

RIDESAFE
RIDE SAFE
@ridesafe.app

BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

2 Forum focuses on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity



5 UN warns Lebanon could face same 'spiral of doom' as Gaza



8 Turkish exports to Palestinians surge after Zionist trade halt



16 Ex-Barcelona and Spain great Iniesta retires at 40



Zionists expand Lebanon attacks

Bibi claims Nasrallah successors killed • Hezb backs truce efforts • More carnage in Gaza

Amir receives Dubai Crown Prince



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Tuesday Dubai Crown Prince and UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum and the accompanying delegation on their official visit to the country.

Sheikh Hamdan conveyed greetings from UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Vice President and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin

Rashed Al-Maktoum to HH the Amir, wishing Kuwait and its people further progress and development.

HH the Amir returned the greetings to the top Emirati officials, wishing them, the UAE and its people development, progress and welfare. The reception featured discussion of issues of mutual interest and also touched on means to boost cooperation between both countries in all possible domains. Talks also touched on regional and international developments. — KUNA (See Page 3)

JERUSALEM/BEIRUT: Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday Zionist airstrikes had killed two successors to Hezbollah's slain leader, as the Zionist entity expanded its offensive against the group with a fourth army division deployed into south Lebanon. Netanyahu spoke in a video released by his office hours after the deputy leader of Hezbollah, which is reeling after a spate of killings of senior commanders in Zionist airstrikes, left the door open to a negotiated ceasefire.

"We've degraded Hezbollah's capabilities. We took out thousands of terrorists, including (Hasan) Nasrallah himself and Nasrallah's replacement, and the replacement of the replacement," Netanyahu said, without naming the latter two. Earlier on Tuesday, Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Hashem Safieddine, the man expected to succeed Nasrallah, had probably been "eliminated". It was not immediately clear whom Netanyahu meant by the "replacement of the replacement".

Safieddine has not been heard from publicly since another airstrike late last week, part of an escalating Zionist offensive after a year of border clashes with a major foe that has been clashing with the Zionist entity along the border in support of Palestinians fighting the Zionist entity in Gaza. "Today, Hezbollah is weaker than it has been for many, many years," Netanyahu added.

The heightened regional tensions kindled a year ago by Palestinian group Hamas' attack on Gaza on the Zionist entity have escalated in recent weeks to engulf Lebanon. On Oct 1, Iran fired missiles at the Zionist entity. On Tuesday, Iran warned the Zionist



An image grab taken from Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV shows the group's deputy chief Naim Qassem delivering a speech from an undisclosed location on Oct 8, 2024. — AFP

entity not to follow through on threats of retaliation. Its foreign minister said any attack on Iran's infrastructure would be avenged. Western powers are seeking a diplomatic solution, fearing the conflict could roil the wider, oil-producing Middle East.

The Zionist military said it had sent the 146th Division into south Lebanon, the first reserve division to have been deployed over the border, and was extending ground operations against Hezbollah from southeast Lebanon into its southwest. Overnight, the Zionist entity again bombed Beirut's southern suburbs where Hezbollah is headquartered and said it had killed a figure responsible for the heavily armed group's budgeting and logistics, Suhail Hussein Hussein — the latest in a string of assassinations of some of Hezbollah's top officials.

Continued on Page 6

Duo wins Nobel for 'foundational' AI breakthroughs



STOCKHOLM: Geoffrey Hinton, known as the Godfather of AI, and physicist John Hopfield won the Nobel physics prize on Tuesday for their pioneering work on the foundations of artificial intelligence. The pair's research on neural networks in the 1980s paved the way for technology that promises to revolutionize society but has also raised apocalyptic fears.

"In the same circumstances, I would do the same again, but I am worried that the overall consequence of this might be systems more intelligent than us that eventually take control," British-Canadian Hinton, 76, told reporters via a phone interview after the announcement. Hinton raised eyebrows in 2023 when he quit his job at Google to warn of the "profound risks to society and humanity" of the technology. In March last year, when asked whether AI could wipe out humanity, Hinton replied: "It's not inconceivable".

The pair were honored "for foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks," the jury said.

Continued on Page 6

Bader Al-Kharafi hails Zain's Gulf Cup sponsorship

By Faten Omar

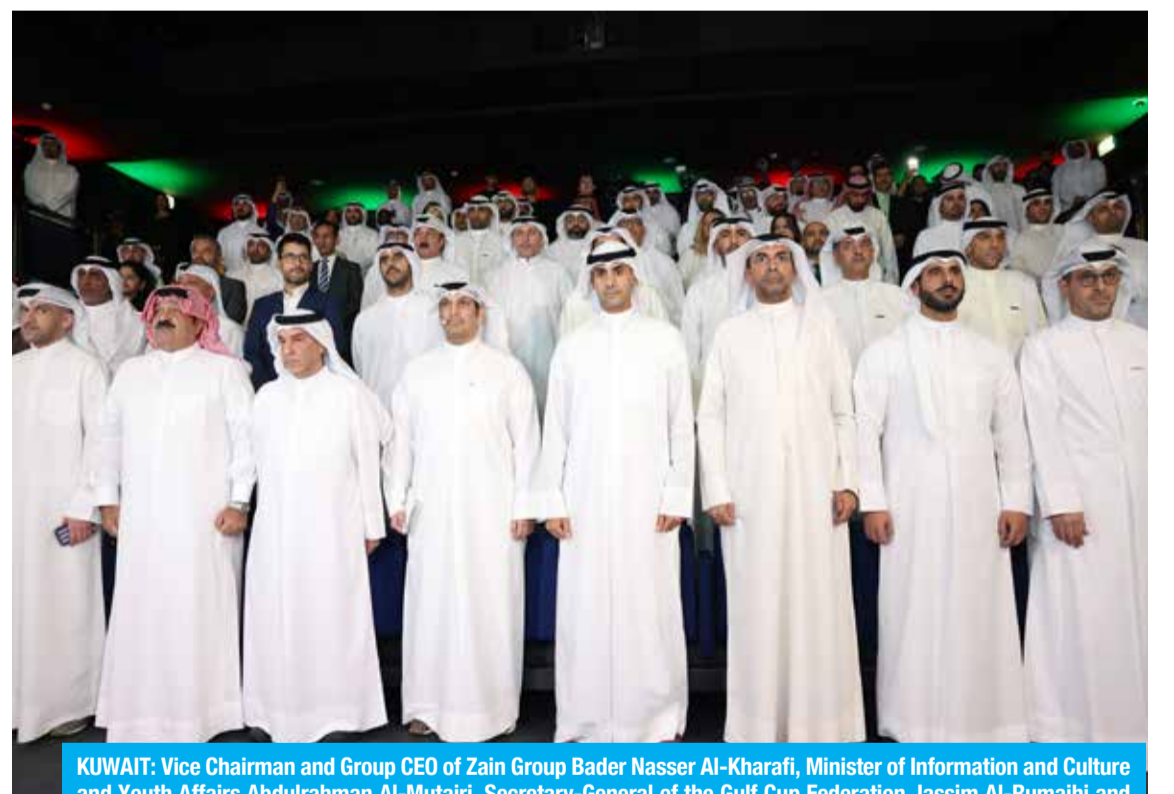
KUWAIT: Kuwait is gearing up to host the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament from Dec 21, 2024 to Jan 3, 2025. During a presentation led by Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Zain Group signed a partnership agreement with the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Zain Group, stated: "Zain's strategic partnership reflects its commitment to sports and youth, aligning with the directives of HH the Amir of Kuwait to position Kuwait as a host for international events."

Al-Kharafi highlighted Zain's role as the official sponsor, noting that the Gulf Cup holds special significance for Kuwait. "Kuwait has won the Gulf Cup multiple times, and it holds a special place in the hearts of Kuwaiti fans. The tournament's slogan, 'The Gulf Future', emphasizes the need for advanced technology, and Zain, a leader in the tech field, will provide top services in terms of stadium coverage and digital solutions, all in line with international standards," he shared. (See Page 16)

Saied re-elected with 90.7% votes, but turnout 28.8%

TUNIS: Kais Saied has been re-elected president of Tunisia with 90.69 percent of votes cast, electoral authority ISIE said Monday. Saied, 66, won Sunday's vote by a landslide with 2.4 million votes — but with turnout at only 28.8 percent of nearly 10 million eligible voters. His imprisoned rival Ayachi Zammel received just 7.3 percent, and third candidate Zouhair Maghzaoui only 1.9 percent, ISIE head Farouk Bouasker said on national television.

Critics said the low turnout reflected widespread disillusionment with the election. On Sunday, the ISIE said just six percent of voters were aged 18-35, a category constituting a third of the initially



KUWAIT: Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Zain Group Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Minister of Information and Culture and Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cup Federation Jassim Al-Rumaihi and other officials attend an event at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center on Oct 8, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

eligible electorate. After longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted in 2011, Tunisia prided itself on being the birthplace of the regional revolts against authoritarianism that became known as the Arab Spring.

But the North African country's path changed dramatically after Saied was elected in 2019 with 73 percent of the vote. Two years later, he dissolved parliament, and later rewrote the constitution. Sunday's turnout was the lowest recorded in a Tunisian presidential after Ben Ali's ouster. In 2019, 58 percent turned out to vote for Saied as president.

"I didn't vote yesterday, simply because I no longer have confidence and I am desperate," said Houcine, 63, giving only one name for fear of retribution. Political commentator Hatem Nafti, author of a forthcoming book on Saied's rule, said: "The vote's legitimacy is undoubtedly tainted with candidates who could have overshadowed (Saied) being systematically sidelined."

Continued on Page 6



TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied celebrates with supporters in the capital after being re-elected on Oct 7, 2024. — AFP



Local

GCC Forum focuses on significance of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity

AIU hosts 2nd AI and Cybersecurity GCC Forum: Introducing leaders and youth to the future



Former MP and minister Maasouma Al-Mubarak (center) is pictured with other dignitaries. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Photos show attendees at the 2nd AI and Cybersecurity GCC Forum on October 8, 2024. The forum was organized by the American International University (AIU) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The 2nd AI and Cybersecurity GCC Forum took place on October 8, 2024, organized by the American International University (AIU) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The forum focused on the critical significance of artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape. Esteemed speakers with profound expertise in these fields shared invaluable insights during various presentations and workshop sessions.

At the beginning of the event, Richard Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of American International University, delivered the opening remarks. He emphasized the pivotal role of cybersecurity in contemporary society, stating that this forum marks a significant moment in history. Johnson explained that the importance of AI and cybersecurity surpasses the importance of any previous discovery humanity ever created.

He urged organizational leaders to prioritize AI and cybersecurity, and said that neglecting these areas put substantial risks to their organizations.



He also highlighted the ongoing shift in the global economy driven by AI and stressed that any nation or organization wishing to remain competitive must adopt AI at all levels because failing to do so, especially in the face of competition that embraces AI, could jeopardize their operational viability.

Moreover, Johnson noted that cybercrime costs the global economy trillions of dollars, which further shows the necessity of cybersecurity. He reiterated that leaders who do not prioritize AI



and cybersecurity are placing their organizations in high risk of failure. On his part, Major General Mohammad A Boarki, Chairman of Kuwait's National Cyber Security Center (NCSC), welcomed attendees and underscored the importance of technological advancement, particularly in AI and cybersecurity.

He discussed the rapid technological developments currently taking place, which present both challenges and opportunities for various sectors.



General Boarki outlined that the conference would delve into these issues through discussions with leading experts. He further stated that the initiatives discussed at the forum are vital for enhancing national security and safeguarding society against emerging risks. In closing, he addressed the youth. "You are the future bearers of knowledge and innovation," he said. He encouraged them to seize this valuable opportunity to expand their perspectives during this forum.

GRTIEC conference discusses transport and infrastructure

ABU DHABI: The Global Rail Transport Infrastructure Exhibition and Conference (GRTIEC) that kicked off in the UAE capital on Tuesday is a platform for expertise swap and study thoughts on how to develop the planned railway in Kuwait, said a senior Kuwaiti official. The theme of the event's first edition, "Setting Transport Infrastructure and Global Connectivity," mirrors its significance, said Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Mashaan, who is heading Kuwait's delegation at the event.

The program brought together elite personalities from the transport and railway sectors to address global approaches in the railway, namely, plans for sustainable infrastructure and challenges, the minister said, affirming that she and her accompanying delegation would study the experiences of

other countries. The minister held a meeting with UAE Infrastructure Minister Suhail Al-Mazroui. They discussed cooperation in the railway field. Up to 300 entities from more than 40 countries are partaking in the exhibition.

The first edition of the Global Rail, Transport, and Infrastructure Exhibition and Conference (GRTIEC) kicked off. The event, hosted by Etihad Rails, is held under the patronage of UAE vice president Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The three-day event saw broad regional and international participation, with 300 exhibitors from 40 countries. The conference is aimed at enhancing cooperation between countries in the fields of transport, logistics, and infrastructure.

The conference would include a series of panel discussions and workshops featuring more than 1,000 participants, including experts, professionals, and decision-makers from various companies worldwide. The exhibition's goal is to highlight key areas, including global railways, challenges, and ways to provide sustainable infrastructure. It will also focus on sustainability issues and the role of the railway sector in enhancing transportation and logistics services in the region. — KUNA



Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Mashaan meets with UAE Infrastructure Minister Suhail Al-Mazroui and other officials. — KUNA

Training program on catheterization, first of its kind in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Aortic Replacement Academy hosted a training program on catheterization, which was held for the first time in Kuwait and out of Europe. The program is aimed at training cardiologists and consultants from the Middle East and Europe. The program included 5 aortic valve replacement procedures, three of which were held in the chest hospital

at Al-Dabous Heart Center (Adan Hospital).

Head of the Cardiac Catheterization Unit Dr Khalid Al-Merri, head of the Heart Department at the Chest Hospital Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi, head of the Cardiac Catheterization Unit at Salman Al-Dabbous Heart Center of Adan Hospital Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti and consultant in cardiology and interventional catheterization, Dr Abdullah Ismail, participated in the program.

The participants discussed all technical aspects of this type of procedure and the best approach, as well as steps that guarantee excellent results. Participants lauded Kuwaiti doctors, adding that Kuwait's hosting of this training program strengthens its position as a destination for advanced medical training in the region. Such quality procedures enhance the level of medical services provided to patients.



Hawally governor and director of Hawally Health District visit Mubarak Hospital.

Hawally gov stresses keenness to provide best medical services

KUWAIT: Hawally Governor Ali Al-Asfar affirmed Kuwait's keenness on providing the best medical services and keeping pace with the latest global developments in the medical field, noting that the health care sector is witnessing rapid growth, in addition to the availability of qualified medical cadres. Al-Asfar added in a press statement on Tuesday after visiting Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital in Jabriya and checking on patients that the efforts made by medical staff in hospitals, health centers, and specialized centers are tremendous.

He stressed the need to provide the necessary services to all patients, calling for enhancing cooperation between health authorities and the community to ensure quality services to all residents of Hawally Governorate. Director of Hawally Health District, Dr Mona Abdul Samad, said in a similar statement that the Ministry is working to develop the health system in line with the future vision and



Hawally governor Ali Al-Asfar greets a child during his visit to the hospital. — KUNA photos

government's directions to achieve a qualitative leap in the level of health services.

Abdul Samad explained that the Ministry seeks, in accordance with the vision (New Kuwait 2035), to provide public hospitals with the latest global medical devices and equipment to ensure a healthy life for citizens and residents while ensuring the highest quality standards. The hospital welcomes retirees at any time, allocating special times for them from 2 pm to 6 pm, providing all necessary medications, and is ready to serve them round the clock. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Medics pose for a group photo after the training program on catheterization.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Dubai Crown Prince, UAE Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum during his official visit to Kuwait. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah holds talks with Dubai Crown Prince.

Dubai Crown Prince visits Kuwait

Sheikh Hamdan meets top leadership, visits Al-Salam Palace Museum

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Tuesday Dubai Crown Prince, UAE Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and the accompanying delegation on their official visit to the country. During the reception, Sheikh Hamdan conveyed greetings from President of the UAE Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum to His Highness the Amir, wishing Kuwait and its people further progress and development.

His Highness the Amir returned the greetings to the top Emirati officials, wishing them, the UAE, and its people development, progress, and welfare. The reception featured discussion of mutual respect and also touched on means to boost cooperation between both countries on all possible domains.

Talks also touched on regional and international developments. First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and senior state officials were present at the reception.

In another development, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held a banquet Tuesday in honor of Dubai Crown Prince, UAE Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and his accompanying delegation. Also, Sheikh Hamdan visited Al-Salam Palace Museum on Tuesday. He was accompanied by First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. Sheikh Hamdan toured the Al-Salam Palace where he was briefed on the historical collections and documents, as well as important aspects of Kuwait's history and civilization. — KUNA



Dubai Crown Prince visits Al-Salam Palace Museum on Tuesday. He was accompanied by First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah welcomes Dubai Crown Prince.

Amir receives credentials of foreign diplomats



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Tuesday the Ambassadors of South Sudan, Honduras, Bangladesh, Algeria and Kyrgyzstan who handed their credentials during a ceremony at Bayan Palace. Senior state officials attended the ceremony. — KUNA

Mexican Embassy marks 214 years of independence

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Mexican Embassy in Kuwait held a reception on Monday to mark the 214th anniversary of the Mexican Independence Movement. "I am honored to celebrate with you the beginning of the Mexican Independence Movement, which started 214 years ago in the small town of Dolores, Hidalgo," Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait Eduardo Pena Haller said.

"It was there that the priest Miguel Hidalgo called on the people to rise against the vicereignty of New Spain. Together with fellow priest José María Morelos y Pavón, they championed a new path for Mexico, advocating for equality, fair opportunities — especially for indigenous peoples — and the establishment of a republic based on values like universal suffrage, freedom of expression and association. These principles continue to shape Mexico as an independent nation today," he said.

Regarding bilateral relations, Haller praised the close ties between Kuwait and Mexico. "The two nations are united by shared values such as respect for international law, a strong belief in multilateralism, the promotion of peaceful coexistence and a commitment to international cooperation as a key instrument in building a more just and equitable world," he said. He also noted the growing closeness between the countries in recent years, citing high-level visits and the signing of 25 treaties and agreements. "Trade between Kuwait and Mexico is growing at an annual rate of 28.5 percent," he added. The ambassador highlighted the contributions of 150 Mexicans living in Kuwait, commending their work ethic, sense of community and dedication, which he said reflect the best of Mexico abroad. He concluded by announcing: "On October 1, Mexico opened a new chapter in its history. For the first time, our country's presidency is held by a woman, Dr Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo. This moment holds great political, economic and social significance and will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on Mexico's future."



Mexican Ambassador Eduardo Pena Haller waves the Mexican flag.



Mexican Ambassador Eduardo Pena Haller and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Affairs, Nawaf Abdulateef Al-Ahmad cut the cake during the ceremony.



Officials and ambassadors take a group photo.



Audience at the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait Lawyers Association holds AI conference

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Lawyers Association, in cooperation with the French Embassy in Kuwait, held a conference on "Artificial Intelligence between Law and Technology: The Role of Lawyers in Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection." The two-day event (October 7-8, 2024) was held at the Society's Theater. On the first day, a lecture about European law was given by Brunessen Bertrand, professor of law at the University of Rennes and expert on AI and EU governance. New laws in the EU were discussed, as well as the possibility of its application in Kuwait, including AI governance and its basis in the EU and Kuwait.

On the second day, they discussed the impact of AI on services, especially with regards to employment. The message is to leverage state employment, promotion techniques, artificial intelligence, and crafts to enhance the efficiency and performance of agencies and organizations in a way that achieves the highest levels of precision in operations and procedures. The vision is to be a leading and distinguished reference in the application of artificial intelligence technologies across various fields and to be the primary source of support and guidance for government and private entities in the country.

The principle is to focus on sustainable innovation with a commitment to develop AI solutions and technologies that support continuous improvement and operational efficiency in line with development goals. The objectives of the initiative include developing an AI Innovation Center — a specialized center that serves as a hub for innovative ideas and projects, working to support government and private entities in adopting smart solutions. The association aims to adopt high standards, transparency, and ethical practices in the development and use of AI technologies while ensuring full compliance with national and international legislation, including data protection, privacy, and human rights. It prepares advanced training by providing high-level educational programs designed to meet the needs of government and private entities.

Interactive platform

The idea is to develop an advanced electronic platform that provides resources and tools based on artificial intelligence technologies and to improve operations and procedures in various sectors. The innovation also focuses on building strategic partnerships with local and international academic and technological institutions and enhancing integration and exchange of expertise in developing AI solutions. Their focus is to achieve results in order to ensure that all AI initiatives and solutions are geared towards achieving tangible and impactful results that contribute to improving overall performance and developing services. The association focuses on spreading awareness and education programs through seminars, conferences, and workshops targeting government and private entities.

KFAED, OCHA ink \$2.5 million deal

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a grant agreement with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) worth \$2.5 million to support humanitarian missions for the period between 2024 and 2025. KFAED said in a press statement on Tuesday that the agreement aims to meet the urgent appeal of the United Nations to support several sectors in the Gaza Strip with fuel supplies so as to maintain the operation of basic services, indicating that this contribution is the third of its kind between the two sides in this field.

The agreement was signed by Acting Director General of the Fund Walid Al-Bahar and Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Lisa Dutton. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development is considered a development tool that relies entirely on its own resources in providing loans and development aid. — KUNA

MoI arrests suspects with narcotics, cash

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior announced on Tuesday the arrest of three suspects in possession of eight kilograms of various drugs and a significant amount of cash in the Kabd area. In an official statement, the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry reported that the Criminal Security Sector, represented by the General Administration for Drug Control, successfully raided a farm in Kabd.

During the operation, authorities seized three kilograms of hashish, three kilograms of a synthetic substance known as chemical, two kilograms of methamphetamine, locally referred to as "Shabu," along with 1,000 capsules of the drug "Lyrica," and an undisclosed amount of cash from the suspects, believed to be proceeds from drug sales. The three individuals, residing illegally in the country, have been referred to the Public Prosecution for legal proceedings.

The Ministry reaffirmed its ongoing efforts to combat the spread of drugs and protect society from the dangers of drug abuse and continuous monitoring of criminal networks with the goal of eradicating drug trafficking and consumption. The Ministry also stressed its commitment to enforcing the law and urged all citizens and residents to cooperate with law enforcement by reporting any suspicious activities through the emergency hotline (112) or the General Administration for Drug Control (1884141). — KUNA



NBK sponsors LOYAC's 'Kilma' program to empower youths

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting the development of youth, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) proudly sponsors LOYAC's "Kilma" program, which empowers young individuals with essential skills in public speaking, critical thinking and leadership through debate. This strategic partnership with LOYAC reflects NBK's dedication to investing in the future of Kuwait by nurturing the next generation of leaders.

LOYAC's "Kilma" program directly addresses these needs in today's world, offering a unique 3-week experience for Arabic-speaking youth aged 13 to 17. The program runs from October 6th to October 24th, held at NBK Headquarters, and is designed to develop key skills and cultivate youth who are capable of critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and open-minded debate.

Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public Relations Manager, expressed NBK's enthusiasm for supporting such a vital initiative, stating, "NBK's sponsorship



Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel

and participation in the Kilma program are part of our longstanding strategic partnership with LOYAC. We are deeply committed to empowering young people to achieve their potential and contribute positively to society."

She continued, "The Kilma program is one of the initiatives that invest in youth, providing them with opportunities to refine their public speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork skills. We believe that investing in human capital is an investment in our collective future, and Kilma aligns with NBK's broader vision to support the aspirations of the next generation."

"By offering youth the chance to engage in such

activities, NBK and LOYAC aim to prepare the next generation to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world with intelligence, empathy, and an open mind", she added. Throughout the course of the Kilma program, shy and reserved participants are given the platform to build self-confidence, interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, and broaden their perspectives. They are encouraged to engage in debates that foster rational discourse while embracing creativity and persuasion.

Participants are challenged to construct well-researched arguments, present them confidently, and engage in meaningful debates on various topics. Through interactive workshops, creative exercises, and public speaking activities, participants not only enhance their debating skills but also strengthen their abilities in active listening and collaboration. LOYAC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating programs that help youth develop professionally, enhance their personal growth, and find purpose through service to others.

Preserving gas cylinders is 'shared responsibility'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) affirmed on Tuesday that preserving gas cylinders and their safety is a shared responsibility that requires concerted efforts of all concerned parties and consumers. This came in a speech delivered by

the Senior Warehouse Analyst at the Liquefied Gas Filling Branch in Al-Shaabiya, Amna Naseeb, during an event organized by the company in cooperation with the General Fire Force under the title 'Safety with Every Cylinder'.

Naseeb pointed out the KOTC's commitment to global safety, security, and quality standards in dealing with gas cylinders before they reach consumers, noting the company's keenness to ensure the safe preservation and transportation of gas cylinders to consumers. She explained that the cylinders go through several stages to ensure their safety before they are safely released to gas branches, in parallel with moving forward with

short- and medium-term plans to address damages resulting from misuse.

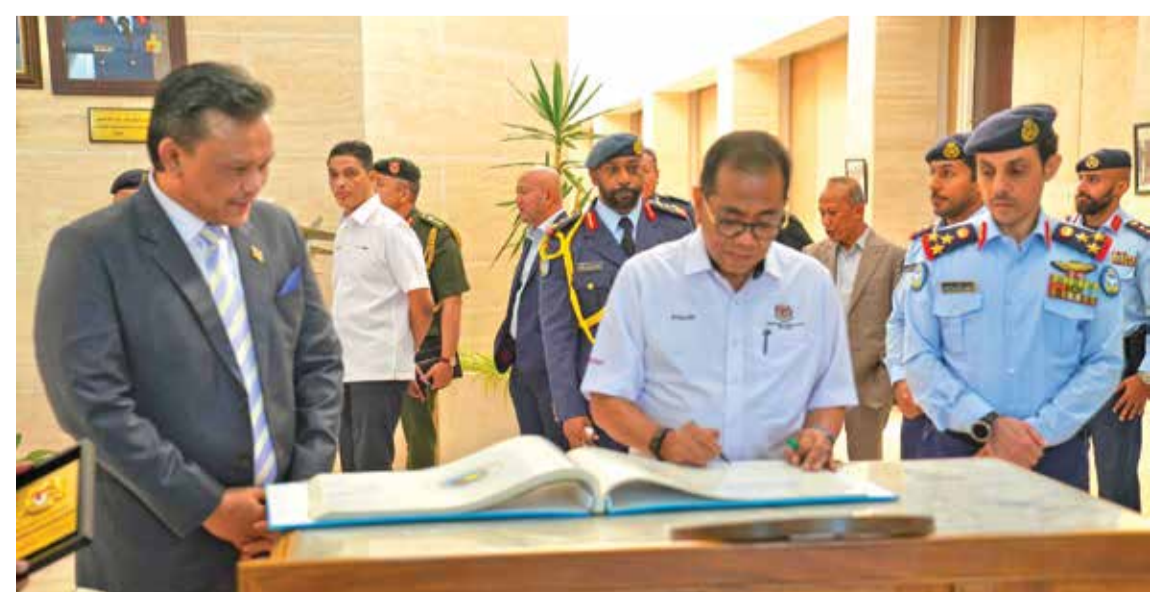
For his part, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Al-Hajji from the General Fire Force gave a visual presentation on the causes of widespread fires and ways to reduce and limit their spread, in addition to the importance of acquiring fire protection means. Al-Hajji explained that some simple accidents, like children playing with it or electrical short circuit issues, can spark fire. He stressed the need to spread awareness among the public to reduce accidents in homes, commercial complexes, investment housing, elevator and escalator accidents, and evacuation routes. — KUNA



Malaysian minister visits Ahmed Al-Jaber Air Base

KUWAIT: Malaysian Defense Minister Mohammad Nordin visited Ahmed Al-Jaber Air Base and was briefed about the base and its duties. The Ministry

of Defense said in a press statement on Tuesday that the Malaysian minister toured various facilities of the base and viewed the squadrons and aircraft hangars. The Malaysian minister was received upon his arrival at the base by Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army and Acting Commander of the Air Force Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and a number of Air Force officers. The Malaysian Defense Minister and his accompanying delegation are currently on an official visit to Kuwait to discuss ways to enhance bilateral military relations between the two friendly countries. — KUNA



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

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



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



Battered Florida braces for monster hurricane Milton

Immigrants bringing 'bad genes' into US, Trump says

Page 6

Page 7



BEIRUT: A man stares at the devastation in the aftermath of a Zionist strike that targeted the Sfeir neighborhood in Beirut's southern suburbs on October 6, 2024. — AFP

UN: Zionist assault leading Lebanon into 'spiral of doom'

Gaza's devastation repeated in Lebanon as hospitals forced to shut, farmlands burnt

GENEVA: UN officials voiced concern on Tuesday that the same methods of warfare used by the Zionist entity that caused high civilian casualties and widespread destruction in Gaza are now being repeated in Lebanon, calling for action to avoid the same "spiral of doom". Zionist forces have begun a ground invasion in the southwest of Lebanon, escalating a year-long war which has killed over 1,000 people in the past two weeks and displaced over a million people.

In the Gaza Strip, the Zionist entity's military offensive has killed nearly 42,000 Palestinians and displaced 90 percent of the Palestinian territory's 2.3 million population. "It is in my mind, from the time I awake until the time I sleep, that we could go

into the same sort of spiral of doom, and we need to do everything we can to stop that from happening in this particular crisis," World Food Programme Country Director in Lebanon Matthew Hollingworth said in response to a question about parallels between the two conflicts.

"We need the world to be more impactful and able to make the arguments that this cannot go on," Hollingworth told a Geneva briefing by video link from Beirut. Fears of a repeat of Gaza's upheaval are also shared by the Lebanese population and this explains why so many have fled so quickly, Hollingworth said after visiting displacement camps.

A World Health Organization official said at the

same briefing that nine hospitals in Lebanon had been shut or partially shut — a pattern that has also occurred in Gaza. Ian Clarke, WHO's Deputy Incident Manager for Lebanon, warned of disease outbreaks in Lebanon due to crowded conditions in displacement shelters and hospital closures as medics have fled the Zionist entity's assault.

The UN human rights office has previously said that Zionist forces may have repeatedly violated the laws of war in Gaza. Its spokesperson Jeremy Laurence said on Tuesday that the "same means and methods of warfare" are being used in Lebanon. "The devastation is beyond belief for all people in Lebanon as it is in Gaza. We can't let this happen again."

Humanitarians are working to address the soaring needs, but Hollingworth insisted that what was needed was to "de-escalate". While WFP is currently able to reach around 150,000 people a day, they "need to be reaching, at this point, almost a million people per day", he said. At the same time, he highlighted that 1,900 hectares of agricultural land had been burned in southern Lebanon over the past year, mainly in the past couple of weeks, while 12,000 hectares of productive farmland had been abandoned. "We have very significant needs moving forward," Hollingworth said, lamenting that the WFP was facing a \$115 million funding gap to cover the towering needs over the next three months. — Agencies

News in Briefs

Saudi Crown Prince reassures of King's health

CAIRO: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman offered reassurances about the health of King Salman during a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, state media reported. The royal court said on Sunday the 88-year-old monarch would undergo medical tests for a lung inflammation. "The crown prince reassures everyone of the health of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (the king) ... praying to God Almighty to bless him with a speedy recovery and to grant him good and sound health," the state news agency (SPA) said on X. — Reuters

Immigration boosts UK population by 1 percent

LODON: The UK population rose by a record one percent in the year to mid-2023 and by 1.2 million over a two-year period, with immigration the key driver, official data showed on Tuesday. An estimated 68.3 million people lived in UK in mid-2023 — an annual increase of 662,400 or 1.0 percent — according to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's statistical institute. It is the largest annual percentage and numerical increase since comparable data began in 1971 and comes with the UK government facing political pressure over migration levels, as well as the provision of housing and services. — AFP

Elon Musk 'all in' for Trump in US election

LOS ANGELES: Elon Musk is ramping up his public support of Donald Trump, telling Tucker Carlson in a conversation streamed Monday that he is "all in" on the Republican presidential candidate. "My view is that if Trump doesn't win this election, it's the last election we're going to have," the entrepreneur, who is from South Africa, told Carlson. Musk, who has increasingly courted controversy in recent years, said he believed "illegals" — migrants — were being deliberately transported to a handful of key states, where if they are eventually granted citizenship, they would become Democrat voters. — AFP

Zionist assault flaming distrust, sectarianism in fragile Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Zionist entity's bombardment of south Beirut has forced tens of thousands to flee to the city center, but many in view the newcomers with suspicion, worried they too might become targets. For weeks, Zionist strikes have widened, allegedly in pursuit of Hezbollah members, leading many Lebanese to shun civilians from the same religious community as the group. "Our neighbors found out we were housing people from Dahyeh (Beirut's southern suburbs) and they panicked and started asking questions," said 30-year-old Christina, asking to be identified by only one name.

She took in displaced people but soon asked them to leave after neighbors, concerned the newcomers might be affiliated with Hezbollah, bombarded her with messages. Hezbollah, the only side to retain its arsenal after the 1975-90 civil war, has strong support within Lebanon's Shiite Muslim community. But Lebanon remains split over the group's decision to open a front against the Zionist entity in solidarity with Gaza.

Lebanon's power-sharing system divides authority among 18 religious sects, with Shiites, Sunnis and Christians maintaining a fragile balance but the latest Zionist assault is flaming distrust and sectarianism in the divided country. "There are growing tensions and suspicions towards displaced people because they are from the same religious group as Hezbollah," Christina said. "Some people are scared that one of their family members might be a target and they don't want to risk" it, she told AFP.

'Bearded men'

After nearly a year of cross-border clashes, the Zionist entity intensified its bombing campaign on September 23, killing more than 1,110 people, according to an AFP tally of official figures. More than one million people, about a sixth of Lebanon's population, have been displaced, many flocking to Beirut which is now overwhelmed. The influx has strained services in the crisis-hit country, with traffic congestion, disruptions to daily life and garbage piling up on the streets. According to the education ministry, 973 public schools around the country have become makeshift shelters, with 773 of them unable to welcome any more displaced.

Panic gripped Souheir, a 58-year-old home-



BEIRUT: A displaced man sits on the side walk in Beirut's sea front promenade in front of a mural that reads in Arabic "Lebanon for everyone" next a cedar tree, the country's national symbol, on October 7, 2024. — AFP

maker, after a displaced Shiite family moved into her building. The women wore chadors, a full-body robe. "We've been seeing more women in chadors, bearded men and young men in black — a sight we're not used to seeing," she added. Souheir admitted she was not immune to the general paranoia.

When she went for coffee at a friend's, she saw bearded men on the balcony — displaced relatives who sought refuge there. She cut her visit short because she worried they could be Hezbollah members. "People are looking at each other with suspicion on the streets," she said. "They're scared of each other."

Tensions are also high outside Beirut, where Zionist strikes have hit displaced people beyond Hezbollah's strongholds, including in the Druze village of Baadaran. "People used to rent out houses to anyone at first, but now they're being extra-cautious," said Emad, 68, who lives in a Druze village about an hour away from Baadaran. Elic, 30, who asked to be identified only by his first name, said no one in his Christian village had rented out to the displaced, who mostly live in shelters nearby. "People are scared because we can't know if there

are Hezbollah members among" them, he said. "They also fear that the displaced could stay in the apartments permanently or semi-permanently since many of their houses were destroyed."

Civil war memories

Incidents of displaced people breaking into empty buildings in search of a place to sleep have revived memories of the civil war, when more than 150,000 people were killed and militias seized homes. Last week, police said "a very small number" of displaced people broke into private properties and that they were "working to remove them". Businessman Riad, 60, said his sister-in-law had been house-sitting their central Beirut apartment after repeated enquiries about rentals. "We experienced this in the '70s and '80s. Even if you asked an acquaintance to live in your house," armed groups would seize the apartment anyway and give it to displaced families from their own community, he said. "It took some people a decade before regaining their house ... This is why people are panicking," he added. "It happened once and it will happen again." — AFP

International

Immigrants bringing 'bad genes' into US, Trump says

White house says it rejects Trump's anti-migrant rhetoric, calls it 'vile, disturbing, hateful'

WASHINGTON: Republican White House hopeful Donald Trump said Monday that illegal immigrants were bringing "bad genes" into the United States, doubling down on previous inflammatory rhetoric about migrants poisoning the blood of the country. Trump was criticizing his Democratic presidential rival Vice President Kamala Harris in a radio interview when he brought up government figures showing there were thousands of immigrants in the United States who were not in federal immigration detention, despite homicide convictions. You know now, a murderer — I believe this — it's in their genes. We've got a lot of bad genes in our country right now," former president Trump told conservative host Hugh Hewitt.

The White House swiftly condemned Trump's comments as "vile." "That type of language is hateful, it's disgusting, it's inappropriate, and has no place in our country," Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters. "This comes from the same vile statements that we've heard about (how) migrants poison the blood, that's disgusting." Jean-Pierre added: "We're going to continue to forcefully reject this kind of vile, disturbing, hateful, hateful speech."

Trump was misconstruing data released in September by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. The figures cover a period spanning decades, including when Trump was president, and also don't include people incarcerated in places other than ICE facilities — in state, local or other federal facilities, for example.

Election issue

Illegal immigration into the United States, especially over the southern border with Mexico, is a major issue in the November 5 US presidential election. Polls show it remains a major vulnerability for Harris, with border crossings having risen to record highs at the end of 2023 under President Joe Biden, whom she replaced as the Democratic standard-bearer in July. But US media reported Monday that migrant apprehensions at the US-Mexico border fell 75 percent year-on-year in September — to the lowest level since the Trump administration — citing Department of Homeland Security statistics.

Trump, who is neck-and-neck with Harris in nationwide and swing-state polling ahead, has spent much of his campaign demonizing both undocumented immigrants and those in the United States legally. During a rally last month, the 78-year-old former reality TV star said Harris should be prosecuted over Biden's border policies and called illegal immigrants "animals," out to "rape, pillage, thieve, plunder and kill." "They will walk into your kitchen, they'll cut your throat," he said. And he repeatedly threatened legal Haitian residents in Ohio with deportation, falsely accusing them of eating locals' pets. Trump — the oldest major-party White House candidate in history and the first convicted felon to run — accused immigrants of "poisoning the blood of our country" in December in a phrase that earned him comparisons to Adolf Hitler. — AFP



WAUNAKEE: Donald Trump shouts to supporters as he concludes his remarks during a campaign event at Dane Manufacturing in Waunakee, Wisconsin, October 1, 2024. — AFP

Bangladesh's Yunus says no elections before reforms

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim leader has refused to give a timeframe for elections following the ouster of his autocratic predecessor, saying in an interview published Tuesday that reforms are needed before polls. Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus was appointed the country's "chief advisor" after the student-led uprising that toppled ex-premier Sheikh Hasina in August. The 84-year-old microfinance pioneer is helming a temporary administration, to tackle what he has called the "extremely tough" challenge of restoring democratic institutions. "None of us are aiming at staying for a prolonged time," Yunus said of his caretaker government, in an interview published by the Prothom Alo newspaper. "Reforms are pivotal," he added. "If you say, hold the election, we are ready to hold the election. But it would be wrong to hold the election first."

Hasina's 15-year rule saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents. More than 600 people were killed in the weeks leading up to her ouster, according to a preliminary United Nations report which said the figure was likely an underestimate. Her government was also accused of politicizing courts and the civil service, as well as staging lopsided elections, to dismantle democratic checks on its power. Yunus said he had inherited a "completely broken down" system of public administration that needed a comprehensive overhaul to prevent a future return to autocracy. "Reforms mean we will not allow a repetition of what happened in the past", he added. — AFP

'Blue dot' fires up Nebraskans who could decide US election

OMAHA: Nestled deep in America's heartland, Nebraska is best known for corn, cattle and college football — not usually for its elections. That could be about to dramatically change. A strange quirk of the devoutly Republican state's constitution essentially gives Omaha — the largest city — its own distinct and powerful vote for the next US president, in a race that remains too close to call just one month out. In the far-from-impossible scenario that Kamala Harris and Donald Trump are otherwise tied in the Electoral College that determines the White House's next occupant, this tiny Democratic-leaning "blue dot" of 650,000 people could have the final say. "We're a mini-swing state within a state," said 58-year-old Ruth Brown, a small business owner. "Dang right. Come here and earn our vote, whether you're a red candidate or a blue candidate," added her husband Jason, 53.

Delighted and inspired by the unique opportunity of Nebraska's unusual set-up — nearly every other state allocates all its presidential votes to one party — the Browns have taken matters into their own hands. They have distributed thousands of hand-made lawn signs bearing simple blue dots to homes across Omaha, wordlessly reminding neighbors that this progressive island can tip the balance against Trump. What began with Jason crudely spray-painting an old placard in his garage has become a city-wide viral phenomenon. And it appears to be having an impact.

While in recent elections Omaha has fluctuated between Republican and Democratic candi-



OMAHA: Jason Brown and his wife Ruth Brown take a break after handcrafting political signs featuring a simple blue dot, at their home in Omaha, Nebraska, on September 30, 2024. — AFP

dates, Harris is 10 points clear of Trump in polls here. "It's fun to matter on a national level," said the Browns' neighbor Chris Kilroy, a 55-year-old financial adviser and registered independent, who installed a blue dot in his own front yard. "This is a red state, but once in a while we get to throw a little sand in the gears."

'Fired up'

Democrats have poured some \$15 million into the district, flooding Omaha's airwaves with campaign commercials. Though heavily outspent, Republicans mounted a major effort last month to change Nebraska to a winner-takes-all system. Prominent US senator Lindsey Graham visited to corral legislators, and Republican state senator Merv Riepe had a phone conversation with Trump. "He just said, 'Nebraska is important to me,' and I think in that message we knew why he called — what he wanted," Riepe told AFP.

But the bid failed, and Democratic state senator John Cavanaugh believes it has now backfired on

Republicans. "People here were fired up to vote for Vice President Harris, and you've seen an exponential increase in energy as a result of the attempt to take away our vote," he said. Don Bacon, the Republican congressman battling to retain his House seat in Omaha, conceded that most local residents want to keep their presidential vote. But he questioned why Democrats were so staunchly defensive of Nebraska continuing to split its presidential votes, when liberal states like California and New York do not. "It hurts Republicans. There's no doubt about it," he told AFP. Some residents agree. Nancy Bohnenkamp, a retired restaurant owner in Omaha, wants to switch to "winner-takes-all, just like everybody else." "Stop the madness," she said.

'Quintessentially Midwest'

She considers the frenzy around "blue dot" yard signs and memes "childish." But to Precious McKesson, executive director of the Nebraska Democratic Party, the entirely organic and grassroots movement is "educating people that their vote matters." "Because if their votes didn't matter, the Republicans wouldn't be cheating and trying to change the system." For others, the placards represent something greater — a rebuke to an era of bitter, confrontational partisan politics.

The Browns said their best decision was not to put any words or slogans on the yard signs. "It's friendly, it's warm, it doesn't scream — so many political things you're getting screamed at," said Jason Brown. Alyx Rice, 36, whose bustling Omaha store sells "blue dot" signs and sweaters, said the symbol is a "quintessential Midwest way to tell your neighbors where you stand ... cute and passive-aggressive." Still, attorney Joy Suder, 51, who was buying a "blue dot" T-shirt this week, admitted the prospect of tipping the election Harris's way is tantalizing. "How cool would that be?" she said. "That would be awesome." — AFP

Zionists expand Lebanon attacks...

Continued from Page 1

In the Zionist entity's north, not far from the Lebanon border, warning sirens sounded regularly throughout Tuesday as authorities said Hezbollah fired almost 200 rockets into the Zionist entity. Targets again included Haifa, the northern port city where there were multiple reports of damage to buildings from missile debris. The Zionist entity's stated objective is to make its northern areas safe from Hezbollah rocket fire and allow thousands of displaced residents to return.

Safieddine, the senior Hezbollah official, was widely expected to succeed Nasrallah, the movement's long-time leader assassinated in a Zionist airstrike on south Beirut on Sept. 27. "Hezbollah is an organization without a head. Nasrallah was eliminated, his replacement was probably also eliminated," Gallant told officers at the Zionist military's northern command center, in a brief video segment distributed by the military.

Safieddine has been a prime target for the Zionist entity, nurtured as an influential leader and potential heir to Nasrallah. As head of Hezbollah's executive council, he has overseen the group's political affairs, while also sitting on the Jihad Council that manages its military operations.

Saied re-elected with 90.7% votes..

Continued from Page 1

On Monday, the European Union said it had "taken note" of criticisms from rights groups "concerning the integrity of the electoral process" and "various measures deemed detrimental to the democratic requirements of credibility" of the vote. Late Sunday, hundreds of Saied supporters took to the streets of Tunis in celebration after exit polls announced his potential win with 89 percent.

"I voted yesterday, and the results are excellent, everything is going very well, the atmosphere

In a televised speech from an undisclosed location shown before the release of Gallant's video, Hezbollah's deputy leader Naim Qassem said he backed attempts to secure a truce. For the first time, the end of war in Gaza was not mentioned as a pre-condition to halting the combat in Lebanon. Qassem said Hezbollah backed moves by Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, to secure a halt to the fighting. Qassem said Hezbollah's capabilities were intact despite "painful blows" from the Zionist entity. "Dozens of cities are within range of the resistance's missiles. We assure you that our capabilities are fine."

Gaza's civil defense agency on Tuesday said a Zionist strike killed at least 17 people at a refugee camp in the center of the territory. "The civil defense teams recovered 17 martyrs, including children, and several others who were wounded from the three-story home of the Abdul Hadi family, which was bombed by a missile from an (Zionist) warplane in Al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza," agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said in a statement.

Bassal said the bodies of those killed and the wounded were taken to Al-Awda hospital in Nu-seirat camp and to Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in the city of Deir el-Balah. Bassal earlier told AFP that several air strikes rocked central and northern Gaza since the early hours of Tuesday. Witnesses and rescuers also said Zionist military operations continued in Jabaliya, where troops launched a ground assault in recent days. — Agencies

is great," said Mounir, 65. "What we need now is a drop in prices. We want better education, health and above all safety." Saied had been widely expected to win after the ISIE barred 14 candidates from standing, leaving just Zammel and Maghzaoui as challengers.

Zammel, a little-known liberal businessman, has been behind bars since his bid was approved by the ISIE in September. He faces more than 14 years in prison for allegedly forging endorsements. Maghzaoui had backed Saied's power grab and was seen as no threat. Rights groups have condemned a democratic backslide in Tunisia in recent years. According to New York-based Human Rights Watch, more than "170 people are detained in Tunisia on political grounds or for exercising their fundamental rights". — AFP

Osama bin Laden's son Omar banned from France return

PARIS: Omar bin Laden, a son of slain Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, has been banned from returning to France where he made his home for several years before he was ordered to leave in 2023, France's Interior Minister announced Tuesday. Born in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden has also lived in Sudan and Afghanistan. The 43-year-old settled in the northern French region of Normandy with his British wife several years ago, taking up painting.

France's new interior minister, Bruno Retailleau, said Omar bin Laden "posted comments on his social networks in 2023 that advocated terrorism". "As a result, the prefect of Orne issued an order to leave French territory," Retailleau. "The courts have confirmed the legality of this decision taken in the interests of national security," he added on X. The minister also said he had signed off on a ban preventing

Duo wins Nobel for 'foundational'...

Continued from Page 1

Ellen Moons, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics, told a press conference that these tools have become part of our daily lives, including in facial recognition and language translation. While lauding the potential of AI, Moons noted that "its rapid development has also raised concerns about our future collectively". "Humans carry the responsibility for using this new technology in a safe and ethical way," she said.

Hopfield, a 91-year-old American professor at Princeton University, was spotlighted for having created the "Hopfield network", also known as associative memory, which can be used to "store and reconstruct images and other types of patterns in data". Word of the award reached Hopfield "at a thatched cottage



LE TAILLEUL, France: Saudi painter Omar bin Laden and his British wife Zaina pose during an exhibition of his artworks in this July 1, 2022 photo. — AFP

Omar bin Laden from returning to France "for any reason whatsoever."

Later Tuesday, the Orne prefecture in northern France said Omar bin Laden, a national of Qatar, had lived in the town of Domfront-en-Poiraie since 2018. On the anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death in May 2023, comments that French officials say glorified "terrorism and al Qaeda" were published on social media in the name of Omar bin Laden, on an account that has now been suspended. A probe was launched in France. — AFP

where he is staying in England," Princeton University said in a press release.

"My wife and I went out to get a flu shot and stopped to get a coffee on the way back home," Hopfield was quoted as saying. Upon returning they were met by "a pile of emails" that he described as "astounding" and "heartwarming", according to the statement.

The jury said Hinton, a 76-year-old professor at the University of Toronto, used the Hopfield network as a foundation for a new network: "the Boltzmann machine". Hinton was credited with inventing "a method that can autonomously find properties in data, and so perform tasks such as identifying specific elements in pictures". "I'm flabbergasted, I had no idea this would happen," Hinton told reporters in a phone interview as the laureates were announced in Stockholm. Hinton said he was an avid user of AI tools such as ChatGPT, and said he believed the technology will have "a huge influence". — AFP

International

Battered Florida braces for monster hurricane Milton

People 'are going to die' if they don't heed evacuation orders, official warns

TAMPA: Storm-battered Florida girded Tuesday for a direct hit from Hurricane Milton, a monster weather system threatening catastrophic damage and forcing President Joe Biden to postpone a major overseas trip. As the second huge hurricane in as many weeks rumbled toward the US state's battered west coast, a sense of looming catastrophe spread as people raced to board up homes and evacuate. As of Tuesday morning, Milton was generating maximum sustained winds of 145 mph (230 kph) and the threat of as much as 15 feet of storm surge, the National Hurricane Center said, calling it "extremely dangerous," and urging people to heed evacuation orders. The Category 4 hurricane was tracking just north of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula.

After weakening from a maximum Category 5 overnight, it is forecast to make landfall Wednesday night in Florida as a Category 3 storm and remain powerful as it churns across the state. At a press conference Tuesday, Governor Ron DeSantis ticked off town after town and county after county that are in danger. "Basically the entire peninsula portion of Florida is under some type of either a watch or a warning," he said. The mayor of Tampa, a metropolitan area of three million that was hit hard last month by Hurricane Helene, was blunt in her assessment. "Helene was a wake-up call. This is literally catastrophic," Mayor Jane Castor said on CNN.

"I can say this without any dramatization whatsoever: If you choose to stay in one of those evacuation areas, you are going to die."

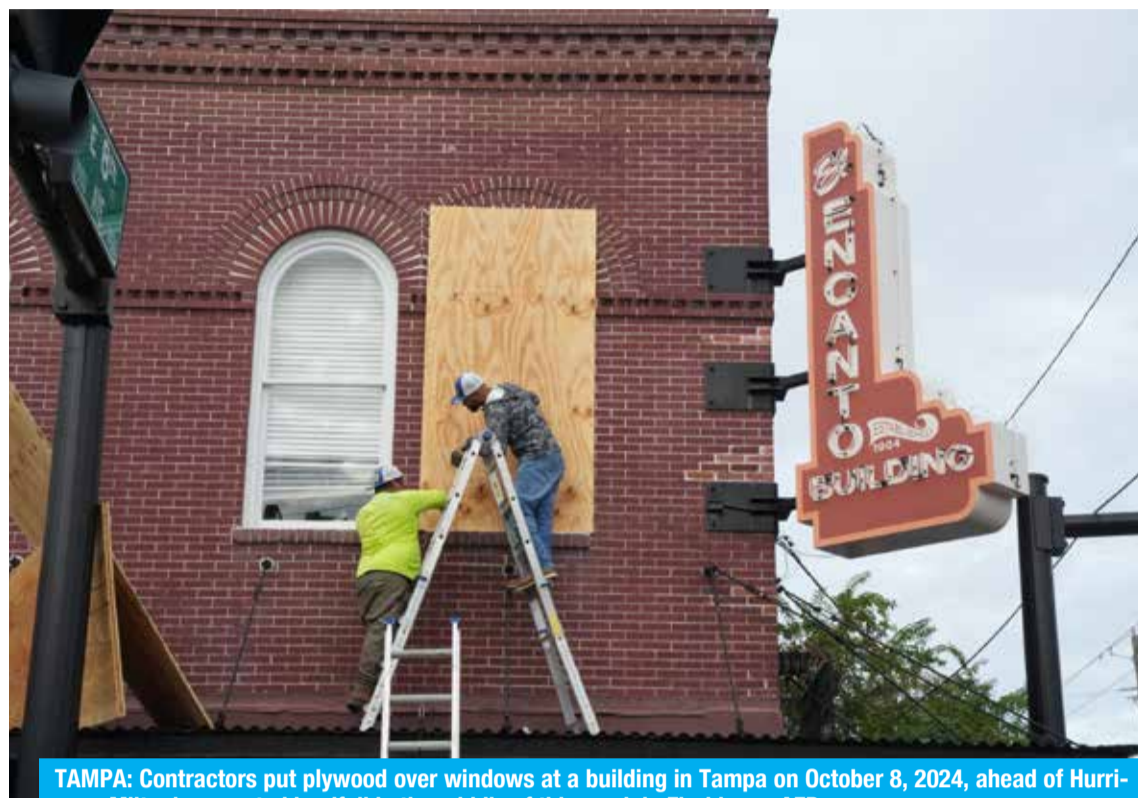
A campaign issue

Biden postponed a trip to Germany and Angola — he had been due to leave Thursday — to oversee

the federal response, as storm relief efforts have become a political battleground ahead of the presidential election on November 5. Republican candidate Donald Trump has tapped into frustration about the emergency response after Helene and fueled it with disinformation, falsely claiming disaster money had been spent instead on migrants. His Democratic rival Kamala Harris criticized Trump as "extraordinarily irresponsible."

The risks posed by Milton were underlined by one Florida TV meteorologist who choked back tears as he talked about how Milton had intensified rapidly from a Category 1. "I apologize," weatherman John Morales said, as he surveyed the data. "This is just horrific." In a scene of frantic preparation repeated all over Florida, dozens of cars lined up at a sports facility in Tampa to pick up sandbags and protect their homes from flooding. John Gomez, 75, ignored official advice and traveled all the way from Chicago to try to save a second house he has in Florida. "I think it's better to be here in case something happens," Gomez said as he waited in line. "If I am in Chicago and something happens, I can't do anything." The National Weather Service said Milton could be the worst storm to hit the Tampa area in more than 100 years.

Scientists say global warming has a role in these intense storms as warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, providing additional energy for storms, which intensifies their winds. Communities hit by the deadly Hurricane Helene, which slammed Florida late last month, have rushed to remove debris that could become dangerous projectiles as Milton approaches. In Mexico's Yucatan, workers boarded up glass doors and windows, fishermen hauled boats ashore and



TAMPA: Contractors put plywood over windows at a building in Tampa on October 8, 2024, ahead of Hurricane Milton's expected landfall in the middle of this week in Florida. — AFP

schools were suspended. In the southeastern United States, emergency workers are still struggling to provide relief after Helene, which killed at least 230 people across several states. It hit the Florida coastline on September 26 as a major Category 4 hurri-

cane, causing massive flooding in remote inland towns in states further north, including North Carolina and Tennessee. Helene was the deadliest natural disaster to hit the US mainland since 2005's Hurricane Katrina, with the death toll still rising. — AFP

N Korean soldiers 'highly likely' killed in Ukraine: Seoul

SEOUL: North Korean soldiers are likely fighting in Ukraine alongside Russian troops, with some believed already killed and more expected to be deployed, Seoul's defense minister said Tuesday. Ukrainian media have reported that six North Korean military officers were killed in a Ukrainian missile attack on Russian-occupied territory near Donetsk on October 3. Seoul's defense minister, Kim Yong-hyun, told lawmakers Tuesday that it was "highly likely" that the report was true. "We assess that the occurrence of casualties among North Korean officers and soldiers in Ukraine is highly likely, considering various circumstances," he said.

North Korea is expected to send more foot soldiers to support Russia's war effort, he added. "The issue of deploying regular troops is highly likely due to the mutual agreements that resemble a military alliance between Russia and North Korea," Kim said. Both Ukraine and Russia have foreign fighters in their ranks, with AFP journalists in India and Nepal having investigated recruitment drives for the Russian military.

Experts have long said North Korean missiles are being deployed in Ukraine by Russian forces — something both Moscow and Pyongyang have denied. South Korea also claims Pyongyang has sent thousands of containers of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine. The nuclear-armed North has publicly bolstered military ties with Moscow in recent years. President Vladimir Putin made a rare visit to Pyongyang in June, where he signed a mutual defense agreement with leader Kim Jong Un. Analysts have warned that the recent ramped-up testing and production of artillery and cruise missiles by the North could be in preparation for shipments to Russia.

'Real-world combat experience'

Experts said that moving from supplying shells to soldiers to Russia was the logical next step. "For North Korea, which has supplied Russia with many shells and missiles, it's crucial to learn how to handle different weapons and gain real-world combat experience," said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Seoul's Institute for Far Eastern Studies. "This might even be a driving factor behind sending North Korean soldiers — to provide them with diverse experiences and war-time training," he told AFP.

It is likely that higher-ranking North Korean officials would have been dispatched to Russia earlier on, to help manage the North Korean weaponry or facilitate trainings on their use, Lim said. "What's new here is not only the potential for continued artillery and weapons support from North Korea but also their growing involvement, such as using North Koreans as additional labor as the war drags on."

The key question, he added, is what North Korea will get in return from Russia. North Korea is barred by United Nations sanctions from any tests using ballistic technology. But Moscow used its UN Security Council veto in March to effectively end UN monitoring of violations, for which Pyongyang has specifically thanked Russia. North Korea is expected to scrap a landmark inter-Korean agreement signed in 1991 at a parliamentary meeting this week, as part of Kim's drive to officially define the South, Washington's security ally, as an enemy state. Moscow and Pyongyang have been allies since North Korea's founding after World War II and have drawn even closer since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Tragedy of Madrid street sweeper shows how heatwaves kill

MADRID: Three hours into his shift as a street sweeper in Madrid on a summer afternoon when temperatures went above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), Jose Antonio Gonzalez fainted from heatstroke. He died the next day in hospital. With the Spanish capital on heatwave alert, the 60-year-old had set out for work that day in July 2022 with two two-liter bottles of water and a spray bottle to cool off. "He knew he had to keep hydrated. But that day, it obviously wasn't enough," Gonzalez's son Miguel Angel told AFP.

Gonzalez had only recently started a one-month contract as a street sweeper. He normally worked the cooler morning shift but had swapped shifts as a favor to a colleague and began at 2 pm, when temperatures were at their highest. His death made headlines in Spain and thrust the spotlight on the threat posed by scorching temperatures, especially to outdoor workers and the more vulnerable.

Organs began to fail

When emergency services arrived in the working-class neighborhood in southeastern Madrid where Gonzalez had collapsed, they found his body temperature was 41.6 degrees Celsius. They applied ice to his neck and armpits to try to cool



MADRID: Miguel Angel Gonzalez poses at his home in Madrid holding a picture of his father, Jose Antonio Gonzalez, on September 26, 2024. — AFP

him down, hydrated him with a saline solution and put him under a hypothermic blanket before rushing him to hospital, said a spokeswoman for Madrid's emergency services.

His liver and kidneys were already failing by the time his family arrived at his bedside and doctors gave them "no hope", Miguel Angel said. "His back was purple as if he'd been on the ground for a long time ... He had a lot of equipment around him, like an ice shield and several fans. He was lying down with his eyes covered," he said.

Gonzalez died on July 16, 2022. His death certificate said he suffered fatal organ failure due to high body temperatures. His death was classified as a workplace accident. "When body temperature rises above 40 degrees Celsius, the defense mechanisms we have to combat heat, such as

sweating, stop working," the spokesman for the Spanish Society of General and Family Physicians (SEMG), Lorenzo Armenteros del Olmo, told AFP. In scorching temperatures the body pushes blood quickly to the skin where it can release heat, reducing the flow to internal organs.

'Hard to talk'

"It affects the whole body and that's when the organs start to fail," said Eduard Argudo, an intensive care doctor at Barcelona's Vall d'Hebron hospital, adding quick medical care is key to avoiding irreversible organ failure. "Sometimes the damage is such that, even if we manage to control the temperature, we can't reverse the damage to the organs," he told AFP. "Heatstroke is a medical emergency, and these patients always go into intensive care," he added, warning it has a "high mortality rate".

With climate change likely to drive temperatures even higher in coming years, the dangers look set to rise even further. Miguel Angel said that a few days before his father died, he crossed paths with him on the train as Gonzalez was coming home and "he told me it was hard for him to talk because of the heat he was feeling." "When he got home, after greeting us, the first thing he would do is go to the swimming pool to cool off," his son added.

Gonzalez's death shook up public opinion in Spain and led Madrid city hall to adopt measures halting outdoor work during heatwaves as well as to avoid working in the hottest hours of the day during. A Madrid park now bears his name. Miguel Angel said that after his father passed away he was on his computer and saw he had recently done a Google search on "What to do about heatstroke". — AFP

September 2024 second-warmest ever recorded

PARIS: Last month was the second-warmest September ever registered globally in an exceptional year "almost certain" to become the hottest on record, the EU climate monitor Copernicus said on Tuesday. September saw extreme rainfall and destructive storms across the world, events that are occurring with greater severity and frequency as temperatures rise due to climate change. The average global temperature last month was second only to September 2023, said Copernicus, which uses billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations to aid its calculations. Last year was the hottest on record, but 2024 looks set to beat that.

Global warming is not just about rising temperatures, but the knock-on effect of all the extra heat trapped in the atmosphere and seas. Warmer air can hold more water vapor, and warmer oceans mean greater evaporation, affecting rainfall and resulting in more intense downpours and storms. In September some parts of the world saw "months' worth of rain falling in just a few days", said Samantha Burgess, deputy director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service. "The extreme rainfall events of this month, something we are observing more and more often, have been made worse by a warmer atmosphere," Burgess said. "The risk of extreme rainfall will continue to increase with rising temperatures."

In a month of wild weather, Hurricane Helene pounded the southeast United States, Typhoon Krathon slammed into Taiwan and Storm Boris brought floods and devastation to central Europe. Typhoons Yagi and Bebinca left a trail of destruction in Asia while deadly floods hit Nepal, Japan and west and central Africa. Copernicus said wetter than average conditions also hit parts of Africa, Russia, China, Australia and Brazil, while Pakistan was "severely" impacted by the monsoon.

New highs

Copernicus said the months January through September 2024 have already set fresh highs "making it



GLUCHOLAZY: This aerial photograph taken on September 15, 2024 shows a view of the flooded streets in Glucholazy, southern Poland. — AFP

almost certain that 2024 is going to be the warmest year on record". Fourteen of the last 15 months have been at least 1.5 degrees Celsius above average temperatures experienced in the pre-industrial era, taken as the period between 1850-1900. This does not signal a breach of the Paris climate deal, which strives to limit global warming to below 2 C and preferably 1.5 C, because that is measured over decades and not individual years. But scientists have warned the 1.5 C cap is slipping out of reach.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that a breach is likely sometime between 2030 and 2035. Planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels, have risen in recent years, even as scientists say they need to fall by almost half this decade. Taken together, national policies to cut emissions would lead to as much as 2.9 C of warming by 2100,

according to the UN Environment Programme.

Much of this excess heat is stored in the oceans, which cover 70 percent of earth's surface, and acts as a major climate regulator. The pace at which oceans are warming has almost doubled since 2005 because of human-caused climate change, Copernicus said in September. This has led to stronger and more frequent marine heatwaves and greater ocean acidity, which above a certain point can make seawater corrosive to certain marine life.

Copernicus records go back to 1940 but other data sources such as ice cores, tree rings and coral skeletons allow scientists to expand their conclusions using evidence from much deeper in the past. Climate scientists say the period being lived through right now is likely the warmest the earth has seen for the last 100,000 years, back at the start of the last Ice Age. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2024



LIWA OASIS, UAE: An Emirati youth plays in the sand dunes in the Liwa desert, some 250 kilometers west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi. Nations remain in deadlock over a crucial pact on climate aid at next month's COP29 summit.— AFP

Deal on climate aid hangs in balance at UN COP29 summit

Divisions over who pays and how much threaten chances of a deal

PARIS: Nations remain in deadlock over a crucial pact on climate aid, with divisions over who pays, and how much, threatening chances of a deal being landed at next month's COP29 summit.

The UN conference starts just six days after the US election and the possible return of Donald Trump—who pulled the United States out of the Paris climate agreement—looms over the negotiations. World leaders will attend a two-day gathering at the opening of the summit in Azerbaijan, which faces scrutiny as the latest petrostate with limited tolerance for dissent to host the preeminent annual climate talks.

Organizers say over 50,000 attendees are expected between November 11–22 in the capital Baku. COP29 has been dubbed a “finance COP” because rich countries most responsible for global warming are supposed to commit to substantially increasing their assistance to poorer countries for climate action. The current amount of \$100 billion a year expires in 2025 and is considered well below what developing nations need.

But major donors, including the European Union and United States, have still not said how much they are willing to pay, resisting pressure to put even a ballpark figure on the table. They are being urged to turn billions into trillions at COP29, but the appeal for vast new sums of government money comes at a time of political and economic uncertainty for many donors.

Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic between Russia and Iran with little experience in international diplomacy, has urged parties to make the most of the “critical final stage” before COP29. On Wednesday, government ministers will gather in Baku to try and make headway. “These are complex negotiations—if they were easy, they would have been resolved already—and ministers will succeed or fail together,” said COP29 president Mukhtar Babayev, a former oil executive and Azerbaijan's ecology minister, in September.

“The eyes of the world are now upon them.” Observers say climate leadership has been missing in action this year, with attention elsewhere even as fires, floods,

heatwaves and drought have hit every corner of the globe. As they stand, international efforts to reduce planet-heating greenhouse gases are insufficient to cap global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the safer limit of the Paris agreement.

“We are potentially headed towards 3C of global warming by 2100 if we carry on with the policies we have at the moment,” Jim Skea, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told The Telegraph in October. Developing nations suffer disproportionately from climate change and are seeking a deal at COP29 that ensures upwards of \$1 trillion annually in “climate finance” -- 10 times current amounts.

They want the new agreement to cover not just money for low-carbon technology and adaptation measures like sea walls but for disaster recovery as well, something developed countries do not want to include. Countries obligated to pay—a list of industrialized nations drawn up in 1992, and reaffirmed in the 2015 Paris agreement—intend

to keep doing so, but want wealthy emerging economies to help out.

This has been flatly rejected by developing nations, who say adding donors is not up for discussion.

“We should not let others turn away from their responsibility,” said Evans Njewa of Malawi, who chairs the Least Developed Countries group of the 45 most climate vulnerable nations. The specter of Trump's return was one of the “main issues” clamoring up the negotiations, said Michai Robertson, lead climate finance negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States. “You see a lot more hesitancy in general from those who typically contribute. I do think... they're waiting to see whether there will be a government that will hopefully stay within the Paris agreement,” he said. With the negotiations stalled, Azerbaijan has asked fossil fuel producers to raise \$1 billion for climate action and has promised, as an economy wedded to oil and gas, to make the first donation.

Campaigners slammed this as greenwashing by a country expanding its own

fossil fuel production, and whose strongman leader called Azerbaijan's gas “a gift of the gods”. Andreas Sieber, from activist group 350.org, said Azerbaijan's reluctance to address the phase-out of fossil fuels—a pledge made at COP28 in oil-rich United Arab Emirates—had “become a worrisome pattern”.

COP29 is the “biggest international event Azerbaijan has ever hosted, bringing unprecedented scrutiny to a tightly-controlled state that Human Rights Watch has described as “repressive”. Amnesty International and US senators have raised concerns about a crackdown in Azerbaijan in recent months, with critical voices jailed on dubious charges. “The situation on the ground is quite grim... By the time Azerbaijan actually hosts COP29 there won't be much of civil society left,” said independent Azerbaijani journalist Arzu Geybullu. The summit has a much lower profile than the extravaganza in Dubai and it remains unclear how many world leaders will attend, with COP30 in Brazil next year considered of greater import. — AFP

Turkey exports to Palestinians surge

ISTANBUL: Turkey's exports to Palestinian territories leapt six-fold in the first nine months of the year to \$571.2 million, data showed on Tuesday, five months after the country halted trade with Zionist entity in protest over its war in Gaza. The 526 percent rise in exports occurred largely after the ban went into effect. In the first four months of the year, Turkish exports to Palestinian territories were up 35 percent to \$49.4 million, according to data from the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TİM).

Turkish opposition lawmaker Mustafa Yeneroglu on Monday submitted questions to parliament about the sharp increase in exports to Palestinian areas and ongoing ship traffic from Turkey to Zionist entity, despite the trade ban. Yeneroglu asked Trade Minister Omer Bolat to respond to local media reports that trade with Zionist entity was quietly continuing through Palestinian companies, with shipping documents describing goods as going to Palestinian territories when they were actually going to Zionist entity. Asked for comment by Reuters, the Trade Ministry pointed to previous statements on the issue. On Sept 18, it denied trade with Zionist entity was continuing, reiterating that it ended on May 2.

It said Palestinian authorities had declared several times that Turkish goods were used exclusively in Palestinian areas. These territories encompass the Gaza Strip, the Zionist entity-occupied West Bank, and Arab East Jerusalem. The trade ministry imposed export restrictions on 54 categories of products to Zionist entity in April before completely halting exports and imports in early May.

At the time, Turkey said it would not resume trade with Zionist entity, worth \$7 billion a year, until a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid were secured in Gaza, becoming the first of Zionist entity's key commercial partners to take such a step. — Reuters

World Bank looking to offer emergency funds for Lebanon

WASHINGTON: The World Bank is looking to free up emergency funds for Lebanon, potentially including up to \$100 million through the use of special clauses in existing loan deals, its managing director of operations told Reuters. The Washington-based development lender currently has \$1.65 billion in loans to the country including a \$250 million loan approved this week to help connect dispersed renewable energy projects in the country.

Amid fighting across southern Lebanon, the bank was currently discussing ways in which it could help support the economy, including through the use of so-called Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERCs) clauses. “We can use our existing portfolio and free up some money for really critical, short-term liquidity needs,” Anna Bjerde said.

CERCs are present in around 600 of the bank's existing projects, globally, and allow it to redirect funds that have yet to be disbursed, if requested to by a government, for example after a health or natural disaster, or during conflict. Lebanon has yet to make such a request, Bjerde said.

After a year of exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and Zionist entity mostly limited to the frontier region, the conflict has significantly es-

Saudi buys chunk of department store group Selfridges

LONDON: Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund said it will buy 40 percent of luxury department-store group Selfridges following the collapse of Austrian conglomerate Signa. The Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced late Monday that it would partner Thai-based Central Group, which became 60-percent owner of the business when its



Smoke billowing following Zionist bombardment on the Lebanese territory on Tuesday. — AFP

calated in Lebanon. Lebanon's government could choose to use an existing social protection program that was put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic that allows for financial support to be sent to individuals, Bjerde said. “It has the benefit of being totally digital so you can reach people, plus it can be verified a bit... so we will also prob-

ably use that to top up the social safety net for those that are particularly affected.”

Up to 1 million people have been internally displaced in the country, she added: “So it's important we focus on that”. Lebanon's finance ministry and economy ministry did not immediately respond when asked for comment. — Reuters

Selfridges partner Signa collapsed in late 2023.

“Today we are glad to welcome our new partner PIF, and together we will immensely strengthen the Selfridges Group's financial position,” Central Group chief executive Tos Chirathivat confirmed in a statement Tuesday. “The Group is ready to embark on a new chapter of development and growth supported by the shared long-term vision of its shareholders.”

Selfridges Group owns and operates 18 premier luxury department stores across three countries, including its flagship Selfridges store in London, De Bijenkorf in the Netherlands, and Brown Thomas and Arnotts in Ireland. “We are pleased to be partnering with Central Group in Selfridges Group, one of Europe's most iconic luxury department stores,” Turki Al-Nowaiser, deputy

governor and head of PIF's international investments division, said in a separate statement.

“This transaction allows Selfridges Group to build on its position as a premier retail destination.” PIF did not disclose the amount it was paying for the stake. Central Group and Signa spent a combined £4 billion on purchasing Selfridges Group from Canada's Weston family in late 2021. American Harry Gordon Selfridge founded the business in early 20th century Britain, revolutionizing retail by showcasing products in window displays and turning department stores into attractive venues, complete with restaurants, art and entertainment. Like many store-based retailers, Selfridges has suffered as consumers are drawn to online shopping. — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank highlights its commitment to sustainability at Green Skills Summit

Empowering Kuwaiti youth with green skills is our top priority: Aleisa

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to promoting sustainability and environmental awareness, Gulf Bank participated in the Green Skills Summit, organized by Meras Consulting – Kuwait in collaboration with Fifty Shades Greener. The conference, held under the patronage of Kuwait's Environment Public Authority and the European Union Delegation to Kuwait, brought together a diverse group of ambassadors and diplomats from various Arab and foreign countries.

tal sustainability, including:

- **Sustainable Development Projects:** Gulf Bank has played a prominent role in financing key sustainable development projects, including the Shqaya Renewable Energy Park and the Clean Fuel Project.
- **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Strategy:** The Bank recently unveiled its ambi-

community. Furthermore, the Bank repurposes its street advertising materials into reusable bags once their display period ends.

- **E-Waste Recycling:** Over the past two years, Gulf Bank has successfully recycled over 22.3 tons of electronic waste in partnership with a specialized company.

- **Internal Sustainability Efforts:** The Bank has introduced a range of initiatives designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower paper consumption, and minimize waste while promoting renewable energy. In addition, Gulf Bank is committed to enhancing its branch network to be more environmentally friendly, exemplified by the recent opening of branches such as the one in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City.

- **Green Skills Training:** Gulf Bank is dedicated to enhancing environmental awareness among its employees through specialized training on green skills. The Bank has also introduced sustainable banking products and services designed to meet customer needs while upholding environmental integrity.

Aleisa concluded her speech by reaffirming Gulf Bank's commitment to supporting Kuwait's sustainable future: "At Gulf Bank, we are fully dedicated to doing everything in our power to realize Kuwait's vision for sustainability. Our commitment goes beyond our internal initiatives; we actively collaborate with the broader community. Together, through our collective efforts, we can achieve our environmental goals and create a greener, more prosperous Kuwait."



Najla Aleisa delivers her keynote address at the summit.

At the summit, Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer Najla Aleisa delivered a keynote address highlighting the significance of sustainability initiatives within the community.

"At Gulf Bank, we are committed to doing our part in protecting the environment and ensuring a brighter future for Kuwait and the generations to come. We believe today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, and they will be responsible for shaping the future. This is why empowering them with essential green skills is a top priority for us," said Aleisa. In her speech, Aleisa highlighted several key initiatives and achievements Gulf Bank has implemented to promote environmen-

Najla Aleisa

Gulf Bank is committed to doing its part in protecting the environment and ensuring a brighter future for Kuwait and the generations to come.

tious ESG strategy for 2024 to 2030, outlining a comprehensive roadmap for the next six years.

- **High-Level Sustainability Committee:** The Bank has formed a dedicated sustainability committee, chaired by a Board member, to oversee and direct its sustainability initiatives.
- **Community Initiatives:** In partnership with various cooperative societies and the Environment Public Authority in Kuwait, Gulf Bank launched an initiative to encourage the use of reusable bags, distributing over 100,000 bags to the



Gulf Bank team attends the Green Skills Summit.

US Fed's Kugler makes case for more rate cuts

WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler said on Tuesday she strongly supported the US central bank's recent interest rate cut and will support further reductions if inflation continues to ease as she expects. The Fed cut interest rates by a half a percentage point last month and investors see another smaller move in November as the labor market is cooling and inflation pressures continue to ease.

"While I believe the focus should remain on continuing to bring inflation to 2 percent, I support shifting attention to the maximum-employment side of the FOMC's dual mandate as well," Kugler said, referring to the US rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee, of which she is a member.

She argued that the labor market was already starting show signs of cooling and the Fed was keen to avoid sharper weakness. "We don't want a drastic slowdown in the labor market," Kugler told a European Central Bank conference.

"We don't want the labor market to weaken so much that it's going to cause undue pain, when at the same time we have been seeing a serious reduction in terms of inflation and inflation is moving back to target." But Kugler also noted that last week's job report, which showed a bigger than expected jump in job creation and a fall in the unemployment rate was a welcome development, since it showed resilience in the labor market. She also argued that the Fed will not base its decisions on a single indicator and would instead look at trends, which are clearly showing that cooling has started to take hold in the labor market.

"The labor market remains resilient, but I support a balanced approach to the FOMC's dual mandate so we can continue making progress on inflation while avoiding an undesirable slowdown in employment growth and economic expansion." — Reuters

Foxconn building world's largest 'superchip' plant

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn said on Tuesday it is building the world's largest production plant for US hardware leader Nvidia's GB200 "superchips" that power artificial intelligence servers. Foxconn, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for major tech companies, including Apple.

Ambitious to expand beyond electronics assembly, it has been pushing into areas ranging from electric vehicles to semiconductors and servers. "We're building the largest GB200 production facility on

the planet," senior executive Benjamin Ting said at the company's annual "Hon Hai Tech Day".

"I don't think I can say where now, but it's the largest on the planet," said Ting. Foxconn's senior vice president for the cloud enterprise solutions business. Chairman Young Liu said while opening the two-day event that Foxconn would be "the first to ship these superchips".

Liu later told reporters the new plant was in Mexico. Unlike its rivals Intel, Micron and Texas Instruments, Nvidia does not manufacture its own chips but uses subcontractors. Foxconn also unveiled new electric vehicle prototypes at the tech day — a seven-seater lifestyle multipurpose utility vehicle and a 21-seater bus. It plans to do with electric vehicles what it did for gadgets — become a go-to contract builder. Foxconn announced last year that it would team up with Nvidia to create "AI factories" — powerful data-processing centers that would drive the production of next-generation products. — AFP



TAIPEI: Foxconn unveils the Foxtron Model D car during the Hon Hai Tech Day in Taipei on Oct 8, 2024. - AFP

EU backing for China EV tariffs shows Berlin's waning clout

BRUSSELS: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's rejection of EU tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles failed to stop fellow European Union members voting in favor, exposing how a divided Berlin is struggling to drive EU policy. Germany was one of only five EU members to reject tariffs after months of pressure from its carmakers, which rely on China for almost a third of their sales, allowing the European Commission to press ahead with anti-subsidy duties by the end of the month.

The contrast with a decade ago is stark. Then a burst of phone calls over a weekend in July 2013 between China, then German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Jose Manuel Barroso, European Commission president at the time, killed a proposal to put EU tariffs on solar panels. Instead a deal on minimum prices was reached.

After 16 years of Merkel, when Germany industry boomed and the chancellor held the European Union together, a fractious three-party coalition oversees an economy set for a second year of contraction and prioritizes domestic over EU politics ahead of a po-

tentially punishing 2025 federal election. In Brussels, there was exasperation from diplomats over infighting in Germany's three-party coalition, which they say is undermining the influence of Europe's largest economy and EU unity. Brussels has pledged to continue exploring a compromise over EVs with Beijing, but Germany's rejection has weakened its hand. "This split between Germany and the rest (of the EU) compromises one important part of the Commission's initiative: demonstrating a united front against foreign pressure on individual countries," analysts at Eurointelligence wrote.

Highlighting the internal German split, a high-ranking source at Germany's foreign ministry, led by the Green party, said the EU should prevent Beijing from using unfair, market-damaging methods and not take tariffs off the table. The Federation of German Industries (BDI) took a nuanced stand, saying that talks should continue but that it generally supported trade protection if conditions were met.

"Close economic relations with China's party-state-controlled hybrid economy are associated with economic and geopolitical risks," it said.

This is not the first time a divided Germany has fallen out of step with EU peers in recent months. In March, the bloc backed a law requiring companies to audit their supply chains despite strong vocal opposition from Germany's pro-business Free Democrats and a German abstention. German government opposition to Italian bank UniCredit's bid

for a tie-up with Commerzbank has led to frustration among policymakers at the European Central Bank, which will have the final say. They have pointed to Germany's stated support for creating an EU banking union, which likely requires cross-border banking mergers to be effective.

One place where Scholz has found an ally is with often-isolated Hungary, whose Prime Minister Viktor Orban described EU tariffs on Chinese EVs as a "huge blow" for the European economy and German auto sector. "Germany and European industry can no longer convince the Commission to be reasonable. But then, who can?" he wrote on X.

But Orban is more a master of blocking rather than steering EU policy and certainly not the sort of champion of EU unity that Berlin used to be. Zach Meyers, assistant director of the Centre for European Reform, said the tariff dispute illustrated Germany no longer led EU trade policy and that the influence of France too was more limited after Commission President Ursula von der Leyen removed French commissioner Thierry Breton and gave a less influential role to his successor. While seeking to be closer to the United States and de-risk from China, the EV case suggested that, without firm Franco-German guidance, she could only proceed sector-by-sector and follow international trade rules to ensure EU support. Noah Barkin, senior advisor at Rhodium Group, said that despite its victory on tariffs the European Commission would find it hard

Golden Week travel surges in China but spending lags

BEIJING: The number of domestic trips and total travel expenditure during China's week-long National Day holiday exceeded last year's numbers, but per capita spending lagged pre-pandemic levels, according to the culture and tourism ministry. The data, released on Tuesday, is an important indicator of consumer demand and the health of the Chinese economy. It showed that 765 million domestic trips were made across the country during last week's Golden Week holiday, a year-on-year increase of 5.9 percent. Expenditure by domestic tourists reached 700.82 billion yuan (\$99.30 billion), a year-on-year increase of 6.3 percent. However, per capita spending was 2.09 percent lower than the same period in 2019 before the COVID pandemic, according to Reuters' calculations.

Despite the rise in total trips made, the average spending edged up 0.38 percent year on year, almost flat, in line with forecasts by analysts. Chinese consumer spending has been sluggish in the past two years amid a downturn in the property market and mounting concerns about employment and income security. While Chinese people have demonstrated a strong desire to travel, consistently taking more trips around major holidays than before the pandemic, they are less keen to spend while travelling. On lifestyle social media app Xiaohongshu, some users shared their experience of bringing their own food to scenic sites in order to avoid buying food and snacks from kiosks on site.

During the holiday, a screen shot circulated widely online in China showed dozens of people lying on the floor of a public toilet at popular tourism site Huangshan Mountain, reportedly sleeping there rather than spending money on a hotel. On X-like Weibo, a user said he went to Beijing during the holiday because of its affordable sightseeing options. "The National Museum is free of charge, Tiananmen Square is free, Peking University and Tsinghua University are free, Jingshan Park costs only 2 yuan!", the user wrote. — Reuters

to adopt a coherent, more skeptical policy towards China without Berlin's backing.

"So long as narrow, short-term priorities take precedence in Berlin, it will be a struggle for the Commission to press ahead with its new foreign economic policy agenda," he said. — Reuters



JINHUA, China: Employees work on an electric vehicle (EV) production line at the Leapmotor factory in Jinhua, China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

Business

China holds off on fresh stimulus but 'confident' on growth target

Lack of stimulus details disappoints markets

BEIJING: China said on Tuesday it was "fully confident" of hitting its growth target this year but held off more stimulus, disappointing markets and fuelling concern about a lack of detail on a raft of measures unveiled last month.

Beijing has struggled to reignite business activity as officials target around five percent expansion, which analysts say is optimistic given the numerous headwinds, from a prolonged housing crisis to sluggish consumption and local government debt. Investors had hoped a much-anticipated news conference led by Zheng Shanjie, head of China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), on Tuesday would see the announcement of more economy-boosting policies.

But Zheng and colleagues refrained from laying out any new stimulus—instead reiterating that "the fundamentals of our country's economic development have not changed".

"We are fully confident in achieving the goals of economic and societal development for the year," the top economic planner said. "We are also fully confident in maintaining stable, healthy and sustainable development," he added. Markets in mainland China had soared 10 percent on the opening as traders resumed a blistering rally after a week-long break hoping for more measures from Beijing.

But they pared those gains as the news conference progressed with few concrete details and Shanghai ended the day 4.6 percent higher, while Shenzhen added 8.9 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was down more than eight percent in the final hour of trading.

"Tuesday's press briefing from China's top economic planner... was supposed to be the big moment, the one where Beijing unleashed a stimulus bazoo-

ka," Stephen Innes, Managing Partner at SPI Asset Management said in a note. "Instead, it was more of a pop gun," he wrote, adding that "Beijing's reluctance to roll out a bigger package is raising serious doubts about the sustainability of this rally".

Analysts had hoped officials would unveil further fiscal support such as trillions of yuan in bond issuances and policies to boost consumption. They want 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.

But HSBC economists Jing Liu and Erin Xin said "more patience" was needed, adding that the NDRC was "not in a position to announce the complete stimulus package or a specific number". More fiscal support may yet be revealed by the State Council—China's cabinet—and the finance ministry, "to help sustain confidence and shore up growth", they said in a note.

Investors had raced back into stocks on the mainland and Hong Kong since authorities began announcing a raft of stimulus measures to reverse a long period of tepid economic growth. Many of the measures unveiled so far have been aimed at the flagging housing market, long a key driver of growth but now mired in a prolonged debt crisis exemplified by the fates of developers like Evergrande. To that end, Beijing's central bank has slashed interest on one-year loans to financial institutions, cut the amount of cash lenders must keep on hand, and pushed to lower rates on existing mortgages.

"With the continued release of various policies, particularly incremental packages, market expectations have recently significantly improved," Zheng said Tuesday. Several cities—including the financial



Employees work at a factory which produces car parts in Lianyungang, in eastern China's Jiangsu province on October 8, 2024. — AFP

crucibles of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen—have also further eased restrictions on buying homes. Trade tensions between China and Western governments have also weighed on the economic outlook. Beijing on Tuesday further escalated a months-long squabble with the European Union, saying its customs authorities would start imposing anti-dumping

measures on imports of European brandy from Friday in the latest salvo between the two.

The move came after Brussels last week gave the go-ahead to extra tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China, saying Beijing had unfairly subsidized its domestic EV industry to the detriment of European automakers, which China denies. — AFP

Samsung issues rare apology for poor results in tech 'crisis'

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics issued a rare apology and acknowledged on Tuesday it was facing a "crisis" over its technological competitiveness, reflected in a disappointing profit guidance, despite a global AI boom. Samsung said it expected third-quarter profits to rise to 9.1 trillion won (\$6.8 billion), up 274.5 percent from a year earlier, falling short of market expectations as the company struggles to leverage robust demand for the chips used in artificial intelligence servers.

"Today, we, the management of Samsung Electronics, would like to first say sorry to you," Samsung said in a statement signed by Jun Young-hyun, the vice chairman of its device solutions division.

It said "concerns have arisen about our fundamental technological competitiveness and the future of the company" because of the results. "Our management will take the lead in overcoming the crisis... We will make the serious situation we are currently facing an opportunity for a resurgence."

The results are up around three-fold from the same period last year but down nearly 13 percent from the previous quarter. The rare apology came about a week after the tech giant said it intended to reduce staff in some of its operations in Asia, describing the move as "routine workforce adjustments".

Bloomberg reported that the layoffs could affect about 10 percent of the workforce in those markets, while other reports claimed the planned move could affect up to 30 percent of overseas employees at some operations. Samsung has been lagging behind South Korea's SK hynix when it comes to high bandwidth memory (HBM) chips used in AI chipsets, which could be one of the biggest causes of the



A Samsung flag flutters outside the company's Seocho building in Seoul on October 8, 2024. — AFP

profit estimate released on Tuesday, said Kim Dae-jong at Sejong University in Seoul.

"Given the circumstances, it appears that Samsung has also lost a significant number of (HBM-related) employees to SK hynix," Kim told AFP. The company was facing a "grave situation", he said. Shares in Samsung fell 1.31 percent in afternoon trading in Seoul, with its stock down almost 30 percent over the past six months.

The Samsung statement said management would "quickly assess and make any necessary adjustments to our workplace culture." The firm is the flagship subsidiary of South Korean giant Samsung Group, by far the largest of the family-controlled conglomerates known as "chaebol" that dominate business in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

Jene Park, a senior analyst at Counterpoint Research, said there had been "an expected decline" in Samsung's memory sector, with delays in supply of the newest chips and general reductions in memory demand. Even so, a sharp profit or sales decline was unlikely in the near future, he said.

"Samsung plays a significant role in the global supply chain," Park said. The company's estimate for its sales for the third quarter were seen increasing 17.2 percent on-year to 79 trillion won. Samsung is expected to release its final earnings report at the end of this month. — AFP

UK's HS2 rail link will likely reach central London

LONDON: Britain's transport minister said the long-delayed HS2 railway will likely run all the way to central London, following speculation around the future of the multi-billion-pound project after it was scaled back last year. The Labour government said soon after it was elected in July it would review plans for an HS2 terminus at Euston in central London, raising the prospect that the line might only be built as far as Old Oak Common in west London to save on costs.

Transport minister Louise Haigh said on Tuesday that Euston was always planned to be part of the picture for HS2, which will connect London and Birmingham. "We'll be making an announcement on that soon... it certainly doesn't make - it would never have made sense - to leave it between Old Oak Common and Birmingham," Haigh told Times Radio. HS2's northern leg between Birmingham and Manchester was cancelled by the previous Conservative government last year with former prime minister Rishi Sunak blaming the spiraling budget after costs soared beyond 100 billion pounds (\$130.9 billion). A new HS2 hub at Old Oak Common is being built, but trains terminating here rather than at Euston would inconvenience passengers, business leaders have said.

HS2 was originally designed to connect the British capital with the major cities in central and northern England. It was meant to add capacity to the rail network, cut travel times and help Britain catch up with other European nations that operate well-connected high-speed rail networks. — Reuters

French minister backs raising electricity tax

PARIS: The French government supports removing caps on household electricity taxes as it rushes to plug a massive hole in the country's finances, France's budget minister said on Tuesday. "These caps have cost billions and billions of euros to French taxpayers," Laurent Saint-Martin told franceinfo. "With inflation falling below 2 percent and energy prices under control again, should we remove the caps? My answer is yes."

The government is due to present a budget bill later this week reflecting a 60 billion euro (\$65.90 billion) belt-tightening drive to hit new fiscal targets in an unprecedented push to rein in France's spiraling deficit. With cost-of-living worries a hot-button issue that drove many voters to back far-right and far-left parties in recent elections, the government is walking a tightrope as it seeks to identify the best levers to raise revenue.

The tax increase could amount to more than 32.44 euros per megawatt hour (Mwh), the levels in place before the 2022 inflation crisis, according to newspaper Le Parisien, but Saint-Martin said the hike would not lead to higher bills for consumers because of a fall in the base cost of electricity. "Around 80 percent of our fellow citizens are on the state-regulated rate, and even without the energy cap, they will still have a reduction in their bill of around 10 percent", the minister said.

Prime Minister Michel Barnier has promised to reduce the budget deficit - which is set to reach 6.1 percent of GDP this year - to 5 percent by the end of 2025, but has said he will need to delay the target date for reaching the euro zone's common 3 percent deficit goal to 2029 from 2027. Without an urgent U-turn, the deficit could rise above 7 percent next year, Saint-Martin said. — Reuters

Bored bitcoin seeks direction after big bang

SAN FRANCISCO: Bitcoin has been distinctly listless in the past three months after starting the year with a bang. The crypto leader has largely shuffled between \$56,000 and \$63,000 so far in the second half of the year - a contrast to the first six months when it jumped 45 percent, propelled by the launch of US exchange-traded funds (ETFs) tracking its spot price. Market players are now eyeing possible new crypto catalysts heading into year-end and early 2025, beyond broader market-moving events such as shifts in US interest rates and the American presidential election.

Jake Ostrovskis, trader at UK-based crypto firm Wintermute, is anticipating the upcoming launch of options on BlackRock's spot bitcoin ETF, a new product he believes could attract more US retail money after its approval by the Securities and Exchange Commission last month. Because regulators view bitcoin as a commodity, though, such options may also need the green light from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which oversees commodity derivatives, said Youwei Yang, chief economist at BIT Mining. "If successful... (ETF options) could increase bitcoin's market sophistication and volatility, driving

greater institutional and retail engagement," Yang added.

It's been quite a run for crypto as the anticipation and approval of US ETFs helped drive bitcoin activity globally. The total size of the cryptocurrency market has ballooned to \$2.2 trillion as of Oct 1 this year, from \$8.3 billion at the start of 2023, according to CoinGecko data. "We've observed a significant increase in institutional on-boarding and trading activity," this year said Ostrovskis, adding there was a strong demand for platforms and services for digital assets that resemble traditional financial structures. Notoriously wild bitcoin's 90-day volatility has fallen to 42 percent this year from 67 percent in mid-2020, according to Deutsche Bank data. Market watchers cautioned that bitcoin still showed a strong correlation to other cryptocurrencies and was likely to be among the first assets dumped by investors retreating from uncertainty and risk; bitcoin slumped 5 percent on a new spike in hostilities in the Middle East last week, for example.

Chainalysis' Global Adoption index, which tracks crypto use in 151 countries with measures including trading and payments, surpassed the 2021 crypto bull market between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. Crypto adoption is particularly strong in lower-income countries which often have less developed and accessible mainstream financial systems, the report showed. India took top spot, followed by Nigeria in Chainalysis' rankings, while seven of



ISTANBUL: This illustration photograph taken in Istanbul shows a physical banknote and coin imitations of the Bitcoin cryptocurrency. — AFP

the other top 20 countries were Asian emerging markets including Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Crypto fans often point to uses in countries with high inflation and rapid currency depreciation - such as Turkey and Argentina - as evidence of digital money's real world use. Chainalysis also noted a significant increase in decentralized finance (DeFi) and stablecoin activity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. "The value proposition for bitcoin and stablecoins in Latin

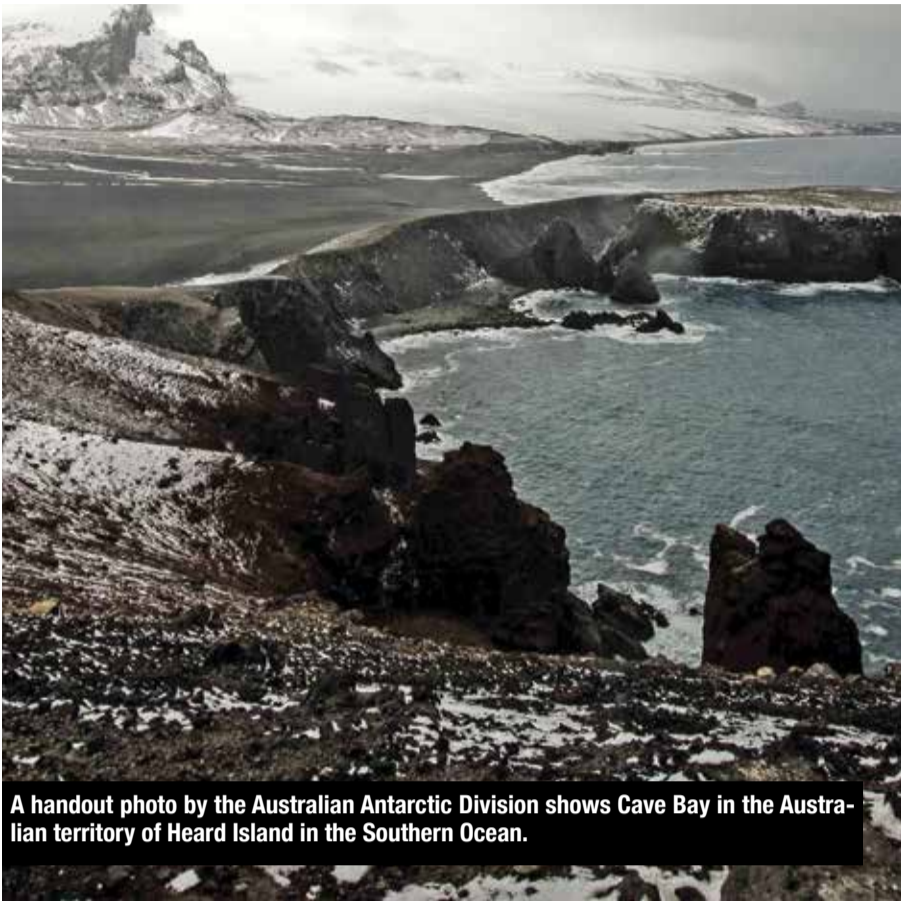
America are intact," said Mauricio Di Bartolomeo, co-founder of crypto loan provider Ledn.

"Most of the emerging world wants to bank in dollars, but they don't necessarily trust their banks."

The United States ranked fourth overall on the adoption ranking, while South Korea and China were 19th and 20th, respectively. In terms of crypto transaction volumes, the US is the world's biggest market followed by India, according to Deutsche Bank. — Reuters

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2024



A handout photo by the Australian Antarctic Division shows Cave Bay in the Australian territory of Heard Island in the Southern Ocean.



A handout photo shows a waddle of King penguins standing on the shores of Corinthian Bay in the Australian territory of Heard Island in the Southern Ocean. — AFP photos



A handout photo shows the active conical volcanic vent atop of Big Ben seen above band of cloud cover on the Australian territory of Heard Island in the Southern Ocean.

AUSTRALIA MOVES TO EXPAND ANTARCTIC MARINE PARK

Australia moved Tuesday to protect a swathe of ocean territory by expanding an Antarctic marine park that is home to penguins, seals, whales and the country's only two active volcanos. The marine reserve - Heard Island and McDonald Island - located 1,700 kilometers (1,056 miles) from Antarctica, will quadruple in size under the announcement. This means 52 percent of the nation's seas will be protected, a government statement said, cementing Australia's place among leading countries safeguarding seas.

It will also see Australia blitz the global 30 percent United Nations target by 2030 that Australia signed up to in 2022. Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said the announcement was a "huge environmental win". "This is a unique and extraordinary part of our planet. We are doing everything we can to protect it," she said. Australia's remoteness and vastness means it is somewhat easier to protect oceans than in other countries, particularly in parts that are used less frequently for fishing. For example, commercial fisheries

are a vital part of Tasmania's economy - the local abalone industry provides about 25 percent of the annual global harvest - and only 1.1 percent of its waters are protected, government data show. WWF-Australia's head of oceans Richard Leck said the country had a "significant amount of work to ensure our network of marine parks is comprehensive, adequate and representative".

He added strong protections were still missing for many key ocean conservation areas. "Australia is a global biodiversity hotspot and one of the world's

largest coastal nations, so it's important that we do some of the heaviest lifting to care for our precious marine ecosystems and the species they call home," he said. But Leck said the final plan did not protect "some of the islands' highest priority conservation areas", including critical foraging habitat for king penguins and black-browed albatross. "Without increased protection, these critical foraging grounds will remain exposed to pressures like commercial fishing," he said. — AFP



A handout photo shows King penguins at Walrus Beach on the Australian territory of Heard Island in the Southern Ocean.



A handout photo shows a white-capped albatross on the Australian territory of Heard Island in the Southern Ocean.

Tampa zoo rushes Chompers the porcupine and others to safety as Milton nears

With carrots and strawberries, zookeepers lure Chompers the porcupine into an animal carrier, hoping to keep the creature - and all the rest of the inhabitants of Zoo Tampa - safe from the fury of Hurricane Milton. Orangutans watch the flurry of activity before allowing their keepers to move them to safety, while African elephants are herded gently to the protected areas. Tiffany Burns, director of animal programs at the zoo, says it has a few hurricane-proof buildings where they will move all the animals - very carefully.

"We hope that the animals have very minimal stress, that's always our goal," the 41-year-old says. Florida's west coast is still digging out from the devastation of Hurricane Helene, which roared onshore as a Category 4 storm on September 26, causing widespread devastation. Now, with the debris from Helene still strewn about, the battered region is bracing for Milton - a potentially catastrophic Category 5 storm taking aim at Tampa. Residents are bracing for the worst storm the city has faced in years - perhaps a century.

The city of roughly 400,000 people, separated from the Gulf of Mexico by Tampa Bay, faces the worst impact from storm surges and flooding. Burns explained that staff have tried to maintain a positive attitude as they

prepare the zoo, but fear the impact of Milton on their own homes. "It's really hard to see such a big storm coming back toward us so soon," she says. They are not alone.

'Too much'

Ernst Bontemps boarded up the windows of his medical clinic in the nearby city of St. Petersburg for the

second time in two weeks. "This is too much," sighed the 61-year-old gastroenterologist. "It's painful because last time we had complete devastation everywhere in St. Petersburg. And here we go again." The entire Tampa Bay metropolitan area - which includes the eponymous city, St. Petersburg and Clearwater - still bears the scars of Helene, which left more than 230

people dead across the southeastern United States.

On Treasure Island, located in the Gulf of Mexico and accessible via a bridge from St. Petersburg, the streets remain littered with debris. Helene caused flooding in most of the homes and businesses on the island, leading inhabitants to pile up everything damaged by the water in front of their residences, including mattresses, refrigerators, televisions and more. David Levitsky looked at the pile in front of his own home on the island.

"All this stuff is just wind fodder that's going to just be blowing down the street and hitting who knows what," the 69-year-old retiree said. Like other Treasure Island residents, Levitsky is trying to protect what little survived Helene before he evacuates. "Being on the water is a joy, but obviously, with the joy comes a lot of possibilities on the other side of that spectrum," he said. In St. Petersburg, meanwhile, Bontemps fears that repeat hurricanes are the new normal for this part of Florida. "I've been here for 22 years and we've never been hit by hurricanes twice in one year," he said. — AFP



African elephants are seen before being moved to protected areas at Zoo Tampa.



A mother and child orangutan look on before being moved to protected areas at Zoo Tampa ahead of Hurricane Milton's expected landfall in the middle of this week in Florida. - AFP photos



Employees move an African porcupine named Chompers to a pet carrier at Zoo Tampa.

Lifestyle



Police stands guard on May 21, 2023 at the Fontana di Trevi Fountain in downtown Rome after environmental activists of Last Generation (Ultima Generazione) poured black liquid made out of vegetable-based carbon into the water as part of a campaign to raise awareness about climate change. --AFP photos



A picture shows the drained Trevi Fountain in downtown Rome as it undergoes renovation works, on July 6, 2014.

Visitors to get rare view of Rome's Trevi Fountain

Rome's iconic Trevi Fountain is to undergo a two-month clean-up when some visitors will get a rare, close-up view of the Baroque masterpiece from a suspended walkway, authorities said Monday. Construction of the walkway began Monday "to allow for a major extraordinary maintenance intervention" on the fountain, Rome city council said. The 18th-century fountain

stars in to the most famous scene in Federico Fellini's film "La Dolce Vita", when actress Anita Ekberg takes a dip.

Now it is besieged with tourists most days. The monument is "located in an area with high pedestrian traffic and subject to particular microclimatic conditions" that lead to "invasive vegetation and calcareous deposits" forming on parts most exposed to water, the council said. The

work -- including cleaning stones in the lower part of the monument and grouting joints -- should be completed by the end of the year, the council said. Limited groups of visitors will be allowed to cross the fountain on a raised walkway while the maintenance is carried out.

The walkway will be ready within a month and "will offer the opportunity to acquire new data on attendance, useful

for solving the overcrowding problems", authorities said. Because of the fountain's fame, the crowds in the square surrounding it are often so deep that it is hard to get a proper look. Rome authorities said this month they were considering introducing a ticketing system for visitors to control the crowds.

Visitor numbers are expected to surge in 2025 for the Jubilee, a holy year

held by the Catholic Church around once every 25 years, with some 30 million people expected in Rome and the Vatican over the 12 months. It is not the first time a walkway has been installed above the basin, with fashion house Fendi installing a plexiglass bridge in 2014 during an 18-month long restoration. --AFP

Hollywood star Idris Elba champions African cinema in Ghana

As Idris Elba strode the halls of the Africa Cinema Summit in Ghana's capital Accra, it was clear the Golden Globe-winning British actor was not just a guest. Born and raised in London to a father from Sierra Leone and a Ghanaian mother, the star of both television and the silver screen was at the continent's premier film industry event as a passionate advocate for the future of African cinema.

Elba, who has starred in Africa-focused films such as "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and the shot-in-Ghana "Beasts of No Nation", has long been vocal about his deep-rooted connection to the continent. At this year's summit, which brings together stakeholders in the industry, Elba took on the role of ambassador for the importance of African stories and how best to tell them to the world.



Idris Elba attends the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards at Peacock Theater on September 15, 2024 in Los Angeles, California.--AFP

African cinema's future

"African cinema is not young. We've been around for a long time," the 52-year-old pointed out, noting the rich film heritage of French-speaking Africa. "But our stories have yet to springboard on that wider landscape." The African continent has the world's youngest population but only around 1,700 cinemas, compared with around 44,000 in the United States and 75,500 in China, according to the National Film Authority of Ghana.

Elba's belief in African cinema's untapped potential was palpable as he spoke. For him, the key is raising its profile through better infrastructure, distribution channels, and connecting filmmakers with audiences on the continent and globally. "We need bums on seats," Elba said. "The future relies on us... our own distribution. We must fill the cinemas with our people first."

This Africa-first focus distinguishes Elba's vision from other industry luminaries who often focus solely on international recognition. Elba said he

wanted African cinema to succeed domestically as much as it does abroad. He drew parallels with Hollywood, where success is measured both by domestic box-office numbers and international sales.

But instead of merely cheering it on from the sidelines, Elba has been working to shape African cinema's future. He has already taken steps to invest in the continent's creative industries, nurturing African talent through his production companies IE7 and The Akuna Group.

Passion and optimism

Where others might see the challenges of financing, education, or infrastructure as barriers to progress, Elba said he was optimistic -- he saw "opportunities in the waiting".

"A lot of young filmmakers are making films on their phones," he told AFP, excitedly describing the innovative, grassroots approach emerging from Africa's youth. "But we still need to amplify those films. We still need distribution methods." He argued that African filmmakers must not rely solely on global streaming giants like Netflix or Amazon Prime Video.

Though he acknowledged the value of these platforms in showcasing African content to international audiences, he insisted true success lay in building local capacity and infrastructure. He said he wanted a robust African film ecosystem that can sustain itself, with distribution pipelines independent of Western platforms. "We want to penetrate international markets," he said. "But we need to penetrate into African markets as well."

A legacy in the making

Elba stressed the need for African filmmakers to take charge of their creative destinies. "Just do it," he advised aspiring filmmakers. "The barrier between making your film and dreaming about it is much shorter now." Driven by his love for storytelling, Elba developed an early passion for acting during his London childhood, working various jobs while pursuing his craft.

His breakthrough came with his role as drug kingpin Russell "Stringer" Bell in the critically acclaimed US series "The Wire," and he later cemented his star power with the British crime series "Luther", which earned him a Golden Globe. Over the years, Elba's versatile filmography, ranging from Hollywood blockbusters to indie projects, has made him one of the most respected and influential actors on the global stage.

And as one of the most visible African-heritage actors in Hollywood, he said he felt a responsibility to ensure African stories reach the widest audience possible. "We have a long way to go," Elba acknowledged. But as the lights dimmed on this year's Africa Cinema Summit, the vision Elba painted was not just one of awards or accolades but of a flourishing film industry that resonates deeply with African viewers while continuing to capture the world's attention. -- AFP



Uganda's popular radio and social media comedians 'Bizonto' rehearse backstage at Theatre Labonita before their stage performance.



Support performers backstage at Theatre Labonita ahead of their performances in Kampala.

Uganda's 'singing fools' use satire to attack government

A packed Kampala audience holds its breath as four self-styled "singing fools" in choir uniforms bound onto the stage for their latest daring satire of Ugandan politics. The Bizonto comedy troupe recount the misadventures in a fictional village, ruled by an ageing leader and suffering from a dire lack of basic services and sky-high taxes. The parallels with real-life Uganda -- ruled for almost four decades by 80-year-old Yoweri Museveni -- are not hard to spot.

The troupe's name means "mentally unstable", which they chose when they formed in 2020 in the hope it would provide some protection from the authorities. But it has not diluted the sharpness of their satire. "Our message means people know we are actually not fools," said troupe member Maliseeri Mbambaali, 40.

The show "supports issues raised by the majority of the population," he told AFP. Their buffoonish front has not always protected them. In 2020, they released a video sarcastically calling on Ugandans to pray for their leaders, including Museveni, the police chief and the head of prisons, that quickly went viral. All four members -- Mbambaali, Julius Sserwanja, 41, Tony Kyambade, 21, and Joshua Ssekabembe, 19 -- ended up in jail, charged with "promoting sectarianism" and facing up to five years' imprisonment.

The government was on edge at the time ahead of 2021 elections, with singer-turned-politician Bobi Wine galvanizing youthful opposition to Museveni's regime. With a comedian's exaggeration, Sserwanja describes how "50 men armed with 70 guns, helicopters and

sub-machine guns" swarmed to arrest the quartet at a radio station. But their time in jail was not so funny.

"I thought a lot about whether we're ever going to leave the cells -- what's going to happen to us?" Mbambaali said. They didn't know that outside, #FreeBizonto was trending on social media. "We gained energy and followers... our fan base grew," Mbambaali said. The pressure helped ensure the charges were eventually dropped, but the episode still carried a dark warning. "It gave a signal

Christine Nabaata Kamwesi, 29. "The performers capture what Ugandans are going through like corruption, bad roads, drugs lacking in hospitals," Kawuma said. "We pay higher taxes but they are stolen by officials," she added.

Uganda ranks a lowly 141 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption index. Young people, infuriated by a string of scandals, took to the streets earlier this year, only to be met with a heavy-handed police response.



Uganda's popular radio and social media comedians 'Bizonto' perform at Theatre Labonita.

that whatever we do, the government will be monitoring us," said Mbambaali, who vowed to take a more "coded" approach to future satires.

'We never gave up'

Bizonto's audience stretches across the generations. In the crowd at a recent show were 72-year-old widow Miria Kawuma and her granddaughter

At the Bizonto show, cheers, shouts, and ululations make it clear that the comedians' message is striking home. Their time in prison may have shaken them, but the troupe remains undeterred. "We never gave up. We never stepped back," Mbambaali said. "We knew we were on the right path." --AFP



Support performers dress up backstage at Theatre Labonita ahead of their performances in Kampala, Uganda.--AFP photos



Record number of climbers chase 14-peak dream in Tibet



A helicopter flying over the Khumbu glacier in the Mount Everest region of Solukhumbu district, some 140kms northeast of Nepal's capital Kathmandu. — AFP photos

A record number of climbers are gathered in Tibet to complete mountaineering's pinnacle achievement, summiting the world's tallest 14 peaks. Only about 50 climbers have climbed all mountain peaks above 8,000 meters (26,250 feet), a feat that took most years, or even decades, to complete. About 20 are vying for the record books this month, some spurred by a blockbuster Netflix documentary giving the endeavor a wider profile.

all 14 peaks in 1986. But most of the climbers assembled in the Chinese Himalayas at the base camp of Mount Shisha Pangma only began their attempts within the past few years.

They have already summited the 13 other highest peaks, located in the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, straddling Nepal, Pakistan, Tibet and India. Many have been waiting to scale the 8,027-metre-high (26,335 feet) Tibetan peak since last year, when China

to accomplish the feat. Advances in mountaineering technology, weather forecasting and logistical support have made this once-inaccessible goal more achievable - particularly for those who can afford it.

Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, Nepal's biggest mountaineering expedition company, told AFP that climbers could expect to pay up to \$700,000 for full support teams. But he said the hefty price tag had not dissuaded a growing number of people from pursuing the endeavor. "They climb one or two, and then the mountains attract them," he said. "Soon they might decide to climb them all".

Teams of support crews and helicopters for rapid transportation between base camps have allowed climbers to tackle multiple mountains in a single season. "It is clear that the pioneers back then, they did much more difficult, dangerous and exceptional ascents," German mountaineering chronicler Eberhard Jurgalski told AFP.

"Now it is possible to do them within three months. The logistics are so world-class now." British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja famously completed the 14 peaks in just over six months in 2019, shattering the previous record of seven years. His efforts were chronicled in a Netflix documentary, inspiring a new wave of athletes to try and eclipse his speed run.

Norwegian climber Kristin Harila and her Nepali guide Tenjen Lama Sherpa - the latter who died attempting to summit Shisha Pangma last year - now hold the record. They climbed the giant mountains in 92 days, ending in July 2023. The pair also reached the "true summits" of all the mountains, which many previous climbers had missed.

This month, at least six have already completed the feat after summiting Shisha Pangma, including the first Japanese, Pakistani and female American climbers. They also included Nirmal Purja again, who this time said he was climbing all 14 without supplementary oxygen.



This picture shows peaks along the Himalayan range, as seen from the summit of Mount Everest.

Technological advancements have made the feat easier to accomplish. "We are growing as a community, and we are representing mountaineering all over the world," Pakistani climber Shehroze Kashif, 22, told AFP. "I think that's great... they are completing their dream, as I am." It took Italian climber Reinhold Messner 16 years from his initial summit to become the first person in the world considered to have climbed

closed the mountain to climbers after two American women and their Nepali guides were killed in an avalanche.

'Mountains attract them'

The aspirants are a mix of seasoned veterans and rising stars. Teenage Nepali climber Nima Rinji Sherpa, 18, aims to be the youngest to climb all 14. Several hope to be the first from their respective countries



Pakistani climber Shehroze Kashif speaks during an interview with AFP in Kathmandu.



Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, who is aiming to become the first woman from Nepal to summit the world's tallest 14 peaks, speaks during an interview with AFP in Kathmandu.



Russian climber Alina Pekova organizes her mountaineering essentials and equipment before an interview with AFP in Kathmandu.



Pakistani climber Shehroze Kashif organizes his mountaineering essentials and equipment before an interview with AFP in Kathmandu.

'Another challenge'

The trend towards speed has not always been welcomed by the mountaineering fraternity. Veteran climbers have criticized Purja and Harila for using helicopters, pre-prepared routes and support teams. Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, who is aiming to become the first woman from Nepal to summit all 14 peaks, said the style of ascent dictated how much it was valued by other alpinists.

"Some climb 14 peaks... and may-

be even have climbed Everest several times, but some don't have the capacity to climb without support," she told AFP. But Russian climber Alina Pekova, also attempting the Tibetan summit to finish her 14-peak climb, said that speed ascents were an endurance test. "If you can climb it a fast way, why not try?" she told AFP. "That's another challenge." — AFP

Trash art: Dutch museum finds 'beer can' artwork in bin



This handout photograph shows the art work "All The Good Times We Spent Together" by French artist Alexandre Lavet deployed at the Lisser Art Museum "LAM" in Lisse.



This handout photograph shows the art work "All The Good Times We Spent Together" by French artist Alexandre Lavet deployed at the Lisser Art Museum "LAM" in Lisse. - AFP photos

A Dutch museum has recovered one of its artworks that looks like two empty beer cans after a staff member accidentally threw it in the rubbish bin thinking it was trash. The work, entitled "All The Good Times We Spent Together" by French artist Alexandre Lavet, appears on first glance to be two discarded and dented beer tins. However, a closer look shows they are in fact meticulously hand-painted with acrylics and "required a lot of time and effort to create", according to the museum.

But their artistic value was lost on a mechanic, who saw them displayed in a lift and chucked them in the bin. Froukje Budding, a spokeswoman for the LAM museum in Lisse, western Netherlands, told AFP that artworks are often left in unusual places - hence the display in a lift. "We try to surprise the visitor all the time," she said. Curator Elisah van den Bergh returned from a short break and noticed that the cans had vanished. She recovered them from a bin bag just in the nick of time as they were about to be thrown out.

"We have now put the work in a more traditional place on a plinth so it can rest after its adventure," Budding told AFP. She stressed there were "no hard feelings" towards the mechanic, who had just started at the museum. "He was just doing his job," she said. Sietske van Zanten, the museum's director, said: "Our art

encourages visitors to see everyday objects in a new light."

"By displaying artworks in unexpected places, we amplify this experience and keep visitors on their toes," added Van Zanten. With this in mind, the cans are unlikely to stay on their traditional plinth for long, said Budding. "We need to think hard about a careful place to put them next," she said. — AFP



This handout photograph shows the art work "All The Good Times We Spent Together" by French artist Alexandre Lavet deployed on the top of the elevator in the Lisser Art Museum "LAM" in Lisse.

The exterior of the Lisser Art Museum "LAM" in Lisse.



Sports

Kerry Carpenter, Tarik Skubal get Tigers past Guardians to even ALDS

Matt Vierling had two hits and two walks for the Tigers

CLEVELAND: Kerry Carpenter elected not to take some swings in the batting cage before entering Monday's American League Division Series in the eighth inning. It turns out all the Detroit designated hitter needed was one giant swing in the ninth inning to make a difference.

Carpenter launched a three-run homer with two outs in the top of the ninth to lift the Tigers to a 3-0 victory over the Cleveland Guardians in Game 2 of the series between AL Central rivals. Carpenter hit a 423-foot blast into the right field seats to break a scoreless tie and help the Tigers even the best-of-five series at 1-1. Game 3 is Wednesday at Detroit.

"It's just I want to be ready for the first swing I have to take in the box," Carpenter said of his preparation. "So that's kind of the way I look at it." Another way to view it is that Carpenter achieved hero status in Motown with the blast off Cleveland right-hander Emmanuel Clase, the top relief pitcher in the majors.

"It is special because I don't know how many runs or home runs he's given up this year," Carpenter said. "It's pretty fun to be a part of this and to do it off of him is special, because he's literally the best closer in the game for a reason."

Clase (0-1) retired the first two batters in the ninth before Jake Rogers singled to left and Trey Sweeney singled to right center to put runners on the corners. Carpenter then engaged in a six-pitch at-bat with Clase and jumped on a 2-2 slider for a towering shot that was his first career postseason homer.

"The plan was to get it in the dirt

where the catcher was calling for and I just didn't execute it," Clase said through a translator. "That's what cost us the game." In the regular season, Clase gave up two homers and just five earned runs in 74 appearances. He gave up all three Detroit runs Monday.

"These things are going to happen, and it's unfortunate the timing of when it did, but at the same time he's going to have the ball in the ninth again," Guardians manager Stephen Vogt said. "This is the best closer in the game for a reason, and they just happened to get him tonight."

Probable AL Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal tossed seven shutout innings for the Tigers. He gave up three hits and struck out eight with no walks. "I think every time I take the mound I'm trying to put my team in a position to win and do what I can to win however it's possible," Skubal said. "So in the moment you just can't make the game bigger than it needs to be. As a competitor you can't make it bigger than it needs to be. You gotta stay in the moment."

Will Vest (1-0) pitched a perfect eighth for the Tigers and Beau Brieske struck out two in the ninth for his second save of the postseason. Cleveland starter Matthew Boyd allowed four hits over 4 2/3 scoreless innings against his former club. He struck out five and walked two.

Matt Vierling had two hits and two walks for the Tigers. Teammate Justin-Henry Malloy also had two hits. A great defensive play by Cleveland left fielder Steven Kwan in the eighth kept the game scoreless.



CLEVELAND: Kerry Carpenter #30 of the Detroit Tigers hits a home run in the ninth inning against the Cleveland Guardians during Game Two of the Division Series at Progressive Field in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

Vierling lined a one-out double to left center. Hunter Gaddis struck out Colt Keith before Riley Greene was intentionally walked. Vogt called on Clase and Wenceel Perez sent a liner into left field. Kwan made a dash for the ball and made a spectacular diving catch to end the inning. The Tigers requested a replay review and the call was upheld.

"Kwany doing Kwany things," Vogt said. "Perez put a good swing on Clase's pitch, and Kwan came out of nowhere. Great diving catch." Skubal retired the first 13 batters until Josh Naylor ripped a double into the right center gap in the fifth. Skubal then hit Jhonkensy Noel on the hand to put a second runner on base before Andres Gimenez followed with a

grounder to second that Andy Ibanez turned into an inning-ending double play. One inning later, Brayan Rocchio doubled to left and Kwan followed with a single to left to put runners on the corners. Skubal again got out of trouble as David Fry hit a slow grounder to shortstop that Sweeney turned into a 6-4-3 double play to end the inning. — Reuters

Mahmudullah announces T20 retirement

NEW DELHI: Former Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad said Tuesday his remaining two T20 matches in India will be his last international appearance in the format, vowing to play out with a "good show".

The 38-year-old Mahmudullah, who quit Tests in 2021, is set to play his 140th T20 match for Bangladesh in the second game in New Delhi on Wednesday. The tourists need to win in the Indian capital to keep the three-match series alive, after they lost the opener by seven wickets in Gwalior.

"I am retiring from T20 cricket after the last game of this series," Mahmudullah told reporters. The final match of the series will be in Hyderabad on Saturday. "I was pre-decided before coming here. I had a chat with my family and with my coach and captain," Mahmudullah added.

Sciver-Brunt leads England to second win in Women's T20 WCup

SHARJAH: England made it two wins from two group games at the Women's T20 World Cup as Nat Sciver-Brunt's unbeaten 48 lead them to a seven-wicket victory over South Africa with four balls to spare in Sharjah on Monday.

Sciver-Brunt came to the crease in the ninth over with England on 50-2 chasing South Africa's total of 124-6.

She joined forces with Danni Wyatt-Hodge to add 64 for the third wicket before the opener, who also made 41 in England's opening win over Bangladesh, was stumped after charging down the pitch to Nonkululeko Mlaba.

Sciver-Brunt kept England on track hammering Ayabonga Khaka through the covers to secure the victory. Her 48 came off 36 balls and included six boundaries.

"We controlled the chase brilliantly, that partnership was outstanding to watch," said England captain Heather Knight. "The way they controlled it, the way they ran, it was a proper job." It was a small revenge for the English, who top Group B with their two victories, over a South African side that stunned them in the semi-final of last year's edition at Newlands in Cape Town.

England spinner Sophie Ecclestone was named Player of the Match for her miserly spell of 2-15 in four overs which helped restrict South Africa to 124-6. "Sophie was back to her best," said Knight. "She seemed to get a bit of bounce, somehow, which is strange on this wicket." Ecclestone's two victims were the key batters in the South Africa line-up as she bowled both skipper Laura Wolvaardt, who made a brisk 42, and the dangerous Marizanne Kapp who plundered 26 from 17 balls.

"Always great to do it against the world's best. To get them out, two big wickets. Glad about the win," said Ecclestone. South Africa, who lost to Australia in the 2023 final, face Scotland in Dubai on Wednesday and Bangladesh in Dubai on Saturday.

"Obviously the next two are must-win games for us and both could be tough in these conditions so we will have to be on our A-game," said South Africa captain Wolvaardt. England's next match is against the Scots in Sharjah on Sunday. — AFP

"It is the right time to move on from this format for me and the team as well and concentrate on the one-day game." Mahmudullah has been Bangladesh's warhorse after he made his international debut in 2007 in a one-day international against Sri Lanka in Colombo. He has played 50 Tests, 232 ODIs and 139 T20 matches for his country with over 10,500 runs across formats as a dependable middle-order batsman and 165 wickets with his off-spin.

'Team man'

"If we can play to our ability (in Delhi), then we could put up a good show", he said. Mahmudullah said he had "no regrets" in his 17-year career. "I have never ever regretted, at any stage at any point of my life, playing for Bangladesh," he said. "I have always been a team man." The veteran said the T20 team remains in good hands under skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto.

Mahmudullah's T20 exit comes soon after star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan announced his decision to quit the format last month during the Test series, which the tourists lost 2-0. India's left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh meanwhile said he was making the most of his opportunities in the national team with-



Mahmudullah Riyad

out thinking much about the future.

"My life mantra is to enjoy the present," Arshdeep, who made his India debut in 2022, told reporters. "I want to do my best in all the formats wherever I get the opportunity." Arshdeep, who has claimed 86 wickets in 55 T20 internationals, played in India's T20 World Cup triumph in June. — AFP



MULTAN: England's Zak Crawley (R) watches the ball after playing a shot during the second day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and England at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan. — AFP

England 96-1 after Salman's ton lifts Pakistan to 556

MULTAN: England finished the second day of the first Test in Multan on a solid 96-1 on Tuesday in reply to Pakistan's mammoth 556 that was boosted by a fiery century from Agha Salman. The tourists lost stand-in skipper Ollie Pope for a second-ball duck before Zak Crawley and Joe Root steadied the innings with 64 and 32 respectively at stumps.

It was another tough day for bowlers as an unbeaten 104 from Salman and 82 by Saud Shakeel swelled Pakistan's total, which was set up by Shan Masood's 151 and Abdullah Shafique's 102 on Monday. Pope, standing in for injured skipper Ben Stokes, was smartly caught by a leaping Aamer Jamal who plucked an uppish pull shot off pacer Naseem Shah with one hand at mid-wicket.

He had been drafted in to open the batting after Ben Duckett injured his left thumb taking a catch at the end of the Pakistan innings. England need another 261 to avoid a follow-on—a task eminently achievable on a pitch offering no help to bowlers.

Salman built on the good work of Shakeel and Naseem in the afternoon, reaching his third century with a single off spinner Jack Leach soon after the

tea interval. Salman, who also completed 1,000 Test runs during this knock when he reached 71, added a rapid 85 for the ninth wicket with Shaheen Shah Afridi, who scored 26.

In all, Salman cracked 10 boundaries and three sixes in his 119-ball knock — surviving a catch by Chris Woakes when the third umpire declared the fielder's foot went beyond the rope. "It's always satisfying to hit a century and contribute to the team's total," said Salman, who hoped the pitch would take spin in the next three days.

"I think cracks will open on this pitch and that will help spinners, I see this as a result-oriented pitch as both the teams will go for a result." Salman added an invaluable 57 runs for the seventh wicket with Shakeel, who was caught smartly by Root at slip off Bashir for 82. Shakeel hit eight fours.

Leach was the most successful England bowler with 3-160, while Gus Atkinson finished with 2-99. Woakes, Shoaib Bashir and Root took one wicket apiece. Pace bowler Brydon Carse took 2-74 on debut after trapping Jamal for seven. His first Test wicket was Naseem, caught at leg slip by Harry Brook before lunch for 33. Carse said England's bowlers were made to toil on an unresponsive pitch. "The last two days were immensely tough conditions for everyone out there," he said. "To be able to pick up a couple of wickets today is rewarding." "It's been a tough graft but credit to the players for keep coming back." The remaining Tests are in Multan (October 15-19) and Rawalpindi (October 24-28). — AFP

French rugby tighten discipline after Argentina tour

PARIS: French rugby federation president Florian Grill announced Monday an overhaul of the system of discipline in the France teams after a summer tour of Argentina overshadowed by claims of attempted rape and racism.

"The historical pattern that existed for years, based on empowerment, accountability does not work," Grill told AFP in an interview, revealing that "a plan, in which there will be controls and sanctions" will be unveiled in the coming days.

"The framework was not clear and a form of flexible structure was even admitted," he explained of the approach until now. "We are setting a clear framework which will then allow sanctions to be imposed. And we will not have a hand that trembles."

In July, France players Hugo Auradou and Oscar Jegou, both aged 21, were charged with aggravated rape after winning their first international caps against Argentina. The pair were arrested after a 39-year-old woman alleged they viciously assaulted her in a hotel room hours after winning against the Pumas in Mendoza.

On the same night in July, full-back Melvyn Jaminet made racist remarks on social media. He was sent home from the three-match tour and received a 34-week suspension by the FFR. On Friday, the prosecutor's office in Mendoza recommended that the charges of aggravated rape against Auradou and Jegou be dismissed at a hearing set for October 18.

Grill said he "completely respects" the Argentine justice system and would not comment on the Jegou-Auradou affair. But the FFR boss said that he wanted to put an end to "the fourth and fifth half" post match celebrations which had preceded these cases.

"There will be financial or sporting sanctions" in the future, he continued regretting in previous years "a form of acceptance of these excesses which could sometimes even be organized". "We can't imagine that we're doing ultra-elaborate nutrition, personalized hydration for each player, data you don't want to know, and that at the same time, we can, in the middle of a tour, do a fourth or fifth half," he explained.

The details of this plan, which notably includes an overhaul of the international players' charter, should be announced in the coming days. "We cannot take all the positives from rugby, ask brands and partners to associate their image with our presupposed values and not respect them," he added. — AFP



Florian Grill

Sports

From boom to budgeting as reality bites for Saudi Arabia's football

Saudi's lavish drive comes under budgetary strains

RIYADH: A billion-dollar binge which brought some of football's biggest names to Saudi Arabia's modest league has given way to a more cautious phase, with spending down dramatically this year.

After a jaw-dropping 2023, when Cristiano Ronaldo led a parade of largely ageing superstars to the oil-rich, conservative monarchy, Saudi transfer spending slumped from \$957 million to \$431 million in the latest window.

On any given weekend Ronaldo and Karim Benzema, with six Ballons d'Or between them, can now be seen in the Saudi Pro League, with N'Golo Kante, Sadio Mane and the injured Neymar among a host of other top players.

But their ranks have barely swelled this season, with Brentford's occasional England international Ivan Toney the most notable addition when he signed for Al Ahli. The Saudi Pro League, the second biggest spender in the summer of 2023, behind only the English Premier League, dropped to sixth this year, trailing the "Big Five" European competitions that it aims to rival.

According to analysts, Saudi officials are assessing the commercial returns of their record outlay as Saudi Arabia's lavish drive to modernize its oil-reliant economy comes under budgetary strains.

"I think they achieved the purpose last year, they put themselves on the map, they put the league on the map," said James Dorsey, a senior fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute. "Someone like Ronaldo and others attract audiences... it's now a question of how do you sustain that?"

'Not over forever'

The oil-fuelled Saudi football project has drawn comparisons with the Chinese Super League, which imported players on exorbitant salaries until team owners went bust as the Chinese economy fizzled. But with Saudi Arabia the sole bidder for the 2034 World Cup, and desperate to re-mod-

el itself as a tourism and business magnet before global oil demand falls for good, there is probably more to come from the Pro League.

"There are more considered and strategic ways to address the challenges of talent acquisition, which one senses the Saudis are now contemplating," said Simon Chadwick, professor of sport and geopolitical economy at France's SKEMA Business School. "The expensive, lavish signings are not over forever, though it seems unlikely we will be seeing an occurrence like 2023 on a regular basis."

The drop in football spending parallels belt-tightening across the world's biggest oil exporter's so-called "giga-projects" — giant infrastructure gambits ordered under the Vision 2030 economic diversification plan of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto Saudi ruler.

In April, the Saudi finance minister admitted global shocks such as the Ukraine and Gaza wars and COVID-19 had prompted a review of the reform plans which include NEOM, a futuristic city being built in the desert.

The Public Investment Fund, the acquisitive Saudi sovereign wealth vehicle, has issued bonds four times this year, and state-owned oil giant Aramco floated more than a billion shares to fund major projects, according to experts.

"This year Saudi Arabia has stepped back from many of its big spending commitments to appraise whether they represent value for money, added to which even the PIF has been selling debt bonds on financial markets," Chadwick said.

"Spending on expensive, big name players is ultimately a financially burdensome pursuit in the long term which doesn't guarantee success, especially of the Saudi national team," he added.

"And... the anticipated commercial returns (including TV deals and merchandising) have thus far failed to materialize, necessitating a reappraisal of priorities and objectives."

publication of a decision of an arbitration panel. The English top flight said in its summary that City were "unsuccessful in the majority of (their) challenge" and that the tribunal considering the case had determined the APT rules were necessary and pursued a legitimate objective. But City, in their own statement, said the tribunal had declared the APT rules "unlawful" and that the league had abused a dominant position under competition law.

'Inaccuracies'

The club's general counsel, Simon Cliff, in his letter to the other clubs, said: "Regrettably, the (Premier League) summary is misleading and contains several inaccuracies". "Of even greater concern, however, is the Premier League's suggestion that new APT rules should be passed within the next 10 days," he said in an email, according to Britain's PA news agency and the BBC.

"When the Premier League consulted on and proposed the original APT Rules in late 2021, we pointed out that the process (which took several weeks) was rushed, ill-thought-out and would result in rules that were anti-competitive. The recent award has validated those concerns entirely.

City accuse EPL of 'misleading' claims after legal case

LONDON: Manchester City have accused the Premier League of a "misleading" response following a legal case concerning rules governing commercial deals. City wrote to the other 19 Premier League clubs and the league late Monday to challenge the league's interpretation of the outcome, saying their position was that all the associated party transaction (APT) rules were now void.

The Premier League champions launched a legal challenge to the regulations earlier this year on the grounds that they breached competition law. The APT rules are designed to ensure commercial deals with entities linked to a club's owners reflect fair market value and are not artificially inflated.

The Premier League champions and the Premier League both claimed victory on Monday after the

Panthers begin title defense against Bruins

FLORIDA: Entering last season, 11 current NHL franchises had never won a Stanley Cup championship. Thanks to the Florida Panthers' triumphant 2023-24 season, that list is down to 10. On Tuesday night, the Panthers will raise their Stanley Cup banner to the rafters and begin their title defense against the Boston Bruins in Sunrise, Fla. It will be the season opener for both teams. Boston has won five straight season openers, which is tied with the Carolina Hurricanes and the Vegas Golden Knights for the NHL's longest active streak.

The Bruins have earned more than 100 points in each of the past three seasons but have not advanced past the second round during that span. Further, Florida eliminated Boston each of the past two years, but that has not shaken the Bruins' confidence.

"If we're healthy, we're Cup contenders," Bruins president Cam Neely said. "I strongly believe that. I think our players believe that, and I know our coaches believe that. I think we're going to defend extremely well. Are we going to get the offense we'd like? That remains to be seen. We need some guys to step up offensively."

One of those guys is captain Brad Marchand, who needs one goal to tie Rick Middleton for fourth place in Bruins history with 402. Johnny Bucyk (545), Phil Esposito (459) and Patrice Bergeron (427) occupy the top three spots.

Boston made a splash this offseason, adding free agent center Elias Lindholm (seven years, \$54.25 million) and free agent defenseman Nikita Zadorov (six years, \$30 million). The Panthers are led by winger Matthew Tkachuk and center Aleksander Barkov, who each had 22 points in Florida's 24 playoff games last season. Barkov is the franchise leader in career games (737), goals (266), assists (445) and points (711). But it's not just Tkachuk (88 points last season) and Barkov (80) — the Panthers have brought back their top eight point-scorers.

Defenseman Brandon Montour, who finished ninth on that list, signed with Seattle on a seven-year, \$49.98 million contract. Still, the Panthers return veteran defenseman Aaron Ekblad, Gustav Forsling, Dmitry Kulikov and Niko Mikkola.

Forsling led Panthers defensemen with 39 points and topped the league with a plus-56 rating. Among the forwards, Sam Reinhart (57 goals), Carter Verhaeghe (34) and Sam Bennett (20) also return. Reinhart was first on the team in goals; Verhaeghe was second. — Reuters



KANSAS CITY: Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs throws a pass as he's hit by Cameron Jordan #94 of the New Orleans Saints during the third quarter at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium. — AFP

Chiefs battle past Saints to stay unbeaten

LOS ANGELES: The Kansas City Chiefs shrugged off their injury woes to maintain their unbeaten start to the season with a battling 26-13 victory over the New Orleans Saints on Monday. The reigning Super Bowl champions, whose offense has been disrupted by injuries to running backs Isiah Pacheco and receiver Rashee Rice, were nevertheless too strong for the Saints at Arrowhead Stadium.

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes marshalled the Kansas City offense superbly, finishing with 331 passing yards from 28-of-39 completions. The Chiefs' points came from rushing touchdowns from Kareem Hunt and Xavier Worthy, with kicker Harrison Butker slotting four field goals for the home side.

Hunt finished with 102 rushing yards while Juju Smith-Schuster had a big night with 130 receiving yards from seven receptions. The Chiefs improved to 5-0 with the win to widen their lead at the top of the AFC West, where the Denver Broncos are a distant second with a 3-2 record.

The Saints however fell to 2-3 for the season and



RIYADH: (FILES) Nassr supporters congratulate their Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (not pictured) for his 200th international cap during the Saudi Pro League football match between Al-Nassr and Damac at the King Saud University Stadium in Riyadh. — AFP

'Wind of austerity'

Transfers in other countries are also lower this year, with the Premier League's spending nearly halved to comply with profit and sustainability rules. Globally, transfer fees in men's football fell by 13 percent from a year earlier to \$6.4 billion (5.8 billion euros) this summer, according to world body FIFA.

As Chadwick said, "a wind of austerity is blowing through football".

Mohamed Mandour, a journalist at French website Sportsdata, said the lower spending reflects "realism and rationality" at the Saudi Pro League, four

of whose biggest teams are owned by the PIF.

"Any sports project spends a lot in the beginning phase," he told AFP, saying the league is looking for "sponsors and resources for the clubs, some of which are from outside Saudi Arabia itself".

An official in the Saudi Professional League, who wanted to remain anonymous as he was not authorized to speak to the media, told AFP: "Who says we have to sign a big player every summer?"

"Spending this year reflects the maturity of the league and the pursuit of filling the technical gaps" in the teams, the official added. — AFP

News in Brief

Cycling race abandoned

MILAN: Italian cycling race Tre Valli Varesine, which was due to feature Tadej Pogacar, was abandoned on Tuesday after heavy rains battered the north of the country. The soaking conditions which hit the race between Busto Arsizio and Varese in Lombardy, which had earlier been delayed and shortened to 168 kilometres, caused riders to stop with 58km completed. Italian media reported that the riders then spoke to organizers and it was decided that the race would not be finished due to the poor conditions. UAE rider Pogacar was the big favorite for Tuesday's race, which is a warm-up for Il Lombardia on Saturday, the final "Monument" one-day race of the road cycling season. The Slovenian star won the Tour of Emilia at the weekend in his first race after being crowned world champion for the first time last month. The rain didn't stop the women's race, which was held on Tuesday morning and won by France's Cedrine Kerbaol after also being significantly shortened. — AFP

Hernandez receives suspension

MILAN: Theo Hernandez has been suspended for two games for ranting at referee Luca Pairetto following AC Milan's dramatic defeat at Fiorentina, Serie A said on Tuesday. France full-back Hernandez was sent off after the final whistle of Sunday's 2-1 loss in Florence for having repeatedly aimed "seriously disrespectful criticism" at Pairetto. Hernandez, who wore the captain's armband on Sunday, will miss Milan's matches with Udinese and Bologna after the international break. His ban could have been longer as he had to be dragged back by Alvaro Morata following a thrilling match which featured three saved penalties including one taken by Hernandez. The aftermath of the defeat has created more unwanted controversy for Milan, who are five points behind league leaders Napoli after an inconsistent start to the season. — AFP

MLS sets attendance record

NEW YORK: More than 11 million fans have flocked to Major League Soccer games this season, the league said Monday, breaking the previous record of 10.9 millions fans who attended games in 2024. The league said in a statement that the league has averaged 23,240 fans per game, breaking the 11 million-fan barrier for the first time in history. MLS said the arrival of international stars such as Lionel Messi — whose presence in the league has often prompted teams to switch fixtures to bigger stadiums — had helped boost attendances. "The arrival of international stars and the work from clubs to create more unique fan friendly ticket packages and game day experiences are among the key drivers of the continued surge of record-breaking attendance across MLS," the league announced. The record-breaking tally comes with the regular season still to be completed. Sixteen more matches are due to take place before the season wraps up on October 19. — AFP

were also given an injury scare with quarterback Derek Carr taking a knock in the fourth quarter that forced him out of game. Kansas City moved into an early 10-0 lead after Hunt rushed over for a five-yard touchdown before Butker slotted a 26-yard field goal early in the second quarter.

New Orleans finally stitched together a scoring drive though soon afterward with Carr hitting Rashid Shaheed with a 43-yard touchdown pass midway through the second quarter. The extra point cut the lead to 10-7 but Kansas City kept the scoreboard ticking over on the next drive with another Butker field goal.

The 15-play drive included another highlight reel-worthy moment, with tight end Travis Kelce flipping a cheeky lateral pass to Samaje Perine to help turn a 3rd & 21 into a short yardage fourth down, to the delight of Kelce's pop-star girlfriend Taylor Swift watching from the VIP seats.

With New Orleans punting on their next possession, Kansas City ensured they would reach half-time nine points clear after another Butker field goal made it 16-7. After a scoreless third quarter, the Saints closed to within three points after Carr found Foster Moreau with a six-yard touchdown pass early in the fourth quarter.

But the Chiefs re-asserted their control with Worthy rushing over from three yards to put Kansas City 23-13 before another Butker field goal extended the lead to 13 points with just over three minutes remaining. — AFP



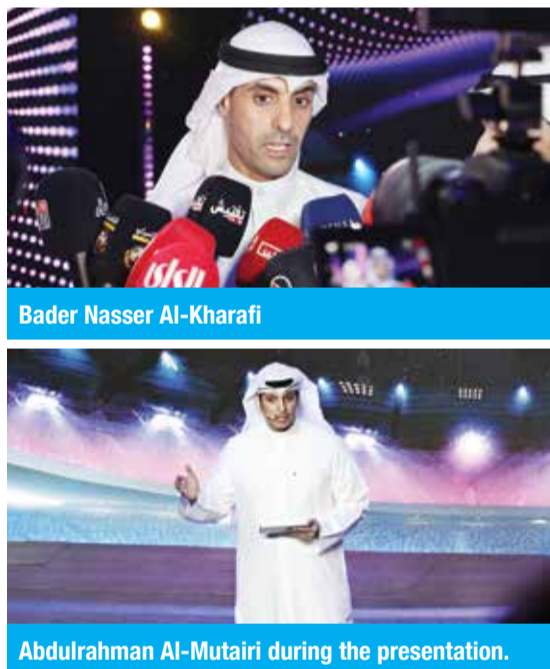
(From left) Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Zain Group, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Secretary-General of the Gulf Cup Federation Jassim Al-Rumaihi seen on stage during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain official sponsor of Gulf Cup

Information minister emphasizes government support with strategic partnerships and youth involvement



The signing of the partnership agreement.



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during the presentation.



(From left) Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Jassim Al-Rumaihi seen on stage during the event.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and presence of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, a presentation was held on Tuesday to showcase preparations for the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament, which Kuwait will host from December 21, 2024, to January 3, 2025.

During the event, Zain Group signed a partnership agreement with the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Zain Group, stated: "Zain's strategic partnership reflects its commitment to sports and youth, aligning with the directives of HH the Amir of Kuwait to position Kuwait as a host for international events."

Al-Kharafi highlighted Zain's role as the official sponsor, noting that the Gulf Cup holds special significance for Kuwait. "Kuwait has won the Gulf Cup multiple times, and it holds a special place in the hearts of Kuwaiti fans. The tournament's slogan, 'The Gulf Future', emphasizes the need for advanced technology, and Zain, a leader in the tech field, will provide top services in terms of stadium

coverage and digital solutions, all in line with international standards," he shared.

In his opening remarks, Minister Al-Mutairi said: "For decades, Kuwaiti sports have received strong government support, experiencing both challenges and a golden era, which is natural for all countries. The important thing today is to have institutional memory, develop strategies, and plan for the future. Under the guidance of HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister, we have a mandate to support and enhance Kuwait's sports system."

He added: "Today's event is a great opportunity to train and prepare national talents. The Gulf Cup embodies the spirit of hosting our brothers from the region, bringing everyone together in the peaceful country of Kuwait, and reinforcing our presence on the world stage."

The minister revealed that the tournament's slogan, "The Gulf Future", reflects the significant progress in the Gulf states and their prominent role in hosting major events. "Our future must align with the Gulf's trajectory. We must plan according to global standards and strengthen international partnerships. We have an agreement to collaborate with interna-

tional companies to leverage their expertise in organizing the Gulf Cup, alongside coordination with various government ministries and the private sector," Al-Mutairi stressed.

Al-Mutairi also announced Kuwait's partnership with Microsoft to develop an app that will provide services, location tracking, and advanced technologies during the tournament. "A specialized company has been hired to handle the unique opening and closing ceremonies, ensuring that Kuwaiti talent is showcased with international standards and supported by a global company."

The ministry has also established a 19-committee organizational structure, involving both global and local companies to enhance performance levels. "Around 500 Kuwaiti youth will work within these committees, along with 2,280 volunteers who will be trained to organize the event," he added. "We have completed over 200 construction and maintenance projects across three main stadiums and eight training fields, achieving over 70 percent progress. All necessary work will be completed before the tournament, meeting international standards to ensure full readiness," Al-Mutairi confirmed.

Regarding parking, he said: "We have provided 10,000 spaces at Jaber Stadium, along with an additional 10,000 nearby. The app will make it easy for attendees to find suitable parking spots. On the tourism front, we've involved the private sector in organizing various activities at venues across Kuwait."

Al-Mutairi also noted that the Ministry of Information has coordinated with the exclusive broadcaster to dedicate TV and radio programs and four studios to cover the event, creating a visual identity worthy of Kuwait's media reputation. "A sustainable developmental legacy is a key focus, and we must continuously improve these facilities to host future events, leaving a lasting legacy and achieving our vision under the theme 'The Gulf Future'."

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cup Federation Jassim Al-Rumaihi expressed his happiness with Zain's partnership, noting this is not the first time Zain has participated, as they were also involved in the 25th Gulf Cup. He hopes Zain's continued collaboration will inspire other companies to follow suit. Al-Rumaihi thanked the minister for his detailed presentation and expressed hope that Kuwait will be fully prepared to successfully host the Gulf Cup.

Ex-Spain star Iniesta retires

BARCELONA: Former Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta, who won two European Championships and the 2010 World Cup with an all-conquering Spain team, announced his retirement from football on Tuesday at the age of 40.

"Being on the pitch is over," a visibly emotional Iniesta told reporters at a news conference in Barcelona. "I can't stay away from football, it's my life and will continue to be my life. Now I need to continue educating myself, I'm in the process of doing my coaching diploma and that's the next step."

"I will try to come back and do a great job, but it won't be running after the ball, but from another place," he added. Iniesta came up through Barcelona's famed La Masia academy and made his first-team debut in 2002 aged just 18, becoming a mainstay in the midfield before his departure 16 years later.

He won nine La Liga titles and the Champions League four times with Barcelona, but his greatest moment came in the 2010 World Cup final when he scored the winning goal against the Netherlands in extra time.

After leaving Barcelona in 2018, Iniesta spent five years with Japanese club Vissel Kobe before playing one final season with Emirates of the UAE. — AFP



Andres Iniesta

Kuwait Olympics delegation returns home with gold

KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Olympics team, under the umbrella of Al-Tamouh Sports Club, returned home on Monday after winning the gold medal in the regional modern sailing competition for the Middle East and North Africa, hosted in Dubai.

The competition aimed to promote the concept social empowerment for people with disabilities. Players Sulaiman Al Nasser and Nawaf Awadh represented the Kuwaiti team. The Chairwoman of the Kuwaiti Special Olympics Board Hanaa Al-Zawawi, expressed her gratitude to the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club in a statement to the Ku-

wait News Agency (KUNA). She thanked them for their support of Al-Tamouh's participants and for providing partner athletes to join the competition.

The Head of the Delegation, Saddiq Al-Ansari, affirmed that the Public Authorities in Kuwait provided full support to the Kuwaiti champions, facilitating their first participation in the competition. Player Nawaf Awadh told KUNA that despite tough competition, they were able to achieve the gold medal thanks to prior preparations and guidance from the technical and administrative staff, under the leadership of Manager Habbab Al-Hami. He expressed his gratitude for this victory in the name of Kuwait.

From his side, athlete Manaf Al-Wuhaib from the Marine Sports Club stated that the competition marks the beginning of further achievements to be added to the record of Kuwaiti sports, particularly in relation to athletes with intellectual disabilities. — KUNA