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Defiance amid Zionist genocide

Hamas vows 'long war' • Hezb slams 'cancerous' entity • Erdogan: Zionists will pay price • Iran hails 'turning point'



(Left) Palestinians pass beneath the tilted minaret of a destroyed mosque in the Shujaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City on Oct 7, 2024. (Right) A woman walks past a crater where a collapsed building stood following an overnight Zionist air strike on the neighbourhood of Kafaat in Beirut's southern suburbs on Oct 7, 2024. — AFP photos

NEWS IN BRIEF

Govt spokesman resigns

KUWAIT: Government spokesman Amer Al-Ajmi said Monday on his X account that he has submitted his resignation for personal reasons. Ajmi said he worked very hard to serve the nation in his duty as the spokesman of the government.

Man kills driver, dumps body

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti was arrested for the premeditated murder of a driver after being spotted disposing of bloodstained clothes. Investigators in Saad Al-Abdullah tracked the suspect through surveillance footage and found traces of blood in his vehicle. During interrogation, the suspect confessed to the crime and led authorities to the victim's body, which was dumped in a desert near Amghara scrapyard.

Saudi king undergoes tests

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman has a lung infection and underwent medical tests on Sunday night. King Salman "will undergo some medical tests this evening, ...based on the recommendations of the royal clinics, due to a lung infection," said the statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. — AFP

Zionists kill boy in West Bank

RAMALLAH: Two Palestinians including a 12-year-old boy were killed in separate Zionist raids in the occupied West Bank on Monday. The Palestinian health ministry said Ziad Abu Haleel, 66, was killed when "(Zionist) forces attacked him during a raid on his home in Dura, south of Hebron". Abu Haleel's son Murad said his father died after being beaten by Zionist soldiers who had come to arrest his brother. In the second incident, the ministry announced the death of Hatem Ghaith, 12, "due to critical injuries sustained from the occupation's gunfire in Qalandiya camp". — AFP

GAZA/BEIRUT: Hamas' armed wing vowed on Monday, the anniversary of the group's Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity, to keep fighting what it described as a "long war of attrition". "We choose to keep up the fight in a long war of attrition, one that is painful and costly for the enemy," said Abu Obeida, spokesman of the militant group's armed wing.

He also warned in a statement broadcast on Al Jazeera that scores of people taken captive into Gaza on Oct 7 last year were enduring a "very difficult" situation. He said the "psychological and health condition of the remaining hostages has become very difficult".

Hamas' attack on Oct 7 last year took the Zionist entity back to "square zero", a senior Hamas official said on Monday. "Al-Aqsa flood returned the occupation to square zero and threatened its existence," Khaled Meshaal, the former head of Hamas, said on the AlArabiya TV station, using the group's name for

the attack. Meshaal said last year's Oct 7 attack was "a natural response to the occupation and its accelerating plans for settlement, siege and aggression against Al-Aqsa," referring to the flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City.

He also accused the Zionist entity of threatening Egypt and Jordan, despite long-standing peace agreements between the countries, saying "the enemy wants everyone in the region to be subject to him and he does this even with countries that do not fight him". He said the Zionist entity "attacks Arab and Islamic national security everywhere".

"The crossing of the glorious 7th of October shattered the illusions the enemy had created for itself, convincing the world and the region of its supposed superiority and capabilities," Qatar-based Hamas member Khalil Al-Hayya said in a video statement on Sunday. Hayya said a year after the Oct 7 attack,

"all of Palestine, particularly Gaza, and our Palestinian people are writing a new history with their resistance, blood and steadfastness".

The Hamas member, who has emerged as the Islamist group's public face following the killing of its former leader Ismail Haniyeh in July, said Gazans had remained "resilient to all attempts at displacement... despite the kinds of torture and terrorism you have endured, and the horrific genocide and daily massacre".

Hayya, who has worked as Hamas' lead negotiator in talks since the end of July, reiterated Hamas' position that the Zionist entity had obstructed a truce in Gaza. "What we rejected yesterday, we will not accept tomorrow, and what the occupation failed to impose by force, it will not take at the negotiating table," he said.

Continued on Page 6

West Bank rally hails resistance, Hamas and Hezb

RAMALLAH: Waving Hamas flags and carrying portraits of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, hundreds rallied in support of the Palestinian struggle in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah Monday, the first anniversary of Hamas' attack on the Zionist entity. About 400 Palestinian protesters of all ages and representing various political factions marched in the de-facto Palestinian capital, which is controlled by long-time Hamas rival the Palestinian Authority.

Activists organized the rally on the

first anniversary of Hamas' unprecedented attack under the slogan "we will not lose faith in the revolution". Beyond the characteristic yellow and green flags of the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah and of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, protesters also waved the flags of Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. Hezbollah, as well as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and Houthis in Yemen, have sporadically fired rockets and missiles at the Zionist entity since the start of the Gaza war.

Demonstrators also chanted "salute from Ramallah to Hezbollah soldiers", and "put the sword against the sword, we are the men of Mohammed Deif", in reference to Hamas' military chief. The Zionist entity says it killed Deif — nicknamed "the cat with nine lives" — in a strike in July, which Hamas denies.

Continued on Page 6



RAMALLAH: Palestinian protesters shout slogans during a rally to mark the anniversary of Hamas' Oct 7, 2023 attack on the Zionist entity in the occupied West Bank on Oct 7, 2024. — AFP

US duo wins Nobel for gene breakthrough

STOCKHOLM: US scientists Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun won the Nobel Prize in Medicine on Monday for their discovery of microRNA and its role in how genes are regulated, solving a decades-old mystery, the Nobel Assembly at Sweden's Karo-



Victor Ambros



Gary Ruvkun

linska Institute said. If gene regulation goes awry, it can lead to serious diseases such as cancer, diabetes or autoimmune illnesses. "Their ground-

breaking discovery revealed a completely new principle of gene regulation that turned out to be essential for multicellular organisms, including

humans," the jury said. Ruvkun said he was shocked to win the prestigious prize. "It's quite a sea change," the 72-year-old professor at Harvard Medical School told AFP after receiving the news in a call from the prize committee in the early hours of Monday. "I've won other awards in the past, but those were very quiet in comparison. There's already been TV crews and photographers, and 300 email messages from friends!" he said, as his dog barked at the front door with more reporters arriving.

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Local

Kuwait mobilizes extensive support for Palestinians through KRCS initiatives

Zionist aggression 'pushing entire region to regional war'

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) emphasized on Monday that Kuwait, through its governmental and non-governmental institutions, has made every possible effort to support Palestinians in terms of relief, development, and health initiatives. KRCS also reaffirmed that the Palestinian cause remains at the forefront of its humanitarian agenda. In a statement to KUNA, KRCS Chairman Ambassador Khaled Al-Maghames highlighted Kuwait's continued support for the Palestinian people in Gaza, in line with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and emphasized the society's backing of humanitarian initiatives aimed at alleviating the suffering of Palestinians.

He noted that the brutal occupation has caused significant damage in Gaza, causing the Palestinians to seek refuge in camps, and face severe shortage of food, water and medicine. He added that Kuwait has organized an airlift carrying essential aid, including medicine, medical supplies, ambulances, food, and tents, to meet the needs of the Palestinians. The KRCS has played a critical role by collecting donations through its website and working closely with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Health to stand with the Palestinians and provide support to the affected.

Al-Maghames explained that the society has deployed a field team within Gaza to distribute urgent aid, including food, medicine, flour, and meals to displaced Palestinians in shelters, underscoring the humanitarian organization's commitment. The society also successfully facilitated the entry of the first Kuwaiti team and a fully equipped field hospital into the Rafah area of Gaza to provide medical services to the Palestinian people and train Kuwaiti medical personnel, while also caring for orphans there. Al-Maghames further noted that the society has rehabilitated and equipped the Noura Al-Kaabi Dialysis Center in northern Gaza and launched a clean drinking water project for the displaced in central and southern Gaza shelters.

Meanwhile, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi said on Monday that the Zionist aggression on Gaza and Lebanon, is pushing the entire region into "the abyss of a complete regional war." This came in a press conference held by the Jordanian Minister after his meeting with Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati where he affirmed that his visit to Lebanon came under the directive of King Abdullah II of Jordan, as a solidarity stand with Lebanon in facing the occupation aggression.

Al-Safadi expressed Jordan's readiness to provide assistance to Lebanon in the aftermath of this brutal aggression, which is a clear violation of international law and of Lebanon's sovereignty, stressing that they will continue their efforts and coordinate with the international community to do so as quickly and immediately as possible. He added that they support Lebanon's efforts to activate its national institutions and decision, starting with the election of a President, as it is an important step in strengthening Lebanon's position on an international level, noting the catastrophe and dangerous escalation that threatens the security of the entire region and international peace.

He stressed the need to stop this aggression immediately, the necessity of restraining occupation's aggression and applying international law fully, pointing to the existing UN Security Council Resolution No 1701, which would achieve security and stability. In response to a question, Al-Safadi stated that Jordan will not be a battlefield for anyone, and will not allow anyone to penetrate the Kingdom's airspace and sovereignty, threatening the security of its citizens.

Arab countries' position was clear from the start in rejecting Zionist aggression against Gaza, explained Al-Safadi, adding that they warned of its consequences and that it would only lead to a dangerous regional escalation. The world has failed in protecting the region's peace and security, limit the occupation's crimes and apply international law and the UN Charter, remarked Al-Safadi, noting that Zionist occupation is responsible for the aggression and escalation in the region, and any new escalation will inevitably push the region towards a regional war. — KUNA



GAZA: Displaced people arrive in Khan Yunis after being given notice by Zionist forces to evacuate from the eastern parts of the city in the southern Gaza Strip on October 7, 2024. — AFP

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In my view

Health insurance 'Afyā'

Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

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Kuwait passed a health insurance law for pensioners, most of whom are elderly. This marked a significant achievement, offering the elderly general health services and access to private sector care. The program, called "Afyā" (meaning "Well-Being"), gave these pensioners much-needed support. However, this benefit was later revoked, leaving pensioners vulnerable once again.

As experienced individuals, the pensioners organized and formed a strong advocacy group fueled by Afya. Their battle with the Ministry of Health began years ago, starting with criticism and complaints. They used social security platforms to spread awareness and rallying support. The struggle will likely continue until the pensioners win, as they are backed by younger generations. I know the people within the Ministry of Health. They are dedicated individuals who love their country, but they are caught between a rock and a hard place. They cannot disobey government decisions, yet they are overwhelmed by waves of both justified and unjustified criticism.

So, what is the solution? The best interim solution is to reinstate the pensioners' insurance while exploring improvements to the law. Options could include having pensioners bear part of Afya's cost without overburdening them or establishing a government-run insurance company to take on Afya's responsibilities. At this stage, it's crucial to avoid unnecessary distractions like suggesting new clinics, as Afya is already tied to ministry of health doctors. For many, Afya has become a vital source of financial support amidst rising costs, particularly the skyrocketing price of land, which remains a dream for Kuwaiti youth.

Afya not only supports pensioners but also benefits Kuwaiti doctors working in the private sector, many of whom also serve in the Health Ministry during the day. Any delay in reinstating Afya will weaken the private sector and harm the Ministry of Health's reputation. In the long run, the Ministry risks undoing all its efforts to improve healthcare services under the pressure of Afya's absence.

Economists concerned with state finances often speak about savings and waste. However, they must now contend with the pensioners' movement, which holds considerable influence and insider knowledge. For the sake of social harmony, I hope a solution can be found that satisfies pensioners outside of the public sector, which seems unlikely to ever fully meet their needs.

Kuwait's Humanitarian Society launches clinic in Yemen

ADEN: Kuwait's Al-Safaa Humanitarian Society inaugurated on Monday Al-Nafisi Medical Clinic, which will benefit 10,000 people in the temporary Yemeni capital Aden, with funding from a Kuwaiti philanthropist as part of the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, which continues for the ninth year in a row. In a press statement during the inauguration, President of Aden University, Professor Al-Khadher Lasour, praised Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in various Yemeni governorates, including the clinic, which was built and equipped with the latest medical equipment, explaining that it will serve patients from Aden and university students.



Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah inaugurates a new marketing outlet for the Farmers Union in Fahad Al-Ahmad area. — KUNA photos

Minister praises Kuwaiti farmers

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah

has stressed the importance of supporting local products to achieve food security and raise the level of local production.

This came in a press statement by Minister Al-Huwailah on the occasion of the opening of a new market outlet for the Farmers Union in the Fahad Al-Ahmad area in Ahmadi Governorate. This comes within the efforts to expand the

markets for local agricultural products.

Al-Huwailah praised the role of farmers in supporting food security through the quality of local products, expressing her appreciation for the efforts made to enhance the Kuwaiti agricultural products. She affirmed the Ministry's commitment to supporting everything that benefits citizens. — KUNA



Kuwait displays sustainable urban projects at Riyadh's Gulf Municipal Work Conference. — KUNA photos

Kuwait displays urban projects

RIYADH: Kuwait Municipality displayed its national projects at the Gulf Municipal Work Conference's side exhibition, held in Riyadh.

All Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries participated in the exhibition, with each country hosting a pavilion.

Kuwait's pavilion, titled "Sustainable Urban Planning and Design," highlighted its innovative efforts in urban development. Among the standout projects were the Friday Market, Bird Market, Tent Central Market project, and the Al-Jahra seafront project.

Visitors to Kuwait's pavilion were impressed with the country's modern and sustainable urban initiatives.

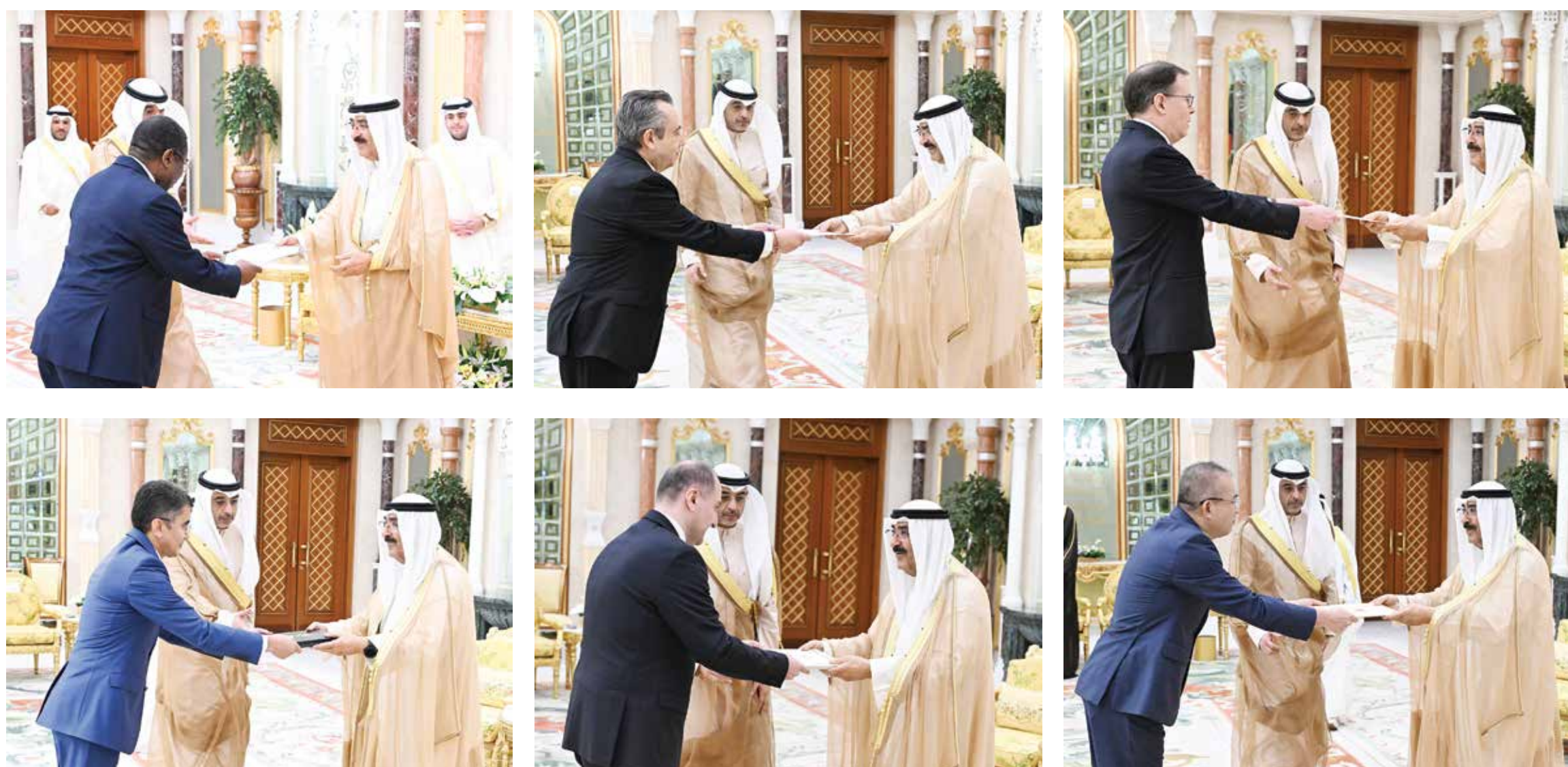
The pavilion was supervised by Kuwaiti engineers Lulwa Al-Dehani and Meshari Al-Enizi, who skillfully explained the features and importance of each project to the attendees, enhancing Kuwait's contribution to the region's urban planning discourse. — KUNA



Kuwait-funded clinic inaugurated in Aden. — KUNA

Local

Amir receives credentials of foreign diplomats



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday the Ambassadors of Tanzania, Mexico, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Vietnam who handed their credentials during a ceremony at Bayan Palace. Senior state officials attended the ceremony. — KUNA

FM receives US ambassador



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya met on Monday with US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara in his office at the Ministry's headquarters. The meeting reviewed the close bilateral relations and strategic cooperation between Kuwait and the United States, ways to enhance and develop them in various fields, and current developments on the regional and international arenas. — KUNA

Kuwait and Malaysia discuss cooperation



KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah receives Malaysian Defense Minister Mohammad Nordin. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah holds talks with Malaysian Defense Minister Mohammad Nordin and his accompanying delegation.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with the attendance of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and Defense Minister, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, received Malaysian Defense Minister Mohammad Nordin and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral ties and ways of boosting cooperation.

The meeting was attended by the Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Abdulaziz Al-Dakhil, the Chief of Staff of the Army,

Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Salem Al-Muzain, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, and the Ambassador of Kuwait to Malaysia, Rashid Mohammad Al-Saleh.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister discussed with Malaysian Defense Minister Mohammad Nordin ways to bolster bilateral military. Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received Minister Nordin and his accompanying delegation at the Ministry's headquarters. He emphasized

the deep ties and friendship between the two countries, as both sides commit to developing these relations in a way that serves their common interests, especially in the military field.

Minister Nordin expressed his pleasure and praised the strong relations between the two nations, affirming Malaysia's desire to enhance the military partnership to achieve stability and security for both countries. They discussed ways to develop bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on prominent developments in regional and

'Oil Innovates' award to enhance innovation

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil said Monday that its "Oil Innovates" award, which will be launched in mid-October, aims to enhance innovation, improve the work environment, and develop innovative solutions that contribute to raising performance efficiency and increasing sustainability. The Ministry of Oil added in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the award reflects the Ministry's commitment to advancing development, improving performance, and achieving excellence.

This is with a strategic partnership with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity—one of the centers of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences—and is within the framework of joint efforts to discover and develop national talents. The partnership translates the Ministry's vision in encouraging innovation in its various departments, with a focus on enhancing the skills of employees and motivating them to present ideas and projects that would advance their operations.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity will provide its extensive experience in sponsoring innovation and supporting talented people, which will contribute to directing creative ideas towards achieving

tangible successes in the oil sector and enhancing digital transformation processes. The award seeks to encourage creativity by motivating employees to present innovative ideas and projects, enhance their skills, and improve their capabilities.

The Ministry of Oil pointed out that the introductory meetings will be organized for talented students affiliated with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity on Tuesday to explain the importance of the award and how to participate in it. A special meeting will also be held for female students on October 16 to encourage them to participate and highlight their role in innovation. The award activities will start in mid-October and will continue till the end of November. Participation will be individually or in groups consisting of 3 students.

Prizes will be distributed to the winners of the first three places. The participating departments include the Drilling and Production Department, the Exploration and Development Department, the Environment and Safety Department, and the Energy Research Department, in addition to the Information Systems Center Department. The Ministry of Oil indicated that the "Oil Innovates" award represents a "unique opportunity" to enhance the culture of innovation within the Ministry and deepen cooperation between the various departments to ensure a more sustainable and advanced future for the Kuwaiti oil sector. — KUNA



Speakers, organizers and key guests take a group photo.

EPA Director: Natural reserves make up 12% of Kuwait's land area

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Natural reserves, which account for 12 percent of Kuwait's land area, play a vital role in environmental protection and biodiversity preservation, said Samira Al-Kandari, Acting Director General of the Environmental Public Authority. Speaking at the Green Skills Summit held on Monday, she outlined the authority's efforts since its establishment to foster an environmentally friendly society. This includes the implementation of law no. 42 of 2014 for environmental protection and its amendments in 2015, as well as initiatives to raise environmental awareness within the community, particularly among school students.

"Adopting green skills is no longer an option but a necessity to address pressing environmental challenges," Kandari said. By guiding individuals toward careers that prioritize environmental sustainability, she believes Kuwait can work toward achieving a sustainable economy. This will include the shift to renewable energy, treating wastewater, enhancing the circular economy, adapting to climate change and adopting

strategies to reduce carbon emissions and transform consumption and production patterns into more sustainable ones.

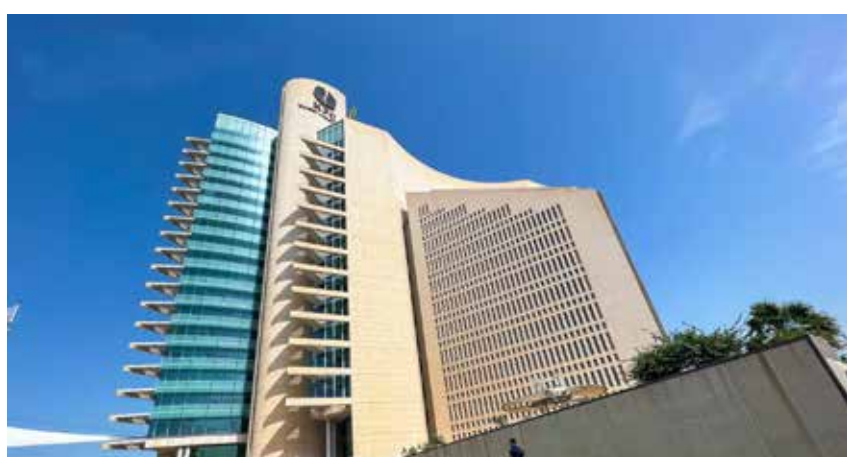
European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen emphasized the urgent need for action on climate change, not only in addressing its physical impacts on the environment, but also in adapting to its profound effects on people and ways of life. Speaking to Kuwait Times, Koistinen highlighted the critical role of skill development in facing climate challenges. "We still have time to equip ourselves with the skills necessary for the future, and this applies especially to future generations," she remarked, stressing that climate change presents an opportunity for new types of skills and jobs that will be increasingly essential.

The ambassador pointed out that the younger generation must recognize that the world they are inheriting is significantly different from that of their parents and grandparents. "It's undeniable that the climate is changing, and the global community has come to this realization," Koistinen said. "That's why we must work together to act before it's too late, rather than allowing fear of the future to hold us back."



EU Ambassador Anne Koistinen

Koistinen also underlined the importance of cooperation between the EU and Kuwait, not only with government authorities but with the youth, private sector and civil society. She expressed the EU's commitment to supporting Kuwait's 2035 vision, particularly in areas where Europe can contribute to the diversification of Kuwait's economy. "The government is committed to the implementation of this vision, and we are here to support where Kuwait wants us to be onboard," she added.



stc launches its latest 'Talent Incubation Program' to empower younger generation

Providing graduates with opportunities to experience innovative work culture

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its latest program titled 'Talent Incubation Program' (TIP) for recent graduates. The program serves as unique and innovative initiative for young graduates to further develop their skills, while also gaining real-world experience and a chance to be hired at stc.

As part of its ongoing commitment to empower the younger generation, strengthen its workforce, and the pillars under its corporate social responsibility program, the 'Talent Incubation Program' (TIP) strongly aligns with the various objectives set by stc to support the community and attract talent. The 'Talent Incubation Program', held over the course of one year, will provide participants with a comprehensive exposure of stc's work culture and various departments, including an opportunity to shadow globally recognized consultants, particularly in areas such as transformation and change management.

Through this experience, the graduates will acquire the expertise needed to become future subject matter experts. They will be able to navigate different areas within the telecom industry, allowing them to play a contributing role in their future careers, whether they are hired at stc or follow any other opportunities in the industry. The program also falls in line with stc's recent recognition as the employer of choice for engineers and IT professionals in Kuwait according to Universum's custom research.

As part of its strategic vision, stc highly values

the importance and significance of nurturing Kuwaiti talent. The next generation will serve as the future leaders of Kuwait holding positions in critical roles across various industries such as technology, innovation, strategy, human resources, and others. Under the 'Talent Incubation Program', stc aspires to identify and nurture local talent by providing them with the skills and opportunities that will shape graduates today to adapt and excel in a fast-paced and highly competitive industry.

ing them with an invaluable experience and advanced training that can add value to any role that they decide to pursue. Through this program, our objective is to equip these recent graduates with the skills and tools needed to succeed in their careers while positioning them as future leaders in the industry."

Al-Makhtoor added, "As a pioneer in digital transformation, we are dedicated to ensuring that our initiatives are not only supported by the immediate needs of the Company, but also contribute to the sustainable growth of Kuwait's workforce. Having said that, we are committed to consistently investing in the development of Kuwait's younger generation, while providing lucrative job opportunities for recent graduates to join stc across various professions and departments. In its ongoing pursuit to attract bright young talent, stc has organized various initiatives throughout the years that have achieved a high success rate in hiring local talents based on their performance. Considering this great achievement, we will continue to introduce such programs and platforms that empower recent graduates and enable them to gain access to market opportunities that can add value to their future careers."

The Talent Incubation Program (TIP) is an extension of stc's ongoing efforts to support young Kuwaiti professionals and empower them to play a key role in the country's digital and economic future. Upon completion of the program, participants may also have the opportunity to secure permanent positions within the Company, further solidifying stc's commitment to long-term talent development.



Commenting on the launch of the program, Abdulaziz Al-Makhtoor, Acting Chief Human Resources Officer of stc, said, "Every economy relies on the next generation to take on the significant role of sustainably growing the economy and achieving new heights. We are proud to launch the 'Talent Incubation Program' that will empower Kuwaiti talents by provid-



Ministry promotes responsible energy consumption

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy announced its participation in the "House of a Lifetime" exhibition, which kicked off at the Mishref International Fairgrounds on Monday. The Ministry said in a press statement that its participation in the exhibition, which will continue until October 12, is part of its efforts to raise public awareness on the importance of responsible consumption of electricity and water resources and to provide basic information that customers need to establish energy-saving homes.

In this regard, the Ministry stressed the need to adhere to the standards of the Energy Code and to identify highly efficient devices for saving electricity and water, explaining that engineers from its teams will provide valuable guidance and advice and introduce a program for rationalization, which grants incentives to customers who prove their rationalization of energy. The Ministry indicated its keenness and endeavor, through its participation in the exhibition, to communicate directly with the public and improve energy use in homes, which directly contributes to reducing the value of consumption bills and improving the quality of life. — KUNA



Kuwaiti delegation



Jordanian Minister of Youth Yazan Shdeifat is pictured with other officials during the opening ceremony.



Head of the Kuwaiti delegation Aseel Al-Anzi

19th Arab Youth Meeting kicks off in Jordan

AMMAN: The 19th Arab Youth Meeting began on Sunday in Jordan, themed "Youth, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence" in collaboration with the Arab League, with participation of Kuwait's Youth Affairs Ministry. In the opening speech, Jordanian Minister of Youth Yazan Shdeifat — on behalf of the Prime Minister Jaffar Hassan — stated that Jordan is keen on hosting this event, noting that it offers Arab youth a platform to exchange experiences and knowledge in the fields of technology and artificial intelligence.

He also underscored the royal patronage that prioritizes Jordanian youth, particularly in technology and artificial intelligence, and praised Jordan's national

youth strategy for supporting innovative projects in these fields. The Arab League's representative, Faisal Ghassan, emphasized the League's commitment to promoting initiatives that enable Arab youth to work toward a better future. He noted that despite the current challenges in the region, the Arab League remains committed to ensuring the continuation of this event, reaffirming the League's support for Palestinian youth.

The Kuwaiti delegation's head, Aseel Al-Enezi, described the event as an exceptional opportunity for Arab youth to develop skills in modern technology and artificial intelligence, as well as highlighted the growing demand for AI-driven jobs. Al-Enezi stressed the importance of cross-country collaboration to achieve sustainable development, aiming to create job opportunities for youth. The meeting, with the participation of 12 Arab youth delegations, includes dialogue sessions on Jordan's artificial intelligence strategy and other Arab experiences, as well as visits to leading institutions in the technology sector and various tourist sites. — KUNA

KUNA launches news app, honors journalists

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency celebrated on Sunday evening the launch of its observatory for verifying news and responding to rumors, "mar-sad.kuna.net.kw," a smart phone app. At a ceremony coinciding with its 48th anniversary, the wire service also honored the winners of its award for excellence in journalism. KUNA Director General Dr Fatema Al-Salem said, in a speech during the celebration, that KUNA has been a beacon for state media over the past four decades, reflecting the positive picture of Kuwait.

"KUNA, as the main source of Kuwait-related news in the Arab world and beyond, plays the main role in documenting the history of the country," she pointed out. "The wire service remains committed to authenticity, accuracy, and objectiveness, which are the key values of the profession of journalism," Al-Salem added. She commended the diligent work of her predecessors and the dedication of KUNA staffers in covering the news around the clock. Regarding the new app, she said, "It is a big stride in providing news in an easy and authentic way and countering the fake news and rumors."



Director-General Dr Fatema Al-Salem launches KUNA news app and KUNA observatory for verifying news and responding to rumors. — KUNA photos

On his part, KUNA Chief Editor Mohammad Al-Bahr honored the winners of the competition of excellence in journalism. They are Fahad Al-Saied — the best interview award; Mohammad Abu-Bakr — the best feature award; and Kholoud Al-Enzi — the best news report award. Head of the team of the app, Dana Al-Balhan, gave a presentation on the features and merits of the interactive app and how to use artificial intelligence in following the news stories. — KUNA



Director General Dr Fatema Al-Salem poses for a group photo with KUNA staff.



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Chinese workers killed in 'terrorist attack' near Karachi

Dry season to fuel Sudan's war

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Gazans tired after 'year of suffering'

A year on, the Zionist entity continues bombing Gaza 'as if the war had just begun'

GAZA: One year after the Zionist entity unleashed war in Gaza, the Palestinian territory is unrecognizable and its residents are exhausted by displacement and shortages, with no end in sight. "It felt like the first day of the war all over again", said Khaled Al-Hawajri, 46, as the Zionist forces bombarded his Gaza neighborhood on Monday. "Last night we were terrorized by the bombardments from quadcopters and tank shells," said Hawajri, who has been displaced 10 times with his family of seven in the past year. "We have endured a whole year in the north under bombardment, terror, and fear in the hearts of my children," he said, adding he had staying in Gaza's devastated north because "there is no safe place in the entire Strip".

On Monday, Gaza City was barely recognizable, ravaged by relentless air strikes and fighting. Residents walked along sand-covered streets stripped of pavements, with buildings either destroyed or left without facades, while piles of rubble littered the roads. With fuel in short supply and expensive, car traffic was almost nonexistent. Most people walked, cycled or used donkey carts. "There is no electricity or petroleum products. Even firewood is not available. Food is almost non-existent", said 64-year-old Hussam Mansour, speaking from a street in Gaza City, surrounded by piles of rubble and sand. The United Nations says 92 percent of Gaza's main roads and more than 84 percent of its health facilities have been damaged or destroyed in the war.

Long war

Mansour and his sons have all been displaced, and his apartment building was destroyed in an air strike. "Now when I walk the streets, I do not recognize them anymore," he said. Like Hawajri and Mansour, Gaza's 2.4 million inhabitants have endured hardship, with no signs of relief, even after the Zionist entity said it reassigned divisions to expand its war into Lebanon. About 90 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced at least once, the United Nations says.

"Last night was one of the hardest nights of the war, as if the war had just begun!" said 46-year-old Muhammad al-Muqayyid, displaced from the Jabaliya



GAZA CITY: Buildings are destroyed in the Shujaiya neighborhood of Gaza City on October 7, 2024, on the first anniversary of the Zionist military offensive in Gaza. — AFP

refugee camp in northern Gaza. "I never imagined the war would last this long," he said. "A year has gone and we have seen every kind of suffering — disease, hunger, danger and loss."

The Zionist military offensive in Gaza has killed at least 41,909 people, most of them civilians, according to figures provided by the territory's health ministry. The entity launched its attack after Hamas led an operation in the entity. The Hamas operation and the aftermath, where the Zionist military directed its fire at its own people who

were held captive by Hamas, led to the deaths of 1,200, most of them civilians, according to Zionist figures. A year on, the Zionist entity has yet to achieve one of its alleged main objectives: securing the return of all those taken hostage on October 7, 2023. Out of 251 people taken hostage that day, 97 are still being held inside the Gaza Strip, including 34 who the Zionist military says are dead. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Monday to bring back all those held captive but thousands of protestors, families of those held

captive and world leaders have criticized the Zionist government for not doing enough to reach a ceasefire and hostage exchange deal. Meanwhile, the Zionist entity continues to bombard Gaza. "There was a sudden ground invasion by tanks, and people were rushing out of their homes without taking anything with them, just carrying their children and running through the streets with fire and shells raining down on them", Muqayyid said, referring to a Zionist military operation in northern Gaza on Sunday. — Agencies

GIG launches first regional report dedicated to wellbeing

- Survey reveals a concerning disconnect between perceived wellbeing and underlying mental health issues in the region, underscoring the growing importance of mental health awareness and support.
- 65% of respondents report experiencing mental health challenges in the past year, yet a surprising 82% still rate their overall wellbeing as positive.

- 74% of those surveyed report excellent or very good physical health, though ailments like allergies (15%) and musculoskeletal disorders (14%) are prevalent.
- Report highlights a need for the industry to address care gaps with comprehensive wellbeing initiatives, and prompts calls for greater industry focus on holistic wellbeing.

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) – a leading insurance provider in the Middle East and North Africa – has announced the launch of a new report that offers unique insight into the wellbeing landscape in the region. GIG's inaugural Wellbeing Report, which underscores the company's firm commitment to advancing holistic health, reveals both intriguing trends and areas where improvements could have a significant impact on wellbeing.

Conducted by renowned research firm YouGov on behalf of GIG Group, the report delves into key factors influencing overall wellbeing, including physical health, mental health, and lifestyle habits. Despite a generally positive outlook on wellbeing among survey respondents – based in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, and Jordan – the report highlights an important trend: a significant portion of the population is facing mental health challenges, and could benefit from additional support.

"We are proud to introduce our Wellbeing Report, a cornerstone of our mission to promote holistic wellbeing for all our members across the MENA region," says Khaled Saoud Al Hasan, Vice Chairman & CEO, Gulf Insurance Group. "With wellbeing emerging as a key focus in today's world, our report aims to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the wellbeing



GIG Vice Chairman & CEO – Khaled Al Hasan

landscape and identify areas for ongoing improvement and support."

Survey respondents were asked a range of questions about factors impacting their overall wellbeing, from physical ailments and medical conditions such as allergies and diabetes to mental health diagnoses such as depression and anxiety. The survey also explores lifestyle influences, including sleep, diet, and exercise, as well as stressors and activities undertaken to promote mental peace.

"The findings are both insightful and eye-opening," continued Khaled Saoud Al Hasan. "While 82% of respondents re-

ported positive overall wellbeing and 84% rated their mental wellbeing as good, 65% acknowledged facing mental health challenges in the year preceding our survey. Even more notably, 62% of those who reported mental health challenges based their responses on self-diagnosis, suggesting opportunities for better awareness and understanding of mental wellbeing in the region. Moreover, up to 35% of respondents in some countries were unsure of where to seek help, underscoring an urgent need for enhanced communication and support structures."

In addition to mental health challenges, the report also highlights significant findings in physical health and lifestyle habits. While 74% of respondents assessed their physical health positively, ailments such as allergies (15%) and musculoskeletal disorders (14%) were frequently reported. Furthermore, lifestyle factors showed room for growth, with only 54% of respondents getting the recommended 7 hours of sleep per night, and more than half not engaging in regular exercise. These insights underscore the need for a more holistic approach to wellbeing that addresses both mental and physical health as well as lifestyle choices.

Workplace wellbeing emerged as another area of focus, with many respondents expressing a desire for employ-

er-driven initiatives such as regular health checks, stress management programmes, and wellness workshops. Digital tools such as mental wellbeing and fitness apps were also highlighted as areas where employees would like to see greater support from their employers.

Laura Gerstein Alvarez, Chief Employee Benefits Officer, GIG Gulf concluded: "Our report opens the door for important dialogue within the industry. Why is there such a high rate of self-diagnosis for mental health challenges, and how can we ensure that all our members have access to the support they need? While these findings point to areas for further attention, we are confident that this report will inspire meaningful discussions and prompt actions to enhance wellbeing across the region."

The survey, conducted by YouGov on behalf of GIG Group, gathered responses from 3,599 individuals – males and females over the age of 18 – across eight countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, and Jordan. Participants were either current health insurance holders or prospective buyers, ensuring a diverse and representative sample. All responses were collected confidentially, with responses remaining anonymous to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the data.

International

Dry season to fuel Sudan's war

Army advances in Khartoum; RSF expected to benefit from end of seasonal rains

DUBAI: After almost 18 months of war, fighting in Sudan is escalating as seasonal rains end with the army using intensified airstrikes and allied fighters to shore up its position ahead of a likely surge by the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF). An uptick in fighting will aggravate an already dire humanitarian crisis in which famine has been confirmed and over 10 million people — one fifth of the population — are displaced, more than anywhere else in the world. UN agencies have often been unable to deliver aid. "There won't be a decisive breakthrough," a senior Western diplomat in the region, speaking on condition of anonymity due to political sensitivities, told Reuters. "What we expect to come into the fall more and more is much more fragmentation, to see more armed groups getting involved... And this will make the situation in general much more difficult."

The paramilitary RSF has had the upper hand during much of the conflict but at the end of September the army, after shunning US-led talks in Switzerland, recently launched its biggest offensive yet in the capital Khartoum, advancing across a key bridge over the Nile. In Darfur, former rebel groups and volunteers from displacement camps have rallied to defend the densely populated city of Al-Fashir, the army's last holdout in the western region, against waves of RSF attacks.

Two army sources said the army had worked for months to replenish weaponry including drones and warplanes, as well as training up new volunteers, to strengthen its position on the ground before any negotiations. Three residents in the capital, which is made up of Khartoum and its adjoining cities of Omdurman and Bahri, said that in recent days the army had been carrying out more air bombardments with a larger number of drones and fighter jets than before.

While the army has used its superior air power at the end of the rainy season to pound RSF-held territory in the capital, Darfur and El Gezira state, the RSF's more effective ground troops are expected to regain an edge as the dry season starts and roads

become more passable. The RSF released a video last week with its fighters promising a "hot winter" for its rivals in Sennar, where its progress had earlier been slowed by the rains. Witnesses there as well as in the capital reported heavy fighting on Thursday. Both sides have reinforced militarily as the conflict in Africa's third largest country by land area has deepened, drawing on material support from foreign backers, diplomats and analysts say.

Battle in the capital

The war began in April 2023 as the army and the RSF jostled to protect their power and wealth ahead of a planned political transition towards civilian rule and free elections. The RSF, which has its roots in the so-called Janjawed militias that helped the government crush a rebellion by non-Arab groups in Darfur in the early 2000s, quickly occupied much of the capital before consolidating its grip on Darfur and seizing El Gezira state, south of Khartoum.

Earlier this year, the army gained ground in Omdurman after acquiring Iranian drones. But it showed little sign of building on the advance before the surprise offensive it began last week on the day that its commander, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, told the United Nations that the RSF had to withdraw and lay down its arms for there to be peace. The army now has control of the capital's Halfaya bridge, allowing it to build a foothold in Bahri from its bases in Omdurman. It has also weathered heavy clashes and sniper fire to advance across another Nile bridge that leads to the heart of the capital, military sources and witnesses said.

Disease and starvation

For months the RSF has besieged Al-Fashir, which is crammed with some 1.8 million residents and displaced people. Activists and diplomats have warned of ethnically-charged bloodletting if the city falls, after similar violence that was blamed on the RSF and its allies elsewhere in Darfur. Two witnesses in Al-Fashir



GEDAREF: People celebrate in a street in Gedaref on September 28, 2024, following reports of advancement by the Sudanese army. — AFP

told Reuters that the RSF had been shelling large areas of the city as the army responded with air strikes. The battle has dragged on as non-Arab rebel groups and volunteers from displacement camps who are better equipped for ground combat than the army fight to protect themselves and their families, the witnesses said. A local group representing displaced people in Darfur said last week that the fighting had exacerbated the humanitarian situation in two dozen camps across the Darfur region, "all of which suffer from a lack of the most basic daily necessities", and that disease and starvation were spreading.

Aid workers and human rights activists say there has been little increase in humanitarian relief, despite pledges by both sides to improve access for aid. Sudan, often overlooked amid armed conflicts elsewhere, received some diplomatic attention at the UN General Assembly last week. But USAID Deputy Administrator Isobel Coleman told Reuters there had been little progress getting outside players to stop fueling the war. "Both of the actors in this conflict, both sides of this, have outside support which they believe is going to tip the scales to their advantage," she said. — Reuters

Russia jails US 'mercenary', 72, for nearly 7 years

MOSCOW: A Russian court on Monday sentenced a 72-year-old US citizen accused of fighting as a mercenary on the side of Ukraine to nearly seven years in prison. Russia has recently detained and tried a number of US citizens and completed a large prisoner exchange, including Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, which enabled the return of Russians jailed in the United States. On Monday, a court in Russia's western city of Voronezh also sentenced a US man already serving a jail term to a further seven years on a charge of violence in prison.

At Moscow City Court, judge Alexandra Kovalevskaya sentenced the 72-year-old defendant, named as Stephen Hubbard by the media, to six years and 10 months, an AFP journalist heard. The bearded defendant dressed in a knitted jacket and dark trousers shuffled slowly into court and stood with difficulty as the sentence was read out. He was convicted of "participating as a mercenary in the armed conflict" after a brief trial largely held behind closed doors.

The sentence took into account the fact that Hubbard has already been in custody since April 2, 2022.



MOSCOW: US citizen Stephen Hubbard, 72, accused of fighting as a mercenary for Ukraine, attends his verdict hearing in this grab from a handout footage by the Moscow City Court. — AFP

Every day he spent in pre-trial detention subtracts 1.5 days from his sentence, meaning he has already served over 3.5 years, RIA Novosti news agency reported. The lawyer representing Hubbard told journalists he was likely to appeal against his sentence. Hubbard had risked up to 15 years in prison but prosecutors asked for the minimum of seven years taking into account his age and guilty plea, the judge told RAPS news agency. His case only became public on September 27, when his trial began in Moscow. Russia has not said where he had been detained.

Hubbard appeared at a hearing last week, when the court ordered that the trial be held in secret without the media, at the request of prosecutors. Prosecutors said that Hubbard was paid at least \$1,000 a month to join a Ukrainian territorial defense unit. They say he underwent training, was given a combat uniform and "took part in the armed conflict" in Ukraine.

Westerners in custody

Russia's state-run TASS news agency said Hubbard had been living in the Ukrainian city of Izyum in the northeastern Kharkiv region since 2014. Russian forces took control of the city of 45,000 shortly after ordering troops into Ukraine, before being ousted in September 2022 in a lightning counter-offensive by Kyiv. Russia has not given any details on the circumstances of Hubbard's arrest. A video posted on pro-Russian YouTube channels in May 2022 — during the Russian occupation of Izyum — showed

a bearded man who gave his name as Stephen James Hubbard, said he was born in Big Rapids, Michigan, and came to live in Ukraine in 2014.

The other US citizen convicted in Russia on Monday, named as Robert Gilman, was handed a term of seven years and one month in a strict-regime penal colony. He was found guilty of attacking prison staff and a criminal investigator, Russian news agencies reported. He had been convicted in 2022 of attacking a policeman while drunk in the city of Voronezh and sentenced to four years and six months in prison, later reduced to three and a half years on appeal.

While in jail, he punched members of prison staff "in the head" on two separate occasions and attacked a criminal investigator, according to prosecutors. Russia has arrested numerous Westerners in recent years on charges ranging from espionage to petty theft, with some cases related to Moscow's Ukraine offensive. They include Ksenia Karelina, a dual US-Russian citizen who was arrested while visiting family in Russia and sentenced to 12 years in jail for donating around \$50 to a Ukrainian organization.

Two Colombian citizens are also being held in Russia on charges of being "mercenaries" for Ukraine. Russia and the West held the largest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War on August 1. Journalists and Russian dissidents jailed on one side were swapped for Russians imprisoned for murder, espionage and other crimes on the other. — AFP

Defiance amid Zionist genocide...

Continued from Page 1

Lebanon's Hezbollah on Monday also vowed to keep up the fight against Zionist "aggression". Hezbollah and the Lebanese have paid a "heavy price" for the group's decision to open a "support front" for Gaza on October 8, but "we are confident... in the ability of our resistance to oppose the (Zionist) aggression", it said in a statement, calling the Zionist entity a "cancerous gland that must be eliminated, no matter how long it takes".

Iran on Monday praised Hamas' Oct 7 attack as a decisive moment for Palestinians. "The operation on October 7, 2023... was a turning point in the history of the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against the occupation and oppression of the Zionist regime," Iran's foreign ministry said. It described the attack as a release of "the Palestinian people's pent-up historic anger against eight decades of occupation, murder and genocide".

The statement also accused the Zionist entity's allies of supporting these actions. "Supporters of the occupying regime, especially the United States, have been complicit in the crimes of this regime" against Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and Yemenis, it said. It added that they "must be held accountable for supplying weapons and supporting the Zionist regime".

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday vowed the Zionist entity would pay a price for the genocide in Gaza as he marked the first anniversary of the war. "It should not be forgotten that (the Zionist entity) will sooner or later pay the price for this genocide that it has been carrying out for a year and is still continuing," he said on X.

A vocal advocate of the Palestinian cause, including Hamas, Erdogan has often attacked the Zionist entity, branding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the "butcher of Gaza" and comparing him to Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler. "Just as Hitler was stopped by an alliance of humanity, Netanyahu and his murder network will be stopped in the same way," Erdogan said. "A world in which no account is held for the Gaza genocide will never find peace."

The Turkish leader, who often lauded Hamas as freedom fighters, said what has been massacred before the eyes of the entire world for exactly one

year "is actually all of humanity, and all of humanity's hopes for the future". Erdogan also criticized the international system's failure to stop the conflict in Gaza and now in Lebanon and said: "(The Zionist entity's) long-standing policy of genocide, occupation and invasion must now come to an end."

The Zionist entity stepped up its air and ground offensive in Gaza with more attacks on Hamas fighters and command posts on Monday. Hamas said it struck Tel Aviv with a missile salvo, setting off sirens in the Zionist entity. The rocket volley signaled Hamas enduring ability to hit back despite a protracted Zionist military campaign that has seriously degraded its combat capacities, a year after the shock cross-border Hamas incursion into the Zionist entity. Hamas' smaller ally Islamic Jihad said it hit Sderot, Nir Am and other Zionist towns near Gaza with rockets.

On Monday, Zionist tanks advanced into Jabalia, the largest of Gaza Strip's eight historic urban refugee camps, after encircling it, residents said. Soon after the rocket volley, the Zionist military expanded evacuation orders in Jabalia to cover areas in the northern towns of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya. Residents said Zionist forces pounded Jabalia from the air and the ground, and medics said several Palestinians had been killed, with rescuers unable to reach some of the victims. Later on Monday, Palestinian medics said a Zionist airstrike killed five Palestinians to the west of Jabalia.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah fired rockets at Haifa on Monday as Zionist forces looked poised to expand ground raids into south Lebanon. Hezbollah said it targeted a military base south of Haifa with "Fadi 1" missiles and launched another strike on Tiberias, 65 km away. Hezbollah said it targeted areas north of Haifa in a second salvo of missiles later in the day. The Zionist military said around 135 projectiles had entered Zionist territory on Monday.

The military said the air force was carrying out extensive bombings of Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon, and that two Zionist soldiers were killed in border-area combat, taking the military death toll inside Lebanon so far to 11. It said it also carried out a targeted strike in Beirut's southern suburbs, where a thick plume of smoke could be seen. Lebanon's health ministry said 10 firefighters were killed in a Zionist airstrike on a municipal building in the border-area town of Bint Jbeil, and that other aerial attacks on Sunday killed 22 people in a swathe of southern and eastern towns. — Agencies

West Bank rally hails resistance...

Continued from Page 1

Other participants held up a box shaped like a coffin that bore the words "International Law" and "Arab League" on its sides.

"We came to remember our martyrs, wish recovery for our wounded, and congratulate the resistance (to the Zionist entity), whether Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqi or Yemeni, for their struggles over the past year," Jamila Johar told AFP, saying he was

"hoping for victory". Others praised Hamas' Oct 7 attack. "We came to raise our voices and say that the Palestinian struggle continues, and that the 7th of October took us from a phase of humiliation to a phase of dignity and pride," said a man who spoke on the condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Similarly, Afaf Ghatasha, who identified herself simply as a member of the Palestinian People's Party, said Oct 7 "changed the course of the Palestinian cause, the region, and the world". "We came to say that the world will not find stability until the occupation ends and a Palestinian state is established," she added. The Zionist offensive in Gaza has killed at least 41,909 people, the majority of them civilians. — AFP

US duo wins Nobel for gene...

Continued from Page 1

Ruvkun shared that he and Ambros are "buddies" and had a congratulatory video call that morning. "We just FaceTimed to high-five. We've been friends for years." Ruvkun told Swedish public radio SR he looked forward to the Nobel gala banquet on Dec 10 in Stockholm, where the laureates will receive their prizes from the hands of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf. "It's a party. You don't think of a bunch of scientists as party animals but we really are," he said.

Ruvkun told AFP the pair would be "celebrating like crazy," praising Ambros as "always positive and wonderful." The Nobel committee failed to reach Ambros by telephone to give him the news. He heard it instead from an SR reporter who called. "Wow, that's incredible! I didn't know that," the 70-year-old professor at the University of Massachusetts medical school said, adding: "Good. Wonderful."

Speaking at a press conference organized by the University of Massachusetts Medical School — where Ambros is a professor — he said he had left his phone downstairs and slept until late in the morning. "We get a call from my son who calls my wife... and says: 'If you get a call from somebody in Sweden, answer it,'" Ambros said, explaining people had started trying to reach his son instead.

Collaborating but working separately, Ruvkun and Ambros conducted research on a one-millimeter roundworm, *C. elegans*, to determine why cell muta-

tions occurred and when. They discovered microRNA, a new class of tiny RNA molecules that play a crucial role in gene regulation, which in turn allows each cell to select only relevant instructions. Their findings were published in two articles in 1993.

"The seminal discovery of microRNA has introduced a new and unexpected mechanism of gene regulation," Thomas Perlmann, secretary general of the Nobel Assembly, told reporters. "MicroRNAs are important for our understanding of embryological development, normal cell physiology and diseases such as cancer," he said.

Gunilla Karlsson Hedestam, a biology professor at the Karolinska Institute, told reporters that "though there are no very clear applications available yet in microRNAs, understanding them, knowing that they exist, understanding their counter regulatory networks, is always the first step." "There are quite a lot of trials ongoing, not only against cancer but also other diseases, cardiovascular, kidney diseases," she said.

The Nobel Prize consists of a diploma, a gold medal and a \$1 million cheque to be shared by the pair. Last year, the medicine prize went to Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman for work on messenger RNA (mRNA) technology that paved the way for COVID-19 vaccines. The Nobel season continues this week with the announcement of the winners of the physics prize on Tuesday and the chemistry prize on Wednesday.

They will be followed by the much-anticipated prizes for literature on Thursday and peace on Friday. The economics prize winds things up on Monday, Oct 14. For Tuesday's physics prize, Swedish public radio SR's science experts suggested the honor could go to Swiss physicist Christoph Gerber, a pioneer in the development of the atomic force microscope. — AFP

International

2 Chinese workers killed in 'terrorist attack' near Karachi

Baloch Liberation Army claims responsibility; Pakistan's PM vows security for Chinese nationals

ISLAMABAD: Two Chinese nationals were killed in an explosion near the international airport of the southern Pakistani city of Karachi on Sunday night, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan said, in what it described as a "terrorist attack". In a statement emailed to journalists, separatist militant group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed the explosion was an attack carried out by them using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeting Chinese nationals, including engineers.

The Chinese embassy said a convoy from the Port Qasim Electric Power Company was attacked near the airport. "The Chinese Embassy and Consulates General in Pakistan strongly condemn this terrorist attack, express deep condolences to the innocent victims of both countries and sincere sympathies to the injured and (their) families," the statement said, adding the Chinese side has been working with Pakistani authorities in the aftermath.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said a Chinese national was also injured and that an investigation was underway. "Pakistan stands committed to safeguarding our Chinese friends," he said in a statement on social media platform X. "We will leave no stone unturned to ensure their security and well-being."

Pakistan is preparing to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in the capital Islamabad, which was roiled by protests and clashes this

weekend between police and supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan. High-level Chinese representation and the first visit by an Indian foreign minister in a decade are expected at the summit next week, which authorities have vowed to secure. Pakistan broadcaster Geo News reported at least 10 people were injured in Sunday's blast in addition to the fatalities. Karachi police did not immediately respond to request for comment.

The BLA seeks independence for the province of Balochistan, located in Pakistan's southwest and bordering on Afghanistan and Iran. In August, it launched coordinated attacks in the province, in which more than 70 people were killed.

BLA specifically targets Chinese interests — in particular the strategic port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea, accusing Beijing of helping Islamabad exploit the province. It has previously killed Chinese citizens working in the region and attacked Beijing's consulate in Karachi.

Security issues have affected China's billions of planned investments, including under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which is part of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road. In March, a suicide bomber killed five Chinese engineers working on a hydropower project in northern Pakistan. Authorities arrested militants they said were associated with the Pakistani Taliban, though that group denied being behind the attack. — Reuters



KARACHI: Security officials examine at the site of an explosion which occurred near Karachi airport in Karachi, on late October 6, 2024. — AFP

Volunteer charged with rape, murder of Kolkata doctor

KOLKATA: Indian police on Monday charged a man with the rape and murder of a 31-year-old doctor, a crime which appalled the country and triggered wide-scale protests. The discovery of the doctor's bloodied body at a government hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata on August 9 sparked nationwide anger at the

chronic issue of violence against women. The suspect, named as Sanjoy Roy, arrested the day after the murder and held in custody since, was formally charged on Monday with a confidential document of evidence submitted to the court. "Sanjoy Roy has been charged with the rape and murder of the on-duty trainee post-graduate doctor inside the hospital," a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) official told AFP.

Roy, widely reported by Indian media to be aged 33, and who had been working as a volunteer in the hospital supporting patients, would potentially face the death penalty if convicted. Doctors in Kolkata went on strike for weeks in response to the brutal attack. Tens of thousands of ordinary Indians joined

in the protests, which focused anger on the lack of measures for women doctors to work without fear.

While most medics have returned to work, a small group began a hunger strike this month. The doctors say the West Bengal state government had failed to deliver on its promises to upgrade lighting, security cameras and other measures to protect them. India's Supreme Court last month ordered a national task force to examine how to bolster security for healthcare workers, saying the brutality of the killing had "shocked the conscience of the nation". The gruesome nature of the attack drew comparisons with the 2012 gang rape and murder of a young woman on a Delhi bus, which also sparked weeks of nationwide protests. — AFP

As Great Salt Lake dries, Utahns pardon Trump climate denial

SALT LAKE CITY: From his ranch on the shores of the Great Salt Lake, Joel Ferry has a front row view of climate change: a native of Utah, the Republican farmer has seen the water's surface area shrink by two-thirds in the past 40 years. And as director of the western US state's natural resources department, he knows that the drying up of the lake is an "environmental nuclear bomb," threatening the existence of Salt Lake City and the homes of two million people living on its shores.

Still, he will vote without hesitation for Donald Trump this November, despite the Republican presidential candidate's outspoken skepticism on climate change. Ferry praises the former president's "good economic results," and as a Mormon says he is grateful because Trump has "been very strong on family value issues," including packing the US Supreme Court with conservative judges who overturned abortion rights. For Ferry, these factors outweigh the fact that Trump regularly mocks claims of a climate emergency.

Just this summer, Trump claimed sea levels would rise "one-eighth of an inch over the next 400 years" and create "more oceanfront property." "I think he's just teasing a little bit. I don't think he truly believes that," said Ferry. This is a common response in Utah, where Mormons — who represent half the state's population — remain largely loyal to the Republican Party, despite reservations about Trump's personality. No Democrat has won a presidential election in Utah since 1964.

'Mad Max'

The region received a stark reminder of its ecological fragility in 2022. That year, the Great Salt Lake plummeted to its lowest recorded levels, due to a combination of overconsumption of water by farming and mining sectors, and a historic drought spanning two decades. The water became so salty that brine shrimp, a major source of income for the local economy, began to die. Migratory birds vanished because the flies they feed on were gone. "It really triggered a lot of scientists, but a lot of just general worry that the lake was going to completely dry up," said David Parrott, deputy director of the Great Salt Lake Institute at Utah's Westminster University.

If the lake disappears, "it would be like 'Mad



SALT LAKE CITY: People walk on salt crusts beside the pink water near Stansbury Island at the Great Salt Lake in Salt Lake City, Utah on September 9, 2024. — AFP

Max,' where water is completely gone and we just have to abandon the city," said the biologist, referring to the dystopian Hollywood movie franchise. "It would be unthinkable." This is because the lake bed, which contains arsenic and toxic heavy metals, would become more exposed to the open air, and contaminate the atmosphere during dust storms. Ferry said the looming threat sparked a "rallying cry" among local Republicans.

Financial incentives for farmers to reduce water consumption; exploring technology that optimizes irrigation, and seeds clouds to increase rainfall; splitting the lake into two to limit its salinity: "over a billion dollars" has been invested in the past three years, he said. Even the Mormon Church has set an example, substantially cutting its water use. Utah is "a great example where you have a very red and conservative state making decisions that are very environmentally driven," said Ferry. Nationally, "the environment should be a key priority of the Republicans as well."

'Local problem'

Trump's environmental policies, which include rolling back President Joe Biden's climate legacy, are a world away from this ambition. If he wins in November, it would likely end any hope of limiting

defense cooperation", India's foreign ministry said. "Your visit is a new chapter in our ties," Modi told Muizzu, who was given an honor guard including cavalry and a marching band. "India will always be there for the progress and prosperity of the people of Maldives." Muizzu, 46, in a speech alongside Modi that included the virtual inauguration of an Indian-supported airport runway and social housing, said he had held "extensive discussions ... charting a path for the future collaboration between our two countries".

He also thanked India for budgetary support "instrumental in addressing foreign exchange issues", including a 30 billion rupee (\$357 million) and \$400 million currency swap agreement. India will also develop the commercial port at Thilafushi to ease the congested port at the island capital Male, and the two nations will begin talks on a potential free trade agreement.

India met Muizzu's May deadline to withdraw a contingent of 78 soldiers stationed in the Maldives to operate two helicopters and a fixed-wing plane. However, the aircraft remained and are being oper-

ated by a civilian Indian crew. "What I did is what the people of Maldives asked from me," Muizzu said, in an interview in the Times of India published Monday. "Maldives would never do anything that undermines the security of India", he told the newspaper. "While we enhance our cooperation with other countries in various sectors, we remain committed to ensuring that our actions do not compromise the security and stability of our region."

'Line of credit'

China and India are the two largest bilateral lenders to the Maldives, and the cash-strapped archipelago last month insisted it has no plans to seek an International Monetary Fund bailout after warnings of a possible sovereign default. 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. Muizzu said that a "line of credit arrangement" from India was a "positive step".

In June, Muizzu travelled to New Delhi for Modi's inauguration following his victory in a third consecutive election, and India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam

Desperate deja vu for foreign doctors in Lebanon

BEIRUT: In a south Lebanon hospital, Norwegian doctor Mads Gilbert peered out of the window after bombardment near southern Lebanese border, four decades after he first worked in the country. "It's a horrible experience," he said in a video call from the southern town of Nabatiyeh. "It's been 42 years and nothing has changed," said Gilbert, who first saw war-treating patients during the 1982 Zionist invasion and siege of Beirut. Below the window paramedics were on standby next to parked ambulances at the hospital behind the front line.

The anesthetist and emergency medicine specialist said he had seen just a few cases since arriving on Tuesday. "Most of the cases have been south of us and they have not been able to evacuate them because the attacks have been so vicious," Gilbert said.

The Zionist entity escalated its war on Lebanon in late September, which has triggered a humanitarian crisis and devastated cities and villages in south Lebanon, as well as Beirut's southern suburbs. Nearly 2,000 people were killed in Zionist strikes and more than a million have been displaced. Official media have reported some Zionist strikes killing entire families, and AFP has spoken to two people who lost 17 relatives and 10 family members respectively.

The Zionist entity's military "can do whatever they want to healthcare, to ambulances, to churches, to mosques, to universities, as they've been doing in Gaza," said Gilbert, who has repeatedly volunteered in the Palestinian territory during past conflicts. "And now we see the same repeat itself in Lebanon in 2024." A hospital in the town of Bint Jbeil closer to the border on Saturday said it was hit by heavy overnight Zionist strikes, wounding nine medical and nursing staff, most seriously. At least four hospitals said they had suspended work amid ongoing Zionist bombardment on Friday. On Thursday, Lebanon's health minister said more than 40 paramedics and firefighters had been killed by Zionist fire in three days. UN official Imran Riza on X on Saturday spoke of "an alarming increase in attacks against healthcare in Lebanon." Britain said reports that Zionist strikes had hit "health facilities and support personnel" in Lebanon were "deeply disturbing".

In the capital Beirut, British-Palestinian doctor Ghassan Abu-Sittah said he also saw parallels with the conflict in Gaza. Abu-Sittah has tirelessly campaigned for "justice" since spending weeks in the besieged Palestinian territory treating the wounded at the start of the war. Now in Lebanon, the plastic and reconstructive surgeon described seeing "kids, families whose houses have been targeted" with blast injuries in the past few weeks. There were "kids with blast injuries to the face, to the torso, amputated limbs," he said outside the American University of Beirut's Medical Centre. — AFP

Cash-strapped Maldives leader in India to repair ties

NEW DELHI: Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu was given a red carpet welcome on his first state visit to India Monday, a trip Prime Minister Narendra Modi said marked a "new chapter" to reset troubled ties. Pro-China Muizzu came to power a year ago on a promise to evict dozens of Indian troops deployed in his small but strategically located archipelago. Most South Asian leaders are invited to New Delhi soon after they assume office, but it has taken almost a year for India to accord Muizzu a state visit. India however on Monday rolled out a financial support to bolster Male's struggling economy, with Muizzu and Modi discussing "energy, trade, financial linkages and de-



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) speaks during a joint media briefing with Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu at the Hyderabad House on October 7, 2024. — AFP

Jaishankar travelled to Male in August. Known as a luxury holiday destination with pristine white sand beaches and secluded resorts, the Maldives has also become a geopolitical hotspot. — AFP

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2024

ZainTECH and DATANUUM enter strategic partnership

Collaboration to elevate customer data enrichment, engagement and retention

DUBAI: ZainTECH, the integrated digital solutions provider of Zain Group entered a strategic partnership with DATANUUM, the comprehensive customer data enrichment, engagement and retention platform for retailers and healthcare businesses. This collaboration aims to provide innovative solutions that enhance customer data driven growth and retention capabilities for businesses across the Middle East and beyond.

This partnership will leverage ZainTECH's extensive regional expertise in implementing compliant cloud infrastructures with DATANUUM's cutting edge plat-

Partnership aims to drive business growth in retail and healthcare industry offering advanced compliant solutions to unlock the full potential of customer data and optimize marketing spend

form, to address the growing need for data privacy and regulatory compliance in the region. This should appeal to businesses looking for robust solutions to handle data securely while optimizing customer relationships, engagement and marketing spend.

Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH commented, "ZainTECH's mission is to deliver state-of-the-art digital solutions to our clients and exceed expectations while doing so. By combining DATANUUM's solutions with our services, we can offer businesses with compliant value-added technologies that support differentiation and growth."

Salam Saadeh, CEO of DATANUUM said, "Partnering with ZainTECH represents a significant step forward in our mission to empower B2C businesses in the MENA region and beyond with the best data enrichment and engagement capabilities. ZainTECH's robust infrastructure and regional market



Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH and Salam Saadeh, CEO of DATANUUM (center) with their respective senior executives.

presence will enable us to reach more businesses and help them transform their customer interactions. The collaboration will drive innovation and growth for both our clients."

DATANUUM was founded from the deep understanding of the daily challenges faced by businesses to consistently capture customer data, enrich it, retain customers, manage the full customer life-cycle, increase customer life-time value, while providing a consistent customer experience. The partnership will initially focus on Retail and Healthcare establishments offering several key benefits, including:

1. Data Privacy Compliance: Through helping

businesses meet compliance without compromising performance.

2. Enhanced Customer Engagement and Retention: Through implementing hyper-personalized cutting-edge customer engagement and retention tools, allowing businesses to focus on growing and retaining their customer base, while driving long-term loyalty.

3. Maximized Digital Advertising ROI: Through easily and efficiently leveraging their secure customer data and behavior, businesses can decrease customer acquisition costs, improve ROI on lead acquisition marketing initiatives, while ensuring accurate

attribution and performance tracking.

4. Cost Efficiency and Scalability: Through ZainTECH's scalable cloud solutions, coupled with DATANUUM's flexible engagement tools, businesses can adapt their customer strategies as they scale, optimizing both costs and performance.

Together, ZainTECH and DATANUUM are committed to driving digital transformation and supporting regional businesses to unlock the full potential of their customer data in a simple, integrated and efficient manner that will elevate customer relationships and engagement, as well as optimize marketing spend.

Oil prices extend upward march on Mideast tensions

LONDON: World oil prices rallied more than two percent Monday as tensions escalated in the crude-rich Middle East one year after the deadly Hamas attacks on Zionist entity.

European stock markets mostly rose after more big gains in Asia as China's stimulus boost, a strengthening US economy and the outlook for interest rates in major economies outweighed geopolitical unrest. Brent North Sea crude, a benchmark oil contract, came close to surpassing \$80 per barrel on Monday for the first time since late August.

Oil futures have experienced recent volatility, with Brent surging above \$80 in the late northern hemisphere summer on Middle East tensions, before slumping under \$70 last month on concerns about weak demand. Beyond Middle East tensions, oil is also being supported by hopes of stronger Chinese demand after Beijing recently announced major stimulus measures to boost its flagging economy. Offsetting price support is an expectation in the market that the OPEC+ group of oil producing nations could reverse output cuts, according to analysts.

"The oil market is on a wild ride, caught in a whirlwind of geopolitical tension, OPEC+ strategy shifts, and a slowdown from its biggest customer, China," noted independent analyst Stephen Innes. Zionist entity on Monday marked the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attack, the deadliest in its history and one that sparked a devastating war in Gaza that has since expanded into Lebanon.

There were sizeable gains Monday for the Tokyo and Hong Kong stock markets, with the former boosted by a softer yen supporting Japanese exporters. Hong Kong extended a rally fuelled by China's plans to boost its growth, notably by supporting its battered property sector and thanks to interest-rate cuts. Shanghai was closed for a holiday.

Concerns over Europe's biggest economy, Germany, weighed on Frankfurt's stock market Monday, while London and Paris nudged higher nearing the half-way stage. Official data showed Germany's industrial orders fell more than expected in August, adding to fears that the country will end the year in recession. A strong US jobs report Friday increased expectations that the Federal Reserve would avoid consecutive big cuts to interest rates. All three main indices on Wall Street rallied ahead of the weekend, while US inflation data this week will be closely watched for further clues on the Fed's thinking heading into its next call over rates. — AFP

Sri Lanka govt secures \$200m World Bank loan

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka said on Monday it had secured a new \$200 million World Bank loan to bolster economic recovery, the first foreign funding since leftist President Anura Kumara Dissanayake won elections.

Dissanayake, a self-avowed Marxist, took power last month on the back of public anger over the island's 2022 economic meltdown, promising to reverse steep tax hikes, raise public servant salaries and renegotiate an unpopular \$2.9 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout.

The loan announced on Monday, which follows an earlier \$500 million World Bank loan after the 2022 economic crash, would help in "fostering

an equitable economy", the bank said in a statement. Dissanayake said the loan would support "economic reforms for stability, growth, and protection of the vulnerable".

The new president approved last week a controversial restructuring of \$14.7 billion in foreign commercial credit tentatively agreed by his predecessor Ranil Wickremesinghe. Wickremesinghe announced a deal with international sovereign bondholders and the China Development Bank two days before he lost September presidential elections.

Dissanayake had called for better terms but, after talks with an IMF delegation in Colombo, his government said it would honor the deal. Sri Lanka defaulted on its external debt for the first time in 2022 after running out of foreign exchange during its worst financial crisis.

Months of street protests against acute shortages of essentials led to the toppling of then leader Gotabaya



NUWARA ELIYA, Sri Lanka: Women farmers carry sacks of leaves at a tea estate in Nuwara Eliya in this file photo. — AFP

Rajapaksa. Dissanayake, a member of a once-marginal leftist party, was elected on the back of public resentment over perceived corruption and mismanagement. He called snap

parliamentary elections for November 14 days after he was sworn into office. Any deal with bondholders or the IMF will require approval by the next parliament. — AFP

China to flesh out economic stimulus after bumper rally

BEIJING: Top Chinese economic policymakers are expected to flesh out a raft of growth-boosting policies on Tuesday, after the announcement of long-awaited stimulus measures last month sparked a blistering stock market rally. Beijing has struggled to kickstart the economy as officials target around five percent growth this year — a goal analysts say is optimistic given the numerous headwinds, from a prolonged housing crisis to sluggish consumption.

After months of piecemeal tinkering did little to reverse the malaise, officials have unveiled a raft of measures from rate cuts to loosening house buying curbs aimed at getting money flowing again. Hopes of that long-awaited "bazooka stimulus" have lit up stock markets, sending bourses in mainland China and Hong Kong surging more than 20 percent.

And with all eyes on the reopening of mainland markets following the Golden Week public holiday, officials from the National Development and Reform Commission will hold a news briefing at 10 am (0200 GMT) Tuesday. Chairman Zheng Shanjie and others will discuss the rollout of "a package of incremental policies to solidly promote economic growth", Bei-



BEIJING: People rest outside a clothing store in a shopping mall in Beijing. — AFP

jing has said.

Analysts said they hoped officials would unveil further fiscal support measures such as trillions of yuan in bond issuances and policies to boost consumption. But they cautioned that deep reforms to the economic system to relieve the debt crisis in the property sector and boost domestic demand are needed if Beijing is serious about resolving the fundamental obstacles to growth.

"Unless China introduces structural reforms to re-

ally jumpstart consumption — from unemployment benefits to real pensions — I just don't think that we will see a major change," said Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief economist for the Asia-Pacific region at Natixis. The market rally risked becoming a "mirage", she warned, as policymakers propped up stocks without properly tackling the underlying issues in the real economy. "If the measures are not proven to be effective... it will be even worse, because it means that not even the stimulus works," she said. — AFP



A group photo of the participants of 10th edition of the Ajyal program.

Gulf Bank introduces 10th edition of Ajyal program to develop young talent

Program is designed to refine employees' skills and cultivate future banking talents

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to develop and enhance its employees' capabilities, Gulf Bank has launched the 10th edition of the Ajyal program, welcoming a new cohort of high potential employees with less than five years of experience at the bank. This program aims to refine their skills and support their professional and personal growth.

Gulf Bank has organized the Ajyal program in partnership with the American University of Kuwait. The Human Resources team continues to identify young talents and enhance their expertise, equipping various departments across the bank with exceptional banking professionals who can contribute effectively to strengthening the bank's position as the Bank of the Future. The program is designed to provide new employees with a deeper understanding of banking operations, enhance both their individual and organizational capabilities, and foster a culture of performance excellence by applying their learning to real-world business challenges.

On this occasion, Sarah Al-Rifaii, Head of Talent and Business Development in the Human Resources Department at Gulf Bank, highlighted the rigorous selection process for participants, which includes personal interviews and general skills assessment. Those chosen will embark on a thorough six-month learning journey aimed at developing key banking skills and



Sarah Al-Rifaii speaking at GB Talks.

preparing them to be high-performing professionals. This training is designed to equip them to implement the bank's long-term growth strategy and continually improve the customer experience. Al-Rifaii emphasized the significance of empowering and training young talents to reach their full potential, aligning their capabilities with the highest global banking

standards. This approach ensures they can contribute to achieving objectives and surpassing expectations in the banking sector. She also expressed pride in observing the numerous success stories of Ajyal graduates within the bank over the years.

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

Sarah Al-Rifaii

We are dedicated to empowering young talents by providing training and development opportunities to help them achieve their fullest potential.

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.



This file photo shows visitors interacting with games during a media preview of the new Nintendo Museum.

Nintendo shares rise on Saudi fund report

TOKYO: Nintendo shares jumped more than four percent Monday after a top official of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund was quoted as saying it was mulling hiking its stake in the Japanese gaming giant.

Riyadh has built up a stake of 8.6 percent in Nintendo as part of a \$38-billion push into gaming under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 program to diversify away from oil.

It also has stakes in "Resident Evil" maker Capcom, Activision Blizzard, Electronic Arts, and Scopely, the US mobile games company behind "Monopoly Go!." "There are always opportunities," Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al-Saud, vice-chair of Saudi Arabia's Savvy Games—a subsidiary of the Public Investment Fund—told Kyodo News in an interview published Saturday. He added, however, that the fund

had no intention of raising stakes without the consent of the firms concerned. "It's important to keep the communication going so you get there in the right way," he said. "We don't want to rush into anything."

Nintendo's shares jumped 4.44 percent Monday to end at 8,087 yen.

Saudi Arabia aims to create 250 gaming companies and studios on its soil, 39,000 game-related jobs, be in the top three of professional gamers per capita and to produce a blockbuster "AAA" game by 2030. Savvy has already bought esports tournament organizer ESL, Gaming and platform FacelT. Riyadh last year hosted the eSports World Cup that saw 2,500 gamers battle for \$60 million in prize money. Campaigners say the push—accompanied by similar drives including football—belies a dire rights record where dissidents are imprisoned, executions are common and homosexuality is illegal. "There's a lot we want to do to get it done and to reach our targets at 2030," Prince Faisal told AFP in an interview in May. "But we also want to make sure that we are taking the time to study things, to look at things. And make sure we're making the right steps and not just throwing cash out there to see what hits," he said. —AFP

Indonesia's Prabowo wants gradual rise in debt-to-GDP ratio

JAKARTA: Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto will increase the country's debt-to-GDP ratio level gradually, alongside efforts to boost tax revenues, his top adviser and brother Hashim Djojohadikusumo told a seminar on Monday. The increase may be within a range of 1 to 2 percentage points per year, he said, describing Indonesia's current debt-to-GDP level of under 40 percent as "underleveraged".

Investors and rating agencies are closely monitoring Prabowo's fiscal plans after his earlier comments suggesting an appetite for higher debt levels to fund his costly campaign promises triggered concern about potential fiscal slippage. In June, capital outflows hit the rupiah after Bloomberg News reported Prabowo planned to boost the debt-to-GDP ratio to 50 percent within his five-year term. Prabowo has promised to comply with Indonesia's fiscal laws limiting the annual budget deficit to a maximum 3 percent of GDP and debt-to-GDP at 60 percent. "Prabowo will not add to national public debt abruptly, not drastically," Hashim said. "We will remain prudent, but we will be daring, more aggressive, so we can fulfill our (campaign) promises," he added.

Prabowo's key campaign pledge is to provide free

Russian wheat export prices continue to rise

MOSCOW: Russian wheat export prices continued to rise last week, following global markets, amid continuing difficult weather conditions for the crop. The price of 12.5 percent protein Russian new crop wheat scheduled free-on-board (FOB) with delivery in November was \$223 per metric ton at the end of last week, up \$1, Dmitry Rylko, head of IKAR consultancy said.

The Sovecon consultancy reported that prices for Russian wheat with the same protein content were \$222-224 per ton, up from \$219-221 the previous week. "Dry weather in Russia continues to support bullish sentiment. Models predict rains starting in mid-October, but more reliable short-term systems show no significant precipitation during the first half of the month," Sovecon said in a weekly note.

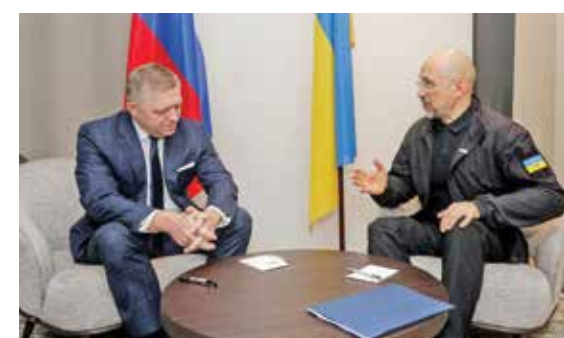
"Farmers are voicing concerns over the state of their winter wheat across most regions, except parts of the South", Sovecon said in a weekly note, adding that Russian FOB prices are expected to "continue rising gradually". Weekly grain exports are estimated at 0.87 million tons, down from 1.33 million a week ago, including 0.80 million tons of wheat, down from 1.29 million.

Sovecon raised its September export estimate by 0.1 million tons to 5.0 million tons versus 4.9 million tons a year ago. However, it cut its 2024/25 Russian wheat export forecast last week to 47.6 million metric tons and total grain exports to 55.4 million metric tons due to bad weather affecting the harvest, noting high export volumes at the start of the season. Russian grain exporters' lobby Rusgrain urged curbs on low price exports last week in the face of a lower harvest than last year and said it wanted to propose a review of the export quota mechanism. Russia's Agriculture Ministry said it will review its 2024 crop forecast this week. — Reuters

meals to more than 80 million children and pregnant mothers across Indonesia, which is estimated to cost 450 trillion rupiah (\$28.73 billion) to implement.

Hashim said increasing revenue is important before the government takes on more debt and that he had consulted Prabowo's plans for tax reform with the World Bank several times in order to raise the revenue-to-GDP ratio to 23 percent, from an estimate of 12 percent this year. Prabowo will spin off the tax and customs offices from the finance ministry and set up a new revenue collection agency, which will use artificial intelligence and other technology to boost tax collection, Hashim said.

"We will achieve that (the revenue target) without increasing tax rates," he said. Prabowo will be sworn in on Oct 20.—Reuters



UZHGOROD, Ukraine: In this handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian Prime Minister's Office on October 7, 2024, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmygal (right) attends a meeting with Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico (left) in Uzhhorod. — AFP

Kyiv will not extend gas transit deal, Ukraine tells Slovakia

KYIV: Ukraine will not extend its gas transit agreement with Russia after it expires at the end of 2024, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico on Monday. The two held talks in Uzhhorod in western Ukraine and, according to a Ukrainian official, were focused on infrastructure cooperation, energy security and support for Kyiv's peace plan. "Ukraine once again says it will not continue the transit agreement with Russia after it expires," Shmyhal told a news conference sitting alongside Fico.

"Ukraine's strategic goal is to deprive the Kremlin of profits from the sale of hydrocarbons which the aggressor uses to finance the war," Slovakia, a member of NATO and the EU which shares a border with Ukraine, opposes Kyiv's accession to NATO, but has a strong interest in maintaining the transit of oil and gas from Russia to the west via Ukraine.

Slovak state-owned gas buyer SPP said this month it was continuing negotiations to secure an extension of gas transit through Ukraine after Kyiv's contract with Russian supplier Gazprom expires at the end of the year. Shmyhal said that Kyiv understands the "acute dependence" of some states, including Slovakia on the Russian gas supply, but is counting on gradual diversification of delivery. Ukraine's prime minister also said the two countries had agreed on the creation of an Eastern European energy hub, which aims to utilize large Ukrainian gas storage facilities.

Fico has been a big critic of Western military aid to Ukraine, along with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, and has made a big show of halting government-sponsored military aid to Ukraine while allowing commercial supplies to continue. He reiterated his view that there was no military solution to the Ukrainian-Russian war. "Peace must be sustainable, you have to have security guarantees. Above all, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. We understand all that," Fico said. He said the talks with Ukraine's government confirmed that Kyiv remained interested in using its gas and oil transit systems after the deal with Russia expires. —Reuters

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English actor Leigh Gill attends the US premiere of Warner's "Joker: Folie a Deux".



US director Todd Phillips attends the US premiere of Warner's "Joker: Folie a Deux".



US actress and singer Lady Gaga (R) and US actor Joaquin Phoenix attend the US premiere of Warner's "Joker: Folie a Deux" at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood, California, September 30, 2024.—AFP photos



US actor Hudson Oz attends the US premiere of Warner's "Joker: Folie a Deux".

New 'Joker' film, a dark musical, tops North America box office



Argentine-US director Andres Muschietti attends the US premiere of Warner's "Joker: Folie a Deux".

Warner Bros.' "Joker: Folie a Deux," a dark new musical Batman spinoff, earned an estimated \$40 million over the weekend to top the North American box office, industry watchers reported Sunday.

But that was far behind the \$96.2 million opening of the original "Joker" in 2019, a movie that earned Joaquin Phoenix a best-actor Oscar and grossed more than \$1 billion worldwide. Industry analyst David A. Gross called it "a weak opening for the follow-up sequel in a superhero series."

"Folie a Deux" -- French for "shared madness" -- again stars Phoenix as

the unbalanced titular villain, this time joined by Lady Gaga (playing the cheerily deranged Harley Quinn) as the two sing, dance and plan assorted acts of mayhem. Todd Phillips directs, and the cast includes Brendan Gleeson and Catherine Keener.

Last week's box office leader, family-friendly sci-fi tale "The Wild Robot" from DreamWorks Animation, slipped a spot to second, taking in \$18.7 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations estimated.

Lupita Nyong'o voices Roz, an intelligent robot who is marooned on an

uninhabited island and, to survive, has to befriend a menagerie of woodland animals -- and ends up adopting an adorable gosling.

Warner Bros.' "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" also slipped a spot, to third, earning \$10.3 million.

Michael Keaton again plays the creepily hilarious title character with Winona Ryder reprising her role as Lydia Deetz, backed by "Beetlejuice" newcomers Jenna Ortega, Monica Bellucci and Justin Theroux.

In fourth was Paramount's animated action film "Transformers One," the latest installment in the toy-based fran-

chise, at \$5.4 million.

And in fifth, for the second straight week, was "Speak No Evil," a psychological horror film from Blumhouse and Universal Pictures, at \$2.8 million. James McAvoy and Mackenzie Davis star.

Rounding out the top 10 were:

"White Bird" (\$1.5 million)

"Deadpool & Wolverine" (\$1.5 million)

"The Substance" (\$1.3 million)

"Megalopolis" (\$1.1 million)

"My Old Ass" (\$908,000)—AFP

Is music finally reckoning with #MeToo?

The music industry has long evaded a #MeToo reckoning like that experienced in Hollywood or the media, but the blockbuster charges against hip hop magnate Sean Combs could finally prove an inflection point. Federal prosecutors say the artist known by various monikers including "Diddy" ran a criminal sex ring that preyed on women and blackmailed them into silence -- accusations that have activists and industry watchers hoping music's moment of accountability has arrived.

Their hope has been bolstered by a massive class action suit that followed Combs's federal charges, as well as a new lawsuit against country star Garth Brooks. When an explosive series of accusations against R&B hitmaker R. Kelly went public five years ago, outlets including AFP asked if that was the beginning of a sea change in music.

Kelly was convicted and sentenced to more than 30 years of prison for child sex crimes, sex trafficking and racketeering.

It was indeed a milestone for the #MeToo movement as the first major sex abuse trial where the majority of accusers were Black women. But wider cultural shifts in the industry long-cliched as a bastion of sex, drugs and rock and roll didn't seem to crystallize.

The shock rocker Marilyn Manson, the music mogul Russell Simmons, the DJ Diplo, the producer Dr. Luke -- over the years women have made serious accusations against these and many other powerful men in the industry. Few repercussions have followed.

"There's this whole pass we give rock stars because of the rock star trope," said Caroline Heldman, an Occidental College professor and co-founder of the Sound Off Coalition, which is focused on sexual violence in the music industry.

"A lot of survivors that I've spoken with from the music industry, they've internalized the rock star idea -- that they should have expected" bad behavior, "because he was a rock star," she told AFP.

'Keep survivors quiet'

Kate Grover -- a women's and gender studies professor at Washington and Lee University, who has researched intersections of gender and the music industry -- said the notion of "geniuses" is also particularly pronounced in music. "Once we have labeled someone as a genius," she said, "it kind of creates a scarcity model," where they're seen as too big to fail.

But women "are seen as much more disposable within the music industry than men," she added. Many experts including Grover and Heldman say race is a clear factor when considering which cases are taken seriously by the wider public. Celebrity also plays a major role.

The victims in Kelly's lawsuits were young Black girls and women who "did not have the kind of star power that a lot of the actresses who came forward against Harvey Weinstein did," Grover said. And pop's top musicians are frequently empires in their own right, said Heldman, "who employ a people who help them in their years of perpetration."—AFP



US producer-musician Sean "Diddy" Combs poses in the press room during the MTV Video Music Awards.



Marilyn Manson performs during the Astroworld Festival at NRG Stadium on November 9, 2019 in Houston, Texas.



US singer Garth Brooks arrives for the 2019 MusiCares Person Of The Year gala at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles on February 8, 2019.—AFP photos



Singer R. Kelly appears during a hearing at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse on September 17, 2019 in Chicago.



Roma singer Gilda-Nancy Horvath, known as Nancy Black, poses for a picture prior to her performance at Brunnenpassage in Vienna, Austria.—AFP photos



Roma singer Gilda-Nancy Horvath, known as Nancy Black, poses for a picture prior to her performance.

Austrian rapper channels anti-racist rage in Romani hip-hop songs

Alone in front of her laptop, Gilda-Nancy Horvath composed and recorded her first angry rap, "Trushula" -- the anthem of an artist railing against the racism suffered by her Roma people in her native Austria and beyond. Eight years later, her quest has gained fresh relevance with the resurgence of the European far-right -- several of whose figureheads she assails in that early track, pounding out her rhyming verses to the rhythm of keyboards and drums.

With the Nazi-rooted Freedom Party (FPÖ) topping the polls for the first time in Austria's national elections last weekend, the activist told AFP she is set on "denouncing the lies of the far right". Besides wanting to "settle scores" with racists targeting her community, Horvath raps in Romani -- under her stage name Nancy Black -- to keep the language alive and to "stop the suffering".

Across Europe, Roma -- estimated to number 14 million -- face poverty and discrimination at school and work, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

Horvath is descended from the Lovara, a group of Roma who worked as horse-dealers under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Austria, Roma officially account for 30,000 of the country's nine million people, but this is thought to be an underestimate since many do not declare themselves for fear of discrimination. "The Nancy Black project gives them the courage not to hide," she said.

Netflix Roma hip-hop drama

Wearing round glasses and dressed all in black, Horvath chooses to sing in Romani, an endangered language which is orally transmitted. She has also released Romani lullabies. "With the death of this language we are also forgetting a large part of our history," she said. When she raps in Romani,

she said, it "touches young people".

Last year, Netflix launched a series about a 17-year-old Roma girl torn between her family's strict rules and her dream of making a name for herself in hip-hop.

Horvath also fights for Roma artists to appear on Spotify and iTunes to be able to "penetrate and find their place in mainstream culture". Roma singers are starting to break into pop culture, according to Anna Piotrowska, a musicologist at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland.

She cites the example of Polish artist Viki Gabor, who won the Junior Eurovision in 2019. "Roma have always assimilated (Western) fashions and reworked them in an innovative way", Piotrowska told AFP. And "protest rap is very popular" among young people.

Women in particular are breaking down barriers, Piotrowska added. Pre-

viously, Roma music was "a man's job", she added, with men accounting for 99 percent of those playing the cymbal -- a popular Roma instrument.

Roma Holocaust memory

But discrimination and inequality endure, Horvath said, even in Austria where the constitution protects Roma as a minority present since the 15th century. It gives Roma the right to their own broadcasts and bilingual establishments, and a fund to finance associations.

Horvath herself worked for years as a journalist for the Romani programs of the public television channel ORF. At one of her recent stage shows, she used satire to make her audience understand the stigmatization Roma people suffer.

In front of an audience of about a hundred, almost entirely non-Roma -- or "gadje" in Romani -- she read between songs a text that turned a vicious stereotype on its head, making the "gadje" a "discriminated minority". "I use the same pseudo-scientific language" as that used in public discourse to make people believe that because the Oktoberfest beer festival in Munich exists, and rapes are committed there every year, Germans are all alcoholics and violent, she said.

"That is not representative of German society, and yet it is how the Roma are spoken about in the media," she said. She also writes poems about the killing of at least 500,000 Roma by the Nazis -- an atrocity also referred to in her early song "Trushula".

Roma call it the "Porajmos", which literally means "devouring". "Our ancestors were murdered. That is a reality," said Horvath, who has visited Auschwitz several times to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. "But in my family's daily life, as in most families, there was silence."—AFP



Roma singer Gilda-Nancy Horvath, known as Nancy Black, performs at Brunnenpassage.

Lifestyle



Hedi Slimane quits as Celine's artistic director

Hedi Slimane has left as artistic director at Celine, the French fashion house said amid speculation the 56-year-old may fill Karl Lagerfeld's empty chair at Chanel.

Slimane and Simon Porte Jacquemus -- the young French designer who made tiny handbags and other accessories a must-have -- are being talked about for the Chanel job after Virginie Viard bowed out in June. Celine hailed the company's performance since Slimane's 2018 appointment.

"Under his creative and artistic direction, Celine has experienced exceptional growth and established itself as an iconic French couture house," the company, part of the LVMH luxury goods group, said in a statement.

"The extraordinary journey taken together over the last seven years has made Celine a house with a formidable foundation for the future."

He will be succeeded by Michael Rider, who had worked at Celine, before joining Balenciaga. Slimane's holistic vision and rigour had, the statement went on, reaffirmed Celine's "feminine and Parisian roots".



Celine designer Hedi Slimane salutes the audience at the end of the presentation of Celine's Men Spring/Summer 2020 fashion collection on June 23, 2019 in Paris.—AFP

With his signature slim trousers and narrow black jacket, Slimane is considered one of the most influential designers in men's fashion. Lagerfeld bragged that he lost 40 kilograms (88 pounds) in the early 2000s to fit into Slimane's clothes.

The son of a Tunisian accountant and an Italian seamstress, born in Paris and educated at the Ecole du Louvre, he was the first designer of men's collections to receive the sought-after International Designer accolade from the Council of Fashion Designers of America in 2002. The prize, dubbed the "Oscars of fashion", was presented by late singer David Bowie, whom Slimane regularly dressed for his tours.

Slimane was artistic director of menswear at Yves Saint Laurent until 2000, when he moved to Dior Homme until 2007. In 2012 he returned to Saint Laurent as creative director but left in 2016. Between then and his arrival at Celine, Slimane had devoted himself to photography, his other passion.

At Celine, he replaced Phoebe Philo, a British designer who over a decade had introduced a sporty-chic look at the French house.

Slimane shook up this bourgeois look with a rock'n'roll spirit that at first was poorly received in some media. For his first Celine show in 2018, he turned Paris' Invalides military museum into a nightclub before sending models down the runway in short black dresses and ankle boots.

"I worked a lot on black effects, lacquered, satin, glossy, coppery as opposed to matte," he said in an interview with French newspaper Le Figaro, where he explained that he invented his famous skinny silhouette because as a teenager he "floated in everything".

In February 2020, Slimane stopped showing during Paris' official fashion weeks, saying they were "obsolete". Instead, he shot films on the French Riviera or at Chateaux.

He returned to Paris Fashion Week in February 2023, holding a show at the Palace, an historic Paris nightclub where Yves Saint Laurent, Serge Gainsbourg and Mick Jagger partied during its heyday. Tom Ford, John Galliano and Carine Roitfeld have also been spoken about as candidates for the Chanel post.—AFP

'Billions of birds' killed for fashion, says designer McCartney

British designer Stella McCartney lamented the "billions of birds" that have been killed to make people look good after her Paris show in which she appealed for the fashion world to change its ways. The campaigning creator who has blazed a trail for sustainable style, provocatively called her show "It's about... time" -- a reference to a T-shirt she first wore 25 years ago calling for an end to the use of fur and feathers in fashion.

"I see things from a different perspective," said the designer after her open-air show near the Eiffel Tower showcased top end looks made from everything from lentils to mushroom leather. "I've just been thinking about the billions of birds killed for the fashion industry," McCartney told reporters, yet "for me they represent freedom, they represent purity and peace".

The designer, the daughter of ex-Beatle Paul McCartney and animal rights activist Linda McCartney, is an advisor to the world's most powerful luxury tycoon, Bernard Arnault, on sustainability. Arnault's LVMH giant also owns a stake in her label.

Bird motifs dominated McCartney's spring-summer show, where she married her trademark business suits and jackets -- this season oversized with big shoulders -- with diaphanous and transparent blouses and dresses.



Protest at Hermes "It's about having a lightness of touch, having that femininity in that flight -- a general kind of weightlessness" to balance with what the designer called

"the masculinity" of some of the cuts. Nothing showed that playing off of soft and hard more than her metallic bras in the shape of birds.

McCartney said a series of deeply glamorous puff evening dresses were made from "the waste of plastic bottle tops. So we just, you know, trying to marry all of that together Other looks used "apple leather" made from waste in the apple industry.

McCartney -- a lifelong vegetarian -- has long preached that "sustainability is the future of fashion, not just a trend", with her brand lauded for its innovation and transparency as much as its style.

The fashion industry is regularly criticized for its impact on the environment, with some labels accused of greenwashing to disguise any lack of real change. Animal rights activists briefly disrupted the Hermes Paris Fashion Week show on Saturday. The high-end French house is best known for its leather goods.

Several major luxury brands, particularly in Italy, still use exotic skins and furs. Several major Hollywood figures were at the McCartney show including "Barbie" director Greta Gerwig, actor Natalie Portman and American singer-songwriter Hayley Williams, who braved the Paris chill in a barely-there ensemble that mostly consisted of her underwear.—AFP



British fashion designer Stella McCartney acknowledges the audience at the end of her Women Ready-to-wear Spring-Summer 2025 collection.



Models present a creation by Stella McCartney for the Women Ready-to-wear Spring-Summer 2025 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, with the Eiffel Tower in the background in Paris.—AFP photos



Artist Marina Abramovic hopes first China show offers tech respite



Serbian conceptual artist Marina Abramovic speaks during an interview with AFP.

Pioneering performance artist Marina Abramovic famously once walked thousands of kilometres along the Great Wall of China, a conceptual piece that became the stuff of art world legend. Now, decades later, she is finally holding her first exhibition in the country.

Abramovic, 77, will open her largest show ever at Shanghai's Modern Art Museum on Thursday.

"I was always dreaming how I can have a show here," Abramovic told AFP in Shanghai. "To have a show here, you have to be invited - now I'm invited." She said the wait had given her the chance to create something "very different than any show ever made... absolutely fully interactive".

"I think that China deserves something very, very radical and this is very radical." These days the country is a nascent superpower, but when Abramovic finished her 90-day feat of endurance along the Great Wall in 1988, it was only just emerging from years of isolation.

She and German artist Ulay, her romantic and creative partner for many years, had initially planned to get married after walking from opposite ends of the Wall to meet in the middle.

But it took so many years for Chinese officials to approve the project that their relationship had withered by the time they started the hike.

When the two artists reached the midpoint, they broke up instead.

Detox

The new exhibition, entitled "Transforming Energy", features videos and photos from that project, as well as dozens of new pieces embedded with Brazilian crystals.



Serbian conceptual artist Marina Abramovic (L) poses in a new artwork embedded with crystals, which Abramovic believes contain energy, with Shai Baitel, Artistic Director of the Modern Art Museum (MAM) Shanghai, ahead of the opening of her first exhibition in China, "Transforming Energy", in Shanghai. — AFP photos

Visitors will be encouraged to walk under and lie down on the works, or cooperate with strangers to "complete" them through physical gestures.

"I really wish (for a) detox of technology in this show," Abramovic told AFP, adding that visitors will be encouraged to put their phones away - a big ask in social media-obsessed Shanghai.

Born in the former Yugoslavia, Abramovic made her name with performances and pieces that blurred the boundary between the artist's body and art, often requiring audience involvement.

In 1974, she performed "Rhythm Zero", inviting visitors to treat her however they wanted with an array of objects including a rose and a gun.

Audience members eventually turned violent as they realized they could act with impunity.

More recently, at the Glastonbury Festival this year, Abramovic led an audience of hundreds in seven minutes of silence while wearing a white dress in the shape of a peace symbol.

Abramovic told AFP she felt people were drawn to her work because they "like to be part of some-

thing on the very human level".

"I don't lie, I tell the truth, I don't pretend anything else, I show vulnerability and somehow it's real," she said. "I experience incredibly much love, and also this brings me so much responsibility."

Chinese influence

China has changed dramatically from her first trip, on which she had an entourage of soldiers dispatched by the Chinese government, as well as an interpreter. "I never saw a car in 1988, it was all bicycles," Abramovic said.

At each village along the Wall, she asked to speak with local elders and listened to their tales of mythical dragons. Now, she sees robots delivering food to guests at her Shanghai hotel.

But the country still feels like "home", she said, drawing parallels with her upbringing as the daughter of communist officials. "I come from communism, I'm a hard worker, I have strong discipline and strong dedication," she said. Likewise, "Chinese people are hardworking people". Asked whether she



Serbian conceptual artist Marina Abramovic poses in a new artwork embedded with crystals.

thought it was ironic that a communist government was welcoming her now after being criticized for her earlier work in Yugoslavia, she said she does not talk about politics because her work is not political.

Her encounters along the Wall in 1988 sparked an interest in traditional healing practices, which fed into an enduring fascination with the alleged benefits of crystals.

In the show, trained guides will perform meditative actions with pieces intended to help participants channel the energy that Abramovic believes crystals contain.

"People should talk to each other, people should fall in love with each other - and this show is, in some kind of even romantic way, going back to simplicity," she said.

"I don't like it when you see the young people sitting at the table texting each other, we've lost simple human contact." — AFP

Sardinia's sheep farmers battle bluetongue as climate warms

The sheep huddle together, bleeding from the nose, aborting lambs or suffocating on saliva as they succumb to bluetongue, a virus sweeping through flocks on the Italian island of Sardinia.

Some 20,000 sheep have died so far this year on the island, which is home to nearly half Italy's flock and plays an important role in the production of famed Italian cheeses such as Pecorino.

It is another blow for farmers in a region already battered by a drought aggravated by man-made climate change - which experts say is also fuelling the spread of bluetongue and longer outbreaks.

"The virus hit about two and a half months earlier than usual," 39-year-old farmer Michela Dessi told AFP as she scanned her flock for panting or limping sheep in her fields in Arbus in western Sardinia.

Bluetongue does not present any risks to humans but in animals it causes swollen heads, high fevers, mouth ulcers, difficulty swallowing and breathing, and can turn an infected animal's tongue blue. It is transmitted between animals by biting midges.

While cattle, goats and deer can get it too, sheep are the most severely affected, according to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). Infected and pregnant ewes abort or their lambs are born deformed, and survivors can lose their wool.

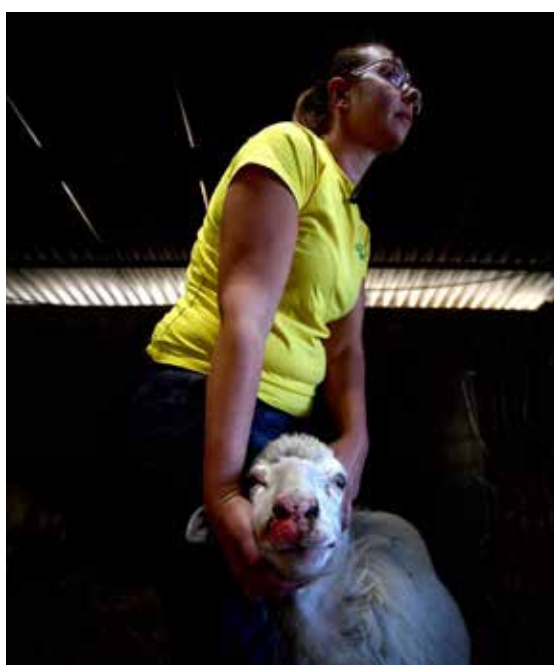
Sunken sides are a sign the ewes are carrying dead fetuses. The sick animals struggle to expel them.

Virus peaks

The infection rate this year on Dessi's farm is about 60 percent, and some 30 percent of her sheep have aborted. Around 50 of her 650 sheep have died - and in a way she said was "horrible to watch".

With high fevers, "they refuse food and water and some suffocate or drown in their own saliva", she said, adding that it is illegal to euthanize them.

Nearly 3,000 outbreaks have been recorded so far



Farmer Michela Dessi holds one of her sheep affected by bluetongue disease in her farm.

this year in Sardinia, compared to 371 last year - and the end is not yet in sight.

Bluetongue used to peak in Sardinia in August but has done so as late as November in recent years, according to the region's veterinary research institute (IZS). "Climatic conditions heavily influence midge populations," the animal health division at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome told AFP. They affect "their biting behavior and the speed of development of the virus, with climate change likely driving the virus' expansion... and con-



A flock of sheep grazes in a field in Arbus in the island of Sardinia. — AFP photos

tributing to larger outbreaks".

Cases have been reported this year in other European countries, from neighboring France to Portugal, Spain, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Bluetongue has been present in Sardinia since 2000 but Italy's farming lobby Coldiretti says authorities are too slow each year to vaccinate the island's flocks. The costs of failing to rein it in are high.

A University of Bologna study last year found the 2017 outbreak, which killed 34,500 sheep, cost an estimated 30 million euros (\$33 million). That included damages suffered by farms - deaths, reduced milk yields, infertility, abortions - costs to animal health authorities and subventions paid by the region to affected farms.

Mass graves

"The first outbreaks occur in the same at-risk areas each year," meaning highly targeted measures could theoretically prevent outbreaks, said Stefano Cappai from research institute IZS. There are three variants on the island this year, two of which can be vaccinated against, with mortality rates twice as high among unvaccinated sheep. Flocks should be vaccinated in March or April, Cappai said, but vaccines were only issued by the region in mid-June this year.

By that point, the virus had begun to spread unchecked. Even if the vaccines had been made available earlier, some farmers fear to use them.

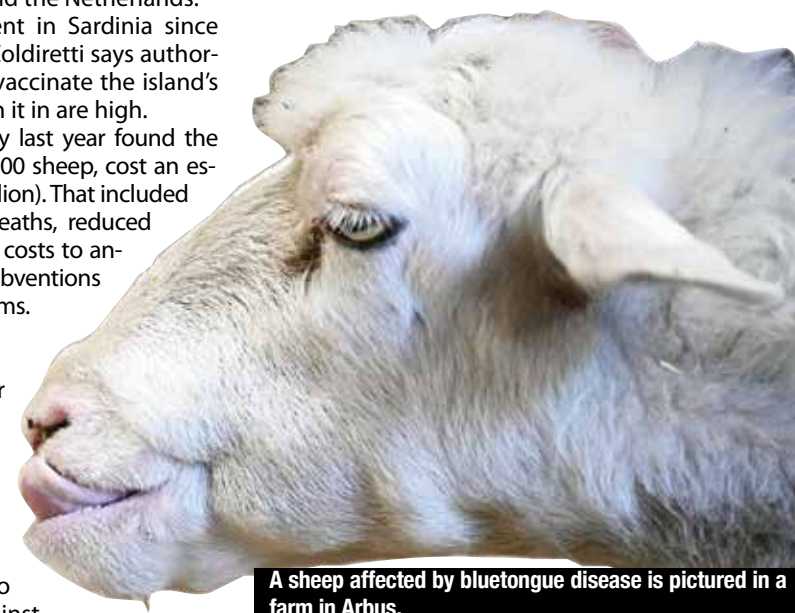
Others only vaccinate part of their flock, which means they fail to reach herd immunity, Cappai said.

And some farmers - like Dessi - vaccinated her flock, only for the sheep to catch the variant for which there is no vaccine yet.

Battista Cualbu, head of Coldiretti in Sardinia, who also has an outbreak on his farm, said vaccines are not enough and authorities must disinfect areas and

provide midge repellents.

"It would certainly save public money because the region has to pay compensation for dead livestock



A sheep affected by bluetongue disease is pictured in a farm in Arbus.

(and) lost income," he said, including less milk sold and fewer lambs for the slaughterhouse.

Compensation is set at 150 euros per sheep killed by bluetongue - a figure Coldiretti is battling to increase, although the region has failed to pay over the past three years, Dessi said.

As temperatures fall, the case numbers are expected to decline but Dessi said the end was weeks away.

"I've dug three mass graves already and I fear the worst is still to come", she said. — AFP



Sports

Darvish tames Ohtani as Padres thrash Dodgers

'If we keep showing up like this, there's no limit for us'

LOS ANGELES: Yu Darvish put on a pitching masterclass to shut down Shohei Ohtani as the San Diego Padres thrashed the Los Angeles Dodgers 10-2 to claim an emphatic series-leveling victory on Sunday. Japanese pitcher Darvish got rid of Dodgers superstar Ohtani three times for no hits in a gem of a display at Dodger Stadium that leaves the Padres in control of the best-of-five National League Division Series.

Darvish, who spent a season with the Dodgers in 2017, completely dominated the Los Angeles club's vaunted offense through seven innings, conceding just three hits for one run. The Padres bats meanwhile went to town on the Dodgers pitching. Fernando Tatis Jr. set the tone in the first inning, slamming a home run off Dodgers starter Jack Flaherty before David Peralta added a two-run homer in the second inning. Jackson Merrill's single scored Tatis to make it 4-1 in the sixth inning. Merrill then bludgeoned a two-run homer in the eighth inning before Xander Bogaerts blasted an insurance run to take the score to 7-1. Kyle Higashioka and Tatis then put the seal on the win in the ninth inning, smashing solo home runs as the Padres bats continued to dominate.

"There was a lot of emotion but we controlled those emotions and we took care of business today," two-homer hero Tatis said afterwards. "If we keep showing up like this, there's no limit for us." Tensions flared in the bottom of the seventh inning as Dodgers fans threw trash onto the outfield, holding up play for several minutes as security intervened.

"It's a show, and people got a little bit upset because our team went up," Tatis said. "But this is the playoffs, and this is the environment we're built for. I enjoy every single bit of it." The win leaves the Padres in pole position to claim victory as the best-of-five series heads to San Diego for games three and four on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Phillies level

In other playoff action on Sunday, Nick Castellanos was the hero as the Philadelphia Phillies bagged a thrilling 7-6 walkoff victory over the New York Mets. Castellanos' line drive to left field sent shortstop Trea Turner racing over home plate for the winning run in the final act of another epic duel between the two National League divisional rivals at Citizens Bank Park.

"Unbelievable," Castellanos said. "It was incredible. The series is even, but there's a lot of baseball left. We have to turn the page and get focused on game three as quickly as possible." The underdog Mets, who had stunned the Phillies 6-2 in game one on Saturday, once again provided stubborn resistance in an encounter that went back-and-forth.

Mark Vientos crushed a two-run homer in the third inning to put the Mets 2-0 ahead before Pete Alonso bludgeoned a 370-foot home run to right center field to leave the visitors 3-0 up in the top of the sixth. But after going a combined 13 innings without a score over game one and two, the Phillies bats suddenly came alive in the sixth inning.



LOS ANGELES: Shohei Ohtani #17 of the Los Angeles Dodgers grounds out in the sixth inning against the San Diego Padres during Game Two of the Division Series at Dodger Stadium. — AFP

Bryce Harper smashed a two-run homer to make it 3-2 before Castellanos tied it up with a 425-foot moon shot in the same inning. The Mets regained the lead through Brandon Nimmo's home run in the top of the seventh, only for the Phillies to respond with two runs to make it 5-4 after Bryson Stott's triple in the bottom of the eighth.

Stott then tacked on a run after J.T. Realmuto reached on a fielder's choice, to leave the Phillies

seemingly poised for victory at 6-4 heading into the final inning. However the Mets — who have made a habit of late comebacks throughout their postseason campaign — were not done.

Vientos hit his second homer of the game to score with Francisco Lindor and leave it knotted at 6-6 before Castellanos rescued the Phillies once again. Game three in the best-of-five series takes place in New York on Tuesday. — AFP

Masood, Abdullah tons lift Pakistan to 328-4 in first England Test

MULTAN: Skipper Shan Masood and opener Abdullah Shafique both cracked centuries as Pakistan scored an impressive 328-4 on the opening day of the first Test against England in Multan on Monday.

Masood's brilliant 151 was his first hundred for four years, while Shafique also returned to form with 102 as the pair put on a solid 253-run stand for the second wicket after Pakistan won the toss and batted. England, led by Ollie Pope in the absence of the injured Ben Stokes, briefly fought back when they removed both Masood and Shafique in the space of just two runs in the third session.

The visitors took the second new ball at 308-3 and dismissed Babar Azam, trapped leg-before by fast bowler Chris Woakes for 30. Saud Shakeel was unbeaten on 35 at the close of play with nightwatchman Naseem Shah yet to score. England's attack toiled hard in the Multan heat, with fast bowler Gus Atkinson the most successful with 2-70. Woakes and spinner Jack Leach both took a wicket each.

Masood had been under pressure to make runs, with his last hundred coming against the same opponents at Manchester in 2020 - 14 Tests and 27 innings ago. He pushed Woakes for a single to complete his fifth Test hundred off just 102 balls with two sixes and 13 fours in a dominant display of batting.

Shafique was equally assured as the pair made England's three-pronged pace attack and two spinners toil on a batting-friendly pitch. England took a wicket in the fourth over when Atkinson forced opener Saim Ayub to glove a shorter ball down the leg side to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith with the total on eight.

The visitors thought they had a second when pace bowler Brydon Carse, on debut, trapped Masood in front on 16 and umpire Kumar Dharmasena gave him out. However, a review showed the ball had pitched outside the leg stump. Masood went on the attack against Shoab Bashir, hitting the off-spinner for four boundaries before two more off Atkinson took him to his 11th Test fifty. Shafique survived being run out on 34 when Pope missed the stumps with his diving throw with the batsman well short of his ground. He smashed two fours and a six off Bashir to reach his sixth Test half-century. — AFP

Tennis stars hunt winning formula with new coaches

BEIJING: World number one Iga Swiatek split from hers after three seasons. Naomi Osaka and Coco Gauff were both at the China Open with new ones.

Three of the biggest names in women's tennis have in the past month jettisoned their coaches, casting a spotlight on the relationship between players and the people behind them. Swiatek was the latest to announce a change when she said Friday she would no longer be working with Tomasz Wiktorowski after a hugely successful partnership.

The five-time Grand Slam champion did not detail the reasons for the split, but after winning the French Open in June her form has tailed off. The 23-year-old Pole, who did not defend her China Open crown in Beijing because of "personal matters", is in the process of finding a replacement.

In the coaching merry-go-round, she has been linked with Wim Fissette — the Belgian who has been available since Osaka ended their working relationship last month. Players usually wait until the end of the season to make such changes but Osaka and Gauff both arrived in the Chinese capital with new coaches.

It brought instant success to the 20-year-old Gauff when the American won the China Open on Sunday, having parted ways with Brad Gilbert and brought in the lesser-known Matt Daly. Daly, who coached Canada's Denis Shapovalov in the past, will



Weyay Bank sponsors LOYAC AC Milan Academy with discount

KUWAIT: Weyay Bank, Kuwait's first digital bank, has officially signed a partnership agreement with AC Milan Academy in Kuwait, a collaboration designed to support and empower juniors as well as the youth through football training sessions promoted by AC Milan.

This sponsorship aligns with Weyay Bank's mission to create meaningful opportunities for the younger generation. By supporting AC Milan Academy, Weyay Bank aims at providing young athletes with the resources and opportunities they need to excel both on and off the field.

As part of this collaboration, Weyay Bank will be sponsoring all sessions at the academy, reinforcing its commitment to fostering the development and engagement of these segments within the community. "We are thrilled to support AC Milan Academy and contribute to the growth and development of young athletes in our community," said Fawaz Al Nakib, Campaign and Partnership Manager at Weyay Bank, during the signing ceremony. "Weyay Bank offers a 20% discount on all training sessions at the AC Milan Academy, exclusively for the 'Jeel' cardholders, which promotes our broader effort to make quality sports education more accessible to young aspiring footballers."



Naomi Osaka

work alongside Gauff's longtime coach, Jean-Christophe Faurel.

Top players usually have a large backroom team that includes more than one coach, fitness gurus, physiotherapists, analysts and others. Gauff said that she needed "a reset, a refresh", after her US Open defence ended in the last 16 in a blur of double-faults.

She called her performance in winning the Beijing final — in her first tournament with Daly — "by far my best match in a while". "It was trying to find the mix of two people that work together well," said Gauff, who until Beijing had struggled to replicate her best form this year.

Asked by AFP in the Chinese capital what the biggest factor is in choosing a coach, Gauff said "it just depends at what point in your career you're at". "Obviously right now I'm very young, so I'm look-

ing just for someone to help me develop in the long term," she said.

The right mix

Osaka returned to tennis in January after becoming a parent and is also looking for a reboot after failing to recapture the form that brought her four Grand Slams between 2018 and 2021. After ending her association with Fissette, she arrived in Beijing with the high-profile Patrick Mouratoglou in her corner. He is best known for being the long-time former coach of Serena Williams. Former world number one Osaka said that had initially put her off the Frenchman and also referenced his "big persona". The 26-year-old Osaka was in good touch at the China Open until retiring from her match against Gauff in the last 16 with a back injury.

She admitted to being "still a bit nervous" around Mouratoglou, but said: "Day by day we're getting more comfortable around each other. He's very confident in my abilities, and that in turn makes me very confident. His coaching style — he lets me figure things out, but at the same time he'll tell me things," she said. "He's surprisingly very strict, and that works for me." Beaten Beijing finalist Karolina Muchova said the most important aspect of the relationship between player and coach is someone you can get on with.

"I like to have people that I really like around me because we spend most of the time together on the tour travelling," said the 28-year-old Czech. "The most important thing is to have a nice relationship off court." She added: "We can go to dinners. We can talk very openly. I would say they're like my second family." She added with a smile: "Of course, they are not bad as well as their work." — AFP

Vikings hold off Jets in London to stay unbeaten

MIAMI: The Minnesota Vikings maintained their unbeaten start to the season after holding off a late rally from the New York Jets on Sunday to clinch a nail-biting 23-17 victory in the NFL's first London fixture of the season.

Vikings quarterback Sam Darnold, who was drafted by the Jets and then released after three seasons, was well contained by the Jets defense but crucially Minnesota were able to stop Aaron Rodgers at the death.

Rodgers led a 10-play drive as New York searched for a touchdown to win the contest but on 3rd & 10, the Jets quarterback's attempted pass to Mike Williams was picked off by Stephon Gilmore. It didn't look like being a close contest after the Vikings had opened up a 17-0 lead in the second quarter after they followed up a field goal with a 63-yard interception return from Andrew Van Ginkel.

C.J. Ham then ran in from two yards but the Jets gave themselves some hope with Rodgers moving out of the pocket and finding Allen Lazard at the back of the endzone to make it 17-7 at the half. The Jets trailed 20-10 midway through the fourth quarter before Rodgers found Garrett Wilson with a one-yard pass and when the Vikings could only manage a field goal in response, the outcome was in Rodgers' hands.

But the former Green Bay quarterback, who finished with 244 passing yards and two touchdowns, gave up his third interception of the game to leave the Jets on 2-3. The San Francisco 49ers suffered their third defeat of the campaign with a surprise 24-23 loss to NFC West rivals the Arizona Cardinals. The 49ers, beaten in the Super Bowl by the Kansas City Chiefs last season, led 23-10 at half-time but Kyler Murray found Elijah Higgins with a two-yard touchdown pass which was followed by a two-point conversion. — AFP

Sanath Jayasuriya named as Sri Lanka cricket head coach

COLOMBO: Sanath Jayasuriya was appointed Sri Lanka cricket head coach on Monday, replacing Chris Silverwood who quit following the country's early exit from the T20 World Cup. Jayasuriya, 55, had been in interim charge since June and on Monday was appointed full-time coach until March 2026 after recent successes, which included a Test match win in England and a home 2-0 Test series sweep against New Zealand.

"The Executive Committee of Sri Lanka Cricket made this decision, taking into consideration the team's good performances in the recent tours against India, England, and New Zealand," Sri Lanka's cricket board said in a statement.

Under Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka also won a one-day international series against India for the first time in 27 years. Former Sri Lanka captain Jayasuriya was regarded as one of the greatest one-day international batsmen of all time and was pivotal in the 1996 World Cup victory.

Jayasuriya represented Sri Lanka 586 times across the three formats of the game, hitting 42 centuries and taking 440 wickets. He played his last international in 2011. The former national selector has also had a brush with the International Cricket Council (ICC) anti-corruption unit, and was banned from all forms of cricket for two years in 2018.

Jayasuriya was charged after failing to hand over his mobile phones, and was accused of obstructing or delaying any investigation into corruption in the game. He is also an ex-lawmaker and a former deputy minister of the postal service. — AFP



Sanath Jayasuriya



Fawaz Al Nakib

Sports

PSG held by Nice to leave Monaco clear at top of Ligue 1

Luis Enrique's side have won just one of their last four games in all competitions

NICE: Paris Saint-Germain missed the chance to retake top spot in Ligue 1 after they were held to a 1-1 draw away at Nice on Sunday, leaving Monaco clear at the top going into the October international break. Nice had led at half-time on the Cote d'Azur thanks to a deflected strike late in the first half from their Tunisian international full-back Ali Abdi.

However, PSG were much improved in the second half following coach Luis Enrique's decision to replace Randal Kolo Muani at the interval and bring on Lee Kang-in up front. Their equalizer came from Nuno Mendes in the 52nd minute, with Ousmane Dembele setting up the Portuguese defender for a shot from outside the box on his weaker right foot which lacked power but found the bottom corner of the net.

Dembele's return was notable after the France winger was surprisingly dropped for the midweek Champions League defeat away to Arsenal. He tested Nice goalkeeper Marcin Bulka on several occasions and PSG had chances to take all three points, including a Marquinhos header which came back off the post.

Luis Enrique's side have won just one of their last four games in all competitions and go into the international hiatus in second place in Ligue 1, two points behind Monaco. A win for PSG in Nice would have seen them begin the weekend where they started it, above Monaco on goal difference.

"I am especially proud of my team for the way they played in the second half," said Luis Enrique, who expressed his satisfaction with PSG's start to the season. "I think it has been a promising start. I like what I am seeing. I think it is much better than our start to last season, but the important thing is to win the league and compete in all competitions."

said the Spaniard, who chose not to criticize Kolo Muani despite taking off the France striker early on. "I could have changed five players at half-time. In this case that was the change I decided to make." Monaco won 2-1 away at Rennes on Saturday with goals by Thilo Kehrer and United States striker Folarin Balogun.

Lyon continue upward surge

Marseille, who were held 1-1 at home by bottom club Angers on Friday, are five points behind the leaders in third place. Reims are fourth, behind Marseille only on goal difference, as they continued their good start to the campaign by beating struggling Montpellier 4-2.

Zimbabwe's Marshall Munetsi, Japanese international Keito Nakamura and Ivory Coast striker Oumar Diakite all scored for Reims before Teddy Teuma sealed their victory with a late penalty. Arnaud Nordin netted twice for Montpellier, who are in the relegation zone. Also on Sunday, Brest followed their 4-0 win away to Red Bull Salzburg in the Champions League in midweek by beating Le Havre 2-0 in Brittany.

Ludovic Ajorque and Ibrahim Salah scored for Brest in a game both sides ended with 10 men. Liam Rosenior's Strasbourg came from behind twice to draw 2-2 at home to Will Still's unbeaten Lens in Alsace.

M'Bala Nzola and Andy Diouf were on target for Lens either side of an Abakar Sylla counter for Strasbourg, who secured a point thanks to Habib Diarra's penalty on the hour. Lyon continued their revival in form by claiming a fourth consecutive win in all competitions with a 2-0 defeat of Nantes.

Argentinian World Cup winner Nicolas Ta-

They created a Champions League record last season by conceding only one goal in 14 matches en route to winning the competition an unprecedented 12th time. The achievement was reached despite the lengthy absence of injured goalkeeper and captain Mohamed el Shenawy with Mostafa Shobeir deputising in nine matches.

Ahly and Pirates met in the 2013 Champions League final with the Egyptians winning 2-0 in Cairo after drawing 1-1 in Soweto. Belouizdad will be making a fifth straight group-stage appearance while 1966 champions Stade Abidjan returned to the competition this season after a 54-year absence.

Sundowns, semi-finalists in the last two editions, face Moroccan clubs Raja Casablanca and FAR Rabat and Maniema Union from the Democratic Republic of Congo in Group B. Chasing a second title after defeating Zamalek of Egypt in the 2016 final, Sundowns recently bolstered their attack by signing South African international Iqraam Rayners.

Young Africans of Tanzania, unlucky quarter-final losers to Sundowns last season, are in Group A

Juve slip up

Marin lashed home the 88th-minute penalty which gave Cagliari a point at the Allianz Stadium after Roberto Piccoli was clumsily brought down by Douglas Luiz.

Romania midfielder Marin's arrowed penalty levelled Dusan Vlahovic's 15th-minute spot-kick and moved Cagliari a point above the relegation zone. It was the first goal conceded by Juve in Serie A this season and left Thiago Motta's third-placed side three points behind Napoli.

"We created a few opportunities but there was always the feeling that Cagliari could get back into the game," said Motta.

"What happened today is all our own fault."

Cagliari could have even snatched a last-gasp win as Adam Obert thumped the post in the fifth minute of stoppage time, with Juve down to 10 men following Francisco Conceicao's sending off almost immediately after Marin's equalizer for trying to win a penalty by simulating a foul.

Juventus would have almost certainly had the full three points had Vlahovic not wasted a huge chance in the 78th minute in front of Paul Pogba, who was in the stands after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) decided on Friday to cut his doping ban from four years to 18 months.

France midfielder Pogba can return to action in March but sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli gave the impression that the 31-year-old has no future at Juve. "We'll make our decision once the CAS decision has been made official. He was a great footballer but he hasn't played for a long time," Giuntoli said pre-match.

Roma demand 'respect'

Juve have been joined on 13 points by their next opponents Lazio, who are fourth after winning their fourth straight match in all competitions, 2-1 over Empoli.

Roma's sporting director Florent Ghisolfi meanwhile demanded "respect" for his team after the capital club were denied a late penalty during their 1-1 draw at Monza.

Georgios Kyriakopoulos' 87th-minute challenge on Tommaso Baldanzi, which was if anything

the crown in May by beating Lyon 2-0 in Bilbao.

A year after defeating Wolfsburg in Eindhoven, Barcelona eased to victory against the French giants who have won a record eight Champions Leagues. Formerly Europe's dominant force, Lyon outclassed Barcelona in the 2019 final and were victorious when the teams clashed in 2022.

Yet Barcelona have now won three of the last four editions of the competition, and have appeared in five of the last six finals. The question is whether anything can stop lifting the trophy again in Lisbon.

There have been changes in Catalonia, however, with coach Jonatan Giraldez leaving to take charge of Washington Spirit in the NWSL. His replacement is Pere Romeu, an internal appointment whose Champi-



NICE: Nice's Tunisian defender #02 Ali Abdi (L) and Paris Saint-Germain's Moroccan defender #02 Achraf Hakimi fight for the ball during the French L1 football match between Nice (OGCN) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Allianz Riviera stadium in Nice. — AFP

gliafico put Lyon ahead midway through the first half at the Groupama Stadium when he converted from a Said Benrahma assist. Lyon then doubled their lead early in the second half as Nantes defender Nicolas Pallois turned a low Corentin Tolisso centre into his own net.

The victory for Lyon comes on the back of a 4-1 win away to Rangers in the Europa League on Thursday and is their second on the bounce in Ligue 1. Having started the season with just one win in five, Pierre Sage's team are up to eighth, above Nantes. — AFP

Orlando Pirates, Ahly paired in CAF Champions draw

JOHANNESBURG: Title-holders Al Ahly of Egypt will face Orlando Pirates of South Africa after both were placed in Group C when the CAF Champions League group-stage draw was made on Monday. Chabab Belouizdad of Algeria and Stade Abidjan of the Ivory Coast complete the section following the draw at the Confederation of African Football offices in Cairo.

Ahly are the team to beat in the premier African club competition as they seek a historic third straight title having won the past two finals. The Cairo Red Devils, coached by Swiss Marcel Koller, are unbeaten in 24 Champions League matches since a humiliating 5-2 loss to Mamelodi Sundowns in South Africa early last year.

AC Milan fall at Fiorentina after De Gea's heroics

MILAN: AC Milan slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Fiorentina on Sunday after having two penalties saved by star man David De Gea, while Juventus fell further behind Serie A leaders Napoli on a day of spot-kick drama.

Albert Gudmundsson lashed home the decisive goal in the 73rd minute of a match in Florence which was packed with drama and featured three failed attempts from the penalty spot.

The 27-year-old's winner was made possible by De Gea pulling off two incredible stops to deny Theo Hernandez and then Tammy Abraham from scoring penalties in a superb display from the former Spain goalkeeper.

Those saves contributed to Milan missing the chance to move second above champions Inter Milan and Juventus, with the latter held 1-1 by Cagliari due to Razvan Marin's late penalty.

"We need to work out why we played the way we did because at times we did well but we couldn't keep it up over the course of the match," said Milan defender Matteo Gabbia, who received his first Italy call-up on Friday.

Instead Milan, who did level Yacine Aldi's first-half opener for Fiorentina when Christian Pulisic deftly guided home Hernandez's cross on the hour, sit sixth and five points behind Napoli.

Aldi's opener came in the 35th minute, after Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan made the first penalty save of the evening, easily keeping out Moise Kean's weak effort after Hernandez was penalized for kicking Dodo.

Italy international Kean had a tough night, missing a series of chances, having two goals rightly ruled out for offside and thumping the crossbar with a rocket in stoppage time, but he did provide the knockdown from which Gudmundsson won a thrilling contest.

Barcelona aiming for three in a row in Women's CL

PARIS: Barcelona begin their defence of the UEFA Women's Champions League on Wednesday with the rest of Europe trying to work out how to stop the Catalans winning the title for the third year running. Led by the brilliant Aitana Bonmati, as well as Alexia Putellas—her predecessor as winner of the Women's Ballon d'Or—Barcelona retained

with TP Mazembe of DR Congo, Al Hilal of Sudan and Mouloudia Alger of Algeria. The Dar es Salaam outfit are coached by Argentine Miguel Gamondi, and boast an outstanding midfielder in Burkina Faso international Stephane Aziz Ki, who scored four goals in qualifiers.

Draw

Group A

TP Mazembe (COD), Young Africans (TAN), Al Hilal (SUD), Mouloudia Alger (ALG).

Group B

Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA), Raja Casablanca (MAR), FAR Rabat (MAR), Maniema Union (COD).

Group C

Al Ahly (EGY, holders), Chabab Belouizdad (ALG), Orlando Pirates (RSA), Stade Abidjan (CIV).

Group D

Esperance (TUN), Pyramids (EGY), Sagrada Esperanca (ANG), Djoliba (MLI).

Matchdays: Nov 26-27, Dec 6-7, Dec 13-14, Jan 3-4 2025, Jan 10-11, Jan 17-18

Note: Group winners and runners-up qualify for quarter-finals. — AFP



MILAN: Inter Milan's French forward #09 Marcus Thuram warms up ahead of the Italian Serie A football match between Inter Milan and Torino at San Siro Stadium in Milan. — AFP

worse than Douglas Luiz's on Piccoli, sparked a furious reaction from Roma's players on the pitch and Ghisolfi later vented his frustration to Sky.

"What happened today was unacceptable, it was a clear penalty. Why did VAR not intervene?" said the Frenchman. "There is a huge amount of frustration in the dressing room. We demand respect."

Bologna's difficult start to life under Vincenzo Italiano continued with a goalless draw against 10-man Parma. — AFP

ons League bow comes away to Manchester City. "Pere Romeu gives us the continuity necessary to give the project stability," sporting director Marc Vives told the club's streaming platform. Barca One, Barcelona have added prolific Polish striker Ewa Pajor, who was top-scorer in Germany last season for Wolfsburg.

England right-back Lucy Bronze has left for Chelsea, while Spain World Cup-winning forward Mariona Caldentey has signed for Arsenal. Crucially, Bonmati and Putellas both agreed contract extensions. "It is key that they're staying. Not only in terms of football, as they are two players who have won the Ballon d'Or, but because they create Barca's identity," Vives said.

The main challenge to Barcelona could come from

News in Brief

Johan Neeskens dies at 73

THE HAGUE: Johan Neeskens, part of the Ajax and Netherlands teams that created "total football" in the 1970s and a key team-mate of Johan Cruyff, has died aged 73, the Dutch football federation said Monday. "With Johan Neeskens, the Dutch and international football world loses a legend," the KNVB federation said in a statement, adding that the midfielder had died on Sunday from an unspecified illness. Neeskens was part of the Ajax team that won three straight European Cups in the early 1970s and was also a member of the 'Clockwork Orange' Dutch team that reached consecutive World Cup finals in 1974 and 1978. He won 49 caps for the Netherlands. "With his characteristic tackles, sublime insight and iconic penalties, (he) will forever remain one of the leading players that Dutch football has ever produced," said the KNVB. — AFP

Osaka pulls out of Japan Open

TOKYO: Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka on Monday pulled out of her home Japan Open next week because of an injury that caused her to retire from the China Open in Beijing. "Due to injury, Naomi Osaka will not participate" in the WTA 250 tournament in the city of Osaka from October 14-20, the Japan Tennis Association said in a statement. The 26-year-old former world number one looked in good touch as she recorded three wins at the China Open in Beijing last week. But in her last-16 match, against eventual champion Coco Gauff, Osaka retired at the end of the second set because of a back injury. "So I locked my back up during practice earlier and honestly wasn't sure if I could even play but I just wanted to try," she said on social media. "Unfortunately things just got progressively worse during the match." — AFP

Duran signs new deal

LONDON: Jhon Duran has signed a new long-term contract with Aston Villa following his stunning start to the season, the Premier League club announced on Monday. The 20-year-old, who reportedly agreed personal terms with West Ham during the summer transfer window, has agreed a deal that will keep him at Villa Park until 2030. Duran has scored six times this season including the only goal in last week's 1-0 win against Bayern Munich in the Champions League, despite starting just once in all competitions. The Colombia international joined Villa in January 2023 from MLS side Chicago Fire, scoring five goals in 23 Premier League appearances last season, most as a substitute. Following last week's win against Bayern, Villa boss Unai Emery said the player's potential was "huge". "Sometimes he has been impatient and I need to speak to him as a person and connect to him as a person," he said. "As well as a player to try to let him play, putting him on the field because his talent is there and the capacity to help us." — AFP

England, the only country with three clubs in the 16-team group phase. Domestic champions Chelsea are joined by City and Arsenal, who both came through the qualifying rounds.

Chelsea are the only English finalists in the last 17 years. They were torn apart by Barcelona in 2021. They have won the English Women's Super League in the last five years, but long-serving coach Emma Hayes left after last season to take the United States job.

Her replacement is Sonia Bompastor, the former French international who led Lyon to Champions League glory in 2022. Chelsea, with Bronze, Sam Kerr and Lauren James, should be too strong for Real Madrid, Dutch champions Twente and Celtic in Group B. — AFP



VITORIA: Barcelona's Spanish forward #19 Lamine Yamal fights for the ball with Alaves' Spanish defender #08 Antonio Blanco and Alaves' Spanish defender #03 Manuel Sanchez during the Spanish league football match between Deportivo Alaves and FC Barcelona. — AFP

Lewandowski treble for leaders Barcelona as Atletico Madrid held

Girona snatch late 2-1 win over Athletic Bilbao

BARCELONA: Robert Lewandowski's 26-minute hat-trick steered La Liga leaders Barcelona three points clear of Real Madrid with an emphatic 3-0 win at Alaves on Sunday. Atletico Madrid's bid to bounce back from a heavy Champions League defeat fell short as Real Sociedad rescued a 1-1 draw thanks to Luka Sucic's brilliant late strike. Lewandowski reached 10 goals for the season in nine league games, stretching his lead as the division's top goal-scorer with a first-half treble.

Champions Madrid beat Villarreal on Saturday to pull level with Barcelona but the Catalans strolled to a comfortable triumph at Alaves' Mendizorroza stadium to continue a strong start to the campaign under new coach Hansi Flick. "I get a lot of good passes and so it's easier for me to score goals," Lewandowski told DAZN. "Today in the first half we played well from the first minute, we wanted to attack and score goals. "If you score three goals in the first half then in the second you can play with everything under control." Barca secured their eighth victory in nine La Liga matches

by taking control from the start.

Lewandowski and winger Raphinha, in superb form this season, were Barcelona's key players in a match they largely dominated. The Brazil international had a goal disallowed for offside before setting up Lewandowski for the opener with an inviting free-kick, which the striker headed home.

Raphinha burst down the left wing for Barcelona's second, crossing for the veteran Polish forward to knock in. Lewandowski completed his hat-trick with a clinical finish across Sivera after collecting Eric Garcia's pass. The 36-year-old hitman looks far sharper than last season and has 12 goals in 11 games across all competitions. "In front of goal (Lewandowski) is the best player, for me," Flick told reporters.

"It's amazing to score so many goals over such a period... I'm really happy with him and you can see he's 100 percent fit, it's perfect at the moment. "I'm happy for Lewy but also the other team-mates are really supporting him very (well)." Alaves had goals from Toni Martinez and Santiago Mourino ruled out

for offside as they battled well in the second half but Barca held firm.

Atletico denied

Diego Simeone's Atletico were thrashed 4-0 by Benfica on Wednesday but took a first-minute lead in San Sebastian against Real Sociedad. Former Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez drilled home after Antoine Griezmann's cute backheel into his path.

The Rojiblancos battled hard defensively to keep their advantage but Sucic looped a long-range effort over Jan Oblak in the 84th minute to secure the home side a point. Atletico's point took them third, level with Villarreal, but they trail leaders Barcelona by seven, while Real Sociedad are 15th.

"We scored the goal, the team worked well defensively, we didn't allow a team that plays well (to create) much danger," Simeone told DAZN. "Look at their goal, a great strike, and that's about it, I think a draw was fair." Sevilla shaded a derby clash against Real Betis 1-0 while Girona snatched a late 2-1 win

over Athletic Bilbao. Dodi Lukebakio's penalty was enough to pull Sevilla up to 12th, level on points with derby rivals Betis.

The winger converted from the spot in the 50th minute after a handball by Diego Llorente, who was furious with the decision. "I just ask for respect, we work like mad every week and there are referees who lie to our faces," said Llorente, who said the referee had claimed the defender's arm was in a raised position. Veteran Sevilla winger Jesus Navas, 38, played in his 28th and final Seville derby, becoming the player with the most appearances in the fixture—one more than Betis great Joaquin. Earlier Girona snatched a late win over sixth-placed Athletic Bilbao in an entertaining clash.

Cristhian Stuani converted a late penalty to earn three points for last season's surprise package, who are currently 11th after a difficult start this season. Girona goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga saved two penalties, denying Alex Berenguer and then Ander Herrera. — AFP



Kuwait wins gold in Special Olympics sailing competition

ABU DHABI: Kuwait Special Olympics team, under the umbrella of Al-Tamouh Club, secured the gold medal of the regional sailing competition for the Middle East and North Africa, which took place in Dubai last Wednesday, concluded today, Sunday. Players Nawaf Awadh and Manaf Al-Whaib secured first place in the Division Two competition, contributing

to the team's gold medal victory with an outstanding performance. The head of the Kuwaiti Special Olympics delegation Sadiqah Al-Ansari expressed her pride in this victory in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). She emphasized that teamwork and collaboration among the team members played a significant role in accomplishing this success. Al-Ansari praised the role of the State of Kuwait, represented by the Public Authority for Youth and Sports, the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club, and Al-Tamouh Club, for their exceptional support. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of participation in this competition, noting that it has provided a wealth of experience that enhances the players' abilities and opens new horizons for them. — KUNA

Family affair as LeBron, Bronny James make Lakers bow

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James and eldest son Bronny James claimed a piece of NBA history on Sunday after making their long-awaited first appearance alongside each other for the Los Angeles Lakers. The duo appeared together at the start of the second quarter in the Lakers' 118-114 preseason defeat to the Phoenix Suns in Palm Desert, east of Los Angeles. While LeBron James impressed with 19 points in just 16min 20sec on court before sitting out the second half, Bronny found the going harder with zero points in just over 13 minutes on court. The younger James attempted just one shot.

"It was cool for both of us, especially our family," LeBron James, 39, said afterwards of playing alongside Bronny, who celebrated his 20th birthday on Sunday. "It's definitely a moment I'll never forget.

"As a father it means everything. For someone who didn't have a dad growing up, to be able to have that influence on your son, to be able to have moments with your son, to work with your son—that's one of the greatest things a father could ever hope for." James Sr. admitted though that there were moments on court that felt surreal. "We came out of a timeout and we kind of stood next to each other. I kind of looked at him. It was like being in 'The Matrix' or something. It just didn't feel real. But it was great to have those moments."

Anticipation about when the James duo would become the first father-son duo to appear in the same NBA lineup together has built since the Lakers picked Bronny with the 55th pick in the NBA Draft in June.

"I'm thrilled that I get to be a part of this," new Lakers coach J.J. Redick said Sunday after the James double-act. "It's cool as a basketball fan. I think it speaks to the longevity of LeBron and his competi-



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 and Bronny James #9 of the Los Angeles Lakers greet David Fizdale of the Phoenix Suns on October 6, 2024 at Acrisure Arena in Palm Springs, California. — AFP

tive stamina. And it speaks to the work that Bronny has done to get to this point."

Redick introduced Bronny James to the floor with the Lakers leading 34-25 in the second quarter. LeBron James has said that playing with Bronny on the same team has given him a new lease on life as he enters the 22nd season of a glittering career.

"It's a lot of excitement, a pure joy, to be able to come to work every day, put in hard work with your son every day and be able to see him continue to grow," James said. "We push each other. He pushes me. I push him. We push our teammates, and vice versa. So it's just a very joyous moment not only for myself, but for our family. "So it's pretty awesome. Gives you a lot of life." Bronny said at the Lakers recent media day he was fueled by the words of critics who have suggested he owes his place on the Lakers roster entirely to his superstar father.—AFP