

R
RIDE SAFE

BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

@ridesafe.app

3 ABK successfully prices \$300m Additional Tier 1 bond offering



7 Historic private astronaut mission ends with splashdown off Florida



8 Tunisia fishermen battle inequality and climate change



16 Kuwait youth handball team win bronze in Asian Championship



Kuwait ready for new school year

Ministries launch road awareness campaign as 500,000 students head back to school

Former PM Sheikh Jaber passes away



Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Former prime minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah passed away on Saturday. He was 82. Sheikh Jaber headed the government between 2011 and 2019, when he resigned. He started his government career as early as 1968 as a senior official at the Amiri Diwan. Eleven years later, he was appointed governor of Hawally and Ahmadi before he was appointed as minister of social affairs and labour and later minister of information.

In 2001, he was appointed minister of defense, and five years later was appointed as first deputy premier and minister of defense and interior until 2011, when he was appointed as prime minister. Sheikh Jaber was admitted in hospitals inside and outside the country several times for treatment before his demise.

KUWAIT: The ministries of education and interior launched on Sunday a road awareness media campaign prior to the 2024-25 academic year, which kicks off on Monday at public schools. The campaign, also in collaboration with the Center for Government Communication (CGC) and the ministry of information, aimed to lessen congestion and smooth the flow of traffic.

The education ministry said in a statement on X that the campaign would ensure the safety of road users and students alike, affirming that all sectors of the interior ministry are working on making sure that all roads are safe for commuting. With less stress on the road, students will excel in their studies and achieve their academic goals, the statement added.

The interior ministry affirmed that it would be organizing events at schools and educational facilities to spread knowledge on proper road etiquette, which would hopefully prevent traffic congestion and prevent accidents from occurring. The media campaign, featured on various platforms, would continue throughout the school year targeting students, par-

ents, educational staff and the public.

Meanwhile, the ministry of education has wrapped up preparations to receive more than 500,000 students and some 105,000 faculty and administration members, gearing up to start the new 2024-2025 academic year. In terms of infrastructure and logistic services, the ministry arranged the technical requirements, periodic maintenance and replacement of 26,993 AC units, as well as providing a large number of buses equipped with GPS tracking systems.

Some six million schoolbooks were printed and distributed across all schools, and 5,125 interactive screens were installed in classrooms and labs in an effort to keep pace with the developing educational field and to provide an experience that fosters creativity and innovation. As part of its plan to expand its services and meet the demand of the increasing number of students, the ministry inaugurated 19 new school buildings, eight in Jahra educational region, four in Ahmadi, four in the Capital and three in Farwaniya.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait football board quits

KUWAIT: The entire board of Kuwait's football governing body has resigned after fans were left in sweltering temperatures for hours during a World Cup qualifier against Iraq. Board members quit after an inquiry into ticketing and logistical problems that marred Tuesday's match at the 60,000-capacity Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, the Kuwait Football Association said in a statement late Saturday. "The board members of the Kuwait Football Association tendered resignations en masse," KUNA reported. The board had seven members. The association also accepted the resignation of its secretary-general Salah Al-Qanai and public relations director Mohamed Bou Abbas and appointed Dr Saleh Al-Majroub as acting Secretary-General. — Agencies

Pakistan waives visas for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: In a revision of its visa policy, Pakistan now allows citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain — to enter the country without needing a visa or electronic travel authorization. Travelers from these nations can visit Pakistan for business and tourism purposes by simply purchasing an air ticket, with a stay duration of up to 90 days. This move aims to boost business and tourism ties between Pakistan and GCC countries.

Citizenship of puppet head revoked

KUWAIT: Kuwait announced on Saturday that it has revoked Kuwaiti citizenship from Ala Hussein Al-Khafaji, who headed a puppet government installed during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion by former president Saddam Hussein. A former officer in the Kuwaiti military, Khafaji fled the country after the liberation of Kuwait in Feb 1991 and sought asylum in Europe. A Kuwaiti court sentenced him to death in absentia in 1993 for treason. He returned to Kuwait seven years later to appeal his death sentence. Kuwait's court of cassation later commuted the sentence to a life term in prison. The 76-year-old is still serving the sentence. The government also stripped the citizenship of Mohammad Hamad Al-Juwaed, a former officer in the National Guard, after being convicted of spying for Iraq. He was arrested in 2003.

Houthis strike Zionist entity, Hamas defiant

JERUSALEM/GAZA: A Yemeni rebel missile triggered a rush to shelters in the Zionist entity on Sunday, an incident that added to regional tensions nearly a year into the Gaza war. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the rebels will pay a "heavy price". AFP photographers saw firefighters putting out a brush fire near Lod and broken glass at a train station in Modin, about 20 km southeast of Tel Aviv after the attack.

The Houthi rebels claimed the strike.

They are among Iran-backed groups in the Middle East that have been drawn into the conflict after war began in October between the Zionist entity and Hamas Palestinian fighters in Gaza. Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said the group struck with a new hypersonic ballistic missile that traveled 2,040 km in just 11 1/2 minutes.

"The Houthis launched a surface-to-surface missile from Yemen into our territory. They should have known by now that we charge a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," Netanyahu said at the start of a cabinet meeting, according to a statement from his office. The rebels had targeted a Zionist "military position" in the Jaffa area, around Tel Aviv, using a "ballistic missile that succeeded in

Continued on Page 6



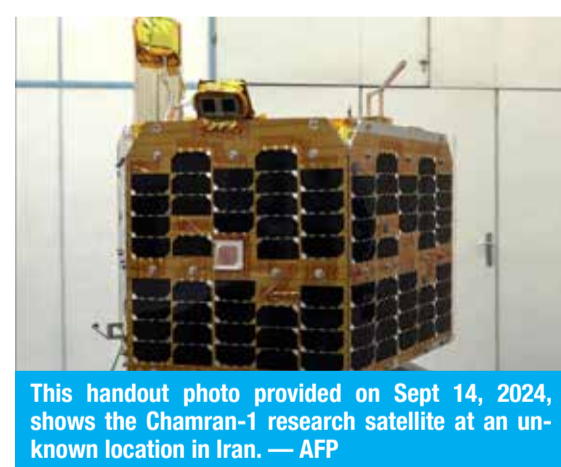
MODIN: A member of the Zionist security forces stands guard inside a train station damaged after a missile was fired from Yemen on Sept 15, 2024. — AFP

Iran launches new research satellite in orbit

TEHRAN: Iran on Saturday blasted a new research satellite into orbit, state media said, in the latest such development for an aerospace program that has long faced Western criticism. "The Chamran-1 research satellite was successfully launched and put into orbit by the Ghaem-100 carrier," state television said. The satellite, which weighs around 60 kg, is designed to test hardware and software systems for orbital maneuver technology, the TV report said.

The device was designed and built by Iranian Electronics Industries affiliated with the defense ministry, state TV said. Western governments including the United States have repeatedly warned Iran against such launches, saying the same technology can be used for ballistic missiles, including ones designed to deliver a nuclear warhead.

Iran has countered that it is not seeking nuclear



This handout photo provided on Sept 14, 2024, shows the Chamran-1 research satellite at an unknown location in Iran. — AFP

weapons and that its satellite and rocket launches are for civil or defense purposes only. The Ghaem-100 rocket which carried the latest satellite is manufactured by the aerospace organization of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, an arm of the military. The carrier is the country's first three-stage solid-fuel satellite launcher, and official media reported its use in January to send a satellite for the first time into an orbit above 500 km. — AFP

saying she would be voting for his Democratic rival, calling Harris a "steady-handed, gifted leader".

Celebrity endorsements rarely carry enormous weight, but the hugely popular Swift is seen as being in a class of her own, with more than 100 million followers on social media — 10 million of whom "liked" her Instagram post. "Going after Taylor Swift is a genuinely bad campaign strategy," said one poster on social media platform X. "Taylor doesn't get mad, she gets even."

It was not clear what Trump hoped to gain by attacking Swift, though he may calculate that any publicity is better than none. He has been criticized, even by fellow Republicans, for his recent association with conspiracy-minded right-wing influencer Laura Loomer, who has at times joined him on his campaign plane. — AFP

Trump: 'I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT'

WASHINGTON: The tweet came as a surprise, even from the provocative Donald Trump: "I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT!" the former president said Sunday. Though the all-caps post came without accompanying commentary or explanation, the context was clear. On Tuesday, just minutes after a debate with Vice President Kamala Harris that Republican Trump was widely seen as losing, the superstar singer/songwriter posted a message on Instagram

Pro-Palestinian Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury dies



Elias Khoury

BEIRUT: Novelist Elias Khoury, one of Lebanon's most renowned writers and a fervent advocate of the Palestinian cause, died on Sunday from illness aged 76, sources close to his family told AFP. Khoury, who was born in 1948 to a Christian family in Beirut, died in the Lebanese capital where he had been hospitalized for months, the sources said.

Over several decades Khoury produced a large body of work in Arabic that touched on the themes of collective memory, war and exile, alongside writing for newspapers, teaching literature and editing a publication linked to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Many of his books were translated into foreign languages including French, English, German, Hebrew and Spanish.

One of his best-known novels, "Gate of the Sun", tells the story of Palestinian refugees expelled from their homes in 1948 during the

Continued on Page 6



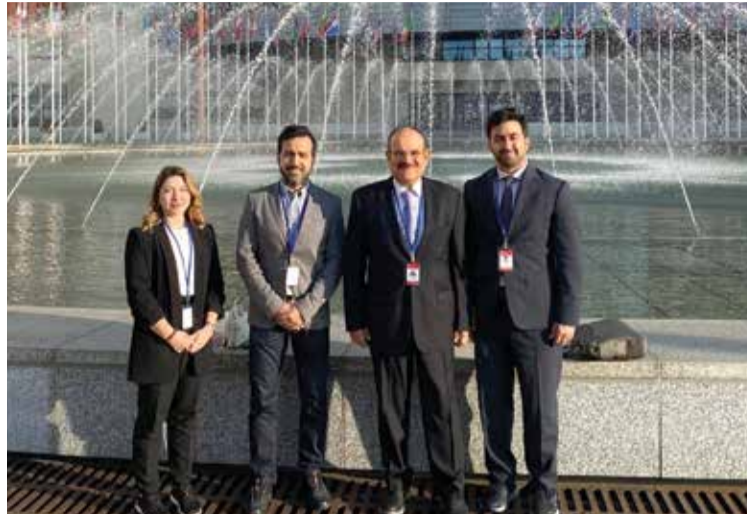
Local

Kuwait to join IAEA 'Rays of Hope' initiative as the regional center

IAEA enhances nation's ability to obtain cancer treatment



Head of the Radiotherapy and Oncology Department Dr Yasser Hassan takes a group photo.



Kuwaiti delegation at the United Nations headquarters in Vienna.



Kuwaiti delegation meet experts from the Atomic Energy Agency at the Sealsdorf Laboratory. — KUNA photos

VIENNA: Kuwait has reached an initial agreement to join as a regional center for the 'Rays of Hope initiative' launched by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to help low and middle-income countries and enhance their ability to obtain cancer treatment. In remarks to KUNA Sunday, the Head of the Radiotherapy and Oncology Department at the center and the head of the Kuwaiti delegation to Vienna, Dr Yasser Hassan, confirmed that the visit aimed to meet with technical officials from the IAEA to discuss the development of radiotherapy techniques and the importance of this step in establishing new partnerships that work to expand capabilities in the field of radiotherapy.

He noted that the preliminary agreement allows Kuwait, represented by the Department of Radiotherapy and Oncology, to join as a representative center in the region within the innovative initiative of the Atomic Energy Agency (Rays of Hope). This move received great support and encouragement from senior officials at the Atomic Energy Agen-

cy, in addition to the support and encouragement of the Ambassador of Kuwait and its Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna, Talal Al-Fassam, who pledged to provide all necessary support to facilitate this important agreement, he added.

He pointed out that the meetings with the technical team, technical members, and managers at the IAEA addressed many important topics, most notably improving the quality of health care and technologies related to radiotherapy and nuclear therapy for cancer patients. The Kuwaiti delegation included Dr Hassan, radiation oncology specialist Dr Ahmad Bushehri, from the Department of Nuclear Medicine Dr Sarah Murad, and the National Liaison Officer with the International Atomic Energy Agency Dr Nader Al-Awadhi. The Kuwait Cancer Control Center, which was established in 1968, is a governmental center affiliated with the Ministry of Health and was designated for the purpose of providing care for cancer patients. — KUNA



Kuwaiti delegation meets with Ambassador of Kuwait to Vienna Talal Al-Fassam.

Kuwait welcomes joint meeting communique on two-state solution

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry welcomed on Saturday the communique issued by the joint meeting held in Madrid on Friday on the implementation of the two-state solution in the Middle East. The meeting featured some representatives of Arab and European countries, in addition to the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In a statement, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry also praised efforts made by those countries and organizations, mainly the ministerial committee led by Saudi Arabia, to find a solution to the Palestinian cause in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions and stop Zionists ongoing aggression on the brotherly Palestinian people.

In addition, the statement extolled ongoing mediation efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States in this regard. Hoping for the success of all endeavors to



President of the Arab Parliament and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Arab Observatory for Human Rights Adel Al-Asoumi

reach a fair solution to the Palestinian cause and end the suffering of Palestinian people, Kuwait urges supporting all efforts of Palestine's state to obtain a full UN membership and holding an international conference of peace with the participation of all concerned parties, according to the statement.

Ceasefire in the besieged Gaza Strip has become a unanimous international demand, Adel Al-Asoumi, President of the Arab Parliament and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Observatory for Human Rights (AOHR), said on Saturday. Delivering a speech before the second meeting of the AOHR's board, Al-Asoumi affirmed that the halt of war in the Strip is a humanitarian and moral necessity and a strategic goal to avoid the impacts of war.

The Palestinian people have been suffering from genocide and ethnic cleansing as well as forced displacement due to the ongoing brutal aggression launched by the Zionist occupation, which claimed the lives of more than 41,000 people and wounded 92,000 others, he stated. The aggression resulted in huge destruction and damage at a time when the international community fails to stop this massacre, he noted. Zionist occupation violations of international law and humanitarian international law are against not only Palestinians but also the global system and its rules, he elaborated.

"We, as the Arab system, have been backing the steadfastness of Palestinian people against Zionist occupation," he said, calling for intensifying collective efforts and work in support of Palestinians. Amid all ongoing brutal crimes committed by the Zionist occupation, all official and popular efforts must continue until reaching the two-state solution, Al-Asoumi said. He showed support for the results of the Madrid meeting held on Friday, with the participation of some representatives of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and others on how to implement the two-state solution.

He underlined the need for reaching an immediate and permanent ceasefire and giving the Palestinian Authority full control over Rafah crossing and all borders. Al-Asoumi called on the international community to take positive steps to implement the two-state solution, reiterating the observatory's support to develop the system of Arab human rights. Today's meeting discusses some topics and approves the minutes of the meeting of the first gathering of the observatory held in June 2024 in Cairo. It also focuses on a proposal on Arab human rights' award and a draft on exposing Zionist occupation violations and crimes in the Palestinian territories and Gaza, as well as other human rights topics. — KUNA

Sat-1 captures satellite images of holy sites

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the Prophet's (PBUH) birthday, the Kuwait SAT-1 satellite, funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), captured satellite images of the Two Holy Mosques in Saudi Arabia. The first image shows the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the holy sites (Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah in Makkah) and the area is geologically covered with various types of igneous rocks. The second image shows the Prophet's (PBUH) Mosque in Medina, surrounded by lava plateaus and hills known locally as Harrat. Mount Uhud is located next to the city from north to northeast. The image also highlights a number of valleys and dry channels such as Wadi Al-Aqiq and Wadi Al-Bayda.



Gold records new level

KUWAIT: Gold prices closed last week at a new record high of \$2,578 per ounce, while futures contracts increased by 1.15 percent. A specialized report issued by the Kuwaiti company (Dar Al-Sabayek) said that this jump led to weekly gains of 3.4 percent, ending a series of losses that lasted for two consecutive weeks. The report stated that this rise came as a result of the US dollar index falling by 0.3 percent to reach 101 points against other major currencies, in addition to the decline in US Treasury bond yields amid strong expectations of a significant interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, which enhanced the attractiveness of gold as a safe haven for investors against market risks.

The report indicated that consumer inflation expectations in the United States declined to 2.7 percent for the current month of September—the lowest reading since December 2020—increasing the possibility of the US Federal Reserve cutting interest rates by 50 basis points. The report stated that the European Central Bank cut interest rates by 25 basis points last week, reflecting confidence in the decline in European inflation.

These moves, along with similar monetary policies from other central banks, supported gold prices globally last week. In light of these unstable global economic conditions, gold prices are expected to continue to achieve further gains while investors closely monitor the decisions of the US Federal Reserve and their impact on the markets. — KUNA



GAZA: A displaced Palestinian man builds a makeshift sand barrier in front of a tent flooded with sea water because of the high tide combined with windy weather, along the shore of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Sept 15, 2024. — AFP

Nutritionist offers advice, guidelines

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: "It is necessary to follow the nutritionist's advice and guidelines based on the diagnosis of each person as each body differs in its nutrition needs," Chairman of Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) Campaign Dr Khalid Al-Saleh said. The coordinating team of the "Lose...You Win" contest for women arranged individual interviews of participating women with nutritionist Minnatullah Mohammad.

Also, a nutrition program was prepared for each woman, in addition to an orientation program. The nutritionist gave instructions on how to deal with hunger and thirst—most importantly, how to take light meals every 3 to 4 hours—which helps to maintain blood sugar levels and prevent the feeling of hunger. He said that drinking water regularly will reduce the urge to eat food.

The nutritionist said the 'free day' is limited to one meal out of the program and not during the entire day, adding that eating food slowly helps the feeling of having a full stomach. Participants



Participants take a group photo.

were advised to take meals that contain protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables during the free day. He warned against common mistakes when placing yourself on a diet, such as (i) avoiding eating excessive and unhealthy meals (ii) not monitoring the food portions (iii) relying mainly on diet products (iv) not drinking enough water. Meanwhile, Dr Al-Saleh announced the sports program that goes along with

"Lose...You Win" through the campaign's Instagram account and asked everyone to follow the live broadcast of the program so as to benefit from the workouts to help reduce weight from 6:15 pm until 7:00 pm. CAN will launch its annual breast cancer awareness initiative, "Your health is by testing you," during a press conference to be held in Mubarakiya on Oct 1st by 6:00 pm.

Local

What women need to know about birth control, side effects, health

Dr Akbar explains the most common birth control methods

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: To explore the most common birth control methods, their side effects, and how to ensure women's comfort while using them, Kuwait Times interviewed Dr Ghadeer Akbar, Double Canadian Board-Certified Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Sub-Specialist in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (GREI-IVF). Akbar explained the most common birth control methods: "The oldest and most common form of contraception is birth control pills, or 'the pill'."

It comes in different brands and names but overall, it's usually the single or combined-double hormone birth control. The single hormone is least used in both the US and North America due to high side effect profile and failure rate, but we still have to use them occasionally due to specific indications such as breast feeding. The more mainstream and commonly used birth control is the combined-double hormones birth control pills.

This is the most physiologic and has the least side effects and thus, most tolerated by patients. On top of its benefits as a very effective birth control, the combined birth control is known for its non-contraceptive benefits such as cycle regulation, flow control, pelvic pain control, as well as control over acne, hair fall, and PMS symptoms that some women get before their periods. In addition, it has been proven that using the combined birth control pills for more than 5 years in one's lifetime can prevent ovarian and endometrial cancer incidence for the pill user. Patients sometimes ask about the relation between contraceptive and pain as well as period

cycles, and actually as I mentioned above, one of the benefits of contraceptives is its use for pelvic pain management, and cycle regulation.

The details of this are counseled and planned with the patient. Regarding people's common concerns about the side effects, she said: "Nothing has no side effects. A vital part of a patient's compliance and comfort is to counsel them about the possible side effects when using the combined birth control pills; this is the doctor's responsibility. Just like any new medication that goes into your system it is normal to experience some mild bloating, irregular spotting, very mild nausea and mild headache. These side effects are all short lived and should not last for more than the first pack, or at most, the second pack of use. Once we start the third pack all these side effects should disappear, if they don't, then I usually advise my patients to come back to me to discuss an alternative, this is what ensures the patient is comfortable with their plan and not experiencing any long-term harmful side effects."

Moreover, Akbar mentioned alternatives to consuming pills on daily basis for birth controlling. "Contraceptive patches are an alternative to the combined birth control pills. It works exactly the same with the same non-contraceptive benefits, as



Dr Ghadeer Akbar

well as side effects. The only difference that exists between the two is that the patches need to be changed once a week, while the pill is taken once a day. So, for those that tend to have a busy work schedule, work in shifts, or have difficulty remembering taking their pill every day, a patch that they would be committed to remembering once a week might be easier for them to comply with."

However, in some cases, IUD, is a women's only option, according to Akbar. "IUD is another fairly common contraception. I would definitely recommend it to those that keep forgetting their pill, or just don't want to have any hormones. Some of my patients have contraindications for the pills, which means that their only available option would be the IUD. The contraceptive device comes in two forms: hormonal IUD (known in Kuwait as the Mirena, and in the US and North America as Kyleena) or the none hormonal IUD (our old friend-copper T IUD).

Hormonal IUD can also have none contraceptive benefits such as control of excessive period bleeding and has been recently used even in the control of pelvic pain originating from endometriosis. The main advantage of all IUDs in general is the fact that a patient does not need to remember checking them except once a year after insertion. As with any contraceptive method, the cons of having an IUD are that it can fall, change position, or fail to protect from a pregnancy, but keep in mind that would be less than one percent of IUD users."

She further elaborated: "Other contraceptive methods exist and different ones keep coming up.

A contraceptive implant has been introduced in Kuwait over the last few years. It works as a hormonal contraceptive; it's just a single rod that gets implanted under the skin in the arm with benefits and side effects that are very similar to the birth control pills. The depot injection (3 monthly, or yearly) has been used less frequently in the Gulf area overall. It's more commonly used in the east Indian continent, with a high rate of effectiveness."

More on people's concerns over the side effects, especially on infertility, Akbar said: "There has been no proven correlation between the use of contraception, and infertility, this is actually a very common misconception I see with my patients especially in Kuwait and the Gulf. Once you stop the pill, you should be able to get pregnant right away. And if you do not get pregnant then something else is going on so you should see a fertility specialist, well trained in contraception counseling and fertility assessment to sort out the possibilities. Depot form of contraception/injectable contraception is the only method that might delay cycle resumption and thus, one's fertility.

But as I discussed earlier, it is not even used that often in Kuwait or any of the Gulf countries. Other vital aspects of contraception counseling are a patient's baseline fertility, how many kids the couple would like to have? How long should the female partner delay get pregnant? If anything would have negative impact on one's fertility, it's reproductive ageing. So, exploring these important delicate topics during a contraception visit is the responsibility of, specifically, a well-trained GREI-fertility specialized doctor."

Minister forms higher committee for green urban development

KUWAIT: The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Dr Mahmoud Boushehri, issued a ministerial decision to form a higher committee for green urban development initiatives headed by Ahmad Governor Sheikh Hamoud Al-Sabah and includes in its membership many government agencies, state institutions, and the relevant private sector.

These include the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the Ministry of Public Works, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, the Public Author-

ity for Roads and Land Transport, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait University (College of Architecture), the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Kuwait Banks Association, the Union of Investment Companies, the Voluntary Work Center, the Union of Cooperative Societies, and a number of interested parties in this regard.

The work of the committee shall be responsible for the following: Diagnosis of the current status of green spaces (parks and public gardens) in all residential areas and Kuwait's border crossings, in addition to planting crops in various main and ring roads, roundabouts, bridges, and important strategic locations.



Dr Mahmoud Boushehri

The committee will also evaluate the initiatives on green urban development and cosmetic crops by private sector institutions and entrepreneurs of various categories and consider the extent to which they can be applied in a manner that preserves the national identity, taking into account the security aspects. They will also propose viable development initiatives and projects concerned with green urban development, cosmetic agriculture, and marine environmental preservation.

It will communicate with the private sector and companies working in the fields of green urban development to support financially and technically. In this context, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy chaired the first coordination meeting in the presence of the Governor of Ahmadi. They reviewed the priorities that the committee should focus on during the next stage, while stressing the need to combine all efforts to achieve the desired goals.

MoH to use Sahel app for sick leave

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced on Saturday the possibility of using the digital service for sick leave through the Unified Government application (Sahel). The Ministry pointed out through its account on the social networking site (X) the possibility of downloading electronic sick leave that have been requested and registered through the list of notifications in the application during the past days. The Ministry had announced that one of its systems was exposed to a technical flaw at dawn last Saturday, adding that it had activated the protection systems and procedures, disconnected the systems and work is underway to assess the level of the flaws. It also confirmed that the procedures for converting some of its businesses to paper transactions until the bug is fixed. — KUNA

The impact of food influencers on public health

By Jana Kriez

KUWAIT: The rapid rise of social media platforms has fundamentally changed how people interact with food, particularly in Kuwait, where food influencers wield significant power. Kuwait continues to grapple with one of the highest obesity rates in the world, with over 40 percent of its adult population classified as obese. This alarming trend raises questions about how influencers, who often showcase indulgent meals, might be contributing to the public health crisis. In this context, Kuwait Times sat down with Dana Kayyali, a food blogger with 111,000 followers, who is based in Kuwait and Dubai. With her significant online presence, Dana shared her insights on the role of food influencers in shaping public dietary habits and the responsibilities that come with it.



quently focuses on well-balanced meals in her recipes, choosing healthier alternatives, and prioritizing protein in her meals. She also encourages the use of local produce and collaborates with registered dietitians for expert advice on nutrition and meal planning.

Dana's guilty pleasure

Despite her commitment to promoting healthier eating, Dana also knows the importance of indulging in comfort food. One of her favorite guilty pleasure dishes is her homemade pink pasta, a creamy dish made with tomato sauce, cream, and a secret ingredient—ketchup. "I love this dish because it's incredibly comforting, flavorful, and always a crowd-pleaser," she shared. The addition of ketchup adds a touch of sweetness and tanginess that perfectly complements the creamy sauce, making it a standout favorite among her followers.

The best culinary scenes

When it comes to choosing a restaurant in Kuwait or Dubai to eat at for the rest of her life, Dana finds it difficult to pick just one. As a Palestinian, she has a deep appreciation for Levantine cuisine, which emphasizes fresh, flavorful dishes with quality ingredients. "No matter what, I'd always make sure to order mixed grills, vine leaves, fattoush salad, and muhammara," she said, noting that these are classics she would never tire of.

Viral moments

Dana's journey as a food influencer has had its share of surprises. One of the most unexpected reactions she received was after sharing a copycat version of the famous Caesar mini pizzas in Kuwait during the COVID-19 lockdown. With restaurants closed, Dana encouraged her followers to recreate the recipe and share their creations with her. "This video is one of my most viral ones to date, and I was grateful for the positive response and how far it reached," she recalled.

As Kuwait continues to wrestle with an escalating obesity epidemic, the role of social media influencers like Dana Kayyali in shaping public dietary habits cannot be underestimated. While the glamorization of indulgent foods on platforms like Instagram can contribute to unhealthy eating patterns, influencers also have the potential to drive positive change by promoting balanced, nutritious meals. The intersection of digital culture and public health is complex, but with thoughtful content and responsible partnerships, food influencers can be part of the solution to addressing Kuwait's public health challenges.

ABK successfully prices \$300m Additional Tier 1 bond offering

KUWAIT: AlAhli Bank of Kuwait KSCP (ABK) has successfully priced a \$300 million Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bond offering with a coupon rate of 6.5 percent per annum. This marks the bank's return to the debt capital markets since its last issuance in 2018 and showcases a significant achievement with notable price tightening for an AT1 issuance. It highlights ABK's strong market position and the confidence investors have in its financial stability.

Initially, ABK opened the order books with initial price thoughts (IPTs) in the low 7 percent area and for a transaction sized at \$300 million. The substantial and robust demand from both international and regional investors enabled the Bank to set the final coupon rate at 6.5 percent. Despite strong interest, the order book remained resilient with minimal adjustments from investors. The Perpetual Non-Callable 5.5-year AT1 bond was priced with a reset margin of +292.2 basis points. JP Morgan Securities acted as the Global Coordinator, while Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, Citi, Emirates NBD Capital, HSBC, Kamco Invest, Mashreqbank, and SMBC Nikko acted as Joint Lead Managers and Book runners for this issuance.

The transaction garnered overwhelming interest, with the order book peaking at over \$1.4 billion, resulting in an oversubscription of over 4.5 times. The allocation breakdown showed that 68.0 percent was in the Middle East, followed by Europe (including the UK) at 26.0 percent. Notably, real money investors, including private banks and high-quality asset managers, accounted for 94 percent of the issuance.

On this occasion, Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK, said, "The



Abdulla Al Sumait



strong demand for subscription to the bonds reflects the confidence and reputation we have among investors at both regional and international levels. It confirms the success of our plans to address local, regional, and global economic challenges, as well as our commitment to providing the best returns for our shareholders and all our stakeholders."

Al Sumait added that the issuance marks ABK's return to international capital markets for the first time since 2018, reaffirming its commitment to seizing the best opportunities to enhance its financial position, provide exceptional investment opportunities, and support the Bank's growth strategy at various levels. He indicated that the issuance will contribute to strengthening the capital adequacy of ABK and will provide additional liquidity for the long term to support its expansion investment plans, alongside its ongoing commitment to regulatory and international requirements set by Basel III.

He noted that the Bank will use the proceeds from the issuance to develop its products and services for clients, as well as continue investing in its digital transformation plan across all its divisions and operations, keeping up with the continuous developments in the banking industry. This will aid in enhancing its financial position in all markets where it operates in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. Al Sumait concluded that the strong demand for participation in the issuance serves as confirmation of the financial strength of the ABK Group and the confidence in its credit history. It also demonstrates investors' trust in the economic environment of Kuwait and its banking sector.

Ministry busts drugs factory

KUWAIT: As part of the ongoing efforts to combat drug abuse and protect society from the scourge of toxins, the General Department for Combating Drugs was able to deal a heavy, severe blow to drug networks as it succeeded in busting a secret factory for manufacturing Lyrica narcotic pills—run by a

stateless person. This security operation came after careful follow-up and intensive investigations by the anti-narcotics officers and resulted in the seizure of large quantities of narcotic substances, including 30,000 Lyrica capsules ready for sale, 6 kilograms of raw Lyrica powder, 2,500 captagon tablets, and 100 grams of hashish.

A large quantity of empty capsules and equipment used in the manufacture and packaging of narcotic pills were also seized. The suspect has been referred to the Public Prosecution Office for necessary legal measures.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Sunset in Kuwait mesmerizes watchers as the orange twilight adds to the beauty of the shores with a fascinating horizon decorating the serene sea waters. — KUNA photos

OPEC's launch
64 years ago
marked new era

VIENNA: Secretary General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Haitham Al-Ghais said Saturday that the establishment of OPEC on September 14, 1960, marked the beginning of a new era in the energy industry and global economic sector. This came in a joint press statement made by the Secretary General to KUNA and Kuwait TV on the occasion of the organization's celebration of the 64th anniversary of its establishment.



Secretary General of OPEC Haitham Al-Ghais

OPEC's Secretary General congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, recalling the pioneering role of Kuwait in the organization's journey in all stages. Al-Ghais said that the organization has remained faithful and committed to the principles and values it has adopted since its establishment until today, supporting the stability of the oil market and the global energy market.

He said that the distinguished Kuwaiti presence in OPEC indicates Kuwait's sound forward-looking vision and its awareness of the utmost importance of the energy industry in the global economy. On this occasion, Al-Ghais extended his congratulations and gratitude to all member states, including heads of state, kings, heads of government, and ministers, for their support for OPEC and its activities.

He also praised the efforts made by former OPEC secretaries general over the past decades, which has made OPEC gain a prestigious position and trust at the global level. He said that the 64th anniversary of OPEC's establishment is an ideal opportunity to focus on the role of the organization and its progress over the past decades. He added that it's also an opportunity to look forward to its prosperous future under the continuous support of the member states and the clarity of vision in the organization's goals despite all the challenges facing the energy and oil markets in general.

OPEC was founded in September 1960 in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, following an extraordinary meeting of senior officials representing the five founding countries of the organization: Dr Fuad Rouhani of Iran, Dr Tala'at Al-Shaibani of Iraq, Ahmad Sayed Omar of Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Tariki of Saudi Arabia, and Dr Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso of

Fitch affirms Kuwait rating
at AA- with stable outlook

Heavy dependence on oil could be challenging

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait welcomed the report by Fitch Ratings, one of the big three credit rating agencies, which affirmed Kuwait's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating (LTFC IDR) at "AA-" with a stable outlook. A CBK statement, received by KUNA, carried the following highlights from the Fitch report: "Kuwait's heavy dependence on oil, its generous welfare system, and large public sector could be challenging to sustain in the long term. Kuwait's external balance sheets remain the strongest of all Fitch-rated sovereigns," the CBK statement quoted the report as saying.

Fitch forecasts Kuwait's sovereign net foreign assets will rise to 538 percent of GDP in 2024 and average 553 percent in 2025-2026, more than 10x the AA median, according to the statement. On the implementation of the structural reform plans, Fitch noted that the initial reform plans focus on diversifying oil revenue, improving government efficiency, rationalizing government spending, and capping medium-term expenditure at KD 24.5 billion (48 percent of projected GDP the fiscal year ending March 2025; FY24), which is slightly below FY23's.

Regarding the draft liquidity/debt law, the Fitch report noted that the enactment of this law would enable Kuwait to raise new debt, following the expiry of the previous debt law in 2017. Fitch expects the liquidity law will be passed in the coming fiscal year (FY2025-2026), "although delays are possible." "Even without a liquidity law, the government would still be able to meet its financing obligations in the coming years, given the assets at its disposal," according to the report.

On the budget deficit, Fitch expects it to widen to 4.4 percent of GDP in FY24, from 3.1 percent in FY23, and further to 6.0 percent in FY25. The government plans to rationalize spending in line with its expenditure target, which we anticipate is achievable through modest reductions in non-core expenditures and continued under-spending of the budget. However, significant reform of the generous public employment and welfare spending (81 percent of total expenditure; 41 percent of GDP) is unlikely, thereby keeping total expenditure near the target ceiling, according to the report. Fitch expects

the oil revenues to continue to decline, even as non-oil revenues rise modestly.

Oil revenue loss from lower oil prices is partly mitigated by the potential unwinding of OPEC+ oil production quotas from 4Q24. Fitch forecasts that the government will continue to rely on the assets of the General Reserve Fund (GRF) to cover its budget deficit and meet domestic maturities. Fitch's FY25 forecast assumes that the government will resume borrowing, with about 30 percent of the deficit being financed by debt issuance.

On the gross government debt, Fitch forecasts it will rise to 4.8 percent of GDP in FY25 and further in FY26, despite a \$4.5 billion Eurobond maturing in March 2027. Nonetheless, it expects the debt levels to remain well below the projected 2025 'AA' median of 50 percent of GDP. Regarding the impacts of regional conflict on the economy, the Fitch report finds that the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and disruptions to Red Sea shipping have had "minimal impact on Kuwait," which has large government assets that provide an important buffer to support the economy if tensions were to escalate. — KUNA

LuLu Hypermarket
launches 'Awesome
Onam 2024' festival

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, Kuwait's premier retail destination, kicked off its "Awesome Onam 2024" festivities, held on the occasion of the annual Onam festival in the southern Indian state of Kerala. The festivities began on 12 September with a lighting of the traditional oil lamp at the Al-Rai outlet by top management of LuLu Kuwait. This year's Onam celebrations promise to be a treat for customers, with amazing discounts and offers across all LuLu Hyper outlets from 11-17 September that allow shoppers to enjoy unbelievable prices on fresh fruits, groceries, vegetables, household items, garments, and much more.



The retailer has also curated a special collection of Onam-themed products, such as Onam Special Mixed Flowers (available at all outlets), Onam Sadhya (a traditional Onam feast with 21 varieties of dishes), Payasams (delicious sweet puddings), Onam Special Ethnic Wear 'Dhawani' (available exclusively only at LuLu outlets), and special sale promotions on sarees, churidars, and ethnic wear.

The resplendent celebrations also feature an array of cultural events, including a traditional 'Kathakali' performance, a special highlight of the event. On the sidelines of the festival's inauguration on September 12, the Al Rai outlet hosted an Onam fashion show for kids, awarding gift vouchers for first, second & third place winners. In addition, all participants were rewarded with consolation prizes. Other exciting events include the Onam Special 'Payasamela', also held on September 12 at Al Rai, with prizes of KD 150, KD 125, and KD 100 gift vouchers presented to the first, second and third place winners respectively.

In addition on September 12, a special Onam 'Floral Carpet Competition', was held at the Al Rai outlet, with the winner receiving KD 130 worth of gift vouchers. The second and third placed winners received gift vouchers worth KD 100 and KD 75 respectively. Traditional cultural programs, including 'Chendamalam' and 'Pulikali with Maveli', were held at LuLu Al Rai, Fahaaheel, and Dajeer outlets, added to the excitement of the inauguration on September 12 and provided an unforgettable experience for shoppers and visitors alike.

On September 13, the Al-Rai outlet witnessed an energetic 'Vadam Vali' (tug-of-war) competition, with KD 400 worth of gift vouchers presented to the winning team. The second placed team received gift vouchers worth KD 300, while the third place winning team was granted gift vouchers worth KD 200 & KD 100 for special consideration. More than 10 teams vigorously participated in the competitions.

Customers can also savor traditional Onam delicacies, enjoy exclusive discounts, or participate in lively cultural events, during the week-long festi-



val, as this celebration has been specially crafted to bring people together and create lasting memories. LuLu Hypermarket's Onam celebrations are supported and sponsored by Alwazzan, Bayara, Noor, London Dairy, and Eastern, ensuring a truly grand and memorable celebration. Visit the nearest LuLu Hypermarket outlet to experience the uniting spirit of Onam.

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



Boris lashes central, eastern Europe

UN staff fear they are targets as Zionists hit Gaza shelters

Page 7

Page 6



DISIM, Turkey: (Left) Family members, attendees and officials carry the coffin of late Turkish-American activist Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, shot dead by Zionist forces while protesting against illegal Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank, at the Didim central mosque in Aydin Province on Sept 14, 2024. (Right) Eygi's partner Hamid Ali Mazhar and relatives pray after burying her body during her funeral ceremony at a cemetery. — AFP photos

Activist killed by Zionists laid to rest

Turkey seeks international arrest warrants over citizen shot in West Bank

DIDIM, Turkey: Mourners gathered in southwest Turkey on Saturday for the funeral of a US-Turkish activist, who was shot dead while protesting Zionist settlements in the West Bank. The killing last week of 26-year-old Aysenur Ezgi Eygi has sparked international condemnation and infuriated Turkey, further escalating tensions over the war in Gaza.

Eygi's body, wrapped in the Turkish flag and carried by uniformed officers, arrived at its final resting place in the Aegean town of Didim. A picture of Eygi was placed near the coffin during the funeral at the local mosque. A large crowd gathered during the prayers including Eygi's family, members of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamic-rooted AKP party, and activists advocating the Palestinian cause. Protesters chanted slogans near the mosque showing their support for Palestinians.

Eygi was shot while taking part in a demonstration on Sept 6 in the northern part of the occupied West Bank, near Nablus. She was a human rights activist and volunteer for the International Solidarity Movement,

which calls for resisting the oppression of Palestinians using non-violent methods. Her family wanted Eygi to be buried in Didim, where her grandfather lives and her grandmother has been laid to rest. She was a frequent visitor to the seaside resort.

Pressure on US

Ankara said this week it was probing her death and pressed the United Nations for an independent inquiry. Turkey also urged the US to probe her death, with Erdogan's chief press aide Fahrettin Altun saying Istanbul had already launched its own investigation and calling for an "international investigation". "Since Aysenur was a dual Turkish-American citizen, the US must do the same and pressure the Israeli authorities for answers and full accountability," he wrote Saturday on X, formerly Twitter.

Turkey said it was also planning to issue international arrest warrants for those responsible for Eygi's death, depending on the findings of its investigation. Erdogan — who has become one of the most strident critics in the Muslim world of Isra-

el's offensive in Gaza — has vowed to ensure "that Aysenur Ezgi's death does not go unpunished".

The Zionist military admitted it was likely Eygi was hit "unintentionally" by forces while they were responding to a "violent riot", and said it is looking into the case. President Erdogan himself did not show up in Didim but he sent his vice-president, foreign, interior and justice ministers. Opposition CHP party chief Ozgur Ozdel attended the funeral.

'Seek justice'

The United Nations said Eygi had been taking part in a "peaceful anti-settlement protest" in Beita, the scene of weekly demonstrations. Zionist settlements, where about 490,000 people live in the West Bank, are illegal under international law. The young woman's body arrived in Istanbul Friday from Tel Aviv, before being transferred to Turkey's third-biggest city Izmir, for an autopsy.

Initial findings revealed a bullet hit her in the head, and the cause of Eygi's death was defined as "skull fracture, brain hemorrhage and brain tissue damage," state-run TRT tele-

vision reported. The report overlapped with an initial autopsy carried out by three Palestinian doctors, which concluded that a bullet passed directly through the victim's skull.

Her mother, Rabia Birden, on Friday urged Turkish officials to pursue justice. "The only thing I ask of our state is to seek justice for my daughter," she was quoted as saying by Anadolu news agency. Her father, Mehmet Suat Eygi, paid tribute to his daughter in Didim, telling AFP that she was a "very special person" who was "sensitive to human rights".

US President Joe Biden on Wednesday called for the Zionist entity to provide "full accountability" for Eygi's death. Vice President Kamala Harris said in a separate statement that no one should be killed for participating in a peaceful protest. Her death has further inflamed tensions between Turkey and the Zionist entity. Erdogan has accused the Zionist government of "state terrorism" — branding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the "butcher of Gaza", and suspending all imports and exports to the Zionist entity. — Agencies

Persecution and defiance 2 years after Amini's death

PARIS: Persecution of bereaved relatives. Impunity for perpetrators. Rampant executions and infighting among the opposition. A bleak picture confronts opponents of Iran's clerical authorities two years after a protest movement erupted that they hoped would be a turning point in the four-and-a-half-decade history of the Islamic republic.

Activists and exiles still hope that the protests sparked by the September 16, 2022 death in custody of Mahsa Amini — an Iranian Kurd arrested for allegedly violating the dress code for women — left an indelible mark on Iran and that her tragic death aged 22 was not in vain.

The women-led protests that broke out after Amini's death, challenging not only the rule of the obligatory headscarf that has been a key pillar of the regime but also the very existence of the clerical-based system, rattled Iran's leadership over autumn and winter 2022-2023.

But they were crushed and defeated in a crackdown Amnesty International said saw security forces use assault rifles and shotguns against protesters. Human rights groups say at least 551 people were killed. Thousands more were arrested, according to the United Nations.

Iran has executed 10 men in cases related to the protests, the latest being Gholamreza Rasaei who was hanged in August after being convicted of killing a Revolutionary Guard. Activists said his confession was obtained under torture. "Countless people in Iran are still reeling from the consequences of the authorities' brutal crackdown," said Amnesty's deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Diana Eltahawy.

Jordan's king names new PM after election

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Sunday nominated his chief of staff to be the new prime minister, the royal palace said, charging him with forming a government after parliamentary elections. The outgoing premier, Bisher Khasawneh, submitted his resignation to the king earlier on Sunday. Under the kingdom's constitution, the government usually resigns after legislative elec-

'Brutalizing twice over'

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), family members of dozens of people killed, executed or imprisoned during the protests have been arrested on trumped up charges, threatened or harassed. "Iranian authorities are brutalizing people twice over: Executing or killing a family member and then arresting their loved ones for demanding accountability," said HRW's acting Iran researcher, Nahid Naghsbandi.

Among those jailed is Mashallah Karami, father of Mohammad Mehdi Karami who was executed in Jan 2023 aged just 22 in a case related to the protests. Mashallah Karami, who had campaigned for his son's memory, was sentenced to six years in jail in May and then in August to another term of almost nine years.

Meanwhile, the authorities are enforcing the wearing of the headscarf with a vengeance. Its abolition was a key demand of the protesters, and the authorities had initially given grounds for hope of a more lenient policy. Security forces are implementing the so-called "Nour" ("Light") plan to enforce the rule, with a "visible increase of security patrols on foot, motorbikes, car and police vans in public spaces", according to Amnesty.

Women in Iran have long regarded their vehicles as a safe space, but they have been increasingly targeted there, often with facial recognition technology, rights groups say. Cars can be impounded as punishment. UN experts said Iran has "intensified" the repression of women, also resorting to "beating, kicking, and slapping women and girls".

Amnesty has highlighted the case of 31-year-old Arezou Badri, who it says was left paralyzed after police shot her in her car in northern Iran in July, in an incident related to the dress code. Even though a UN fact-finding mission in March found that many of the violations in the crackdown amount to crimes against humanity, not one official has been brought to account.

'Not going back'

Yet observers outside Iran insist that while the crackdown has allowed the clerical authorities under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to restore order, Iranian society has changed forever. "Many young women re-

tions. It is the king who appoints the prime minister, not parliament which has limited powers.

"King Abdullah on Sunday tasked Jaafar Hassan with forming a new government," a palace statement said. As well as being chief of staff, the 56-year-old Harvard-educated Hassan was previously planning minister. In Tuesday's election Jordan's leading Islamist party, the Islamic Action Front, became the largest in parliament, winning 31 out of the 138 seats.

The IAF is a political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, and the result gives the Islamists their largest representation since 1989. Despite a low turnout of 32 percent, the party's success came with voters frustrated about economic woes and the Zionist war against the Palestinian group Hamas in the Gaza Strip.



TEHRAN: Women chat on a street in the Iranian capital on Sept 15, 2024 on the second anniversary of a protest movement sparked by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini. — AFP

main defiant," said a co-founder of the US-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, Roya Boroumand. "Two years after the protests, the Islamic Republic's leadership has neither restored the status quo ante nor regained its lost legitimacy." Rights groups said August's execution of Gholamreza Rasaei showed no let-up in Iran's use of the death penalty under new President Masoud Pezeshkian, who was elected in July after predecessor Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash. The Amini protests have exposed deep divisions within the opposition, with no unified group emerging to champion the protesters' demands.

Abroad, attempts at finding harmony between disparate groups of monarchists, nationalists and liberals have collapsed amid acrimony. The protest movement "shook the Iranian regime to the core and further affirmed just how deeply disillusioned Iranians have been with the status quo", said Arash Azizi, visiting fellow at Boston University and author of a book titled "What Iranians Want". "But the movement also showed the absolute bankruptcy of the opposition alternatives to the regime." He added: "I still believe Iran is not going back to pre-2022 and, within the next few years, the Islamic Republic will likely see some fundamental shifts." — AFP

Jordan in 1994 signed a peace treaty with the Zionist entity, becoming only the second Arab state to do so after Egypt, but regular protests have called for the treaty's dissolution since the war erupted last October. Nearly half of the country's population is of Palestinian origin. Khasawneh, 55, had headed the government since Oct 2020.

Jordan's parliament is bicameral. In addition to the elected parliament, there is also a senate with 69 members appointed by the monarch. The Gaza war has hit tourism in Jordan, which relies on the sector for about 14 percent of its gross domestic product. The kingdom is heavily dependent on foreign aid, especially from the United States and the International Monetary Fund. In the first quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate was 21 percent. — AFP



This handout picture dated Sept 14, 2024 shows a vessel with a rope extended toward the Greek-owned oil tanker Sounion as smoke and fire billows from it, off the coast of Hodeida in the Red Sea — AFP

Salvage operation for stricken Red Sea tanker underway

ATHENS: An operation to tow an abandoned tanker struck by Yemen's Houthi rebels in August, threatening environmental disaster, began Saturday and is ongoing, a Greek defense ministry source told AFP. The Greek-flagged Sounion is being towed northwards under military escort, the source said. The tanker was hit last month by Iran-backed Houthis off the coast of Hodeida while carrying 150,000 tons of crude oil.

"(The tugboat) Aigaion Pelagos has begun to gradually tow the tanker northwards, escorted by military vessels," the defense source told AFP, adding that the ships' radars had been turned off for security reasons. The official added that a rescue team had boarded the tanker and attached tow cables, overcoming "adverse conditions". Once the tanker is safely out of the area, the source said that an update would be given on the operation.

Greek state news agency ANA said the tugboat was escorted by three frigates, helicopters and a special forces team, without disclosing the states of origin. A Greek fire ship also stood ready to lend assistance if required, ANA said. The tanker had been anchored west of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, midway between Yemen and Eritrea.

The European Union's Red Sea naval mission, Aspides, earlier Saturday said that the salvage operation of the Sounion "is essential in order to avert a potential environmental disaster in the region". "To achieve this, several public and private actors are working together," it added.

Oil spill fears

The Greek-flagged oil tanker Sounion was hit by missiles off the coast of Hodeida on Aug 21. After the initial strike, the Houthis returned and detonated charges on the ship's deck, setting off new fires. Damage to the vessel had threatened a Red Sea oil spill four times the size of the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska. The Sounion's crew — made up of 23 Filipinos and two Russians — was rescued the day after the attack by a French frigate serving with the EU mission.

The EU naval force was formed in February to protect merchant vessels in the Red Sea from attacks by the Houthi rebels, who have waged a campaign against international shipping that they say is intended to show solidarity with Hamas in its war with the Zionist entity in the Gaza Strip. Since November, the Houthi attacks have resulted in the sinkings of two ships and the deaths of at least four crew members.

The Houthis have been firing drones and missiles at ships in the vital commercial route, saying they are targeting vessels linked to the Zionist entity, the US and Britain in a show of solidarity with Palestinians over the Zionist war in Gaza. A salvage operation had been attempted earlier this month, but Aspides at the time had said that "the private companies responsible for the salvage operation have concluded that the conditions were not met to conduct the towing operation and that it was not safe to proceed." On Friday, the mission said it stood ready "to facilitate a new salvage operation in the coming days". The vessel was still on fire on Sept 12 but there were no signs of an oil spill from the main cargo hold, Aspides said Friday. — AFP

International

Boris lashes central, eastern Europe

Some towns see worst flooding in decades amid torrential rains

GLUCHOLAZY, Poland: One person has drowned in Poland and an Austrian fireman has died responding to floods, authorities said Sunday, as Storm Boris lashed central and eastern Europe with torrential rains. Since Thursday, swathes of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia have been hit by high winds and unusually heavy rainfall.

The rains have flooded streets and submerged entire neighborhoods in some places, while shutting down public transport and electricity in others. Romanians waded through armpit-high water to safety, Poles sought shelter in schools, and Czechs hurriedly put up sand dykes in an effort to keep the water at bay. Some parts of the Czech Republic and Poland faced the worst flooding in almost three decades, as towns evacuated thousands.

Sunday's deaths bring the overall toll from the storm to seven, with thousands evacuated across the continent. In Romania, a body was found on Sunday, after four people were reported killed earlier. Four more people were reported missing in the Czech Republic. "The water came into the house, it destroyed the walls, everything," Sofia Basalic, 60, a resident of Romania's village of Pechea, in the hard-hit region of Galati, told AFP. "It took the chickens, the rabbits, everything. It took the oven, the washing machine, the refrigerator. I have nothing left," she said.

'Worst hours of their lives'

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday morning that "we have the first confirmed death by drowning, in the Klodzko region" on the Polish-Czech border in the southwest of the country, which has been hit hardest by the floods. Around 1,600 people have been evacuated in Klodzko, and Polish authorities have called in the army to support firefighters.

Separately, a fireman in northeastern Austria died in floods in the Lower Austria region, which has been classified as a natural disaster zone. "Unfortunately a

firefighter has died while responding to the flooding," Johanna Mikl-Leitner, the governor of Lower Austria, told reporters Sunday. "For many residents, the upcoming hours will be the worst of their lives," she said.

Emergency services had made nearly 5,000 interventions overnight in the state of Lower Austria, where flooding had trapped many residents in their homes. Polish authorities shut the Golkowice border crossing with the Czech Republic after a river flooded its banks on Saturday, as well as closing several roads and halting trains on the line linking the towns of Prudnik and Nysa.

In the Czech Republic, police reported four people were missing Sunday. Three were in a car that was swept into a river in the northeastern town of Lipova-Lazne, and another man was missing after being swept away by floods in the southeast. A dam in the south of the country burst its banks, flooding towns and villages downstream. In the village of Velke Hostice, residents put up a wall of sandbags 500 m long in an effort to hold back the rising waters of the River Opava. "If we don't stop the wave, it will flood the lower part of the village," local hunter Jaroslav Lexa told AFP.

'Catastrophe of epic proportions'

On Saturday, four people died in floods in southeastern Romania, with the bodies found in the worst-affected region, Galati in the southeast, where 5,000 homes were damaged. Another body was found in the same region on Sunday. "We are again facing the effects of climate change, which are increasingly present on the European continent, with dramatic consequences," Romania's President Klaus Iohannis said.

Hundreds of people have been rescued across 19 parts of the country, emergency services said, releasing a video of flooded homes in a village by the Danube river. "This is a catastrophe of epic proportions," said Emil Dragomir, mayor of Slobozia Cona-



GLUCHOLAZY, Poland: This aerial photograph taken on Sept 15, 2024 shows a view of flooded streets of this town in southern Poland. — AFP

chi, a village in Galati, where he said 700 homes had been flooded. Romania's interior minister said more than 5,000 households and 15,000 people were affected in the region.

Some areas of Austria's Tyrol region were blanketed by up to a meter of snow — an exceptional situation for mid-September, which saw temperatures of up to 30 degrees Celsius last week. Rail services were suspended in the country's east early Sunday and several metro lines

were shut down in the capital Vienna, where the Wien river was threatening to overflow its banks, according to the APA news agency.

Firefighters have intervened around 150 times in Vienna since Friday to clear roads blocked by storm debris and pump water from cellars, local media reported. Neighboring Slovakia has declared a state of emergency in the capital, Bratislava. Heavy rains are expected to continue until at least Monday in the Czech Republic and Poland. — AFP

AI 'accelerating climate crisis'

MONTREAL: If you care about the environment, think twice about using AI. Generative artificial intelligence uses 30 times more energy than a traditional search engine, warns researcher Sasha Luccioni, on a mission to raise awareness about the environmental impact of the hot new technology. Recognized as one of the 100 most influential people in the world of AI by the American magazine Time in 2024, the Canadian computer scientist of Russian origin has sought for several years to quantify the emissions of programs like ChatGPT or Midjourney.

"I find it particularly disappointing that generative AI is used to search the Internet," laments the researcher, who spoke with AFP on the sidelines of the ALL IN artificial intelligence conference, in Montreal. The language models on which the programs are based require enormous computing capacities to train on billions of data points, necessitating powerful servers.

Then there's the energy used to respond to each individual user's requests. Instead of simply extracting information, "like a search engine would do to find the capital of a country, for example," AI programs "generate new information," making the whole thing "much more energy-intensive," she explains. According to the International Energy Agency, the combined AI and the cryptocurrency sectors consumed nearly 460 terawatt hours of electricity in 2022 — two percent of total global production.

Energy efficiency

A leading researcher on the impact of AI on climate, Luccioni participated in 2020 in the creation of a tool for developers to quantify the carbon footprint of running a piece of code. "CodeCarbon" has since been downloaded more than a million times. Head of the climate strat-

egy of startup Hugging Face, a platform for sharing open-access AI models, she is now working on creating a certification system for algorithms.

Similar to the program from the US Environmental Protection Agency that awards scores based on the energy consumption of electronic devices and appliances, it would make it possible to know an AI product's energy consumption in order to encourage users and developers to "make better decisions." "We don't take into account water or rare materials," she acknowledges, "but at least we know that for a specific task, we can measure energy efficiency and say that this model has an A+, and that model has a D," she says.

Transparency

In order to develop her tool, Luccioni is experimenting with it on generative AI models that are accessible to everyone, or open source, but she would also like to do it on commercial models from Google or ChatGPT-creator OpenAI, which have been reluctant to agree. Although Microsoft and Google have committed to achieving carbon neutrality by the end of the decade, the US tech giants saw their greenhouse gas emissions soar in 2023 because of AI: Up 48 percent for Google compared to 2019 and 29 percent for Microsoft compared to 2020.

"We are accelerating the climate crisis," says Luccioni, calling for more transparency from tech companies. The solution, she says, could come from governments that, for the moment, are "flying blindly," without knowing what is "in the data sets or how the algorithms are trained." "Once we have transparency, we can start legislating."

It is also necessary to "explain to people what generative AI can and cannot do, and at what cost," according to Luccioni. In her latest study, the researcher demonstrated that producing a high-definition image using artificial intelligence consumes as much energy as fully recharging the battery of your cell phone. — AFP

Haitians in US live in fear amid threats, conspiracy theories

SPRINGFIELD, Ohio: Bomb threats are being called into schools and businesses are closing at sundown in Springfield, Ohio, after the small US town became the center of conspiracy theories targeting its Haitian immigrant community — leaving some in fear for their lives. The mostly white city in the American Midwest has seen a boom in population in recent years, fueled mostly by Haitians attracted by its economic revival, and new businesses happy to attract laborers.

But after fleeing gang violence in Haiti, many newcomers are now worried they could be victims of hate crimes here as Republicans stir tensions over the influx of Black foreigners during a heated political campaign season. "Some of them want to leave (town), some have already left," said Romane Pierre, manager of the Rose Goute Haitian restaurant. He closed early, around 8:00 pm, on Thursday, worried about his staff having to walk home late at night.

What started as municipal growing pains in a rapidly growing city have morphed into allegations of an "invasion" by "illegal" newcomers, baselessly accused of stealing and eating people's pets and causing a crime wave. Since Republican White House candidate Donald Trump declared "they're eating dogs" at Tuesday's presidential debate, tensions have only increased.

A bomb threat Thursday closed city hall and a local public school attended by many Haitian children. Schools were evacuated for a second day Friday, and the FBI investigated threatening calls telling a Haitian community center to "f***ing leave," the center's executive director told AFP. "It's a sad reality, putting people in panic," said Viles Dorsainvil, executive director of the Haitian Community Help and Support Center. "We are trying to help them to understand what has happened is just because of a political agenda."

Too much of a good thing?

In many ways, Springfield's growing population was a success — and one specifically



SPRINGFIELD: Haitians sit down to eat their meal at a Haitian restaurant on Sept 12, 2024. — AFP

sought out by the city, which previously had a declining population typical of the post-industrial heartland. City officials pushed an economic plan to attract new businesses, and it worked — perhaps too well, attracting some 10-15,000 Haitians to a town that had a population of under 60,000 in 2020.

The growth has stressed the already tight housing market, emergency services, and the health and school systems — real problems, said Wes Babian, former pastor at the First Baptist church. And the jobs revival has not translated into fixing systemic problems such as longstanding local poverty. But Babian denounced what he said were growing "racial overtones" in residents' complaints.

"There's been a lot of controversy over the last year or so with regard to the new neighbors," said Babian. "Certainly understandable in some respects, but it's migrated to a much more negative, even dangerous level at some points." Many of the Haitians in Springfield have some sort of legal or protected status. Some have lived in the United States for years. But they have been accused of being bused into the town by the federal government, or living grandly off public benefits while the local population languishes.

In reality, some Haitians arrived with their own funds and started businesses, like Philomene Philostin, a naturalized US citizen who owns a grocery store stocked with Haitian staples such as djon-djon season-

ing and dried lalo leaves. Others are barely scraping by, such as Fritz. He arrived at the US-Mexican border five months ago, and was given an appointment to cross and seek asylum. He receives food assistance, but nothing he can use to pay rent — which he hopes to turn around after finding a night shift job at a food services company.

"But they haven't paid me yet," he said, and the housing situation for him, his two-year-old son and pregnant wife, at a friend's house, is precarious. As he spoke to AFP downtown across from the evacuated city hall, a car drove by, with its occupants yelling out, "F*** you!"

'I've got my weapons'

Since the presidential debate, Daniel, a Haitian who has lived in Springfield for four years under a legal protection called Temporary Protected Status, has stopped leaving his house unless it's completely necessary. But he insists the people spreading the hateful rhetoric are in the minority. "The threat is real," he said. But "it's not the entire community."

Others are on his side. An American flag fluttering in the twilight, Vietnam War veteran William Thompson declares "it's the land of the free... They got an opportunity to come be free." And if, like so many fear, things spiral into violence, "I've got my weapons inside the house," he laughed. — AFP

Kuwait ready for new school year...

Continued from Page 1

The new schools were designed according to state-of-the-art standards, with qualifications that meet environmental sustainability standards via solar panels that decrease reliance on traditional energy.

In an effort to create a safe and stimulating environment for students and teachers alike, the ministry also invested in making the schools more accessible with elevators and designating special areas for people with disabilities. The schools are fitted with 25,000 pieces of furniture for some 8,453 students and 1,918 faculty members. Based on the approved plan on the Takamul platform, the libraries management at the ministry of education prepared 19 libraries in new schools that provide information for all grades, which helps motivate students and builds a better environment.

The ministry also updated the Sahel platform, making it easier for students and administrators to upload their data on the application, as well as prepared the information infrastructure in the new schools and distributed 922 computers, 52 attendance fingerprint devices and 82 interactive screens in preparation for the new academic year. The ministry of education appreciated the support of Kuwait's political leadership in all fields, adding that they are also working on implementing plans that reflect Kuwait's educational vision.

Education Minister Dr Nader Al-Jallal congratulated teachers on the start of the 2024-2025 academic year, stressing that teachers are the main pillars in building the future generation. Based on the academic calendar, first grade starts on Sept 16, while elementary, middle and high school will begin on Sept 17 and kindergarten on Sept 18. — KUNA

Houthi strike Zionist entity...

Continued from Page 1

reaching its target", Saree said in a video statement. He added that "the enemy's defenses failed to intercept it". In July, the Houthis claimed a drone strike that penetrated the Zionist entity's intricate air defenses and killed a person in Tel Aviv, at least 1,800 km from Yemen. This time, the Zionist military said an initial inquiry indicates the missile fired from Yemen probably fragmented in mid-air. Sirens sounded, the military said, leading to what local media described as a scramble for shelter in the greater Tel Aviv area. A paramedic service said several people were slightly injured while "on their way to shelters". Zionist police said they were at the scene near Shfela, east of Tel Aviv, where a fragment of an air defense interceptor had come down.

A senior Hamas official told AFP on Sunday that the Palestinian Islamist movement had ample resources to continue fighting the Zionist entity despite losses sustained over more than 11 months of war in Gaza. Gaza's civil defense agency on Sunday reported Zionist air strikes killed at least three people in central Gaza and another around Gaza City. The Zionist military campaign has killed at least 41,206 people in Gaza, mostly women and children.

"The resistance has a high ability to continue," Osama Hamdan told AFP during an interview in Istanbul. "There were martyrs and there were sacrifices... but in return there was an accumulation of experiences and the recruitment of new generations into the resistance." "The number of casualties... is much less than what is expected in a battle of this

size, level and breadth," Hamdan said on Sunday. Hamdan said the United States, the Zionist entity's most important military backer, was not doing enough to force concessions from Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that would end the bloodshed. "The American administration does not exert sufficient or appropriate pressure on the (Zionist) side," Hamdan said. "Rather it is trying to justify the (Zionist) side's evasion of any commitment." Hamdan said the Houthi attack showed the limits of the Zionist entity's ability to defend itself, including its oft-touted aerial defense system. "It is a message to the entire region that (the Zionist entity) is not an immune entity," Hamdan said. "Even (Zionist) capabilities have limits." Hamdan also reiterated Hamas' view that an attack earlier this month in which a Jordanian truck driver shot dead three Zionist guards at a border crossing underscored widespread anger at the Zionist entity in the region.

As for Arab leaders who have normalized diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity or are considering doing so, Hamdan said they should ask themselves how they would feel if their countries were occupied and the world stood by and watched. "If you see (the Zionist entity) as a blessing and a gain... give them a piece of your country," he said, jokingly adding that it could be called "the new (Zionist entity)".

Hamdan said on Sunday it was impossible to imagine a scenario in which Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar would leave the besieged territory. Sinwar and other leaders "are ready to be martyred thousands of times in Palestine rather than leaving it because everything he is doing is to free Palestine," Hamdan said. Hamdan said that Hamas wants "joint Palestinian rule" in Gaza, adding that Hamas officials and representatives of other Palestinian factions would meet soon in Cairo to discuss their post-war vision. "The day after the battle is a Palestinian day," he said. — Agencies

Pro-Palestinian Lebanese novelist...

Continued from Page 1

war that coincided with the Zionist entity's foundation. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven out or expelled from their homes during that war, in what Palestinians call the Nakba, or catastrophe in Arabic. The novel was made into a film by Egyptian director Yousry Nasrallah. Khoury also wrote about Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war in novels like "Little Mountain" and "Yalo".

A champion of the Palestinian cause since his youth, Khoury was co-managing editor of the PLO-linked Palestinian Affairs magazine from 1975 to 1979, together with poet Mahmoud Darwish. Khoury also headed the cultural section of the now-defunct Lebanese newspaper As-Safir and the cultural supplement of the daily Annahar. He taught literature at several US institutions including New York's prestigious Columbia University. Khoury's ailing health in recent years did not stop him from writing, publishing articles reposted on his Facebook page from his hospital bed. On July 16, he published an article titled "A Year of Pain", recounting his time bedridden in hospital and enduring "a life filled with pain, which stops only to herald in more pain".

He ended his piece by alluding to the Zionist war in the besieged Gaza Strip, which by then had raged on for more than nine months. "Gaza and Palestine have been brutally bombarded for almost a year now, but they stand steadfast and unshakable. A model from which I have learnt to love life every day," Khoury wrote. — AFP

International

UN staff fear they are targets as Zionists hit Gaza shelters

At least 220 members of UNRWA staff have been killed

JERUSALEM: A senior UN official said Saturday that teachers and other UN staff working in Gaza fear they are now targets after a Zionist air strike hit a school-turned-shelter in the territory last week. Wednesday's strike on the UN-run Al-Jawni School in central Gaza, which is housing displaced Palestinians, killed 18 people, including six employees of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

It was the deadliest single incident for the agency in more than 11 months of war and drew international condemnation. "One colleague said that they're not wearing the UNRWA vest anymore because they feel that that turns them into a target," UNRWA senior deputy director Sam Rose told AFP on Saturday after visiting the shelter in Nuseirat. "Another one said that that morning, their children had stopped them from coming into the shelter," he said in an on-line interview from Gaza.

The colleagues were gathering for a post-work meal in a classroom when the strike flattened part of the building, leaving only a charred heap of rebar and concrete. "A son of one of the staff had brought a meal into the building," Rose said, adding the group then debated whether to eat it in the principal's office before settling on what appeared to be a classroom decorated with pictures of scientists. "They were eating when the bomb hit."

'Bereft and desperate'

The Zionist military published what it said was a list of nine fighters killed in the Nuseirat strike, including three it said were employees of UNRWA. A Zionist government spokesman said the school had become "a legitimate target" because it was used by Hamas to launch attacks. Rose said such statements further battered morale among UN staffers still at the school, where thousands have sought shelter from a war that has displaced nearly all of Gaza's 2.4 million population at least once.

"They were particularly angry by the allegations that had been made as to the involvement of their colleagues in extremist and terrorist activities," Rose said. "They felt that this really was a stain on the memory of dear colleagues, dear friends," he added, describing the mood as "bereft" and "desperate".

UNRWA has said at least 220 members of the agency's staff have been killed in the Zionist war in Gaza. The Zionist offensive has killed at least 41,206 people in Gaza, mostly women and children. On Friday, UNRWA announced one of its employees was killed during a Zionist raid in the occupied West Bank, the first such death in the territory in more than a decade. UNRWA has more than 30,000 employees in the Palestinian territories and elsewhere.

It has been in crisis since the Zionist entity ac-



GAZA: A Palestinian woman gestures at the courtyard of the Al-Jawni School after a Zionist air strike hit the site in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on Sept 11, 2024. - AFP

used a dozen of its employees of being involved in the Oct 7 attack. The UN immediately fired the implicated staff members, and a probe found

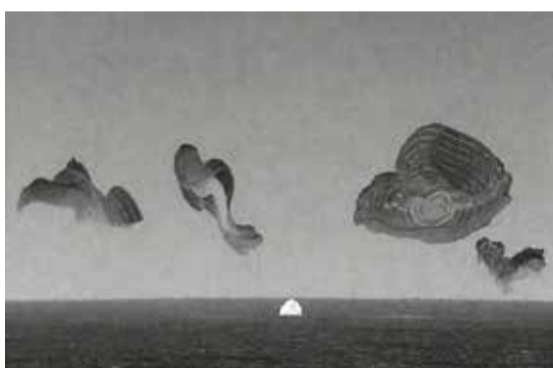
some "neutrality related issues" but stressed the Zionist entity had not provided evidence for its main allegations. — AFP

Historic private astronaut mission splashes down

WASHINGTON: The SpaceX Polaris Dawn mission, which made history when its crew conducted the first spacewalk by non-government astronauts, splashed down off the coast of Florida early Sunday. The Dragon spacecraft landed in the ocean at 3:37 am (0737 GMT), a webcast of the splashdown showed, with a recovery team deploying in the pre-dawn darkness to retrieve the capsule and crew. The capsule was lifted from the water and onto the recovery vessel half a hour later.

After brief medical checks, a smiling and waving SpaceX engineer Anna Menon was the first of the crew to exit, followed by engineer Sarah Gillis, pilot Scott Poteet and commander Jared Isaacman. A helicopter was due to transport them to land. The four-member team led by fintech billionaire Isaacman launched Tuesday from the Kennedy Space Center, quickly journeying deeper into the cosmos than any humans in the past half century as they ventured into the dangerous Van Allen radiation belt.

They hit a peak altitude of 1,400 km more than three times higher than the International Space Station and the furthest humans had ever traveled from Earth since the Apollo missions to the Moon. Then on Thursday, with their Dragon spacecraft's orbit



This still image taken from a broadcast on Sept 15, 2024 shows the manned Polaris Dawn mission's "Dragon" capsule splashing down off the coast of Dry Tortugas, Florida. — AFP

brought down to 434 miles, Isaacman swung open the hatch and climbed out into the void, gripping a structure called "Skywalker" as a breathtaking view of Earth unfolded before him.

"SpaceX, back at home we all have a lot of work to do, but from here, Earth sure looks like a perfect world," he told mission control in Hawthorne, California, where teams erupted in applause. He went back inside after a few minutes and was replaced by a second astronaut, SpaceX engineer Gillis, who, like Isaacman, performed a series of mobility tests on SpaceX's sleek, next-generation suits.

Since Dragon doesn't have an airlock, the entire crew were exposed to the vacuum of space. Mission

pilot Poteet and SpaceX engineer Menon remained strapped in throughout as they monitored vital support systems. It marked a "giant leap forward" for the commercial space industry, said NASA chief Bill Nelson, as well as another triumphant achievement for SpaceX. Though the company was only founded in 2002, it has outpaced its legacy competitors thanks in large part to founder Elon Musk's vast fortune and zeal to begin the colonization of Mars.

Rousing violin solo

Since completing their extravehicular activity, the crew have continued to carry out roughly 40 science experiments — for example inserting endoscopic cameras through their noses and into their throats to image their airways and better understand the impact of long-duration space missions on human health. They also demonstrated connectivity with SpaceX's Starlink internet satellite constellation by sending back to ground control a high-resolution video of Gillis playing "Rey's Theme" by "Star Wars" composer John Williams, on the violin.

Polaris Dawn is the first of three missions under the Polaris program, a collaboration between Isaacman and SpaceX. Financial terms of the partnership remain under wraps but Isaacman, the 41-year-old founder and CEO of Shift4 Payments, reportedly poured \$200 million of his own money into leading the 2021 all-civilian SpaceX Inspiration4 orbital mission. The final Polaris mission aims to be the first crewed flight of SpaceX's Starship, a prototype next-generation rocket that is key to Musk's interplanetary ambitions. — AFP

Biden to use term putting Ukraine in 'best position'

KYIV: US President Joe Biden will use the remaining four months of his term "to put Ukraine in the best possible position to prevail", a close advisor said Saturday. Speaking remotely to a forum in Kyiv, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also said Biden will meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in late September at the UN General Assembly in New York to discuss aid to Ukraine.

"President Zelenskyy has said that ultimately this war has to end through negotiations, and we need them to be strong in those negotiations," Sullivan said, adding Ukraine would decide when to enter talks with Russia. Biden will be replaced next January either by his Vice President Kamala Harris, who has indicated she will continue his policies of backing Ukraine, or by former president Donald Trump, who would not say at a debate earlier this week whether he wanted Kyiv to win the war.

The announcement of the upcoming Biden-Zelenskyy meeting came after Moscow and Kyiv earlier Saturday swapped 103 prisoners of war each in a UAE-brokered deal, and as Russian forces continue to gain ground in their grinding offensive in east Ukraine. The Russians released in the latest swap were captured during Ukraine's recent cross-border incursion into the Kursk region, Moscow said, while some of the Ukrainians freed had been held prisoner since Moscow seized the Azovstal steel plant in May 2022.

"Another 103 soldiers were returned to Ukraine from Russian captivity," Zelenskyy said on Telegram. Russia confirmed it had "handed over" 103 Ukrainian army prisoners, and in return received 103 Russian servicemen captured by Kyiv. "All Russian servicemen are on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, where they are being provided with the necessary psychological and medical assistance," the Russian defense ministry said.

Despite ongoing hostilities, Russia and Ukraine have managed to swap hundreds of prisoners throughout the two-and-half-year conflict — often in deals brokered by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia or Turkey. The announcement came a day after Zelenskyy said 49 Ukrainian POWs had been returned from Russia, and three weeks ago both sides swapped 115 prisoners each in a deal also mediated by the UAE.

Russian advances

The prisoner swap came as Russia pushed ahead in east Ukraine, where it claims to have captured a string of villages in recent weeks. The Russian defense ministry said in a daily briefing it had "liberated" the village of Zhelanne Pershe, less than 30 km from the key logistics hub of Pokrovsk. Pokrovsk lies on the intersection of a key road that supplies Ukrainian troops and towns across the eastern front and has long been a target for Moscow's army.

More than half of the city's 60,000 residents have fled since the invasion began in Feb 2022, with evacuations ramping up in recent weeks as Moscow's army closes in. Ukraine had hoped its major cross-border incursion into the Kursk region last month would slow down Russia's advances in the east.

On Friday, Zelenskyy said Moscow had been slowed down somewhat but conceded the situation on the eastern front was "very difficult". "Ukraine has taken bold and assertive steps... but that area around Pokrovsk is of unique concern," Sullivan told the Kyiv forum on Saturday. Russia meanwhile claimed this week to have clawed back a swath of territory in its western Kursk region, as it mounted what appeared to be a counter-offensive.

Missile spat

Tensions between Russia and the West over the conflict reached dire levels this week over UK and US discussions about letting Ukraine use longer-range weapons to strike targets inside Russia. President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Thursday that green-lighting the use of the long-range weapons deep inside Russia would put the NATO military alliance "at war" with Moscow. "It would mean that NATO countries, the US, European countries, are at war with Russia," Putin told a state television reporter. — AFP

Venezuela arrests three Americans, two Spaniards

CARACAS: Three Americans, two Spaniards and a Czech citizen have been detained in Venezuela on suspicion of plotting to destabilize the country, the government said, as the United States and Spain denied Caracas's allegations they were involved. The arrests come amid heightened tensions between Venezuela and both the United States and Spain over Venezuela's disputed July 28 presidential election, which the country's opposition accuses President Nicolas Maduro of stealing. Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said Saturday the foreign nationals were being held on suspicion of planning an attack on Maduro and his government. "We know that the United States government has links to this operation," Cabello asserted. Cabello said two Spaniards were recently detained in Puerto Ayacucho in the southwest.

He added that three Americans and a Czech national were also arrested and linked the alleged plot to intelligence agencies in the United States and Spain, as well as to Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado. Maduro has heaped blame for the tide of adversity his country faces on the "imperialist" United States, which he accuses of conspiring with his Venezuelan opponents to overthrow him.

A State Department spokesperson said Saturday that "any claims of US involvement in a plot to overthrow Maduro are categorically false". The State Department spokesperson additionally confirmed that a US military member was being held and noted "unconfirmed reports of two additional US citizens detained in Venezuela." Spain also rejected allegations it was involved. "Spain denies and categorically rejects any insinuation that it is involved in a political destabilization operation in Venezuela," a foreign ministry source told AFP Sunday. — AFP



CARACAS: Venezuela's Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello gives a press conference next to seized weapons on display on Sept 14, 2024. — AFP



PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines: This handout photo taken on Sept 15, 2024 shows the Philippine Coast Guard ship BRP Teresa Magbanua as it arrives at a port in Palawan. — AFP

Philippines sends replacement ship to Sabina Shoal

MANILA: The Philippines said it was sending a vessel to Sabina Shoal to replace a coast guard ship that returned to port on Sunday after a five-month deployment at the contested feature in the South China Sea, in a swap that would likely irk China. Beijing had demanded the Philippines withdraw the 97-m coast guard vessel Teresa Magbanua it claimed was "illegally stranded" at the atoll, which it asserts it owns as part of its broader claim to nearly the entire South China Sea.

"The Philippine side's actions have seriously infringed on China's territorial sovereignty," Liu Dejun, a spokesperson for China's coast guard said in a statement on Sunday about what it referred to as Manila's "withdrawal" of its ship.

Teresa Magbanua, which was deployed at Sabina Shoal to monitor what Manila suspects to be China's small-scale land reclamation activities in the area, has returned to port as its mission has been accomplished, the Philippine Coast Guard and National Maritime Council (NMC) said. "Another will immediately take over," NMC spokesperson Alexander Lopez said, citing an order from the Philippine Coast Guard chief. "Definitely, we will keep our presence there."

Sabina Shoal, which China refers to as Xianbin Reef and the Philippines as the Escoda Shoal, lies 150 km west of the Philippine province of Palawan, well within the country's exclusive economic zone. Teresa Magbanua's presence there has angered Beijing, turning the shoal into the latest flashpoint in the contested waterway.

Manila and Beijing have traded accusations of intentional ramming of each others' vessels near Sabina last month, just after reaching a pact on resupply missions to a beached Filipino naval ship in the Second Thomas Shoal. Teresa Magbanua's return was necessary for the medical needs of its crew and to undergo repairs, and once it has been resupplied and repaired, it will resume its mission, along with other coast guard and military assets "as defenders of our sovereignty," Lucas Bersamin, executive secretary and NMC chairman said in a statement.

The move followed high-level talks between Manila and Beijing in China last week where the Philippines reaffirmed its position on Sabina and China reiterated its demand that the vessel be withdrawn. China's coast guard said it would continue to carry out law enforcement activities in the waters under Beijing's jurisdiction in accordance with the law and safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

China claims sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, overlapping into maritime zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. In 2016 the Hague arbitration tribunal voided China's expansive and historical claims, a decision Beijing rejects. — Reuters

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

Tunisia fisherwomen battle inequality, climate change

Women row against entrenched patriarchy, environmental threats

KERKENNAH: Off a quiet Tunisian island, Sara Souissi readies her small fishing boat. As a woman in the male-dominated trade, she rows against entrenched patriarchy but also environmental threats to her livelihood. Souissi began fishing as a teenager in a family of fishers off their native Kerkennah Islands near the city of Sfax, defying men who believed she had no place at sea. "Our society didn't accept that a woman would fish," she said, hauling a catch onto her turquoise-colored boat. "But I persisted, because I love fishing and I love the sea," said Souissi, 43, who is married to a fisherman and is a mother of one.

A substantial portion of Tunisia is coastal or near the coast, making the sea an essential component of everyday life. Seafood, a staple in Tunisian cuisine, is also a major export commodity for the North African country, with Italy, Spain and Malta top buyers, and revenues nearing 900 million dinars (\$295 million) last year, according to official figures. Tunisian women have long played a major role in this vital sector. But their work has been undervalued and unsupported, a recent study by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found.

The study said that while women were actively involved throughout the fishing value chain, they remained "generally not considered as an actual worker" by their male counterparts. Fisherwomen also have less access to administrative benefits, training and banking services, where they are viewed as "high-risk borrowers" compared to men, the study said. As a result, many don't own their own boats, and those working with male relatives are "considered as family help and therefore not remunerated", it added.

Under the table

In Raoued, a coastal town on the edge of the capital Tunis, the Tunisian Society for Sustainable

Fishing launched a workshop in June for women's integration into the trade. But most of the women attending the training told AFP they were only there to help male relatives. "I want to help develop this field. Women can make fish nets," said Safa Ben Khalifa, a participant.

There are currently no official numbers for fisherwomen in Tunisia. Although Souissi is formally registered in her trade, many Tunisian women can work only under the table - the World Economic Forum estimates 60 percent of workers in informal sectors are women. "We want to create additional resources amid climate change, a decrease in marine resources, and poor fishing practices," said Ryma Moussaoui, the Raoued workshop coordinator.

Last month, the Mediterranean Sea reached its highest temperature on record at a daily median of 28.9 degrees Celsius, Spain's leading institute of marine sciences said. The strain on sea life and resources has been compounded in countries like Tunisia by pollution and overfishing. Rising temperatures make the waters uninhabitable for various species, and unsustainable fishing like trawling or using plastic traps indiscriminately sweeps up the dwindling sea life and exacerbates pollution. "They don't respect the rules," Souissi said about fishers using those methods. "They catch anything they can, even off-season."

'Unfavorable environment'

In 2017 in Skhira, a port town on the Gulf of Gabes, 40 women clam collectors formed an association to enhance their income - only to see their hard-won gains later erased by pollution. Before its formation, the women earned about a tenth of the clams' final selling price in Europe, said its president, Houada Mansour. By cutting out "exploitative middlemen", the association helped boost their earnings, she added.



KERKENNAH: Tunisian fisherwoman Sara Souissi rows her boat along the coast of Tunisia's Kerkennah Islands in the Mediterranean Sea in the south of the country. — AFP

In 2020, however, the government issued a ban on clam collecting due to a severe drop in shellfish populations, leaving the women unemployed. "They don't have diplomas and can't do other jobs," Mansour, now a baker, explained. In hotter, polluted waters, clams struggle to build strong shells and survive. Industrial waste discharged into the Gulf of Gabes for decades has contributed to the problem.

It has also forced other species out, said Emna Benkahla, a fishing economics researcher at the University of Tunis El Manar. "The water became

an unfavorable environment for them to live and reproduce," undermining the fishers' revenue, she said. "Because they couldn't fish anymore, some sold their boats to migrants looking to cross the Mediterranean illegally," she added, calling for more sustainable practices. Souissi, who only uses relatively small nets with no motor on her boat, said she and others should fish responsibly in order to survive. "Otherwise, what else can I do?" she said, rowing her boat back to shore. "Staying at home and cleaning? No, I want to keep fishing." — AFP

Germany's parks plant a way forward on climate change

BAD MUSKAU: In the castle gardens of Muskauer Park, which straddles both banks of the German-Polish river border, caretakers have mounted a fightback against the impacts of climate change. On the stump of a 150-year-old oak tree, gnawed by parasites and felled in a storm, a tender new shoot represents the estate's hope of adapting to rising temperatures and more frequent droughts. As part of a "natural regeneration" project, the sapling was grafted onto its fallen predecessor by gardeners in the first step towards replacing the UNESCO-listed park's lost trees. The young oak "will benefit from the roots of the old tree and will be more resistant to threats", gardener Jana Kretschmer told AFP.

By transmitting their DNA to the new saplings, the older trees "teach" their descendants how to adapt to less hospitable conditions. "Nature shows the way, humans need only look on," said Kretschmer. Drought and pests are among the silent killers encouraged by climate change, which weakens plants and has started to decimate the flora of the parklands on both sides of the Neisse river. Some 180 beeches, ashes and oaks had to be felled there last year. "Every year since 2018 we have to cut down more and more trees," said Kretschmer, the site's deputy manager, who bemoaned the loss of countless old trees as a "catastrophe".

Natural cure

In June, 15 German estates presented their plans to protect their gardens against the impacts of climate change. At Muskauer Park, the groundskeepers are betting on the traditional method of natural regeneration to increase the tree-count. Importing more resistant species of trees would be an option, but one that would be "neither sustainable, nor intelligent", said park manager Cord Panning. A natural regeneration approach moreover promises savings in two scarce commodities: money and water.



BAD MUSKAU: Gardener Jana Kretschmer explains the damages on a tree in the landscape park in Bad Muskau, near Goerlitz in eastern Germany. — AFP

Following the method, caretakers select the best young specimens to plant them in place of old trees, eschewing genetic engineering or any foreign transplants. In time, they hope to restore virtually all of the trees in the 19th century garden that have been lost and felled. Among the pests to have plagued the trees at Muskauer Park are the tinder fungus and the bark beetle. "Usually, by the time you realize it, it is too late," said Kretschmer. Long dry spells between 2018 and 2020 did nothing to help the situation, leaving the trees ever more vulnerable to attack.

Fungal invasion

Further south in Germany, at Nymphenburg Palace in Munich, the spread of the phytophthora fungus and invasive mistletoe species are depriving trees of water. "The trees are experiencing dry stress, even in years where rainfall is sufficient," said Michael Degle, the palace's landscape architect. The

Munich park has had a system of "sustainable tree management" since 2018, which employs moisture sensors and new pruning techniques. The project feeds into the joint efforts of over a dozen garden estates in Germany, including Muskauer Park, to develop effective responses to climate change.

But their work is "reaching its limits", according to the group's June report. Already, 20 to 30 percent of their budget is spent on fixing climate damage - a share which is only increasing. According to their calculations, somewhere between 200 and 250 million euros (\$220 and 275 million) would be needed in the long term to protect historic parks from rising temperatures. The damage to trees at Muskauer Park by a warming climate will be on show at the estate's open day at the end of September. An opportunity, according to Kretschmer, to show that trees "are not just wood, but living beings much more clever than us". — AFP

Switzerland unveils supercomputer Alps, with an eye on AI

GENEVA: Switzerland on Saturday inaugurated its new supercomputer called Alps - one of the world's fastest - which it hopes will help place the country first for trustworthy artificial intelligence solutions. The ETH Zurich university officially inaugurated Alps at the Swiss National Supercomputing Centre (CSCS) in Lugano, southern Switzerland. "Alps is an expression of our vision of a future characterized by knowledge and progress," Economy, Education and Research Minister Guy Parmelin said in a speech at the CSCS site.

In June, Alps was ranked as the world's sixth most powerful supercomputer. However, at the time it was not fully constructed and had only reached 60 percent of its potential. The supercomputer was developed to meet extreme data and computing scientific requirements, and allows artificial intelligence to be utilized more fully. It is the central part of an initiative "to position Switzerland as the world's leading hub for the development and implementation of transparent and trustworthy AI solutions", ETH Zurich said in a statement.

Andreas Krause, head of the AI Centre at ETH Zurich, said: "Alps makes it possible to train complex AI models for important applications, for example, in medicine and climate research." The MeteoSwiss national weather service is already using Alps to produce a higher resolution weather prediction model that better reflects Switzerland's complex topography of mountains and valleys.

Parmelin said on X that Alps would be "opening new horizons, clearing the path for the future, placing Switzerland in pole position for scientific research". CSCS deputy director Michele De Lorenzi told Switzerland's Keystone-ATS news agency it would take 40,000 years for a commercial laptop to perform the operations that Alps can do in a day. The supercomputer is housed in 33 cabinets covering 116 square meters. — AFP

The poor squeezed out by Cape Town housing shortage

CAPE TOWN: Ursula Felkers moved to "Tin Can Town" in 2007 after being evicted from an apartment near the centre of Cape Town when a new landlord took over. She thought she would only be in Blikkiesdorp - where row upon row of shacks stand on a desolate plot next to Cape Town's international airport - for a few months. Intended for "housing emergencies", the site 25 kilometers from central Cape Town made headlines in 2010 when the municipality was accused of moving thousands of homeless people there ahead of the World Cup.

"The city originally said this was only for three to six months," said Felkers, 43, at her two-roomed shack made from rusting metal sheets. But a new housing project

fell through and "16 years later, we are still waiting", she told AFP. "In summer, you suffocate inside. In winter, it's like an icebox," she said. There is not much here: no shops, no services, nowhere to work.

"In Woodstock (where she used to live), we had access to everything: we could walk to town, to the park, the supermarket or the butcher across the road," she said. Felkers' name is among 340,000 on the Housing Needs Register for Cape Town, a city of around five million people. Her family is one of 2.3 million on the national waiting list, most of them black and mixed-raced people whose families were forcibly displaced under the racially segregationist system of apartheid that ended 30 years ago.

"We had more than 300 years of explicitly racist urban planning which decided where different groups would live, and that legacy is still very present today," said Nick Budlender from housing activist group Ndifuna Ukwazi. The imprint of apartheid's spatial segregation is strikingly apparent in Cape Town. Its seaside areas and leafy inner-city neighborhoods at the foot of Table Mountain are primarily enjoyed by white residents and tourists. On the outskirts are crowded and underserved townships where most people are black or mixed race.

They are "much further away from jobs, schools, and all the essentials needed for a decent life and a chance at social mobility," Budlender said. Since her husband was killed by a stray bullet at the door of their shack in 2015, Felkers has relied on social grants to raise her two children. Her son's commute to school costs almost 1,000 rands a month (50 euros), which amounts to the entire grant. — AFP



CAPE TOWN: Residents of Blikkiesdorp, a settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town, walk through houses and corrugated iron shacks. — AFP

Gulf Bank partners with 'Basta' for Back-to-School initiative

Bank distributes 1,000 school bags to underprivileged families



KUWAIT: In its ongoing efforts to enhance community sustainability, Gulf Bank has joined the "Back to School" initiative for the new academic year. The bank prepared 1,000 fully stocked school bags, complete with all necessary supplies, to be distributed to children from underprivileged families, in partnership with the volunteer team 'Basta'.

Najla Al-Eisa, Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer, commented, "We are thrilled to partner with 'Basta' to bring joy to students and their families, and to make a positive impact that encourages them to continue their educational journey." She emphasized that this initiative reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to community sustainability. "We strive to participate in various community events throughout the year, spreading joy and support to those in need."



Najla Al-Eisa

Al-Eisa added, "For more than sixty years, Gulf Bank has played a significant role in Kuwait's economic and social spheres, consistently dedicating resources to support those in need. We recognize



the profound impact these efforts have on underprivileged families." Gulf bank is dedicated to sustainability through a range of thoughtfully selected initiatives that benefit both the community and the bank, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait Vision 2035.

She continued, "As a financial institution, Gulf Bank is dedicated to supporting active civil society organizations like 'Basta,' which play a significant social and humanitarian role. We believe the private sector has an important role in advancing community sustainability through charitable initiatives." Additionally, Gulf Bank supports students and parents who hold Gulf Bank credit and prepaid cards by offering exclusive discounts and promotions on school supplies in partnership with major retailers in Kuwait. The bank also provides educational loans

and promotes savings through its savings accounts.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience. In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

PPPs and public-private dialogue

By Hassan M Abdulrahim

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have emerged as an essential tool for governments worldwide to bridge the gap in public service delivery and infrastructure development. The collaboration between public entities and private sectors in these partnerships aims to leverage the strengths of both parties. However, the success of PPP projects hinges not only on contracts, financial arrangements, or risk-sharing frameworks but also on fostering robust public-private dialogue (PPD).

PPD provides the essential communication, collaboration, and alignment needed to ensure that PPPs meet both public goals and private sector needs. This section of our guide delves into the concept of public-private dialogue in the context of PPP projects, its importance, key factors driving successful dialogues, and how it fosters the creation of resilient, efficient, and impactful partnerships.

What is Public-Private Dialogue?

Public-Private Dialogue refers to the formal and informal mechanisms that facilitate engagement and communication between government authorities and private sector entities. These dialogues serve as platforms where stakeholders from both sides can voice concerns, align expectations, and collaborate on policy formula-



Hassan M Abdulrahim

tion and project execution. When integrated into PPP frameworks, PPD helps mitigate risks, improves project designs, aligns interests, and ensures transparency. Through structured dialogue, governments can learn from private sector expertise, while private firms gain clarity about the public sector's objectives, legal frameworks, and socio-economic concerns.

Importance of PPD in PPP Projects

Improving Transparency and Trust: Transparency is a critical component in PPP projects, as it addresses potential concerns such as corruption, inefficiency, or mismanagement. Through continuous dialogue, stakeholders can establish clear communication channels that reduce information asymmetry, increase trust, and ensure that both parties are accountable to the public and each other. For instance, regular updates during the project life cycle and joint decision-making mechanisms foster a sense of ownership among all involved. Governments can provide insights into regulatory frameworks, while the private sector can contribute their expertise on efficiency, technology, and innovation.

Fostering Collaborative Solutions: In the complex landscape of PPPs, both public and private sectors come with distinct motivations. Public authorities aim to deliver public services or infrastructure, while private entities seek profitability. Through PPD, these divergent objectives can be harmonized.

A successful dialogue allows both parties to identify mutual benefits, negotiate risk-sharing arrangements, and find innovative solutions to potential conflicts. This is particularly important during the planning and financing stages, where the allocation of responsibilities and risks must be clearly defined.

Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement: Beyond just the government and private partners, PPPs often impact a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, and financial institutions. Public-private dialogues help integrate these diverse perspectives into the project's design and implementation, leading to more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable outcomes. For example, the public can provide feedback on the expected

social benefits, such as job creation or environmental impact, while the private sector can address technical and financial concerns.

Mitigating Risks: PPP projects inherently involve high levels of risk, including political, financial, legal, and operational risks. Through dialogue, both parties can anticipate and mitigate these risks early in the project life cycle. PPD enables the public sector to gain insights into market dynamics and potential private sector constraints, allowing for more informed policymaking and project design. On the other hand, private entities benefit from understanding regulatory environments and social concerns, allowing them to align their investment strategies with the public interest.

The key factors

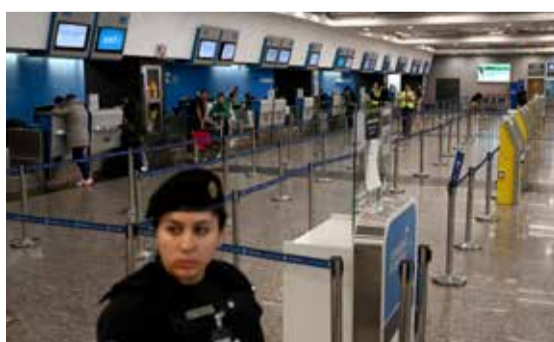
Institutionalization of Dialogue Platforms: For public-private dialogue to be effective, it needs to be institutionalized. This means setting up formal platforms for continuous engagement throughout the project cycle. Governments can create PPP units or agencies specifically tasked with facilitating these dialogues, while the private sector can form consortia to ensure coordinated participation. For example, Kuwait's Partnerships Technical Bureau (PTB) was established to oversee and promote PPP projects, serving as a vital bridge between the public and private sectors. This unit has played a key role in managing dialogues in sectors like healthcare and education, helping align both sides toward common goals.

Clear Communication and Shared Objectives: Successful PPD requires clear, open, and transparent communication. Both public and private sectors must articulate their objectives, concerns, and constraints early on. Dialogue platforms should encourage frank discussions where each party's roles and expectations are clearly defined. Involvement of All Relevant Stakeholders: Effective public-private dialogue must be inclusive. Besides government agencies and private sector firms, dialogues should involve civil society organizations, community leaders, industry associations, and even international organizations or financial institutions when necessary.

Boeing and striking workers to resume negotiations

SEATTLE: Talks between Boeing and striking US factory workers are due to resume early next week under a federal mediator, the government said Friday, after workers voted overwhelmingly to reject an earlier proposal from the embattled aviation giant. Thousands of Boeing factory workers in the United States walked off the job Friday over the pay dispute, its first strike in 16 years. Union leaders called for the strike to start just after midnight, shortly after hourly workers in the Seattle region in the Pacific Northwest spurned the tentative contract with 94.6 percent of the vote, and to strike with 96 percent.

The strike shuttered two major plane assembly plants for the 737 MAX and 777 in the Puget Sound region and sidelines some 33,000 workers, further delaying the financially stressed company's turnaround efforts. "We sent an overwhelmingly large message to Boeing that they cannot continue to treat us this poorly," Mike Corsetti, who has worked at Boeing for 15 years, told AFP Friday afternoon as he picketed in front of the Everett factory.



BUENOS AIRES: A police officer stands guard next to an empty Aerolíneas Argentinas counter is pictured at Jorge Newbery International Airport in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Thursday's vote was a decisive rejection of a deal line workers said was far less generous than depicted by Boeing executives, marking the latest show of defiance by unions following earlier major strikes in the auto and entertainment industries. Boeing, led by new CEO Kelly Ortberg, had hoped a 25-percent wage hike over four years and a commitment to invest in the Puget Sound region would be enough.

But rank-and-file workers described it as a slap in the face after more than a decade of nearly stagnant wages. Late on Friday, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) said it had been in contact with both parties and supported their return to the negotiating ta-

ble. "As part of the effort to resolve the current labor dispute and end the work stoppage, which began at 12:01 am PDT this morning, the parties will resume meetings early next week," said a FMCS statement.

'Hollow' commitments

Workers had sought a 40-percent wage hike and critics have said the 25-percent figure is inflated because the new deal also eliminates an annual company bonus. Other points of contention include the deal's failure to restore a pension, as well as Boeing's pledge to build its next plane in the Seattle region, which critics said offers no promises beyond the four-year contract.

Some workers expressed anger about the compensation packages offered to Dennis Muilenburg and Dave Calhoun, two former CEOs who received multi-million dollar pay-offs even as the company faced turmoil. Boeing Chief Financial Officer Brian West said Friday that the company had put "our best foot forward" and felt confident in the deal after it was endorsed by union leadership.

But Boeing leadership quickly understood that the offer "didn't meet the mark and was not acceptable" to the rank-and-file, West said at a financial conference. "We want to get back to the table and we want to reach an agreement that's good for our people, their families, our community," he added. Corsetti, 51, said he was not impressed with Boeing's conciliatory posture. "It's all talk until they actually come up with a real offer,"

he said. "What they considered their final offer should have been the starting point, not the final point."

Long strike ahead?

The most recent stoppage by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), in 2008, lasted 57 days. According to analysts at TD Cowen, a 50-day strike would deprive Boeing of between \$3 billion and \$3.5 billion in cash flow, and would have a \$5.5 billion impact on revenue.

Richard Aboulafia, managing director of the Aero-Dynamic Advisory consultancy, said a lengthy strike would damage Boeing's turnaround prospects, but noted that a 2023 strike at Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems lasted less than two weeks. Labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein predicted a "relatively shorter" strike at Boeing compared with past stoppages as the company faces pressure from Wall Street to improve its quality control enough to boost production and return to profitability.

"The quality question is totally linked to the frozen wages and lost institutional memory" due to staff turnover, said Lichtenstein, who teaches at the University of California at Santa Barbara. To win a deal, Boeing will need to increase pay and augment a pledge to build the next airplane in the Seattle region to ensure that it is good beyond the four-year life of the contract, Lichtenstein said. Boeing was the biggest loser on the Dow index on Friday, slumping 3.7 percent. — AFP

Business

Pennsylvanians plan to continue controversial fracking industry

US candidates vow to support hydraulic fracturing industry

CANONSBURG: Pennsylvanians working in the controversial fracking industry are confident that the sector will endure, whoever wins the White House in November's presidential election. With an eye firmly on winning over voters in the gas-rich battleground state, both Republican candidate Donald Trump and his Democratic opponent Kamala Harris are vowing to support the hydraulic fracturing industry.

But Trump's consistently strong support for the practice – and Harris's past opposition to it – have led some voters in the largely rural Republican county of Washington to conclude that the former president would be better. "I absolutely adore Trump, but I think he's very contentious," said Jennifer McIntyre, a 47-year-old sales and operations representative for Keystone Clearwater Solutions, which provides water transfer services for the fracking industry.

McIntyre, who is active in the local Wash-

ington County Republican party, told AFP she thinks the former president is "incredibly pro-oil and gas," and that Democrats at both the state and national level have put up regulations that make it harder for the industry to succeed. "I think that sometimes those regulations are not necessarily appropriate," said McIntyre, 47, in an interview at the company's offices in the suburban business park of Southpointe, where many fracking businesses are located.

Pennsylvania's embrace of new fracking and drilling techniques in the first decade of the 21st century kicked off a boom in natural gas extraction which has pushed the state's annual production higher than Canada or Qatar. There are currently more than 2,000 active so-called "unconventional" gas wells in Washington County, and close to 13,000 across the state, according to data from Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection. At Diversified Energy's

site in South Franklin Township in southwestern Pennsylvania, seven 10-year-old wells hum quietly as they extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale thousands of feet below.

The gas is first cleaned, and then sold into a nearby pipeline, generating profits for Diversified, royalties for landowners, and revenues for state and local government. Together, these seven wells produce more than four million cubic feet of gas per day, on average, (approximately 113,000 cubic meters), Jason John Mounts, the company's director of operations in southern Pennsylvania, told AFP during a tour of the site.

Asked whom he supports in the 2024 presidential election, the 40-year-old, who grew up nearby, said he backs "whoever is going to be driving our business." "At the end, it'll take care of itself," he said. "Every four years, it always takes care of itself." Unlike some of the largest players in the fracking sector, Diversified Energy does not

do the actual fracking – an expensive and dangerous process in which water, sand, and chemicals are pumped thousands of feet underground at high pressure to create fractures in the bedrock and release the gas trapped inside.

Instead, it buys operating wells from other companies once they are up and running, and then fine-tunes them to increase production. Diversified expects its existing portfolio of wells across the United States to continue producing gas for the next 50 to 75 years on average, according to the company's vice president of investor relations, Douglas Kris. "This is going to be part of our economy here for as long as we need it," he told AFP.

Scientists, environmentalists, and public health experts around the world have called for fracking to be banned, citing the health and climate impacts of the fracking phase of the extraction process, and the long-term environmental damage caused by

the continued burning of fossil fuels. In response to these concerns, governments across Europe – including France and Germany – have either banned or suspended the process, as have several provinces of Canada, and US states that include New York.

But in Pennsylvania, support for fracking has grown over the past decade, with 48 percent in favor and 44 percent opposed, according to a 2022 poll from the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion. When asked if fracking was good for the economy, 86 percent said yes. Across the state, where coal was once the dominant source of energy, fracking supported more than 120,000 jobs in 2022, paying an average of around \$97,000, according to a study commissioned by the Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC), an industry trade group. "Those jobs are across the spectrum," MSC president David Callahan told AFP in an interview. "Many blue collar jobs. But many white collar jobs as well." — AFP

Cash-strapped Maldives says no need for bailout

COLOMBO: The Maldives says its financial troubles are "temporary" and the luxury tourist destination has no plans to seek an International Monetary Fund bailout after warnings of a possible sovereign default. Foreign minister Moosa Zameer said the Indian Ocean archipelago, best known for its upscale resorts and celebrity visitors, was pressing ahead with tax hikes to meet its debt servicing obligations. "We have bilateral partners who are very sensitive to our needs and our situation," Zameer told reporters in Colombo on Friday night. "I seriously don't think it is a time where we will be right now engaging with the IMF... The issue that we have is very temporary because currently we are having a dip in reserves."

He said tax reforms, along with the rationalization of state-owned enterprises, would improve liquidity. Zameer was visiting Sri Lanka along with Finance Minister Mohamed Shafeeq to meet with local central bankers and other officials. China and India are the two largest bilateral lenders to the Maldives, a tiny nation of 1,192 tiny coral islands in the Indian Ocean scattered across the equator. President Mohamed Muizzu came to power a year ago on the back of a campaign to evict a small contingent of Indian troops deployed in the Maldives and pursue closer ties with China.

'Rough patches'

After the removal of the troops, the two nations have mended fences and had "cleared misunderstandings," Zameer said. "At the start of our government, we did have some rough patches, you know," he added. "We have fantastic bilateral relations with both China and India... Both countries continue to support us." China has pledged more funding since last year's victory by Muizzu, who thanked the country for its "selfless assistance" for development funds on a state visit to Beijing shortly after taking power.

Official data showed the Maldives' foreign debt at \$3.37 billion in the first quarter of this year, equating to around 45 percent of gross domestic product. China accounted for about 20 percent of the external debt while India owned just under 18 percent. Zameer's visit came days after Moody's Ratings downgraded the Maldives' credit rating by one notch to Caa2, considered a high credit risk. Fellow ratings agency Fitch downgraded the Maldives in June, saying that dwindling foreign currency reserves posed a financial risk. It said the government's debt servicing obligations, amounting to \$409 million this year, would add to severe stress. — AFP

US Fed to announce first interest rate cut since 2020

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve is gearing up to announce its first interest rate cut for more than four years on Wednesday, with policymakers expected to debate how big a move to make less than two months before the US presidential election. Senior officials at the US central bank including Fed chair Jerome Powell have in recent weeks indicated that a rate cut is coming this month, as inflation eases toward the bank's long-term target of two percent, and the labor market continues to cool.

The Fed, which has a dual mandate from Congress to act independently to ensure both stable prices and maximum sustainable employment, has repeatedly stressed it will make its decision on rate cuts based solely on the economic data. But a cut on Wednesday could still cause headaches for Powell, as it would land shortly before the election, in which former Republican president Donald Trump is running against the current Democratic vice president, Kamala Harris. "As much as I think the Fed tries to say that they're not a political animal, we are in a really wild cycle right now," Alicia Modestino, an associate professor of economics at Northeastern University, told AFP.

The debate among policymakers on Tuesday and Wednesday this week will likely center on whether to move by 25 or 50 basis points. However, a rate cut of any size would be the Fed's first since March 2020, when it slashed rates to near-zero in order to support the US economy through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fed started hiking rates in 2022 in response to a surge in inflation, fueled largely by a post-pandemic supply crunch and the war in Ukraine. — AFP

China retail sales, industrial production slow

BEIJING: Chinese retail sales and industrial production growth slowed in August, official data showed Saturday, as leaders in Beijing seek paths to achieve growth targets despite consumers' reluctance to spend. More than a year and a half since abolishing strict COVID-19 measures that had dampened activity, the world's second-largest economy has yet to achieve a highly anticipated post-pandemic recovery.

A prolonged debt crisis in China's vast property sector, continued deflationary pressure and high unemployment are among the factors now weighing on investor confidence. In August, retail sales increased 2.1 percent year-on-year, slowing from 2.7 percent in July, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The figure also came up short of the 2.5 percent growth forecast by a Bloomberg survey of analysts. Year-on-year industrial production also slowed, NBS data showed, dropping from 5.1 percent growth in July to 4.5 percent in August.

The Bloomberg forecast had anticipated industrial production to grow 4.7 percent last month. The new figures are a worrying sign that efforts this year to spur the Chinese economy have not had a major impact, as Beijing looks for ways to achieve its goal of five percent growth in 2024. "Adverse effects of current changes in the exter-

US finalizes tariff hikes on Chinese EVs, other goods

WASHINGTON: The United States locked in tariff hikes on billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods Friday, with a 100 percent duty on electric vehicles and 25 percent on EV batteries taking effect in two weeks. The White House announced the steep tariff increases in May, targeting key sectors including EVs, semiconductors, batteries and solar cells – drawing a fiery response from Beijing. It also comes ahead of November's presidential election, where both Democrats and Republicans are seeking to show a tough stance on China as competition between both countries intensifies.

"Today's finalized tariff increases will target the harmful policies and practices of the People's Republic of China that continue to impact Ameri-

Russian central bank hikes rate; inflation jumps

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank has raised interest rates to 19 percent amid the country's ongoing Ukraine offensive, warning inflation was running too high and it needed to cool the economy. Inflation was running at an annual rate of 9.05 percent in August, the country's statistics agency said earlier this week. Russia has faced economic headaches since launching its February 2022 Ukraine offensive. "Current inflationary pressures remain high," Russia's central bank said in a statement. "Further tightening of monetary policy is required to resume the disinflation process, reduce inflation expectations, and ensure the return of inflation to the target in 2025," it added.

Russia has faced volatile prices since it sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a barrage of Western sanctions and strict counter-measures in a bid to stabilize the economy.

A splurge in government spending -- up almost 50 percent since 2021 -- to fund the conflict has seen billions poured into the military and defense sector.

That has helped shield the economy from the collapse that many predicted, but also pushed prices up fast. "The labour market remains tight. Unemployment has dropped to a new historic low," the central bank said. Numerous sectors have suffered personnel shortages as hundreds of thousands of men have been recruited to fight in Ukraine.

The bank's director Elvira Nabiullina called those shortages "the main obstacle to increasing production" in the country.



SUQIAN: Employees work at a factory producing water dispensers for pets in Suqian, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

nal environment are increasing, domestic demand is still insufficient, and the economy is still facing many difficulties and challenges in its continued recovery," the NBS said in a statement.

Unemployment edged upwards to 5.3 percent in August, NBS figures also showed, compared to 5.2 percent in July. Saturday's data release comes one

day after Beijing announced a long-anticipated rise in the national retirement age, as birth rates decline and hundreds of millions of people approach old age. China's total population fell in 2023 for the second consecutive year, with experts warning of severe impacts on the economy, healthcare and social welfare systems if action is not taken. — AFP

can workers and businesses," said US Trade Representative Katherine Tai in a statement. Apart from tariff increases that take effect later this month including those on solar cells, the US Trade Representative's office confirmed that a 50 percent duty on semiconductors – a sharp rise from before – would start in 2025.

A 25 percent tariff on lithium-ion batteries that are non-EV take place January 2026, said the USTR. The tariff hikes on about \$18 billion worth of goods were taken after a review of levies imposed under then-president Donald Trump, which impacted some \$300 billion in goods from China. The moves this year impact both products already targeted by earlier Trump tariffs as well as additional ones. But the Biden administration's moves go beyond tech for green energy, also impacting goods like cranes and medical products. Tariffs on ship-to-shore cranes will rise to 25 percent this year, said the USTR.

But the final decision allows exclusions for Chinese cranes ordered before mid-May, if they are delivered before May 2026. The move on Fri-

day allows some reprieve to port operators, given that China dominates the industry while the United States works to rebuild its own capacity to produce port cranes. Among medical products, the USTR said it would lift tariffs on medical face masks to 50 percent – higher than a proposed level of at least 25 percent. But it delayed the start of 50 percent tariffs to 2026, to give time for a shift away from Chinese sellers.

Levies would also impact items like medical gloves. President Joe Biden's administration has pumped massive funding into areas like semiconductor manufacturing and research, alongside efforts to boost green investments, and is concerned about underpriced exports from China. On Friday, the US government also announced it would move to curb a surge in lower-value shipments entering without being subject to tariffs – concerned about Chinese products entering with minimal scrutiny. The trade rule is known as de minimis, and foreign shipments are eligible for exemption if the fair retail value of items imported is \$800 or less. — AFP



MOSCOW: An illustration shows Russian ruble banknotes. Russia's militarized economy is set to enter a new phase of slower growth, posing fresh challenges for the Kremlin. — AFP

'Unacceptable' inflation level

Inflation was slightly down in August but still well above the government's target level of four percent. The central bank has aggressively raised rates over the past year, taking them back towards the emergency level of 20 percent that was introduced straight after the start of the conflict.

It says such hikes are needed to stop the economy "overheating" and stave off the risk of "stagflation" -- where growth slows but inflation remains high. But steep borrowing costs have hit some consumers and businesses, many of which rely on short-term debt. Nabiullina said she was committed to achieving a lasting lowering of inflation.

"We are prepared to maintain strict monetary conditions for as long as necessary," she told a press conference, calling the current level of inflation "unacceptable". Numerous business chiefs have complained in recent months about the rising cost of borrowing, which they say hampers investment and growth in sectors not related to the military.

Russian authorities however have forecast economic growth of 3.9 percent for this year, followed by a slight slowdown over the coming two years. The bank said it expected inflation would "probably" remain above 6.5 percent at the end of this year. — AFP

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

London Fashion Week goes 1960s... with a twist



Models present creations during a catwalk presentation for the Bora Aksu Spring/Summer 2025 collection, at London Fashion Week in London, on Sept 13, 2024.



Models present creations during a catwalk presentation for the Paul Costelloe Spring/Summer 2025 collection, at London Fashion Week in London, on Sept 13, 2024.—AFP photos



Turkish designer Bora Aksu (center) poses with models wearing his creations backstage, ahead of the catwalk presentation for the Bora Aksu Spring/Summer 2025 collection, at London Fashion Week in London, on Sept 13, 2024.



The first full day of London Fashion Week kicked off with a nod to the Swinging Sixties by Irish designer and LFW veteran Paul Costelloe and Turkish designer Bora Aksu.

1960s-style Mod dresses and workwear in pastel linens, floral silk jacquards and understated tweeds abounded in Costelloe's Spring/Summer collection, "Le ciel est bleu". The once-private stylist for Princess Diana presented his "ode to Paris" -- 40 years after showing at the first ever LFW in 1984 -- in a call back to his fashion beginnings working as a design assistant in the French capital.

In a modern twist to the outfits with his debut hosiery line, Costelloe paired trending long striped socks with stilettos. Speaking to the Irish Independent newspaper ahead of the show, Costelloe said the hybrid look was "akin to Emily in Paris", the hit Netflix series starring Lily Collins, whose character Emily Cooper's experimental fashion choices have split opinions among viewers.

A short walk away from Costelloe's Parisian-inspired runway, models at the Bora Aksu show strutted through a sun-drenched rose garden in a central London churchyard, draped in layers of sheer, delicate fabric. Pastel colorways and floral patterns alongside polka dots and bows recalled the traditional roots of the trendy "coquette" aesthetic.

Outfits with intricate lacework, tailored jack-



ets, and light knitwear were completed with cat-eye sunglasses and vintage hairdos piled high. The slim, layered silhouettes were a "nod to the 60s", Aksu said backstage after the show, along with sunglasses and pearl earrings -- favorites of his late Turkish mother to whom the show was dedicated.

"You know, they have that femininity, and that coquette look, but they're still quite strong", Aksu explained, describing his mother as an independent working woman who explored her individual style through creating her own clothes. Greek designer Dimitra Petsa (Di Petsa), meanwhile, travelled further back in time to ancient Greek mythology with her "My Body is a Labyrinth" collection, inspired by the myth of Theseus and Princess Ariadne and celebrating feminine pleasure and summer nostalgia.

Wet-look dresses and jumpsuits, seen notably on actress Zendaya, hugged the models adorned with barely-there chest jewels and fishing nets.

Mermaids and sea gods seemed to emerge from the waters with wet hair and sunburnt skin, in immaculate asymmetrical swimsuits and cut-out tops, mixed with more straightforward red or electric-blue pieces and colorful flip-flops. For the show's finale, the models linked together with a long red thread, recalling the spool Ariadne gave to Theseus to help him find his way through the labyrinth.—AFP



LONDON FASHION WEEK

Nightlife now rules in Iraq's former IS bastion



Iraqis sit at a popular cafe overlooking the old city of Mosul.—AFP photos

If they had tried to do this a few years ago, the group of Iraqi women enjoying a night out in Mosul would probably have risked severe punishment. The northern city was under the harsh rule of the Islamic State group until the jihadists were ousted from their last major Iraqi bastion in 2017.

Seven years later, Mosul's streets truly come alive at nightfall, and residents are rediscovering the art of having a good time. Amira Taha and her friends have come to a restaurant with their children, to enjoy food and live music — complete with crooners — on a night out that would have been unthinkable under IS rule.

"There has been enormous change in Mosul," Taha tells AFP. "We now have freedom and nights out like this have become common" because of "the very stable security situation". The city has new restaurants to go to, pleasure cruises on the river Tigris, and amusement parks that draw families keen to take advantage of the newfound stability. Dressed in an electric blue suit, the 35-year-old mother says "people wanted to open up (to the world) and enjoy themselves".

Reign of terror

On the stage, three Iraqi singers in suits and slicked-back hair take it in turns to entertain the diners with Iraqi and Arab pop songs. The orchestra includes an electric organist, a violinist, and a musician playing the darbouka, a goblet-shaped drum.

When the jihadists took Mosul in 2014 they imposed a reign of sheer terror.

Music was banned, as were cigarettes. Churches and museums were ransacked, and IS staged public stonings and beheaded perceived wrongdoers.

Even after Mosul was retaken in 2017 in a destructive and lengthy fight by Iraqi and international coalition forces, it took several years for its citizens to emerge from years of trauma. Entire neighbourhoods were devastated, and reconstruction became a lengthy process.

Mines had to be cleared before homes, infrastructure and roads could be rebuilt to allow hundreds of thousands of people to return to what is now a metropolis of 1.5 million people.

In the past, Taha says, "people would go home, shut their doors and then go to bed" because of fears over security. But now, all around her on the restaurant's lawns, families are seated at most of the tables. Sometimes the men and women puff on water pipes as their children clap and dance. Overlooking the restaurant is a brand new bridge spanning the Tigris, a proud symbol of a Mosul being reborn.

Taking a gamble

Other cities in Iraq are in a similar situation, enjoying a return to normality after decades marked by war, sectarian violence, kidnappings, political conflict and jihadist extremism.

Ahmed — who goes by only his first name — opened a restaurant called "Chef Ahmed the Swede" in June, after spending "half of my life" in Sweden and taking a gamble. Now he serves between 300 and 400 diners every day, Ahmed tells AFP. "I'd always dreamt of coming back and starting my own business," says the proprietor, who is in his forties.

"People want to go out, they want to see something different," he says.

At Ahmed's, diners can choose from dishes inspired by Scandinavian and Eu-

ropean cuisines, alongside old favourites such as pastas, pizzas and grilled meats.

Khalil Ibrahim runs an amusement park on the banks of the river.

"The city has seen radical changes over the past few years," he says. "We've gone from destruction to reconstruction."

Friday is the first day of the weekend, and the evening is pierced by the happy shrieks and laughter of children in dodgem cars, the Ferris wheel and other attractions. "People used to go home early," Ibrahim tells AFP. "But now they're still arriving even at midnight."

'We can breathe'

His park opened in 2011, but it was "completely destroyed" in the war.

"We started again from scratch" with the help of private funding, he says.

As Mosul was still emerging from its jihadist nightmare, another tragedy befell the city. In 2019 around 100 people, mostly women and children, died when a ferry taking families across the river to a leisure park capsized.

But today, pleasure boats ply the Tigris by night, their passengers admiring the riverbank lights of the restaurants and their reflection in the dark waters.

In small cafes, clients play dominoes or cards as they have a smoke. "We're comfortable here. We can breathe. We have the river, and that's enough for us," says day labourer Jamal Abdel Sattar. "Some shops stay open until three in the morning, and some never close," he adds. "When people got their first taste of security, they began to go out again."—AFP



Prince William wishes brother Harry a happy 40th birthday



Prince William and Prince Harry in July 2021.—AFP

Britain's Prince William wished his estranged younger brother Harry a happy birthday, as the younger son of King Charles III turned 40 on Sunday. Harry's ties with his family have been increasingly fraught since he and wife Meghan Markle quit royal life and moved to California in 2020. William and Harry used to be close — a bond that was forged with the death of their mother Princess Diana in 1997. But according to British media reports, they have not spoken to each other in two years.

"Wishing a Happy 40th Birthday to The Duke of Sussex!" read a post on William and wife Catherine's official X account, referring to Harry's royal title. It shared an earlier message on the royal family's X account which read: "Wishing The Duke of Sussex a very happy 40th birthday today!"

That post was accompanied by a photo of a smiling Harry and an emoji of a birthday cake.

UK media said the post from the royal family account marked the first public birthday message for Harry since 2021. Harry, who has two young children, said on Friday that he was "excited about 40", despite his strained family ties.

"I was anxious about 30, I'm excited about 40," he told the BBC in a statement, adding that becoming a father had given him a "fresh perspective on life".

"Being a dad is one of life's greatest joys and has only made me more driven and more committed to making this world a better place," he added.

William and Harry were seen together at the late Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in September 2022, but have pointedly kept their distance at subsequent events, including at their father's coronation in May last year. Harry's autobiography "Spare" published in January 2023 described William as his "beloved brother" but also his "arch-nemesis".

Royal experts have said they do not see a reconciliation on the horizon.—AFP

Barred from sport, Afghan women seek relief in secretive exercise

Most mornings after praying, 25-year-old Sanah joins several women from her neighbourhood in the Afghan capital Kabul for a walk along the main road before it fills with traffic, never jogging or getting too near to the many Taliban checkpoints.

They exercise secretly, and not for competition, but for a modicum of health and peace of mind in a country where the Taliban government have stopped women from playing sports.

"We cannot go near the Taliban checkpoint because they say, 'Why are you outside the house so early? Where are you going? Why do you need to exercise, you don't have to, so don't,'" said Sanah, whose name has been changed — along with all the women interviewed by AFP — for fear of reprisal. The Taliban authorities have implemented an austere interpretation of Islamic law, with women bearing the brunt of restrictions that the United Nations has labelled "gender apartheid".

In November 2022, the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice announced women were barred from parks and gyms on the grounds they were not adhering to a dress code that orders them to cover up.

Gyms had previously offered time slots for women, and while some informal women-only fitness clubs still exist, they are rare and low-profile.

Sanah and one of her com-

panions, Latifah, who is middle-aged, used to walk in the large, tree-lined parks in the city. The last time Latifah went to the park near her house, not long after they were permanently closed to women, she said she was forcibly removed, crying anew as she recalls the incident.

"The doctor told me to exercise more because I have high cholesterol and fatty liver, but the Taliban don't let us exercise or go to the gym or walk (freely) outside," she said.

Sanah yearns to become a yoga teacher and guides the group through some gentle aerobic exercises and meditation after their walk. Pressing her thumb and forefinger together on her knees in the yellow dawn light, away from prying eyes on a protected balcony, Sanah says softly, "Take a deep breath".

Boxing in secret

Forced out of their gym, Rayan and a few fellow women boxers instead visit a friend's home and use what little equipment they have to practise in a society that was already hostile to women in sport, but has now turned draconian.

"We train less, but we never stopped," said the 19-year-old Rayan, watching a video on her phone in which her fists



An Afghan female boxer poses during a training session in Kabul.

fly in jabs and hooks — a bittersweet reminder of the avid boxer she once was. Pulling her headscarf off in a private garden in the Kabul heat, fellow former competitive boxer Bahar said the situation had left her and other Afghan women stressed, exhausted and low.

"But when we box, it pushes all that away for a moment. Even if we only train for a few minutes it makes a big difference," the 20-year-old said, the henna from her recent wedding still staining her hands.

Her husband doesn't know she still boxes.

Many women athletes fled Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover. Some still compete on the international stage, including at the recent Paris Olympics, but they come from outside the country and under the flag of the ousted Republic. The Taliban authorities are not officially recognized by any state.

"In Afghanistan, girls' sports have been stopped. When girls' sport isn't practised, how can they join the national team?" said Atal Mashwani, spokesman for the Taliban government's sports directorate.

'Give them hope'

Banafsha, a black belt in the Chinese martial art of wushu, voiced the mixed feelings echoed by others about Afghan women's Olympic participation.

The Afghan team in Paris had three men and three women, while Afghan women also competed in the Refugee Team. "It made me happy that women haven't surrendered yet, they are committed to their goals," she said. "But I was also sad. Why can't they go to the Olympics from within their own country?"

The former national competitor burned her uniform when the Taliban took power.

These days she can barely leave the house and struggles to motivate herself to practise, feeling "hopeless and heartbroken". Hasina Hussain Zada, who works for Free to Run, an organization focused on women's empowerment through sport, said while there is a range of online exercise videos and classes, they can't replace in-person training, being in a team or exercising outdoors. "We tell our participants to think about it as if it were Covid time," said the 28-year-old, who fled to Canada after the Taliban takeover.

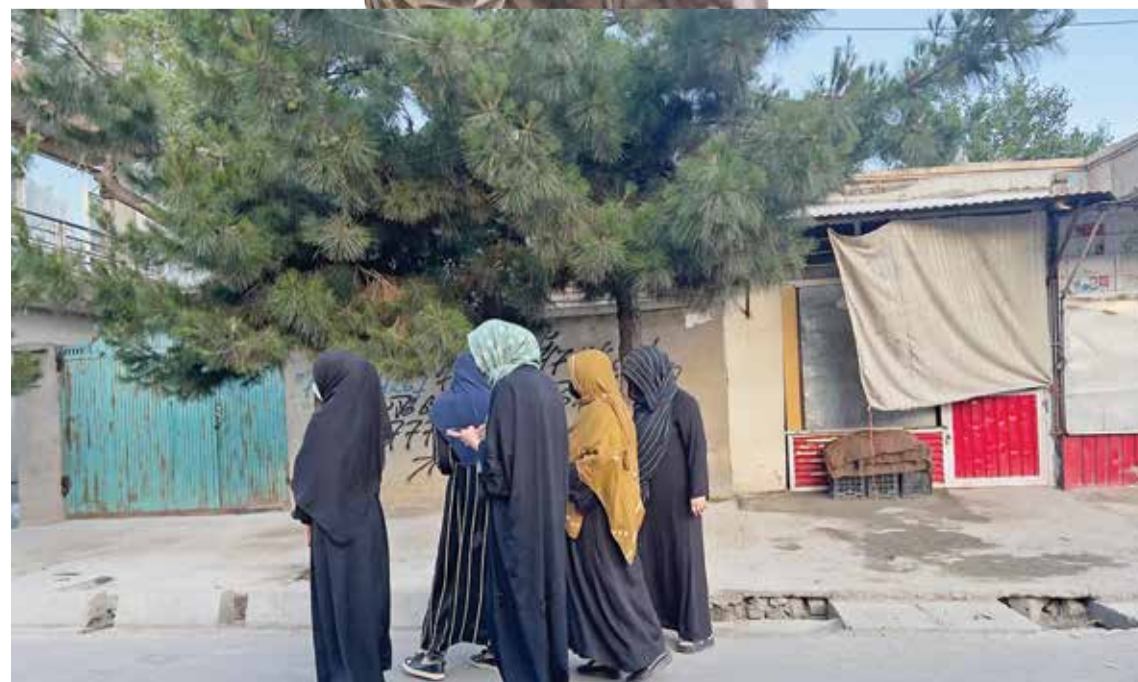
She has worked since 2018 with the non-profit, which is still supporting women in Afghanistan in indoor exercise — albeit "cautiously and secretly".

"You don't need to think about the Taliban, the rules... just think about it as if it were Covid time when everyone was doing their exercises at home," she said.

"We're trying to change their mindsets, we're trying to give them hope."—AFP



An Afghan female boxer poses during a training session in Kabul.



In this photograph Afghan women walk along a road during early morning in Kabul. —AFP photos



Guests taste raw meat from a fin whale at the exhibition.



A plate of sushi made from raw fin whale meat is displayed.



A guest uses chopsticks to grab and taste raw meat from a fin whale.

Hearts, tails and blubber at Japan fin whale tasting

Bite-size portions of fin whale were available to sniff and taste Friday as Japan's whaling industry seeks to rekindle appetite for a traditional protein source that has fallen out of favour.

"Once young people eat it and they realize it's good, they will eat it more and more," Hideki Tokoro, the head of Japan's main whaling firm, said at the event at Tokyo's main wholesale fish market.

"People are excited about the fin whale... It's just delicious," he told AFP in his trademark whale-themed hat and jacket. Since 2019, Japan has caught whales in its own waters after abandoning under international pressure hunting for "scientific purposes" in the Antarctic Ocean and the North Pacific.

The catch list was limited to sei, minke, and Bryde's whales, but this year fin whales -- the planet's second-largest animal -- were added and on August 1 the first killed.

Tokoro's firm Kyodo Senpaku hopes the taste of fin whale will revive demand and help it recoup the costs of its new 9,300-tonne "mothership". Almost every part of the whale was on display, including slabs of heart, slices of tail and chunks of blubber.

Vital source of food

With three-quarters of Japan mountainous and ill-suited to agriculture, Japan has long relied on the sea -- including whales -- as a vital source of food. As imports of other meats have grown, consumption of whale has slumped to around 1,000 to 2,000 tons per year compared to around 200 times that in the 1960s.

Kyodo Senpaku this week released footage showing its first fin whale catch. The animal was almost 20 metres (65 feet) long and weighed at least 55 tons.

Fin whales are deemed "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Japan's decision to catch them has alarmed conservationists. Japan's industry has come under additional scrutiny since the arrest of US-Canadian anti-whaling activist Paul Watson, 73, in Greenland in July on a Japanese warrant.

Watson co-founded Sea Shepherd, whose members played a high-seas game of cat-and-mouse with Japanese whaling ships in the 2000s and 2010s.



A guest uses chopsticks to grab and taste raw meat from a fin whale at the exhibition.



Trendy tacos

Anna Okada, a visitor to Friday's event who runs a cafe in the Yamanashi region, said that she is on a mission to jazz up whale meat to appeal to younger people. "Sashimi and deep-fried whale meat have an old-fashioned image of having a bad smell," Okada told AFP. "The popularity can spread quickly when people try and find it delicious," she said.

"If it's sold from younger people's perspective, for example like casual, stylish and tasty tacos, I think it will be popular quickly."

Some schools are starting to serve it again in their canteens, she said, while products where the whale content isn't obvious -- such as in dumplings -- can increase demand.

Keita Ishii, another visitor to the tasting event who works for an "izakaya" pub in Tokyo -- famous for their meat skewers -- was impressed. "We're using Bryde's whale (for our restaurant). I came here to look for other whale meat today," he told AFP. "The fin whale tasted different. It was delicious." —AFP



Hideki Tokoro, president of Japan's whaling company Kyodo Senpaku, answers questions from the media at the exhibition and business meeting of domestically produced fin whales hosted by Kyodo Senpaku at Tokyo's Toyosu market.—AFP photos



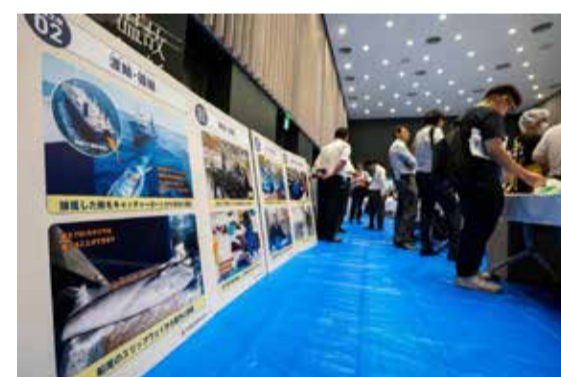
Guests taste processed whale meat products at the exhibition.



Various cuts of fin whale meat are displayed.



Various cuts of fin whale meat are displayed at the exhibition.



Panels about whaling are displayed at the exhibition.

Justin Timberlake given community service in drunk driving case

Pop star Justin Timberlake was handed a sentence of community service after he changed his plea to guilty following his arrest for drunk driving, US media reported. On June 18, the 43-year-old entertainer was pulled over in the town of Sag Harbor, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of New York City, after police observed his BMW go through a stop sign and struggle to stay within road lanes.

Sag Harbor Village Justice Court justice Carl Irace handed Timberlake a community service sentence and ordered the star to make a public statement after the singer pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of driving while alcohol impaired, broadcaster NBC reported.

The charge is a traffic violation that carries a fine between \$300 to \$500 and a 90-day license suspension.

Timberlake told Irace that he would be willing to perform between 25 and 40 hours of community service to settle the case, NBC reported.

"I try to hold myself to a very high standard for myself. This was not that. I found myself in a position where I could have made a different decision," Timberlake said outside the court.

"Even if you've had one drink, don't get behind the wheel of a car, there's so many alternatives," added Timberlake, who wore a dark cardigan and a pearl necklace. "I grew up in a small town so I can appreciate and understand the strain, or unique nature, of what this must have been for the people of Sag Harbor... I'm very grateful and I thank them."

Sag Harbor is an upmarket community in the exclusive Hamptons, notori-



Justin Timberlake

ous for its decadent parties and a favorite destination for the rich and famous, many of whom have summer houses on Long Island.

The officer who pulled over the "Selfish" singer said he was in no fit state to drive, although Timberlake has always insisted he had only one drink at the American Hotel during an evening with friends.

"His eyes were bloodshot and glassy, a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage was emanating from his breath, he was unable to divide attention, he had slowed speech, he was unsteady afoot, and he performed poorly on all standardized field sobriety tests," the police report said.

Timberlake's lawyer, Edward Burke Jr, said that the star was respectful during his encounter with police. "Contrary to what was reported, (Timberlake) wasn't drinking other people's drinks, or warned in advance not to drive, he wasn't rude, he wasn't obnoxious, he wasn't belligerent." —AFP

Brazil vets heal burns of jaguar burned in Pantanal fire

At a shelter for big cats in Brazil, a vet gingerly dresses wounds on a jaguar that was caught in wildfires raging in the world's largest tropical wetland. While the animal is expected to heal, her home in the Pantanal continues to burn.

The Pantanal, south of the Amazon in Mato Grosso do Sul state, has the world's highest density of jaguars. It is also home to millions of caimans, parrots and giant otters. Brazil has been parched by a historic drought that experts link to climate change and which has sparked what authorities have called a "fire pandemic." So far this year, some 6.7 million hectares (16.6 million acres) have burned in the Brazilian Amazon, amounting to 1.6 percent of the rainforest.

The fires are also ripping through the Pantanal, a UN World Heritage site which has recorded 1,452 fire outbreaks so far in September -- almost four times the number recorded in September 2023, according to the National Institute for Space Research.

Pollyanna Motinha, a vet at the Nex NoExtinction shelter on the outskirts of Brasilia, says she is increasingly seeing animals "at the top of the food chain, like jaguars" being injured in wildfires.

"It's not something that happened often in the past," she told AFP. The jaguar, the largest feline in



A veterinarian works on the paws of Itapira, a young female jaguar that burned her paws.



Veterinarian Thiago Luczinski (center) and his wife Pollyanna Motinha (left) stand next to Itapira, a young female jaguar that had its paws burned during recent fires in Pantanal, as she receives treatment to heal her wounds and reintroduce back into the wild at the Nex No Extinction Institute NGO in Corumba de Goias, Goias State, Brazil.—AFP photos

the Americas, is listed as a "near threatened" species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Pantanal jaguar, which is found along the banks of the Paraguay River, weighs on average 100 kilograms (220 pounds). It is estimated that there are fewer than 2,000 left in the region.

The jaguar named Itapira was found hiding in a drainpipe near the town of Miranda, an area badly hit by flames. All four of her paws had been burned.

Despite her injuries the two-year-old, 57-kilogram cat must be approached with caution. Before being treated, she is sedated with anesthetic darts.

Motinha, her husband and fellow vet Thiago Luczinski and two students then clean her wounds and wrap her paws in bags to apply ozone, which acts as a disinfectant, as well as a healing agent. After a month of almost daily care, Itapira's condition has improved.

In the wild, the burns prevented her

from using her claws to hunt caimans and capybaras -- a large semi-aquatic rodent native to South America.

"If she had not been brought here, if she had remained in the wild, she would probably no longer be alive or would be in a deplorable state," Luczinski said.

But the caregivers worry about the jaguar's future. "This animal is safe today but she is going to return to a region that is still burning," he said.

Another female jaguar who suffered burns in a previous major wave of fires in the Pantanal in 2020 was unable to return home from Brasilia. Her legs were so badly burned she lost the tendons that move her claws, Silvano Gianni, co-founder of Nex NoExtinction, explained. She went on to have two cubs in captivity -- one of whom will be reintroduced to the wild.—AFP

Sports

Kipyegon wins, Tebogo and Crouser upset at Diamond League finals

Cherotich outpaced Bahrain's Olympic champion Winfred Yavi to win 3,000m steeplechase

BRUSSELS: Kenya's 1,500m queen Faith Kipyegon sealed victory in the finals of the Diamond League in Brussels on Saturday, but Botswanan sprinter Letšile Tebogo and American shot putter Ryan Crouser both tasted rare defeats.

Kipyegon, the three-time Olympic and world champion, has had another sensational year over 1,500m, even setting a new world record at the Paris leg of the elite track and field circuit. And she made no mistake at the King Baudouin Stadium, sprinting away to win in a meet record of 3min 54.76sec.

"The world record was not on my mind today, my goal was to finish my Diamond League season in a good way and I did," said Kipyegon. "It was good race, but definitely not an easy one. It was a bit cold to run 61 seconds in the first lap and 62 seconds for the next lap.

"I tried to be myself and focus on the finish line." Of the 16 finals on Saturday, the first 16 having been held on Friday, there was a strong showing from Kenyan athletes. Double Olympic 5,000/10,000m champion Beatrice Chebet also set a meet record of 14:09.82 to win the 5,000m in a powerful solo run.

Faith Cherotich outpaced Bahrain's Olympic champion Winfred Yavi to win the 3,000m steeplechase in 9:02.36 and Emmanuel Wanyonyi produced a devastating final flourish to win a high-quality men's 800m in 1:42.70. There was a surprise in the men's shot put as Italy's European champion Leonardo Fabbri claimed the win with a meet and national record of 22.98m, improving his own personal best by 3cm. A lifetime best.

American Ryan Crouser, the three-time Olympic champion and twice world gold medalist, finished

second with a best of 22.79m, but there were no sour grapes despite missing out on the \$30,000 winner's cheque. "I threw pretty well. It was a very solid performance, five times over 22 metres," Crouser said.

"I just had not that big throw in me like the one Leonardo Fabbri had. He threw a lifetime best so a big throw from him. The level in the shot put was never this high." And Olympic champion Tebogo was outpaced in the 200m by American Kenny Bednarek, who won in 19.67sec.

"I wanted to win the Diamond, but it has been a rollercoaster after the Olympics," lamented Tebogo.

Fabbri's shot put victory was one of three on the night for Team Italia, high jumper Gianmarco Tamberi (2.34m) and long jumper Larissa Iapichino (6.80m) also winning. In field events, two other Olympic champions won their events, Japan's Haruka Kitaguchi taking the women's javelin with a season's best of 66.13m and Australia's Nina Kennedy claiming the pole vault with 4.88m.

Grenada's Anderson Peters edged India's Neeraj Chopra by just 1cm for victory in the men's javelin in 87.87m. In the absence of Olympic gold and silver medallists Rai Benjamin and Karsten Warholm, it was the bronze medal winner from Paris, Alison Dos Santos, who claimed victory in the 400m hurdles.

The Brazilian clocked 47.93sec while Puerto Rico's Jamine Camacho-Quinn confirmed her seasonal form to win the 100m hurdles in 12.38sec. Olympic 400m hurdles champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone won her second invitational race in two days, clocking 22.40sec for victory in the 200m. "Vacation and waffles!" the American, who won a 400m race on Friday, said after the race. "It was great to race



BRUSSELS: Winning athletes celebrate on the podium after competing in the Memorial Van Damme Diamond League athletics finals at the Roi Baudouin Stadium in Brussels. — AFP

here, but to be honest I am just happy with my successful season and with how everything turned out.

"I am happy that I can walk away healthy and look back on a great season." In the absence of McLaughlin-Levrone from the 400m hurdles because she was ineligible having not competed on the Di-

mond League circuit, it was left for Paris bronze medallist Femke Bol to take the victory in 52.45sec.

The 200m final proper saw American Brittany Brown top the podium in 22.20sec. Her teammate Sha'Carri Richardson was a no-show after her eighth-placed finish in Friday's 100m. — AFP

Japan to face Fiji in Pacific final after romping past Samoa

TOKYO: Japan set up a Pacific Nations Cup final showdown with defending champions Fiji after sweeping aside Samoa with a rampant 49-27 win in Tokyo on Sunday. Japan scored four tries in the first half and three in the second of the semi-final to give Eddie Jones his third straight win after a tricky start to his second stint as head coach.

Jones will hope to keep the streak going in next weekend's final in Osaka against Fiji, who beat the United States 22-3 in the first semi-final on Saturday. "It was a good step up for the team," said Jones, whose side beat Canada and the United States to top their group.

"Samoa are obviously a much stronger opposition than USA or Canada. I thought we started the game really well with great intent, particularly playing against a strong wind." Jones said his team would have to improve their defence around the ruck if they want to lift the trophy for the first time since 2019.

"As much as we're pleased to be in the final, our only aim is to win the final," said the Australian. "We're going to play against a high-quality team in Fiji and we've got a good week's preparation ahead of us to get ready."

Dylan Riley got Japan off to the perfect start with a try in the sixth minute. Riley, who scored a superb solo effort against the United States in the group stage, collected a through kick and touched down before Seungsin Lee added the conversion. A penalty try four minutes later increased Japan's lead and saw Samoa winger Elisapeta Alofipo sent to the sin-bin. Samoa dug in despite the setbacks and scored a try through Tuna Tutama in the 13th minute.

But Japan restored their cushion just minutes later when Tomoki Osada crossed the line on the right wing. Samoa reduced the deficit with two penalties but Japan added a fourth try before half-time when Lee touched down just before the hooter. Kanji Shimokawa scored another four minutes after the restart, before Melani Matavao pulled one back for Samoa. Further tries for Japan's Shinobu Fujiwara and Taichi Takahashi and Samoa's Lalomilo Lalomilo rounded off the scoring. — AFP

'Canelo' Alvarez pummels Berlanga to retain belts

LOS ANGELES: Mexican superstar Saul "Canelo" Alvarez retained his unified super middleweight world title with a punishing unanimous decision over Edgar Berlanga on Saturday in Las Vegas. Alvarez knocked down the previously unbeaten Berlanga in the third and was relentless throughout the 12 rounds.

The champion rocked Berlanga with a big right in the waning seconds of the ninth round and Berlanga's cornerman could be heard asking his fighter: "Are you awake?", as he sat on his stool before the 10th. Berlanga, who was warned for an intentional head butt, remained defiant, taunting Alvarez as they came out for the 12th. But the Puerto Rican-American, who launched his pro career with 16 straight first-round knockouts, couldn't find the stoppage he'd brashly predicted.

The vastly experienced Alvarez put him under pressure early, Berlanga looking tentative in the opening two rounds as he was backed repeatedly



GAINESVILLE: Allisen Corpuz and Nelly Korda of Team United States react on the 18th green after winning their match during the Saturday Foursomes matches against Team Europe during the second round of the Solheim Cup. — AFP

Korda to face Hull in singles opener at Solheim Cup

GAINESVILLE: Top-ranked Nelly Korda and England's Charley Hull will meet to start Sunday's 12 singles matches at the Solheim Cup as Europe seeks a historic comeback to beat the United States. Pairings for the closing session at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club also feature Spain's Carlota Ciganda against ninth-ranked Rose Zhang and France's 10th-ranked Celine Boutier against Lexi Thompson.

After going 2-2 in Saturday's four-ball and foursomes matches, the Americans take a 10-6 lead into Sunday's 12 concluding singles matches, needing four wins and a draw to capture the Cup for the first time since 2017.

"We're going to go try to win as many points early as we can and try to get this thing done," US captain Stacy Lewis said. "I feel good with where we're at and I'm excited about tomorrow." After Korda, Lewis has Megan Khang against Denmark's Emily Pedersen, Alison Lee against England's Georgia Hall, Allisen Corpuz against Sweden's Anna Nordqvist and Zhang against Ciganda.

"Tomorrow's lineup was based off how they've played this week," Lewis said. "We have strokes gained data on every match and every round these

into the corner. He tried gamely to respond in the third after Alvarez landed a right to the head, but a devastating left hook from Alvarez sent him down. Berlanga banged his gloves together as he sat on the canvas and hopped up quickly.

Berlanga had no answer as Alvarez went after him with debilitating body blows round after round. "I did good," said Alvarez, who was awarded the fight by a score of 118-109 by two judges and by 117-110 from the third.

'Best fighter in the world'

"Now what are they going to say? I fight younger fighters? Before they say I fought older fighters. Now what are they going to say? They always talk. 'I'm the best fighter in the world,'" added Alvarez, who improved to 62-2-2 (39 KOs) and retained his World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and World Boxing Organization belts.

Alvarez was stripped of his International Boxing Federation belt in July when he opted to take on Berlanga rather than IBF mandatory challenger William Scull. That was immaterial to the partisan crowd of more than 20,000 at T-Mobile Arena, where Alvarez claimed another victory on Mexican Independence Day weekend—a holiday he's made his own along with Cinco de Mayo.

"It means a lot," Alvarez said. "It's an honor

players have played, so that's where the pairings came from." Europe needs eight wins Sunday at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club to take the trophy for an unprecedented fourth consecutive time. "We need a massive day tomorrow. We need to go another record singles series again. It has been done before," European captain Suzann Pettersen said. "It will be a miracle, but we've seen it before."

Europe would need to match the greatest last-day comeback in Solheim history, the Americans' 2015 rally from 10-6 down in Germany. "Win your own point. Have fun out there. Enjoy it," Hull said. "Just kick some ass."

Pettersen cited European men's 2012 Ryder Cup fightback from 10-6 down to win, dubbed the Miracle at Medinah, as a source of inspiration. "We've seen miracles before," said Pettersen. "Medinah. Germany 2015. We've given ourselves a chance. As long as there's hope, these girls will fight -- 10-6? It's absolutely doable."

Germany's Esther Henseleit, the Paris Olympic runner-up, plays Andrea Lee ahead of Boutier and Thompson in match seven, followed by Sweden's Maja Stark against Lauren Coughlin, Swiss Albane Valenzuela against second-ranked Lilia Vu, Sweden's Madelene Sagstrom against Sarah Schmelzel, Ireland's Leona Maguire against Ally Ewing and Swede Linn Grant against Jennifer Kupcho in the last match. "If we don't get enough points in the first six, seven matches, it's game over anyway," Pettersen said. "We have to go strong. We have to try and cover the top half. — AFP

for me to represent my country on this day. I feel proud about it." Berlanga, 27, fell to 22-1. As the final bell sounded the fighters embraced in an extended hug. "I was telling him that he's my idol," Berlanga said. "Since I was a kid I looked up to him."

It was the fifth straight points victory for Alvarez, whose last win inside the distance was an 11th-round knockout of Caleb Plant in November 2021. But it was the fourth consecutive fight in which Alvarez scored a knockdown. The four-division champion, who has been accused of ducking rising star David Benavidez, said he'd take some time to ponder what's next for him.

"I'm going to rest with my family now and then I'm going to decide," he said. On the undercard, Erislandy Lara retained his WBA middleweight world title with a ninth-round stoppage of Danny Garcia. The slow pace of the bout drew boos from the crowd, but 41-year-old Cuban-born southpaw Erislandy connected with a straight left that dropped Garcia to a knee late in the ninth.

When the round ended, Garcia's father and coach Angel called for the bout to be halted. "I took him to school," said Lara, who improved to 31-3-3 with 19 knockouts. Garcia, fighting for the first time since July 2022, fell to 37-4 with 21 wins inside the distance. — AFP

Farrell watches son as Racing beat Clermont

PARIS: Ireland head coach Andy Farrell witnessed his son, ex-England captain Owen Farrell, score five points as Racing 92 beat Clermont 33-20 in the French Top 14 on Saturday. Racing's maiden victory of the season marked their first game since South Africa captain Siya Kolisi announced his departure after just one season of his three-year deal.

The hosts crossed for three tries in six minutes during the second half from Owen Farrell's compatriot Henry Arundell, France centre Gael Fickou and scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec, Antoine Dupont's understudy with Les Bleus.

Farrell, 32, missed three shots and goal was shown a yellow card just before the break. "I thought he was generally good, but a little less good kicking at the posts," Racing 92 assistant coach Frederic Michalak told reporters. "The yellow card was a bit severe."

"Maybe the referee just wanted to show a yellow card to an English player!" Michalak jokingly added in reference to the cross-Channel rivalry. A much-changed Clermont, coached by the colourful Christophe Urios, followed last weekend's win at Pau by defeat despite leading by four points with 20 minutes to play.

The game was moved across the French capital to a fourth-tier football ground in the suburb of Creteil as fly-half Farrell made his home debut after his summer move from Saracens. Racing's usual La Defense Arena home is being re-adapted for rugby after it was used as a swimming venue at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Farrell senior, 49, will take charge of the British and Irish Lions for next summer's tour of Australia and can select his son even if he is ineligible for England as he plays his club rugby abroad. Racing's three crucial tries came just after the hour mark, the highlight being Fickou's effort, set-up by 32-year-old fly-half Farrell.

'Dream'

Elsewhere, former Scotland captain Stuart Hogg missed Montpellier's 26-7 win over Perpignan. The match came days after the 32-year-old was arrested and then granted bail for allegedly breaching previous bail conditions ahead of his trial for domestic abuse.

Earlier, former New Zealand scrum-half Brad Weber scored twice as Stade Francais held on to beat newly-promoted Vannes 34-31. Weber, 33, crossed either side of the break as the Parisians won for the first time this campaign having lost at Bordeaux-Begles in their season-opener last weekend.

Vannes, the first club from Brittany to feature in the French top-flight, followed up last Sunday's defeat to champions Toulouse with another loss despite coming within three points of their hosts with a minute to play at Stade Jean Bouin.

Later, France fly-half Leo Berdeu kicked an 82nd minute penalty as Lyon edged Bordeaux-Begles 28-26 to go top of the table. "It was important to reward the team's work with the penalty," Berdeu told Canal+. "The penalty was tough, the wind was blowing from left to right, as a kicker it's a dream to win a game with the last kick. I had never done it before," he added.

The weekend's blockbuster game is La Rochelle's trip to Toulouse on Sunday in a re-run of the 2021 and 2023 finals. French rugby's poster boy Dupont remains on holiday and unavailable for Toulouse after clinching gold at the Olympics and rugby sevens. Scrum-half Dupont was part of the post-Games parade held in Paris on Saturday as French athletes were celebrated on the Champs-Elysees. — AFP

Sports

Milan start huge week by destroying Venezia as Juventus held at Empoli

Milan are eighth, to face Liverpool on Tuesday night

MILAN: AC Milan warmed up for the Champions League and next weekend's Milan derby in the best possible fashion with Saturday's 4-0 hammering of Venezia in Serie A, while Juventus stumbled to a goalless draw at Empoli.

Pressure had been building on Milan over the international break after just two points from their first three matches, and thousands of hardcore fans gathered outside the San Siro to show their support ahead of a big week for the seven-time European champions.

Paulo Fonseca's team responded to that backing by sweeping sorry Venezia aside, racing into a four-goal lead within 29 minutes and cruising through the rest of the match. Milan are eighth but will face Liverpool on Tuesday night in better spirits following their first win of the season, with a massive clash with champions Inter Milan coming a week on Sunday.

Inter have won the last six derbies, the most recent victory also securing last season's Scudetto. "It was important to win, and win in this manner, to give the players belief in what we're doing," said Fonseca to Sky.

"This week I've been thinking about Liverpool and Inter. I know how important the derby is... I know that we've not won the last few derbies, we're working to change that." Milan were ahead with less than two minutes on the clock when Theo Hernandez forced a low shot through Venezia goalkeeper Jesse Joronen, and the hosts doubled their lead in the 16th minute through Matteo Gabbia, who pushed home Christian Pulisic's corner.

Venezia already had a mountain to climb but their hopes of getting anything from the match were ended by two soft penalties converted by Pulisic and Tammy Abraham on his full Milan debut. England

international Abraham pounced on a spilled Tijjani Reijnders shot and was clipped by Joronen, allowing Pulisic to roll home Milan's third in the 22nd minute.

And Abraham completed the rout from the spot after Rafael Leao, who set up Hernandez's opener, went down when his foot was stood on by Joel Schillingtierre. Francesco Zamparo thought he had netted for Venezia in the 72nd minute, but the consolation goal was ruled out for Hans Nicolussi Caviglia clattering into Ruben Loftus-Cheek's ankle.

Caviglia, whose surname means ankle in Italian, was then sent off for the rash challenge which was his second bookable offence in a matter of minutes, compounding a dreadful evening for rock-bottom Venezia.

Uninspiring Juve

Juve's stalemate gave them temporary lead of the Italian top flight, one point ahead of Inter Milan, Torino and Udinese who are all yet to play this weekend. But Thiago Motta's team underwhelmed in Tuscany, creating almost nothing in a performance that offered little to worry PSV Eindhoven, who visit Turin on Tuesday evening.

Dusan Vlahovic went closest for Juve four minutes after half-time when he shot straight at Devis Vasquez after being sent racing towards goal. And Juve had Federico Gatti to thank for a goal-saving tackle in the fifth minute of stoppage time which denied Emmanuel Gyasi what would have been a shock winner.

"Let's put this match behind us and focus on Tuesday. PSV are a good team who play good football, we'll need to be at our best," said Motta. Juventus will take part in the revamped Champions League after a year away from European football following a UEFA ban for financial fair play violations.



EMPOLI: Juventus' Serbian forward #09 Dusan Vlahovic (C) fights for the ball with Empoli's Italian defender #22 Mattia De Sciglio (L) during the Italian Serie A football match between Empoli and Juventus. — AFP

Earlier debutant Samuel Iling-Junior saved Bologna ahead of their first ever match in the Champions League with a brilliant late equaliser in their 2-2 draw at Como. Bologna played one tie in the old European Cup in 1964 and host Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday without a win this season under new coach Vincenzo Italiano.

"We need to be better, we've been too sloppy in our first four matches," Italiano told reporters. "We've not been together for very long and we know where we need to improve." Italiano's team have three points from their first four matches while Como have two after throwing away a great chance to win their first home match in Serie A for 21 years. — AFP

Messi scores twice in triumphant injury return for Miami

MIAMI: Lionel Messi dazzled in his return from injury Saturday, scoring two goals in the space of four minutes and adding an assist in Inter Miami's 3-1 Major League Soccer victory over the Philadelphia Union.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner hadn't played since injuring his right ankle during the Copa America final on July 14, when he helped Argentina to victory over Colombia. Since then he had missed eight MLS games for his club and this month's World Cup qualifiers for his country. Messi hadn't played for Inter since June 1, but he didn't miss a beat as he was inserted into the starting lineup.

"The truth is that I'm a little tired," he said after the match. "The heat and humidity in Miami don't help much either, but I really wanted to come back, I had been off of the field for a long time.

"Little by little I was training with the group, feeling good and that's why we decided that I would start, and I'm very happy—very happy." Miami coach Gerardo Martino was delighted to see his star come out "feeling good" after 90 minutes.

Philadelphia seized the advantage in the second minute on Mikael Uhre's left-footed shot from outside the area. Messi grabbed the equalizer in the 26th minute, collecting a pass from Luis Suarez and beating defender Kai Wagner before unleashing a right-footed shot to cap a sequence launched by Jordi Alba on the left.

Ecstatic fans were still celebrating when he fired Inter ahead in the 30th, connecting again with Alba and firing a left-footed shot from the center of the area into the bottom right corner. Inter thought Su-



FORT LAUDERDALE: Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi shoots the ball during the Major League Soccer (MLS) regular season football match between Inter Miami and Philadelphia Union at Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. — AFP

arez had made it 3-1 before halftime, but his goal was overturned on a VAR review.

But Suarez added a goal deep in second-half injury time with Messi -- who also picked up his first yellow card in MLS for lingering on a corner kick—providing the assist. Martino said the late goal vindicated his decision to leave both players in the game until the end, saying "both played the whole game because they were fine to finish the game".

The victory extended Inter Miami's lead at the top of the MLS standings to 62 points, 10 points clear of their closest Eastern Conference chal-

lengers FC Cincinnati with six games remaining in the regular season. Messi is also pleased that despite his lengthy absence they lead the race for the Supporters' Shield awarded to the team that tops the overall standings.

"During the year we were very unlucky with injuries, we were never at full strength," he said. "For one reason or another we were always missing players and the group always came through." Today we are in first place with a big difference and deservedly so, and hopefully we can finish on top for what it means and what comes after that." — AFP

Virus-hit Cristiano Ronaldo to miss Asian Champions League

BAGHDAD: Cristiano Ronaldo was diagnosed on Sunday with a viral infection and will miss Al Nassr's Asian Champions League opener this week at Iraq's Al Shorta. The Portuguese veteran is targeting Asia's top club crown to add to his long list of achievements when the competition kicks off on Monday.

"Al Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo was not feeling well today and was diagnosed with a viral infection," said a club statement posted on social media platform X on Sunday. "The team's doctor confirmed

he needs to rest and stay at home. As a result he will not be travelling with the team to Iraq today. We wish our captain a speedy recovery."

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United forward saw his first attempt with the Saudi side Al Nassr end in a quarter-final penalty shootout defeat to eventual champions Al Ain earlier this year. Now rebranded as the Asian Champions League Elite, Al Nassr and the other teams from Saudi Arabia will be a major threat after spending vast sums of money in the last two years on the likes of Ronaldo and Neymar.

England forward Ivan Toney was the latest big name to swap Europe for Saudi when he left Brentford for Al Ahli last month for more than \$45 million. As part of the new-look competition, Saudi Arabia—which is expected to host the 2034 World Cup—will stage a mini knockout tournament from the quarter-finals onward to decide

the champions, who will take home at least \$12 million. Al Nassr, Al Ahli and Neymar's Al Hilal will all be involved when the Champions League Elite launches on Monday with a new format that splits 24 teams evenly into two groups of East and West. Each team will play eight different opponents in the group stage.

The top eight teams from each zone will play in the last 16 over two legs in March, before the action moves to the final stages in Saudi Arabia from April 25 to May 4.

Saudi champions Al Hilal are looking to win a record-extending fifth Asian title but they are still waiting for the return of Brazilian ace Neymar, who has been sidelined since suffering a serious knee injury last year. Al Hilal have signed Portugal full-back Joao Cancelo from Manchester City, bolstering a squad that already featured Aleksandar Mitrovic, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Ruben Neves. — AFP

Champions League set for big kick-off

PARIS: A new era in European club football begins this week when the first games are played in the expanded Champions League amid curiosity about the rejigged format as well as growing concerns over an ever-increasing number of matches.

UEFA, the European game's governing body, sensed the need for change at a time when the traditional group stage was becoming more predictable and the continent's biggest clubs were threatening to break away and form their own Super League.

The result is a league phase featuring 36 clubs—four more teams than in the past—with everyone playing eight matches against eight different opponents, two more games than previously. The action starts in earnest on Tuesday, when reigning champions Real Madrid begin their quest for a record-extending 16th title with a home game against VfB Stuttgart, the surprise runners-up in last season's German Bundesliga.

That will be the first ever meeting of the sides, while the same night AC Milan host Liverpool in a heavyweight clash between clubs with 13 European Cups between them. On Wednesday, Manchester City play Inter Milan in a repeat of the 2023 final won by Pep Guardiola's team.

For one week only, Champions League matches will also be played on Thursday and the lineup will include a glamour tie between Monaco and Barcelona. The expanded competition also has room for a meeting of two historic names when former champions Red Star Belgrade and Benfica face off in Serbia.

In addition to that, there will be an encounter between French newcomers Brest and Austrian champions Sturm Graz, hardly the kind of tie normally associated with the European elite. "In the end I think we came to a solution that will benefit all," UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told Britain's Sky News recently when asked about the new format.

"It will make a more unpredictable and more interesting competition. It is a great change." The top eight teams at the end of the league phase—which now runs into January—will advance to the last 16.

The teams placed from ninth to 24th in the standings will enter a play-off round to contest the remaining last-16 berths, while the bottom 12 teams will be eliminated. There are greater financial rewards too, with the winners of the competition pocketing over 86 million euros (\$95.3m) just in prize money, not including bonuses of 700,000 euros for every point gained in the league phase or income from television. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics

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

Change of Name

I, Abdul Kadar, holder of passport no. Z3201026 has changed my name to Abdulqadir Jafar Ali (given name) Tapiya (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Abdulqadir Jafar Ali Tapiya and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(16/09/2024)**

I, Amina holder of Passport No. U3670267, do hereby change my name to Amina (given name) Tapiya (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Amina

Tapiya and I also undertake to carry out this name change in my all documents. **(#5920 13/09/2024)**

I, Hakimuddin Yusufali Chacha do hereby change my name which is mentioned in my Passport, from Hakimuddin S/o Yusuf Ali to Hakimuddin Yusufali Chacha S/o Yusuf Ali Haji Dawood Bhai Chacha (with immediate effect). From: Hakimuddin Yusufali Chacha S/o Yusuf Ali Haji Dawood Bhai Chacha R/O 109, Saifee Nagar, Indore (M.P.) **(#5019 13/09/2024)**

I, Akula Karimulla S/o Akula Mabu (old name), holder of Indian passport No. R8108839, R/o 14/256, Police line Kamalapuram Kadapa district, AP. Now I changed my name to Shaik Karimulla S/o Shaik Mahaboob (new name) **(#6165 13/09/2024)**

I, Aliakbar (current name in passport) Aliakbar holder of Indian passport No. M5454723 having permanent address Sagwara - 314025, Rajasthan, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Aliakbar (given name) and Popat (surname). **(#6164 12/09/2024)**

Gabriel strikes as Arsenal hit Tottenham with sucker punch

Second placed Gunners are two points behind Manchester City



LONDON: Arsenal's Brazilian defender #06 Gabriel Magalhaes scores the team's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal. — AFP

LONDON: Gabriel Magalhaes headed Arsenal to a 1-0 win at Tottenham on Sunday as the Gunners overcame the absence of key midfielders Declan Rice and Martin Odegaard to extend their north London derby dominance.

Mikel Arteta's side were without skipper Odegaard due to an ankle injury suffered on Norway duty, while Rice served a suspension for his red card against Brighton. Losing two such influential players appeared to make Arsenal vulnerable on their trip up the Seven Sisters Road to face their bitter rivals.

But the Premier League title contenders dug deep with a combative display, benefitting from Tottenham's latest display of wasteful finishing before Gabriel bagged the winner in the second half. The Brazilian defender's first goal since February made it three wins from four league games for unbeaten Arsenal as they chase a first title since 2004 after two successive runners-up finishes.

Arsenal have now won on their last three visits to

Tottenham, losing just once, in May 2022, in their last eight meetings with their hated neighbours. The second placed Gunners are two points behind Manchester City as they turn their attention to their Champions League opener at Atalanta on Thursday before travelling to face Pep Guardiola's champions next weekend.

The 196th north London derby showed Arsenal have steel and spirit aplenty, but they also needed a dose of good fortune as Tottenham let them off the hook in the first half. Failing to turn dominant spells into goals has been a familiar story for Tottenham this season and once again Ange Postecoglou's men were let down by their lack of cutting edge.

Tottenham's second successive defeat leaves them with only one win from four games in a worrying start to the season for Postecoglou after their late swoon last term cost them a top four place. Turning to Jorginho and Gabriel Martinelli to replace Rice and Odegaard, Arteta had urged his team to show the "resilience, depth and hunger" needed to overcome their selection issues.

Set-piece specialists

Arsenal had to call on all those qualities during a vibrant start from Tottenham, with David Raya making a fine save at his near post after Son Heung-min's pass picked out Dejan Kulusevski for an instinctive strike. Raya had to make an even more agile stop when Kulusevski's cross flashed through a crowd of players toward the far corner until the Spaniard clawed it away at full stretch. William Saliba had to make a crucial, last-ditch tackle to deny the unmarked Dominic Solanke, who took too long to shoot inside the area after Son pressured Arsenal into conceding possession.

Tottenham's profligacy gave Arsenal encouragement and Kai Havertz rose highest for a close-range header that forced a superb save from Guglielmo Vicario, who was also equal to Martinelli's curler moments late. Picked out by James Maddison's cross, Solanke did well to hold off Gabriel but his looping header dropped narrowly wide. Amid a flurry of aggressive challenges, the simmering derby tension boiled over

after Jurrien Timber's tackle on Pedro Porro left the Tottenham right-back writhing on the turf.

Vicario confronted the Arsenal defender, with both players booked after a melee featuring a plastic bottle thrown from the stands. By the time Kulusevski crudely up-ended Jorginho on the stroke of half-time, seven players had been booked in a fractious clash, including five from Tottenham.

Micky van de Ven's glancing tested Raya soon after the interval, but toothless Tottenham were hit with a brutal sucker punch in the 64th minute. With 23 goals from set-pieces since the start of last season, Arsenal have become dead-ball specialists this was another expertly worked routine.

Saka's in-swinging corner arrowed towards Gabriel, who got away with a push on Cristian Romero before powering his header past Vicario from five yards. Tottenham penned Arsenal back in the closing stages, but couldn't find a way through as Kulusevski blasted just over. — AFP

Kuwait handball team beat Saudis to win bronze

AMMAN: The Kuwaiti Junior Handball Team came in third place in the 10th Asian Championship held in the Jordanian capital Amman and qualified for the Junior World Cup in Slovenia 2026 after competing with the Saudi team on Saturday (30-26). After the match, captain Hussein Mandani told KUNA that the youth team competed strongly and secured qualification for the Junior Handball World Cup, due in Slovenia in 2025. The Japanese team achieved first place, defeating South Korea (26-24) in the final match, which was led by the two Kuwaiti international referees, Dalal Al-Naseem and Maali Al-Enezi. Saudi team was in fourth place, Bahrain came fifth, Iran was sixth, and the Jordanian team was in seventh place. The Kuwaiti player Youssef Madouh was chosen as the best player in the match with the Saudis.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi congratulated Kuwait's youth handball team on winning the bronze medal in the 10th Asian Championship, to qualify for the 2025 World Handball Championship in Slovenia. In a press statement, the minister said that this victory is the culmination of their distinguished performance in the tournament after they ensured qualifying for the World Cup in Slovenia next year after reaching



Handball match between Kuwait and Saudi in action.

the semifinals. He praised the Kuwaiti team for their efforts throughout the tournament, saying that their achievement embodies the cooperation and discipline that characterizes the work of the Kuwaiti federations and clubs. The Kuwaiti team clinched the bronze medal today after winning against their Saudi Arabian counterpart, with a score of (30-26) in the finals match, held in the Jordanian capital Amman. The two teams performed exceptionally well, with the Kuwaiti team succeeding in achieving victory in this high level matchup. Kuwait's team member Youssef Madouh was chosen as best player in the match with the Saudi Arabian team. The Japanese team achieved first place after winning against South Korea with a score of (26-24) in the final match led by the two Kuwaiti international referees, Dalal Al-Naseem, and Maali Al-Enezi. Saudi Arabia won fourth place, Bahrain fifth, Iran sixth, and Jordan seventh.—KUNA

Kuwaiti hammer thrower 5th at Arab championship

JEDDAH: Sulaiman Al-Shamroukh, of Kuwait, came fifth at the rankings of the hammer throw competitions of the 10th Arab athletic junior male and female championships being held in Taif city, southwest Saudi Arabia. Al-Shamroukh scored a personal record with a 59.99m throw while Mohammad Al-Mayas set a new personal record in the triple jump events with a 13.37m jump. In the 200m dash event, Sayyed Fakher was able to reach the final after finishing the race in 22.29 seconds. The



Sayyed Fakher

tourney, which kicked off on Thursday with national teams from 18 Arab countries participating came to a close on Sunday. — KUNA

Italy, Argentina qualify for Davis Cup final eight

PARIS: Defending champions Italy qualified for the Davis Cup final eight on Saturday without playing as Argentina advanced with a dominant 3-0 win over Finland. Italy and Argentina join Spain, Australia, the United States and Germany, who are already through to the eight-team finals in Malaga, Spain from November 19-24.

On Sunday, the last two places are up for grabs with Britain needing to beat Canada 3-0 at home in Manchester to take the Group D berth ahead of the Canadians. All is to play for in Group A between Brazil, Belgium and the Netherlands, depending on the result of the clash between the Dutch and Italy.

In Bologna, Italy advanced thanks to Brazil's 2-1 victory over Belgium. Brazil's Thiago Monteiro beat Belgian Zizou Bergs 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 after Joao Fonseca defeated Raphael Collignon 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 6-3. Belgium kept their slim hopes alive thanks to their doubles victory.

In Group D, Guillermo Coria's Argentina powered back after 2-1 to Canada on Tuesday crushing last year's semi-finalists Finland. Tomas Martin Etcheverry beat Eero Vasa 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 with Francisco Cerundolo battling past Otto Virtanen 6-7 (4/7), 6-1, 6-0. Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni survived dropping their opening set to take the doubles. Argentina return to the last eight for the first time since 2019.

"We knew we had to win 3-0," said Gonzalez. Etcheverry added: "The Davis Cup was a tournament I always dreamed about as a child. It was so important to get the first point." In China, Reilly Opelka saved two match points, with Brandon Nakashima also winning as the United States beat Germany 2-1 to take top spot in Group C.

Both 32-times tournament winners USA and Germany were already through to the final eight but were playing for top spot in the group which helps determine seeding. Bob Bryan's US team made it three wins out of three having also defeated Slovakia and Chile.

Opelka beat Germany's Henri Squire 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (11/9), 6-3 in Zhuhai with Nakashima easing past Maximilian Marterer 6-4, 6-2. Germany's Kevin



TOKYO: Nicolas Mejia of Colombia serves against Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan during their men's singles match on day two of the Davis Cup World Group I first round tennis tournament between Japan and Colombia. — AFP

Krawietz and Tim Puetz won the doubles rubber.

In World Group 1, Novak Djokovic eased to a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Ioannis Xilas as Serbia took a 2-0 lead over Greece. The 37-year-old world number four, who won the Davis Cup with Serbia in 2010, wrapped up the match in just 45 minutes.

Earlier Miomir Kecmanovic gave Serbia a 1-0 lead with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Aristotelis Thanos. Djokovic is playing his first match since losing in the third round of the US Open. "It is always a great pleasure to play here," said Djokovic.

"This may be the last time I will play in front of this audience. The format is changing. "It's been seven years since I last played the Davis Cup here. I don't know if I have seven more years of my career. We'll see, some young tennis players who will defend the colours of the national team need to take over the helm." Casper Ruud secured a 3-1 win for Norway in their World Group I tie against Portugal. — AFP