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Zionist PM vows 'no mercy'

Hezbollah threatens to hit Zionist targets



NABATIEH: A picture shows the damage after a Zionist airstrike in southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh. — AFP

BEIRUT: Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to hit Hezbollah without mercy after the Hezbollah's deadliest strike on Zionist entity since the start of the war in late September. Hezbollah's drone attack on the base killed four soldiers, while volunteer rescuers said another 60 people were injured. "We will continue to mercilessly strike Hezbollah in all parts of Lebanon—including Beirut," Netanyahu said on a visit to the base near Binyamina, south of Haifa.

Hezbollah said it launched the "squadron of attack drones" in response to Zionist attacks, including one last week that Lebanon's health ministry said killed at least 22 people in central Beirut. Since Zionists last month escalated bombing in Lebanon before sending ground troops across the frontier, the war has killed at least 1,315 people, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry figures, though the real toll is likely higher.

Prior to Netanyahu's comments, new air strikes had already occurred against targets around Lebanon, including one in a northern Christian-majority village which killed at least 21 people on Monday, according to the health ministry. Meanwhile, Lebanese militant group threatened Tuesday to attack targets across Zionist entity and said it would not be defeated by ongoing intense bombardment of its strongholds and leadership. In the latest exchanges

during the conflict, the group said it launched a barrage of rockets towards the northern city of Haifa, while Zionists carried out air strikes in several areas of Lebanon.

A defiant Hezbollah "will not be defeated" in its war with Zionists, the group's deputy chief Naim Qassem said in a speech. "Since the (Zionist) enemy targeted all of Lebanon, we have the right from a defensive position to target any place" in Zionist entity, "whether the centre, the north or the south," he said. "I am telling the Zionist home front: the solution is a ceasefire," he added. Iran, which supports Hezbollah, has in recent days engaged in diplomatic talks around establishing a ceasefire in Lebanon and war-battered Gaza amid growing fears of a broader regional conflict.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati told AFP that his country was ready to bolster its military presence in the south after any ceasefire, adding that Zionist troops were making brief cross-border incursions. Security has been tightened in the country's only airport in Beirut "to remove any pretexts" for an attack, Mikati added. Zionist entity has also been intensifying its offensive in the besieged Gaza Strip, which the United Nations warned Tuesday is suffering under its worst aid restrictions since the war there began over a year ago.

Continued on Page 6

Mideast conflict to top agenda at first EU-Gulf summit

BRUSSELS: Avoiding a "general conflagration" in the Middle East will be top of the agenda when European Union and Gulf leaders meet in Brussels this week, European officials said on Tuesday. Heads of state and government from six Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - are expected to attend the first summit on Wednesday with their EU counterparts in the Belgian capital. Trade, energy and climate change are among issues on the table. But conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon, and the risk of a broader regional war are expected to be "the main topic", EU officials said.

"One of the objectives is to avoid a general conflagration," one official said. "Both sides are worried about this." The 27-nation EU is seeking to foster closer ties with countries from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The EU is the second-largest trading partner for GCC countries but talks on a trade pact have languished for years and differences also remain on other subjects, including the war in Ukraine. "We see much more eye-to-eye on the Middle East," another official said. "We want - both the EU and the GCC - stability in the region, de-escalation." The talks come amid escalating Zionist attacks it says are targeting Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. Hezbollah had been exchanging cross-border fire with Zionists for almost a year, saying it is acting in response to devastating ground and air assault on Gaza.

The near-daily exchange of fire across the Lebanon border led to the displacement of tens of thousands of people on both sides even before the dramatic escalation last month, when Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to crush Hezbollah. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and top EU diplomat Josep Borrell will participate in the EU-GCC meeting, along with the heads of the EU's 27 nations, ahead of a European Union leaders' summit on Thursday. — AFP (See Page 2)

Kuwait supports efforts to bolster economic stability

NEW YORK: Kuwait renewed its commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at enhancing economic stability and effectively contributing to achieving sustainable development goals, calling for enhancing joint action in the field of sustainable investments and vital projects. The remarks were made during a speech by the Permanent Delegation

Indian FM lands in arch-rival Pakistan for a rare visit

ISLAMABAD: Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday for a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, the first top Delhi diplomat to visit their arch-rival neighbor in nearly a decade. Jaishankar's plane landed just before 3:30 pm at an airbase near the capital Islamabad, a foreign office official said, as state TV showed him receiving a bouquet of flowers from a host delegation that did not include any senior ministers.

Canada blasts India as tensions soar over separatist's murder

OTTAWA: Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India Monday of making a "fundamental error," as an escalating row over the killing of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil last year saw both countries expel each other's ambassadors. Trudeau branded New Delhi's actions as "unacceptable" during a press conference in Ottawa on the diplomatic expulsions, which saw tensions reach a new height after the 2023 murder of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Trudeau has previously said there were "credible allegations" linking Indian intelligence services to the killing.

Both countries have traded barbs since then, culminating with the expulsions Monday of each other's ambassadors and five other top diplomats in both countries. "The government of India made a fundamental error in thinking that they could engage in supporting criminal activity against Canadians here on Canadian soil, whether it be murders or extortion or other violent acts," Trudeau told reporters in Ottawa, hours after the expulsions were announced.

"We will never tolerate the involvement of a foreign government threatening and killing Canadian citizens on

of Kuwait to the United Nations by Diplomatic Attache Shabib Al-Ajmi in the Second Committee meeting, which was entitled "Macroeconomics".

Al-Ajmi said that macroeconomics is one of the main pillars of sustainable development and global economic growth, and it directly affects the standard of living and quality of life of people in countries around the world. Al-Ajmi pointed out that Kuwait has adopted, in its vision "New Kuwait," comprehensive policies aimed at diversifying the economy, sources of income, and reducing dependence on oil, as it focused on developing non-oil sectors such as renewable energy, education, and technology.

He added that these policies support small and medium-sized companies for their essential role in

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan are bitter adversaries with longstanding political tensions, having fought three wars and numerous smaller skirmishes since they were carved out of the subcontinent's partition in 1947. Relations have been particularly sour since 2019, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked the limited autonomy of Indian-administered Kashmir. The Himalayan region is divided between India and Pakistan but claimed by both in full, with each accusing the other of stoking militancy there. Modi's 2019 move was celebrated across India but led Pakistan to suspend bilateral trade and downgrade diplomatic ties with New Delhi.

Indian government spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said this month the agenda of Jaishankar's visit would strictly follow the SCO schedule, which is

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driving economic development in the country. With regards to the field of clean energy, the Diplomatic Attache stated that Kuwait has adopted the (Shaqaqaya) renewable energy project, which aims to generate 15 percent of the total electricity by 2030, in order to enhance efforts to transition towards a green and sustainable economy.

He also pointed out that Kuwait has achieved remarkable progress in the Arab macroeconomic indicators for the year 2023, which reflects its commitment to improving the business and investment environment and strengthening the country's economic structure, in addition to progress in several indicators, including the monetary and banking sector index.

Continued on Page 6



RAWALPINDI: India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (2nd left) speaks to Pakistan's DG South Asia Ilyas Nizami (3rd right) upon his arrival at the Nur Khan Airbase in Rawalpindi. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian policemen stand guard outside the entrance of the Canadian High Commission, in New Delhi on October 15, 2024. India and Canada each expelled the other's ambassador and five other top diplomats. — AFP

KU and Zain empower girls with digital skills

Company supports 'Girls Powered' workshop, part of the National Robotics Competition



Empowering girls to acquire robotics and programming skills.



Fostering students' passion for technology.

KUWAIT: Zain supported the 'Girls Powered' workshop, one of the programs under the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC), organized by the Computer Science Department of the College of Science at Kuwait University, the Youth Public Authority, and the Ministry of Education, in partnership with Zain. The workshop aimed to invest in the digital skills and capabilities of girls and young women, focusing on empowering their technical expertise in various fields.

This initiative aligns with the shared vision of the Computer Science Department and Zain to support creativity and enhance technical skills within the community, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), specialties that are increasingly demanded by modern job markets. The workshop had a specific emphasis on empowering girls and young women to inspire them to enter and excel in these fields.

The workshop, organized in collabora-

tion with the Women's Cultural and Social Society, saw the participation of around 90 girls aged 8 to 14 years. During the event, the girls were empowered to acquire new skills in robotics and programming while enhancing their abilities in utilizing advanced tools and techniques associated with these fields through interactive and practical methods. A range of hands-on activities was also held, fostering a spirit of collaboration and teamwork among the young participants. This contributed to boosting the girls' self-confidence and enhancing their problem-solving and creative thinking skills. The workshops were led and supervised by faculty members from the Computer Science Department.

This year, Zain returns as a strategic partner for the new season of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition in collaboration with the Computer Science Department, the Youth Public Authority, and the Ministry of Education. The company

has seen remarkable success following its support of the previous edition of this initiative after months of hard work and creativity, which culminated in Kuwait University's team winning the Build Award at the VEX Robotics World Championship held in the United States.

The competition contributes to fostering Kuwaiti students' passion for technology and enhancing their creative thinking while helping them chart their future career paths and preparing them to enter STEM fields. This effort is the result of direct and effective collaboration between public and private sector institutions to prepare the next generation of technology leaders in Kuwait. This partnership comes as part of Innovation Nation, the initiative under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, with a focus on STEM areas. The initiative mainly targets young people and entrepreneurs and aims to foster a digitally capable generation.



Promoting a spirit of collaboration and teamwork.



The winning mathematics team.



The supporting technical advisors.

Kuwaiti students win Gulf Scientific Olympiad medals

JEDDAH: Kuwaiti students Ali Behbehani and Fajr Al-Sahli won silver medals at the 10th Gulf Scientific Olympiad, held in Madinah, Saudi Arabia. Behbehani won a silver in chemistry, while Al-Sahli took home a silver in mathematics. The Kuwaiti team also achieved notable success, earning two silver medals and six bronze medals overall. The bronze medalists included Najat Al-Rifai, Jassim Mohammad and Ali Al-Basri for physics, and Hussain Al-Wazzan, Marwa Al-Azmi, and Sara Al-Humaidi for mathematics.

Kuwait's Gulf Scientific Olympiad team consisted of 14 students, supported by several technical advisors, and the event was organized by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States in collaboration with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education. Among the participants in the physics competition were Ah-



Silver medal winner student Ali Behbehani

mad Bader, Jassim Mohammad, Najat Al-Rifai and Ali Al-Basri, while the chemistry team included Ali Behbehani, Khaled Al-Mudaires, Dana Al-Ayubi and Jana Al-Jadi. In the mathematics competition, Marwa Al-Azmi, Fajr Al-Sahli, Mubarak Al-Mee, Hussain Al-Wazzan, Abdulrahman Adel and Sara Al-Humaidi represented Kuwait. — KUNA



The winning physics team.

MoH awards Kuwait Prize to 2 physicians

DOHA: Kuwait's Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, awarded the Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to Dr Asem Hamza, of Jordan and Prof Davood Khalili of Iran, in recognition of their efforts to promote public health. The prize-giving took place on the fringes of the 71st session of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, which opened in Doha on Monday and continues until Thursday, October 17.

Addressing the event, Dr Al-Awadhi said, "The prize reflects Kuwait's commitment to supporting scientific research and pioneering initiatives for improving public health in our region and beyond. Over the last decades, Kuwait has been pursuing a comprehensive approach for controlling chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes, which pose a serious threat to the lives of millions of people."

"The combat against these diseases is a priority item on the national development agenda and the action program of the Ministry of Health. The Ministry has launched several ambitious programs for

preventing, early diagnosing, and treating chronic diseases with a view to alleviating the social and economic burdens caused by such diseases. These programs include large-scale awareness campaigns to educate the public on the risks of these diseases and how to prevent them," Dr Al-Awadhi added.

He highlighted the importance of regional and international cooperation in addressing the health challenges, noting that Kuwait has been keen on

building partnerships with several countries and health organizations to promote public health. Launched in 2003 and administered by the World Health Organization, Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region recognizes individuals who have made an outstanding contribution in prevention, control, or research in one or more of those disease groups. — KUNA



Kuwait's Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi awards Kuwait Prize for control of chronic diseases to Dr Asem Hamza and Prof Davood Khalili.

First GCC-EU summit crowns decades-long cooperation

BRUSSELS: The first GCC-EU summit, scheduled for Wednesday, reflects the strong ties between the two entities, crowning the decades-long cooperation in various fields. The summit, chaired by current GCC Presidency holders Qatar through its Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and EU Council President Charles Michel, will be an opportunity to further expand cooperation. His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, will partake in the summit.

According to the EU, the summit will address numerous fields of cooperation, especially in the economy, trade, investment, energy, climate collaboration, and more. Though the summit is the first of its kind between the two sides, the GCC and EU relations date back to 1989, when the two signed a cooperation deal, which set the mainframe of dialogue and mutual understanding. The agreement led to the formation of a joint Foreign Ministers Council, which held meetings annually.

In February of 2022, the Foreign Ministers of the GCC and the EU agreed on the joint cooperation program of 2022-27, recently updated back in October 2023. The program set GCC-EU mutual activities within the domains of trade, investment, climate cooperation, green and sustainable energy transition, as well as efforts within counterterrorism. The European Commission and the European High Representative of Foreign Affairs issued in May 2022 a joint statement titled "Strategic Partnership with the GCC," which defined the roadmap for the EU to boost cooperation with the Gulf countries.

In the same month, the EU assigned Luigi Di Maio as the Union's Special Representative for the Gulf region, which was in line with efforts to solidify ties. The EU is the second largest commercial partner to the GCC, with a volume of trade around EUR 170 billion (\$185 billion) in 2023, according to the Union's documentation. The documentation also revealed that the EU imported 75 percent of its fuel needs from the GCC, and the number tripled since 2020 with the start of the Russian-Ukraine war.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Belgium Nawaf Al-Enezi said the GCC-EU summit due in Brussels on Wednesday comes in the context of long-lasting bilateral cooperation. Speaking to KUNA, Al-Enezi, also chief of Kuwait's missions at the EU and NATO, regarded the summit as an additional step towards the promotion of strategic cooperation between two blocs that wield much influence in the international order. "This is reflected by an economic power estimated at more than 20 percent of the gross world product (GWP) as trade exchange hit 170 billion euros (\$185.35 billion) in 2023," he said, citing the document of the Strategic Partnership with the GCC.

He added that the gathering reflects the strategic significance of promoting relations with the GCC countries, given their growing role and influence on the international scene, along with mutual willingness to bolster strategic partnership to the highest levels and create communication channels aiming at ensuring regional and global security and stability. The Kuwaiti ambassador noted that the summit would come up with a final communiqué bearing on a host of issues involving trade, investment, dialogue on energy transition and climate change, counterterrorism, coordination regarding humanitarian aid, and cooperation in regional security. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait takes the center stage in global counterterrorism efforts

Workshop focuses on disengagement, deradicalization, rehabilitation, reintegration



International delegates gather for a group photo during a workshop of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation, Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan, stated that Kuwait has been at the forefront of global efforts to defeat terrorism and radical groups, playing a leading role at both regional and international levels. His remarks came during a workshop hosted by Kuwait on Tuesday for the East Africa Working Group (EAWG), a part of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) co-chaired by Kuwait and Kenya as part of their membership in the forum, which they joined in September 2023.

Ambassador Al-Mashaan expressed Kuwait's commitment to advancing its role by effectively contributing to the strategic vision of the Global Counterterrorism Forum for the upcoming decade (2021-2031), aimed at reducing terrorist recruitment and enhancing capabilities through long-term strategic engagements. Seeking to build on the solid foundation established by the co-chairs, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union, the ambassador outlined several key areas of focus, including addressing domestic extremism, managing the return of foreign fighters, preventing and countering violent extremism at both national and regional levels, and integrating a gender-based approach into counter-extremism initiatives.

Transferring over 1,200 terrorists

He also mentioned the need to improve strategic communications to effectively counter extremist narratives, address the connections between organized crime and radical groups, prevent violent extremism in prisons, and enhance community dialogue. Reflecting on previous achievements, the ambassador highlighted Kuwait's past successful efforts in recent years to foster bilateral cooperation with friendly countries to counter radicalism, improve community safety and strengthen institutions, particularly emphasizing its work in addressing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters.

Since 2018, he mentioned that Kuwait has played



Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation, Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan

a critical role in the safe transfer of over 1,200 foreign terrorist fighters and their families from camps in Syria and Iraq back to their countries of origin, using Kuwait's airbases as part of the process. As part of its previous initiatives, he added that Kuwait has co-chaired, alongside the Republic of Turkey and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Working Group on Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTFS) under the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS, which has contributed to creating favorable conditions for containing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating these fighters and their families into their communities.

11 strategic-level workshops

Speaking about the workshop which focuses on Disengagement, Deradicalization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) of individuals associated with terrorist groups, Kibiego Rotich Kigen, a representative from the National Counter Terrorism Centre in Kenya, highlighted the significance of this event as the first in a series of 11 strategic-level workshops planned by the East Africa Working Group over the next two years.

He noted that these workshops aim to deliver



KUWAIT: (From left to right) Zeeshan Amin, Kibiego Rotich Kigen and Hamad Al-Mashaan are pictured during the workshop. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

long-term strategies that foster synergy, cooperation, and collaborative action between the Global Counterterrorism Forum and regional partners in countering terrorism. The workshops, he said, will be guided by five priority areas: preventing and countering violent extremism, enhancing capacity for investigation and prosecution, improving strategic communication, effectively disrupting terrorist networks, and facilitating disengagement, deradicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Kigen further highlighted that the East Africa region has developed innovative, localized solutions that are African-led and inspired to address the challenges posed by radicalized individuals wishing to disengage from violent extremism. He remarked, "The Global Counterterrorism Forum has also evolved a comprehensive set of good practices based on global experiences. This workshop therefore provides us with an opportunity for dialogue, the co-development of priorities, and the integration of efforts to tackle a shared challenge."

Kuwait's leadership in DDRR Initiatives

On a side interview with the press, Zeeshan Amin,

Head of the United Nations Office of Counterterrorism in Baghdad, commended Kuwait's leadership on a global level regarding DDRR. "Kuwait has been a leader in combating terrorism around the world. In many ways, there have been instances of terrorism and violent extremism in the broader region, as well as in many other parts of the world. It's countries like Kuwait that demonstrate how nations should be able to prevent and effectively tackle this challenge," he said.

Amin expressed optimism about collaborative efforts, saying, "We look forward to working together to understand some of the good practices that have been put in place to take this conversation forward." He highlighted the significance of sharing and understanding practices related to DDRR of individuals affected by terrorism. Additionally, he noted the ongoing partnership with the governments of Kuwait and Kenya as implementing partners for the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum East Africa Working Group, for which Kuwait and Kenya serve as co-chairs. "We hope to organize more conferences and capacity-building training events that will help countries in the East African region understand effective practices related to DDRR," Amin concluded.

NBK sponsors 'TAMAKAN' training program for fresh university graduates

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors "TAMAKAN" training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates, as part of the strategic partnership with "Creative Confidence" for the sixth consecutive year. The online registration for TAMAKAN program continues through www.creativeconfidence.co/tamakan/ until 2 December 2024. The program is an innovative training experience especially tailored for fresh Kuwaiti university graduates. It aims to support young Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills, expand their capabilities and grow their knowledge in a way that will make them compelling candidates for employment.

NBK will be hosting the program and providing a real business challenge that participants will work on into the final stages of the training sessions. The program will start on 11 December till 13 February 2025. TAMAKAN is a full-time commitment for 10 weeks, 5 days a week, from 8:00 am-4:00 pm. Executive Manager, Head of Public Relations and Event Man-



Talal Al Turki



Rana Al Resheed

agement at NBK, Talal Al Turki, said, "NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with Creative Confidence. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young graduates and empowering Kuwaitis"

"TAMAKAN" is one of these initiatives that help invest in promising youth talents. NBK is looking forward to the outcome of the program and to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future," he added. "NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. TAMAKAN program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in Kuwaiti youth and support their aspirations," Al Turki noted. In her



turn, the Founder and Managing Director of Creative Confidence, Rana Al Resheed expressed her sincere thanks to NBK for their continuous support to TAMAKAN. "We are proud of this strategic sponsorship that results in supporting and investing in the Kuwaiti youths."

She added that graduates will gain real, relevant work experience and develop their skills to help them start their careers. They will get exposed to



the latest methods and tools that will help them in designing solutions and shaping ideas in any field. TAMAKAN Program offers recent graduates a unique development opportunity before starting their first job. TAMAKAN is organized by Creative Confidence in collaboration with NBK. Creative Confidence is a Kuwaiti based consulting and training company that specializes in creativity, innovation and collaboration.



KUWAIT: The International Women's Group hosts an event to celebrate the beauty, strength, and resilience of women.

IWG celebrates beauty, strength and resilience of women

KUWAIT: The International Women's Group (IWG) - Kuwait hosted a vibrant event on 13 October, celebrating the beauty, strength, and resilience of women. Themed "Celebrate Your Sparkle & Inner Beauty," the gathering aimed to empower women to embrace both

their inner and outer grace. It was a day of laughter, connection, and self-appreciation. IWG President Polina Dalmini, wife of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Eswatini, welcomed ambassadors and guests with an inspiring message on the importance of self-acceptance and supporting one another.

"Today we come together to celebrate, not only our outer beauty but also our inner grace, courage, and individuality," she said. Her speech set the tone for an uplifting day, focusing on women's empowerment. The event featured a lively bingo game with empowering phrases such as "You are enough" and

"Strength is beauty," encouraging participants to embrace their inner strength while enjoying moments of laughter and excitement. The atmosphere was filled with positivity, as the game brought everyone together in a celebration of resilience and beauty.

Guests were also pampered with beauty services, including make-up, perfume, and hair styling by professionals. A luxurious nail service and a showcase of beauty products further enhanced the glamorous experience. The professional photo shoot captured the radiant glow of each woman, adding a special touch to the day. Vera Al Muttawa,

IWG Presidential Advisor, took the stage to reflect on the strength of women in all aspects of life. She emphasized that every woman is the CEO of her own life, skillfully balancing personal, family, and professional roles. Her words resonated deeply: reminding attendees of their power in managing life's many demands. The event concluded with a joyful sing-along to "I Will Survive," symbolizing the resilience of women, followed by a sumptuous buffet. Dalmini expressed her gratitude to all contributors who made the day special, celebrating a shared spirit of empowerment and femininity.



UNTOC discusses draft resolutions

VIENNA: The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) kicked off Monday with a Kuwaiti participation. The five-day conference is expected to discuss series of draft resolutions, including crimes that affect the environment, ways to combat the trafficking of firearms, organized fraud, and the sharing of electronic resources.

The draft resolutions would also address the issue of implementing international cooperation provision, as well as reviewing the implementation of the convention and protocols. More than 63 side-events would take place in UNTOC, covering various aspects of addressing and countering organized crimes, United Nations said in a statement. The Kuwaiti delegation to the gathering is headed by Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to International Organizations, Talal Al-Fassam. — KUNA

KUNA publishes 2nd volume of 'Today in Kuwait's History'

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) released a second volume of its book titled "Today in Kuwait's History," documenting key events in the country between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2023. The second volume, which provides an overview of Kuwait's daily events and includes photographs, comes after the first volume was published in 2011, which chronicled Kuwait's history up to December 2010. The latest edition serves as a national archive, capturing significant political, economic, social, and cultural transformations in Kuwait during these twelve years.

It highlighted the country's progress and achievements, offering a well-documented, detailed record of major milestones that shaped the nation. This publication comes as a continuation of KUNA's historical documentation journey since October 2001, when it launched daily monitoring on its newsletter of the most prominent and important events in Kuwait under the title "Today in Kuwait's History." — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on October 14, 2024 from Kuwait City shows a view of the waxing gibbous moon and Saturn (top right). — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Burgan Bank raises awareness about breast cancer in collaboration with Kuwait Hospital

Confirming bank's commitment to the health and safety of its employees

KUWAIT: As part of the global Pink October Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Burgan Bank renewed its partnership with Kuwait Hospital to publish a series of educational videos across its social media platforms throughout the entire month, as well as deliver a breast cancer awareness workshop for its employees at its headquarters.

The workshop, delivered by Dr Zahraa Ismail, General Surgery Consultant and Dr Maryam Al-Shatti, Senior Specialist Radiologist at Kuwait Hospital, was attended by a large number of Burgan Bank employees, covering a broad spectrum of breast cancer detection and prevention tips and engaging the attendees in a dynamic Q&A session. The educational workshop comes as part of Burgan Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program, its committed adherence to the highest Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, and its uncompromising care for the mental,



Kholoud AlFeeli



Dr Zahraa Ismail and Dr Maryam Al-Shatti take a group photo with Burgan Bank representatives.

physical, and emotional health of all Burgan staff.

"As part of our ongoing efforts to equip our employees with crucial information that enhances their quality of life, we are delighted to collaborate with Kuwait Hospital, one of the top healthcare providers in Kuwait, once again to guarantee the health and wellness of our staff and their families," said Kholoud AlFeeli, Deputy General Manager – Corporate Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank, commenting on the breast cancer educational workshop.

"We believe that educating our employees and raising their awareness about breast cancer is the first and most important line of defense against the risks of this malicious disease. We are honored to be among numerous conscious institutions worldwide participating in the global Pink October awareness efforts, which reflect positively on the lives of individuals and communities."

On her part, Dr Zahraa Ismail, General Surgery Consultant at Kuwait Hospital, said: "As medical staff, we spare no effort to provide breast cancer patients with the best care and treatment possible to minimize their physical and emotional pain, and an integral part of these efforts is spreading awareness about the proven methods for detecting and

preventing breast cancer. The more commonplace such knowledge is across our society, the higher the chances that breast cancer patients will be able to receive the right care at an early stage or even avoid the disease altogether.

We are very proud to collaborate with Burgan Bank for the second year on our shared mission to raise awareness about breast cancer and contribute to the health and wellness of our community." To guarantee the efficiency of the educational workshop, Dr Maryam Al-Shatti, Senior Specialist Radiologist at Kuwait Hospital, delved into the contributing factors that lead to breast cancer and the different means of protection and prevention.

She also introduced the attendees to the different breast cancer symptoms they should watch out for and how to administer a correct self-check. It serves to note that as part of its robust and dynamic social responsibility program, Burgan Bank continues to spread awareness about the different lifestyle choices that contribute to leading a healthier, more fulfilling life. In addition to breast cancer awareness, the Bank has also participated in raising awareness about diabetes, mental health, and the importance of blood donation.



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Interior Ministry delegation takes group photos with Director General of KUNA. — KUNA photos

Interior, KUNA look to deepen cooperation

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Dr Fatma Al-Salem, and a delegation from the Interior Ministry held talks on Monday aiming to bolster media cooperation between the two state bodies. The talks examined efforts to push forward bilateral cooperation, in addition to matters of mutual concern, with KUNA's chief underlining that a greater rapport between the two sides would lead to the more efficient delivery of state news to the public.

She went on to commend the efforts of the Ministry's media office in putting together national campaigns to generate awareness about a slew of

pressing matters, chief among them the need to cooperate with security personnel. Leading the Ministry's delegation amid the gathering, Major General Nasser Abusaleeb praised the significant role of the state-run Kuwaiti news agency, saying greater bilateral cooperation would be instrumental in pushing forward the ministry's efforts to communicate with the public. — KUNA



Director General of KUNA Dr Fatma Al-Salem with Major General Nasser Abusaleeb.



North Korea blows up roads, rail lines connecting it to the South

Chinese PM 'virtually' inaugurates Pakistan airport

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KHAN YUNIS: Senior UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Action and Reconstruction in Gaza Sigrid Kaag visits a makeshift camp for displaced Palestinians in Mawasi Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 15, 2024. — AFP

UN decries 'worst restrictions' on Gaza aid since start of war

UNICEF official laments devastating impact of Zionist war on children

Harris pokes fun as Trump turns rally into dance-a-thon



Supporters cheer as US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris arrives to speak at a campaign event in Erie, Pennsylvania, on October 14, 2024. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris questioned Donald Trump's mental state Tuesday after the 78-year-old Republican's latest televised town hall veered into a bizarre, impromptu music session. "Hope he's okay," the Democratic candidate posted on X. Harris's campaign, which has begun to aggressively challenge Trump on his health and mental stability, said that during the late Monday event he appeared "lost, confused."

Trump's campaign spokesman Steven Cheung declared that instead "something very special" had taken place between the billionaire and the crowd.

For about half an hour, the event near Philadelphia in the key swing state of Pennsylvania was standard fare ahead of the November 5 election: Trump took friendly questions from supporters on the economy and cost of living. With the session moderated by a loyal right-wing ally, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, Trump was on cruise control—although he got the election date wrong by two months, urging supporters to vote "on January 5."

After the town hall paused for two audience members who required medical attention, Trump then switched focus. Jokingly asking whether "anybody else would like to faint," Trump declared: "Let's not do any more questions."

"Let's just listen to music. Let's make it into a music. Who the hell wants to hear questions, right?" Trump said. And so they did: for more than half an hour, the Trump playlist blasted while the candidate mostly stood on stage listening and slowly dancing. Trump has made a brief, jerky dance his signature at the end of rallies for years, nearly always to his exit song—the Village People's 1978 disco anthem "YMCA."

On Monday, however, he stayed on stage for nine songs, ranging from opera to Rufus Wainwright's rendition of "Hallelujah," Elvis and of course "YMCA." And his dance routine expanded from the familiar jerky motion to a slow swaying. Often, however, he did not dance but stood in place and stared out into the crowd and sometimes pointed at people. — AFP

GENEVA: Conflict-ravaged Gaza appears to be facing the worst restrictions on aid since the Zionist-Hamas war began over a year ago, the UN said Tuesday, lamenting the especially devastating impact on children. "Day after day, the situation for children becomes worse than the day before," said James Elder, spokesman for the UN children's agency UNICEF. Vast areas of Gaza have been devastated by Zionist entity's retaliatory assault on the territory. Zionist entity has been intensifying operations in the north of the besieged Palestinian territory, where the UN has warned hundreds of thousands of people are trapped. Despite a desperate need to increase the amount of aid going in, Elder lamented that aid access was worsening.

"August was the lowest amount of humanitarian aid that came into the Gaza Strip of any full month since the war broke out," he said.

There had been "several days in the last week (where) no commercial trucks whatsoever were al-

lowed to come in," Elder added. "We see now what is probably the worst restrictions we've seen on humanitarian aid, ever." Earlier in the year, amid warnings that the UN could declare a full-fledged famine in Gaza, Elder said there had been "a real push to have new routes and access points open".

But now, "we have seen an absolute reversal of that", he warned, adding that since May, "we've seen consistent entry points blocked". Northern Gaza meanwhile "hasn't had food, any food aid at all coming in all of October", he added. The dire lack of aid, coupled with the relentless strikes and the fact that around 85 percent of the Gaza Strip has been hit with some form of evacuation order, has made the territory "essentially unlivable", Elder said.

Polio vaccination campaign

Despite escalating Zionist entity military operations in certain areas, the second round of a polio

vaccination campaign for hundreds of thousands of children began on Monday. The vaccination drive began after the Gaza Strip confirmed its first case of polio in 25 years. Like the initial round, the second will be divided into three phases, helped by localized "humanitarian pauses" in the fighting: first in central Gaza, then in the south and finally in the hardest-to-reach north of the territory. Last week, the UN acknowledged that the second round would be "more complicated" than when the first doses were given last month. The aim is to provide more than 590,000 children under the age of 10 with a second dose, with nearly 93,000 doses delivered in central Gaza on Monday alone, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters.

"The vaccination went without major issues yesterday," he said, adding that he hoped the necessary humanitarian pauses would be observed throughout the territory. — AFP

Images Diagnostic Center's Neuro Imaging Summit highlights latest innovations in diagnostic imaging

KUWAIT: Images Diagnostic Center, the first outpatient imaging center of its kind in Kuwait, collaborated with Advanced Technology Company (ATC), the leading distributor of comprehensive health and environmental care solutions across the public and private sectors, hosted the Neuro Imaging Summit at the Four Seasons Hotel in Kuwait on 13 October 2024.

The summit gathered leading local and international neuroimaging experts to discuss advancements in diagnostic imaging and their impact on neurological diseases including strokes, dementia, multiple sclerosis (MS), migraines, and epilepsy. It served as a platform for sharing knowledge on the latest neuroimaging techniques and boosting collaboration among medical professionals in Kuwait and the region. Key topics included innovations in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for early detection and management of neurological disorders, as well as the potential of imaging to improve patient outcomes.

Speakers offered key insights into various neurological disorders during the event's panel discussions. Professor Dr Gokcen Coban Cifci from Hacettepe University presented the latest developments in MRI for diagnosing multiple sclerosis and dementia, while also exploring innovative imaging techniques that offer earlier and more precise diagnosis.

Professor Dr Arnd Doerfler, Head of Neuroradiology at the University Hospital Erlangen, discussed the role of MRI contrast agents in enhancing image quality and diagnostic accuracy, while Dr Muhammad Yaman Adi, a Coventry, UK-based Consultant in Interventional Neuroradiology, shared his expertise on stroke imaging pathways, focusing on comprehensive workflows for acute stroke management.

Additional sessions covered migraine and epilepsy imaging, as well as the various MRI techniques that are reshaping diagnosis and treatment of such conditions. Dr Yahya Slaiman, CEO of Images Diagnostic Center, highlighted the evolving role of neuroimaging in neurological treatment: "Rapid innovations in neuroimaging technology are transforming the way we diagnose and treat complex neurological diseases.



Professor Dr Arnd Doerfler



Professor Dr Gokcen Coban Cifci

From identifying early signs of dementia to improving stroke care, these technologies are integral to better patient outcomes". Commenting on the event, Ghasan Mamlook, CEO of ATC, said: "We are delighted to collaborate on this summit and bring together ex-

perts to exchange knowledge on the latest diagnostic tools in neuroimaging. This aligns with our vision of enhancing healthcare in Kuwait through the adoption of innovative technologies that improve diagnostic accuracy and patient care."



International

Chinese PM 'virtually' inaugurates Pakistan airport in volatile region

Li will also attend Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: China's Premier Li Qiang took part in a ceremony during his Pakistan visit to inaugurate a Beijing-funded airport, located in a volatile region where Chinese interests are routinely targeted by separatists. While Li did not travel to Balochistan, he "virtually" inaugurated Gwadar Airport at a ceremony held Monday in the capital Islamabad, some 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) away.

The airport is next to Gwadar Port, the cornerstone project of the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that connects China's Xinjiang region to Pakistan's coast. "China will continue to work with Pakistan to uphold the principle of planning together, building together and benefitting together," Li said at the ceremony alongside Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. An aviation official told AFP, on condition of anonymity, that the airport is yet to open for flights. "The facility is now ready for operations, but it is not yet operational," he told AFP.

Li is on a four-day visit to Pakistan that began on Monday to hold bilateral talks. He will also take part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit that Islamabad is hosting on Tuesday and Wednesday. Beijing has been one of Islamabad's most reliable foreign partners, readily providing financial assistance to bail out its often struggling neighbor.

But ties are strained by several militant attacks that have targeted CPEC projects and killed more than 20 Chinese nationals in several attacks in the past three years. Earlier this month, two Chinese nationals were killed in a deadly attack on a convoy of engineers in Karachi. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: China's Premier Li Qiang (center, left) speaks with Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif (center) upon his arrival at the Chaklala military air base in Islamabad. (Right) Li Qiang plants a tree alongside Sharif in Islamabad. — AFP



UN troubled by jailing of political foes in Tunisia

GENEVA: The United Nations said Tuesday it was troubled by the presidential election campaign in Tunisia, which had been "marred" by a crackdown on the opposition. Three years after making a sweeping power grab, Kais Saied was re-elected president of Tunisia with 90.69 percent of the votes cast, the ISIE electoral authority announced Monday. A low turnout reflected widespread discontent in the cradle of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings.

Saied had been widely expected to win after the ISIE barred 14 candidates from standing, with other figures jailed. "Such cases are troubling. Their trials indicate a lack of respect for due process and fair trial guarantees," UN human rights chief Volker Turk said.

His statement recalled that out of 17 prospective candidates only three were accepted, while a number of presidential hopefuls were arrested and served lengthy prison sentences on various charges.

Meanwhile, more than 100 prospective candidates, their campaign members and other political figures were arrested on a variety of charges ranging from falsification of electoral paperwork to issues related to national security. Turk called on the Tunisian authorities to protect the country's democratic processes and uphold fundamental freedoms. "Since 2011, Tunisia had been a pioneer in efforts to ensure accountability and redress for past abuses, including through the work of the Truth and Dignity Commission," Turk said. "Unfortunately, a number of these gains have been lost, and the recent arrest of the former head of the commission is an example." — AFP

Indonesia's Prabowo courts largest party for broad coalition

JAKARTA: Indonesia's incoming president Prabowo Subianto met candidates for senior government posts for a second day on Tuesday, as he seeks to bring the country's biggest political party into his already dominant parliamentary coalition. If Prabowo can reach a deal with Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) there would be no opposition parties in parliament, an unprecedented situation since Indonesia began holding direct presidential elections in 2004.

Prabowo, who will be sworn in as president on Oct. 20, summoned more than 40 people on Monday who said they had been asked to join the next government, including current finance minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati. On Tuesday Prabowo summoned dozens of potential deputy ministers, his top aide Sufmi Dasco Ahmad said.

Prabowo plans to meet PDI-P chief Megawati Sukarnoputri, Dasco said, without specifying a time.

Senior PDI-P politician Pramono Anung met with Prabowo to convey a message from Megawati, his spokesperson said, without elaborating. Prabowo's cabinet assessments are expected to continue until Saturday. Badminton Olympic gold-medalist Taufik Hidayat, one of Indonesia's biggest social media influencers Raffi Ahmad, and popular singer-songwriter Yovie Widianto were among those who arrived at Prabowo's house on Tuesday.

The absence of any opposition in the parliament would ensure smooth passage of Prabowo's legislative agenda, but would likely heighten fears about a lack of meaningful checks on Prabowo's power in a country with a history of authoritarian



JAKARTA: People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Chairman Ahmad Muzani (center), one of his deputies Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono (right) and Indonesia's vice president-elect Gibran Rakabuming Raka (left) speak with journalists on October 14, 2024. — AFP

rule. Seven of the eight parties in parliament have already joined Prabowo's coalition, securing him a parliamentary majority.

PDI-P, which won the most seats in the February election, had nominated Prabowo's predecessor, Joko Widodo, for president in 2014. But their relationship soured over President Widodo's tacit support for Prabowo during his election campaign. Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the incoming vice president. In his second five-year term, Widodo was also backed by most parties in parliament, with only two remaining in opposition.

Widodo leaves office amid criticism that he

tried to change laws to benefit his family and to co-opt state bodies to control his opponents. He denies any impropriety, and has said democracy is thriving and that he respects the country's institutions. Analysts say they fear what they see as that democratic backsliding may continue under Prabowo, a member of the old elite that previously ruled Indonesia. Prabowo is an ex-special forces commander who was dismissed from the military amid speculation over human rights abuses. He denied any wrongdoing. In March, Prabowo described democracy as tiring, costly and messy, and said there was room for improvement. — Reuters

Zionist PM vows 'no mercy' ...

Continued from Page 1

Zionist entity is also weighing how to respond to Iran's decision to launch about 200 missiles at the country on October 1. Prime Minister's office said that Zionist entity - and not its top ally the United States - would decide how to strike back. The Iranian barrage was in retaliation for a Zionist airstrike in Lebanon's Beirut that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian general Abbas Nilforoushan on September 27. US President Joe Biden - whose government is Zionist top arms supplier - has warned against striking Iran's nuclear or oil facilities in order to avoid broader war.

According to a Washington Post report on Monday citing unnamed US officials, Netanyahu reassured the White House that Zionist entity was only contemplating targeting military sites. Oil prices - which soared after Iran's attack - tumbled by more than five percent following the report. A statement from Netanyahu's office on Tuesday took a different tone. "We listen to the opinions of the United States, but we will make our final decisions based on our na-

tional interest," the statement said. Also on Tuesday, top Iranian commander Esmail Qaani - whose absence sparked rumors that he could have been killed in an airstrike - appeared in public for the first time in weeks when he attended Nilforoushan's funeral in Tehran.

'Violent night'

Zionist military launched several strikes in Lebanon on Tuesday, including in the eastern Bekaa Valley where a hospital in Baalbek city was put out of service, Lebanon's official National News Agency reported. "It was a violent night in Baalbek, we have not witnessed a similar one since" the 2006 war between Zionists and Hezbollah, 50-year-old resident Nidal Al-Solh told AFP. The war in Lebanon has displaced at least 690,000 people, according to verified figures last week from the International Organization for Migration.

Zionist entity says it wants to push back Hezbollah in order to secure its northern boundary and allow tens of thousands of people displaced by rocket fire since last year to return home safely. Hezbollah says its strikes are in support of Palestinian militants Hamas. Despite a desperate need for more aid in Gaza, particularly in the north, UNICEF spokesman James Elder lamented that the situation was the worst since the start of offensive. — AFP

for his first term, sparking short-lived hopes of a thaw in relations. The SCO is a block of 10 nations established by China and Russia, which have used the alliance to deepen their ties with Central Asian states and vie for influence in the region. However, they have recently pitched the organization as a competitor to the West.

The bloc claims to represent 40 percent of the world's population and about 30 percent of its GDP, but its members have diverse political systems and even open disagreements with one another. Pakistan's former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was in Goa last year—also a rare visit—for an SCO meeting where he and Jaishankar were involved in a verbal spat. It was the first official visit by a senior Pakistani official to their eastern neighbor since 2016, but the two foreign ministers did not hold a one-on-one meeting. — AFP

Canada blasts India as tensions soar...

Continued from Page 1

Canadian soil, a deeply unacceptable violation of Canada's sovereignty and of international law," he said. The expulsions came after New Delhi said its envoy had been named among "persons of interest" following the killing of Nijjar. India "decided to expel" Ottawa's acting High Commissioner Stewart Wheeler, his deputy and four first secretaries, ordering they leave before midnight on Sunday.

Ottawa announced similar measures in return, with Canadian police saying they had "evidence pertaining to agents of the government of India's involvement in serious criminal activity" in Canada. Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said that India had refused to cooperate in the investigation, or to lift diplomatic immunity for its envoys. "The decision to expel these individuals was made with great consideration and only after the RCMP gathered ample, clear and concrete evidence which identified six individuals as persons of interest in the Nijjar case," she said in a statement, referring to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Nijjar - who immigrated to Canada in 1997 and became a citizen in 2015 - had advocated for a separate Sikh state, known as Khalistan, carved out of India.

Kuwait supports efforts to bolster...

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On the international level, Al-Ajmi said that Kuwait emphasizes the importance of enhancing cooperation and supporting policies aimed at improving the sustainability of external debts, which comes in line with the directions of Kuwait's foreign policy through the Kuwait Fund for Development. He stated that the Fund has provided development assistance to more than 100 countries to improve infrastructure and develop the educational and health sectors in those countries, "which reflects our keenness to

He had been wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. Four Indian nationals have been arrested in connection with Nijjar's murder, which took place in the parking lot of a Sikh temple in Vancouver in June 2023.

New Delhi had earlier said it had "received a diplomatic communication from Canada suggesting that the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats are persons of interest" in the ongoing investigation. It said their envoy, Sanjay Kumar Verma, a former ambassador to Japan and Sudan, was a respected career diplomat and that the accusations were "ludicrous". New Delhi's foreign ministry said it had told Verma to return home and that it had "no faith" in the Canadian government's commitment to ensuring the six expelled diplomats' security.

'Murder'

India on Monday called allegations it was connected to the killing "preposterous" and a "strategy of smearing India for political gains." Last year, the Indian government briefly curbed visas for Canadians and forced Ottawa to withdraw diplomats, and on Monday threatened further action. "India reserves the right to take further steps in response to the Trudeau Government's support for extremism, violence and separatism against India," the foreign ministry said. The foreign ministry also summoned Canadian envoy Wheeler, who said that Ottawa had given India the evidence it had demanded. — AFP

support developing countries and achieve the sustainability and stability of the global economy."

In the same context, Al-Ajmi warned that the global economy is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of economic and geopolitical environmental transformations, which require everyone to work collectively to enhance international cooperation and develop balanced economic policies that ensure sustainability and social justice. The diplomatic attaché concluded Kuwait's speech by calling on the international community to enhance cooperation and joint action in the field of sustainable investments and vital projects to confront these challenges, which require us to combine international efforts to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development for all. — KUNA

Indian FM lands in arch-rival Pakistan...

Continued from Page 1

due to discuss trade, humanitarian and social issues. "The Indian foreign minister has not requested a bilateral meeting, nor have we extended an invitation to them," Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Sunday. Islamabad is keen to project an image of stability and security during the conference after a rash of civic unrest in the capital and militant attacks elsewhere across Pakistan in recent weeks.

Former Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj was the last to visit Pakistan in 2015, arriving for a summit on Afghanistan. Modi also made a surprise visit to Pakistan that year, shortly after taking office

International

North Korea blows up roads, rail lines connecting it to the South

Seoul says Pyongyang's actions violate past agreements



This screen grab taken from video released by the South Korean Defense Ministry shows an explosion on a road connecting North and South Korea on October 15, 2024. — AFP photos



PAJU, South Korea: Barricades are seen at a military checkpoint on the Tongil bridge, the road leading to North Korea's Kaesong city, in the border city of Paju on October 15, 2024.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Irregular EU border crossings fell 42% this year: Frontex

WARSAW: Detected irregular crossings into the European Union fell 42 percent in the first nine months of 2024 compared to the same period last year, EU border agency Frontex said on Tuesday. Frontex released its latest statistics shortly before a summit of the bloc's leaders in Brussels later this week, where immigration is among topics high on the agenda. The number of detected crossings into the EU "fell by 42 percent to 166,000 in the first nine months of this year", Frontex said. It said the biggest falls were along the routes through the Western Balkans and Central Mediterranean. — AFP

Russia says defense pact with North Korea 'clear'

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Tuesday its defense pact with North Korea had a "clear" meaning as tensions flared over Pyongyang's destruction of roads leading to South Korea. North Korea blew up sections of the deeply symbolic roads on Tuesday, prompting Seoul to conduct a "counter-fire" operation in response. When asked about a treaty signed between Russia and North Korea in June that provides "mutual assistance" in case either country faces aggression, the Kremlin said the wording "does not need to be clarified". — AFP

Russia reduces consular staff in Norway on Oslo request

OSLO: Russia will reduce its consular staff in Norway following a request from Oslo, the Russian embassy said. In a post on Facebook late Monday, the Russian mission in Oslo said "only two diplomats will remain in the consular section" after a request to cut staff by October 17. The Russian consulates in Kirkenes, near the Russian-Norwegian border in the north, and in Barentsburg, a Russian mining community in the Arctic Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, announced on X and Telegram that they would be suspending their consular services for the same reason. — AFP

WHO receives nearly \$1bn in new funding at Berlin summit

GENEVA: The World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday announced it had received nearly \$700 million in new funding and another \$300 million in re-affirmed pledges during a financing summit in Berlin. It comes under a new financing mechanism that was launched in May, which aims to raise billions of dollars for the UN agency's budget through to 2028 that can be deployed more quickly and flexibly—and hopefully save millions of lives. "We know that we are making this ask at a time of competing priorities and limited resources. That's why I have asked every Member State and every partner to step up. Every contribution counts," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement. — AFP

Chad tightens media controls ahead of elections

N'DJAMENA: Chad's online news sites voiced concern Monday over measures announced by authorities to tighten media controls just over two months before elections. The Association of Chad's Online Media (AMET) said the decisions by the main media authority "seem to indicate a desire to restrict the activities of online media". Abderamane Barka, head of the High Authority for Audiovisual Media (HAMA), announced last week that any private newspaper, printed or online, that broadcasts sound or audiovisual content "instead of limiting itself to its written articles, will see its publication suspended". — AFP

SEOUL: North Korea blew up sections of inter-Korean roads and rail lines on its side of the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas on Tuesday, prompting South Korea's military to fire warning shots. Pyongyang said last week it would cut off the inter-Korean roads and railways entirely and further fortify the areas on its side of the border as part of its push for a "two-state" system scrapping its longstanding goal of unification.

At around midday on Tuesday, some northern parts of road and rail lines connected to the South were destroyed, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. Seoul's unification ministry, which handles cross-border affairs, condemned the incident as a clear violation of past inter-Korean agreements, calling it "highly abnormal." "It is deplorable that North Korea is repeatedly conducting such regressive behavior," ministry spokesperson Koo Byoung-sam told a briefing.

Tensions mounted after the North last week accused Seoul of sending drones over Pyongyang. North Korea said the drones scattered a "huge number" of anti-North leaflets, and Kim Yo Jong, leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister, warned on Tuesday that Seoul would "pay a dear price".

South Korea's government has declined to say

whether the South Korean military or civilians had flown the alleged drones. The two Koreas have also clashed over balloons of trash floated since May from North Korea. Pyongyang has said the launches are a response to balloons sent by anti-regime activists in the South. After Tuesday's demolitions, video released by the South's military showed an explosion and a plume of smoke rising above an area of road where the North had put up a black barrier.

It also showed several dump trucks and earth-movers approaching with a group of North Korean military officials observing and guiding the vehicles. In response to the blasts, the South's military fired warning shots south of the military demarcation line, although there was no damage on Seoul's side of the border, it said. Pyongyang has been taking steps to sever inter-Korean ties, redefining the South as a separate, hostile enemy state, since Kim Jong Un declared it a "primary foe" early this year and said unification was no longer possible. The two Koreas are still technically at war after their 1950-53 war ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

The cross-border roads and railways are remnants of rapprochement that included a 2018 summit. Seoul has funneled more than \$132 million into

rebuilding the links in the form of cheap loans to Pyongyang, unification ministry data showed. "It was a major inter-Korean cooperation project that was carried out upon the request from the North," said ministry spokesperson Koo, adding Pyongyang was still obliged to repay the loans. In 2020, the North blew up a joint liaison office set up in a border town after nuclear talks with the United States collapsed.

South Korea filed a lawsuit in 2023 against the North, seeking damages of around 45 billion won (\$33 million) from the joint office's demolition. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a press briefing that Beijing was concerned about developments and wanted "to avoid further escalation of the conflict." The government of South Korea's Gyeonggi Province bordering the North said on Tuesday a special police force would be brought in to crack down on the practice of flying anti-North Korea leaflets from some border areas.

South Korea's constitutional court overturned a ban on such launches last year.

Proponents say leaflet campaigns should be respected as freedom of speech but critics and some lawmakers say police should block them if they threaten lives and safety. — Reuters

US and Philippines launch war games after China drills

MANILA: Thousands of US and Filipino troops launched joint exercises in the northern and western Philippines on Tuesday, after China held huge drills around Taiwan and a Chinese vessel collided with a Filipino patrol boat. The annual Kamandag, or Venom, exercises are focused on defending the north coast of the Philippines' main island of Luzon, which lies about 800 kilometers (500 miles) from self-ruled Taiwan.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed it will never rule out using force to take it, calling Monday's drills a "stern warning" to "separatist" forces on the island.

The joint US-Filipino exercises also come days after a collision between a Chinese and a Philippine vessel in the South China Sea. It was the latest in a series of confrontations between the two countries in the strategic waterway claimed almost entirely by Beijing. Philippine Marine Corps commandant Major General Arturo Rojas stressed at Tuesday's opening ceremony in Manila that Kamandag was long planned and had "nothing to do with whatever is happening in the region".

The drills' primary focus will be live-fire exercises along Luzon's north coast, while other activities will be conducted on tiny Philippine islands between Luzon and Taiwan.

"It's a coastal defence doctrine. The doctrine says that a would-be aggressor might be directed towards our territory," Filipino exercise director Brigadier-General Vicente Blanco told reporters.

"We are not exercising to join the fight (over Taiwan)," he added. US Marines representative Colonel Stuart Glenn said the exercises were aimed at helping the United States and its allies respond to "any crisis or contingencies". The western Philippine island of Palawan, facing the

Thailand massacre defendants skip last hearing

BANGKOK: All seven defendants in a notorious Thai massacre—including a former ruling party MP—on Tuesday missed their last scheduled court date before the deadline to try them, heightening the chance they will never face justice.

Their absence from the hearing in Narathiwat means that unless they turn themselves in or are arrested in the next 10 days, no one will be prosecuted for the "Tak Bai" incident, in which 85 people were killed on October 25, 2004. The 20-year statute of limitations expires next week and relatives of the victims expressed anger, promising to fight on "for the sake of the dead".



MANILA: (Left-right) Philippine Marine Corps and exercise director Brig Gen Vicente Blanco, Philippine Marine Corps commandant Maj-Gen Arturo Rojas, US Marines exercise rep Col Stuart Glenn, and Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force Maj-Gen Hajime Kitajima pose during a press conference in Manila on October 15, 2024. — AFP

South China Sea, will also host part of the drills.

The US and Philippines are fielding just over a thousand participants each, while smaller numbers of Australian, British, Japanese and South Korean forces are also taking part. An amphibious landing and training on how to defend against chemical and biological warfare were also among the activities planned, according to a press kit. As the war games began Tuesday, the Philippine government announced that the BRP Datu Cabaylo, a civilian patrol vessel, had sustained minor damage on October 11 when it was "deliberately sideswiped" by a "Chinese Maritime Militia" vessel.

The collision dented the 30-metre (98-foot) ves-

Seven people were shot dead when security forces opened fire on a crowd protesting outside a police station in Narathiwat, one of the Muslim-majority southern provinces Thailand colonized over a century ago. Subsequently 78 people suffocated after they were arrested and stacked on top of each other in the back of Thai military trucks, face down and with their hands tied behind their backs.

It remains one of the deadliest days in the decades-long rebellion by Malay-Muslims against rule by the Thai state, which rumbles on to this day. With the time limit looming, the Narathiwat provincial court in August accepted a criminal case filed by victims' families against seven officials, a move Amnesty International called a "crucial first step towards justice".

Under the Thai criminal code, at least one of the defendants must appear before court to acknowledge the case for proceedings to begin. Among the accused is Pisan Wattanawongkiri, commander of the army's southern region at the time of the massacre, who was last year elected to parliament for the

self's front right section, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said in a statement. It took place about 9.3 kilometers (5.8 miles) from Thitu, a Philippine-garrisoned island in the Spratly group.

Prior to the collision, the Chinese vessel also "conducted dangerous maneuvers and tried to block the path" of the Filipino boat, which was conducting routine patrol, the bureau said.

The crew were unhurt and later sailed the vessel to Thitu. "What they did to us is against international law and violates our sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea," Nazario Briguera, the spokesman for the fisheries bureau, told AFP, using Manila's term for its claimed sections of the South China Sea. — AFP

ruling Pheu Thai party. He resigned from the party Monday, it said Tuesday, adding he was undergoing medical treatment in Britain. The move means he automatically loses his seat and with it his parliamentary immunity to prosecution.

The court said that in their absence it was scheduling the next hearing for October 28, at which point the proceedings are expected to be dismissed.

Rasada Manurasada, a plaintiff attorney, told reporters it was the defendants' "last chance" to make their case. "If you all run away in the hope that the statute of limitations will expire, it will remain in people's minds," he told them in a message from the courthouse steps.

Tak Bai has become synonymous with lack of accountability in a region governed by emergency laws and flooded with army and police units. "The court issued an arrest warrant but nobody was arrested," said Muhamad Sawaree Useng, 36, who lost his older brother. "We are very tired but we have to fight for fairness for the sake of the dead." — AFP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2024

Oil market 'adequately' supplied despite Middle East conflict: IEA

Crude prices tumble on easing geopolitical fears



DAMASCUS: A woman walks outside accommodations housing Lebanese fleeing the war between Zionist entity and Hezbollah in Lebanon, in Al-Harjalah, south of the Syrian capital Damascus, on October 15, 2024. — AFP

IMF says global public debt to top \$100 trillion



CALIFORNIA: A credit card decal is displayed on the window of a business in San Rafael, California. The world's total public debt is set to exceed \$100 trillion this year for the first time, IMF said on Tuesday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The world's total public debt is set to exceed \$100 trillion this year for the first time, and may grow more quickly than forecast as political sentiment favors higher spending and slow growth amplifies borrowing needs and costs, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday.

The IMF's latest Fiscal Monitor report showed global public debt will reach 93 percent of global gross domestic product by the end of 2024 and approach 100 percent by 2030. That would exceed its 99 percent peak during COVID-19. It would also be up 10 percentage points from 2019, before the pandemic exploded government spending.

Released a week before the IMF and World Bank hold annual meetings in Washington, the Fiscal Monitor said there are good reasons to believe future debt levels could be well higher than currently projected, including a desire to spend more in the US, the world's largest economy. "Fiscal policy uncertainty has increased, and political red lines on taxation have become more entrenched," the IMF said in the report. "Spending pressures to address green transitions, population aging, security concerns, and long-standing development challenges are mounting."

The IMF's concerns about rising debt levels comes three weeks before a US presidential election in which both candidates have promised new tax breaks and spending that could add trillions of dollars to federal deficits. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's tax cut plans would add some \$7.5 trillion in new debt over 10 years, more than twice the \$3.5 trillion added from the plans of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, according to the central estimates the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB), a budget think-tank.

The report finds that debt projections tend to underestimate actual outcomes by sizeable margins, with realized debt to GDP ratios five years ahead averaging 10 percent higher than originally forecast. And debt could be further increased significantly by weak growth, tighter financing conditions and greater fiscal and monetary policy uncertainty in systemically important economies such as the US and China. — Reuters

PARIS/LONDON: Global oil markets remain "adequately" supplied despite escalating tensions in the Middle East, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday, signaling that its member nations could act quickly to release reserves if necessary. Iran's missile attacks on Zionist entity earlier this month sent crude prices soaring over fears that Zionist entity could launch retaliatory strikes that would disrupt supplies.

"Heightened oil supply security concerns are set against a backdrop of a global market that—as we have been highlighting for some time—looks adequately supplied," the Paris-based IEA said in its monthly market report. The agency said the end of a Libyan oil blockade, weaker demand and relatively modest output losses from hurricanes in the US Gulf Coast "have helped to steady markets".

"For now, oil exports from Iran and neighboring countries are unaffected but the market remains on tenterhooks, awaiting the next developments in the crisis," the IEA said. "As supply developments unfold, the IEA stands ready to act if necessary," it said. The IEA was founded in 1974 to help coordinate collective responses to major disruptions of supplies in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.

"As shown in 2022, the Agency and its member countries can quickly take collective action," the IEA recalled, noting that its public stocks alone top 1.2 billion barrels. It added that China holds 1.1 bil-

BofA, Citigroup Q3 profits beat estimates

NEW YORK: Bank of America's third-quarter profit dropped as it paid more to customers to hold onto their deposits but the earnings beat estimates, propelled by stronger investment banking and trading.

Investment banking fees jumped 18 percent compared with a year ago to \$1.4 billion as confidence among clients improved, spurring them to issue more debt and equity. "Our customers' deposit balances and asset quality are healthy, and we believe we have good opportunities to grow," Chief Financial Officer Alastair Borthwick told journalists. Regarding investment banking, Borthwick said, "We feel pretty good looking forward. We've got a good pipeline."

CEO Brian Moynihan called the earnings "solid," citing growth in investment banking, asset management

Ubisoft staff in France strike over home working

PARIS: Workers at video game giant Ubisoft began three days of strike action in France on Tuesday in a dispute over home working and pay, hitting a firm already struggling with poor sales and a collapsing share price. Titles such as "Star Wars Outlaws", "Skull and Bones" and the new episode of "Prince of Persia" have failed to impress, and the company spooked investors by delaying the latest release of the "Assassin's Creed" franchise to next year.

lion barrels of crude stocks. "For now, supply keeps flowing, and in the absence of a major disruption, the market is faced with a sizeable surplus in the new year," the IEA said. The agency also forecast a "sharp slowdown" in global oil demand growth, expanding by just under 900,000 barrels per day in 2024 due to a deceleration in China.

Meanwhile, oil prices tumbled more than five percent Tuesday after a report said Zionist entity Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden he would not strike Iran's crude or nuclear facilities. Oil prices were also pushed down by worries about demand in China after Beijing failed to announce any new stimulus for its stuttering economy at a weekend briefing.

Major stock markets were mostly lower with declines in Shanghai, Hong Kong and London, while Frankfurt rose on a report showing reviving investor confidence. Key US oil contract, West Texas Intermediate, tumbled more than five percent to \$69.71 per barrel. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq edged higher while the Dow dropped on Tuesday, with the benchmark index hovering near record highs as investors parsed a mixed set of quarterly results from companies such as UnitedHealth and Bank of America. At 09.49 am the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 222.22 points, or 0.52 percent, to 42,843.00, the S&P 500 gained 4.97 points, or 0.08 percent, to 5,864.82 and the Nasdaq Composite gained 34.53

fees and sales and trading revenue.

Meanwhile, Citigroup posted a smaller-than-expected drop in profit for the third quarter thanks to gains in investment banking, particularly in debt underwriting. The third-largest US lender's dealmakers joined rivals at JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo in benefiting from a rebound in capital markets as corporate clients issued more debt and equity. Investment banking was a bright spot for the second straight quarter, as revenue jumped 31 percent to \$934 million. Wall Street executives are optimistic that the Federal Reserve's interest-rate cut last month will pave the way for more deals and initial public offerings. "You've heard me talk for a number of quarters about the pipeline and announced deal volume being strong," Chief Financial Officer Mark Mason said in a call with reporters. The bank has "always been strong in debt capital markets" and continues to benefit from investment grade issuance as clients look to get back into the market, he said.

Citi's total operating expenses declined 2 percent in the third quarter. The bank increased its total allowance for potential credit losses by about \$1.9 billion, driving down net income to \$3.2 billion, or \$1.51

The value of Ubisoft shares has collapsed by more than 40 percent since the beginning of the year, touching their lowest level in 10 years in September. This week's strike, sparked by a September message from management insisting on a return to three days working in the office for all staff worldwide, follows on from another walkout in February when hundreds in France joined a dispute over pay.

Unions said they had received no response to the grievances aired in February and that the September message was "the straw that broke the camel's back". Clement Montigny of the STJV union told AFP the move to in-person working broke promises made to staff and "calls into question the way they organize their lives". Ubisoft managers told staff in an email that returning to the office was vital to foster creativity, and promised to give workers time to adjust. — AFP

points, or 0.19 percent, to 18,537.21.

European benchmark Brent North Sea crude also slumped by a similar amount to \$73.34, before clawing back some losses. Prices slid following a Washington Post report that Netanyahu had pledged to target Iran's military rather than its crude and nuclear sector. Iran's missile attacks on Zionist entity earlier this month sent crude prices soaring on fears that retaliatory strikes would disrupt oil supplies.

Tuesday's news has "alleviated some of that supply concern", said Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. "With the geopolitical risk-premium falling, prices are once again being led by the struggling demand picture," he added. The International Energy Agency on Tuesday said global oil markets remain "adequately" supplied. In its monthly update, the Paris-based agency said the end of a Libyan oil blockade, weaker demand and relatively modest output losses from hurricanes in the US Gulf Coast "have helped to steady markets".

Adding to the downward pressure on oil prices is concern that China, the world's largest importer of crude, is failing to reignite its ailing economy. Investors have been left disappointed by a lack of details from China's finance minister Lan Fo'an over the size and scale of economic-stimulus measures aimed at kickstarting growth in the world's second-largest economy. — Agencies



AUSTIN: The exterior of a branch of Bank of America on July 16, 2024 in Austin, Texas. — AFP

per share, from \$3.5 billion, or \$1.63 per share, a year earlier. It still handily beat analysts' average expectations of \$1.31 per share, according to estimates compiled by LSEG. — Reuters



SAINT-MANDÉ, France: Employees demonstrate as they launch a 3-day strike at the French video game headquarters Ubisoft in Saint-Mandé, outside Paris, on October 15, 2024. — AFP

Gulf Bank highlights innovative cash withdrawal options in GB Talks session

A variety of exceptional services available to Gulf Bank customers

KUWAIT: In the latest session of the GB Talks series, Yahya Qassem, Assistant Manager of the ATM Channel at Gulf Bank, highlighted a variety of exceptional services available to customers through the bank's ATM and Interactive Teller Machines (ITM).

Yahya Qassem

Customers can withdraw cash using their mobile phones, civil ID, or through NFC-enabled services.

During his presentation, Qassem explained how customers can conveniently withdraw cash from ATMs using their mobile phones. By accessing the Gulf Bank mobile app and selecting the cardless withdrawal option, customers can enter the desired amount and phone number to generate a code, which can then be used to withdraw cash directly from an ATM. He also noted that customers can withdraw cash using their civil ID if they happen to forget their card.

He noted that Gulf Bank's ATMs come equipped



Yahya Qassem speaks during the GB Talks series.

with NFC technology, enabling customers to complete transactions without inserting their card. By simply tapping their card near the designated area on the ATM, customers can withdraw or deposit cash without inserting the card. This feature helps

reduce potential issues, such as forgetting their card in the machine.

Qassem highlighted the success of Gulf Bank's digital transformation, which includes upgrading ATMs and ITMs across Kuwait. These advance-

ments have made banking with Gulf Bank a seamless and convenient experience, accessible to everyone around the clock. He noted that Gulf Bank offers ATMs at all its branches, providing 24/7 access to cash withdrawals and deposits. Additionally, the bank's ITMs deliver a wide range of services that have significantly reduced transaction times, further enhancing the customer experience.

Gulf Bank remains dedicated to offering 24-hour banking services through various channels, including its website, Gulf Bank mobile app, call center, social media, ATMs, and a network of branches throughout Kuwait. Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

Boeing lines up \$35bn in funds as strike hits finances

EVERETT, US: Boeing filed papers with the US markets regulator on Tuesday for raising up to \$25 billion through a stock and debt offering and entered into a \$10 billion credit agreement amid a crippling strike and upcoming debt maturities. The planemaker is looking to shore up its finances that have been strained due to a slump in production of its best-selling 737 MAX jet following a mid-air door panel blowout earlier this year and a strike by thousands of union workers since Sept 13.

It was not clear when and how much Boeing will raise via the stock offering, but analysts estimate that Boeing would need to raise somewhere between \$10 billion and \$15 billion to be able to maintain its credit ratings, which are now just one notch above junk.

The planemaker's shares were up 1 percent in pre-market trading. Boeing said in a statement it had not drawn on the new \$10 billion credit facility or its existing credit revolver. "These are two prudent steps to support the company's access to liquidity," Boeing said, adding that the credit agreement provides additional short term access to liquidity as it navigates through a "challenging environment".

"This universal shelf registration provides flexibility for the company to seek a variety of capital options as needed to support the company's balance sheet over

a three year period," Boeing said, referring to its filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission. The company will use the funds for general corporate purposes, according to the filing. The planemaker had cash and cash equivalents of \$10.89 billion as of June 30.

The strike is costing the company more than \$1 billion per month, according to one estimate that was released before Boeing announced it will cut 17,000 jobs or 10 percent of its global workforce. The company and the Machinists union, which represents about 33,000 striking workers in the US Pacific Northwest, are yet to reach an agreement over a new contract and talks have become increasingly heated. US Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su met with Boeing and the union in Seattle on Monday in a bid to break the deadlock.

The planemaker was already reeling due to a regulator-imposed cap on production of its MAX jets after the mid-air cabin-panel blowout in January. Last month, Chief Financial Officer Brian West said at a Morgan Stanley conference that the company was "constantly evaluating our capital structure and liquidity levels to ensure that we could satisfy our debt maturities over the next 18 months while keeping confidence in our credit rating as investment grade."

Boeing has \$11.5 billion of debt maturing through Feb 1, 2026, and has committed to issuing \$4.7 billion of its shares to acquire Spirit AeroSystems and assume its debt. Reuters reported earlier this month Boeing was examining options to raise billions of dollars through a sale of stock and equity-like securities. Boeing delivered 33 jets in September, down from 40 in August, as it slipped further in the delivery race with rival Airbus. — Reuters



EVERETT, United States: A Boeing 777X airplane takes off on its inaugural flight at Paine Field in Everett, Washington on January 25, 2020. — AFP

EU ministers meet on Ukraine energy crisis, Russian LNG

BRUSSELS: EU energy ministers met in Luxembourg on Tuesday to discuss the bloc's rising Russian LNG imports, Ukraine's energy shortages ahead of winter and how to balance energy prices across member states, officials said. The EU agreed a 14th package of sanctions in June including a ban on transshipments of Russian gas as of March next year but stopped short of an outright ban. Since then, Belgium and the Netherlands have seen a sharp increase in imports.

In a letter on Monday, France and nine other countries asked the European Commission to propose stricter reporting obligations on Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) for storage companies and suppliers. "Belgium will file and we will support an initiative to ban and track LNG imports from Russia more structurally," Kai Mykkanen, Finland's climate and environment minister, told reporters ahead of the meeting.

Soon after Moscow began its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU announced an effort towards phasing out Russian fossil fuels "as soon as possible" without setting a date. "We have seen in Belgium a doubling of LNG volumes. These are probably destined for security of supply within Europe but we have difficulty implementing this (14th) package that's why we are calling for a tracking system," said Tinne van der Straeten, Belgium's energy minister. After the major Nord Stream pipeline was blown up in 2022, Russian LNG imports to the EU increased, while piped gas still flows via Ukraine and Turkey to central Europe. "Some countries have internal issues clouding their judgement preventing a fast switch but it's been two and a half years so it's time to find an alternative," Krzysztof Bolesla, Poland's state energy minister, said. The contract between Ukraine and Russia for gas flows via Ukraine is due to end in December.

The International Energy Agency said Ukraine's winter electricity shortfall could reach six gigawatts (GW), exacerbated by the end of the Russian pipeline deal. The Commission will update countries on Tuesday on efforts to extend the Russia-Ukraine pipeline deal. Ukraine said it does not want to continue while Russia said it is willing. The ministers will

WB: Growth across Pacific slows as rebound fades

SYDNEY: Growth across the Pacific Islands is expected to slow to 3.6 percent this year, down from 5.8 percent in 2023, as a post-pandemic rebound fades and Fiji, contributing half of the region's output, slowed significantly, the World Bank said on Tuesday. A long-term slowdown was caused by weaker investment, increasing climate risks, and structural challenges, a report said. Without immediate action to ramp up investment, Pacific Island nations may struggle to reduce poverty and generate new economic opportunities, it added.

The Washington-based global lender said investment had shrunk on average across Pacific Island countries in seven out of the past 15 years. In a "troubling outlook", investment growth in 11 Pacific Island countries is expected to be around 1 percent annually this decade, significantly lower than the 4.2 percent average growth from 2000 to 2019, the report said.

Natural disasters cost an average 1.5 percent of gross domestic product per year, and many Pacific Island countries struggle to manage economic shocks after disasters such as cyclones, and are locked into a cycle of "construction, destruction, and repair", the report said. While several smaller Pacific Island countries reliant on tourism saw growth, as tourists from Australia and New Zealand returned, Fiji's growth is expected to slow to 3 percent in 2024. Fiji's public debt, at 79 percent of GDP in 2024, is among the region's highest and one-third higher than pre-pandemic levels.

In Vanuatu, the liquidation of national airline Air Vanuatu hit tourism, causing a significant economic shock and growth to slow to 0.9 percent. Vanuatu has experienced 10 years of shrinking investment, the World Bank said. As well as investment in sustainable tourism and agriculture, the region needs investment in ports, inter-island shipping, and digital connectivity, it said.

Despite having some of the largest maritime zones in the world, Pacific Islands have been unable to fully capitalize on sustainable fishing, aquaculture, and marine biotechnology, it said. The cost of Internet connectivity is relatively high and speeds are poor, compared to the rest of the world, said World Bank senior economist Dana Vorisek. "Digital connectivity really has to be addressed," she told a media briefing in Suva.

Reforms to payment systems and more digital payment services are needed to boost the impact of remittances sent back home to families by offshore workers, officials said. — Reuters

Cooling UK jobs market keeps BoE rate cut on track

LONDON: British pay grew at its slowest pace in more than two years in the three months to August and vacancies fell again, according to official data that will likely be welcomed by the Bank of England as it considers when to cut interest rates again. Average weekly earnings, excluding bonuses, were 4.9 percent higher than a year earlier in the three months to the end of August, the Office for National Statistics said, in line with the median forecasts of economists polled by Reuters.

Sterling was little changed after the data and markets continued to show around an 80 percent chance of a quarter-point UK interest rate cut on Nov 7. Britain's central bank cut borrowing costs in August but kept them on hold at its September meeting, saying it wanted to see further signs that inflation pressures were abating. Data due on Wednesday is expected to show Britain's consumer prices index fell to 1.9 percent in September, below the central bank's 2 percent target, although core inflation is likely to be stronger, according to the economists polled by Reuters.

"For now, another interest rate cut in November looks nailed on, and we will see how the budget changes the outlook for the path of rates from there," Luke Bartholomew, deputy chief economist at asset manager abrdn, said. The first tax and spending announcement of the new government is scheduled for Oct. 30. Finance minister Rachel Reeves on Monday declined to rule out the possibility of an increase in social security contributions paid by employers, prompting the opposition Conservative Party to say she was planning a "jobs tax".

Recent data releases have shown a cooling of pay pressures that built during and after the coronavirus pandemic when employers were forced to jack up wages to recruit and retain staff. Excluding bonuses, private sector pay growth - closely watched by the central bank - slowed to 4.8 percent in the three months to August, leaving it on track to meet the BoE's forecast of an increase of 4.8 percent for the third quarter as a whole. Adding to signs of a cooling labor market, the estimated number of vacancies in the UK fell by 34,000 in the three months to September to 841,000, similar to pre-pandemic levels.

The figures also showed a fall in the unemployment rate to 4.0 percent during the three months to August, the lowest reading this year, and the biggest surge in employment on record.

However, the statistics agency stepped up its health warning over the Labour Force Survey which is used to measure the jobless rate and employment. The survey is being overhauled because of falling response rates. The statistics office said the survey likely overstated employment growth and the fall in unemployment.

"It's clear that this data offers little insight into what's currently happening in the labor market. We think the most likely story is that labor market conditions are continuing to gradually loosen," said Andrew Goodwin, chief UK economist at consultancy Oxford Economics. — Reuters

also look at practical ways to help Ukraine through the winter. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Russia had knocked the "power equivalent of the three Baltic states" and aims to restore about 15 percent of Ukraine's needs.

Poland said it was in talks with Ukraine's transmission companies to raise exports while Lithuania has dismantled a power plant, which is being rebuilt in Ukraine. The ministers will discuss former ECB bank governor Mario Draghi's competitiveness report, on which the incoming Commission is expected to draft its new Clean Industrial Deal. Europe's gas and power prices are higher than in the United States and elsewhere, and they vary considerably across the bloc. In September, the Greek prime minister asked the EU to urgently respond to soaring power prices in central and eastern Europe.

Draghi advocated a faster deployment of cheaper green energy solutions. However, aging power grids, red tape, and limited cross-border infrastructure have hampered efforts. "There is work to do on simplifying the authorization of grid projects, mobilizing funding and do more integrated planning," EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson told the meeting. — Reuters

Business

India says no auction of satellite spectrum after Musk slams move

Musk faces-off with Ambani over India satellite spectrum assignment

NEW DELHI: India's government on Tuesday said it will allot spectrum for satellite broadband administratively and not via auction, hours after Elon Musk criticized the auction route being sought by rival billionaire Mukesh Ambani as "unprecedented". In what is seen as a battle between billionaires, the methodology of awarding spectrum for satellite services in India - a market set to grow 36 percent a year to reach \$1.9 billion by 2030 - has been a contentious issue since last year.

Musk's Starlink argues administrative allotment of licenses is in line with a global trend, while India's Reliance, led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, says an auction is needed to ensure a level playing field and as there are no provisions in Indian law on how individuals can be provided satellite broadband services. Telecoms Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said during a New Delhi event that the spectrum will be allocated administratively in line with Indian laws, and its pricing worked out by the telecom watchdog. "If you do decide to auction it, then you will be doing something which is different from the rest of the world," he said.

On Sunday, Reuters was first to report that Re-



BUTLER, US: Tesla CEO Elon Musk speaks on stage during a campaign rally with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. — AFP



MUMBAI: Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries, arrives to pay his last respect to Indian industrialist Ratan Tata in Mumbai on October 10, 2024. — AFP

liance had challenged the Indian telecom regulator's consultation process that signals home satellite broadband spectrum should be allocated, not auctioned, calling for it to start again.

The minister's comment will come as a shot in the arm for Musk, who following the Reuters story wrote on X late on Monday that any decision to auction "would be unprecedented". "This spectrum was long designat-

ed by the ITU as shared spectrum for satellites," Musk said, referring to the International Telecommunication Union, a UN agency for digital technology. India is a member of the ITU and signatory to its treaty that regulates satellite spectrum and advocates that allocation must be done "rationally, efficiently and economically" as it is a "limited natural resource".

Sunil Mittal, co-chair of global satellite group Eutelsat, which has partnered with India's telecom operator Bharti Airtel, voiced support for the auction route on Tuesday. "Satellite companies who have ambitions to come into urban areas, serving elite retail customers, just need to take the telecom licenses like everybody else... they need to buy the spectrum as telecom companies buy," Mittal, who is also the chair of Airtel, said at the New Delhi event.

Earlier in 2023, both Eutelsat unit OneWeb and Airtel had voiced concerns about auctioning the spectrum in their submissions to the Indian government. Musk's Starlink and some global peers like Amazon's Project Kuiper back an administrative allocation, saying spectrum is a natural resource that should be shared by companies. — Reuters

Goldman Sachs profit beats Q3 estimates

NEW YORK: Goldman Sachs' third-quarter profit beat estimates, fueled by a rebound in bond sales, stock offerings and mergers, sending its shares up more than 3 percent on Tuesday. It joined JPMorgan Chase, which also gained from an investment banking revival, as corporate clients became more confident in the economic outlook, spurring debt and equity offerings. "Our performance demonstrates the strength of our world-class franchise in an improving operating environment," CEO David Solomon said in a statement. Robust US jobs and wage growth have underscored the resilience of the economy, while an interest-rate cut by the Federal Reserve have also encouraged companies to pursue deals. Investment banking fees jumped 20 percent to \$1.87 billion. Leveraged finance, which refers to loans made to risky ventures like funding buyouts, and investment-grade activity powered a jump in debt underwriting.

Equity underwriting also fetched higher revenue, thanks to a slew of secondary share sales.

Goldman achieved "a powerful revenue beat across all segments, showcasing the rebound in capital markets is underway, and we believe has durability", said Stephen Biggar, banking analyst at Argus Research. The bank also scored a key victory in the quarter, advising Cheez-It maker Kellanova K.N on its nearly \$36 billion acquisition by family-owned candy giant Mars, the biggest deal in the US so far this year. Goldman also benefited from easier comparisons with the year earlier, when it took sizeable writedowns on the consumer business and real estate investments.

"Goldman Sachs certainly advanced with a big jump in earnings per share," said Octavio Marenzi, CEO of management consultancy Opimas. "Goldman had a good quarter, but it could have been a brilliant one." Revenue from fixed income, currency and commodities trading fell 12 percent, while equities trading jumped 18 percent.

Goldman, however, booked \$397 million in provisions for credit losses compared with \$7 million a year ago, driven by higher charge-offs in its credit card portfolio. The investment bank continues to take a hit from its ill-fated consumer business two years after stepping back from it. Goldman has since shifted its focus back on traditional mainstays of investment banking and trading.

The bank is exiting its credit card venture with automaker General Motors, which has signed a deal with Barclays. Goldman took a one-time hit of \$415 million that included a writedown related to the transfer of the GM credit card business to Barclays. Its card partnership with Apple is also facing an uncertain future, with JPMorgan in talks to replace Goldman as the tech behemoth's credit-card partner. Total profit jumped 45 percent to \$2.99 billion, or \$8.40 per share, for the three months ended Sept 30, higher than expectations of \$6.89, according to the estimates compiled by LSEG.

Asset and wealth management - the unit that caters to institutions and high net-worth individuals - fetched 16 percent higher revenue than a year ago. The bank supervised a record \$3.1 trillion of assets in the third quarter. Its headcount was 46,400, compared with 44,300 as of June end and 45,900 a year earlier. — Reuters

Survey: Eurozone economy shows signs of growth

FRANKFURT: The eurozone economy showed some signs of life on Tuesday with a raft of indicators pointing to lukewarm but still positive growth for a bloc that has been skirting a recession for over a year. Industrial output expanded and lending demand rose, while expectations in a key German sentiment survey also increased more than predicted, offering some reassurance after key indicators tended to underperform expectations over the past month.

The figures are likely to reinforce bets that the bloc is still growing, even if at the slowest possible pace, but are unlikely to prevent the European Central Bank from delivering an interest rate cut, which is now almost fully priced in.

Industrial production rose by 1.8 percent on the month in August, a touch ahead of expectations, and was up 0.1 percent from a year earlier, driven by rising demand for capital and durable consumer goods, Eurostat said. Output in Germany, the bloc's biggest economy, surged more than 3 percent on the month, the biggest rise among the bloc's larger economies, even if the annualized figure was still deeply negative.

High energy costs, lukewarm de-

mand from China and increased competition from other producers have weakened Germany's industry in recent years, prompting some soul searching over the viability of the country's industry-focused economic model. "Still, expectations about industry remain lackluster for the rest of the year," ING economist Bert Colijn said. "The list of concerns for eurozone industry is long at the moment, and... it's pretty hard to see the start of a vibrant recovery for the sector at this point."

In another mildly hopeful sign for Germany, investor morale improved more than expected in October with the ZEW economic sentiment index rising to 13.1 points from 3.6 points in September.

Expectations for low and stable inflation, bets on further rate cuts and some mild improvement in export demand all contributed to the better sentiment reading, the ZEW said.

It added that China's recent stimulus measures are also fostering some hope for both Germany and the broader eurozone. The ECB has cut rates twice already this year and is almost certain to ease again this week while also keeping a further move on the table for December as inflation is now within striking distance of its 2 percent target.

This would add up to one full percentage point of rate cuts with another percentage point priced in next year, suggesting investors see the benchmark halving from its



FRANKFURT: ECB President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the Eurozone's monetary policy, at the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

previous high of 4 percent.

Rising loan demand, a precursor to durable economic growth, is also reflecting hopes for lower rates. Demand for bank loans, the key source of funding for the corporate sector, rose in the third quarter and a further increase is expected in the final three months of the year, with household mortgages driving the expansion, the ECB said based on a survey of top lenders.

Lending growth has been hovering above zero all year as high interest rates and weak growth have pushed down demand, depressing prospects across a bloc skirting a recession for years. "For the first time since the third

quarter of 2022, banks reported a moderate net increase in demand from firms for loans or drawing of credit lines, while remaining weak overall," the ECB said in a quarterly survey of 156 large lenders. "Net demand for housing loans rebounded strongly."

Lower interest rates drove corporate loan demand but investments had little impact, the ECB said. Among household customers, the rise in demand was driven by declining interest rates and improving housing market prospects. This quarter banks see a further rise in net demand across all loan segments, especially for housing loans. — Reuters

Turkey defends tax plan to fund defense industry

ISTANBUL: The Turkish government defended a proposed tax on credit cards on Tuesday, saying it was needed to fund the arms industry and protect the country as conflict rages in its neighborhood.

Indignant Turks, who already face double-digit inflation, called their banks to lower their credit limits after the ruling AKP party submitted the tax bill to parliament on Friday. The legislation comes as Zionist entity's conflicts with Tehran-backed Islamist militants in Gaza and Lebanon, and missile strikes by Iran, have raised global concerns that a broader war could erupt in the Middle East.

"Our country has no choice but to increase its deterrent power. There's war in our region right now. We are in a troubled neighborhood," Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek told private broadcaster NTV.

The bill stipulates that people with a credit card limit of at least 100,000 liras (nearly \$3,000) will have to pay an annual 750 lira (\$22) in tax from January to bolster the defense industry.

"The purpose (of the bill) is obvious," Simsek argued. "If we increase our deterrent power, then our ability to protect against fire in the region will increase," he said, though he added that the bill was in the hands of parliament and the ruling party could "re-evaluate" it. AKP's parliamentary group chairman, Abdullah Guler, said when he proposed the tax on Friday that Zionist entity's next target would be Turkey, an argument often cited by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"While we are in the middle of all these hot developments geographically, we need to make our defense industry stronger than ever," Guler said.

A vocal critic of Zionist entity's offensive in Gaza and Lebanon, Erdogan has warned that Zionist entity's



ANKARA: Foreign exchange rates are displayed against the Turkish lira in this photo. — AFP

military operations could soon target Turkey, prompting the opposition to demand an emergency session in parliament for the government to elaborate. Addressing a conference hosted by his AKP party on Tuesday, Erdogan doubled down the threat posed by Zionist entity. "Even if there are those who cannot see the danger approaching our country... we see the risk and take all kind of measures," he said. Turkey's defense industry has enjoyed a boom in recent years but Simsek said the sector needed a boost. The defense industry is planning to invest in 1,000 projects, including an air defense system that would protect Turkey from missile assaults, Simsek said. "This requires resources," he added. Turkey has allocated 90 billion lira from the budget to fund the defense industry last year, he added. "This year, we increased it to 165 billion lira. Maybe we will need to double this even more."

Turkey's defense companies signed contracts in 2023 worth a total of \$10.2 billion, according to Haluk Gorgun, the head of Turkey's state Defence Industry Agency (SSB). The top 10 Turkish defense exporters contributed nearly 80 percent of total export revenue, he said. Sales of Turkish Baykar drones, used in Nagorno-Karabakh or Ukraine, amounted to \$1.8 billion.

Last week, parliament held behind-closed-doors session for the government to explain why it saw Zionist entity as a potential threat, but the opposition said it was not convinced. The spokesman for Turkey's main opposition CHP party, Deniz Yucel, said Monday the government was exploiting national feelings to sweep an "economic crisis" under the rug. Inflation has spiraled over the past two years, peaking at an annual rate of 85.5 percent in October 2022 and 75.45 percent in May 2023.

Union slams wage offer for key German industries

NUREMBERG: Germany's largest industrial union slammed a proposed pay rise for almost 4 million workers in key sectors on Tuesday as too little too late, teeing up difficult collective bargaining negotiations and possible strikes in Europe's largest econo-

my. The 3.6 percent raise over a period of 27 months - announced formally by the regional employers' association Nordmetall on Tuesday and in line for what would be put on the table nationally - is considerably lower than the 7 percent sought by the union. "It's too little, the pay rises come too late and the term is too long," said Daniel Friedrich, chief negotiator for the IG Metall union's regional district in northern Germany.

"This will make it difficult to reach a good solution quickly," he said in a statement. Employers represented in the talks, which are taking place across the country, include Siemens, Mercedes-Benz and BMW. IG Metall's group for

northern Germany said it would evaluate the offer next week and decide on further steps, which could include strike action as of Oct. 29.

The proposal foresees a staggered pay rise of 1.7 percent from July 1, 2025 and 1.9 percent a year thereafter. "Our offer is a sign of appreciation for employees, even in times of crisis. At the same time, we are at the limit of what our member companies can cope with across the board," said Lena Stroebel, who is leading the negotiations on behalf of employers in the northern district. "The damage would be enormous," Angelique Renkhoff-Muecke, an employers' representative in the southern district

of Bavaria, said of the union's demands, pointing to a structural crisis in German industry and shrinking order books. Not included in the talks is Volkswagen, which has its own in-house collective bargaining negotiations, the second round of which are scheduled to begin on Oct. 30. The first round ended without agreement and the IG Metall industrial union has threatened strike action.

Beset with high costs and fierce competition from abroad, Volkswagen is considering closures of plants in Germany, illustrating the challenges it faces more broadly as Europe's largest economy battles against the threat of de-industrialization. — Reuters

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2024



A zookeeper holds a young still unnamed Panda cub during a media presentation of one of the Panda twins that were born on August 22, at the zoo in Berlin on October 15, 2024.



A zookeeper weighs a young still unnamed Panda cub in a box.— AFP photos



A zookeeper lays down a young still unnamed Panda cub.

Twin panda cubs to make public debut at Berlin Zoo

Berlin Zoo visitors will from Wednesday be able to catch their first glimpse of two rabbit-sized panda cubs born almost eight weeks ago. The 2.5-kilogram (about five pound) baby bears will take turns to greet an admiring public in the zoo's Panda Garden for about an hour a day from 1:30 pm local time. "Until now, it was exclusively reserved for our team to observe the growing up of the little pandas," said zoo director Andreas Knieriem. "Now, for the first time, we can also allow our visitors to take part."

Since their birth on August 22, the still unnamed cubs have been in the care of their mother Meng Meng and an expert team including specialists from China's Chengdu Panda Base. "Panda cubs are still very immature at birth and completely dependent on their mother for care," said biologist and curator Florian Sicks in a statement. "Normally, panda mothers only raise one cub. But with animals as endangered as the giant panda, every offspring is of enormous importance." Sicks added that "we will

observe closely how the little pandas react to their new environment and adjust the time window if necessary."

The zoo said that panda fathers are not involved in the rearing of their offspring and that dad Jiao Qing "can be seen here all day long, eating bamboo and relaxing in a separate enclosure for visitors". Female giant pandas are only able to reproduce for around 72 hours a year, and natural habitat fragmentation makes it difficult for the animals to find each other at mating time. Meng Meng previously gave birth

at Berlin Zoo in 2019 to twin cubs who were named Pit and Paule, and who have lived at the Chengdu sanctuary since late 2023. "Giant pandas are very special animals for us," said Knieriem. "We hope that the panda cubs will capture the hearts of our guests and at the same time draw attention to the need to protect their natural habitats. "Who better to do this than these little bears with their adorable beady eyes?" — AFP

Nut allowed: World Conker Championships probe cheating claims

The UK-based World Conker Championships is investigating allegations of cheating after the men's champion was found to have a steel chestnut in his pocket, an official said on Tuesday. The tournament, which takes place in Northamptonshire in central England every year, sees competitors use conkers - the seeds of horse chestnut trees - threaded onto string to try to smash their opponent's nut.

Eighty-two-year-old David Jakins, nicknamed "King Conker", won the men's event on Sunday at his 46th attempt after competing in it since 1977. But he has been accused of using a metal replica by his defeated finalist Alastair Johnson-Ferguson, who told the Telegraph newspaper that he suspected "foul play". It was shaped and painted brown to look like a real conker, the paper reported. "My conker disintegrated in one hit and that just doesn't happen," 23-year-old Johnson-Ferguson said.

St John Burkett, of the competition's organizing committee, told AFP that it was "still investigating" the claims but suspected that Jakins had not cheated. "Various evidence has come to light, which means we still need to gather further testimony. A video has emerged, which we are looking at closely," he said. Jakins denied using the metal replica in the tournament and said he only carried it around with him "for humor value", according to the Telegraph.

"The evidence looks as if it may exonerate Mr Jakins but we need to confirm through further corroboration," Burkett told AFP. More than 200 people took part in the tournament, which raises money for charity and was attended by about 2,000 spectators. Competitors often wear elaborate headwear. — AFP



President and CEO of Frankfurt Book Fair Juergen Boos (left), Turkish writer Elif Shafak (center) and President of German Publishers and Booksellers Association Karin Schmidt-Friedrichs pose for the press conference prior to the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's biggest trade fair for books, in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. - AFP photos



An employee prepares a booth at the Frankfurt book fair.

Italy row, AI in focus at world's biggest book fair

A row over an Italian mafia author, growing interest in wacky literary subgenres and the use of AI in publishing will be in focus at the world's biggest book fair this week. The Frankfurt book fair, which officially kicks off Wednesday, brings together authors, publishers and other industry players over five days in the western German city. Big names include Zionist author and historian Yuval Noah Harari, best known for "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind", American writer Anne Applebaum and British-Turkish novelist Elif Shafak.

But the run-up has been marred by a row in Italy, this year's "guest of honor" — an annual tradition intended to shine a spotlight on a partner country's literary scene. Fury erupted after the initial official selection put forward by the Italians did not include Roberto Saviano, author of bestseller "Gomorra" who was convicted and fined last year for defaming far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

Following the move, Saviano lashed out on social media at what he branded the "most ignorant government in the history of Italy". In the end he is coming to the fair anyway, but at the invitation of his German publisher. Critics say it is further evidence of a worsening climate for freedom of expression in Italy, with 41 authors writing an open letter in



Turkish writer Elif Shafak attends the press conference prior to the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair.

response that complained of "increasingly suffocating political interference in cultural spaces".

The Italian Publishers Association insisted that it would never allow any kind of "outside interference" in the program, called "Roots in the Future". The fair is no stranger to controversy — last year several publishers from Muslim-majority countries withdrew in protest at organizers' strong support for the Zionist entity following Hamas' October 7 attacks that triggered the Gaza war.

Despite the row, fair director Juergen Boos insisted that it was "the right time" to have Italy as guest of honor. "It is a very

difficult, fragmented world right now," he said at a press conference ahead of the fair's opening. "We need to listen. We need to exchange (views) on what's happening in the world."

'Romantasy' and robot writers

There is much more going on besides the controversy surrounding Italy — the world's biggest publishing trade event will this year welcome about 1,000 authors and other speakers at some 650 events on 15 stages. A large area will be dedicated to "new adult" literature, which encompasses a weird and outlandish range of sub-genres beloved of younger readers, such as "Romantasy" and "Dark College". These genres have been rapidly growing in popularity, often boosted by exposure through social media trend BookTok on the TikTok platform, where authors promote their work and readers post reviews. Book fair organizers like to "pick up on new developments in the market and make them visible in Frankfurt," said Boos.

The "new adult" area will be "fan-driven" and "centered on autographs, on selfies, with authors and stars from special genres," he added. Artificial intelligence will also be a major topic, with talks and panel discussions dedicated to the subject, as fears mount in the industry about

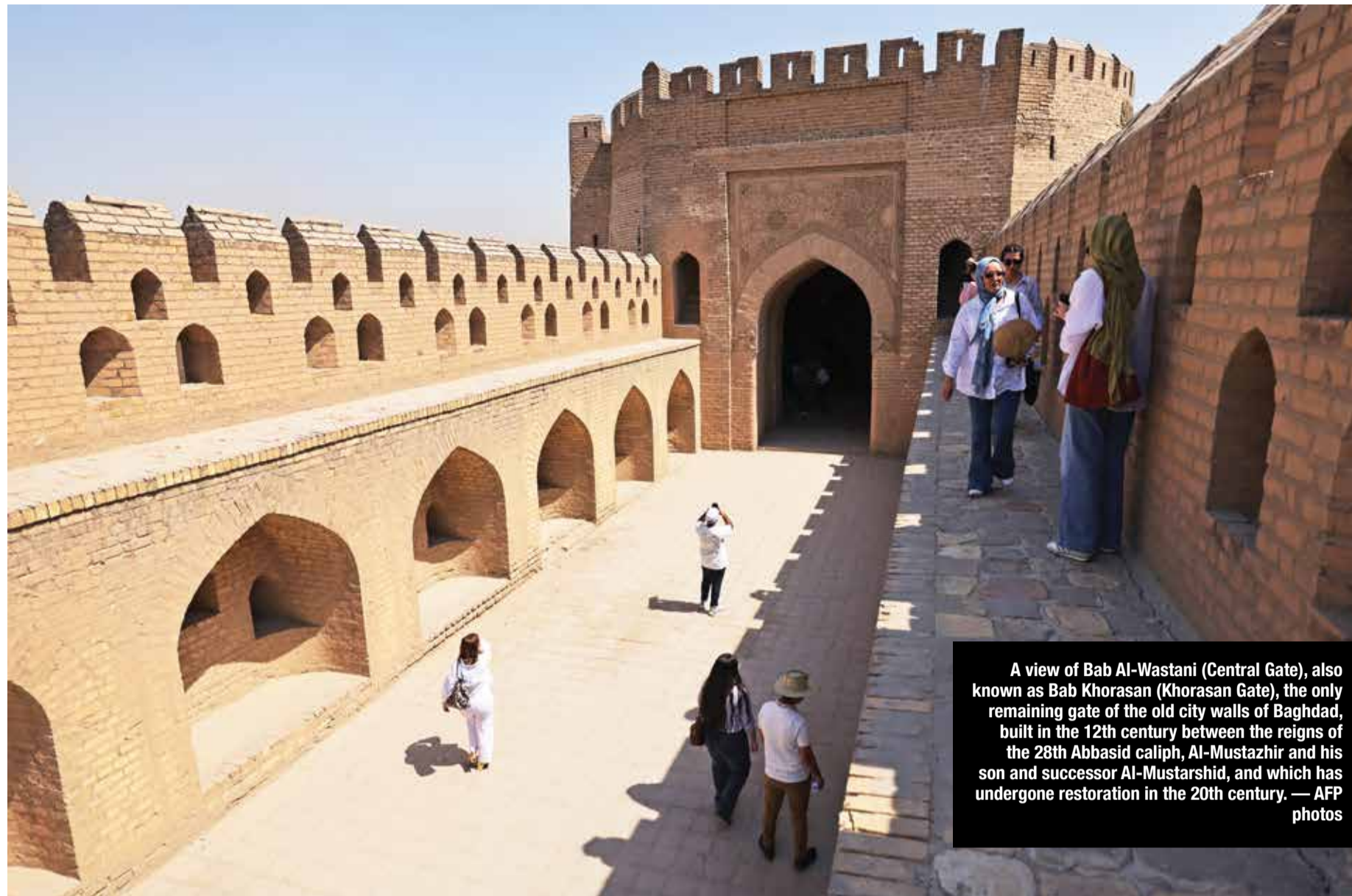


A visitor looks at a screen at Italy's booth of the Frankfurt book fair.

poor-quality, computer-written books flooding the market and potential copyright violations. Leading authors, including John Grisham and Jodi Picoult, have in recent times taken legal action against OpenAI, alleging the company unlawfully used their works to train its popular AI chatbot ChatGPT.

Still it's not all doom and gloom. There are hopes that AI can improve efficiency for publishers and also that it

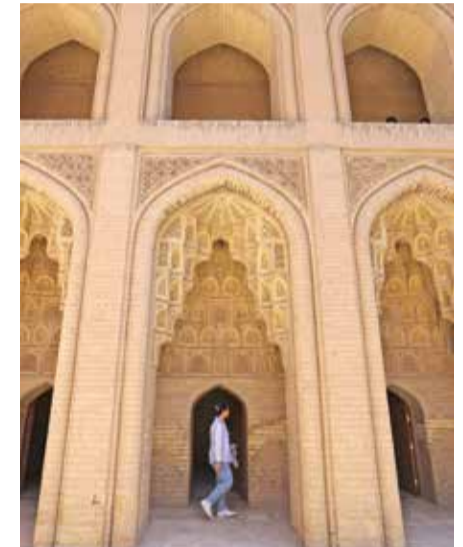
could be beneficial in some areas, such as scientific and research publishing. An annual highlight is the awarding of the prestigious "Peace of the German Book Trade", which will this year go to Applebaum, an American-Polish journalist and historian whose latest book "Autocracy Inc." examines the growing links between authoritarian states. — AFP



A view of Bab Al-Wastani (Central Gate), also known as Bab Khorasan (Khorasan Gate), the only remaining gate of the old city walls of Baghdad, built in the 12th century between the reigns of the 28th Abbasid caliph, Al-Mustazhir and his son and successor Al-Mustarshid, and which has undergone restoration in the 20th century. — AFP photos



A university student visits the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.



A student visits the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.

'SOUL OF OLD BAGHDAD' CITY CENTER SEES TIMID REVIVAL



A view of the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.



Details of the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.



A student poses for a picture next to the walled Murjan Mosque in Baghdad.

An Iraqi professor leading a group of students on a walking tour of Baghdad's historic center invites them to stop and admire a centuries-old stone wall erected to shield the city from Mongol invaders. Such a tour would have been unthinkable in the Iraqi capital through much of recent decades due to the country's successive wars, which saw Baghdad pounded from the air, targeted by suicide bombers and hit with car bomb attacks.

"Several caliphs worked on it," tour leader and professor Muaffaq Al-Tai, 83, told the group as they passed under an impressive brick dome, smart phones and cameras in hand. Braving an autumn heatwave, one of the tour organizers, Abdullah Imad, relished being able to help offer a deeper understanding of his hometown's history.

"Before, there were security events... interest was limited, almost non-existent," said architecture student Imad, 23. "Now interest is growing... Stability has gradually returned to Baghdad," he told AFP. "We want to show the public what Baghdad has to offer in terms of Islamic architecture, its value and identity."

Baghdad, founded in 762 AD by Abbasid caliph Abu Jaafar Al-Mansur along the Tigris River, has long been a key hub in Arab and Islamic society. In the 20th century, it thrived as a modern Arab city with top universities, a vibrant cultural scene and excellent healthcare. However, decades of war and oppression from the late 1970s, including sectarian violence after the 2003 US-led invasion and the rise of the Islamic State group in 2014, led to significant decline.

'Sites worth visiting'
A fragile stability has emerged since the defeat of IS in 2017 that has allowed



A student visits the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.

a greater focus on Baghdad's infrastructure and cultural scene. Around 30 students and amateur photographers strolled through downtown, passing an 800-year-old Abbasid Palace with an inner courtyard adorned with brick facades, arches and arabesque reliefs.

They also visited Bab Al-Wastani, or the Central Gate, built around the 12th century, featuring battlements and flanked by thick walls. Fatima Al-Moqdad, a 28-year-old architect, said the renewed interest in Iraq's heritage is "a source of hope for a positive change in our identity, and our heritage and its preservation". "When young people surf the Internet, they see how other nations look after their heritage. They want and deserve the same," she added. "To be a tourist, you don't necessarily have to go abroad."

In Baghdad, home to nine million people, tuk-tuks, motorcycles and

yellow cabs compete for space with porters pushing carts piled high with goods. They push their way through the fish stalls, sunglasses vendors and counterfeit sneaker stands that have taken over the pavements of the historic center.

On the eastern bank of the Tigris, brutalist buildings from the 1960s stand alongside elaborate facades from the 1920s, decorated with flowery moldings and sagging wrought-iron balconies. Around 2,400 buildings are registered in the historic center, but around 15 percent have been destroyed or altered, according to the municipality.

Many of the properties once belonged to Jewish families or other Iraqis driven out during one of the country's many upheavals. The waves of emigration also resulted in a brain drain, depriving Iraq of expertise particularly in architectural restoration.



People visit the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.



A view of Bab Al-Wastani (Central Gate), also known as Bab Khorasan (Khorasan Gate).



A man rides a scooter past a historic building on Rashid Street in central Baghdad.



A car drives past a historic building on Rashid Street in central Baghdad.



A view of a historic building on Rashid Street in central Baghdad.



People shop at a market on Rashid Street set up in front of historic buildings in central Baghdad.



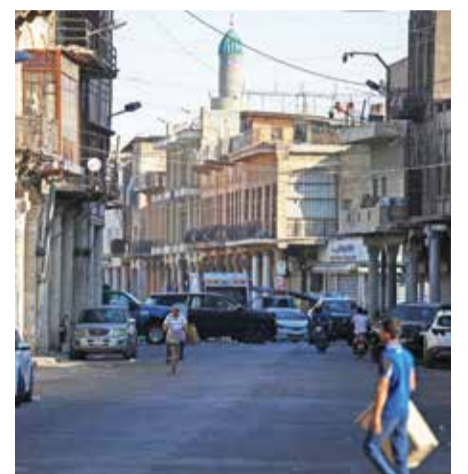
A man sweeps rubbish in front of a historic building on Rashid Street in central Baghdad.

Restoration drive
The municipality, in partnership with an association of private banks, has taken on two major restoration projects, including Al-Mutanabi Street, famous for its many bookshops. They are also restoring another street that houses the old Serail, or Ottoman Empire's seat of government. The restoration has primarily involved repaving sidewalks, updating lighting and cleaning up facades.
Mohammed Al-Soufi, an architect overseeing the restoration, noted the "aesthetic value of the brick buildings", dating from the 19th century and the 1920s and 1930s. Among the many challenges in restoring the area is the difficulty in obtaining permission from the original owners, many

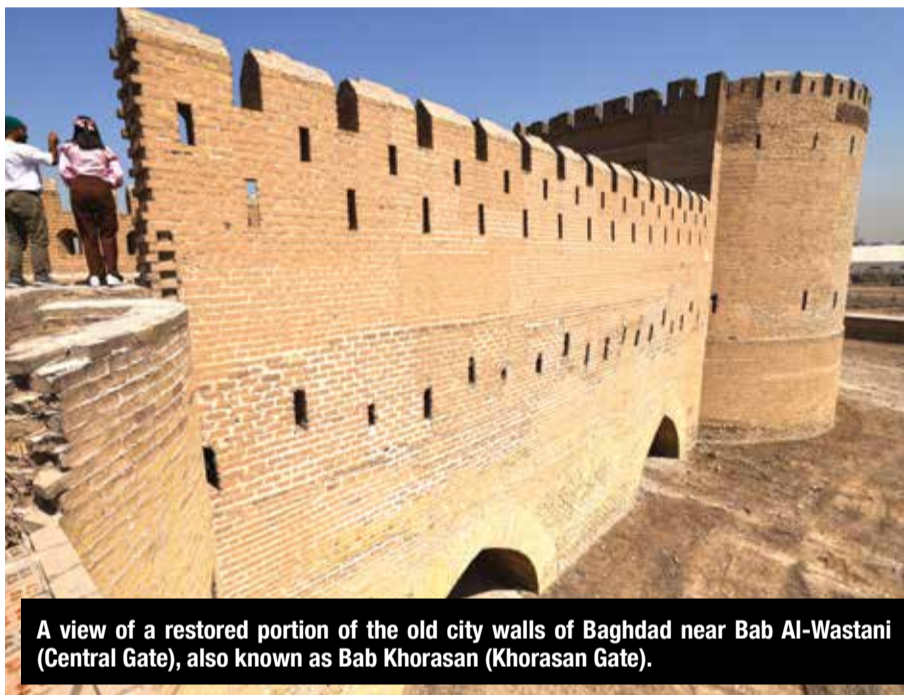
of whom no longer live in Iraq, as well as a lack of funding.
The Baghdad municipality's next focus will be Al-Rashid Street, inaugurated in 1916. "It's the soul of old Baghdad, its identity," said the municipality's head of communications Mohammed Al-Rubaye. But the once-vital artery now houses mostly warehouses, industrial machinery and motor oil stores. Authorities plan to move these activities to the outskirts. "We're not telling people to leave. We're telling them to stay, but let's turn the wholesale warehouses into stores, cafes, cinemas and cultural and heritage sites," Rubaye said. — AFP



Students visit the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.



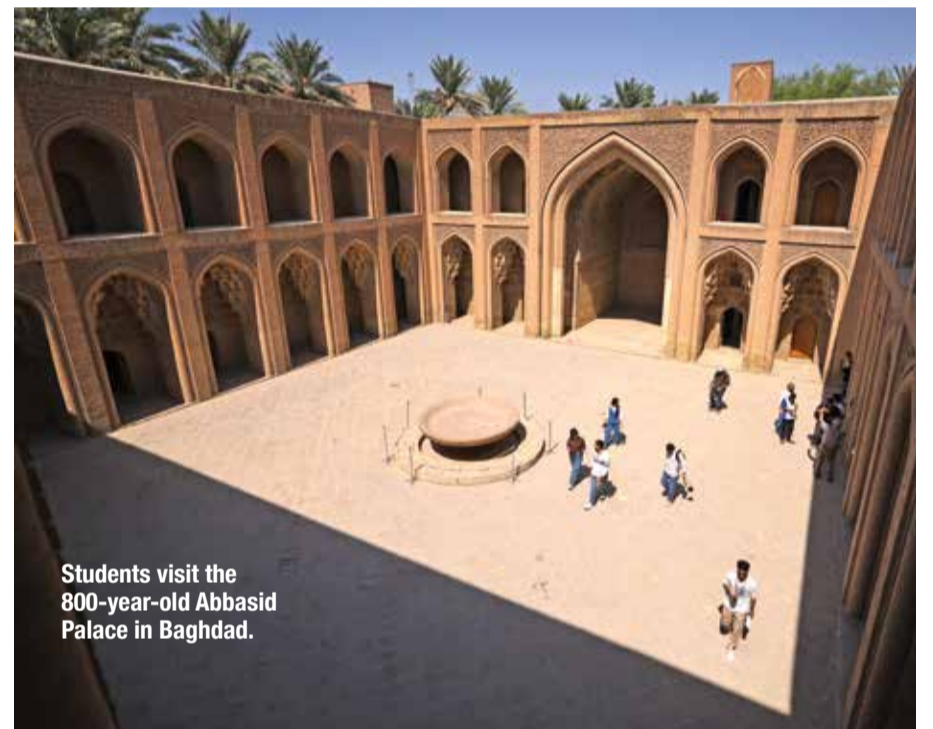
A man walks past historic buildings on Rashid Street in central Baghdad.



A view of a restored portion of the old city walls of Baghdad near Bab Al-Wastani (Central Gate), also known as Bab Khorasan (Khorasan Gate).



A view of Bab Al-Wastani (Central Gate), also known as Bab Khorasan (Khorasan Gate).



Students visit the 800-year-old Abbasid Palace in Baghdad.

UK hopes weight loss jab trial creates appetite for work

The UK government will trial the use of weight loss jabs to help unemployed people with obesity get back into work, the health secretary said Tuesday. Wes Streeting said obesity, which affects millions of Britons, was causing people to take an extra four sick days and placing a huge burden on the state-run National Health Service (NHS).
"Our widening waistbands are also placing significant burden on our health service, costing the NHS £11 billion a year – even more than smoking," he wrote in the Telegraph newspaper. At an international investment summit on Monday, the British government announced a £279 million (\$365 million) investment by American multinational Eli Lilly.
This will include a five-year trial of Eli Lilly's weight loss jab Mounjaro on up to 3,000 patients including those who are obese and unemployed. A head-to-head study published in JAMA Internal Medicine in July found that patients taking Mounjaro achieved significantly greater weight loss than those on Danish pharma giant Novo Nordisk's Ozempic and Wegovy.
"The long-term benefits of these drugs could be monumental in our approach to tackling obesity," said Streeting. He has announced other measures to prevent "unhealthy lifestyles" since the Labor government came into power in July, including a ban on junk food advertising targeting children. Over a quarter of UK adults suffered from obesity in the year ending in 2023 according to government data, increasing to 26.2 from 22.6 percent in 2015-2016.
A 2022 World Health Organization report showed that the UK had higher obesity rates than every EU country except Malta. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said weight loss drugs "were very important for the economy so people can get back into work." — AFP

Belgian pathologist and literary star gives 'voice to the dead'

Forensic pathologist Philippe Boxho likes to ask people "why shouldn't we laugh about death?". But gallows humor is just one of the ingredients that the surprise literary sensation brings to his macabre line of storytelling. In 33 years as a medical examiner in Belgium's eastern Liege region, Boxho has performed hundreds of autopsies - his attention to detail bringing to light homicide cases that would otherwise have remained undetected.
Boxho has become a surprise star of the book world in Belgium and France, distilling his unusual line of work into taut collections of short stories, each one 15 pages or less. Anchored in real life, the writing is unflinching and darkly-humorous, but the 59-year-old Boxho also seeks to impart some of his passion for a little-known, but crucial, profession. The enthusiasm is palpable as the pathologist described the "excitement of being there at the start of an investigation", of pulling on his sturdy dishwashing gloves and white coveralls to begin working.
It's a way, he said of his work, "to give voice to the dead one last time". Boxho's observations have revealed the most unusual of circumstances for a person's demise - like the 60-something woman who had her throat slashed by her son's



Belgian forensic doctor Philippe Boxho poses prior to a conference about his work in Blegny.

pitbull terrier, that she had exceptionally gone to feed. Another time he established how a farmer was trapped by a bull he did not see surge from the stable shadows. Multiple fractures to the torso and limbs showed how the hapless victim was crushed by a beast weighing in at 1.2 tons.

The idea of writing came to Boxho in 2021, triggered by the success of a post by Belgian channel RTBF, in which he recounted three striking anecdotes.

Encouraged, he decided to set down in writing more of the stories pulled from his more than three decades in forensics - which until then had been shared only with students at the medical school where he teaches.

It was an instant hit: published almost back-to-back, his three books have together sold some 740,000 copies, including almost 200,000 for the latest one released in late August, whose title translates as "Looking death in the face". "It's extraordinary for a work of non-fiction," said a spokesperson for Kennes, a small Belgian publisher that was struggling to make ends meet until it struck gold with Boxho. In France, his latest book is among the season's non-fiction bestsellers, with talks underway on an English edition of his work.

'I respect the body'

At a book-signing event at a former mining site in Blegny, near Liege, Boxho drew a full house of enthusiasts. "It's fascinating to hear him talk because he's passionate about what he does," said Marie Lou Collard, a political science student who was among the readers in the audience. She came across Boxho via his videos posted on TikTok and YouTube, and sought out his essays

to find out more.

In all of Boxho's real-life stories, dating back sometimes decades, the identities have been changed in keeping with medical confidentiality rules. "I respect the body I have in front of me," Boxho explained to AFP. "It belongs to a person I don't know." "What I laugh about is death and the ways that people die," he said. "It's a bit cynical, but that's the way I am. If you don't like it, don't read my books."

Many of his cases have involved women killed by their partners. Sometimes it is a parent killed by a child - or almost killed, as in one extraordinary case Boxho shared with the crowd in Blegny. Late one night, a woman entered her father's bedroom with a revolver, intent on murdering him. She fired the entire barrel at him, and left him for dead. But the autopsy later showed the suspected murder victim was already dead when she shot him - of a brain hemorrhage that occurred just moments earlier - and the daughter was cleared as a result. "Criminal law requires certainties," said Boxho, who argued that defending his profession, whose numbers have dwindled dramatically in recent years in Belgium, is also a way of ensuring better justice for all. — AFP



Belgian forensic doctor Philippe Boxho delivers a speech during a conference about his work in Blegny. - AFP photos



Books by Belgian forensic doctor Philippe Boxho during a conference about his work in Blegny.

Sports

Vientos grand slam propels Mets in series-tying win over Dodgers

Guardians seek their first World Series appearance since 2016

LOS ANGELES: Mark Vientos smashed a grand slam and Francisco Lindor homered as well as the New York Mets beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 7-3 on Monday to level their Major League Baseball playoff series at one game apiece.

Vientos's four-run blast in a determined second inning at-bat helped the Mets rebound from a 9-0 drubbing in game one on Sunday in the best-of-seven National League Championship Series.

The winner of the series will advance to face either the New York Yankees or Cleveland Guardians in the World Series. The Yankees, fueled by home runs from Giancarlo Stanton and Juan Soto and six strong innings from starting pitcher Carlos Rodon, beat the Guardians 5-2 to open their American League Championship Series.

The Mets made an early statement when Lindor led off the game with a 395-foot home run off Dodgers hurler Ryan Brasier, ending the Dodgers pitching staff's record-equaling streak of 33 scoreless innings. The Dodgers hadn't surrendered a run since the second inning of game three of their division series against the San Diego Padres.

In the second inning, Vientos got the better of Dodgers reliever Landon Knack, crushing the ninth pitch he saw—a 95 mph fastball—over the center field seats to push the Mets' lead to 6-0. Starling Marte had opened the inning with a single off Knack and scored on Tyrone Taylor's double that left runners at second and third. Lindor was intentionally walked to load the bases and bring up Vientos. The 24-year-old Vientos admitted he "look it personally" when the Dodgers walked Lindor to bring him to the plate.

'In a great spot'

"At that point I was just, let me simplify the game,



NEW YORK: Outfielders Alex Verdugo #24, Aaron Judge #99 and Juan Soto #22 of the New York Yankees celebrate as the Yankees win Game One of the American League Championship Series against the Cleveland Guardians at Yankee Stadium. — AFP

just get one run in, get a walk—whatever I can do to add another run to the score. "Luckily I hit a bomb there and it went over the fence." The Mets will host the next three games on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. "I think we're in a great spot," Vientos said. "I like the momentum we got."

Mets starter Sean Manaea allowed three runs, including two earned, on two hits over five innings with four walks and seven strikeouts. Max Muncy hit a solo homer for Los Angeles in the fifth, but the Dodgers' vaunted lineup was largely silenced. Japanese superstar Shohei Ohtani was 0-for-3 with

two strikeouts and two walks.

The Dodgers put up two runs in the sixth after Manaea walked Mookie Betts and Teoscar Hernandez and Jose Iglesias mis-handled Freddie Freeman's ground ball to load the bases. Phil Manton came in for Manaea and gave up a single to Tommy Edman that scored Betts and Hernandez. The Mets added one more run in the top of the ninth.

In New York, Soto put the Yankees in front with a solo homer to lead off the third inning. Cleveland pitcher Alex Cobb walked three of the next five batters before he was replaced by Joey Cantillo, who threw a couple of wild pitches into the dirt against the next two Yankees batters, allowing Aaron Judge and Stanton to score for a 3-0 New York lead. The Yankees made it 4-0 in the fourth when Judge's sacrifice fly scored Gleyber Torres.

Stanton blast

The Guardians pulled back a run in the sixth on Brayan Rocchio's solo homer off Rodon, one of two hits he surrendered in six strong innings that featured nine strikeouts.

But Stanton made it 5-1 with a towering blast to left center field in the seventh. After Cleveland's Steven Kwan drove in a run with one out in the eighth, the Yankees turned to closing pitcher Luke Weaver, who recorded the last five outs for the save.

The Yankees, owners of 27 World Series titles, are chasing their first appearance in a World Series since they beat Philadelphia for the crown in 2009. The Guardians are seeking their first World Series appearance since 2016 and their first title since 1948. The stars turned out at Yankee Stadium, where pop icon Taylor Swift and her NFL star boyfriend Travis Kelce were among the celebrities in attendance. — AFP

India have 'fingers crossed' for Shami return vs Australia

BENGALURU: India captain Rohit Sharma said Tuesday that fast bowler Mohammed Shami suffered a recent setback on his return from injury, with the Australia Test series starting next month. Shami last played for India at the 2023 50-over World Cup and is recovering from a foot injury as well as surgery on his Achilles tendon.

He faces a race against time with India travelling to Australia for a five-Test tour starting on November 22. "We are keeping our fingers crossed, we want him to be 100 percent fit," Rohit said ahead of the first of three Tests against New Zealand, starting in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

"More than anything else we don't want to bring an undercooked Shami to Australia," Rohit added.

Shami has claimed 229 wickets in 64 Tests and been India's go-to wicket-taker with his swing and seam. Newly appointed vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah will lead India's pace attack against New Zealand.

"He recently had a setback," Rohit revealed of Shami. "He had a swelling in his knee, which was quite unusual while he was in the process of getting fit, getting close to 100 percent. "That put him back in his recovery."

India are expected to take "travelling reserves" with them, including fast bowlers Harshit Rana, Mayank Yadav and Nitish Reddy. Indian media sug-



BENGALURU: India's Rishabh Pant (front) inspects the pitch during a practice session ahead of their first Test cricket match against New Zealand at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. — AFP

gest Rohit will miss the opener in Perth for personal reasons, meaning Bumrah would skipper the visitors.

"He has got a good head on his shoulders," Rohit said of his deputy, sidestepping questions about his own participation in Perth. "He understands what is required when you are in a situation where you need a leader to step up." Rohit also praised the "talent" of fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, with the 22-year-old

batsman scoring 1,217 at an average of over 64 in 11 Tests since his debut last year.

"He has got all the ingredients for success at this level," Rohit said. "It's just about how he manages himself in the next couple of years." India's training session was cancelled on Tuesday because of rain. More wet weather is expected during the first two days of the Test in Bengaluru. — AFP



MULTAN: Pakistan's Saim Ayub plays a shot during the first day of the second Test cricket match between Pakistan and England at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan. — AFP

Pakistan reach 173-3 at tea in second Test

MULTAN: England fast bowler Matthew Potts removed opener Saim Ayub after a half-century before Pakistan reached 173-3 at tea on the opening day of the second Test in Multan on Tuesday. Ayub and debutant Kamran Ghulam had lifted Pakistan from a precarious 19-2 with a third-wicket stand of 149 on a used pitch that assisted the spinners.

At the break, Ghulam was unbeaten on 75 while Saud Shakeel was four not out. The left-handed Ayub scored a career-best 77 studded with seven boundaries before he mis-cued a push off Potts's penultimate over before tea and was caught by captain Ben Stokes at short mid-off position.

Ghulam, who replaced Babar Azam in one of four changes from Pakistan's innings defeat in the first Test, also in Multan, has so far hit five fours and a six. Pakistan, who won the toss and batted, were hit hard at the start with a double wicket strike by spinner Jack Leach, who was brought to bowl in the sixth over of the day.

Leach has taken 2-62. Abdullah Shafique was bowled by Leach for seven in the eighth over of the morning with the score on 15. In his next over, the left-arm spinner had captain Shan Masood caught low at short midwicket by Zak Crawley for three.

England lead the three-match series 1-0. Pakistan's defeat last week—their sixth in as many Tests—prompted the selectors to make wholesale changes, with Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Abrar Ahmed dropped.

Other than Ghulam, Pakistan also brought in the spin trio of Sajid Khan, Zahid Mahmood and Noman Ali, leaving them with only one fast bowler in Aamer Jamal. Stokes was back from a hamstring injury for England, replacing Chris Woakes, while fast bowler Potts came in for Gus Atkinson. — AFP

NZ thrash Pakistan to reach Women's T20 WCup semis

DUBAI: Some fine bowling from Amelia Kerr and Eden Carson propelled New Zealand into the semi-finals of the Women's T20 World Cup with a 54-run thrashing of Pakistan in their last group match on Monday.

Off-spinner Carson, who was named player of the match, took 2-7 from her three overs while Kerr end-

Nepali hailed as hero after climbing world's 8,000m peaks

KATHMANDU: Cheering crowds hailed an 18-year-old Nepali mountaineer as a hero as he returned home Monday after breaking the record for the youngest person to summit all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks.

Nima Rinji Sherpa reached the summit of Tibet's 8,027-metre-high (26,335 feet) Shisha Pangma on October 9, completing his mission to stand on the world's highest peaks. On Monday, he returned from China to Nepal's capital Kathmandu, where scores waited to see him.

"I am feeling very happy," he told AFP, draped in traditional Buddhist scarves and garlands of marigold flowers, as he emerged to loud cheers at the airport. "Thank you so much everyone," he said to his supporters, beaming a wide grin.

Sherpa hugged his family while others rushed to offer him scarves and flowers. He later waved to the crowd out of a car sunroof, while proud-

ly holding the national flag. Nepal's climbing community also welcomed several others who returned after completing the summit of 14 peaks.

Summitting all 14 "eight-thousanders" is considered the zenith of mountaineering aspirations, with all the peaks located in the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, straddling Nepal, Pakistan, Tibet and India.

Climbers cross "death zones" where there is not enough oxygen in the air to sustain human life for long periods. Sherpa is no stranger to the mountains, hailing from a family of record-holding mountaineers, who also now run Nepal's largest mountaineering expedition company.

The record was previously held by another Nepali climber, Mingma Gyabu 'David' Sherpa. He achieved it in 2019, at the age of 30. Nima Rinji Sherpa, who already holds multiple records from his ascents of dozens of peaks, started high-altitude climbing



KATHMANDU: Nepali mountaineer Nima Rinji Sherpa waves upon his arrival at the airport in Kathmandu on October 14, 2024. An 18-year-old Nepali mountaineer on October 9, 2024 broke the record for the youngest person to summit all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks, his team said. — AFP

at the age of 16, by climbing Mount Manaslu in August 2022.

Nepali climbers—usually ethnic Sherpas from the valleys around Everest—are considered the backbone of the climbing industry in the Himalayas.

They carry the majority of equipment and food, fixing ropes and repairing ladders. Long in the shadows as supporters of foreign climbers, they are slowly being recognized in their own right. — AFP

ed with 3-14 as New Zealand bowled out Pakistan for just 56 in 11.4 overs. New Zealand, who posted 110-6 off their 20 overs, became the second team from Group A to make it to the last-four after holders Australia who finish on top.

Defeat marked the end of Pakistan's hopes of qualifying and meant that India were also eliminated, paying the price for their opening 58-run defeat by New Zealand. "It hasn't sunk in yet," said New Zealand captain Sophie Devine.

"We will certainly celebrate tonight but this is just the next stage of a tournament we are looking forward to." Pakistan needed to reach the target in just 10.4 overs if they were to improve their net run rate enough to overhaul the White Ferns in the table.

But they started their chase on a shaky note, losing openers Aliya Riaz, promoted up to opener, for nought and Muneeba Ali (15) inside the first five overs. It was downhill thereafter, with Sadaf Shamas (two) being clean bowled by Fran Jonas and Iram Javed (three) being run out by a direct throw from Lea Tahuhu.

Reduced to 28-5 at the end of powerplay, Pakistan never recovered. Skipper Fatima Sana, who was back with the team after flying home briefly to Pakistan following the death of her father, played a lone hand, making 21 in a lost cause.

"We were good with the ball but we have to improve our batting and fielding," said Sana reflecting on the eight catches that Pakistan put down. "We

were not up to the mark. I think our seniors should step up in these kinds of matches."

New Zealand were off to a steady start after electing to bat first, with Suzie Bates (28) and Georgia Plimmer (17) sharing 41 runs for the opening wicket. But Pakistan struck soon after the powerplay, dismissing both openers and Kerr (nine) in quick succession.

Pakistan paid the price for their sloppy fielding with Sidra Amin dropping a sitter off Nida Dar when Sophie Devine was on 14. Devine, though, failed to capitalise and was scooped up by Sana at long on off Sadia Iqbal for 19. Left-arm spinner Nashra Sandhu was the most successful bowler, picking up 3-18, including the wicket of Brooke Halliday for 22. — AFP

Sports

Swedish prosecutor confirms 'rape' probe without naming Mbappe

Bitter dispute with his former club Paris Saint-Germain over unpaid wages

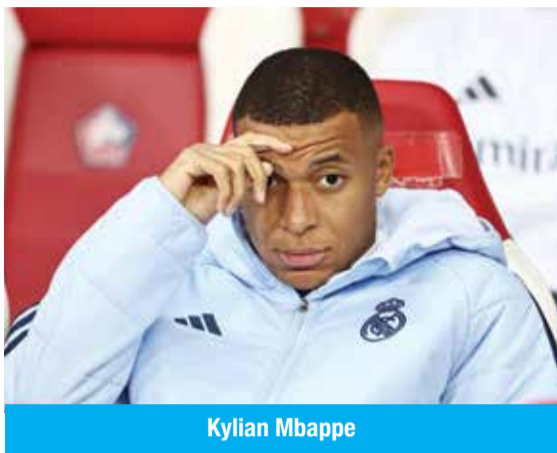
STOCKHOLM: A Swedish prosecutor said Tuesday a rape investigation had been opened without mentioning Kylian Mbappe, following media reports that the Real Madrid and France star was the suspect following a visit to Stockholm.

Swedish newspapers Aftonbladet and Expressen and public broadcaster SVT on Tuesday reported that 25-year-old Mbappe was the target of the investigation, following his two-day visit to the Nordic capital last week.

"In response to media reports about a suspected rape in Stockholm, the prosecutor can confirm that a criminal report has been submitted to the police," Sweden's Prosecution Authority said in a statement. It added that the alleged incident occurred at a hotel on October 10, but did not name a suspect and said no further information could be shared for the moment.

Expressen on Monday identified Mbappe as the suspect, citing anonymous sources, while Aftonbladet and SVT said Tuesday they had also had obtained information confirming Mbappe was the suspect. Expressen said Mbappe was "reasonably suspected" of rape and sexual assault, the lower of two grades of suspicion in the Swedish legal system.

According to the Prosecution Authority, the higher degree of suspicion, "probable cause," is usually a



Kylian Mbappe

prerequisite for a suspect to be remanded in custody prior to a formal charge. Contacted by AFP on Monday, Mbappe's entourage said it had no knowledge of a legal complaint made against him.

Seized evidence

The French international was not selected for his country's latest round of Nations League matches, so visited the Swedish capital with a group of people last

Thursday. According to Aftonbladet, they dined at a restaurant before going to a nightclub. Mbappe and the group left Sweden on Friday. Aftonbladet said the complaint was filed on Saturday after the alleged victim had sought medical attention. Expressen reported Tuesday that police had seized some clothing as evidence, saying it consisted of women's underwear, a pair of black trousers and a black top. On Monday, Mbappe himself claimed in a post on X that there was a link between the Aftonbladet report and his hearing before a French league committee on Tuesday, in his bitter dispute with his former club Paris Saint-Germain over what he says are unpaid wages.

"FAKE NEWS !!!!. It's becoming so predictable, on the eve of the hearing, as if by chance," Mbappe posted. A source close to Paris Saint-Germain told AFP Monday it would "ignore" Mbappe's claim that there was a link between the report in Sweden and his dispute with the club.

Mbappe's entourage said in a statement given to AFP on Monday: "Today, a new slanderous rumor is starting to spread across the web from the Swedish media Aftonbladet. 'These accusations are completely false and irresponsible, and their propagation is unacceptable.'" The statement said "all necessary legal action will be taken to re-establish the truth".

Stellar career

Mbappe claims he is owed 55 million euros (\$60 million) by the Qatari-owned French champions. The French league (LFP) ordered PSG in September to pay Mbappe the 55 million euros in wages and bonuses he claimed he was owed at the time of his departure for Real Madrid at the end of last season.

The committee, which will notably be made up of two members of the French national players' union, a magistrate and an independent president, can confirm or overturn the LFP's order. Mbappe joined Madrid this summer after seven years at PSG and has up until now stayed clear of scandal in his private life.

The forward, who is known for carefully managing his image through a close network of family, lawyers and spokespeople, has become one of the world's highest paid players after a stellar career that began when he was barely into his teens.

He joined Pele as the only teenager to score in a World Cup final when France beat Croatia 4-2 to win the 2018 edition and was voted Best Young Player of the tournament. Four years later in Qatar, he scored a hat-trick in the final against Argentina but finished on the losing side as Lionel Messi's side won in a penalty shootout. — AFP

Ferguson to leave Man Utd ambassador role as club cuts costs

LONDON: Alex Ferguson is leaving his reported £2 million-a-year (\$2.6m) ambassador role with Manchester United at the end of the season as part of a cost-cutting exercise. The former United manager, 82, won 13 Premier League titles and two Champions League crowns among a huge trophy haul during nearly 27 years at Old Trafford.

The Athletic reported that the decision had been made amicably, with Ferguson stepping down from the global ambassador role when the season ends. Ferguson, a regular at matches since he stepped down in 2013, will remain a non-executive director of the football club board.

It comes as part of a wider cost-cutting exercise at United under INEOS, which has had responsibility for football operations at the club since its founder Jim Ratcliffe completed the purchase of a minority stake earlier this year.

Last month United posted losses of £113.2 million (\$148 million) for the year ending June 30, 2024 - their fifth straight years of losses. But the club said they are compliant with the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules.

United have instigated a number of cost-saving measures, including a redundancy programme that cut about 250 jobs. They are currently 14th in the Premier League after a poor start to the season, with manager Erik ten Hag under intense pressure ahead of Saturday's game against Brentford. — AFP



Winners of the tournament and other participants pose for a group photo.

CAN organizes table tennis championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Second Women Table Tennis Championship organized by Cancer Aware Nation for women with cooperation by the Kuwait Society for the Blind concluded with a ceremony of distributing awards to

the winners in the presence of CAN board member who is in charge of this month's breast cancer awareness initiative Dr Hussa Majid Al-Shaheen.

Dr Al-Shaheen started the event by congratulating Chairman of the Blind Society Fayed Al-Azmi on the 52nd anniversary of the Society's establishment and has been serving this group of people ever since.

Dr Al-Shaheen said the awareness campaign is being held under the patronage of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Minister Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah as "we focus on awareness of the most important first signs of breast cancer for early detection which contributes to quick treatment and full recovery".

She said we also draw attention to following the correct nutrition and physical activity to prevent several

diseases including cancer, as breast cancer is on top of cancer cases in women.

She said we were keen on having cooperation with Kuwait Society for the Blind by organizing a sports activity for women specially that there are 500 women members, so CAN was keen to encourage them to practice sports, and as the first championship was a success we went ahead and organized the second one which concluded on Monday Oct 14.

The winners of the tournament were Elham Dal-lah first, Sahar Saad second and Mariam Al-Kandary third. The rest of participants were handed consolation awards. KSB Chairman Al-Enezi thanked CAN for organizing the championship for the members which encourages the ladies to be interested in their health.



EAST RUTHERFORD: Garrett Wilson #5 of the New York Jets attempts to make a catch against Christian Benford #47 of the Buffalo Bills during the third quarter at MetLife Stadium. — AFP

Allen and Bills foil Rodgers, outlast Jets

LOS ANGELES: Buffalo quarterback Josh Allen threw for two touchdowns and ran for another as the Bills overcame first-half fireworks from Aaron Rodgers to beat the New York Jets 23-20 on Monday. Tyler Bass atoned for a miss by kicking a 22-yard field goal that put the Bills ahead with 3:43 remaining and Buffalo held on to end a two-game skid, improving to 4-2 to tighten their grip on the NFL's AFC East division.

The Jets dropped to 2-4, third behind the Bills and Miami Dolphins with the 1-5 New England Patriots in last place. "We found a way to win," Allen told broadcaster ESPN. "Got sloppy in the second half, got to find a way to put more points on the board, but it was a team victory. We'll take 'em how we get 'em."

The Jets suffered their third straight defeat, and their first since sacking head coach Robert Saleh on Tuesday. Defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich was installed as interim coach in the shake-up, which saw offensive coordinator Nathaniel Hackett relieved of play-calling

duties. But there was no change in the outcome, despite an impressive 294 passing yards for Rodgers with two touchdowns and an interception. Rodgers ended the first half with a spectacular Hail Mary pass that Allen Lazard reeled in for a 52-yard touchdown that pulled the Jets within 20-17 at halftime.

Greg Zuerlein booted a 22-yard field goal to make it 20-20 in the third quarter. But Zuerlein missed go-ahead field goal attempts of 32 and 43 yards off the left upright in the second half. Those were just two of the Jets' missed opportunities. With less than two minutes remaining Rodgers threw a long pass intended for Mike Williams but the throw was short and Taron Johnson — back after breaking his right arm in the season opener — grabbed the interception.

Allen and the Bills were able to run out the clock and seal the victory in a game that saw both teams assessed 11 penalties for a total of 204 yards. After the Jets scored a field goal on their opening drive, the Bills answered with a drive capped by Allen's one-yard TD run. Rodgers connected with Garrett Wilson with a five-yard scoring pass to make it 10-7 after one quarter, but Allen came up with an eight-yard TD pass to Mack Hollins and a 12-yarder to Dawson Knox late in the second quarter to put the Bills in front. — AFP

Japan fight back to hold Australia in WCup qualifying

SAITAMA: Japan denied Australia a famous victory after coming back to grab a 1-1 draw in World Cup qualifying in Saitama on Tuesday in front of a crowd of 60,000. Australia had never beaten Japan on Japanese soil but a Shogo Taniguchi own goal just before the hour gave the visitors a shock lead. Cameron Burgess scored an own goal at the other end with less than 15 minutes remaining to hand Japan an equalizer that keeps them on top of Group C on 10 points from four games.

Australia are second on five points, having taken one win and one draw in two games since new coach Tony Popovic replaced Graham Arnold last month. The top two from each of the three Asian qualifying groups automatically reach the 2026 World Cup in North America. South Korea remain top of Group B after a 3-2 home win over Iraq. Popovic said he was happy with the

point in Japan after "a very resolute display defensively". "They have a first 11 that are all players that play in top leagues in Europe," Popovic said of the hosts, who came into the clash with a perfect three wins.

"To keep them to the minimum — they will always have their moments because they have the quality — it was a very good display. Australia's preparations were hampered when they arrived at Saitama Stadium 45 minutes later than scheduled after their team bus got stuck in traffic.

"Not ideal preparations but we didn't use that as an excuse — the players and staff were fantastic," said Popovic, who handed a first cap to 34-year-old midfielder Luke Brattan. "The players had 10 minutes to get ready and we just dealt with the situation and they showed a fantastic performance today."

Japan dominated possession but struggled to create clear-cut chances in the first half. Australia's opener came against the run of play in the 58th minute when defender Taniguchi turned Lewis Miller's cross into his own net. It was the first goal that Japan had conceded in nine games over two rounds of qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. "We hadn't conceded any goals before this game and then we went behind to an own goal," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu. — AFP



SAITAMA: (L-R) Japan's Shogo Taniguchi, Australia's Jordan Bos and Japan's Ko Itakura compete for the ball during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Asian zone qualifiers football between Japan and Australia at Saitama Stadium in Saitama. — AFP



MUNICH: Germany's midfielder #07 Jamie Leweling and Netherlands' midfielder #08 Ryan Gravenberch vie for the ball during the UEFA Nations League, League A Group A3 football match between Germany and the Netherlands in Munich. — AFP

Germany into Nations League quarters, France and Italy win

Kolo Muani double fires France to win in Belgium

PARIS: Germany secured a place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals with a 1-0 win over old rivals the Netherlands on Monday, while France won in Belgium and Italy continued their recent revival.

Jamie Leweling of Stuttgart scored on his debut to give Germany victory over the Netherlands in Munich and guarantee them one of the top two spots in Group 3 of League A. It was the eighth meeting of the teams in the last six years but, for the Dutch, there was nothing familiar about Leweling.

The 23-year-old was an addition to the Germany squad for this month's games following an injury to Jamal Musiala. He was then called off the bench to start the game after an injury to club teammate Deniz Undav in the warm-up. Leweling found the net after just two minutes only for that effort to be ruled out for an offside in the build-up, but he then blasted in the winner on 64 minutes. "Jamie had an outstanding debut—it's not often the Allianz Arena gives you a reception like that—he did well," said captain Joshua Kimmich.

Germany have 10 points from four games and will definitely take part in the quarter-finals next March. The Netherlands, who were without the suspended Virgil van Dijk, are level on five points with Hungary.

The Hungarians won 2-0 on Monday away in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with captain Dominik Szoboszlai of Liverpool, opening the scoring late in the first half and adding a penalty after the break. Italy remain top of Group A2 after easing to a 4-1 win at home to Zionist entity in Udine. Mateo Retegui opened the scoring with a penalty shortly before half-time and captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo netted twice in the second half. Davide Frattesi also scored for Italy, with Mohammad Abu Fani pulling one back for Zionist entity.

Muani downs Belgium

France are a point behind Italy after they again won in the absence of Kylian Mbappe, a double by Randal Kolo Muani securing a 2-1 victory in Belgium. Kolo Muani's opener from the penalty spot in the 35th min-

ute at the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels was cancelled out by Lois Openda in first-half stoppage time.

But Kolo Muani, who has had a difficult start to the season with his club, then headed in the winner just after the hour mark. France, who saw Belgium's Youri Tielemans squander an early spot-kick, held on with 10 men after stand-in captain Aurelien Tchouameni was sent off late on. The result was France's second win in as many games in this international break, despite them being minus skipper Mbappe, who was allowed to sit out the matches following a recent thigh injury. As Les Bleus took to the field in the Belgian capital, a newspaper report in Sweden emerged claiming that Mbappe was being investigated for rape following a visit to Stockholm last week.

Mbappe claimed in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, that there was a link with his hearing before a French league committee on Tuesday in his bitter dispute over unpaid wages with his former club Paris Saint-Germain. It remains to be seen if the Real

Madrid star will be back for the last Nations League group games next month, when France can secure a place in the quarter-finals, but Kolo Muani staked a claim to keep his place.

"I am happy for him," coach Didier Deschamps told L'Equipe TV. "Randal is performing very well for us. He is full of confidence and the first game (against Zionist entity) did him a lot of good too." Elsewhere on Monday, Turkey won 4-2 in Iceland to stay top of Group B4, with all their goals in Reykjavik coming in the final half-hour. Irfan Can Kahveci, Hakan Calhanoglu of Inter Milan, Real Madrid's Arda Guler and Kerem Akturkoglu all scored for Turkey. With 10 points, they are two ahead of Wales in the race for promotion to League A. Crag Bellamy's team beat Montenegro 1-0 in Cardiff thanks to a Harry Wilson penalty. The Czech Republic are top of Group B1 after a 1-1 draw against Ukraine, while Albania defeated Georgia 1-0.

In Group C1, Sweden won 3-0 in Estonia and Slovakia beat Azerbaijan 3-1 away. — AFP

Russian Olympic chief announces resignation

MOSCOW: The head of Russia's Olympic Committee announced his resignation on Tuesday, a surprise move that comes as Moscow faces isolation from international sport over its Ukraine offensive. Stanislav Pozdnyakov, a five-time Olympic medallist, said in his resignation letter there were "timely" reasons why Russian sport needed a new leader, without going into detail.

"Geopolitical challenges faced by our country dictate the need to optimise and centralise the management of key spheres of activity, including top-level sports," he said. A professional fencer, Pozdnyakov was elected as the committee chief in 2018 as Russia faced a string of doping scandals that saw it barred the following year from a number of Olympic sports for four years.

Pozdnyakov condemned the International Olympic Committee (IOC) ruling, following Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, that Russian athletes could only compete at the Paris Olympics as neutrals and urged Russian athletes not to take part.

After Russia announced a mobilization of men to fight in Ukraine, Pozdnyakov said athletes should consider "serving the Motherland" as an "honorable duty". His daughter Sofia Pozdnyakova, who won two fencing gold medals in Tokyo, was one of those athletes who did not compete in Paris.

In the end 15 Russian athletes participated under the neutral flag, returning with a solitary silver medal in the women's tennis doubles. Moscow



Stanislav Pozdnyakov

slammed the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics as a "massive failure" and has promised to host its own "Friendship Games", although when this will happen is not clear. Early elections to choose his successor will be set when the Russian Olympic Committee next meets on November 7, Pozdnyakov said in a statement. — AFP

Nigerian team home after boycotting AFCON qualifier in Libya

ABUJA: The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) confirmed Monday that their national team had returned home after alleged "inhumane treatment" in Libya ahead of a 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifier. "The Nigeria delegation departed the Al-Abraq Airport at exactly 15.05 hours, bound for the city of Kano, and onwards to the Federal Capital, Abuja," the NFF said in a statement.

NFF director of Communications, Ademola Olajire, outlined in a 20-point statement the team's "ordeal on Libyan soil", saying the "keenly-anticipated match" had been "relegated to a fiasco by Libyan federal authorities and Football Federation". The Nigerian team were held at an abandoned airport in Libya for more than 20 hours after their chartered flight landed Sunday.

The Super Eagles had been due to land in Benghazi but their plane was instead diverted to Al Abraq, 230km (143 miles) away from their intended destination. A formal complaint by Nigeria has been sent to the Confederation of African football (CAF) whose disciplinary board is now investigating the incident.

Captain William Troost-Ekong had said the team would not make a three-hour bus ride from Al-Abraq to Benina, where the qualifier was scheduled to be played on Tuesday, for safety reasons. "As the team captain together with the team we have decided that we will NOT play this game," he posted on social media.

"Let them have the points. We will not accept to travel anywhere by road here even with security it's

not safe. We can only imagine what the hotel or food would be like given to us if we continued." CAF said they viewed "the disturbing and unacceptable experiences of the Nigerian National Football Team at an airport in Libya in a very serious light".

The statement added that CAF had been in contact with both the Libyan and Nigerian authorities. "Appropriate action will be taken against those who violated the CAF Statutes and Regulations" the statement concluded.

The Libyan football federation denied any impropriety, saying in a statement it had the "utmost respect" for Nigeria. "There are no grounds to accuse the Libyan security teams or the Libyan Football Federation of deliberately orchestrating this incident," it said. "Such actions are inconsistent with our values and principles. We firmly reject any claims that suggest foul play or sabotage in this situation."

'The team are not safe'

Former African footballer of the year Victor Ikpeba, who accompanied the Nigeria team to Libya, has urged for stiff sanctions against Libya and supported the decision to boycott the match. "If CAF know their job, Libya ought to be banned from international football," he told AFP.

"This is a high-risk country and one really wonders who approved for Libya to be playing their games at home. I played for the Super Eagles for 10 years and I never experienced what I have in Libya in the last hours." "The team are not safe, those of us travelling with them are also not safe," he added. "We were locked up in an abandoned airport for more than 10 hours like hostages." "The team will call their bluff and not play this match."

On Friday, Nigeria beat Libya 1-0 in the southern city of Uyo. They lead Group D with seven points from three matches, while Libya are bottom of the standings on one point. — AFP