by their respective countries. It added these steps are part of the

ongoing digital transformation process at the interior ministry, aiming to facilitate and simplify procedures, reduce paperwork and save public funds.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly's legal and legislative committee on Sunday voted to approve a draft law to reform the election system by introducing for the first time a party-like lists system and also abolishing the controversial single-vote system. Under the new system, candidates are allowed to contest the elections based on lists – groups – that must include between four and six candidates. In addition, candidates can still run on their own as individuals, head of the committee MP Mohammad Al-Sayer said.

Under the new system, every Kuwaiti voter can cast two votes — one must go to one of the lists and the other can be given to another list or to an individual candidate. This system will abolish the single-vote system, which allows voters to cast just one vote. This system was introduced unilaterally by the government about a decade ago and triggered political disputes. Kuwait will remain divided into five electoral districts and each will elect 10

MPs. MP Saud Al-Asfour, writing on his X account, said he supports the draft law but criticized the failure of the committee to discuss other proposals to redistribute voters in the constituencies to have a fair distribution of voters in the five constituencies.

Member of the panel, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, said proposals calling for the redistribution of voters among electoral constituencies have been delayed to prevent disputes among lawmakers. Under the present distribution system, the fifth and fourth constituencies, with mainly tribal voters, have almost 60 percent of the voters but still elect only 20 of the 50 seats, whereas the remaining three constituencies have just over 40 percent of the voters but elect as many as 30 lawmakers. MP Asfour called the distribution of the voters as "unfair". Kandari said this matter will be left for the election commission to settle.

MP Osama Al-Shaheen described the new system as a "major leap" for democratic reform in the way to implement a full parliamentary system in Kuwait. The draft law is scheduled to be debated by the National Assembly on Dec 19.

Raise your hand if you support genocide

By Dr Ziad Al-Alyan



It's time to invoke article 377... The UN Security Council resolution to demand a ceasefire in Gaza fails after a veto by the US. Thirteen other members voted in favor of the resolution put forward by the United Arab Emirates. This was put forward after UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres formally warned the 15 members of the global threat from the two-month war. Sane members in the council all uttered the same concern about the message being sent to the world and other civilians who might find themselves in a similar situation. But Deputy US Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood informed the council that the draft resolution was rushed and imbalanced. He also stated it was divorced from reality and wouldn't move the needle on the ground. Robert had more words of wisdom when he stated that a ceasefire now would only "plant the seeds for the next war".

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that the only thing divorced from reality is Ambassador Wood. Spending quite a significant time scrolling on his phone while

other members were talking, I am not surprised that the ambassador of evil missed the fact that 18,000 civilians have been slaughtered. Half the dead are children!

Robert also had the audacity to accuse the council of "a serious moral failure". It is worth reflecting on that comment for a while. The ambassador of the government sanctioning genocide is calling out the council members of a moral failure. The only human in the room to raise his hand up against a humanitarian ceasefire is calling others out as failing humanity. Jokes aside, I believe his presence in the room is an insult to humanity. I struggle to understand how this is OK in 2023.

The Zionist entity has bombarded Gaza from the air, imposed a siege and began a ground attack. More than 2 million people have been forced out of their homes. What more has to happen for the world to put their fear of persecution away and stand up against the Zionist entity? Enough is enough!

The UN secretary general called this situation a "spiraling humanitarian nightmare", yet the UN can't do anything about it. The council that was trusted by the world has spoken. Why do we allow one country to veto a resolution demanded by all? The US has proven its lack of ability to be a moral watchdog for the world while supporting an entity committing genocide.

I had to research article 377, as I have to admit I wasn't aware of it. This United Nations General Assembly resolution "uniting for peace" states that in a case where the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity amongst its five permanent members, fails to act as required to maintain international security and peace, the General Assembly can consider the matter and act immediately and issue recommendations including the use of military power when necessary in order to restore international security.

This was created for the purpose of not allowing one member to obstruct the Security Council from carrying out its function mandated by the UN charter. The irony is that the uniting for peace resolution was initiated by the United States in October 1950. However, in typical fashion, this only applies when it doesn't contradict their personal needs.

It's time for the international community to exercise a shift in mindset and allay Zionist fears that have been imbedded over years. The cognitive terrorism that has been exercised over the last several decades through the Zionist media machine and the swift aggressive action taken against anybody that dares criticize the Zionist entity must come to an end now.

This is best seen in Hollywood and the world of media. The fear of "getting can-



US Deputy Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood

celled" is overwhelming for many. The most recent victim is the journalist Mehdi Hassan, whose show was cancelled by MSNBC because the democratic establishment has decided to shift in support of the Zionist entity. He was fired after his interview with Mark Regev, the Zionist advisor. Many American citizens and journalists have expressed their disap-

pointment with this move by MSNBC. We should stop this historic move to intimidate, harass silence and often fire those who represent mainstream voices that speak against the Zionist entity.

It is time to protect the First Amendment of freedom of speech. Once again, the US is the pioneer of great ideas as long as the circumstances are in its favor.

Saudi, Iraq stand firm as COP28 targets fossil fuels

DUBAI: Oil producers Saudi Arabia and Iraq stood their ground at UN climate talks on Sunday as they faced pressure to drop their opposition to a phase-out of fossil fuels at COP28 in Dubai. With less than 48 hours left before the conference's official end, COP28 president Sultan Al-Jaber invited ministers to give their views in a "majlis" — a traditional Gulf Arab meeting held in a circle.

While Jaber called the gathering in an effort to produce a compromise, warning that "failure is not an option", countries held firm in their positions. The European Union and members of Pacific islands states threatened by rising seas reiterated their calls for

Continued on Page 6

Hamas warns Zionists to free Palestinians

GAZA: Hamas warned Sunday that no captives would leave Gaza alive unless its demands for prisoner releases are met, while the World Health Organization said the territory's health system is collapsing after more than two months of war. Hamas launched the deadliest-ever attack on the Zionist entity on Oct 7 in which it killed some 1,200 people and took around 240 captives back to Gaza.

The Zionist entity has responded with a relentless military offensive that has reduced much of Gaza to rubble and killed at least 17,997 people, mostly women and children. As aid groups warn the territory is on the brink of being overwhelmed by disease and starvation, the head of the United Nations decried a divided and "paralyzed" Security Council for failing to agree on a ceasefire.

"Gaza's health system is on its knees and collapsing," said World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, with only 14 of 36 hospitals functioning at any capacity. The United Nations estimates that 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians fleeing Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip stare at a crater caused by Zionist bombing on Salah Al-Din Road on Dec 10, 2023. — AFP



Local

KACCH and BACCH hold Heartful Charitable Art Exhibition & Auction

Raising awareness and funds for psychosocial and palliative care services for kids



(Left to right) Diraar Alghanim, Board Member of KACCH & BACCH, Anwar Al Mulla, Donor, Dr Tala Al Dabbous, CEO, Margaret Al Sayer, Founding Director, Dr Hilal Al Sayer, President, Maysan Al Dakheel, Asst VP, Noor Financial Investment Co, Basma Ismail, Community Engagement and Volunteering Manager pose for a group photo.



Paintings by children staying at KACCH & BACCH hospital. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In my view

Self-education

By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

Local@kuwaittimes.com

As time progresses, the landscape of education evolves. In the past, education heavily relied on teachers at all levels. However, contemporary times highlight the significance of mastering the art of self-learning. It has become evident that individuals adept at self-education possess greater competence than those dependent on traditional teaching methods. Those who excel in self-learning acquire valuable skills and a depth of knowledge that propels them to advanced levels.

In today's world, numerous individuals hold university degrees, spanning from bachelor's to doctorate levels. However, possessing degrees does not necessarily equate to the ability to contribute new and groundbreaking knowledge. Many academic works, including master's and doctoral dissertations, often build upon the research of previous scholars without introducing genuinely innovative ideas, in stark contrast to the groundbreaking contributions of European scientists.

Former US President Donald Trump's decision to devalue university degrees as job qualifications sent a powerful message. It was not an assertion that students should not pursue education but rather an emphasis on the global need for individuals who can generate new knowledge. The focus shifts from mere academic qualifications to the creation of original insights and contributions.

The existing challenges in education include widespread cheating and forgery of university certificates. For instance, a student studying law in a college teaching in English must truly master the language to earn a degree. This may involve studying in foreign schools or at universities where English is the primary language of instruction.

Given these global challenges, it becomes imperative to implement admission exams to assess competency accurately. The responsibility for education is increasingly shifting to students, emphasizing the need for self-directed learning. Students must cultivate their knowledge, talents, and skills independently to contribute meaningfully to future advancements in various fields.

A critical aspect of this responsibility lies in parental involvement, particularly maternal guidance. In some societies, mothers bear the primary responsibility for supervising, monitoring and directing their children's education. Unfortunately, in certain Arab societies, cultural norms and a bustling social life often hinder mothers from dedicating sufficient time to their children's education.

To address these challenges, it is essential to reconsider social norms and adopt practices that align with educational priorities. In Islam, for instance, parents are encouraged to visit their mothers and fathers once a week, but in our society there are daily visits to all relatives and friends. Translating foreign research and publications into various languages is also crucial in nurturing an educated generation capable of establishing a new scientific foundation that benefits humanity as a whole.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH) held the opening of the Heartful Charitable Art Exhibition & Auction on Saturday at Bayt Abdullah, which is the first and still the only children's hospice in the Middle East. Scheduled to run for three days, the event showcases and sells diverse pieces by 45 local artists and a special edition of artworks painted by the children staying at the hospital.

The aim of this event is to bring together art enthusiasts, art curators, philanthropists and the local community to learn more about the facilities of KACCH and BACCH and contribute directly with their purchase of the artworks to offer free psychosocial and palliative care to children in Kuwait.

Regarding the event's vital role in supporting the initiative of the organization, Margaret Al-Sayer, OBE, Co-Founder and Founding Director of KACCH

& BACCH, said: "As we embark on this artistic journey, let us be mindful of the exhibition's purpose — to raise awareness about the importance of psychosocial support for children in hospitals, ensure the delivery of crucial palliative care for children with life-limiting conditions and raise essential funds for the sustainability of KACCH & BACCH's free pediatric services."

Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, President of KACCH & BACCH, highlighted that for the past 15 years, the community's generous donations were the backbone behind the organization running. "It's from the community to the community — we built the whole place from the community, by the charity of people," he said. Dr Hilal Al-Sayer and Margaret Al-Sayer noted this place provides an opportunity for all children suffering from life-threatening illnesses to live the best quality of life, and one of the reasons why they chose to hold an art exhibition is that they recognized art as a very crucial part of the children's palliative care journey.

Margaret Al-Sayer said that this can easily be spotted on the walls that are filled with their paint-

ings. "Children love painting and art. Give them space and some colors, and they will do anything for you," she said. Dr Hilal Al-Sayer echoed her words: "They express themselves through art." The curating team of Maha Alasaker and Yousif Abdulsaid expressed their pride of being part of this remarkable event, which reflects their collaborative effort that lasted for three months to bring this exhibition to life. Abdulsaid said it's their first time to participate in such a cause, which feels overwhelmingly beautiful to be able to add meaningful value to these children's lives.

Mohammed Kassim, an architect and creator who contributed with one of his artworks to the exhibition, said in the world of architecture where everyone is focused on maximizing their profit margin, it's very important for some artists to break the norm and do something for the community. "I try to keep myself balanced, where my professional life is about profit margins...but when I have my own space and my own time, I want to give something back to the world and not just take," Kassim said.



Minister, Pakistan envoy discuss food security

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, and Ambassador of Pakistan to the State of Kuwait Malik Mohammad Farooq discussed on Sunday ways to enhance cooperation within food security. In a statement, the Ministry of Commerce said that Minister Al-Aiban commended during the meeting the cooperation between Kuwait and Pakistan, adding that the two countries were eager to develop ties on all possible levels. The statement indicated that the meeting also touched on the food security opportunities offered by Pakistan to Kuwait, especially in agricultural and livestock imports. The two sides agreed to hold further meetings to look into other venues for cooperation. — KUNA

Kuwait Heart Foundation to host 15th conference

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Heart Foundation has announced the hosting of the 15th Gulf Heart Foundation Conference from Dec 13 to 16 at Grand Hyatt Hotel. Dr Rashed Al-Owayesh, Secretary-General of Kuwait Heart Foundation, highlighted the conference's significance in contributing to the development of health services in the country by discussing the latest research in the field of heart diseases.

Dr Owayesh emphasized the importance of the conference, where regional and international elite doctors will exchange expertise and information, gaining insights into modern methods and various skills. He stressed the need for regular medical tests to detect diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure early, enabling timely treatment and complication control. The foundation will leverage the participation of several specialists by organizing a popular question-and-answer session.

Dr Fahad Al-Hajeri, Chairman of the Scientific Committee at the conference, expressed joy in hosting the 15th Gulf Heart Foundation Conference in collaboration with the Kuwait Heart Foundation. He noted that this year's conference would bring together global experts for unprecedented discussions on recent developments in heart and blood vessel fields.

The conference will feature workshops cover-



Dr Rashed Al-Owayesh



Dr Fahad Al-Hajeri

ing advanced heart ultrasound, first aid, and ECG. Scientific sessions during the subsequent days will address various heart-related topics, including catheterization, valves, heart failure, artificial intelligence, heart and artery disease diagnoses and the role of medical imaging such as MRI and CT scans in diagnosing heart diseases. Modern treatments and scientific recommendations for diseases such as the relationship between tumors and heart diseases and myocardial hypertrophy will also be discussed.

The keynote speaker at the conference will be the Head of the Pediatric and Adult Cardiology Department at Cleveland Ohio Hospital. Sessions on heart surgeries and their role in simple interventions are also planned. Dr Hajeri highlighted an open awareness day for the public on Saturday from 5:00 to 9:00 pm at Grand Hyatt Hotel, offering various tests, including blood cholesterol and sugar levels and blood pressure checks.

Ministry alerts motorists amid foggy conditions



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Interior has issued a weather alert informing motorists to exercise caution on the roads as the level of visibility decreased due to foggy conditions in some areas. The Ministry stressed, in a statement, the preparedness of the Emergency Room (112) to promptly address any related concerns. Sea-goers are also asked to exercise caution and to contact the Coast Guard (1880888) during any emergency. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Political movements set aside differences for Palestinian cause

Conference sheds light on the ongoing Zionist massacres



By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Despite political differences, the Democratic Forum and the Constitutional Movement (Hadas) joined forces on Saturday during a conference focused on the Palestinian cause. The conference shed light on the ongoing Zionist massacres in occupied Palestine, specifically in Gaza, where over 17,000 civilians have been killed to date.

The event was attended by prominent figures in the local political scene and featured lectures from various experts who underscored Kuwait's enduring and steadfast support for the Palestinian people. Abdulhadi Al-Senafi, General Secretary of the Democratic Forum, emphasized the rejection of any displacement or coercion against the Palestinian people.

"At the same time that we remain in peace and security, there are missiles landing on the heads of children in Gaza. This bipartisan conference confirms that political differences all fall towards the Palestinian right to preserve Jerusalem," he said. Senafi highlighted the harsh reality of innocent lives being targeted and the bombing of civilian places, noting that the world has become accustomed to publicly stated lies by Western media against Palestine.

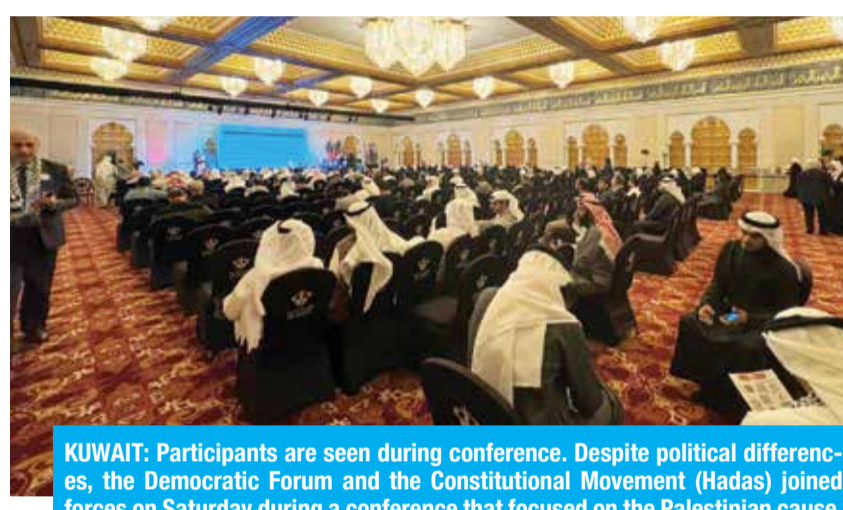
"We did not imagine that in the year 2023 we would witness firsthand the targeting of innocent people and hospitals, or that a force would dare to bomb civilian places. Seventeen thousand martyrs are not numbers — each one of them has a real life story that was ruined by the occupation," he added.

Musaed Al-Saedi, General Secretary of Hadas, added the Zionist enemy's statements revealed the extent of their danger, extending beyond Palestine to all of humanity. He emphasized the importance of supporting the resistance against the occupation and commended Kuwait's honorable stance, both from its people and the government.

Saedi said the Aqsa Flood operation has exposed the reality of double standards in Western media. "Their slogans were fake, and their claims were false. Aqsa Flood revealed this double standard. As Arab people and a Muslim nation, we adhere to human values equally according to what our religion teaches us. Therefore, our stance is clear regarding humanitarian issues," he said.

"Kuwait has provided an honorable position from the beginning, and it is still continuing. The crowds in Irada Square as well as our government diplomacy are firm in their stance. This behavior is our duty and reflects the goodness and authenticity of our people, who love good and renounce evil. More particularly, I would like to thank and commend HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who always supported the Palestinian cause, as well as the prominent position of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during these sensitive moments," he added.

MP Osama Al-Shaheen stressed the importance of parliamentary influence in supporting the Palestinian cause. "The movements supporting the cause and the demonstrations of the West are not enough to establish the needed result of helping the Palestinians. We



KUWAIT: Participants are seen during conference. Despite political differences, the Democratic Forum and the Constitutional Movement (Hadas) joined forces on Saturday during a conference that focused on the Palestinian cause.

must remind ourselves of the importance of the parliament to influence and the Kuwaiti parliament is influential in this issue and its supporting role in the cause," he said.

Yousef Al-Kandari, executive director of Youth for Al-Quds, highlighted the group's continuous efforts in supporting the Palestinian people and organizing awareness and cultural events. "We are a volunteer group that has been working for the Palestinian issue for more than 17 years. Our constant support is for the Palestinian people to return their blessed land. We organize a number of a awareness and cultural events including programs that aim to maintain the support of the Palestinian cause," he said.

Ali Abu Al-Milh, a writer and lawyer, mentioned the ongoing propaganda campaign against the Palestinian people and praised local media platforms for combating disinformation.

"This conference covers a number of problems related to the Palestinian people, and its continuity helps raise awareness among people. We know there is a huge propaganda campaign against the Palestinian people, and local media platforms are thankfully combating the rise of disinformation. English is considered the main language spoken around the world at the moment. So the reach of English local media to Western countries helps to raise awareness for the whole world as well," he said.

Yasser Ibrahim, a member of the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad, expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its firm stance on the Palestinian issue during these sensitive and painful moments in Gaza. "We have come to the brotherly country of Kuwait to thank its great people as well as the state for its firm stance regarding the Palestinian issue," he said.

In my view

The savage Sudanese warrior and civilized British soldier!

By Prof Abdullah Yousef Sahar



Local@kuwaittimes.com

Among many sad stories during the British colonization of Sudan was that of the British soldier who was complaining to his colleagues about the ruthlessness of the Sudanese! "How savage those Sudanese are," he uttered sarcastically! When his colleague asked him: "Oh, how come?!", the civilized British soldier replied: "Oh look... he had bitten my hand while I was slaughtering him!"

This story is perfectly applicable to what is happening by the Zionist media and the Zionist policy towards Gaza. While their media networks are bickering on the day of October 7, they totally ignore what happened before that day, in which the most heinous crimes were committed against humanity for 75 years. The 7th of October, 2023 is pretended to be the kickoff of the Zionist fictional novel on which they are trying to construct their chimera totem.

As if it had bolted from the blue, the Palestinians' reaction on that day against the unbearable and continuous oppression was considered to be the Big Bang of the universe - nobody knows exactly what happened before it!!! That is precisely what Netanyahu and his thugs want us to believe.

The civilized British soldier had forgotten the policy of colonialism, which involved killing and subjugation of the poor and helpless Sudanese by occupying their country for more than a century, although the civilized British soldier had started his story since the bite of the Sudanese warrior! This is certainly the case for Netanyahu's most racist policy and those who orchestrated the hypocritical solidarity around him. For them the story began on the 7th of October, not long before that.

The "tyrannical sadism" mentality, which has formed the so-called white man's burden during the colonization era, has represented itself vehemently into the arrogant current Zionist policy. This mentality that gives itself the exception to do what it wants, against whomever and at any time and space as it wishes, indeed represents an atrocious mindset that cannot lead to a world order and stability based on among other things, peace and cooperation.

With this mindset, Netanyahu is emblemized as the most hideous form of sadism in which he exhibits his self-destructive paranoia. Regrettably, he was able to transfer it to carcinogenic spillover behavior in front of the international community, as many governments stay in the shadow of evil.

Britain, and other countries, were forced to abandon their colonies after a long bloody struggle led against them by local patriotic forces, but at a high price. As the Soviet Union departed from Afghanistan full of shame and agony, Japan's occupation of China ended dramatically, America's withdrawal from Somalia was carried out with total defeat and embarrassment, the Ottoman seizure of Cyprus and Greece were done with disgrace, and the Zionist regime eventually will be forced to leave occupied Palestine with humiliation.

We do not know when this will take place, but it is, as past experiences demonstrate, an inevitable historical fact. Certainly, the cost will be greater over time for all human societies, and not just for the Palestinians and Jews. Therefore, the international community must move swiftly to stop the Zionist entity from its unquestioned actions that contradict international laws, global morals and civilized norms.

If Netanyahu wishes to force his false interpretations of Isaiah prophecy of enlightenment by destroying and killing innocents, there is no doubt he is running around in circles! What will be achieved, however, in the end is the victory of oppressed nations and those who are struggling against tyranny, whatever its kind, place and time. Ultimately, as Mark Twain stated: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes". It's not rocket science, but the civilized British soldier could not recognize it back then more than a century ago. Nevertheless, it was crystal clearly seen by the heart and soul of the Sudanese warrior.

In sum, despite the great losses that the Palestinians have to donate from their blood, this can eventually be a blessing in disguise. Thus, if the Palestinians have to bite the bullet, as the Sudanese warrior did to the British soldier, because they need their land back, the Zionist gangsters will ultimately jump out of the bandwagon and leave President Biden, "the man without a face" Brett McGurk and his cockroaches alone.

Currently, the undoubtful truth is that Gaza is not making history, but it is certainly balancing the rhymes of its eternal poetry. In few wistful words, Netanyahu is a disgrace to Judaism!!! He brought utter shame and disgrace to Judaism. I am certain that the overwhelming number of Jews subscribe to the above description.

Ooredoo, Eithar Volunteering Team host panel discussion

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, in collaboration with the Eithar Volunteering Team, hosted a panel discussion at The Hub Kuwait on Saturday as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The discussion focused on the societal impact and protection of women through mobile technology applications. The participants addressed various aspects of this phenomenon. Lawyer Bedour Al-Rasheed discussed how to legally address harassment and the difficulties of reporting due to societal pressures on the victim.

The founder of the Safe City app spoke about their firsthand experience in India confronting harassment through geographically monitored applications, which has since spread to more than 15 countries. The discussion concluded with Sondos Hussein from the Eithar Volunteering Team highlighting the available legal awareness tools to assist victims of violence and harassment in their "Thoub" (Cloak) application, which was launched last year.



KUWAIT: A group photo of participants at the Hub Kuwait on Saturday - part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

CAN launches 'We Are With You' campaign

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Dr Hussa Al-Shaheen, Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) Board and Executive Committee member, emphasized the effectiveness of the partnership strategy adopted by the awareness campaign in selecting accurate information through a team of specialized doctors. She appreciated the collaboration of various entities to reach the targeted audience within the "We Are With You" awareness campaign for youth and children cancers, inaugurated at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Dr Mariam Abdulmohsen Al-Otaibi, in charge of the "We Are With You" campaign, highlighted that 20 percent of diagnosed cancer cases annually are in individuals under 40 years of age, approximately 540 cases each year. She stressed the importance of launching the campaign to raise awareness among youth about risk factors, such as smoking, that increase the chances of developing cancer.

Dr Otaibi explained that the campaign aims to break down the fear barrier preventing youth from consulting doctors when experiencing unusual symptoms, as the fear of a cancer diagnosis delays treatment and hinders early detection, impacting the rate of recovery.



KUWAIT: Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) launches 'We Are With You' awareness campaign for youth and children cancers at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Dr Maha Burisli, a member of the "I Want to Learn" society, noted that 10-16 children out of every 100,000 are diagnosed with cancer. She highlighted the various treatment methods available in Kuwait for childhood cancer, including chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, immunodrugs, targeted treatment, bone marrow transplant and other modern approaches. The recovery rates for this disease range from 85 to 90 percent, with efforts aimed at achieving a 100 percent recovery rate.

Meanwhile, the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), in coordination with Sarah Khalaf, participated in an exhibition held alongside the campaign launch. The exhibition featured works by professional artists symbolizing the love of life, providing



psychological support for cancer patients and empowering them in their fight against the disease.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432

ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301

CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220

ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.com



37th Gaza relief plane heads to Al-Arish, Egypt

KUWAIT: The 37th Kuwait relief plane for the Gaza Strip left for the Egyptian city of Al-Arish on Sunday, carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid and three ambulances organized by the Al-Salam Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works in partnership with the International Islamic Charitable Organization and the Ayat Charitable Society.

In a statement to KUNA, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al-Salam Charitable Society, Dr. Nabil Al-Aoun, said that arrangements had been made with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Egyptian Red Crescent to send relief aid directly to Al-Arish warehouses at the Rafah crossing and deliver it to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Al-Aoun said that the relief aid came at the request of the Palestinian Red Crescent, especially in light of the severe decrease in all aspects of services and various materials in the Strip. — KUNA



Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A waning crescent moon rises above Kuwait City on December 10, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's pavilion at COP28 shows environmental initiatives, efforts



Visitors at Kuwait pavilion in Dubai.

DUBAI: Kuwait's pavilion at the Conference of the Parties (COP28), held in Dubai, displayed a rich cultural front that talks about Kuwait's efforts to support global environmental initiatives and its commitment to Gulf, regional, and international resolutions of carbon neutrality in the oil field in 2050 and nationwide in 2060. The Kuwaiti pavilion also included lectures on Ku-

wait's role and efforts in environmental preservation and discussed the notions of climate change and ways to limit it in pursuit of achieving sustainable developments in combating global environmental challenges.

The Kuwaiti participants also gave a summary of their projects aimed at improving the efficiency of natural resource use and promot-

ing innovation in renewable energy fields. It also shed light on the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the field of the environment through partnerships with regional and international organizations that combine economic growth and environmental protection to support climate change mitigation projects. — KUNA



Supervisors explain the projects.



Kuwait Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah attends a lecture at the pavilion.

Canadian envoy, Lulu Hypermarket director promote business ties

KUWAIT: In a significant step towards fostering bilateral economic ties, Aliya Mawani, the esteemed ambassador of Canada to Kuwait, engaged in a productive business meeting with Mohamed Haris, the Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait. The meeting took place at the Lulu Hypermarket Regional Office in Kuwait on the 6th of December, 2023.

The meeting showcased the commitment of both Canada and Kuwait in nurturing economic partnerships and enhancing trade relations. The presence of key officials from Lulu Hypermarket added an air of collaboration and innovation to the discussions, highlighting the dedication of both parties to expand their cooperation further.

Lulu Hypermarket, one of the largest retail chains in the region, currently offers more than 250 Canadian products on its shelves. The diversity of these products ranges across various categories, catering to the discerning tastes of Kuwaiti consumers. This range includes premium food items, beverages, consumer goods, and more, exemplifying the remarkable quality and variety that Canadian products are known for.

Ambassador Aliya Mawani expressed her enthusiasm for the ongoing cooperation between Canada and Ku-

wait, emphasizing the importance of creating mutually beneficial business opportunities. She underscored the potential for the expansion of Canadian product offerings in Lulu Hypermarket outlets across Kuwait, which aligns with the growing demand for high-quality international products in the Kuwaiti market. The meeting also saw the active participation of Jade Makki, Trade Commissioner from the Canadian Embassy, alongside Ambassador Mawani. Their joint contribution further solidifies collaborative efforts between Canada and Kuwait.

Director Mohamed Haris echoed Ambassador Mawani's sentiments, highlighting the success of the existing collaboration and outlining a strategic vision for the future. He affirmed Lulu Hypermarket's commitment to increasing the diversity of Canadian products available in their stores. The Director also expressed optimism about exploring new avenues for collaboration, encompassing various product categories, and enhancing the shopping experience for the Kuwaiti consumers.

In a notable development, Lulu Hypermarket announced plans to host a significant Canadian festival in upcoming year 2024. This decision, discussed during the meeting, aims to celebrate the rich diversity of Canadian products, providing Kuwaiti consumers with an immersive experience and highlighting the best of what Canada has to offer. Additionally, Lulu Group International revealed plans to open a sourcing and export hub in the upcoming months in Canada, further enhancing the dynamic and forward-looking nature of the Canada-Kuwait business relationship.



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



Over 300 Rohingya refugees stranded on Indonesia beaches

Syria strikes kill six civilians in rebel bastion: Monitor

Page 6

Page 7



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's new president Javier Milei waves next to his vice president Victoria Villarruel after being sworn in during his inauguration ceremony at the Congress in Buenos Aires on December 10, 2023. — AFP

Milei sworn in as Argentina braces for economic reforms

Vows to 'dynamite' central bank and replace ailing peso with US dollar

BUENOS AIRES: Javier Milei was sworn in Sunday as Argentina's president, as the country steels itself for harsh spending cuts and economic reforms aimed at curbing rampant inflation. The 53-year-old libertarian economist has vowed there will be no "half-measures" as he tackles decades of over-spending, debt and convoluted currency controls in Latin America's third-biggest economy.

"I swear to God and country... to carry out with loyalty and patriotism the position of president of the Argentine nation," he said as he took the oath of office. Thousands of supporters lined the streets outside Congress, waving the country's blue-and-white flag and chanting Milei's rallying cry of "freedom!"

"Perhaps it will take us many years to rebuild the country but maybe this is the beginning of a new era for us," said Javier Lobos, 41, a shopkeeper. "We will be able to work and strive to fulfill our dreams without the burden of suffocating taxes, inflation and the strain of a currency system that is crippling our nation."

The event brings together a diverse handful of world leaders, including Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Hungary's nationalist Prime Min-

ister Viktor Orban — the only EU leader who has maintained close ties to Russia. "The Right is rising not only in Europe but all around the world," Orban wrote on social media, sharing a picture of a meeting with his "good friend," Brazil's far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, who is also in town for the ceremony.

Chile's leftist leader Gabriel Boric and the King of Spain Felipe VI are also attending. After taking the oath of office, Milei will give his first speech as president from the steps of Congress. He will later swear in a cabinet of nine ministers — a major slimdown from the current 18. He has said his first set of measures will be presented to Congress in a matter of days.

The chainsaw

Milei's inauguration caps a meteoric rise for the former television panelist who entered politics only two years ago. His rants against the "thieving" establishment fired up voters and drew comparisons to leaders like Bolsonaro and former US president Donald Trump.

With his deliberately disheveled mop of hair and rock star persona, he would wave a powered-up chainsaw at political rallies, vowing to slash public

spending and a bloated cabinet. He vowed to "dynamite" the central bank and replace the ailing peso with the US dollar.

'Lights all flashing red'

Inflation has hit almost 140 percent year-on-year and 40 percent of the population lives in poverty. "Like many of his predecessors, Milei will take office with the warning lights all flashing red," said Benjamin Gedan, director of the Argentina Project at the Washington-based Wilson Center.

But for Argentines, the future is mired in uncertainty over what exactly their new president plans to do. With few lawmakers from his party in Congress the hard reality of politics has set in, and Milei has softened many of his stances and allied with politicians he previously insulted, incorporating some into his cabinet.

Talk of shutting the Central Bank, dollarization and welfare cuts has dissipated. "Milei 2.0 will still face an uphill climb, but he appears to have adopted a more pragmatic agenda and sought the advice of more experienced political figures," said Gedan.

However, with central bank reserves in the red

and no credit line Milei is facing "bare cupboards," added the analyst. "His rescue strategy, including a rapid downsizing of the government, will be tough to swallow for a long-suffering population. Either way, the next few months will almost certainly see social and political turmoil."

'Stagflation'

Among the questions hanging over Argentina's heads in the coming days will be whether Milei will devalue the strictly controlled peso and loosen the currency controls which have birthed a multitude of dollar exchanges.

Economist Victor Becker of the University of Belgrano said the first "litmus test" for Milei will be if he actually halts the money printing by the Central Bank that he has so derided, which funds much of the government's spending.

Milei has warned that it could take between 18 and 24 months to bring the country's inflation under control, warning of months of "stagflation" — rising prices coupled with economic stagnation. For 2023, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a contraction of 2.5 percent in Argentine GDP. — AFP



CAIRO: Egyptian women queue in front of a polling station to cast their ballots in the presidential election, in downtown Cairo on December 10, 2023. — AFP

Egyptians vote in election to give Sisi third term

CAIRO: Egyptians went to the polls on Sunday in a presidential election overshadowed by war in neighboring Gaza and with little doubt the incumbent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would secure a third term. In a country gripped by the most severe financial crisis in its recent history — inflation has hovered near 40 percent after the currency lost half its value and drove up the cost of imports — the economy is at the centre of Egyptians' concerns.

Even before the current crisis, about two-thirds of the country's nearly 106 million people were living on or below the poverty line. Voting will take place until Tuesday, between 9:00 am and 9:00 pm (0700-1900 GMT) each day, with the official results announced on December 18.

In front of one Cairo polling station, posters bore messages to "get out and participate" while a DJ played nationalist songs. Some 67 million people are eligible to vote, five million of whom had cast their ballots by 4:30 pm (1430 GMT) on Sunday, accord-

ing to a statement from the National Election Authority. Turnout is expected to be a key indicator of public sentiment in an otherwise uncompetitive election. Last time, it fell six points to 41.5 percent. Casting her ballot in the western Cairo district of Dokki, Asmaa Refaat, a voter in her forties, said she "doesn't know the other candidates".

"I only know President Sisi," she said, calling on the winner "to change our lives for the better and ease inflation". Annual inflation is at 38.5 percent, with food price rises alone hitting 45.2 percent, official figures showed on Sunday.

Voter Fathi Ali, 79, said he "only asks that the next president ensures full health insurance". Despite Egypt's afflictions, a decade-long crackdown on dissent has eliminated any serious opposition to Sisi. Under his rule, Egypt has jailed thousands of political prisoners.

Egyptians, meanwhile, have paid little attention to election campaigning that has taken place in the shadow of the war between Zionist entity and Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza. That conflict has monopolized media and public attention across the Arab world. Talk shows in Egypt — closely tied to the intelligence services and fervent supporters of Sisi — have sought to link the two issues in the incumbent's favor. — AFP

UN chief: Zionists trying to force Gazans into Egypt

WASHINGTON: The head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees has accused Zionist entity of laying the groundwork for the mass expulsion of Gazans into Egypt, an accusation Zionist entity said was "simply not true".

More than two months of deadly war between Zionist entity and Hamas, sparked by the militant group's October 7 attacks, have displaced most of Gaza's population, but Palestinians are largely barred from leaving the narrow besieged territory.

In an opinion piece published on Saturday in the Los Angeles Times, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini pointed to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the increasing concentration near the border of displaced civilians who fled the fighting, first in the north and then further south.

"The United Nations and several member states, including the US, have firmly rejected forcibly dis-

placing Gazans out of the Gaza Strip," Lazzarini said. "But the developments we are witnessing point to attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt, regardless of whether they stay there or are resettled elsewhere."

The widespread destruction in the Palestinian territory's north and the resulting displacements were "the first stage of such a scenario", he added, while forcing civilians from the southern city of Khan Yunis closer to the Egyptian border was the next.

"If this path continues, leading to what many are already calling a second Nakba, Gaza will not be a land for Palestinians anymore," Lazzarini said, using the Arabic term for the exodus or forced displacement of 760,000 Palestinians during the war that coincided with Zionist entity's creation in 1948.

Responding to the accusation, a spokesperson for the Zionist defence ministry office responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs said: "There is not, never was and never will be a Zionist plan to move the residents of Gaza to Egypt. This is simply not true." Zionist Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel said last month that one "option" after the war would be "to promote the voluntary resettlement of Palestinians in Gaza, for humanitarian reasons, outside of the Strip". — AFP



RAFAH: Palestinians flee Khan Yunis in southern Gaza Strip further south toward Rafah, along the Salah Al-Din road, on December 10, 2023. Zionist forces pushed into southern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled in search of shelter from bombardments. — AFP

International

Syria strikes kill six civilians in rebel bastion: Monitor

UN peacekeeping position hit in south Lebanon, no casualties

BEIRUT: Six civilians were killed and 25 others wounded on Saturday in Syrian army bombardment of the city of Idlib, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding that industrial areas were also hit, as well as "residential areas in the town of Sarmin" nearby.

"Regime forces directly targeted residential areas of the city of Idlib," said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding that industrial areas were also hit, as well as "residential areas in the town of Sarmin" nearby.

Six civilians, "including two children and a woman", were killed in Idlib and Sarmin, while 25 others were wounded in the strikes in various areas of Idlib province, added the Britain-based Observatory. Government forces fired "more than 35 missiles" during the bombardment, it added.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria branch, controls swathes of Idlib province and parts of the neighbouring Aleppo, Hama and Latakia provinces. HTS is considered a terrorist group by Damascus, as well as by the United States and the European Union.

Parts of the rebel bastion have seen fierce fighting in recent days, according to the Observatory. On Friday, it said 11 pro-government forces and five HTS fighters had been killed after the jihadists launched an attack in neighbouring Aleppo province a day earlier.

Late last month, Syrian government bombardment killed nine civilians including six children as they harvested olives in Idlib province, reported the Observatory, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria.

Civil war erupted in Syria after President

Bashar al-Assad crushed peaceful anti-government protests in 2011. The conflict has killed more than half a million people and displaced millions after spiralling into a devastating war involving foreign armies, militias and jihadists. A ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey was declared in Idlib after a government offensive in March 2020, but it has been repeatedly violated.

A United Nations peacekeeping position in southern Lebanon was hit on Saturday without causing casualties, the UN force said, adding it was seeking to verify the source of the fire. Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) reported that a "Zionist Merkava tank" targeted the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) position near the border across from Metula in northern Zionist entity.

A Zionist army spokeswoman said: "We did not aim at UNIFIL, we did not hit a UNIFIL position". UNIFIL spokesman Andrea Tenenti said the force was "verifying" the source of the fire, and said the incident caused "no casualties" but damaged a watchtower at the base.

Since the Zionist-Hamas war began on October 7, the frontier between Lebanon and the Zionist entity has seen intensifying exchanges of fire, mainly between the Zionist army and Shiite Muslim movement Hezbollah, raising fears of a broader conflagration.

More than 120 people have been killed on the Lebanese side since October, mostly Hezbollah fighters but also including more than a dozen civilians, according to an AFP tally. UNIFIL was set up in 1978 to monitor the withdrawal of Zionist forces after they invaded Lebanon in reprisal for a Palestinian attack.



IDLIB: A person wounded in a Syrian army bombardment is transported at the hospital in Idlib. Six civilians were killed and more than 20 others wounded Saturday in Syrian army bombardment of the country's last major rebel bastion, a war monitor said. — AFP

It was bolstered after Hezbollah and the Zionist entity fought a devastating war in 2006, and its roughly 10,000 peacekeepers are tasked with monitoring the ceasefire between the two sides. Since the Hamas-Zionist war began, UNIFIL has said its

headquarters in southern Lebanon has been hit by shelling. Late last month, UNIFIL said the Zionist gunfire hit one of its patrols despite a temporary Hamas-Zionist truce largely quietening the Lebanon-Zionist border at that time. — AFP

Polish parliament speaker becomes viral sensation

WARSAW: As Polish pro-EU parties prepare to take power, a new star has shot to fame: A parliament speaker whose wit has drawn thousands of new followers to the chamber's social media channels. Szymon Holownia is no stranger to a wide audience as a former TV personality who notably hosted the Polish edition of the "Got Talent!" franchise.

The 47-year-old left showbusiness for politics four years ago and now enjoys the spotlight chairing plenary proceedings following his success in the October 15 parliamentary elections. "Ladies and gentlemen, stock up on popcorn... because I suspect there will be a lot of action," Holownia said of the upcoming sitting during one of his now almost daily press conferences.

His quips and comebacks in the plenary have been going viral—including an instance when he corrected a conservative lawmaker for mistakenly calling a colleague a "Jay-Z" instead of a member of Generation Z. On another occasion, as lawmakers heckled him, Holownia retorted saying they were becoming "a tad mono-

thematic". "I encourage you to be more original, to do more intellectual work. Insulting takes skill too," he said, drawing applause from the pro-EU lawmakers.

In the matter of weeks, the parliament's YouTube channel streaming the debates saw its followers surge almost tenfold, from 45,000 to 435,000 subscribed users.

'Like Zelensky'

The sudden rise in popularity of the parliamentary proceedings prompted an unorthodox move by a Warsaw cinema to organise a screening of Monday's confidence vote for the conservative minority government. "We've never done this before," Karolina Fornal, a spokeswoman for Kinoteka told AFP, adding the cinema had already run out of free tickets for the screenings. "We allotted two rooms for the viewings, that means over 500 seats... and we've received around 1,500 requests," Fornal said, adding that the cinema would add parliamentary-themed snacks to its offer that day.

Holownia has been quick to capitalise on his own fame too: he has launched a behind-the-scenes podcast on the ins and outs of parliamentary life—with the first episode hitting nearly a million downloads.

For experts, Holownia's fame as a celebrity-turned-politician follows a familiar pattern. "It's a bit like (Ukrainian President Volodymyr) Zelensky and how he made a



Szymon Holownia

name for himself. Holownia also stood out because he had the experience, he knew how media work," said Adam Szyml, a media analyst from the University of Wrocław. "He knows that he has to speak briefly, that he needs a punchline or a joke from time to time," Szyml said.

But Holownia's flashy style has also drawn criticism—notably from the current conservative prime minister. "Instead of real work we have the popcorn, a show and circus. Is this what politics is about?" Mateusz Morawiecki said in a post on social media.

Szyml conceded there was a risk that young people are watching parliament sittings "just for fun, to see who landed a heavier blow or came up with a meme". But he said an increased interest among a generation that often switches off from politics should not be dismissed. — AFP

France detains 80 in largest child sex crime swoop

PARIS: Around 80 men, including a local councillor and two schoolteachers, were detained this week in France's most far-reaching swoop on suspected child sex abusers, police sources said. Police made arrests in 53 of France's 101 departments, Commissioner Quentin Bevan told AFP on Saturday.

The men arrested, whose ages range from around 30 to over 60, come from a wide range of backgrounds, from an elected official to a person on the dole. "There is no typical profile in child sex crime. It's found in all walks of life," Bevan said. He heads the operational unit of the Office for Minors within the judicial police, which coordinated the operation. The "unprecedented" swoop focused on professions where adults were in regular contact with children, the commissioner explained.

That enabled them to detain, among others, two teachers, several sports coaches and a monitor in a centre for disabled children. One of the teachers possessed "photos and videos stolen from his pupils" and is suspected of sexually assaulting at least one of them, Bevan said. Around a dozen others are

suspected of raping or sexually abusing minors. The monitor in the centre for the disabled had been convicted of rape "several decades ago" but had been permitted to change his identity, which enabled him to have contact with children again, Bevan said.

"Online child sex abuse is not just about lone individuals trawling the internet... (Some) have gone on to commit crimes in real life or are on the verge of doing so," he added. "We're not just talking about virtual images," Martine Brousse, head of the Voice of the Child organisation, told BFM television.

"Vulnerable children have been raped and many have suffered acts of torture and barbarity." Police searches uncovered "more than 100,000" videos and photos on computers or hard drives. Some were "extremely violent" and included "sexual acts on babies or children being sexually abused by animals", Bevan said. "It's the worst kind of vile," he said. All the suspects admitted the facts presented to them while in police custody, although some tried to downplay them or deny responsibility. — AFP



DUBAI: Activists protest at the OPEC pavilion at the United Nations climate summit on Dec 10, 2023. — AFP

Saudi, Iraq stand firm as COP28...

Continued from Page 1

a phaseout of fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, has voiced its opposition to any phaseout or phasedown of fossil fuels and OPEC has urged its members to block any such language at COP28.

A Saudi official told the COP28 majlis that Riyadh's "perspectives and concerns" must be taken into account. "The politically backed points about targeting specific energy sectors, it's something that we have heard at many different discussions and many different settings, but in each and every time, science, common sense, principles prevailed," he added.

An Iraqi representative was more direct, saying his country was against any "mention (of) global sectorial targets" including a phase-out or phase-down of fossil fuels. Veteran climate campaigners and negotiators say the world has never been so close to a deal on winding down oil, gas and coal in nearly 30 years of COP summits. Jaber, the head of the national oil company of the United Arab Emirates, has said himself that action on fossil fuels must be part of any deal at COP28.

After the majlis, EU climate commissioner Wopke Hoekstra said there was "a majority, some would say a supermajority, of countries here present who want to push forward for more ambition". Hoekstra then headed to the Saudi pavilion as negotiations continued. Speaking about the Saudi and Iraqi statements, German cli-

mate negotiator Jennifer Morgan said: "They obviously felt they needed to engage, whether it was a bit of panic, whether it was a bit of realization of how far the discussions are." Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua said Saturday his team was working with other countries to find a deal on fossil fuels that is "acceptable to all parties". Observers said Saudi Arabia was slowing down negotiations on other issues at COP28 in efforts to rally developing countries to join their opposition to a phaseout.

Scientists say the world must end its use of fossil fuels, which are responsible for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions, if it is to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid the most catastrophic climate scenarios. A third draft of a deal, released on Friday, offers various ways to phase out fossil fuels but also includes the option to avoid the issue entirely. A new text is expected on Monday.

Developing countries say they cannot be expected to move at the same pace as developed nations that owe their wealth to the burning of oil, gas and coal. At the majlis, China's representative said climate action was a "marathon, not a sprint". He said developed nations are ahead of the pack and should help developing countries by providing the funds needed for their energy transitions. Bolivia denounced the "hypocrisy" of countries that press the developing world on climate change while expanding their own production of fossil fuels. He named the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia. Standing in the middle of the circle, Jaber closed the meeting by urging countries to make the event be known as a "change-makers majlis". "We are now in the endgame," he said. "To deliver the very balanced, ambitious outcome we need, we need you to act as the change-makers." — AFP

Houthi warn ships headed to Zionist entity

SANAA: Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels threatened on Saturday to attack any vessels heading to Zionist ports unless food and medicine were allowed into the besieged Gaza Strip. The latest warning comes amid heightened tensions in the Red Sea and surrounding waters following a series of maritime attacks by Houthi rebels since the start of the Zionist-Hamas war on Oct 7.

In a statement posted on social media, the Houthis said they "will prevent the passage of ships heading to the Zionist entity" if humanitarian aid is not allowed into Hamas-ruled Gaza. The Houthis have recently attacked ships they claim have direct links to the Zionist entity, but their latest threat expands the scope of their targets. Regardless of which flag ships sail under or the nationality of their own-

ers or operators, Zionist-bound vessels "will become a legitimate target for our armed forces", the statement said.

Hamas welcomed the rebels' "courageous and bold" decision. "We call on Arab and Muslim countries to use all their capabilities, based on their historical responsibilities and in the spirit of chivalry, to lift the siege of Gaza," it added in a statement sent to AFP. The Zionist entity's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, said his country would not accept the "naval siege", noting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had asked US President Joe Biden and European leaders to take measures to address the situation. "If the world will not take care of it," Hanegbi warned on the Zionist entity's Channel 12 television, "we will take action to remove the naval siege."

The French military said Sunday that one of its frigates shot down two drones in the Red Sea that were heading towards it from Yemen's coast. "The interception and destruction of these two identified threats" were carried out late Saturday by the frigate Languedoc, which operates in the Red Sea, the general staff said in a press release. The interceptions occurred at 2030 GMT and 2230 GMT, it added, and were 110 km from the Yemeni coast. — AFP

Hamas warns Zionists to free...

Continued from Page 1

have been displaced — roughly half of them children — many forced south and running out of safe places to go. "We have been stuck here for 18 days. Whenever I want to go somewhere, we hear bombing and shelling and feel scared and go back," said Noura Al-Sayed Hassan, trapped in Rafah despite having an Egyptian passport. "I've been searching for bread for my daughter for over a week now." The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said only 100 aid trucks entered Gaza via the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Saturday, well below the pre-war average. "The restrictions and challenges being placed on the delivery of lifesaving aid... are another death sentence for children."

Hamas said Sunday that the Zionist entity had launched "very violent raids" targeting the biggest southern city of Khan Yunis and the road linking it to Rafah near the border with Egypt. "Neither the fascist enemy and its arrogant leadership... nor its supporters... can take their prisoners alive without an exchange and negotiation and meeting the demands of the resistance," Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida said in a televised broadcast.

There are still 137 captives held in Gaza, according to the Zionist entity. Activists say around 7,000 Palestinians are

detained in Zionist jails, and senior Hamas official Bassem Neim said in late November that the movement was "ready to release all soldiers in exchange for all our prisoners".

On Sunday a source close to Hamas and Islamic Jihad told AFP both groups were engaged in "fierce clashes" with Zionist forces near Khan Yunis, where an AFP journalist also reported heavy strikes, as well as Jabalia and Gaza City's Shejaiya district in the north. The Zionist army says 98 soldiers have died in the Gaza campaign and around 600 wounded have been evacuated.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the Security Council's "authority and credibility were severely undermined", after the United States on Friday blocked a ceasefire resolution. "I can promise, I will not give up," Guterres told Qatar's Doha Forum. Qatar said it was still working on a fresh truce, but that the Zionist entity's relentless bombardment was "narrowing the window" for success.

The Gulf emirate, where Hamas' top leadership is based, was a key mediator for a seven-day truce last month that saw 80 Zionist captives exchanged for 240 Palestinian prisoners and humanitarian aid. The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) voiced alarm over what he feared would be a mass expulsion of Palestinians into Egypt. In an opinion piece Saturday in the Los Angeles Times, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said "the developments we are witnessing point to attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt". The fighting in Gaza has sparked protests around the world, with pro-Palestinian protests in Morocco and Turkey on Sunday. — AFP

International

Hong Kong holds first 'patriots only' district council election

Five arrested on Sunday, including three activists and a couple

HONG KONG: Polls opened in Hong Kong's first "patriots only" district council election on Sunday, with officials dismissing concerns of potentially low turnout in a race that has shut out all opposition candidates after a national security crackdown. The previous election was held at the peak of the huge, sometimes violent, democracy protests in 2019, and recorded a historic-high 71 percent turnout—delivering a landslide victory for the pro-democracy camp.

As part of the widespread clampdown on political opposition—aided by a national security law imposed in 2020 by Beijing—the city authorities overhauled the councils' composition earlier this year. Authorities have attempted to drum up enthusiasm for the election, covering the city with posters urging Hong Kongers to participate, but on Sunday morning, polling booths appeared to have few voters in the wealthy Mid-Levels area.

"It must be the patriots ruling Hong Kong—this is our principle," said a civil engineer surnamed Lee, a lone early voter, adding "the election wouldn't be affected just because some (candidates) can't be part of it". According to new rules announced in May, seats for direct election were slashed from 462 to 88, with the other 382 seats controlled by the city leader, government loyalists and rural landlords. Candidates were required to seek nominations from three government-appointed committees, which effectively shut out all pro-democracy parties. Over 70 percent of the candidates nominated to run for directly elected seats were members of those committees.

City leader John Lee said this year's election was "the last piece of the puzzle to implement the principle of patriots ruling Hong Kong", referring to a doctrine Beijing imposed on the financial hub to weed out from public office anyone deemed politically disloyal after the 2019 protests. "From now on, the district councils would no longer be what they were in the past—which was a platform to deconstruct and reject the government's administration, to promote Hong Kong independence and to endanger national security," Lee said after he cast his ballot on Sunday.

'One-sided'

The councillors for Hong Kong's 18 districts handle mostly local-level issues—like sanitation, transport routes, or the adequacy of public facilities. But after Sunday's election, they will "behave as local consultative bodies in name, and as the government's echo chamber in practice", said Kenneth Chan, a political scientist at the Hong Kong Baptist University.

"This is about achieving 100 percent political control above all," he told AFP. Senior officials have rejected concerns about potentially low voter participation, with Erick Tsang, the constitutional affairs minister overseeing the election, saying that "the turnout rate cannot be an indicator of the (new) system's success".

Some residents expressed apathy about the exercise on the eve of the election. "What's the point of voting? The political atmosphere is one-sided," said a resident surnamed Ng. More than 12,000 police officers were deployed across the city to prevent disturbances in the election, according to local media.

Five people were arrested on Sunday, including three activists and a couple, one of whom worked for the government. The League of Social Democrats—one of the city's last remaining opposition groups—said it planned to stage a protest and that three of its members were followed from home and arrested by the police in the city's Central District.

Police said the trio were "attempting to incite others to disrupt district council elections". The League called the arrest "extremely ironic and ridiculous" on an election day that was supposed to reflect various public opinions.

Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption said it had arrested a couple for allegedly "leaving a comment" on a social media post which incited people to cast invalid ballots. On Friday, the national security police arrested a 77-year-old man for an "attempt to carry out seditious acts". A 38-year-old man was charged on Tuesday for reposting a video of an overseas commentator that allegedly incited people to boycott the election. — AFP



HONG KONG: A man walks past signs for candidates during the district council election in Hong Kong on December 10, 2023. — AFP

Five Bangladesh opposition figures die in prison: BNP

DHAKA: Five members of Bangladesh's main opposition party have died in prison in the past two weeks, officials and relatives said Sunday, as thousands took to the streets before next month's general election.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is boycotting the January 7 vote, leaving the re-election of incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a foregone conclusion. The BNP says its entire leadership and more than 20,000 politicians have been arrested over the past five weeks in "an unprecedented crackdown" that followed a massive opposition rally in the capital on October 28.

Police have rejected the BNP's arrest figures, while not disclosing how many opposition activists have been detained. A few thousand BNP supporters, including detainees' family members, gathered Sunday in central Dhaka to demand the activists' release.

Last month, New York-based Human Rights Watch estimated that at least 10,000 opposition supporters had been arrested since the October 28 rally. In the violence that has unfolded since that rally, one police officer and five civilians were killed and nearly 300 buses torched, according to police.

But the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamist party, which was banned last month, said at least 20 people were dead. The BNP has also tallied five deaths in custody among its activists in the past two weeks, party legal chief Kayser Kamal told AFP.

"We want a full judicial and impartial investigation into the deaths," he said. "This is serious." "We've learnt that many BNP activists were tortured in police custody after they were arrested as part of the nationwide crackdown," he added.—AFP

West Africa leaders meet as region struggles with coups

ABUJA: West African leaders met on Sunday for talks with the region in deepening crisis, after four countries fell under military rule and with risks growing from Sahel jihadist conflicts. After coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger since 2020, the Economic Community of West African States bloc also saw member states Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau claim attempted coups in recent weeks.

A French military withdrawal from the Sahel—the region along the Sahara desert across Africa—is increasing concerns over conflicts spreading south to Gulf of Guinea states Ghana, Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast.

"These military coups are not only based on fake narrative and false justifications; they are also a driver of insecurity in the region," ECOWAS commission president Omar Touray said in a meeting before the summit. ECOWAS leaders will meet in Nigeria's capital Abuja for an ordinary summit where they will discuss delayed transitions back to civilian rule for Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger.

Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is current chair of ECOWAS and US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee will also be at the meeting to discuss how to support Niger's return to democratic rule and Sahel security. Niger—a key Western partner in the fight against Sahel militants—has demanded French troops based there leave, while the US still has military personnel in the country. ECOWAS members have imposed tough economic sanctions on the military regime in Niger, whose troops ousted President Mohamed Bazoum in July.

Mediator

ECOWAS has demanded Bazoum's immediate return to the presidency, but the military junta has kept him in detention and says it may need up to three years for a return to civilian rule. Earlier this month, Nigeria said it was asking the Niger regime to free Bazoum and allow him to fly to a third country, as a step to opening talks on lifting sanctions.

But Niger's military leaders rejected that option and have asked Togo's President Faure Gnassingbe to act as a mediator. Before Sunday's ECOWAS meeting, Niger's military leader General Abdourahamane Tiani visited Togo on Friday with some of his ministers.

ECOWAS has also left on the table the last option of a military intervention in Niger though analysts say that appears increasingly unlikely. Transitions back to democracy and elections have also been stalled or left uncertain in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea.

After French troops began leaving the region, military regimes in Niger, Mali and Burkina, struggling with jihadist violence, hardened their positions and joined forces in an Alliance of Sahel States. Last month, armed attackers stormed military posts, prisons and police stations in another ECOWAS member Sierra Leone, in what the government called a coup attempt that killed 21 people. A week later Guinea-Bissau also denounced an attempted coup, with fighting between the national guard and special forces of the presidential guard. — AFP



LAWEUNG: Newly-arrived Rohingya refugees gather and rest at a beach in Laweung, Pidie district in Indonesia's Aceh province on December 10, 2023. More than 300 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, were stranded on the coasts of western Indonesia. — AFP

Over 300 Rohingya refugees stranded on Indonesia beaches

BANDA ACEH: More than 300 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, were stranded on the coast of western Indonesia Sunday after being adrift at sea for weeks, the latest in the biggest wave of arrivals since 2015. A group of 180 refugees from the persecuted Myanmar minority arrived by boat at 3:00 am local time (2000 GMT Saturday) on a beach in the Pidie regency of Aceh province. Another boat carrying 135 refugees landed in neighbouring Aceh Besar regency hours later after being adrift at sea for more than a month. The mostly Muslim Rohingya were the target of a 2017 crackdown by Myanmar's military that is the subject of a UN genocide probe. Around a million have fled to Bangladesh, and from there thousands risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

"We had been in the sea for almost one month and 15 days. [...] We left on November 1st," 24-year-old refugee Muhammad Shohibul Islam told AFP. The refugees gathered on a plantation next to the shore, where they drank water given to them by locals. Some lay on the ground, trying to rest after their journey.

Police found stacks of United Nations refugee cards in a cardboard box brought by the refugees, an AFP journalist saw. "We noticed that some of these refugees have refugee cards. So, let them be re-registered first by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration [before we act further]," local police chief Rolly Yuiza Away said by telephone.

Mothers cradle children

The authorities kept the refugees on the shore where they landed, with mothers cradling their children, some of whom were naked, in their arms. The local government in Pidie said earlier it would not take responsibility for providing the refugees with tents, or other basic needs. They said they would not "bear any expenses" and that no shelters were available. Local authorities and residents have been rejecting the Rohingya, threatening to push them back to sea since more than 1,000 arrived last month.

On Wednesday, about 150 protesters in Sabang Island in Aceh clashed with police as they called for the Rohingya refugees to be relocated. "We continue to explain the situation to the people and ensure that they will not be burdened with the handling of refugees," said United Nations refugee agency protection associate Faisal Rahman.—AFP

Why is smoking considered harmful? Is nicotine the real cause?

Nicotine is addictive and not risk-free, but - contrary to what many believe - experts agree that nicotine itself is not the primary cause of smoking-related diseases. It is the chronic exposure to the toxic chemicals in cigarette smoke that are generated when tobacco is burned that cause disease.

When a cigarette is lit, the tobacco combusts (burns) generating a smoke, that contains thousands of chemicals, many of which are toxic and known to cause disease. Once the tobacco is ignited, the combustion is a self-sustaining process that will continue to burn as long as there is tobacco (fuel) and oxygen available. Public health authorities have classified these toxicants in the smoke as the primary cause of smoking-related diseases, such as lung cancer, heart disease and emphysema.

Despite being aware of the evident health risks, many smokers continue to smoke cigarettes. Currently, there are over one billion smokers worldwide, and it is estimated that this number will not change significantly in the coming years. Quitting smoking - or better yet, never starting - is without doubt the best option to reduce the risk of smoke-related diseases. But, for those smokers who will continue smoking, technology has now made it possible to produce smoke-free alternatives, which are less harmful than cigarettes.

Tremendous progress has already been made in moving towards a smoke-free future. Philip Morris International (PMI) is building a future on a new category of smoke-free products that, while not risk-free, are a much better choice than continuing to smoke cigarettes. Since 2008, PMI has invested over USD 10.7 billion in the science and research of developing and accessing smoke-free products. Through their multidisciplinary capabilities in product development, state-of-the-art facilities and scientific substantiation, PMI aims to ensure that its smoke-free products meet adult consumer preferences and rigorous regulatory requirements. PMI's smoke-free product portfolio includes heated tobacco products and nicotine-containing vapor products.

In 2022, 73 percent of PMI's commercial efforts and 99 percent of their R&D expenditures were dedicated to smoke-free products. PMI aims to have smoke-free products account for 30 percent of its shipping volumes by 2025, which means approximately 40 million adult smokers switching to these products. As of March 31, 2023, PMI's smoke-free products



Gizelle Baker

were available for sale in 78 markets, and PMI estimates that approximately 18.5 million adults around the world had already switched to IQOS and stopped smoking.

Dr Gizelle S Baker, VP of Global Scientific Engagement at PMI, explains: "This is a transformation that is happening within each country. We need researchers, healthcare professionals, policy experts, governments, the industry and media to work together to ensure adult smokers have access to and accurate information about different products so they can make informed decisions about their health, relative to continued smoking."

She adds: "We need to find ways to encourage and incentivize innovation in the development and scientific assessment of less harmful products. It is also important to implement regulatory frameworks that recognize that not all tobacco products are the same. This would maximize the number of adult smokers who switch to better alternatives and stop smoking, at the same time minimizing the number of youth and non-smokers exposed to nicotine-containing products."

Today, a future in which cigarettes are obsolete is within reach. In fact, with the right regulatory encouragement and support from civil society, cigarette sales could even end within 10 to 15 years in many countries. Effective policies and regulation should allow smokers access to scientifically substantiated smoke-free products. They should also enable smokers to make informed choices based on accurate information about these products.

Sponsored by Philip Morris Management Services (Middle East) Limited

Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023

Zain partners with GCC Telco Alliance to establish 'Sustainability Innovation Hub'

Bridging the gap between technology, telecom innovation and climate action



A group photo of 'Sustainability Innovation Hub'

KUWAIT: Zain announced the establishment of the Sustainability Innovation Hub in collaboration with the GCC Telco Alliance members along with e&, STC, Ooredoo, Beyon, Omantel, and du, and other key regional and international partners. This initiative is driven by the urgent need to address climate change and expand access to affordable and reliable energy.

As the global energy landscape undergoes a significant transformation, telecom operators are actively seeking alternatives that enhance energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprint. The Sustainability Innovation Hub aims to bridge the gap between technology, telecom innovation, and climate action for a low-carbon economy. It will bring together cutting-edge technologies, visionary experts, and collaborative efforts to tackle one of the most critical challenges faced by the telecom industry today.

The primary focus of the Sustainability Innovation Hub will be to develop and implement innovative power solutions that are cost-effective, reliable, and environmentally friendly. By harnessing the power of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, the initiative will enable telecom operators to reduce their reliance on traditional fuel sources and move toward a greener future. This transition will not only lead to substantial long-term cost savings but will also play a significant role in protecting the environment, aligning with the broader sustainability goals of the sector.

The Sustainability Innovation Hub has been established with a clear set of objectives aimed at revolutionizing the telecom industry's approach to energy consumption and sustainability. The hub will foster a collaborative environment where telecom operators, technology providers, and research institutes can share knowledge, resources, and

expertise, driving the development of innovative power solutions tailored to the specific needs of the telecom industry.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for prototyping, testing, and validating innovative power solutions using GCC telecom networks, the hub will accelerate the development cycle and ensure the effective implementation of new technologies within the industry. Recognizing the importance of skilled professionals in driving innovation, the hub will offer training programs and workshops to enhance the competencies of individuals involved in the design, installation, and maintenance of power solutions within the telecom sector.

The hub will actively seek collaborations and partnerships with leading industry players, government entities, and regulatory authorities, fostering a supportive ecosystem where knowledge sharing, best practices, and standardization can flourish.

These objectives underscore the Sustainability Innovation Hub's commitment to transforming the energy paradigm within the telecom industry, paving the way for a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

Jennifer Suleiman, Chief Sustainability Officer of Zain Group said, "This development is extremely timely. The negative impact of climate change globally is growing more acute over time. Individually, companies such as Zain have been working proactively to reduce the negative impact of our operations on the environment to contribute to a Net-Zero world. However, collaboration across telecom operators and the sectors we interact with, is a much-needed boost in the efforts to reverse the effects of climate change, given the significance of our industry and the impact we can exert on creating value for all our stakeholders and changing people's lives for the better. We are stronger together."

COP28 pledges meet only 30% of needed emission cuts: IEA

DUBAI: Pledges made so far at the COP28 climate summit will only reduce energy-related greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent of what is needed by 2030, the International Energy Agency said Sunday. "While the pledges are positive steps forward in tackling the energy sector's greenhouse gas emissions, they would not be nearly enough to move the world onto a path to reaching international climate targets, in particular the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius," it said in a report.

The agency released an assessment of non-binding promises made in Dubai by governments and the oil and gas industry—tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, as well as sharp cuts in methane emissions.

According to the UN climate body, 130 countries have signed on to the pledge on renewables and energy efficiency. Not signing are China, the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, as well as fellow developing giant India and major energy exporters Saudi Arabia and Russia. China, however, committed less formally to the goal of tripling renewables in a joint statement with the United



DUBAI: People visit the venue housing the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 10, 2023. — AFP

States—which did sign the pledge—after talks in California to prepare for COP28.

Beijing historically has been hesitant to make commitments in such statements that are not officially through the UN framework. The 2015 Paris agreement set an ambition of keeping global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to avoid the worst ravages of climate change including rising drought, storms

and sea level rises. On methane, some 50 oil and gas companies have promised to zero out emissions and eliminate routine flaring by 2030. Methane—which is highly potent but comparatively short-lived—is responsible for about one-third of the warming from greenhouse gases occurring today, second only to carbon dioxide. In addition to energy production, animal agriculture is a major source of methane. — AFP

Desperation for the homeless on Los Angeles streets

LOS ANGELES: When Carlos Schmidt beds down on the hard streets of Los Angeles, he has nothing but a backpack and an old blanket, like thousands of other homeless people in one of the richest cities in the world's richest country.

"At nighttime, I just find somewhere quiet like a park or a bus bench, where there's not a lot of chaos," the 37-year-old told AFP. "And I'll try to rest up right there for as long as I can."

Schmidt is one of some 75,500 people living on the streets of Los Angeles and its sprawling suburbs, according to a January survey. The figure is up 70 percent since 2015, in a city where sometimes shocking levels of inequality are on daily display. Impossibly glamorous people swan through the streets

in top-of-the-range sports cars, hopping from a \$1,000-a-head restaurant to an exclusive nightclub with an eye-watering price list.

On those same streets, men and women huddle against hunger, more than a few of them grappling with untreated addiction or mental health problems. The City of Angels is not alone in California, a state that accounts for around a third of America's known homeless, with significant populations in places including San Francisco, Sacramento and San Diego.

The reasons for homelessness are manifold and compound, and include illness, addiction, family breakdown and debt. But a significant factor in the Golden State is its lopsided real estate market, where multi-million dollar homes are surprisingly common—and where median rent for a Los Angeles studio apartment is more than \$1,700 a month.

This is what tipped Schmidt onto the streets two years ago. Unable to make his rent, he slept on a friend's couch until that arrangement fell apart. The \$400 a week he earned in a cleaning job was not enough to keep a roof over his head. After a few weeks in hotels, his savings were gone.



LOS ANGELES: A homeless man gestures while sitting on a luggage bag along a downtown Los Angeles street lined with tents housing the homeless on November 22, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

"I've tried it on my own. But everything was just so expensive. On top of that, you got to get food," he said. The stress of the streets plunged him into depression, increasing his drug use, and he eventually lost his job. "Sometimes it's just easier to just give up... So that's what I did." — AFP

Fed may pause again as inflation closer to target

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to hold interest rates at a 22-year high for a third consecutive meeting on Wednesday as it continues to fight elevated inflation. With the financial markets all but certain that another pause is coming, traders and analysts are now debating how soon the US central bank will start cutting interest rates, and how rapidly it will then do so.

"The given is that there won't be a rate hike," EY Chief Economist Gregory Daco told AFP. "But there's a lot of unknowns as to how the Fed will frame the policy outlook going into next year."

The Fed, which has a dual mandate to lower inflation to its long-term target of two percent while also tackling unemployment, has continued to keep the threat of another rate hike alive.

"It would be premature to conclude with confidence that we have achieved a sufficiently restrictive stance, or to speculate on when policy might ease," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said recently.

Daco from EY said the Fed is fighting a "battle for optionality" in which policymakers continue to insist that another interest rate hike could happen, "if deemed necessary." This battle is putting the Fed at odds with other central banks like the European Central Bank, whose policymakers have voiced growing support for an end to rate hikes amid a steep decline in inflation.

Recent US economic data point to low unemployment, resilient job creation, positive economic growth and falling inflation. The latest consumer price index (CPI) showed an annual inflation rate of 3.2 percent, down from a pandemic-era peak of 9.1 percent. The string of positive data has raised hopes the Fed will meet its dual mandate without plunging the world's biggest economy into a damaging recession—a rare feat in monetary policy known as a "soft landing." Much rides on the outcome for President Joe Biden who will seek reelection in 2024.

New numbers came out on Friday showing an increase of 199,000 new jobs last month, and Biden told a crowd in Las Vegas that such steady expansion is what "we call a 'sweet spot' that's needed for stable growth and lower inflation, not encouraging the Fed to raise interest rates." In the futures markets, traders have assigned a probability of more than 98 percent that the Fed will sit tight at its next rate decision this week, according to data from CME Group. — AFP

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US employment remains resilient; services sector picked up in Nov

Bank of Canada opts to maintain its key interest rate at a 22-year high

KUWAIT: Labor data came in better than expected in the US, with signs of a strong labor market across the board. Nonfarm payrolls rose by 199K in the month, higher than the 185K average estimate of economists. The unemployment rate tightened to 3.7 percent, marking a fourth month low and below forecasts of 3.9 percent. Average hourly earnings rose 0.4 percent from the month prior, matching the high estimates from analysts and creating a troubling sign for the Federal Reserve as they seek to cool inflation and spending. Payrolls and labor demand were expected to start slowing, but this report solidifies the strength of the jobs market and portrays consumers are in a strong position to keep spending.

Treasury yields rose sharply after the figures with the 2-year rate-sensitive yield rising to 4.74 percent - its highest level in December. In the futures market, the data deflated bets that the Federal Reserve would ease policy as soon as spring. Odds of a quarter-point cut in March fell, while a full cut is still priced in for May.

Federal Reserve officials are widely expected to keep borrowing costs on hold at the highest level in two decades when they meet this week. Chair Jerome Powell has previously pushed back against growing bets of rate cuts early next year, stressing that policymakers will move cautiously but retain the option to hike again. The solid figures will shift focus to inflation numbers as Fed officials contemplate how long to maintain interest rates at the current 5.25-5.5 percent range. A further cooling of prices would likely help push the central bank toward rate cuts if the job market avoids a more sustained re-acceleration.

Service sector activity rebounds
Amid an increase in business activity, the US services sector picked up last month, surpassing market expectations. The Institute for Supply Management said that its non-manufacturing PMI rose to 52.7 from the 5-month low of 51.8 in October. The rebound was supported by growth in fifteen industries, with transportation and warehousing

remains concerned about inflation risks, but refrains from mentioning that risks are increasing, instead highlighting that higher rates are restraining spending and the labor market continues to ease. Growth in Canada's economy has stalled, and consumption remains weak. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate rose to 5.8 percent from 5 percent in just seven months, and such

ing the cash rate at its 12-year high of 4.35 percent. Although the hold was widely anticipated, markets displayed disappointment at the neutral tone in the post-meeting statement, sending the AUD and government bond yields lower. "Higher interest rates are working to establish a more sustainable balance between aggregate supply and demand," Governor Michele Bullock

Rates - 10th December 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0885	1.0722	1.0894	1.0761	1.0600	1.0900	1.0806
GBP	1.2710	1.2500	1.2724	1.2546	1.2400	1.2700	1.2556
JPY	146.71	141.7	147.5	144.93	145.00	148.00	142.85
CHF	0.8688	0.8664	0.8820	0.8796	0.8500	0.8900	0.8712

loosening of the labor market typically coincides with recessions. Inflation decelerated to an annual 3.1 percent in October, and many economists do believe a soft landing is still the base-case scenario for the economy. Nevertheless, key risks facing the country's financial system will be tested. Compared to the US, Canada's highly indebted households carry shorter-duration mortgages that roll over more quickly, representing a major downside risk to the economy.

BoC cites progress
The Bank of Canada opted to maintain its key interest rate at the 22-year high of 5 percent last week as widely expected, marking the third consecutive meeting of no change. According to the BoC the latest data "suggest the economy is no longer in excess demand", which implies no rate hikes are expected moving forward. The central bank noted it

ing demonstrating strong activity. New orders remained robust, suggesting steady demand for services, while input prices saw a minor decline offering some relief from inflationary pressures.

said. "Holding the cash rate steady at this meeting will allow time to assess the impact of the increases in interest rates on demand, inflation and the labor market."

Following the meeting, swap traders trimmed their bets on another RBA hike, and are currently pricing in less than a 30 percent chance for an increase in the first half of 2024. The RBA has proven to be more careful in its hiking campaign despite core inflation remaining elevated.

RBA holds cash rate steady
The Reserve Bank of Australia also opted to keep rates unchanged at its final meeting of 2023, hold-

Kuwait
Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30830.

Canada expands probe of Asia multi-lateral bank

OTTAWA: Canada is broadening a probe of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and freezing its participation in the multilateral organization indefinitely, the government said Friday. Ottawa had temporarily suspended its involvement in the AIIB in June after a whistleblower asserted that China's ruling party pulls the strings at the bank.

The AIIB, a project pushed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, was launched in 2016 to counter Western dominance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It has 106 global members, including Australia, Canada, France and Germany. "In consultation with some of our closest international partners, Canada is expanding its review of the AIIB," Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said in a statement, adding that its participation in the bank would remain indefinitely suspended. The probe will include an analysis of AIIB investments, as well as its governance and management frameworks, and an assessment of management's response to concerns raised by a former executive.

Bob Pickard, a Canadian who was the bank's communications chief, resigned in June and alleged that the organization is dominated by members of the Chinese Communist Party and primarily funds projects of interest to Beijing. Ottawa said it has raised those concerns with Australia, Britain, Germany and Sweden on the sidelines of a recent IMF meeting.

The AIIB and China's foreign ministry have rejected Pickard's explosive claims, saying the bank operates with "openness, meritocracy and transparency." - AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 7 DECEMBER 2023

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	31,348	7,282.72	-0.1%	-0.1%	-10.3%	495,504,407	150,317,610	28,225	16.5	1.3	77.5%
Main Market	9,101	5,481.58	0.5%	0.5%	-2.1%	469,873,493	78,730,579	22,380	12.1	0.7	22.5%
All Share	40,449	6,654.64	0.0%	0.0%	-8.7%	965,377,900	229,048,189	50,605	13.0	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	23,892	1,595.26	-0.1%	-0.1%	-11.1%	166,836,145	70,716,466	10,064	16.3	1.1	59.07%
Basic Materials	441	781.97	-3.1%	-3.1%	-9.6%	4,207,408	2,576,783	936	11.0	2.2	1.09%
Consumer Discretionary	1,047	1,524.01	2.3%	2.3%	2.5%	32,001,165	13,959,614	4,613	12.3	0.8	2.59%
Consumer Staples	180	590.80	-1.8%	-1.8%	23.1%	3,227,771	1,654,073	300	12.4	1.1	0.44%
Energy	197	943.25	-0.1%	-0.1%	-17.2%	764,777	40,316	107	10.6	0.7	0.49%
Financial Services	4,365	1,221.34	1.5%	1.5%	-2.9%	463,841,626	81,163,858	17,038	17.4	0.7	10.79%
Health Care	239	482.15	2.7%	2.7%	4.4%	0	0	0	13.0	1.0	0.59%
Industrials	3,127	904.16	-0.2%	-0.2%	-16.2%	41,931,446	19,480,049	5,004	12.3	0.8	7.73%
Insurance	915	2,245.27	2.0%	2.0%	44.8%	231,540	96,287	50	9.1	0.8	2.26%
Real Estate	2,558	1,192.73	-0.3%	-0.3%	-1.3%	230,260,670	28,061,092	8,871	16.5	0.6	6.32%
Technology	8	609.64	0.0%	0.0%	-12.4%	3,459	268.36	3	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,285	1,074.95	-1.3%	-1.3%	-9.0%	21,253,536	11,156,267	3,415	9.8	1.4	8.12%
Utilities	194	463.16	-1.1%	-1.1%	-6.4%	818,357	143,115	204	13.6	1.5	0.48%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KCIN	1,210	12.98%	35,494	42,292	6
IFAHR	634	12.41%	8,901,246	5,328,683	1,710
MANAZEL	28	10.20%	26,776,178	748,089	748
KRE	204	9.68%	63,210,394	12,493,730	2,092
MADAR	89	9.20%	9,969	887	3

Top Losers

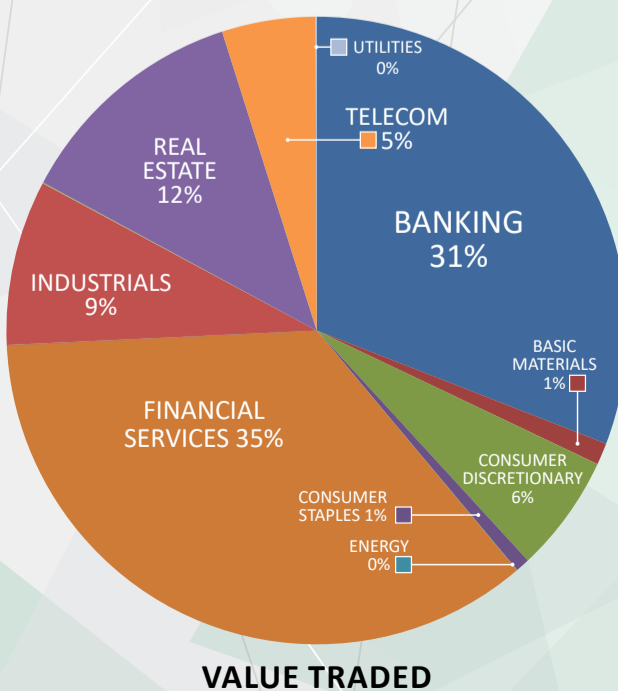
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAHSSILAT	20	-15.95%	111,021	2,209	17
EMIRATES	32	-8.02%	10,449	346	28
PAPER	154.0	-7.23%	652,664	101,356	94
AMAR	60	-6.41%	877,902	51,351	58
KHOT	171.0	-5.00%	200	34	-

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ARZAN	207	5.61%	102,852,477	20,738,537	2,813
IFA	302	8.63%	82,750,270	24,360,226	2,967
KRE	204	9.68%	63,210,394	12,493,730	2,092
ARABREC	66	7.44%	51,427,400	3,341,997	1,346
AAYAN	170.0	3.66%	42,428,734	7,065,523	611

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	701	0.29%	39,078,592	27,271,196	3,489
IFA	302	8.63%	82,750,270	24,360,226	2,967
ARZAN	207	5.61%	102,852,477	20,738,537	2,813
NBK	878	-0.79%	14,326,082	12,562,518	2,417
KRE	204	9.68%	63,210,394	12,493,730	2,092



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value increased 1.1% and 0.4%, while Main Market volume and value dropped 5% and 3%, respectively.
- The Premier index has been moving horizontally, while the Main index shows strength.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 6654, with support levels at 6621, 6526, and 6487, while resistance at 6670. The Premier index closed at 7282, with support levels at 7259, 7195, and 7094, while resistance at 7343. The Main index closed at 5481, with support levels at 5467, 5447, and 5424, with resistance at 5484.

Fadel Abdullah appointed as Burgan Bank's CEO - Kuwait

Appointment as part of Bank's continued strategic transformation efforts

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that it has obtained the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) for the appointment of Fadel Mahmoud Abdullah to the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Kuwait. This latest appointment comes as part of Burgan Bank's continued strategic transformation efforts, as it remains focused on long-term investment in human capital. The new strategy brought about a comprehensive restructuring in 2023 across the entire organization, including a number of strategic appointments and promotions at the leadership level, with Fadel serving as a key figure shaping and leading the transformation. One of Burgan's longest-serving executives and regarded industry-wide as one of its most highly respected leaders, Fadel will continue to play an integral role in steering the new strategic direction of the Bank.

Commenting on this latest appointment, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, Chairman of Burgan Bank, said: "On behalf of myself and our Board of Directors, I congratulate Mr Fadel on his newest role and I look forward to seeing him achieve even greater success alongside the rest of our Burgan Bank team." On his part, Tony Daher, Group CEO, commented on Fadel's promotion by stating: "Over the past months, Fadel has proven to be a valuable asset and visionary leader helping shape our transformation roadmap. Today in his expanded role, we are confident that he will be able to direct the Bank towards its vision of transformation; positioning Burgan Bank as the most modern and progressive Bank in Kuwait, seeking constant evolution and remaining an employer of choice for our industry's brightest."

Fadel Abdullah commented on his appointment by

stating: "I am grateful for the continued trust that Burgan Bank has placed in me. As we accelerate the progress of our exciting transformation in the year ahead, I look forward to working with the rest of our senior leadership team to further strengthen our core Kuwait business: growing and diversifying our corporate portfolio, expanding our retail market share and elevating our banking journey for our customers."

It serves to note that Fadel is a seasoned veteran of the banking sector and a long-serving member of Burgan's management team, bringing 34 years of finance, investment, and corporate banking experience to his new appointment. He has held multiple key leadership roles during his 25-year-long career with Burgan Bank since 1998. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Kuwait University.



Fadel Mahmoud Abdullah

Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah

Is Russia's economy out of the woods?

PARIS: As he prepares to run for re-election in 2024, is President Vladimir Putin right to claim the worst is over for the Russian economy? Nearly two years after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, the Russian economy has demonstrated surprising resilience in the face of an unprecedented avalanche of Western sanctions.

But economists say Russia's wartime economy may be showing signs of overheating, while Western leaders are hoping the sanctions will finally bite. A French diplomatic source expressed hope that the economic penalties would start to be felt in late 2024 or early 2025.

Sanctions "are like a small puncture in a tire. It's not immediate, but it works," another European diplomatic source told AFP. "It's a marathon, not a sprint," said Agathe Demarais, an analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations. She said the goal of the penalties was not to trigger the collapse of the world's ninth-largest economy, which could have provoked a global crisis, but to bring about regime change. "Their aim is to limit the capabilities of the Russian war machine," said Demarais. The EU has imposed 11 rounds of sanctions on Russia since its all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, including hitting its key oil and gas exports. The 12th package of measures, including a ban on the import of Russian diamonds, is currently in the works.

According to official figures, 49 percent of European exports to Russia and 58 percent of Russian imports are under sanctions. Even if Russia has become the most sanctioned country in the world, its economy has been dented but not devastated. Observers say past economic crises and the first set of Western sanctions over the annexation of Crimea in 2014 have taught Putin's economic team how to better manage risks. The Kremlin now plans to increase spending on defense by nearly 70 percent in 2024, a sign Moscow might be hunkering down for a long war in Ukraine. "We have overcome all problems that arose after the sanctions were imposed on us and we have started the next stage of development," Putin announced in October. According to official Russian statistics, the country's gross domestic product grew 5.5 percent in the third quarter of this year, and economic growth is seen at 2 percent next year.

Alexandra Prokopenko, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said the Russian economy performed well but its performance indicators are misleading. "They are all symptoms of overheating. One-third of growth is driven by military spending so the economy got addicted to the military needle," said Prokopenko, who worked at the Russian central bank between 2019 and early 2022. "Dependence on oil has also increased, and it is stronger now than it was before the war," she told AFP. To help bypass sanctions on oil sales, Russia has created a vast shadow fleet and parallel financial infrastructure. "Russia's main export income still comes from the sale of hydrocarbons," said Prokopenko, pointing to major buyers like China and India.

According to Global Witness, an environmental watchdog, EU imports of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) went up by 40 percent in the first seven months of the year, amounting to nearly 5.3 billion euros (\$5.7 billion). Companies in countries including Turkey, the UAE, China and post-Soviet countries like Kazakhstan are involved in schemes to help Moscow circumvent sanctions. — AFP



Made in Anji Furniture Expo to showcase China's innovation in furniture

SHARJAH: The Emirate of Sharjah is all set to host, the Made-in-Anji Furniture Expo, to run from 11-13 December at Expo Centre Sharjah which is supported by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

Anji, a fast-growing city in Zhejiang Province in China and renowned worldwide as the "Home of Intelligent Furniture in China" and the "City of Chair", leads the global chair and furniture production landscape. Visit the Made-in-Anji furniture expo and see for yourself a collection of top-quality brands of chairs, furniture, tea, home decor, and many more from Anji, China.

The event is proof of Anji's commitment to innovation and quality, positioning itself at the forefront of global chair and furniture production in the GCC market. Event Highlights: Top and leading companies from Anji will participate at the Expo to showcase a wide range of top-quality home and office chairs, furniture, home décor, tea, and bamboo products to actively seek trade and investment opportunities and business partnerships with entrepreneurs and traders in the UAE and across the Middle East. Date: December 11-13, 2023 • Time: 10 am to 6 pm • Venue: Expo Centre Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" holds its annual seminar titled "Markaz 2024 Outlook: Investment Trends and Opportunities."

Markaz hosts seminar on investment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" concluded its annual seminar titled "Markaz 2024 Outlook: Investment Trends and Opportunities", which was held on Dec 5, at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, in the presence of a group of experts from Markaz, along with local and international prominent institutions. The seminar aimed at sharing insights on emerging investment opportunities regionally as well as globally, in line with Markaz's efforts towards empowering investors to make informed, responsible decisions.

More than 250 attendees were present at the Markaz 2024 Outlook event to learn about the next frontiers of the investment landscape within Kuwait, the GCC region and across the world. During the event, Markaz's experienced senior leadership shared poignant insights into a variety of asset classes including equities, real estate and fixed income, and investment banking services including IPOs and advisory and Mergers and Acquisitions. Through speeches and panel discussions, the seminar addressed important subjects aimed at ensuring investors remain aware and conscientious of their investment portfolio moving into 2024. The seminar's agenda also focused on key topics such as the impact of rising interest rates on various markets and sectors.

The seminar was initiated with a welcoming note by Abdullatif Al-Nusif, Managing Director – Wealth Management and Business Development, at Markaz. This was followed by an overview on regional and global markets and economies, presented by Khaled Al-Saleh, Senior Analyst, Investment Advisory at Markaz, on behalf of Marmore Intelligence, Markaz's research arm. The overview focused on five key risk areas that must be considered, namely, High Interest Rates, Strong US Currency, Geopolitical Risks, High Oil Prices and the China Slowdown. Al-Saleh went on to highlight 10 key themes of focus beyond 2024, which are Climate Change, Demographic Change, Energy Transition, Rising Global Debt, Deglobalization, Cyber Threats, Artificial Intelligence, Obesity,

Social Media Addiction and Metaverse Economy.

A panel discussion was then held, titled "Where are the opportunities in public equities, fixed income, real estate and investment banking sectors?" which was moderated by Deena Al-Refai, EVP, Wealth Management and Business Development, at Markaz. The panel featured Sami Shabshab, Managing Director, Mar-Gulf, the international real estate arm of Markaz, Rasha Othman, EVP – Investment Banking (Capital Markets and Fixed Income) at Markaz; Mohammad Al-Ghannam, SVP – MENA Equities at Markaz; Abdulrazzaq Razouqi, SVP – Advisory and M&A at Markaz; and last but not least, Muaz Al-Ateeqi, VP – MENA Real Estate at Markaz.

During the session, Sami Shabshab followed that with his views on the adverse effects (Headwinds) in the global real estate sector, the change in the categories of real estate sectors in global markets, his expectations for the best performing sectors in debt markets, and the opportunities available through finding alternative financing sources, and expanding into the European and American markets and the network of partners. Rasha Othman highlighted the most prominent challenges in the fixed income market and the market performance, the impact of the challenges on the GCC bonds market, and the volume of GCC IPOs in 2023, in addition to the regulatory environment for public offerings and listings, and the emerging listing opportunities for family offices. From his end, Mohammed Al-Ghannam provided a recap of the GCC markets performance, his outlook for the economic growth across the GCC, and the thorough selection strategy for stocks. Abdulrazzaq Razouqi discussed the volume of mergers and acquisitions transactions in the GCC in general and in Kuwait in specific, indicating the expectations for growth on that front, and the role of sovereign wealth funds in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, explaining the current shift in investors' strategies, and the expectations across various sectors, especially the health sector. Razouqi showcased the available opportunities available for companies, to enter new sectors or expand existing sectors through mergers and acquisitions, creating stronger and larger entities. Next, Moath Al-Ateeqi revealed the potential growth rates in the medium term supported by economic factors, and the growth of the residential rental sector in the Class-A Buildings category. He underpinned the increasing opportunities in the Saudi market driven by

the strong government support across all sectors. He highlighted that the Kuwaiti market presents important opportunities with the adoption of the Private Housing Law, and efforts to develop the real estate sector in terms of issuance of new laws, specifically with regard to electronic brokerage and the development of the residential sector.

The seminar also featured a presentation by Arthur Mokrzycki, Head of Capital Markets – Europe, at Panattoni, titled "Real Estate – Logistics – The New Chapter", in which he showcased the key drivers in supply chain and manufacturing in the European markets, where the demand is, and what are the available opportunities in these markets.

Following that, Giovanni Leonardo, Head of Investment Management at Schroders & Co Bank AG, provided a presentation titled "Global view on portfolio construction in a dynamic market", where he discussed the expectations for global growth and inflation, and stressed on the fact that the global economy has gradually begun to witness more flexibility, but is yet to overcome some challenging steps. The seminar was concluded with a special one-to-one interview with Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, CEO of Boursa Kuwait, themed "Sharing takes on learnings, success stories, and future vision", which was conducted by Ali Khalil, CEO of Markaz. During the interview, Al-Osaimi shed light on his professional career, working in both private and public sectors, the phases that Boursa went through before and after privatization, how this experience can be implemented in other institutions, and his aspirations for the Kuwaiti capital markets. He concluded with providing advice to the youth encouraging them to follow their aspirations to achieve career success.

Al-Nusif concluded the event thanking the audience for their trust in Markaz and its experts, and for their keenness to attend Markaz's annual seminars, which affirms the success of the "Markaz Outlook event: Investment Trends and Opportunities" since 2021. The event proved to have a wide follower base, where it has become a highly anticipated event by the Kuwaiti financial sector, investors, and those with interests in the Capital Markets. It is also anticipated by financial market experts and related sectors in Kuwait and the region, and is considered a platform for observing changes, tracking developments, and anticipating future prospects in various world markets.

'Small minority' blocking COP28: At-risk Vanuatu

DUBAI: A small minority of countries at UN climate talks are blocking a growing consensus to phase out fossil fuels, at-risk Vanuatu's climate change minister told AFP on Sunday. The COP28 meeting in Dubai is at a "critical stage", said Ralph Regenvanu, whose low-lying Pacific nation faces a severe threat from rising sea levels and tropical cyclones.

"The majority here wants fossil-fuel language, language that takes us away from fossil fuels, that indicates a desire for us to move according to the science, according to the 1.5 degree target," Regenvanu said in an interview. "So that is the will of the majority. We need the small minority of countries that is blocking progress to shift the position, and that's what we're working on for the next couple of days." Negotiators from around the world are trying to strike an agreement aimed at keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius above

pre-industrial levels.

The OPEC oil cartel has called on members to block an emerging declaration that would seek to wind down extraction of the oil, coal and gas that are fuelling the climate emergency.

"The majority of countries now agree to have language on fossil fuels. There's only a few countries that are holding out," said Regenvanu. "And we hope that there will be consideration of the fact that the majority of countries want to see fossil fuel language, phasing out of fossil fuels, and that that can be put into the text," he added. "Because if it isn't in the text, we will not consider this COP a success."

The United Arab Emirates' COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber warned on Saturday that progress was too slow at the talks, which are scheduled to finish on Tuesday. "Today and tomorrow will be critical days to get to the agreement," Regenvanu said. "If it's true that all countries are negotiating in good faith for a



DUBAI: Nicolas Haeringer of the 350.org NGO (second left) and activists protest at the OPEC pavilion at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 10, 2023. — AFP

good outcome, we will get a good outcome." Vanuatu has been battered by three tropical cyclones this year, including a category five storm in October that smashed infrastructure such as schools and left some families surviving on relief aid. "We are suffering extreme effects of climate change," Regenvanu said.

"The cost of relief and recovery from all these events is more than our national budget already for one year. "So financially we can't cope," he said. "We need to urgently course-correct here because otherwise we have very little future we can offer our kids and our grandkids." — AFP



KUWAIT: A group photo during the honoring ceremony of the first batch of 'Shift' program graduates.



شركة الاستثمار الوطنية
NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY

NIC honors Shift program graduates

Ceremony held as part of NIC's strategic partnership with Creative Confidence

KUWAIT: The National Investments Company (NIC), in partnership with Creative Confidence, has honored the first batch of Shift program graduates, exclusively tailored to qualify freshly graduated Kuwaiti females to develop their investment skills, expand their capabilities and grow their knowledge in a way that will make them compelling candidates to embark into the investment world.

The program's closing ceremony was held on Sunday, Dec 10, 2023 at Boursa Kuwait's premises. The program, which was held over four weeks, included several different courses for the trainees, which helped them develop and achieve the goal of the program, thus adding to its intrinsic value, as it provides an efficient and experienced workforce ready to enter the business in the field of investment,

as the program focused on developing trainees in the field of innovation and creativity and contributing to integration in the field of investment work.

The ceremony was attended by Khaled Waleed Al-Falah, Vice Chairman of National Investments Company, who praised Creative Confidence's contribution to the overall positive outcome of the program. He also applauded the graduates of the Shift program for their enthusiasm and excitement in their commitment and development. He mentioned the importance of such a program in shaping the pivotal role of Kuwaiti women in society and their ability to bring about positive changes to the market, as well as their remarkable presence in various fields such as social, political, intellectual and cultural aspects of society.



Furthermore, Al-Falah expressed how boosting women's participation in the evolution of the economic foundation aims to develop the productive capacity of the market. Therefore, it is imperative for women to embark on this field and pursue their career ambitions. Al-Falah continued to emphasize how Kuwaiti society depends largely on the participation of Kuwaiti women, which is primarily what the Shift program aspired to achieve.

During the ceremony, the graduates participated in a detailed presentation about their wonderful training program experience. They presented the enthusiastic and motivating ideas they reached during this unique experience.

Fahad Al-Mukhaizim, Board Member and Chief Executive Officer at NIC, also attended and expressed how the company supports the growth and development of the national economy by strengthening the position of the private sector as a major driver of economic development. Al-Mukhaizim affirmed NIC's support for the growth and development of the national economy by strengthening the position of the

national development, their constant support for the renaissance of Kuwaiti society and their provision of many influential contributions and sacrifices.

Abdulmohsen Al-Khatrash, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Administration Affairs at NIC, said that the success of the program has exceeded our expectations, which represents a starting point to encourage more Kuwaiti women to mix in the field of investment by creating a gradual shift towards greater diversity in their work, adding that this program is designed to accommodate 22 trainees to prepare them to start an influential career in a successful and sophisticated manner.

Basing women's participation in the evolution of the economic foundation aims to develop the productive capacity of the market



Taibah Mohammad Al-Qatami, a Board Member at NIC, said: 'Proud to participate in the investment part through training in collaboration with the Creative Confidence team and the National Investments team in refining the skills of the trainees and providing them with the necessary experience in training and practice to enable them to improve their skills, which will be a powerful and active tool to benefit their careers constructively.'

private sector as a significant engine for economic development and qualifying national cadres with the necessary and required skills to be the best choice for employment in the labor market, as the company confirms its commitment and comprehensive participation in this positive program aimed at developing and refining the skills and capabilities of Kuwaiti women and enabling them to meet the requirements of the investment labor markets at local and the region levels.

He also highlighted the significant role of Kuwaiti women in contributing to na-

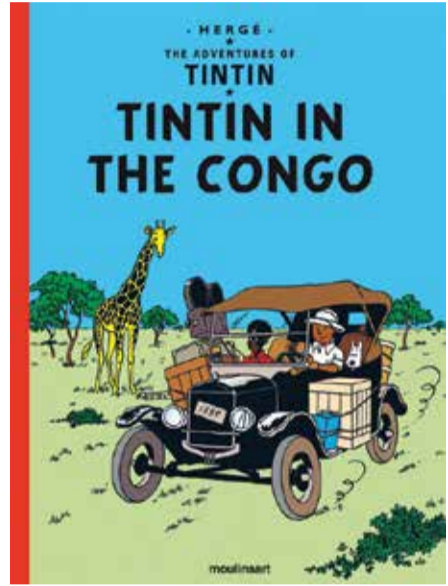
On the other hand, Sumaya Mohamed Al-Jassim, Founder of Creative Confidence, praised the support provided by the National Investments Company for the Shift program and said that this program takes Kuwaiti women into a vibrant educational experience, exploring innovation and investing in their future careers. Al-Jassim added that Shift was a program that raised awareness of the vital impact of commitment, learning and creativity. "I am delighted with this program's positive and effective influence on the trainees and can proudly say that Shift makes real change," she said.



Lifestyle

Tintin comic new edition addresses racism controversy

There has been a mixed response from anti-racism groups over a newly modified version of the Tintin comic books, after it was widely criticized over its colonialist depiction of Africans. "Tintin in the Congo" by Belgian comic strip artist Herge, the second volume of "The Adventures of Tintin", was first published in 1931. The Belgian Congo — comprising most of present-day Republic of Congo — was then a colony of the European country, becoming independent in 1960.



In the comic Tintin, an intrepid reporter, travels to Belgian Congo to report on events there leading to encounters with native people, wild animals and an American diamond-smuggling gangster. Over recent decades, the comic strip has become increasingly controversial, with critics pointing to its racist and colonialist treatment of the local population.

The new edition, launched in November together with two other books in the Tintin series, carries a preface explaining the colonial context of the time. It also contains tweaks to the story. At one point, Tintin teaches an African child mathematics, whereas in

the original he teaches the child that its home nation is Belgium. The cover was also changed from the original, showing Tintin facing off against a lion, whereas before he was sitting with a black child.

"This volume goes back to a time, that is thankfully over, where it was acceptable to consider blacks as inferior," said Patrick Lozes, founder of CRAN, a federation of anti-racism associations. He welcomed the addition of the preface, which he said went "in the right direction".

The preface, written by Philippe Goddin — head of the Friends of Herge association — is mostly concerned with defending the record of Tintin's creator in terms of racism. "He defended himself vigorously against that charge," he wrote. "He happily mocked everybody, whites and blacks." In an interview with AFP Goddin said "there is a thin line between caricature and racism, he did not cross that line".

Pascal Blanchard, a historian of colonialist propaganda, said he was "surprised" that the publishers did not make a special announcement of the changes, and that the new preface was not mentioned on the cover.

He called the preface "highly debatable". Claims that Herge's work had simply been a reflection of his time were "facile and false", he said. Herge himself admitted in 1975 that all he knew about the Belgian Congo was "what people talked about" at the time, saying: "I drew Africans in the pure spirit of paternalism that was prevalent back then."

Herge is considered as one of the leading cartoonists of the 20th century, with a unique style that influenced many artists, including pop artists Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Tintin's adventures have been translated into 130 languages, sold 260 million copies and been made into TV shows and a Hollywood film. — AFP



People look at a drawing by late French cartoonist Albert Uderzo, which appeared on the original cover of "Asterix and Cleopatra", on display at Millon auction house in Brussels. — AFP

Original Asterix cover for auction despite legal challenge

An original cover painting from the 1963 comic book Asterix and Cleopatre was to go under the hammer on Sunday despite a legal challenge from the artist's daughter. The famous gouache, showing a reclining ancient Egyptian ruler and the two Gaulish heroes Asterix and Obelix was to be sold by the Brussels auction house Millon. Measuring 32 by 17 centimetres, it is expected to fetch between 400,000 and 500,000 euros — but the sale was almost blocked by the daughter of the late French illustrator Albert Uderzo. Sylvie Uderzo argued that if her father had given the painting away he would have signed and dedicated it, and thus the painting must have been stolen.

Millon insists that it is selling the work on behalf of the son of a man who was given it more than 50 years ago by Uderzo, the co-creator of the Asterix series who died in 2020. The daughter lodged a complaint with Belgian prosecutors on November 27 but, according to a letter seen by AFP, they found no grounds to suspect a crime had been

committed. Sylvie Uderzo's lawyer Orly Rezlan had warned that any buyer of the cover painting could be prosecuted for receiving stolen goods, an idea rejected by the auctioneers.

"During his lifetime, Albert Uderzo publicly stated that he would oppose the sale of any drawing that did not include his dedication," the lawyer argued last week. Uderzo, she said, had always said of original plates without dedications that "If you bring one to me, I'll dedicate it to you".

But Arnaud de Partz, director general of Millon Belgium, argued that many other non-dedicated pieces by Uderzo have already been put up for public auction. And the house has produced a photograph in which a man presented as the owner of the drawing shares a meal with Uderzo and his wife at a hotel in Normandy in the late 1960s.

Growing market

"We showed this photo to Sylvie Uderzo to show her that the sellers' father knew her father well," de Partz said.

The story Asterix and Cleopatre appeared as a serial in Pilote magazine in 1963 and was bound as the sixth book length adventure in the series in 1965. The cover art parodies the poster for the 1963 Hollywood epic "Cleopatre", then the most expensive ever made, with Uderzo's Cleopatre in the same pose as its star Elizabeth Taylor.

Asterix, the plucky Gaulish hero, stands in for Rex Harrison's Julius Caesar and his portly sidekick Obelix for Richard Burton's Marc Antony. In recent years art from the original editions of beloved French and Belgian comic book successes like Asterix or Tintin has attracted wealthy collectors and investors.

In February, the original 1942 cover art of "Tintin in America" by Belgium's Herge, was sold in Paris for 2.16 million euros. But the estates of the late comic book writers and illustrators fiercely guard the rights to what have become global brands, and several sales have attracted controversy. — AFP



A name tag is pictured on a Christmas tree, so that a customer can rent the same tree from the previous year.



Jonathan Mearns, Director of London Christmas Tree Rental (left), helps a customer relocate and prepare a Christmas tree.



Employee Dan Nicholas (right) helps prepare a Christmas tree for rental at London Christmas Tree Rental.



Jonathan Mearns, Director of London Christmas Tree Rental (left), and colleague Dan Nicholas (center), help a customer relocate a Christmas tree from a previous year to rent again, at the rental site in Dulwich, London.



A customer chooses a Christmas tree to rent at London Christmas Tree Rental.



Customers choose a Christmas tree to rent at London Christmas Tree Rental in Dulwich, London. — AFP photos

Rent-a-tree firm helps Londoners have a sustainable Christmas

On a crisp, winter's day at a London scout centre, seasoned customers picked their way along muddy rows of Christmas trees in pots labeled with their names while newcomers mulled over which one to rent. "It's a big decision", said one. With a rise in popularity of artificial trees for environmental reasons, Londoners who prefer a real Christmas tree can now be equally sustainable. Instead of throwing away their tree in January they can instead return it — having watered it in its pot over the festive season — to a new rental firm that will look after it until the following year.

"We just say it's 'rent, water, return'. After Christmas, return it and we put it back into the irrigation," said Jonathan Mearns, who runs London

Christmas Tree Rental. Mearns, who in another life was a police officer working in counter-terrorism, started the business in 2017 and now has a loyal band of customers who come back year after year.

The business uses a farm located in the Cotswolds in central England, where the trees are irrigated and looked after before being returned for another Christmas. "It started off as I think what some people would have said was a crazy idea — but it has grown over the years and more and more people are interested in renting a Christmas tree," he told AFP at the centre in Dulwich in south London. "There's big growth, big growth in it. We're not saying we have perfect trees what we say is we have real trees," he

added. Publishing worker Jess Sacco and doctor Rachel Gordon Boyd, both in their mid-thirties, said the green aspect of renting a tree was appealing.

Cutting waste

"We're trying to be more sustainable in general I guess in our lives... we thought it's just a nice alternative to buying a tree and throwing it away," Sacco said. Mearns says he finds it dispiriting every January to see so many lifeless brown trees abandoned and destined to decompose. "You will see on the streets of London in January or anywhere around the country, there will be lots of cut trees strewn on the roadside.

"Now those trees are dead, once they're cut they're dead, recovering

them is impossible," he said. The entrepreneur and motivational speaker, who says he is on a mission to reduce waste at Christmas, says that a three-foot (one-metre) tree from his company could be a four-foot tree next year.

The idea has tapped into Londoners' concerns about the amount they throw away and adopting a sustainable lifestyle. "Because there's so much waste that goes on with chucking them every year. I wanted to have a real Christmas tree but something more sustainable," said Joe Potter, a 36-year-old policy manager said. "It's something that's on our mind a lot as a family, he added. — AFP



Director Jonathan Mearns (left) and colleague Dan Nicholas help prepare a Christmas tree for rental.



Jonathan Mearns, Director of London Christmas Tree Rental (center), and colleague Dan Nicholas (right), help customers relocate Christmas trees from a previous year to rent again.

Lifestyle



Iranian journalist Taghi Rahmani (center), husband of this year's winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi (not in picture), and their children Ali Rahmani (left) and Kiana Rahmani (right) pose for a picture after signing the guest book at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway. — AFP photos



Leader of the Nobel Committee Berit Reiss-Andersen (left) applauds as Kiana Rahmani and Ali Rahmani pose with the award on behalf of their mother during the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony at the Oslo City Hall.

Peace Nobel winner Mohammadi's children accept award on her behalf

Imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi denounced Sunday a "tyrannical and anti-women religious" government in Iran, in a speech delivered by her children who accepted the award in her absence. Mohammadi, who has campaigned against the compulsory wearing of the hijab and the death penalty in Iran, has been held since 2021 in Tehran's Evin prison.

Instead, her 17-year-old twins Ali and Kiana, both living in exile in France since 2015, received the award on her behalf, reading a speech she managed to smuggle out of her cell. "I am a Middle Eastern woman, and come from a region which, despite its rich civilization, is now trapped amid war, the fire of terrorism, and extremism," she said in a message that was written "behind the high, cold walls of a prison."

"The Iranian people will dismantle obstruction and despotism through their persistence," Mohammadi said in her speech. "Have no doubt — this is certain," she said. Mohammadi has been arrested and convicted several times in recent decades, and her twin



Taghi Rahmani, husband of this year's winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi signs the guest book at the Nobel Institute.

children have not seen their mother for almost nine years. "Personally I'm rather pessimistic," Kiana Mohammadi told reporters on Saturday, while his brother Ali said he remained "very, very optimistic". The "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement seeks the end of Iran's imposition of a headscarf on all women and an end to the cleric-led government in Tehran.



A handout photo provided by the Narges Mohammadi Foundation shows an undated, unlocated photo of Iranian rights campaigner Narges Mohammadi.

Empty chair

"I am an Iranian woman, a proud and honorable contributor to civilization, who is currently under the oppression of a despotic religious government," she said. A chair was left symbolically empty at the ceremony, where a portrait of Mohammadi was displayed. Mohammadi is one of the women spearheading the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising, which saw months-long protests

across Iran triggered by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini.

Amini, an Iranian Kurdish woman, died on Sept 16, 2022, while being held by Iran's religious police for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's dress code for women. "The mandatory hijab imposed by the government is neither a religious obligation nor a cultural tradition, but rather a means of maintaining authority and submission throughout society," Mohammadi said in the speech read before the Norwegian royal family and foreign dignitaries.

She said Iran "is fundamentally alienating itself from its people", denouncing government repression, the lack of an independent judicial system, propaganda and censorship, and corruption. Mohammadi is currently carrying out a hunger strike in solidarity with the Baha'i community, according to her family. Representatives of Baha'i, Iran's largest religious minority, say it is the target of targeted discrimination.

In Mandela's footsteps

Mohammadi is the fifth laureate in the more than 120-year history of the Nobel Peace Prize to receive the award

while detained. She follows Germany's Carl von Ossietzky, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, China's Liu Xiaobo and Belarus' Ales Beliatki. "Narges Mohammadi's struggle is also comparable to that of Albert Lutuli, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, which took place over a period of more than 30 years before the apartheid system in South Africa came to an end," the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, said in a speech.

Protests in Iran triggered by Amini's death have been severely repressed. The Iran Human Rights group (IHR) says 551 demonstrators, including dozens of women and children, have been killed by security forces, and thousands have been arrested. On Saturday, the lawyer for Amini's family said her parents and brother, who were due to receive the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought on Amini's behalf at a ceremony on Dec 13, was being prohibited from leaving Iran. The other Nobel prizes, in literature, chemistry, medicine, physics and economics, were awarded later Sunday at ceremonies in Stockholm. — AFP

Fresh start or 'unseemly' stunt? New-look Golden Globes to unveil noms

With new owners, a change of TV network and a radically overhauled membership, the Golden Globes will hope for a clean break from years of notoriety as they unveil nominations on Monday for this year's best in film and television. But even as the scandal-racked show seeks to reclaim its position as the fun, rowdy and celebrity-packed kickstarter to Hollywood's movie awards season, critics warn that its reforms could bring a new batch of ethical problems.

For decades, the Globes were owned, run and voted for by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) - an eclectic group of around 100 entertainment journalists, writing for international outlets, who were often derided in the industry for their alleged amateurism and obscurity. Those criticisms erupted in 2021, when a Los Angeles Times expose revealed the HFPA had no Black members, prompting a Hollywood boycott. The Globes have been scrambling to survive ever since.

In June, the awards were purchased by a group of private investors including US billionaire Todd Boehly, the HFPA itself was disbanded, and a new plan was set out to restore the Globes' luster. Under the deal, the erstwhile HFPA's members were taken on as salaried employees of the new Golden Globes company, essentially now paid to watch movies, vote, and contribute articles for the awards' website.

That has prompted questions about potential conflicts of interest. Muddying the waters further, the awards' new owners include Penske Media — which runs the production company behind the Globes telecast, as well as trade outlets Variety and The Hollywood Reporter — and Eldridge, which has a stake in film studio and regular Globes contender A24.

"There's something unseemly about a Globes voter getting paid to write for the Globes website about an actor that they may end up nominating for a Golden Globe award to be given out on the stage of a show owned by the company they work for," noted a Los Angeles Times editorial this year.

"Will the company executives urge voters to nominate high-profile stars and directors in hopes that they will show up? The new model appears to be one giant public relations machine." But the Globes' new owners have defended the changes.

They argue that paying Hollywood-based voters a \$75,000 salary ends a flawed ecosystem under which impoverished, often freelance journalists accepted lavish press trips they could not fund themselves, and collected expensive freebies from studios to help make ends meet.

Seeking to improve the awards' credibility and diversity, the group has added more than 200 non-member (and unpaid) voters based around the world, and appointed a new board including respected industry figures such as former Variety editor-in-chief Tim Gray. "Major changes are already underway at the Golden Globes and I think people in Hollywood, and around the world, will be pleased when they see integrity restored while the sense of fun remains," said Gray, now executive vice president of the Golden Globes, in August.



Golden Globe trophies are set by the stage ahead of the 77th Annual Golden Globe Awards nominations announcement at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills. — AFP

The new-look Golden Globes gala will take place on January 7. CBS will broadcast the event. The network takes over from NBC, and has handed the show a coveted time slot, immediately after the final round of regular-season NFL games. CBS bosses will be hoping for vastly improved ratings, after the 2023 Globes slumped to a new low of just 6.3 million viewers, even as other shows such as the Oscars recovered from pandemic viewership nadirs. — AFP



Video grab taken from an AFP footage shows Russian comic Dan The Stranger performing on stage in a club in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

Funny? Da, da: Russian comic Dan The Stranger's new life in Germany

In a club in Munich, the laughs come easily from the crowd although the jokes from the Russian comic onstage come from the darkest of places. Running to escape the police, struggling with depression and spending a childhood with an alcoholic father are all fair game for Dan The Stranger. The Russian comic with piercing blue eyes left his homeland after death threats when he spoke out against the war in Ukraine. A funeral wreath was even delivered to one of his gigs before he left for Turkey with his wife and their three dogs.

Now the 35-year-old is building a new life in Germany and looking for a new following with a finely honed act of side-splitting delivered in English. "I mostly talk about my trauma," said Dan, who prefers not to give his real name. "And of course if you lived in Russia, you have trauma — you have enough for your whole career," he said with a grin. He is now selling out shows like the one in Munich and has 40,000 followers on Instagram thanks to his short, deeply wry posts.

"Every time my German friends tell stories from their childhood, everyone laughs. Every time I tell stories from my Russian childhood, everyone offers help." Or his morning routines — staring at a blank wall for half an hour — or checking social media. As soon as wakes he feels the need to "read the opinions of incompetent or simply crazy people on all important issues. Now I am ready to start my day." Meditation doesn't help, he complained in another post, because "it is impossible to relax listening to a meditation in a Russian accent." — AFP

The Pogues singer-songwriter Shane MacGowan given full Irish send-off

The hard-living lead singer of The Pogues, Shane MacGowan, received a rousing Irish send-off with music, song and dancing on Friday, after his death at the age of 65. Stars including Johnny Depp, Bono and Nick Cave joined Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins and former Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams at a funeral mass in Nenagh, County Tipperary, west of Dublin. Cave performed a version of the Celtic folk-punk band's wistful "A Rainy Night in Soho" in a service that resonated to the sounds of the fiddle, flute and organ, as well as cheers, whistles and applause.

There was dancing in the aisles to a rousing acoustic rendition of his most famous tune, "Fairytale of New York" — a duet from 1987 with the late Kirsty MacColl, which is tipped to be this year's Christmas number one. "Shane would have enjoyed that," his sister Siobhan told St Mary of the Rosary Church, where their mother Therese used to attend Roman Catholic mass every Sunday.

Father Pat Gilbert, who led the ceremony on the day the late Irish singer Sinead O'Connor would have been 57, welcomed "the world" to the funeral of a man whom he said, "influenced, encouraged, entertained and touched" everyone he encountered. MacGowan, who died from pneumonia on November 30 after a period of ill health, was "a poet, lyricist, singer, trailblazer" who had a "revolutionary edge to life", the priest said. "Pirates of the Caribbean" star Depp, a close friend of the singer-songwriter, referred to MacGowan as "maestro" before reciting a prayer. Another was read by The Boomtown Rats singer and LiveAid founder Bob Geldof. Symbols of MacGowan's life, including a Tipperary flag, a statue of the Virgin Mary, a Led Zeppelin record, a novel by Irish author James Joyce and a hurling stick, were brought to the altar.

'Proud Irishman'

Earlier in the day, thousands lined the streets of Dublin to their pay respects, applauding as MacGowan's wicker coffin was carried the through the city in a horse-drawn carriage. Members of the public turned out in force in the Irish capital and threw flowers while musicians played his best-known songs.

The Pogues fused punk and Irish folk music, with MacGowan, a heavy drinker and drug taker, quickly becoming its figurehead as the band's lead singer and songwriter. His wife, Victoria Mary

Clarke, told the church he used to carry an encyclopedia of pharmacology and consulted it to decide whether to take a drug, and was once found eating a copy of a Beach Boys album.

"He explored the boundaries of what you can do, while you are still in a physical body. His body lasted a long time considering what he did to it," she said. "He was creating music and lyrics all the time he was doing this." MacGowan, hailed as a genius in the Irish poetic tradition, was born in England but spent much of his childhood in Ireland with his mother's family.



Shane MacGowan of British group The Pogues performs on stage at the British Summer Time festival in Hyde Park in central London. — AFP

The band became an international symbol of Irishness at home and for the country's sprawling diaspora, with MacGowan's contribution recognized in a slew of tributes from political leaders. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar called MacGowan "an amazing musician and artist" whose songs "beautifully captured the Irish experience, especially the experience of being Irish abroad".

Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army paramilitary group that fought for decades against British rule in Northern Ireland, praised his support. The Pogues' 1988 song "Streets of Sorrow/Birmingham Six", which recounted the plight of six Irishmen wrongly imprisoned for deadly pub bombings in Birmingham, was banned from British airwaves.

Sinn Fein president Mary Lou McDonald called MacGowan "a poet, dreamer and social justice champion". "He was a republican and a proud Irishman. Nobody told the Irish story like Shane. He sang to us of dreams and captured stories of emigration," she said. MacGowan, who was due to celebrate his birthday on Christmas Day, was taken for cremation in a private ceremony. — AFP

Sports

Championship leaders turn on the style in Plymouth 4-0 rout

Leicester consolidate their position on top

News in Brief

Haney grabs WBC title

SAN FRANCISCO: Devin Haney wrested the WBC super-lightweight world title from Regis Prograis on Saturday, knocking his opponent down once on the way to a unanimous decision victory in San Francisco. Haney, the former undisputed lightweight world champion stepping up to the 140-pound division for the first time, won by scores of 120-107 from all three judges and said the move up in weight had made a new fighter of him. "A tremendous difference," a victorious Haney told DAZN in the ring at the Chase Center, home of the NBA's Golden State Warriors. "You see it in my performance. I felt so much stronger... 140 got a new king." Haney sent Prograis to the canvas in the third round with one of many devastating combinations. He wobbled Prograis again in the sixth on the way to the dominant victory. Haney, a 24-year-old Bay Area native, improved to 31-0 with 15 knockouts. — AFP

Dramatic win boosts Wydad

JOHANNESBURG: Wydad Casablanca of Morocco clawed back into contention for a CAF Champions League last-eight place after snatching an added-time 1-0 victory over Simba of Tanzania on Saturday. Algerian Zakaria Draoui, a recent signing, scored his first goal in Africa for his new club after 95 minutes in Marrakesh to give the three-time champions a massive boost. Wydad reached four Champions League finals from 2017, winning two, and have been a dominant force in the elite African competition along with Al Ahly of Egypt. But a stunning home defeat against minnows Jwaneng Galaxy of Botswana and an away loss to ASEC Mimosas in the Ivory Coast left them bottom of Group B before tackling Simba. Yahya Jabrane, part of the Morocco squad that reached the 2022 World Cup semi-finals in Qatar and often the inspiration behind Wydad triumphs, missed a first-half penalty. But that wasted chance was forgotten when Draoui slammed a low shot between the legs of goalkeeper Ayoub Lakred after a free-kick. — AFP

Rangers close gap on Celtic

GLASGOW: Rangers manager Philippe Clement said his side showed their team spirit in coming from behind and playing the entire second half down with 10 men in a 3-1 win over Dundee. Clement's side closed the gap on Scottish Premiership leaders Celtic to five points as they remain unbeaten in 12 games under the Belgian. Amadou Bakayoko had fired Dundee into a shock fifth-minute lead. But the home side responded at Ibrox to lead through goals from Cyriel Dessers, James Tavernier and Abdallah Sima before the break. A comfortable afternoon for Rangers looked in store until Jose Cifuentes was sent-off in first half stoppage time after a VAR review upgraded his yellow card to a red. "I see this dressing room growing week-by-week in that way. That is crucial. I know you need a really strong dressing room where everybody fights for one another, where everybody is available for the team," said Clement. "Everyone sees in the last few weeks this team sticking together in every sense. Players coming in, playing out of position and doing a job for the team." — AFP

Toulouse trounce Cardiff

TOULON: Scotland full-back Blair Kinghorn scored two tries on his Toulouse debut as the record five-time winners hammered Cardiff 52-7 in the Champions Cup on Saturday. Kinghorn only arrived at the French club this week after moving from Edinburgh for a hefty transfer fee and took his new side, captained by France scrum-half Antoine Dupont, to the top of Pool 2. Wingers Matthias Lebel and Arthur Retiere, lock Richie Arnold as well as back-rowers Anthony Jelonec and Alban Placines crossed for the Top 14 champions, as they put their rusty league form behind them. Twenty-year-old No 8 Mackenzie Martin scored the Welsh side's only try, making only his third senior appearance, highlighting the lack of experience and spending power at the 1996 finalists. Bath also made a winning start in the group after an impressive 37-14 comeback victory over Ulster. — AFP

Odermatt wins slalom opener

VAL-D'ISERE: Marco Odermatt made it a hat-trick of wins in the giant slalom at Val d'Isere on Saturday, while Joan Verdu, in third place, gave Andorra its first podium finish in the competition. Swiss ace Odermatt, who also won the event in 2021 and 2022, notched his 25th World Cup victory as he set the pace in the opening giant slalom of the season. "It's amazing to start the season with another victory here for the third time in a row," said Odermatt. "It's not easy to ski here, but I still love this hill. It's always a tough race and a difficult hill. At the start, I didn't feel 100 percent, but for me it's always a good hill." The win underlined Odermatt's dominance of the discipline. He is the current Olympic and world champion and has won 13 of 19 giant slalom races over the past two seasons, making the podium in all but one of those. In snowy conditions, he clocked the quickest time on the first run and, despite making a few mistakes, did enough in the second run to finish 0.98 seconds ahead of the Austrian Marco Schwarz. — AFP

LONDON: Leicester consolidated their position on top of the Championship as Stephy Mavididi scored twice in a stylish 4-0 rout of Plymouth on Saturday. Mavididi opened the scoring with a 14th minute penalty before the Foxes netted three times in a blistering seven-minute spell after half-time. Patson Daka doubled Leicester's lead with a clinical strike after 49 minutes and Mavididi lashed in his second goal just three minutes later. Nigeria midfielder Wilfred Ndidi completed the scoring in the 55th minute, finishing in off a post from Daka's pass to ensure the Foxes remain one point

clear at the top of the table.

Ipswich remain second after a 2-0 win at Middlesbrough stepped up their unexpected promotion push. Kieran McKenna's side, who came up from League One last season, went ahead through Conor Chaplin's eighth of the season nine minutes before half-time. Omari Hutchinson's fine finish in the 67th minute sealed Ipswich's third successive victory. Third placed Leeds stayed in touch with the top two after a 2-0 win at Blackburn. Dan James scored for the third game in succession to fire Leeds ahead in the first half. Crystall Palace's cool finish

15 minutes from full-time wrapped up the Yorkshire club's sixth win in their last seven games. An equalizer from Watford substitute Rhys Healey six minutes into stoppage-time salvaged a 1-1 draw against fourth placed Southampton at Vicarage Road. Mike Dodds enjoyed a winning start as interim Sunderland boss after two second-half goals gave the Black Cats to a 2-1 victory against fifth placed West Bromwich Albion. Dan Ballard broke the deadlock at the Stadium of Light in the 69th minute before Dan Neil doubled Sunderland's lead in the 84th minute. West Brom hit back through Bran-

don Thomas-Asante in the 86th minute but Sunderland held out to end a three-game winless run that triggered Tony Mowbray's sacking on Monday. Anthony Musaba struck a 91st-minute winner as Sheffield Wednesday moved off the bottom of the table with a 1-0 victory at Stoke. Lowly QPR extended their resurgence under Marti Cifuentes with a 2-0 win against Hull as goals from Chris Willock and Ilias Chair made it three consecutive victories. Dimitrios Goutas's 78th minute header earned Cardiff a 1-0 win against struggling Millwall in south Wales. — AFP

World Cup ski races cancelled because of bad weather

VAL-D'ISERE: The men's World Cup slalom in the French resort of Val d'Isere and the women's super-G across the Swiss border in St Moritz were both cancelled on Sunday because of bad weather. It is the seventh men's event to be cancelled this season out of nine scheduled. Marco Odermatt won Saturday's giant slalom before bad weather closed in to wipe out the slalom. "The snow was really good yesterday during the GS and then late afternoon it starts raining," said men's chief race director Markus Waldner.

"And then it turns into wet snow, strong wind also. We went out at two o'clock in the morning. The base was actually gone, not good enough to race anymore. "We tried to set the course and clean a little bit, but it was not safe enough." Prior to Saturday's giant slalom, the only other race to go ahead was a slalom in Gurgl, Austria. The season giant slalom opener in neighbouring Soelden was cancelled, before two downhill in Zermatt-Cervinia (Switzerland/Italy) were also scratched. Last weekend's races at the American resort of Beaver Creek - two downhills and a super-G - were wiped out by heavy snowfall and high winds.

Snow in St Moritz

After two days of speed racing in St Moritz, heavy snowfall on Saturday night made the Corviglia course unsafe for the women's super-G. "It was quite a lot of snow last night," said Peter Gerdol, FIS race director for women. "The minimum was 20 centimeters,

Japanese star Ohtani confirms move to LA

LOS ANGELES: Japanese superstar Shohei Ohtani confirmed on Saturday he is joining the Los Angeles Dodgers in a record-breaking 10-year, \$700 million deal - the richest contract in baseball history. The future of the 29-year-old Los Angeles Angels ace had been the subject of intense speculation since the two-way star entered free agency at the end of the season. Ohtani eventually opted for the Dodgers after a frenzied battle for his signature which also included interest from the Chicago Cubs, Toronto Blue Jays, New York Yankees and San Francisco Giants. "To all the fans and everyone involved in the baseball world, I apologize for taking so long to come to a decision," Ohtani wrote on Instagram.

"I have decided to choose the Dodgers as my next team. "I pledge to always do what's best for the team and always continue to give it my all to be the best version of myself. "Until the last day of my playing career, I want to continue to strive forward not only for the Dodgers but for the baseball

world," Ohtani added. Ohtani's agent Nez Balelo said in a statement the deal would be worth \$700 million over 10 years, shattering the record for the biggest contract in baseball history. Balelo described Ohtani's mammoth payday as a "unique historic contract, for a unique historic player."

"Shohei is thrilled to be a part of the Dodgers organization," Balelo said. "He is excited to begin this partnership." Ohtani has taken Major League Baseball by storm since landing in the league in 2018, with his almost unheard of combination of elite pitching and hitting prowess earning him comparisons to Babe Ruth. Although his talents were not enough to help spark a revival in the Angels' fortunes - the team failed to make the playoffs following his arrival - Ohtani nevertheless dazzled in a flagging franchise.

He has twice been named American League Most Valuable Player, in 2021 and 2023, on both occasions winning by unanimous vote - the only player in history to achieve that distinction. Although elbow injuries have



TOKYO: People pose with a special edition newspaper announcing that Japanese baseball star Shohei Ohtani has agreed to a contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers, on a street in Tokyo. — AFP

cut short his pitching appearances - he missed the final month of the 2023 campaign with a torn ulnar collateral ligament in his elbow - this season was his most successful to date. As a designated hitter, Ohtani led the AL in home runs with 44, in on-base percentage (.412), slugging percentage (.654) and total bases (325).

He hit 26 doubles and eight triples with 20 stolen bases and 95 runs-batted-in. He hit over .300 for the first time

in his six-year major league career. In 23 pitching starts he went 10-5 with a 3.14 earned-run-average and 167 strikeouts in 132 innings. He had the lowest batting average against (.184) among all AL pitchers with at least 130 innings. It marked Ohtani's second straight season with at least 10 wins on the mound and 10 home runs at the plate. The only other player to accomplish that feat was New York Yankees legend Ruth back in 1918. — AFP

Ten Hag blasts 'inconsistent' Man United

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag blasted his "inconsistent" Manchester United charges after Bournemouth made history with their first ever victory at Old Trafford on Saturday. Ten Hag's side slumped to an embarrassing 3-0 defeat that underlined the array of problems threatening to ruin United's season. Just three days after beating Chelsea to revive their bid for a top four finish in the Premier League, United reverted to the sloppy form that has plagued them for much of the campaign.

Goals from Dominic Solanke, Philip Billing and Marcos Senesi handed Bournemouth a memorable win as Ten Hag and his players were booed off at full-time. With the pressure mounting on Ten Hag with each defeat in his troubled second season as United boss, the Dutchman slammed his team's lacklustre performance. "Of course, annoyed and disappointed, definitely. I expected something different," Ten Hag said.

"I hoped before the game you can build on the performance and result from Chelsea, so then it's very disappointing. "That (consistency) is of course the question, but I think we have to always be ready for

the game, so I have to take the responsibility for that. "I have to prepare my team so that they are ready for the game, so from my point of view I'm very disappointed the way we started so I have to do the things better."

United have now lost 35 home league games since Alex Ferguson retired at the end of the 2012-13 title-winning season. During the iconic 26-year reign of the Scottish manager, United were only beaten in the league at Old Trafford 34 times. Ten Hag shouldered much of the responsibility for United's 11th defeat in all competitions this term. But alarmingly for United fans, the former Ajax boss conceded he did not believe his squad were consistent enough to thrive at the highest level.

'We are not good enough'

"We are really inconsistent. We have the abilities to do it, but you have to do it every game and every third day," he said. "I think as a squad we are not good enough to be consistent and we have to work as a squad to improve that." It was an eye-catching remark at the end of a week that began with reports that some United players had grown unhappy with the manager. Ten Hag denied those claims but, with his team mired in sixth place, he desperately needs some positive results quickly. United host Bayern Munich in the Champions League next week knowing they must win to have any chance of progressing to the last 16.



Manchester United's Dutch manager Erik ten Hag

A trip to in-form Liverpool in the Premier League follows the Bayern clash. "As a group, we have to improve," Ten Hag said. "That's a fact. We have to get tougher, that we are ready for the game and from the start. "I said on Friday, it can't be in this league that you are not playing on the highest levels because you get killed. "That's what happened in the five minutes and then you are following facts and especially against them, such a good transition team, you make life easy for them. They have the perfect conditions to play in. "Then you see the team fighting, battling, put a lot of effort in for a long period to return in the game, but it can't happen that you so easily concede a goal." — AFP

Sports

Calhanoglu guides Inter Milan to Serie A top spot

Inter secure comfortable 4-0 home win over Udinese

MILAN: Turkey playmaker Hakan Calhanoglu set up a goal and scored another as Inter Milan moved back to the summit of Serie A with Saturday's comfortable 4-0 home win over Udinese. Inter had dropped to second in the table on Friday after Juventus' 1-0 victory over champions Napoli. At the San Siro, midfielder Calhanoglu converted a penalty before setting up Federico Dimarco and Marcus Thuram scored a third for the 16-time champions before the break.

Argentina's Lautaro Martinez secured all three points with six minutes remaining to keep his spot as the league's top scorer. "It's important to respond to Juve who are behind us, it's not easy to play after them," Martinez said. "I'm proud and I hope to score many, the important thing is to help my teammates. "I care little about who scores, the important thing is to continue like this," he added. Simone Inzaghi's Inter are two points above Juve and remain unbeaten in Serie A and the Champions League since September 27.

Calhanoglu opened the scoring from the spot after 38 minutes following a foul on Martinez. Inter led 3-0 at half-time after the 29-year-old delicately fed wing-back Dimarco to score and then Thuram netted his sixth league goal this season a minute before the break. Thuram's effort came at the end of 21 passes in a move which started in the Inter half. Udinese were denied a goal with 23 minutes remaining as on-loan Lorenzo Lucca was adjudged to be offside despite beating Yann Sommer.

Calhanoglu was replaced in the 71st minute by Albania defensive midfielder Kristjan Asllani before inform Martinez completed the rout with six minutes to go. Inter club captain Martinez tackled Udinese midfielder Martin Payero near the halfway line and charged forward to rifle his effort into the bottom corner for his 14th goal of the campaign. Next up for Inzaghi's side is Tuesday's Champions League game with Real Sociedad, having already clinched their place in the last 16 of the competition.

Muriel magic

Earlier, experienced Colombia striker Luis Muriel scored a 95th-minute winner with a backheel as Atalanta beat AC Milan. The three points send Atalanta a point off the fourth and final Champions League place and stopped Milan from keeping up pace with the top two in the table, leaders Juve and city rivals Inter. The defeat, just Milan's fourth in the league this season, comes at a bad time before Wednesday's crucial Champions League trip to Newcastle, where Stefano Pioli's side have to win to keep their hopes of reaching the knock-out stages alive. Muriel's first goal of the campaign came after two efforts from Nigeria forward Ademola Lookman in Bergamo. France attacker Olivier Giroud and Serbia forward Luka Jovic had equalized for the visitors. Muriel, 32, claimed the winner, as he connected with Aleksey Miranchuk's drilled pass to secure Atalanta's first league win since October 30. — AFP



MILAN: Inter Milan's Turkish forward Hakan Calhanoglu (hidden) is congratulated by teammates after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Udinese on December 9, 2023. — AFP

Ruibal rocket earns draw for Betis; Real Madrid held

BARCELONA: Leaders Real Madrid stumbled to a 1-1 draw at Real Betis on Saturday as Aitor Ruibal's brilliant strike cancelled out Jude Bellingham's league-best 12th goal of the season. Bellingham slotted Madrid ahead at the Benito Villamarin early in the second half after combining magnificently with Brahim Diaz. But Ruibal drilled an angled shot into the top corner from outside the area to earn Betis a point and extend their unbeaten run in La Liga to 11 matches. "It was a good game, competitive and even, the result is a fair one," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. "I'm satisfied because you're not always going to be able to win every game."

Madrid pulled one point clear of Girona but could lose top spot on Sunday if the surprise challengers beat neighbors Barcelona in a Catalan derby. The visitors thought they had taken the lead when Diaz turned in from close range on 16 minutes after a superb exchange between Bellingham and Rodrygo. Bellingham backheeled the ball towards Rodrygo who slid the ball between the legs of a defender. An attempted clearance ricocheted off Rodrygo and left Diaz with a tap-in, but the Brazilian was offside in the build-up.

Chasing a fifth successive home league win, Betis twice went close as Ayoze Perez saw an attempt well saved by Andriy Lunin before Willian Jose bent an effort narrowly wide of the far post. Betis goalkeeper Rui Silva clawed behind a long-range drive from



SEVILLE: Real Betis' Mexican midfielder #18 Andres Guardado jumps over Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #11 Rodrygo during the Spanish league football match between Real Betis and Real Madrid CF on December 9, 2023. — AFP

Luka Modric, but he was powerless to stop Bellingham breaking the deadlock eight minutes after half-time. The England midfielder retrieved the ball deep in Betis territory near the touchline, finding Diaz and chesting down the scooped return pass as he strode into the box and stroked past Silva.

Madrid's lead lasted only 13 minutes as Ruibal was afforded far too much time and space before he

rifled home from 20 meters, grabbing his first league goal in a two-and-a-half years. Both teams pushed for a winner and former Madrid attacker Isco nearly undid his old club when he headed against the post. Joselu dribbled an effort agonizingly wide in stoppage time at the other end before Lunin tipped over centre-back Chadi Riad's header with the last touch of the game. — AFP

Muani snatches victory for PSG

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain triumphed 2-1 on Saturday thanks to a late Randal Kolo Muani winner against Nantes, with Monaco winning to go second. Bradley Barcola's stylish finish just before the break gave PSG the lead, but a Mostafa Mohamed header in the second half made it look as if the points would be shared in the capital. However, Kolo Muani pounced in the six-yard box seven minutes from time to allow PSG to open up a six-point lead at the top of the table.

"I think that before an important match like Wednesday's (Borussia Dortmund), we were good right from the first minute," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "Nantes defended well and it was a match that allowed us to strengthen our position in the league." In Paris, a first half dominated by the hosts, though with few clear-cut chances at either end, was illuminated by Barcola in the 41st minute when he stroked home his first goal for PSG.

Playing a one-two on the left wing with Vitinha, the 21-year-old glided into the box before opening his body and bending the ball beyond Alban Lafont. But Nantes were back on terms 10 minutes after the break when Florent Mollet's corner was nodded in by Mohamed at the near post, leaving last week's hero Arnau Tenas little chance. PSG were handed a welcome boost when teenager Warren Zaire-Emery entered the fray after 61 minutes, though returning captain Marquinhos left the field at the same time.

However, the key change came with 11 minutes remaining as goalscorer Barcola made way for Kolo Muani. And just four minutes later, the French international was on hand to turn in a rebound from close-range and his fourth goal of the season was enough to give the home team a narrow 2-1 win. Luis Enrique declared the result "a good preparation for a Champions League match" as his side now turn their attention to next week's do-or-die clash in Dortmund, the Parisians need a result to reach the knockout stages.

Monaco reign in Brittany

Second-half strikes from Vanderson and Youssef Fofana gave Monaco a 2-1 win away to Rennes with the principality side moving above Nice into second place. Despite a late penalty from Benjamin Bourigeaud and Vanderson's red card, Monaco held out at Roazhon Park to take themselves within three points of Paris Saint-Germain at the top of Ligue 1.

Monaco started the week in third place, having somewhat fallen out of the title race in recent weeks but back-to-back wins have them firmly back in the conversation as their direct rivals prepare for action later in the weekend. An uneventful first half, spiced only by a VAR intervention that spared the visiting side's Mohamed Camara on 14 minutes, seemed to be heading towards the second 0-0 of the weekend, after Friday's draw between Montpellier and Lens. However, six minutes after the break Folarin Balogun profited from a lucky break to tee up Vanderson and the Brazilian defender's strike glanced off Jeanuel Belocian on its way into the net. — AFP

Villa beat Arsenal to spark unlikely EPL title bid

BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa closed to within two points of the top of the Premier League as John McGinn's goal beat title rivals Arsenal 1-0 on Saturday. Unai Emery's men have now won 15 consecutive Premier Leagues at Villa Park and back-to-back victories over Manchester City and the Gunners have sparked hopes of an unexpected challenge for their first title since 1981.

The only goal came after just seven minutes when Villa captain McGinn span onto Leon Bailey's cross and fired into the top corner. "What a monumental week it has been for us," said McGinn. "That was actually a really tough spell for us we played Thursday, Sunday, Wednesday, Saturday and I think it showed in our performance tonight, it wasn't our best, but I'm certainly not complaining. "The second half was a bit of character, a bit of grit and fair play to the substitutes who've come on."

Arsenal's second league defeat of the season leaves Mikel Arteta's men one point behind Liverpool, who went top with a controversial 2-1 win at Crystal Palace earlier on Saturday. Arteta was forced to watch from the stands as he served a



BIRMINGHAM: Arsenal's German midfielder #29 Kai Havertz (2nd left) and Aston Villa's English defender #02 Matty Cash (center right) fight for the ball in front of the goal post during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Arsenal on December 9, 2023. — AFP

touchline ban and had to restrain himself after the game when asked about a couple of controversial incidents. Arsenal thought they should have had a penalty in the second half when Gabriel Jesus went down under a challenge from Douglas Luiz.

And Kai Havertz had a late goal disallowed for handball. "I do (have a) big opinion, yes," said Arteta. "(But) I prefer not to comment." Victory was sweet

for Emery, who was sacked by Arsenal four years ago. The Spaniard has made a remarkable impact at Villa, since his return to England over a year ago. "It was a tough week and now after these three points we have to be happy but also keep balance," said Emery. "I will speak again when we are in game 32 or 33. Today we are at game 16 and we are not a contender (for the title)." — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

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

Change of Name

I, **ABIJAR** holder of Indian Passport No. M2288551 having permanent address 16 6, Baghicha Mohalla Babra, Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh, Pin: 457887, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) ABIJAR and (surname) BORKI.

(#4075) 11-12-2023

Emergency call 112



LUTON: Manchester City's English midfielder #10 Jack Grealish scores his team's second goal during the English Premier League football match between Luton Town and Manchester City on December 10, 2023. — AFP

Man City end winless run

Chelsea crash at Everton; Fulham run riot, thrash West Ham 5-0

LONDON: Manchester City survived a scare at Luton to end their four-match winless run in the Premier League with a 2-1 victory, while Chelsea's problems mounted with a 2-0 defeat at Everton on Sunday. With star striker Erling Haaland absent due to injury, Pep Guardiola's side trailed to Elijah Adebayo's goal late in the first half at Kenilworth Road. But, after squandering a host of chances, City finally clicked into gear with two goals in three minutes after the break.

Bernardo Silva equalized and Jack Grealish bagged the winner to give City a

much-needed first victory in five league matches. After their lethargic 1-0 defeat at Aston Villa on Wednesday, which followed draws with Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham, City were in danger of falling out of the title race. Liverpool's win at Crystal Palace on Saturday had moved the leaders seven points clear of City. But fourth-placed City responded with a gritty display to close the gap on Liverpool to four points.

City still have work to do to regain control of their bid for an unprecedented fourth successive top-flight title and

Haaland's fitness scare could not have come at a worse time. Haaland, who had started all of City's league matches this season, was sidelined with a foot injury that could impact his availability for the treble winners' hectic Christmas schedule. Everton continued to shrug off the impact of a 10-point Premier League deduction as victory over Chelsea took the Toffees four points clear of the relegation zone.

Abdoulaye Doucoure opened the scoring at Goodison Park before Lewis Dobbin's first Everton goal imposed an-

other damaging defeat on Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino. Without the penalty for breaching financial rules, which Everton are appealing, Sean Dyche's men would be four points above Chelsea in mid-table. Pochettino shuffled his pack after a dreadful display in losing 2-1 at Manchester United in midweek. But the Argentine is struggling to solve his side's lack of a clinical edge up front, despite the club having spent £1 billion (\$1.3 billion) on new players in the past three transfer windows.

Fulham ran riot for the second time

in a week as they thrashed West Ham 5-0 at Craven Cottage. Just four days after Fulham beat Nottingham Forest by the same scoreline, Marco Silva's side turned on the style again. Raul Jimenez opened the scoring to take his personal tally to four in five games having previously not scored a Premier League goal since March 2022 for Wolves. Willian and Tosin Adarabioyo netted for Fulham before the interval, with a fine effort from Harry Wilson and a late tap-in from Carlos Vinicius completing the London derby demolition. — AFP



CP Racing claim GT3 category title

KUWAIT: The Hankook 12H Kuwait, the second and final 24H Series Middle East Trophy powered by Hankook, came to a close at Kuwait Motor Town on Saturday, with CP Racing claiming the title of GT3

category. Manamauri Energy came in second, followed by KKramer Racing. The 992 GT3 race saw Red Camel leading, followed by RABDAN by Fulgenzi and KKramer Racing in the second and third places, respectively. The GTX category saw Toro Verde take victory, followed by Razoon More Than Racing and Vortex V8 in the second and third places, respectively. — KUNA

Columbus Crew win 3rd MLS title

COLUMBUS: The Columbus Crew won their third Major League Soccer title after beating Los Angeles FC 2-1 in the MLS Cup final on Saturday. A penalty from Cucho Hernandez and goal from Yaw Yeboah gave the Crew a 2-0 lead at the interval before Denis Bouanga pulled a goal back for LAFC in the 74th minute. In what may have been the final game before retirement for former Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini and possibly a last appearance for LAFC for Mexican star Carlos Vela, last year's champions were convincingly beaten.

Columbus, coached by little-known Frenchman Wilfried Nancy, dominated the game for long stretches while Steve Cherundolo's LAFC were unable to unleash their trademark counter-attacks. Nancy, who won his first major title as a coach in his first season with Columbus, said his team had improved throughout the season.

"They have grown a lot as players, and as people. When we started, I told them 'Guys, impossible is an opinion' - just enjoy it and we're gonna grow. And this is what happened. This is unbelievable," he said. "We played our way. I'm so proud". After a frantic start, in front of a loud, capacity 20,802 home crowd, Columbus quickly settled into their possession game thanks to the calming influence of veteran midfielder Dar-

lington Nagbe, who has now won the title with three different clubs.

French defender Steven Moreira had the first real opening, in the 16th minute, but his disappointing header from a promising position in the box was off target. The Crew's roaming Colombian striker Hernandez sent a reminder of his goal threat with a shot from 20 yards out which flashed wide of the post. Uruguayan attacking midfielder Diego Rossi was increasingly influential as he began to find spaces behind Hernandez and he went close in the 27th minute with a shot into the side-netting.

Fortunate penalty

The pressure on the Los Angeles defense was building but when the Crew broke through it was via a fortunate penalty award. Yeboah crossed from the left, Rossi flicked the ball up in the air and it struck the shoulder of Diego Palacios and then his arm. Referee Armando Villarreal had no hesitation pointing to the spot and Hernandez buried the penalty into the bottom corner to make it 1-0 in the 33rd minute.

Within four minutes the Crew doubled their lead with a goal of perfect simplicity. Danish defender Malte Amundsen played a pinpoint defense-splitting pass to Yeboah who sped around the back of Ryan Hollingshead before poking home with the outside of his left-foot. The Crew fans, many of whom had been chanting in the stadium over two hours before kick off, were ecstatic and LAFC, who had created next to nothing for the league's top scorer Bouanga, looked shell-shocked.

There was some encouragement though for the constantly singing black-clad visiting Los Angeles supporters on the stroke of half-time when a low cross from Cristian Olivera was almost sliced into his own goal by Crew defender Rudy Carmacho. Columbus continued to dominate after the break though with the livewire Yeboah, skipping past two defenders as he weaved into the box, chipping over the advancing Los Angeles keeper Max Crepeau only for Palacios to head off the line.

There were signs that Columbus were starting to tire a little heading into the final 20 minutes with mistakes creeping into their game and LAFC pushed forward with more urgency. A burst of pace from Bouanga got him behind the defence but his low ball across the face of the goal went untouched. Moments later the French-born Gabon international got his team back into the game - a right foot shot inside the box was parried by Patrick Schulte but Bouanga reacted swiftly and buried the loose ball.

But the Crew were not for crumbling, responding positively - Rossi scuffing a chance to make it 3-1 and substitute Christian Ramirez appealing in vain for a penalty after bursting into the box. The Crew held firm in seven minutes of added time to set off a party as the Ohio crowd celebrated a third title following their triumphs in 2008 and 2020. Chiellini said Columbus had deserved the victory. "It was a beautiful journey, that we have to be proud of it. Of course, I am sad for the game, I don't think they are better in general but they played much better tonight," he said. — AFP



COLUMBUS: The Columbus Crew celebrate winning the 2023 MLS Cup against the Los Angeles FC at Lower.com Field on December 9, 2023. — AFP