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Qatar Amir calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon

Gulf-European summit kicks off in Brussels



BRUSSELS: The first summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU) member states kicked off in Brussels on Wednesday with the participation of Gulf and European leaders. The summit is aimed at enhancing cooperation and discussing major global challenges. The 27-nation European Union is seeking to work more closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which brings together Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in addressing conflicts in both the Middle East and Ukraine.

President of the European Council Charles Michel stressed the European side's readiness to work with the Gulf side to address international problems, especially in the Middle East, which is going through turmoil and major challenges. Michel stressed the importance of a comprehensive and stronger partnership between the EU and the GCC to achieve prosperity, calling on the member states to work to make the summit the first that inspires unity and hope.

The Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, in his capacity as the rotating chairman of the GCC, said in his speech that the destructive



BRUSSELS: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with President of the European Council Charles Michel, on sidelines of the EU-GCC Summit in Brussels on Wednesday. — KUNA

Continued on Page 6

Reducing bureaucracy, boosting private sector key to attract investors

KUWAIT: Kuwait needs to streamline procedures and reduce bureaucracy to become a more attractive destination for foreign investors, according to Abdullah Al-Terkait, Chairman of the Union of Investment Companies. In an interview with KUNA, he emphasized that improving transparency and corporate governance is essential



for building investor trust, making the investment environment more stable and appealing. Terkait highlighted the union's commitment to enhancing the legislative and regulatory framework for the sector to ensure flexibility and sustainability, which will strengthen the role of investment companies in the economy. He also stressed the importance of developing infrastructure, noting that modern facilities, efficient transportation, and strong digital connectivity are crucial for facilitating business operations. To boost Kuwait's competitiveness, Terkait advocated for offering attractive investment incentives, such as tax exemptions and credit facilities, to encourage foreign companies to invest in the Kuwaiti market long-term.

Terkait believes that the private sector, with its expertise and flexibility, should play a larger role in decision-making through collaboration

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Ministry to sign 18 contracts for road maintenance

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah affirmed the Ministry of Interior's keenness to support the Ministry of Public Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport in implementing the road maintenance plan according to the schedule, avoiding delays and overcoming obstacles facing the projects.

This came in a press statement issued by the General Department of Public Relations at the Ministry of Interior on Wednesday following a coordination meeting attended that was by Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Meshaan, assistant undersecretaries and department directors in the two ministries, and those concerned

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Zionists reject ceasefire, hit Hezbollah's bastion

BEIRUT: Zionists conducted airstrikes targeting Hezbollah's main bastion and a city in southern Lebanon where they holds sway on Wednesday, after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed calls for a ceasefire. The strike on south Beirut, the militant group's main stronghold, was the first in several days of calm in the area, after an intense period of bombardment earlier in the Zionist-Hezbollah war. Zionist army said its warplanes struck dozens of Hezbollah targets in the southern city of Nabatiyeh, where the Lebanese group and its ally Amal hold sway.

The Lebanese health ministry said six people were killed and 43 injured in the strikes on two municipal buildings in Nabatiyeh, adding that rescuers were searching through the rubble for survivors. The mayor was among the dead, a local official told AFP, adding that the strikes "formed a kind of belt of fire" in the area. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned the attack, saying that Zionists "deliberately targeted a meeting of the municipal council that was discussing the city's services and relief situation".

In response to the Nabatiyeh strikes, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said that "civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected at all times". The strikes sent a thick



KUWAIT: The Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Meshaan, assistant undersecretaries and department directors and other officials are pictured during a meeting. — KUNA



KOURA: Gravediggers prepare tombs for people killed in a Zionist airstrike on the village of Aito on October 16, 2024 in northern Lebanon's Koura district. — AFP

plume of smoke billowing over houses, palm trees and the blue-tipped minaret of a mosque in the city. Also on Wednesday, Hezbollah said it had targeted Zionist army tank with a guided missile near a border village. Zionist entity ramped up its bombardment mainly of Hezbollah strongholds in late September, and sent ground troops across the Lebanese border on September 30.

The war has left at least 1,356 people dead in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry figures, though the real toll is likely higher. Hezbollah started low-intensity strikes on

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Young Kuwaitis turn ideas into lucrative businesses

KUWAIT: Many Kuwaiti youths have become less dependent on government jobs and turned their passions and dreams from a mere idea to a success story, launching from Kuwait and then expanding regionally and internationally. Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) interviewed ambitious young entrepreneurs in Kuwait who built local businesses, then expanded globally, establishing their brand in the Arab and Gulf regions, and occasionally in European countries.

Co-founder and CEO of Floward Abdulaziz Al-Loughani told KUNA that his company operates in 40 cities across the Gulf and the Middle East, pointing out that his company consists of 1,000 employees. Founded in 2017, the biggest hurdle the company faces is possessing the right technical skills in line with the company's growth, as well as gaining customer trust with the idea of ordering flowers online, he added.

The company did not only emulate global business models of viewing products online; rather, it innovated a special way of providing customers with available goods coinciding with local demand. (See Page 3)



Zain wins 'Outstanding Mobile Broadband Network Quality' award

Dubai-based telecom council recognizes Zain's leadership in delivering 5G experiences

KUWAIT: Zain won the Outstanding Mobile Broadband Network Quality award under the Leadership in User Experience category during the second edition of the Leadership and Excellence Awards (LEAD), recently organized by SAMENA Telecommunications Council in Dubai. This prestigious award acknowledges Zain's leadership in delivering an exceptional 5G user experience, excelling in speed, reliability, and quality for its customers in Kuwait.

The event was attended by top executives and leaders from major telecom operators, ICT providers, and industry regulatory bodies in the Middle East and North Africa. SAMENA Telecommunications Council CEO Bocar A BA presented the award on stage to Daaij Al-Oud, Chief Technology Officer of Zain Kuwait.

This recognition affirms Zain's leadership in continuously enhancing its 5G network technologies to keep pace with the significant developments in the telecom and ICT sectors. The award underscores the company's strategic vision of securing a competitive edge in the digital era by delivering world-class services, pioneering innovations, and exceptional customer experiences.

Zain continues to innovate 5G-powered experiences for its customers, ensuring the highest levels of quality to deliver a superior digital experience. As the era of 5G Advanced technologies approaches, the company aims to maintain its leadership position in the region by building a robust and advanced network.

Zain's recent accomplishments demonstrate its ambition to lead the telecom and ICT sectors, strengthening its position as a leading digital service

provider in the Kuwaiti market and across the region. This year, Zain continues to lead the expansion of the 5G market and enhance its network infrastructure. The company achieved an exceptional speed rate of over 450 Mbps, efficiently managing a massive volume of 5G data, which accounts for more than 55 percent of its mobile broadband traffic.

Zain remains committed to investing in its 5G network infrastructure, consistently leveraging the latest innovative technologies to deliver the highest speeds and best experiences. The company is preparing for the 5G Advanced era by making early investments in upgrading and enhancing its technology infrastructure.

Earlier this year, Zain achieved a significant milestone by reaching speeds of 10 Gbps following a successful trial of 5G Advanced technology, becoming the first operator in the Kuwaiti telecom market to successfully test this technology. Additionally, the company successfully tested Ultra-Reliable Low Latency Communication (URLLC) on its standalone 5G network, a key feature of 5G Advanced technology.

Zain is expected to commercially launch 5G Advanced services in 2025 to meet the evolving needs of customers, businesses, and government entities. As a pioneer of the 5G revolution in Kuwait and the region, Zain aims to create new service experiences that exceed the speed, reliability, and quality its customers expect. The company will continue to build the next generation of networks, foster innovation, and support Kuwait's digital transformation initiatives.

The LEAD Excellence Awards are one of the most prestigious regional platforms celebrat-



DUBAI: Chief Technology Officer of Zain Kuwait Daaij Al-Oud receives the award in Dubai.

ing achievements in the telecom and information technology sectors in the region. They are organized by the SAMENA Council, a coalition of telecommunications companies covering three broad geographic regions: South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. These awards highlight the ac-

celerating efforts of technology players, digital service providers, telecom operators, regulatory bodies, and others. This year's awards focused on five fronts: Innovation, Business Leadership, User Experience Delivery, Fixed Wireless Access, and Regulatory Enablement.

Kuwait participates in 'Middle East Green' initiative's first meeting

JEDDAH: The first session of the ministerial council for the Middle East Green Initiative kicked off today in Jeddah, chaired by Saudi Arabia, with participation from Kuwait represented by the Acting General Manager of the Environment Public Authority Samira Al-Kandari. In her speech during the meeting, Kandari confirmed Kuwait's support for the initiative aimed at enhancing cooperation to combat land degradation and promote sustainable management of vegetation. She said the initiative represents a pioneering step toward a sustainable environmental future by reducing carbon emissions and increasing green spaces in the region. She emphasized the importance of collective efforts to address climate change while preserving natural resources for future generations. Kandari noted Kuwait's progress in ratifying the initiative's charter and launching several projects beneficial to it, including the planting

of mangroves, establishing a seed bank for indigenous plants, and expanding green spaces through increased protected areas, along with projects to rehabilitate contaminated and degraded soils.

The session was chaired by the Saudi Minister of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, Abdulrahman Al-Fadli, and the ministerial council is expected to make important decisions to initiate the implementation phase of the initiative. Kuwait's delegation included, alongside Head of the delegation Al-Kandari, the Director of Environmental Rehabilitation and Activity Monitoring, Shaima Al-Fadhli, and from the International Relations Department of the Public Authority for the Environment, Talal Al-Ali and Mustafa Al-Zuhair. The initiative aims to plant 50 billion trees across the Middle East and support regional efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, contributing to a greener future in the region. Saudi Arabia launched the Middle East Green Initiative in March 2021, aiming to mitigate the effects of climate change in the Middle East and North Africa, and announced in November 2022 a budget allocation of \$2.5 billion to support the initiative and cover its operational budget for ten years, in addition to hosting its secretariat in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh. — KUNA



JEDDAH: Acting General Manager of the Environment Public Authority Samira Al-Kandari is seen with the Kuwaiti delegation at the first session of the ministerial council for the Middle East Green Initiative. — KUNA



GAZA: Children play in the sand at a makeshift camp for Palestinians displaced from northern Gaza, at Gaza City's damaged Yarmouk stadium on October 14, 2024. — AFP

Kuwait condemns Zionist violations of children's rights

NEW YORK: Kuwait reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights while offering full support to the international community's initiatives in this field. This statement came during a speech by the Kuwaiti Permanent Delegation to the United Nations that was delivered by Diplomatic Attache Raheeq Al-Abad, late Tuesday before the Third Committee on Social Humanitarian and Culture Affairs, Article 67 concerning the promotion and protection of children's rights.

Abad expressed Kuwait's strongest condemnation of the unjustified violation committed by the Zionist occupation against innocent Palestinians and Lebanese children, a clear violation of international children's rights treaties. She pointed out that children in the Gaza Strip are facing a traumatic war that would haunt them in life. Many have sustained injuries, while others suffered from illness and malnutrition because of the ongoing attacks by the Zionist occupation. Kuwait reiterated its call for an immediate end to the Zionist occupation's violations against Palestinian and Lebanese children.

Abad highlighted that the world is facing challenges in providing decent and safe life for the children, such as poverty, lack of education, and the basic healthcare needs, as well as unsafe child-labor. Abad reiterated Kuwait's commitment to protecting children's rights and their wellbeing, citing Law No.21 of 2015 on child's rights in Kuwait which guarantees children basic rights. She mentioned the 2023 Gallup International survey, which Kuwait ranked second internationally in respecting children's rights, noting that in 1991 Kuwait approved the Convention on the Rights of Child. She said Kuwait made remarkable achievements toward realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by cooperating with several organizations and bodies. — KUNA



Raheeq Al-Abad



GAZA: Workers implement relief projects overseen by the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO). — KUNA photos

IICO Palestine relief projects valued at \$11m since Oct 2023

KUWAIT: International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) has spent over \$11 million since October 2023 in aid distributed to over two million Palestinians, the organization said Wednesday. Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq, the organization's president, said in a press conference that the aid included 86 relief projects across various fields, executed in cooperation with Kuwaiti, Palestinian, Jordanian, Turkish and Egyptian charitable organizations.

IICO has utilized every possible opportunity since the onset of Zionist assault on Gaza to provide relief through airlifts, maritime shipments and trucks. He noted that over \$677,000 was spent to launch housing projects, provide tents and rehabilitate several shelters for 12,000 displaced individuals, in addition to supplying potable water to over 1.5 million Palestinians in both northern and southern Gaza as part of the "Water for Gaza" campaign, which cost over \$500,000. IICO has provided urgent supplies and medications to the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other hospitals in Gaza, and sponsored 383 healthcare workers. IICO also provided urgent relief to victims of the Zionist aggression who were transferred for treatment in Turkey. The authority undertook projects to equip dental clinics at the Indonesian Hospital and supplied medical tools and medications for the injured and disabled.

Education, community

The organization, in collaboration with the Islamic University of Gaza set up five educational tents to receive 1,200 students. The centers also paid local teachers for their services and offering psychological and social support for students. Another educational

project, "tawassul", supported e-learning for 500 students in the strip. IICO also supported Palestinian students from Gaza studying in Turkish and Malaysian universities. The charity launched programs to distribute food parcels, ready-to-eat meals, fuel, and bread for displaced individuals and field workers, along with winter clothing parcels, vouchers for purchasing goods, and cash assistance. Daily meals were provided to 180,000 displaced individuals in Deir Al-Balah and Gaza's central governorate.

It also initiated efforts to enhance local community capabilities by employing 150 workers in agriculture, sanitation and epidemic response. An IICO campaign supported displaced families in gaining livelihoods and rehabilitating the agricultural sector in Gaza, as well as enhancing food security and restoring shelters in Jabalia camp, alongside purchasing 10,000 kilograms of olive oil from farmers in the West Bank for distribution in Gaza.

Relief bridges, convoys

The charity contributed to 40 relief flights in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Air Force and Kuwaiti charitable organizations, costing over \$700,000. They also participated in dispatching three ships carrying 3,600 tons of essential relief supplies. The authority organized land convoys from Kuwait directly to the Rafah border in partnership with Kuwaiti charities, carrying 1,735 tons of supplies, in addition to supporting two air drops by the Jordanian Air Force in collaboration with Kuwaiti and Jordanian charities. Eight relief trucks loaded with 580 parcels of clothing, food, and health and women's supplies were also prepared.



Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq



Global efforts

To mobilize efforts from international organizations for Gaza relief, the charity held an international conference to build a global humanitarian alliance to support and enhance humanitarian interventions and early recovery in Gaza, in coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, involving 147 local, regional, and international organizations from 48 countries. Organizations participating in the conference committed to implementing programs and projects worth over \$2 billion to support the humanitarian situation in Gaza over the next two years.

Matouq expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the supporters and donors for the charity's projects in Gaza over the past year, emphasizing the IICO's commitment to supporting the people of Gaza in line with its humanitarian and moral responsibilities. — KUNA

Local

Kuwaiti young entrepreneurs turn passions into lucrative businesses

Floward, COFE app, Justclean examples of Kuwaiti success stories

KUWAIT: A group of young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs have successfully transformed their passion and innovative ideas into thriving businesses that have expanded regionally and globally, creating promising job opportunities in the private sector. Many Kuwaiti youths have become less dependent on government jobs and turned their passions and dreams from a mere idea to a success story, launching from Kuwait and then expanding regionally and internationally. KUNA interviewed ambitious young entrepreneurs in Kuwait who built local businesses, then expanded globally, establishing their brand in the Arab and Gulf regions, and occasionally in European countries.

Abdulaziz Al-Lughani, co-founder and CEO of "Floward," said his company operates in 40 cities across Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, the UK, Egypt, and Jordan, employing around 1,000 people. One of the major challenges since the company's establishment in 2017 was recruiting suitable talent to meet growing market demands and understanding customer culture to build online trust, particularly as some customers were hesitant about purchasing flowers online. Lughani explained that the company has developed its e-commerce platform to better suit local market needs, utilizing artificial intelligence to enhance the shopping experience by providing precise product descriptions and personalizing browsing experiences based on customer preferences.

Floward has made numerous achievements since it was founded, like joining the Saudi Unicorns program, acquiring the company Mubkhar, and acquiring an official flower business license from FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to become the first business in the championship's history to get this advantage. Future plans for the business include expanding investment in existing branches and opening new ones and finding new acquisition opportunities in differ-

ent fields similar to the gifting business.

Looking ahead, Lughani noted that the company plans to invest more in the countries it operates in, expand into new markets, and seek acquisition and merger opportunities in related sectors.

COFE App

Co-founder of COFE app Ali Al-Ibrahim said that his business launched in 2018, amidst a coffee industry boom, with the global coffee market valued at around \$100 billion. He emphasized the deep-rooted coffee culture in the Middle East, which paved the way for integrating technology into this field, offering coffee enthusiasts a great way to enjoy coffee. The app has expanded to cover the entire beverage sector. The app has seen over 4.1 million downloads in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Qatar. Ibrahim said he faced challenges in securing suitable strategic partnerships and finding technical talent to build his team, emphasizing the importance of focusing on this specialization in higher education.

He also pointed out that overseas expansion introduced additional challenges, such as aligning the company's operations with regulations in each country. Ibrahim expressed hope for regulatory harmonization in the region to facilitate investment and expansion. In a recent funding round, COFE app raised \$15 million from global investors, boosting the company's valuation to \$100 million, with plans for another investment round with influential investors to enhance the company's value and reach. The company's workforce exceeds 50 employees across operations, marketing, technology, and sales departments in offices throughout Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Qatar. Ibrahim's current ambition is to strengthen the company's position in technology and the beverage market while improving the supply chain in other sectors, like hospitality and airlines.



Justclean

Co-founder and CEO of the Justclean app, Athbi Al-Enezi said the idea for his business arose from the evolution of online services, which expanded from food delivery to cleaning services for homes and cars. Established in 2017, the app serves customers across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with local teams in each country. The company recently raised \$30 million in its latest funding round. The company's big-

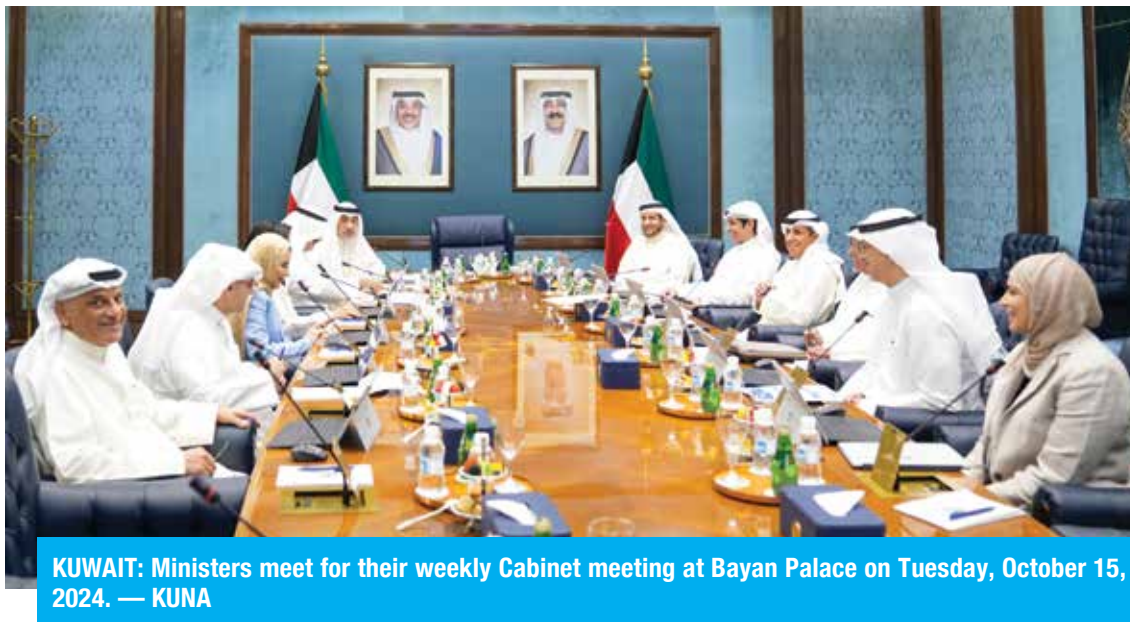
gest hurdles came during the coronavirus pandemic, disrupting supply chains and services, he added. The app records thousands of orders each day in every country it is located in, reflecting the significant trust placed upon it by its customers, he exclaimed. Justclean is valued at \$70 million and employs more than 80 staff working in local teams in each country, assuring the company's willingness to grow and enter different markets. — KUNA

Cabinet approves evening shifts at state departments

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Tuesday approved a Civil Service Commission proposal to introduce evening shifts in the public sector, and assigned the commission to implement the system. The new system's benefits include opening up extra time slots for people to finalize their government-related paperwork, thus improving productivity and the efficiency of work at state departments. It also helps reduce traffic during the morning period by spreading out employees' working hours and giving more options for the public to visit state department offices. Cabinet explained in a statement following its weekly meeting. The ministers, during their weekly session, also examined efforts to curb bids to smuggle drugs into the country, preparations for the forthcoming Gulf Cup tournament and roads' overhaul ahead of the coming winter season.

Foreign relations

The Cabinet began by reviewing messages received from the Amiri Diwan addressed to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, from leaders of several brotherly and friendly countries regarding ways to enhance bilateral relations and activate cooperation in various fields. The Cabinet was



KUWAIT: Ministers meet for their weekly Cabinet meeting at Bayan Palace on Tuesday, October 15, 2024. — KUNA

also informed about the formation of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir's representative, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who left the country for Belgium to chair the Kuwaiti delegation at the first joint summit between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union, which includes the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and several senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office. Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah

also briefed the Cabinet on the results of his official visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain last Wednesday, aimed at enhancing the bilateral relations and activating avenues of mutual cooperation.

Local matters

The Cabinet listened to a report on the successful interception by the General Administration for Drug Control and the Coast Guard of a smuggling operation attempting to bring large quantities of narcotics into the country via the sea. The Cabinet

extended its heartfelt condolences on the passing of Captain Pilot Mohammed Mahmoud Abdul-Rasoul, a member of the Kuwaiti Air Force, who tragically died during a training mission due to the crash of an F-18 fighter jet.

The Cabinet reviewed a presentation from the Minister of Information, Culture, Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi regarding Kuwait's preparations to host the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup from December 21, 2024, to January 3, 2025. The presentation highlighted the collaboration among various governmental bodies to ensure the event is organized to reflect Kuwait's esteemed reputation. Minister Al-Mutairi affirmed that a contract had been worked out with a foreign company specialized in gates' systems, e-tickets and spectators' movement. He noted that the selected company had taken part in organizing the World Cup held in Qatar in 2022.

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan addressed the session revealing that up to 18 contracts would be signed, in the coming few days, for comprehensive maintenance of all major roads and internal streets in Kuwait with international, Gulf, and local companies. Cabinet reviewed recommendations from the Economic Affairs Committee regarding the annual report of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), noting its significant contributions to attracting investments across various sectors, thereby creating job opportunities for national workers. The report included information about investments in industries, information technology, oil and gas services, infrastructures, energy, power, health, education and training. — KUNA



Winter Wonderland



South Sabahiya Park

New entertainment projects, renovations set to open soon

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Touristic Enterprises Company has completed the feasibility study for the Khairan Park project and the preparation of its initial designs. The company is collaborating with government agencies to finalize the necessary laws to launch the project. In a press release, the company stated that the park will cover an area of 800,000 square meters and will include various components, including two hotels with a total capacity of 300 rooms, and 200 chalets equipped to the highest international standards. The project will also feature a dedicated sports area, an entertainment zone, a

water village, and a shopping complex within the park's boundaries.

The company is currently coordinating with the Ministry of Finance to make necessary amendments to the State Property Law (No. 105 of 1980), which allows state-owned companies to sign viable investment contracts. The company expressed confidence in the cooperation of government entities and relevant bodies to overcome obstacles and challenges that may hinder the implementation of its development projects.

Sheikh Mohammed Salman Al-Sabah, Chairman of the company, noted that the intensive efforts of Touristic Enterprises Company align with the ambitious strategy of "New Kuwait 2035" by executing tourism and entertainment projects that diversify income sources and create job opportunities for young Kuwaitis, thereby enhancing a prosperous national economy.

He added that the Tourism Projects Company is

fully prepared for the 2024-2025 season, with the reopening of the South Sabahiya Park and "Winter Wonderland" for their second and third seasons, respectively. The company is also preparing a variety of entertainment events across the country during the upcoming winter to ensure a unique and enjoyable experience for visitors.

Al-Nuwiseeb entertainment facility in southern Kuwait, which will include a variety of restaurants and cafes, as well as a market and the South Sabahiya Park project are set to reopen in November. Sheikh Mohammad said the Hilton in Al-Mangaf will be reopened as Al-Mangaf entertainment facility in 2026.

He added that a contract is expected to be signed next month for Al-Eqaila Beach renovation project, with the project slated for opening in 2026. The company is also working on the development of Burj Al-Hamam restaurant, expected to open by the end of 2025. — KUNA

Kuwait participates in 22nd GCC government officials meeting

DOHA: Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Development Affairs at the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) Mohammad Al-Ahmad stressed Wednesday the importance of participating in the 22nd meeting of the General-Directors of Public Administration Institutes in the GCC countries being held in Doha, Qatar. In a statement to KUNA, Al-Ahmad revealed that the 22nd meeting included an "Innovation in Developing Leadership in the Government Sector" forum, attended by the President of the Qatari Civil Service and Government Development Bureau, Abdulaziz Al-Khalifa. The meeting also discussed Gulf cooperation in public administration and developing national talent, as well as key practices and innovative projects in the region's institutes of public administration and ways to strengthen knowledge exchange among member states through joint programs that support practical training and innovation. He pointed out that it was agreed that the 23rd meeting of the Committee of Directors General of Public Administration Institutes will be held in Kuwait. Director of the Training and Career Development Department at the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) Institute of Public Administration in Qatar Maha Al-Marri, confirmed in the opening speech that the meeting is a good opportunity to discuss the latest developments and future strategies. Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat, Khaled Al-Sunaidi, stressed the importance of united efforts in the fields of administrative development and knowledge exchange. — KUNA



Checkups reveal delivery drivers at high risk of diabetes, hypertension

Human rights diwan proposes new regulations to protect drivers' safety

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Recent findings from health checkups conducted alongside awareness workshops for delivery drivers on bikes in Kuwait have highlighted significant health concerns among this group. Organized by the National Diwan for Human Rights in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the results have shown many riders, particularly those handling food, are at a higher risk of conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure (hypertension), many of whom were unaware of their health status.

"What surprised us was that many of these riders had not previously reported their health issues," said Sarah Al-Rubaian, Head of the Awareness Department at the National Diwan for Human Rights. "This likely stems from a lack of awareness, health neglect, or fear of the financial burden associated with medical checkups and treatments." She also noted that the fear of job loss might discourage riders from seeking medical help or disclosing their health problems.

The checkups also revealed other alarming re-

sults, including a notable prevalence of color blindness among riders. "This condition, particularly the inability to distinguish red color, could increase the risk of accidents, as riders may struggle to identify brake lights and traffic signals, especially at night," added Rubaian.

In response to the recent findings, the National Diwan for Human Rights proposed to the government several new regulations to enhance the safety and well-being of delivery riders. Rubaian asserted that occupational health is a necessity rather than a privilege. "It's a right that should be granted to everyone, regardless of gender, nationality, or position within the hierarchy," she said.

Among the recommendations are the introduction of blood pressure, diabetes, and color blindness tests as part of regular and free of charge health screenings for riders. "These tests would help identify health issues that could impair their ability to operate their motorbikes and protect both the riders and other road users," said Rubaian.

To ensure their inclusive safety on the road, the diwan also proposed additional amendments, such as

reorganizing motorcycle regulations by categorizing motorbikes based on size and specifications. While Kuwait's traffic authorities currently impose a ban on all delivery motorbikes on highways and Ring Roads, this approach would allow only larger, safer models on highways while restricting smaller motorcycles to less-trafficked streets.

Currently, the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) enforces a fixed-hours outdoor work ban usually during the peak summer months of June, July and August each year. The diwan proposes regulating riders' outdoor work based on real-time temperature, offering better protection from extreme heat and reducing heat-related health risks while on duty. Rubaian also mentioned that under the new traffic regulations, advanced cameras will be installed to monitor temperature levels and track rider movements.

According to Rubaian, these measures, which are currently under review and discussion, have been recommended based on international Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems, as well as standards implemented by other Gulf countries.

KFAED grants Global Fund \$8m to fight AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) on Wednesday inked a grant accord with the Global Fund to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis at a value of \$8 million to contribute to the fund's financial resources for the period 2023-2025.

In a press statement, the Fund stated that the grant will help build and develop resilient and sustainable health systems in the beneficiary countries. It noted that the Global Fund, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme, aims to mobilize around \$18 billion to support global efforts to stop the spread of HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

The Global Fund also seeks to assist countries in achieving a set of sustainable development goals, including saving the lives of over 20 million people during the targeted period and reducing mortality rates from the three diseases by 60 percent, in addition to avoiding approximately 450 million new cases of these diseases. This contribution marks the seventh collaboration between Kuwait and the Global Fund in combating diseases and epidemics internationally, and the third of its kind for treating these diseases.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development previously contributed on behalf of the Government of Kuwait with a \$5 million grant during the fifth replenishment of the Global Fund for the period (2017 - 2019), and a \$6 million grant during the sixth replenishment for the period (2020 - 2022). In total, the contributions of the Kuwait Fund on behalf of the Government of Kuwait to the Global Fund's resources have reached \$11 million. The agreement was signed by the Acting Director General of the Fund, Walid Al-Bahr, and the Director of External Relations and Communications at the Global Fund Françoise Vanni. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development is considered a developmental tool that relies entirely on its own resources to provide loans and developmental assistance aimed at helping developing countries finance their development projects. — KUNA

Kuwait discusses human rights with GCC members

DOHA: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah reaffirmed, Wednesday, Kuwait's firm commitment to human rights. This came in a statement to KUNA after her participation in the 17th meeting of heads of government agencies concerned with human rights in the GCC countries that was held in the Qatari Capital, Doha. Sheikha Jawaher stressed on Kuwait's firm commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, including close and effective cooperation with the international community in that matter. She extended her sincere appreciation to the State of Qatar for the invitation, their hospitality, and distinguished co-



Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah

ordination to hold this important meeting, which discussed a number of topics related to promoting human rights in the GCC countries. She noted that the meeting discussed frameworks of cooperation and joint coordination between the GCC countries

in implementation of the human rights strategy for the GCC countries for the years (2023-2026). She congratulated Qatar on its election to membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) during the United Nations General Assembly in its 76th session. She noted that Qatar's obtaining of the membership for an additional three years to its current membership (2025-2027) expresses the confidence of the international community in the effective role and the positive approach taken by Qatar in the field of protecting and promoting human rights at the local, regional and international levels. She indicated that Kuwait, through its assumption of the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is scheduled to begin in December 2024, will host the next meeting of heads of government agencies concerned with human rights in Kuwait, as the term of the presidency coincides with the Kuwait's membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026, and with its presidency of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights 2025-2026. — KUNA

Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah awarded Ambassador for Social Responsibility

KUWAIT: The Regional Network for Social Responsibility announced on Wednesday that Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Chairwoman of the Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations, has been awarded the title of International Ambassador for Social Responsibility. This award recognizes Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah's significant efforts and positive commitment to her community and her work. In a press release, the network highlighted that Sheikha Fadia's appointment to the International Ambassadors for Social Responsibility Program reflects her extensive contributions to humanitarian, developmental, social, and educational causes.

The network added that the appointment is aimed at supporting various issues addressed by the Regional Network for Social Responsibility across different sectors and helping raise awareness and support for these causes. The statement emphasized the importance of promoting a culture of social responsibility in the Arab region, especially in the Middle East, and also stressed the need to encourage and empower the private sector to adopt and implement social responsibility initiatives to assist companies and institutions in meeting sustainability standards.

The award ceremony was held at the Al-Shaah Palace and was attended by several distinguished figures, including Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, Head of the Political Science Department at Kuwait University Dr Haila Al-Mukaimi, Dr Ibtisam Al-Rifai and Huda Al Qenaei, member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations. The delegation from the Regional Network included Dr Salah Abdulrahman, President of the International Congress for Social Responsibility; Dr Shehab Al-Othman, Head of the Advisory Committee for Kuwait's Social Responsibility Program and official representatives of the network in Kuwait.

The Regional Network for Social Responsibility is an international non-profit professional institution that was established in 2007, and has branches, offices and representative agreements in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of France, Turkey, the Sultanate of Oman, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, and the United States of America. It aims to raise the level of awareness about the social responsibility of companies and institutions and achieves its goal by providing consultancy services, implementing training programs and specialized workshops, as well as organizing forums and press conferences in the areas of social responsibility, sustainable development, green economy, community service and institutional volunteering. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah (center right) receives her award in the presence of officials. — KUNA



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DEIR EL-BALAH, Palestinian Territories: Palestinians sit at the site of a Zionist airstrike which hit tents for displaced people two days earlier in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir El-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on October 16, 2024. — AFP

Gaza family mourns children killed in Zionist entity strikes

Bombarding hampers UN polio campaign • 150,000 Gaza children given second dose: WHO

GAZA: Holding his teddy bear, Gazan mother Asmaa Al-Wasifi mourned her 10-year-old son, who was killed in a Zionist entity strike before he could take his second polio shot. The United Nations began the second round of its polio campaign in central areas of the enclave on Monday, though many Gazans said the effort was futile given the ongoing Zionist entity campaign to crush Hamas.

"The time for second vaccine was here, but the (Zionist entity) occupation did not let them live to continue their lives and their childhood," said Asmaa, crying as she went through her son's clothes and school books. Yamen, along with four of his cousins - the oldest of whom was 10 - were killed when Zionist entity hit their family home on Sept 24 in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza.

The children had received their first polio vaccines three weeks earlier in a UN campaign that prompted rare daily pauses of fighting between Zionist entity and Hamas militants in pre-specified areas. The campaign began after a baby was partially paralyzed by the type-2 polio virus in August, in the first such case in the territory in 25 years.

Yamen's grandmother Zakeya, who lost at least 10 of her family members, called for the war that has ravaged the tiny enclave of 2.3 million people for more than a year to end. "We don't want any drinks or any aid. We want them to give us safety and security - for the war to end," she said.

Efforts to secure a ceasefire so far have faltered,

with Zionist entity and Hamas unable to agree on key demands. Her son Osama, 35, said his wife's body was unrecognizable after the strike that also killed their four children. The children had just had fresh haircuts to get ready for school, he added. "They were happy like butterflies... Ten minutes later, the targeting happened. I found them all in pieces," he said.

More than 150,000 children in Gaza received the required second dose of oral polio vaccine in the first two days of the campaign's second round, the WHO chief said Wednesday. Despite continuing Zionist entity military operations in some areas of the Palestinian territory, the second round of a polio vaccination campaign, aiming to reach more than 590,000 children under the age of 10, began on Monday. "The total number of children who received a second dose of polio vaccine in central Gaza after two days of vaccination is 156,943," the World Health Organization's director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X. "The vaccination continues today. At the same time, 128,121 children received vitamin A supplements. "We call for the humanitarian pauses to continue to be respected. We call for a ceasefire and peace," he said.

As during the initial round of vaccination last month, 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. — Agencies

Biden to make farewell trip to Germany

BERLIN: US President Joe Biden will be in Germany on Friday on a whirlwind trip to the NATO ally with Western backing for Ukraine set to be high on the agenda at talks with Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Biden was originally due in Germany last week for a multi-day visit that would have included a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The pair were set to exchange words at the Ramstein US air base in western Germany during a meeting of Ukraine's backers, where they were expected to discuss continuing support for Kyiv as it looks to hold off Russian forces. That appointment was postponed as Hurricane Milton barreled down towards Florida, where the storm ended up killing at least 16 people and causing an estimated \$50 billion in damage.

But the outgoing US leader was at pains to make his valedictory Germany trip nonetheless, with the stripped-down program now squeezed into a one-day flying visit from late Thursday.

Biden had been a good friend to Germany and had overseen "an incredible improvement in co-operation in recent years", Scholz said Wednesday in parliament. "We have a lot to discuss about the major crises and challenges we are facing," Scholz said.

As well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the pair will likely discuss the situation in the Middle East a year into the war pitching Zionist entity against Hamas and its allies. The United States and Germany have backed Zionist entity's right to defend itself but pushed for a way to bring an end to the conflict and avoid further escalation and a possible regional conflagration. The US president and the chancellor could be joined for talks by French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, according to unconfirmed media reports.

The four-way meeting between the leaders was meant to take place last week before Biden's visit was cancelled. On Friday in Berlin, Biden will also meet with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is set to present the US leader with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit, the country's highest honor. Steinmeier's office said this was to recognize Biden's "services to German-American friendship and the transatlantic alliance... in particular in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine". — AFP



AGAJE, Nigeria: Flames and smoke billow from a fuel tanker that exploded after colliding with a truck in this file photo. - AFP

Nigeria fuel tanker explosion kills more than 140

MAJIYA, Nigeria: An explosion has killed more than 140 people in northern Nigeria as crowds rushed to collect fuel spilling from a crashed tanker, officials told AFP on Wednesday. It's the latest such accident at a time when petrol has become a precious commodity during Nigeria's worst economic crisis in a generation.

The fuel tanker had veered to avoid another vehicle and crashed in the town of Majiya in Jigawa state on Tuesday, police said. Following the crash, residents crowded round the tanker, gathering fuel that spilt onto the road and in drains, police spokesman Lawan Shiisu Adam said.

Nura Abdullahi, a spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), said "more than 140 people" had been buried in a mass grave and warned the toll was likely to rise further.

Earlier, police said at least 94 people were killed and 50 injured. Shiisu Adam said the residents had "overwhelmed" officers trying to stop them. The Nigerian Medical Association has urged doctors to rush to nearby emergency rooms to help with the influx of patients.

Nigerian lawmakers have observed a minute's silence in the Senate. In a statement on Wednesday, Nigerian Vice President Kashim Shettima called for a safety review and said the federal government was sending resources to support those affected. Fuel tanker explosions are common in Africa's most populous nation, where roads can be poorly maintained and residents often look to siphon off fuel following accidents. The price of petrol has soared fivefold since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu scrapped subsidies last year, and there are often shortages. — AFP



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International

UK begins emotive debate in parliament on assisted dying

Bill to allow terminally ill adults to end their lives with medical help

LONDON: A proposal to allow terminally ill adults in England and Wales the right to end their lives was introduced to parliament on Wednesday, setting off an emotional debate on an issue that polarizes opinion. The assisted dying bill is expected to allow mentally competent, terminally ill adults with six months or less left to live the right to choose to end their lives with medical help. It is the first attempt to change the law in a decade.

Kim Leadbeater, the lawmaker from Britain's governing Labour Party who is behind the bill, said the current law, under which assisting suicide is punishable by up to 14 years in jail, was outdated given a shift in public opinion. "For some people palliative care is not going to ease their pain and suffering and they are asking for the choice to have an assisted death, and I think they should be given that choice," she told Reuters in an interview.

Legalizing assisted dying is supported by up to two-thirds of Britons, according to a 2023 Ipsos Mori poll, and has some high profile supporters including Prime Minister Keir Starmer and broadcaster Esther Rantzen. In recent years, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and some US states have legalized assisted dying under certain circumstances. It has been legal in Switzerland since 1942 and in the Netherlands since 2002. Opponents of assisted dying argue that vulnerable sick people could feel pressured into choosing it, and some worry the law could then be

extended to cover other conditions.

"For many of us, including many disabled people who would be impacted by these laws, it's not just worrying, it's terrifying," actor and broadcaster Liz Carr said on X.

Protecting the vulnerable

Archbishop Justin Welby, head of the Church of England, said he was concerned that, whatever the safeguards, it would not be possible to protect the most vulnerable. "My concern is that once you can ask for assisted suicide, it soon becomes something that you feel that you ought to do," he said. "Permission slips into being duty." Leadbeater said her bill would be "robust" in addressing such concerns. The proposed legislation will be debated by lawmakers on Nov 29 after which a vote could be held, kicking off the formal process for a law change.

In 2015, British lawmakers voted 330 to 118 against the second reading of proposed legislation to legalize assisted dying. Some of Britain's biggest social reforms have come as a result of what are known as private members' bills, submitted to parliament by individual lawmakers such as Leadbeater. They have included abolition of the death penalty, the legalization of abortion and the decriminalization of homosexuality in the 1960s. Starmer has said politicians will be able to vote with their consciences on the matter, rather than along party lines. — Reuters



LONDON: Labour MP Kim Leadbeater speaks to the press during a gathering in favor of the proposal to legalize euthanasia in the UK, called by campaigners from "Dignity in Dying", outside The Palace of Westminster on October 16, 2024. — AFP

Indians in Punjab fear Canada row imperils work and study plans

CHANDIGARH, India: Indians in Punjab, worried that plans to work, study or visit families in Canada will be jeopardized by this week's tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats over the murder of a Sikh separatist, are urging both governments to reduce the tension. Canada's nearly 800,000 Sikhs formed the world's second largest community in 2021, after roughly 20 million in India. They have links to the northern granary state of Punjab, where their religion was founded more than 500 years ago.

"Many clients have reached out, worried about how this might affect their plans to migrate to Canada," said an immigration lawyer, Karan S Thukral, who is based in the Indian capital, though adding he had seen no big drop yet in legal inquiries. "Indian students are among those feeling the impact most acutely." Indians have made up Canada's largest group of international students in recent years, mainly from Punjab, holding more than 41 percent of student permits in 2022. International students bring in about C\$22 billion (\$16 billion) for its universities each year.

"We want to go to Canada to study and settle there, but now that's not possible because students who want

to go there are facing difficulties," said Anita, a student in Punjab's capital of Chandigarh, who gave only her first name. Canadian study permits for Indians fell sharply late last year and the diplomatic tension was likely to weigh on future numbers, Immigration Minister Marc Miller told Reuters in January. "It is something that both countries cannot afford because we are heavily dependent on each other," said Kanwalpreet Kaur, a political science professor at Chandigarh's DAV College. "It is really keeping students on edge because their future is tied up with Canada," she added.

Ties soured last September when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said there were "credible allegations" linking Indian government agents to the killing of the Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, on Canadian soil. India's high commissioner, or ambassador, was among the six diplomats Canada expelled on Monday, linking them to the murder, while accusing the Indian government of having undertaken a broad campaign targeting the South Asian community in Canada.

India dismissed the accusations and accused Trudeau of pursuing a "political agenda", while kicking out six high-ranking Canadian diplomats in retaliation. However, both countries see no immediate impact on two-way trade, which stood at \$8.4 billion at the end of the last fiscal year on March 31.

"It's a loss for families and for our children who want to go there to live a better life," said Gurinder Singh, who runs a cloth business and exports to Canada. "The government should consider all this and should ensure that the matter does not escalate." — Reuters

ment, complicating companies' efforts to establish stable investment strategies. Local firms also face stiff competition from foreign companies with greater resources and expertise, putting pressure on them to maintain market share. He highlighted a pressing challenge: the shortage of qualified Kuwaitis in the investment field, which limits companies' ability to keep pace with global developments. Bureaucracy, characterized by lengthy and complicated procedures, further hampers companies, causing delays in decision-making and project execution.

As Kuwait considers imposing taxes on private companies, Terkait stressed the union's advisory role in this matter due to its potential impact on the investment environment. He said that taxes could have varied effects on attracting foreign capital, emphasizing the need for careful analysis to ensure that Kuwait remains an attractive investment hub. The union aims to provide recommendations based on detailed studies that balance enhancing state revenue through taxes while maintaining a favorable investment climate for both local and foreign companies.

"Any tax decision must consider its impact on Kuwait's competitiveness," he said, highlighting the importance of a clear and transparent tax framework to build confidence in the local market. Terkait asserted that while taxes can enhance local revenues, they should not impose undue burdens on investors. Striking a balance between revenue generation and foreign investment is crucial for sustainable economic development in Kuwait.

SME fund

The union has also submitted recommendations to the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development to enhance its operations and competitive environment. These include creating venture capital funds and enabling the fund to invest in them, addressing the financing needs of startups and SMEs. Terkait suggested that the fund's investments in these venture capital funds be limited to 25 percent, alongside providing appropriate legislation to make such investments more appealing to investors.

This initiative aims to direct capital toward SMEs through equal contributions from private and state investors. He reiterated that the initiative seeks to support national economic growth and prepare SMEs for potential listings in financial markets or mergers, ultimately contributing to a competitive ecosystem. While the proposal has garnered interest from relevant authorities, further research and analysis are needed to ensure its practical viability. — KUNA

ister Al-Meshaan indicated, according to the statement, that the Ministry of Public Works and the Roads Authority are about to sign 18 contracts with local, Gulf, and international companies in the coming few days for the maintenance of all main expressways and streets in the six governorates of Kuwait.

She appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Interior in facilitating the work of the existing authorities in addition to developing plans to manage roads during the maintenance process, which includes closing some roads and opening alternative routes to ensure smooth traffic. She called on citizens and residents to cooperate with the Ministry. — KUNA

Reducing bureaucracy, boosting private...

Continued from Page 1

with the government. He underscored that effective partnership between the public and private sectors is vital for the success of development projects. "While there has been fruitful cooperation in some areas, we need to strengthen this partnership to achieve national development goals," he said. He called for creating an environment that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship through supportive policies, enabling entrepreneurs and companies to grow and thrive.

He identified innovation and entrepreneurship as essential pillars for a sustainable and diverse economy, advocating for a legislative and regulatory framework that allows the private sector to transform ideas into successful projects that bolster the national economy. Terkait linked economic development to support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for job creation and diversifying income sources. He emphasized the importance of providing necessary support, whether through financing or favorable legislation, to enable these enterprises to grow and contribute sustainably to the Kuwaiti economy.

Difficulty recruiting Kuwaitis

Efforts to attract Kuwaitis to the public sector face various obstacles, said Terkait, starting with the lack of suitable job opportunities that meet the aspirations of young job seekers. "Many graduates find that the available opportunities in the private sector do not align with their specializations or aspirations, requiring significant effort, causing them to hesitate to join the sector." Many Kuwaiti graduates also don't have the skills and competencies required for the private sector, citing "a gap between academic education and the requirements of the work environment." The attractive salaries and social benefits offered by the government, such as retirement pensions, make government jobs more enticing compared to the private sector, which often struggles to offer competitive compensation packages. "These factors collectively pose a significant challenge to enhancing the presence of national labor in the private sector."

Terkait outlined several key issues facing the investment sector, including ongoing challenges and fluctuations in global and regional financial markets. He noted that changing economic and political conditions create an unstable envi-

Ministry to sign 18 contracts for road...

Continued from Page 1

with road projects, operation and maintenance, and water projects. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef directed them to continue their work, stressing the need to achieve citizens' aspirations and solve all road and street problems.

He called for establishing a joint operations room working 24 hours per day from all parties concerned with road development operations in the country. Min-

Pakistan college says alleged rape that sparked protests didn't happen

LAHORE: Senior directors of a Pakistan college said on Wednesday there was no evidence that a student had been raped on campus after reports that spread online sparked days of protests.

Hundreds of students have protested since Monday in response to social media posts that said a woman was raped in the basement of a Punjab College for Women campus in the eastern city of Lahore. The demonstrators, who were mostly male students, smashed windows and burned school buses. The protests reflect growing concern over safety, harassment and sexual violence in Pakistan.

"The incident does not exist. I will resign and I will leave this profession and stand with the students if the incident took place," Arif Chaudry, the Lahore director of the private Punjab Group of Colleges that runs the women's college, told reporters. Agha Tahir Ijaz, another of the group's directors, told the same news conference: "We want the kids to understand that they should not believe misinformation." Police arrested a security guard who was identified in online posts but said no victim had come forward and that



LAHORE: Students carry placards as they shout slogans during a protest in Lahore on October 15, 2024. — AFP

they had not been able to verify the incident. The protests first erupted at two of the college's campuses on Monday afternoon before spreading to several other colleges around the city and continued on Tuesday and Wednesday. The college campus where the alleged rape was said to happen has been shut down by the provincial Punjab government until further notice.

The chief minister of the province, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, said that those who spread the false posts would be punished. — AFP

Zionists reject ceasefire, hit...

Continued from Page 1

Zionist entity in October last year, in support of its ally Hamas. With Hamas weakened but not crushed, Zionist entity widened the focus of its military operations to include Lebanon, vowing to fight until tens of thousands forced by Hezbollah's fire to flee their homes are able to return. Lebanon has suffered years of economic and political crisis, and the war has displaced at least 690,000 people, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration. The latest strikes came a day after Netanyahu told French President Emmanuel Macron he was "opposed to a unilateral ceasefire, which does not change the security situation in Lebanon," according to his office. Netanyahu and the military have insisted there must be a buffer zone along the border with Lebanon where there are no Hezbollah fighters. On Tuesday, Hezbollah's deputy leader Naim Qassem said the only solution was a ceasefire, while threatening to expand the scope of its missile strikes across Zionist entity.

Hezbollah has long vowed there could be no truce in Lebanon unless the war in Gaza ends and there was no indication from Qassem's speech of any shift in that position. He did, however, vow the militant group would continue targeting Zionist entity. "Since the enemy targeted all of Lebanon, we have the right from a defensive position to target any place" in Zionist entity, he said.

The US government - Zionist top arms supplier - has criticized airstrikes in Lebanon. "We have made clear that we are opposed to the campaign the way we've seen it conducted over the past weeks" in Beirut, State Depart-

ment spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday. In a letter sent to the Zionist government on Sunday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin also warned that the United States could withhold weapons deliveries unless more humanitarian aid was delivered to Palestinians in Gaza.

Despite the need for food, medical supplies and shelter in Gaza, a spokesman for the UN's children's agency UNICEF said Tuesday that aid was facing the tightest restrictions since the start of the offensive over a year ago. "Several days in the last week (where) no commercial trucks whatsoever were allowed to come in," spokesman James Elder said. For over a week, Zionist forces have engaged in a sweeping air and ground assault targeting northern Gaza and the area around Jabalia amid claims that Hamas militants were regrouping there.

Nidal Al-Arab lost 10 of his family members during airstrikes on Jabalia. "People are trapped. If they don't die of shelling, they will soon die of thirst and hunger because the siege is getting tighter," the 40-year-old told AFP. People in other Gaza neighborhoods told a similar story. "The whole area has been reduced to ashes," said Rana Abdel Majid, 38, from the Al-Faluja area. Zionist launched a military campaign in Gaza after the October 7 attack. The Zionist campaign has killed 42,409 people, the majority civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory which the UN considers reliable. Zionist entity is also weighing how to respond to Iran's launch of around 200 missiles at the country on October 1. Iran said the attack was itself retaliation for Zionist airstrike in Beirut days before that killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian general Abbas Nilforoushan. Iran's top diplomat, Abbas Araghchi, warned UN chief Antonio Guterres that Tehran was ready for a "decisive and regretful" response should Zionists attack his country. — AFP

Qatar Amir calls...

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war launched by the Zionist occupation "has turned into a terrifying routine in the absence of any international accountability." The Amir stressed the urgent need to find a comprehensive settlement to the conflict based on a just solution to the Palestinian issue based on international legitimacy resolutions, including a full withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon and an end to the provocations by settlers, supported by the occupation army in the occupied West Bank. He said that he believes that a ceasefire should constitute a prelude to serious negotiations leading to a "comprehensive, just, and sustainable" solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation at the summit.

The leaders are expected to address the most important regional issues, most notably working to reduce the escalation in the Middle East region, which is witnessing unrest. The leaders will also discuss how to enhance cooperation in various fields and aspects of economic cooperation, including trade and investment, in addition to the issue of energy, as Gulf states are one of the most important energy centers for oil and gas in the world.

The summit was attended by the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President of the European Council Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jaseem Al-Budaiwi, Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Prime, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Asaad bin Tariq Al Said in addition to the heads of the 27 EU countries and heads of government, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. — Agencies

International

New sanctions monitoring team to track North Korea's violations

Pyongyang says 1.4 million apply to join army amid tensions with South

SEOUL: Eleven countries, including South Korea, the United States and Japan, will launch a new joint mechanism to monitor North Korea sanctions violations, Seoul's foreign ministry said Wednesday.

The decision follows Russia's decision to veto the renewal of a panel of UN experts monitoring international sanctions on North Korea in March, effectively ending official oversight of sanctions imposed for the North's banned nuclear and weapons programs. Russia's veto was met with great criticism, with the United States calling it a "self-interested effort to bury the panel's reporting on its own collusion" with North Korea.

Since then, Seoul and other countries have been working to apply different methods to continue sanctions monitoring, with the US ambassador to the UN saying they are exploring "some creative ways" and "out-of-the-box thinking" to ensure the continuation of monitoring activities.

Alongside South Korea, the United States and Japan, eight other countries — France, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — will participate in the multilateral sanctions monitoring team (MSMT). The MSMT is "aligned in our commitment to uphold international peace and security and to safeguard the global non-proliferation regime and address the threat arising from (North Korea's) weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs," the countries said in a joint statement. The MSMT will "monitor and report violations and evasions of the sanction measures" of the UN Security Council resolutions, it said.

"Our preference would have been to continue the previous regime," said US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell in a joint press conference in Seoul Wednesday. "That avenue was prevented by Russian intransigence, so this is the approach that we've taken," he added.

"This grouping of nations that are animated by common purpose has the potential to actually surpass some of the work and reporting that was done previously," said Campbell. Kim Hong-kyun, South Korea's first vice foreign minister, said the North "continues to violate UN Security Council resolutions in various areas". The violations included "nuclear missile provocations, illegal arms deals with Russia, cyber theft of funds through hacking,

and illegal ship-to-ship transfers at sea," said Kim.

Meanwhile, North Korean state media said on Wednesday around 1.4 million young people had applied to join or return to the army this week, blaming Seoul for a provocative drone incursion that had brought the "tense situation to the brink of war". The fiery rhetoric comes after North Korea last week accused Seoul of sending drones over Pyongyang that had scattered a "huge number" of anti-North leaflets. The North then blew up inter-Korean roads and rail lines on its side of the border on Tuesday, and warned that the South would "pay a dear price".

The young people, including students and youth league officials who had signed petitions to join the army, were determined to fight in a "sacred war of destroying the enemy with the arms of the revolution," the official KCNA news agency said. "If a war breaks out, the ROK will be wiped off the map. As it wants a war, we are willing to put an end to its existence," the KCNA report said, using the initials of the South's official name, the Republic of Korea.

North Korea has previously made similar claims about young people scrambling to enlist at a time of heightened tensions, though such statements from the isolated state are difficult to verify.

Last year, state media reported on 800,000 of its citizens volunteering to join the North's military to fight against the United States. It also said in 2017 that nearly 3.5 million workers, party members and soldiers volunteered to serve. According to data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), North Korea has 1.28 million active soldiers and about 600,000 reservists, with 5.7 million Worker/Peasant Red Guard reservists among many unarmed units. Seoul's defense ministry did not comment on the latest KCNA report, but has warned that if North Korea inflicts harm on the safety of South Koreans, that day will be "the end of its regime." Later on Wednesday, vice foreign ministers of South Korea, the United States and Japan held a news conference after talks in Seoul and strongly condemned the North for "intentionally raising tension" by claiming the drone intrusion and sealing the southern border.

Western countries have long accused North Korea



SEOUL: South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Hong-kyun (center) attends a trilateral meeting with US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell and Japan's Vice Foreign Minister Masataka Okano at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul on October 16, 2024. — AFP

of sending weapons to help Russia fight in Ukraine. On Wednesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the North was also sending personnel, becoming effectively a participant in the war. Asked about that issue, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said there were signs of the North's enhanced material support for Russia "which is being felt on the battlefield", but that Washington was still evaluating the reports.

The three officials earlier in the day announced a new, 11-nation team to monitor the enforcement of sanctions against the North after Russia and China thwarted a UN mechanism.

An official at Seoul's unification ministry handling inter-Korean affairs said Pyongyang might be seeking to consolidate people's unity and build logic for a provocation by kindling and exaggerating tension against the South. There also seemed to be public pressure on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over economic challenges, the official said. Park Won-gon, a professor at the Ewha Womans University in Seoul, said North Korea appeared to be using the drone incident to rally people against the South in line with its push to sever cross-border ties and promote a "two-state" system. — Agencies

NEWS IN BRIEF

38 candidates run for post of Oxford university chief

LONDON: Britain's University of Oxford on Wednesday said 38 candidates are in the running to become its next chancellor but Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan is not among them despite his party saying he had applied. The candidates are vying to succeed former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten, who left in June after 21 years. The ceremonial post has been occupied continuously since 1224. High-profile names to replace him include former Conservative party leader and foreign secretary William Hague, Labour party former EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson and former attorney general Dominic Grieve. — AFP

Eastern Turkey rattled by magnitude 5.9 quake

ISTANBUL: Many areas of eastern Turkey were shaken up by a 5.9-magnitude quake on Wednesday although there were no immediate reports of injuries, officials said. The tremor happened at 10:46 am (0746 GMT) in Kale in Malatya, a province that was badly hit by the violent 7.8-magnitude earthquake which struck on February 6, 2023, killing more than 53,500 people in Turkey and almost 6,000 in neighboring Syria. "For now, there has been no loss of life nor destruction of property following the magnitude 5.9 earthquake," the state's AFAD disaster management agency wrote on X. — AFP

France opens murder probe after motorist hits cyclist

PARIS: French prosecutors said Wednesday they had opened a murder probe after a motorist ran over a cyclist following an altercation on a central Paris street. Witnesses said the driver, 52, appeared to deliberately target the cyclist who died at the scene near the Madeleine in the capital's wealthy 8th district on Tuesday. According to daily Le Parisien, quoting witnesses, the driver at the wheel of a SUV hit the cyclist with his car, and then drove over him, crushing his body under the heavy vehicle. The cyclist, 27, went into cardiac-respiratory arrest. Efforts by emergency services rushing to the scene to save him failed. — AFP

Search fails for remains of British soldier killed by IRA

DUBLIN: A search in Ireland for the remains of a British soldier killed and secretly buried by Irish republican paramilitaries almost 50 years ago has ended without success, authorities said Wednesday. Robert Nairac, a British Army captain, was abducted by the IRA from a pub in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, in May 1977 while working undercover and attempting to gather intelligence. The 28-year-old soldier was taken to a nearby forest across the border with the Republic of Ireland where he was tortured and shot dead. — AFP

Record number of women run for Japan election

TOKYO: A record number of women are running in Japan's general election this month, although they still account for less than a quarter of candidates, local media said Wednesday. New Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba is seeking to shore up his mandate in the October 27 vote by retaining a majority for the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Japan has never had a woman prime minister and Ishiba narrowly beat one of its few prominent female politicians, nationalist Sanae Takaichi, to the top job in a party leadership vote.

The 1,344 lower house candidates who kicked off their campaigns on Tuesday for all 465 seats include a record 314 women, Japanese media including the

Yomiuri and Asahi dailies said. The ratio of women candidates — around 23 percent — is also a record high, according to the Yomiuri.

Ishiba's efforts to encourage women to run — instead of ex-lawmakers embroiled in a slush fund scandal in certain cases — is one reason behind the increase, the reports said.

The previous record was 229 in the 2009 general election. Female leaders are still rare in business and politics in Japan, which is ranked 118 out of 146 in the 2024 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report. Ishiba's 20-strong cabinet includes just two women. But the government has set a goal for 35 percent of the candidates for parliament's powerful lower house to be women by 2025, up from 18 percent in 2017.

In Japan, "political parties are male-oriented and not open-minded, so it's difficult to find female candidates," Momoko Nojo, head of the organization No Youth No Japan, told AFP ahead of September's LDP leadership vote. "Many women also take on care work at home, which makes it difficult for them to be a politician and take care of their family," add-



A woman cycles past campaign posters for the House of Representatives election in Tokyo on October 15, 2024. — AFP

ed Nojo, who also runs a project to encourage and support women and minorities to become politicians.

A United Nations committee for gender equality is currently reviewing women's rights in Japan. It is expected to make recommendations to the Japanese government — for the first time in eight years — after a meeting in Geneva on Thursday. — AFP

Indian airplane forced to divert after bomb hoax

BENGALURU: An Indian passenger aircraft was diverted on Wednesday after the latest in a string of hoax bomb threats made to airline companies involving the country. The Akasa Air flight, which was flying from India's capital New Delhi to the southern city of Bengaluru, "received a security alert" and the flight was ordered to return as a "precaution".

Akasa Air said emergency response teams were monitoring the situation and that the captain had followed "all required emergency procedures for a safe landing in Delhi". The flight had 184 people on board, including three infants, the airline said, with the plane landing safely back in New Delhi.

Another flight, the domestic carrier IndiGo flying from Mumbai to New Delhi, was diverted to Ahmedabad in Gujarat. Zulfikar Hasan, director-general of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), told the

Hong Kong to eliminate 'shoebox' flats

HONG KONG: Hong Kong leader John Lee rolled out plans on Wednesday to ban flats under eight square meters and cut import tax on spirits in a bid to ease a long-term housing crunch and boost the city's sluggish economy. Lee's administration has vowed to focus on livelihood issues and take the Chinese financial hub "from stability to prosperity" following a wide-ranging crackdown in the wake of pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Lee's speech was his third policy address since the former security chief was tapped by Beijing to be the city leader in 2022. Speaking at the semi-autonomous city's Legislative Council, he said flats smaller than eight square meters (86 square feet) — twice the size of a king-size bed — would be banned.

The government estimated about 30 percent of existing subdivided units could not meet the new standards, which would also require windows and independent toilets. Lee suggested that 12 to 18 months would be needed to legislate the requirements and allow registered landlords to make necessary changes. Chinese

Times of India newspaper that "Indian skies are absolutely safe" and said police were working to identify the culprits. "We are confident of tracing all those behind these threat messages and very strict action under law will be taken," Hasan told the newspaper.

The Indian Express newspaper reported 12 domestic and international flights have received bomb threats since Monday, including some messages posted on social media. All have been false alarms.

Singapore scrambled fighter jets on Tuesday to escort an Air India Express plane after an email warning about a possible bomb on board, the city-state's defense minister said. Two F-15 jets were deployed to escort the aircraft "away from populated areas" before it landed safely at Changi Airport late on Tuesday. Air India also said on Tuesday that one of its planes from New Delhi to Chicago had to make an emergency landing in Canada because of "a security threat posted online".

That flight also landed safely at Canada's far northern city of Iqaluit. Canada's armed forces later airlifted the passengers to Chicago, Canada's Minister of Defense Bill Blair said on X. Similar hoaxes were received this week by India's low-cost operator IndiGo regarding two flights that were to take off, to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and to Muscat in Oman, according to Indian media. — AFP



HONG KONG: People gesture as they call for better welfare policies beside a projection screen (left) showing Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee delivering his annual policy address in Hong Kong on October 16, 2024. — AFP

President Xi Jinping has ordered Hong Kong to resolve its longstanding housing woes. The city has some of the most expensive housing in the world and 110,000 households in a population of 7.5 million live in subdivided flats. A government study in 2021 found that 21 percent of households in subdivided units had a living space of below seven square meters (75 square feet) — smaller than a parking space. — AFP

Myanmar junta chief to travel to China next month

YANGON: Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing will travel to close ally China next month, two sources close to the military told AFP Wednesday, in what would be his first known trip there since he led a coup in 2021. Min Aung Hlaing "is planning to go China in November... the trip has been planned since Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi visited Myanmar" in August, a source close to the military said.

"He (Min Aung Hlaing) will visit China next month," another source said. Both sources requested anonymity to talk to the media. AFP has contacted China's embassy in Yangon for comment.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman said "I currently have no information to provide on your question", when asked about the trip at a regular press briefing on Wednesday. Beijing is a major ally and arms supplier of the internationally isolated junta that is battling opponents across the country following its coup in 2021. Analysts say Beijing also maintains ties with Myanmar ethnic armed groups that hold territory near its border. Some of those groups have seized territory from the junta in northern Shan state, disrupting traffic along a vital trade highway to China.

Shan state borders China's Yunnan province and is a vital piece of Beijing's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative. Relations between Beijing and Naypyidaw cooled last year over the junta's failure to crack down on online scam compounds in Myanmar's borderlands targeting Chinese citizens.

The compounds were staffed by citizens of China and other countries who were often trafficked and forced to work swindling their compatriots in an industry analysts say is worth billions. Analysts suggest Beijing later gave tacit approval to an offensive by an alliance of ethnic rebel groups across Shan state, which the alliance said was launched partly to root out the scam compounds. In August, China said it supports the junta's plan to hold fresh elections and return the conflict-torn country to a "democratic transition". Opponents say the polls will be neither free nor fair, with many opposition parties banned and clashes occurring across much of the country. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

NBK reports KD 457.0 million in net profit for 9 months of 2024

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the nine month period ended September 30, 2024. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 457.0 million (\$1.5 billion), compared to KD 431.1 million (\$1.4 billion) for the corresponding period in 2023, improving by 6.0 percent year-on-year. In the three-month period ended September 30, 2024, NBK achieved a net profit of KD 164.6 million (\$540.1 million), demonstrating an annual growth rate of 5.7 percent.

Total assets as of the end of September 2024 grew by 6.3 percent year-on-year to reach KD 39.2 billion (\$128.5 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 6.2 percent year-on-year to KD 23.2 billion (\$76.0 billion). Likewise, customer deposits stood at KD 22.4 billion (\$73.5 billion) as of the end of September 2024, reflecting a 7.1 percent increase compared to the same period in 2023, while shareholders' equity grew by 6.2 percent year-on-year, totaling approximately KD 4.0 billion (\$13.1 billion).

The Bank's asset quality also showed significant improvement, with NPL/gross loan ratio declining to 1.39 percent while the NPL coverage ratio increased to 263 percent.

Strategic diversification

Commenting on the Bank's 9M 2024 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "Throughout the first nine months of 2024, the Group continued to capitalize on the benefits of its strategic diversification approach across its products, services, and geographic presence. This approach has strengthened our operating performance and driven net profit growth, despite the surge of regional and global geopolitical tensions and their broader economic implications."

Al-Bahar elaborated that NBK achieved solid growth, driven by a diversified and resilient business model that effectively navigates shifting operating conditions. He emphasized that this level of growth was underpinned by prudent risk management practices, a strong capital base, high asset quality, and robust liquidity.

Sustainable development

NBK continued to strengthen its leadership in sustainability throughout the first nine months of 2024, building on its sound record in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices. The Bank remains dedicated to fostering sustainable development within the communities it operates, while actively supporting the reach of sustainable financing initiatives to its clients across all locations.

Al-Bahar underscored the robustness of NBK's financial position, high credit quality and its competitive edge within the Kuwaiti banking sector; given the Group's expansive



Hamad Al-Bahar

- We continue to reap the benefits of our strategic diversification initiatives, even amid heightened geopolitical tensions on both regional and global fronts.
- Our ability to achieve solid growth has been driven by a balanced business mix and prudent risk management practices.
- The robustness of our balance sheet, high asset quality and unique competitive advantage will continue to strengthen our position within Kuwait's banking sector.

geographical footprint and its unique capability to provide both conventional and Islamic banking services through its subsidiary, Boubyan Bank. Furthermore, Al-Bahar emphasized upon the Bank's steadfast commitment to fostering sustainable development within Kuwait's economy while reinforcing its position as the leading corporate in ESG practices.

Prudence and resilience

Meanwhile, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "The financial results for the first nine months of 2024 showcase NBK's consistent ability to deliver profit growth through various economic cycles, steered by its resilient business model and prudent approach to risk management". Al-Sager highlighted that the Group endorsed further its leading banking brand and position, as its core business segments continue to witness strong growth rates. He noted that the Group's net operating income rose by 7.8 percent in the first nine months of 2024, reaching KD 931.0 million (\$3.1 billion).

Innovative products

Al-Sager emphasized that NBK remains focused on strengthening its position across key market sectors while broadening its customer base through the introduction of innovative digital products and services, alongside delivering exceptional customer service. He noted that the Bank's ongoing efforts and investments in technology and innovation aim to reaffirm its stewardship in providing digital banking services that promote sustainable future growth. Additionally, these efforts are designed to maximize value not only for customers and shareholders but also for the communities in which the Bank operates and to all its stakeholders.

He further pointed that NBK Group has significantly



Isam Al-Sager

- Our financial results reflect our resilience in sustaining profit growth regardless of the prevailing economic cycle.
- We aim to maximize value creation for all our stakeholders through continued investments in technology and innovation.
- The increasing contribution of our international operations to both operating income and net profit underscores the effectiveness of our diversification strategy.

strengthened the contributions of its Islamic division, Boubyan Bank, along with its international operations, to both operating income and bottom-line during the first nine months of 2024. This achievement underscores the strength of NBK's vision and the effectiveness of its diversification strategy. He reiterated that the Group will continue strengthening its international operations, particularly in key growth markets.

Relentless pursuit of excellence

Al-Sager emphasized NBK's steadfast commitment to fostering a sustainable future through the prioritization of best-in-class ESG practices. He highlighted the bank's strategic focus on integrating sustainability initiatives into its business operations, viewing them as integral to its corporate culture. This approach is designed to support the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy and to fulfill the Bank's ambitious objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

Following the recent launch of NBK Wealth, Al-Sager highlighted that NBK Group is experiencing substantial growth in this segment. The new structure aims to establish the bank as the largest wealth management entity in Kuwait and one of the most significant players in the region.

Credit and project award

In discussing local credit performance, Al-Sager emphasized the substantial recent surge in project awards in Kuwait year-to-date. He expressed confidence that this positive trend in project awards will bode well for business credit going forward. Al-Sager also noted that several factors including the influx of a significant number of citizens into the labor market, are expected to enhance consumer spending and demand for credit on both, the business and retail side.

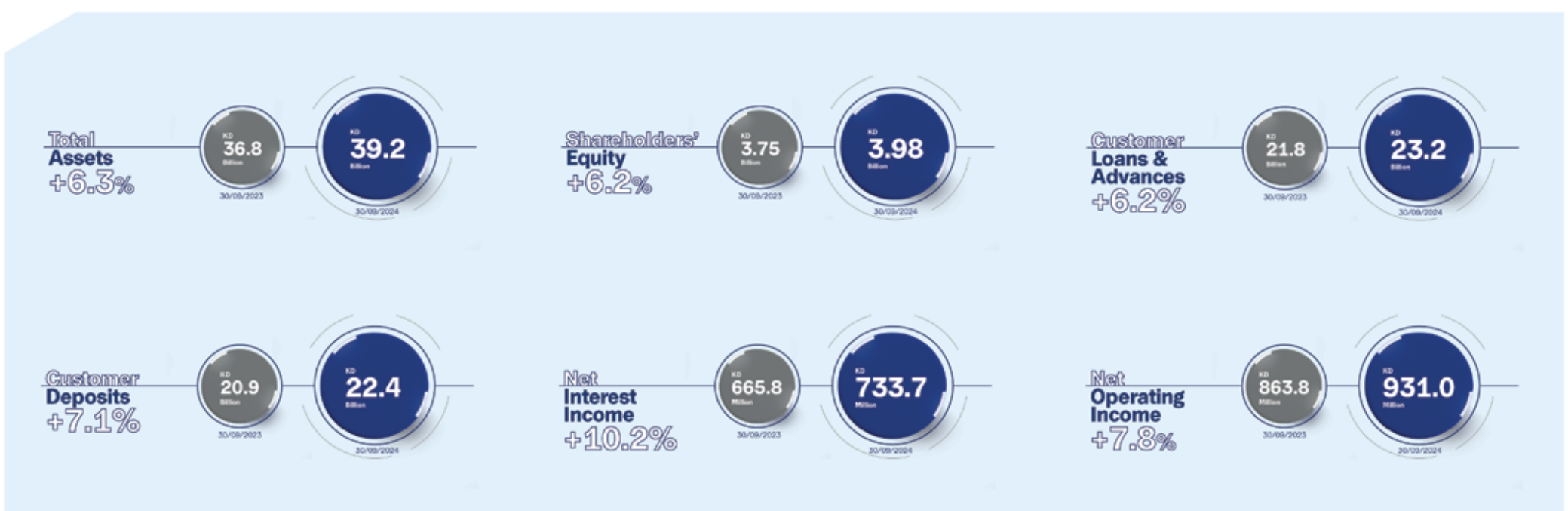
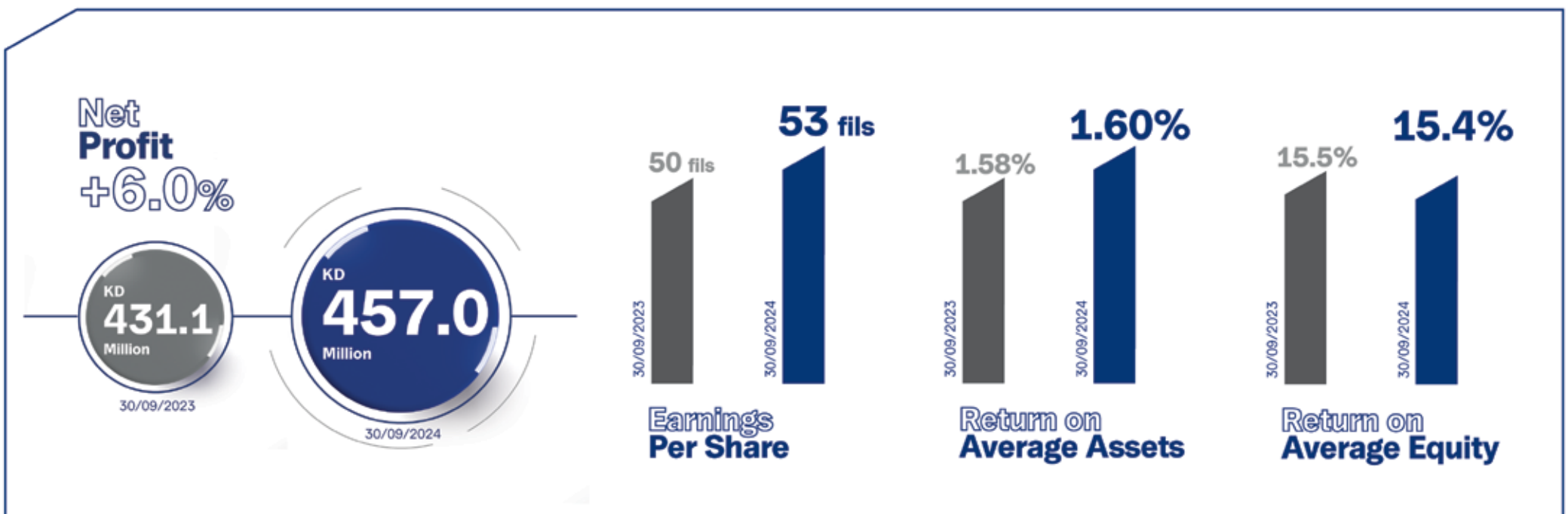
He emphasized NBK's commitment to aligning its strategic objectives with Kuwait's National Development Plan and to playing a pivotal role in financing future mega projects, confirming NBK's position as the government's key partner in financing strategic national projects.

Prestigious awards

In the third quarter of this year, NBK reaffirmed its strong banking brand and solid financial position by securing the top spot on The Banker's list of the "Top 100 Arab Banks" for 2024. Additionally, the Bank maintained its ninth position among regional banks. The Banker's ranking was based on a set of criteria, including Tier 1 capital, total assets, profitability, asset quality, return on capital, and return on assets.

In a further testament to its excellence, NBK has garnered nine prestigious awards from Global Finance, a renowned international publication specializing in finance and business. These accolades recognize the Bank's outstanding achievements in innovation and digital transformation, as well as its commitment to delivering top-tier banking solutions that meet customer needs and align with the rapid technological advancements in the banking sector. For the second consecutive year, Global Finance has recognized NBK as the "Best in Innovation, Global Winner for 2024", outranking both conventional and Islamic banks. The Bank also secured two prestigious awards in the Middle East: Best in Innovation-Middle East, and Best Online Product Offerings - Middle East. Furthermore, NBK distinguished itself at the local level by winning six out of the ten accolades granted to banks in Kuwait, reinforcing its leadership in innovation and digital transformation.

Financial Highlights 9 Months 2024



Business

'Age of Electricity' coming as fossil fuels set to peak: IEA

Deployment of clean energy is 'far from uniform' across the globe

PARIS: More than half of the world's electricity will be generated by low-emission sources before 2030 but the deployment of clean energy is "far from uniform" across the globe, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday. Demand for oil, gas and coal is still projected to peak by the end of the decade, possibly creating a surplus of fossil fuels, the IEA said in its annual World Energy Outlook.

"In energy history, we've witnessed the Age of Coal and the Age of Oil," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. "We're now moving at speed into the Age of Electricity, which will define the global energy system going forward and increasingly be based on clean sources of electricity," he said.

The report said clean energy "is entering the energy system at an unprecedented rate" with 560 gigawatts (GW) of renewables capacity added in 2023. Almost \$2 trillion in investments are flowing into clean energy projects each year, nearly double the amount spent on fossil fuel supplies, according to the Paris-based agency. "Together with nuclear power, which is the subject of renewed interest in many countries, low-emissions sources are set to generate more than half of the world's electricity before 2030," it said.

But the IEA noted that the deployment of clean energy "is far from uniform across technologies and countries". The growing thirst for electricity is driven by industry, electric vehicles, air conditioning and data centers linked to the surge of artificial intelligence. Despite the "growing momentum behind clean energy transitions", the IEA said the world was "still a long way from a trajectory aligned" with its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

The net-zero emissions target is crucial to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. The IEA report comes a month before Azerbaijan hosts the UN's annual climate conference, COP29, in Baku, from November 11 to November 22.

At COP28 in Dubai last year, nations pledged to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. They also vowed to transition away from fossil fuels. The IEA said renewable power generation capacity is set to rise from 4,250 GW today to nearly 10,000 GW in 2030 as costs for most clean technologies are falling.

While it falls short of the COP28 tripling target, it is "more than enough" to cover the growth in global electricity demand and "push coal-fired generation into decline". China accounted for 60 percent of the new renewable capacity added in the world last year. By the early 2030s, the country's solar power generation will exceed the total electricity demand of the United States today, the report found.

In many developing countries, however, "policy uncertainty and a high cost of capital are holding back clean energy projects".

Global carbon dioxide emissions are set to peak "imminently" but today's policies still leave the world on a path towards having a rise of 2.4C in average temperatures by 2100, the IEA warned. "2024 showed that electricity demand is insatiable," said Dave Jones, global insights program director at Ember, an energy think tank. "That means global coal generation would fall less quickly than previously expected. This means the world is not yet transitioning away from fossil fuels and reducing CO2 emis-



PFORZHEIM, Germany: Technicians of electricity transmission operator TransnetBW work on the 380-KV power line from a high-voltage power pole near Pforzheim on October 16, 2024. — AFP

sions in the energy sector," he added. Despite a record deployment of clean energy, two-thirds of the increase in global energy demand was met by fossil fuels last year, the IEA said.

Energy-related CO2 emissions hit another re-

cord high last year. "Renewable growth is creating an energy abundance, but this will only translate into a substantive fall in CO2 emissions if there is simultaneously a strong focus on using energy as wastefully as possible," Jones said. — AFP

China set to post slowest quarterly growth this year

BEIJING: China's economy likely expanded at its slowest pace this year, according to an AFP survey ahead of data Friday, as authorities struggle to reignite consumption amid a chronic debt crisis in the property sector. Officials have in recent weeks unveiled a string of measures to reignite the world's number-two economy and bring an end to years of depressed business activity with an eye to achieving five percent annual growth.

But after a blistering market rally fuelled by hopes for a long-awaited "bazooka stimulus", optimism has waned as authorities refrained from providing a specific figure for the bailout or fleshing out any of the pledges. Officials on Friday will unveil figures for the third quarter, with analysts polled by AFP forecasting the economy to have grown 4.5 percent - having expanded 4.7 percent in the previous three months and 5.3 percent in January-March.

"China's economy got a shot in the arm in September," said Harry Murphy Cruise, economist at Moody's Analytics, referring to the stimulus, but added that investors have been left "disappointed" by the lack of further announcements. Beijing in September revealed a raft of measures to funnel cash into the economy including a string of rate cuts and loosened restrictions on home-buying.

But those supports "won't be enough" to correct woes in the property market - once a key driving force in the Chinese economy, Murphy Cruise warned. Analysts surveyed by AFP predict 4.9 percent overall growth in 2024 - even worse than last year, which was the weakest in decades, outside of COVID. Beijing has said it has "full confidence" that it will reach its target this year and revive the economy but analysts say officials must go further and inject new money before the end of the year.

The need for help has been highlighted by a

long-running series of data releases pointing to sluggish consumer activity, tepid inflation, minimal growth in imports and surging youth unemployment.

On Saturday, Finance Minister Lan Fo'an said Beijing would issue special bonds to boost spending but provided no specific figures. One analyst said there was now "promise fatigue" when it comes to addressing China's economic troubles. "We've been disappointed in the past," said Francois Chimits, senior economist at the Mercator Institute for China Studies.

"What we're missing is a budgetary, potentially public finance type of effort." Analysts warn that without major reforms to the economy that address deep-rooted issues of income inequality and social security, the economic uncertainty will continue to fuel a vicious cycle that has kept consumption stubbornly low. That comes on the back of broader concerns about job security, income stability and property prices, according to Benson Wu, China and Korea economist at Bank of America Global Research.

The absence of incentives that encourage spending is a "key challenge" of China's economic recovery, Wu said. Youth unemployment hit 18.8 percent in August, its highest in 2024.

"Consumer confidence (has) dropped, investors have turned cautious, and policy implementation has seen a decline in effectiveness," Wu said.

Spurring demand, particularly for homes, is also crucial for a sustainable recovery. A number of major cities have eased house buying restrictions - most recently in Chengdu, the capital of southwestern province of Sichuan, and the port city of Tianjin. "The economy is still under the rubble of the housing collapse," Gene Ma, Head of China Research at the Institute of International Finance, told AFP.

While Ma said the most intense phase of the housing crisis is "probably over", Beijing's policies have been overly focused on addressing supply and not demand. But analysts remain skeptical that a major policy shift will occur this year. "Officials have promised to arrest the property market's fall, addressing what has been a key drag on sentiment for the better part of four years," Moody's Analytics' Murphy Cruise said. "We'll believe it when we see it." — AFP



Employees work at a textile factory that produces silk products in Fuyang, in eastern China's Anhui province on October 16, 2024. — AFP

to buy the dip in the market is right there for participants who have taken that chance many times before and won," said Patrick O'Hare, an analyst at Briefing.com. Frankfurt and Paris were lower in mid-afternoon trading, with London one of the few markets to rise as a positive inflation report fed expectations of an interest rate cut next month from the Bank of England. Oil prices steadied after tumbling in previous days.

ASML shares were down more than three percent in Amsterdam in early afternoon deals Wednesday after plunging about 16 percent following its update near the end of trading Tuesday. "ASML's warning has spooked investors holding anything linked to the semiconductor space," said Russ Mould, investment director at traders AJ Bell. On Wall Street Wednesday, chip titan Nvidia and rival AMD were up slightly after sinking Tuesday. IT giant Intel was lower again after losing more than three percent Tuesday. Better

than expected pre-market results from United Airlines and Morgan Stanley also helped Wall Street steady. In Paris, shares in Louis Vuitton-owner LVMH dropped more than four percent after the luxury heavyweight reported disappointing third-quarter results amid a slowdown in demand from Asia. The announcement heightened investor concerns over a luxury sector heavily-reliant on China, said market strategist Patrick Munnely at traders Tickmill Group.

The news "tempered the recent surge in luxury stocks subsequent to the announcement of Chinese stimulus plans", he added. Gucci-owner Kering and Cartier-owner Richemont both fell around two percent in their respective stock exchanges in Paris and Zurich. Prada was down the same amount in Milan as the sector struggles with weaker demand from China.

In London, the FTSE 100 rose after data showed UK inflation hit a three-year low in September, fuel-

UK's Reeves looks to raise \$52bn to fill budget gap

LONDON: British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves is eyeing tax rises and spending cuts to a value of around 40 billion pounds (\$52 billion), two government sources said, after she was quoted as saying there was a "big gap" to be filled in the budget. The non-partisan Institute for Fiscal Studies said last week that Reeves may need to announce a 25 billion pound (\$32.5 billion) tax rise to shore up public services on Oct. 30, her first budget statement since Labour's July election victory.

Asked if this figure was accurate, Reeves told the New Statesman magazine in an interview published on Wednesday the situation was worse than that as that projection did not take into account a 22 billion pound hole identified by the government in July, and how some fiscal pressures would recur in future years. "There's a big gap," she was quoted as saying when asked if the amount she needed to raise was closer to 50 billion pounds. "But I don't think this comes as any surprise to the British people."

Two government sources told Reuters Reeves was looking at introducing tax rises and spending cuts to the tune of 40 billion pounds, as she looks to put investment into services while stabilizing the fiscal situation. The figure was first reported by the Times and the Financial Times newspapers. At a meeting of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's ministerial team on Tuesday, Reeves said that the 22 billion pound black hole "needed to be filled just to keep public services standing still", a Labour spokesperson said.

"The Chancellor said that the scale of inheritance meant there would have to be difficult decisions on spending, welfare, and tax," the spokesperson added, also saying that the budget would deliver on spending priorities such as fixing the National Health Service. Reeves must plot how to fill the fiscal gap while sticking to a manifesto pledge not to raise VAT sales tax or the income tax and national insurance social security tax paid by workers.

However, she and Starmer have not ruled out an increase in the national insurance contributions paid by employers. They have blamed the previous Conservative government for a dire fiscal inheritance, but also vowed there will be no return to austerity measures characterized by sharp spending cuts. The Conservative Party says the allegation is a smokescreen for Labour's public pay awards and a pretext for tax rises. A sharp drop in inflation reported on Wednesday provided a welcome lift to Reeves ahead of the budget, though that has also been cited by the Conservatives as evidence that they left the economy in better shape than Labour have claimed. — Reuters



TOULOUSE, France: Journalists stand in front of the SES-14 hybrid 4-ton satellite equipped with a plasma jet engine, an electrically-powered propulsion system, during a visit at the Airbus headquarters in Toulouse, southern France, on November 27, 2017. — AFP

Airbus to cut up to 2,500 jobs in space division

PARIS: Airbus announced plans Wednesday to cut up to 2,500 jobs in its struggling space and defense division, in the latest sign of trouble for the European aerospace industry. The division, which employs 35,000 people, has been struggling as demand for satellites has fallen and as a consequence Airbus said it was necessary to adapt its organization and workforce. "It is expected that these measures will result in a reduction of up to 2,500 positions within Airbus Defense and Space until mid 2026," the company said in a statement. The firm said it would engage in discussions with trade unions about the changes and indicated it would like to avoid forced departures. "Compulsory actions are not planned, Airbus will work with its social partners to limit the impact by relying on all available social measures," it said. Airbus' net profit fell by 46 percent to 825 million euros in the first half of the year, dragged down by a 989-million euro writedown in its space business. The company had already taken a 600-million euro charge in 2023 in the same division.

"In recent years, the defense and space sector and, thus, our Division have been impacted by a fast changing and very challenging business context," Airbus Defence and Space CEO Mike Schoellhorn said in a statement. He said the challenges include "disrupted supply chains, rapid changes in warfare and increasing cost pressure due to budgetary constraints".

The European company is the world leader for telecommunications satellites but is facing a drop in demand that has also affected other players in the industry. France's Thales earlier this year re-assigned some 1,300 positions in its space division. Telecommunication and navigation satellites are all made to order, eliminating the possibility of benefitting from economies of scale, unlike in Airbus's flagship commercial aircraft business. The division is also facing greater competition from SpaceX and its Starlink constellation of low-orbit satellites. — AFP

Global markets diverge as tech fears linger

LONDON: Wall Street shares steadied Wednesday after a tech selloff the previous day over concerns about the red-hot semiconductor industry. US shares tumbled Tuesday after Dutch tech giant ASML, which supplies chip-making machines to the semiconductor industry, cut its 2025 guidance and forecast a slump in orders. On Wednesday, all three major Wall Street indexes were little changed in early trading.

"The sting from ASML is still there...but the chance

Business

Gulf Bank supports Breast Cancer Awareness Month, offers discounts to female customers

KUWAIT: In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Gulf Bank launches a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of early breast cancer detection, reinforcing its commitment to empowering women within the community.

Throughout October, Gulf Bank provides exclusive discounts to its female customers, with additional benefits for Rose Gold Credit Cardholders. Gulf Bank proudly announces a range of exclusive discounts for its female customers throughout the month of October, in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. These offers include significant discounts of up to 50 percent at the International Hospital, covering essential medical services such as mammography, MRI, CT scans, and ultrasound imaging, aimed at encouraging early detection and proactive health screenings.

In addition, Gulf Bank provides a variety of wellness and health-focused offers, including discounts up to 25 percent at the Baraka Health Center. These discounts apply to services such as health and wellness consultations, nutrition advice, yoga and fitness sessions, gym memberships, skincare treatments, and both traditional and modern massage therapies, offering women a comprehensive approach to maintaining their well-being. Furthermore, customers enjoy up to 15 percent off on luxurious spa treatments at the Waldorf Astoria Spa, allowing them to indulge in a relaxing and rejuvenating experience. Similarly, up to 15 percent discounts are available at Miss Platinum, giving customers access to additional beauty and wellness treatments.



Najla Aleisa: At Gulf Bank, we empower women through more than just financial services. Our commitment also extends to supporting their health and well-being.



These exclusive offers form part of Gulf Bank's ongoing commitment to promoting health and wellness within the community, empowering women to take proactive steps toward maintaining their health while rewarding them with special discounts across various services. Through these initiatives, Gulf Bank continues to highlight the importance of both physical and mental well-being for its female customers.

On this occasion, Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, states, "As part of Gulf Bank's commitment to fostering community well-being, we consistently launch a series of initiatives and awareness programs to promote health. This October, we aim to raise awareness of the importance of regular breast cancer screenings while offering exclusive discounts to encourage participation."

She adds, "In collaboration with hospitals and wellness centers, we have designed a comprehensive health and wellness program for our female clients. This initiative also serves as part of our ongoing ef-

orts to reward Gulf Bank's customers, particularly holders of the Rose Gold Credit Card by MasterCard." Aleisa further highlights that the Rose Gold credit card offers exclusive discounts at more than 1,000 retail outlets, catering to the needs of the modern woman and rewarding her with every purchase. Cardholders also benefit from Gulf Bank's Gulf Points Program, Kuwait's fastest rewards program, allowing them to earn points redeemable for airline tickets, hotel stays, and exclusive seasonal travel packages. Additionally, Rose Gold cardholders earn five Gulf Points for every Kuwaiti Dinar spent on international websites, and two Gulf Points for every Kuwaiti Dinar spent locally or internationally. These points can be redeemed for flights with any airline and stays at over 300,000 hotels worldwide, with no date or booking restrictions.

Cardholders also benefit from Gulf Bank's Easy Pay service, which allows them to shop at participating stores and spread their payments over 12 months

with no interest or additional fees when using a Gulf Bank credit card. The Rose Gold credit card provides additional travel benefits, including discounts on hotel bookings, flights, and car rentals. Cardholders also enjoy complimentary access to airport lounges in five Middle Eastern countries. To simplify travel arrangements, the card offers travel insurance, including coverage for Schengen visa applications, for cardholders and their families.

With these exclusive offers, Gulf Bank reaffirms its dedication to supporting women's health and well-being, not only during Breast Cancer Awareness Month but throughout the year. By offering valuable benefits and rewards, the Bank continues to enhance the banking experience for its female customers, encouraging proactive health measures while providing exceptional financial services tailored to their needs. Gulf Bank remains committed to empowering women and contributing to a healthier, more informed community.

Musk's X platform escapes tough EU competition rules

BRUSSELS: Tech billionaire Elon Musk's X platform will not face the EU's stringent competition rules aimed at keeping digital markets open, the European Commission said on Wednesday.

The landmark European Union law forces the world's biggest digital firms to comply with a set of requirements for how they should behave including giving users more choices in a bid to challenge their dominance. The rules known as the Digital Markets Act (DMA) apply to designated "gatekeepers", which since March have included Google parent Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, TikTok owner ByteDance, Facebook's Meta and Microsoft.

Online travel agent Booking was added to the list in May. X had challenged being added to the list, saying that it was not an "important gateway" for businesses to reach consumers. The EU then launched a probe in May into X's rebuttal. Now the commission, the EU's digital watchdog, has "concluded that X does indeed not qualify as a gatekeeper" because the probe found "business users do not consider that they are dependent on X" to reach consumers online.

The DMA is part of the EU's strengthened legal armory to bring big tech to heel. One of its main goals is to give regulators greater oversight before it is too late. For example, the gatekeepers must tell the EU about any plans to buy a company, which in the past frustrated competition regulators as firms often scooped up potential rivals before they became a threat. The law also forces the giants to offer choice screens for web browsers and search engines to give users more options.

Although Musk has escaped the DMA's crosshairs, his X platform still faces fierce scrutiny under mammoth content moderation rules, and even the risk of a large fine. In July, the EU said X was violating the rules known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) in a preliminary finding that found the platform was deceiving users with its blue checkmarks for certified accounts.

The probe under the DSA into X is wide-ranging and the EU is also looking at how the platform tackles the spread of illegal content and information manipulation. For each offence, the commission can slap a fine of up to six percent of the annual worldwide turnover of the service "provider". — AFP

India's high food prices hit spending in festive season

NEW DELHI: Rising prices of edible oils and vegetables like onions and tomatoes have driven up grocery spending for Indian households ahead of the festival season, prompting some consumers to limit more expensive purchases like electronic items, retailers said. India's annual festival season, which runs from late September to early November, sees households scramble to buy food and other goods, encouraged by discounts offered by both online and brick-and-mortar retailers. But the start to the festive season this year has been slow.

Sales of electronics and home appliances so far in October have risen just 5-7 percent from last year, against estimates for an 8-10 percent climb, said Nilesh Gupta, director at Vijay Sales, a retail chain with 143 stores. "We remain optimistic that sales will pick up," he said.

India's economy is projected to grow by 7.2 percent in 2024-25, driven by increased rural demand, according to the central bank's estimates. But high-frequency indicators such as auto sales and manufacturing purchasing managers index (PMI) have suggested weakness in the economy. Retail inflation, particularly for food, has remained high, eroding disposable income. In September, retail inflation was 5.49 percent and food inflation at 9.24 percent. — Reuters

Morgan Stanley's Q3 profit beats estimates

NEW YORK: Morgan Stanley's profit surpassed estimates on a bumper third quarter for investment banking that had also buoyed rivals, sending its shares up more than 3.5 percent before the market open. A revival in corporate debt issuance, initial public offerings (IPOs) and mergers has bolstered profits for Wall Street banks this year.

As markets hover near record highs and the US Federal Reserve begins its policy-easing cycle, bankers expressed optimism that mergers and acquisitions will continue to recover after a two-year drought.

Morgan Stanley benefited from a "constructive environment", CEO Ted Pick said in a statement. "Institutional securities saw momentum in the markets and underwriting businesses on solid client engagement." Its investment banking revenue jumped 56 percent in the third quarter. Competitors Goldman Sachs had posted a 20 percent surge in fees, while JPMorgan Chase saw a 31 percent gain. Morgan Stanley's profit jumped to \$1.88 per share, exceeding analyst views of \$1.58, according to estimates compiled by LSEG. Across the industry, global investment banking revenue rose 21 percent in the first nine months of the year, led by a 31 percent surge in North America, according to data from Dealogic.

Morgan Stanley earned the fourth highest fees globally over the same period, the data showed.

It was a lead underwriter on big initial public offerings in the quarter, including by cold storage giant Lineage and airplane engine maintenance services provider StandardAero. "We are seeing a rise in equity capital markets activity led by financial sponsors, not only for IPOs in the US but also in Europe", Morgan Stanley CFO Sharon Yeshaya said in a phone interview.



Morgan Stanley's profit surpassed estimates on a bumper third quarter for investment banking. — AFP

The institutional securities business, which houses investment banking and trading, generated revenue of \$6.82 billion, compared with \$5.67 billion a year ago. Equity trading revenue was another bright spot, jumping 21 percent as stocks rallied. Fixed-income revenue rose 3 percent.

The investment bank's profit climbed to \$3.19 billion from \$2.41 billion a year earlier. "The company is executing very well across all the segments... Ted Pick has quickly built a leadership presence and confidence from investors," said Macrae Sykes, portfolio manager at Gabelli Funds.

Under former CEO James Gorman, who will serve as executive chairman until year-end, Morgan Stanley expanded into wealth management to generate stable revenue and even out volatility from trading and investment banking. "The company has been a

leader in wealth technology implementation, which should lead to better advisor productivity and share gains in asset gathering," said Sykes said. Wealth management revenue - a key area of focus - increased to \$7.27 billion, compared with \$6.40 billion, a year ago. The business added \$64 billion in net new assets and total client assets reached \$6 trillion. Considering the investment management division assets of \$1.6 trillion, Morgan Stanley is closer to its goal of managing \$10 trillion in client assets.

"Total client assets have surpassed \$7.5 trillion across wealth and investment management supported by buoyant equity markets and net asset inflows," Pick said. Investment management revenue climbed to \$1.5 billion compared with \$1.3 billion a year ago, helped by higher asset management and related fees. — Reuters



QUSRA, Palestinian Territories: Zionist soldiers and settlers ask foreign volunteers and Palestinian farmers to leave the field during the olive harvest season in the village of Qusra, south of Nablus.



A foreign volunteer helps Palestinian farmers pick olives during the harvest season in the village of Qusra. — AFP photos

West Bank facing 'most dangerous olive season ever': UN

GENEVA: Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank are facing "the most dangerous olive season ever", UN experts said Wednesday, urging Zionist settlers and forces not to interfere with the harvest. They also recommended a "foreign presence" to act as a buffer between the two sides.

A dozen United Nations experts said farmers were facing intimidation, restriction of access to lands, severe harassment and attacks by armed Zionist settlers and Zionist security forces.

"In 2023, the harvest was marred by a sharp increase in movement restrictions and violence by Zionist entity forces and settlers," the independent experts said in a statement. Last year, they said, "Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East

Jerusalem, faced the highest level of Zionist entity settler violence." Settlers had assaulted Palestinians, set fire to or damaged their crops, stolen sheep and blocked them from getting to their land, water and grazing areas, the statement added.

"Last year, Zionist entity also seized more Palestinian land than in any year in the past 30 years," they said, adding that the situation was "expected to worsen".

Olive harvests are central to Palestinian life and culture, said the independent experts, who are mandated by the Human Rights Council but do not speak for the United Nations. "Restricting olive harvests, destroying orchards and banning access to water sources is an attempt by Zionist entity to expand its illegal settlements," they argued. Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, was among the signatories.

The experts, also including those on the right to food, to safe drinking water and sanitation and to adequate housing, said Palestinian farmers were facing "enormous challenges, threats and harassment" in accessing their olive trees. In 2023, more than 9,600

hectares (24,000 acres) of olive-cultivated land across the occupied West Bank was not harvested due to Zionist entity-imposed restrictions, they said. That had meant the loss of 1,200 metric tons of olive oil, worth \$10 million, they added. "This situation is expected to worsen," they warned, as the Zionist entity authorities had revoked or failed to issue permits allowing farmers to access their lands. They urged Zionist entity forces to refrain from interfering with this year's olive harvest, and "concentrate their efforts on withdrawing the occupation and dismantling the colonies".

The experts said they would "continue to call for protection, including through a foreign presence acting as a buffer between the Palestinians and their aggressors, and to protect Palestinian farmers and their families". Violence has soared in the West Bank since Hamas launched its unprecedented attack on Zionist entity in October last year.

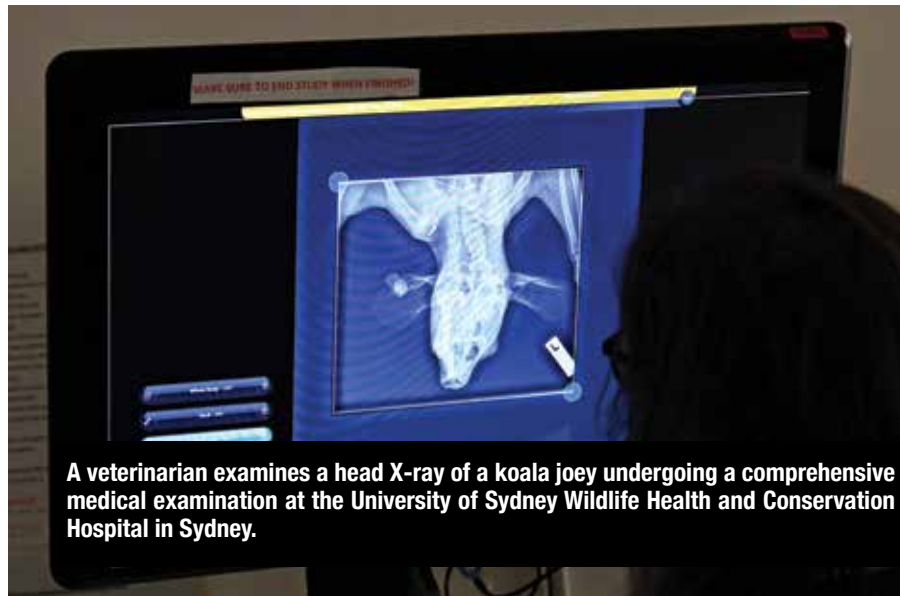
Zionist entity troops or settlers have killed more than 705 Palestinians in the West Bank since, the Ramallah-based health ministry said earlier this month. — AFP

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024



An orphaned koala joey named Ajooni clings to a fluffy toy during feeding time in Sydney.



A veterinarian examines a head X-ray of a koala joey undergoing a comprehensive medical examination at the University of Sydney Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital in Sydney.



An orphaned koala joey named Ajooni clinging to a fluffy toy during feeding time in Sydney.— AFP photos

CARS, CHLAMYDIA THREATEN AUSTRALIAN KOALAS



Annabelle Olsson, director of the University of Sydney Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital, prepares a koala joey for a comprehensive medical examination.



Annabelle Olsson, director of the University of Sydney Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital, examines a koala joey.

Clinging to a fluffy toy twice her size, orphaned koala joey Ajooni made a snuffling noise as she drank milk from a tiny syringe. Weighing about the same as a mango, she was found by the side of a Sydney road where her mother was hit by a car and died. It is a familiar tale for wildlife carer Emma Meadows. Over the past two years, Meadows and other volunteers have recovered 40 koalas hit by cars in their neighborhood. The number left for dead is likely much higher. Koalas are shy and notoriously difficult to catch.

There are anywhere between 95,000 and 524,000 left in Australia, possibly down from millions before European settlement. There is little doubt that expanding cities, land clearance and the spread of chlamydia are devastating the populations of one of Australia's most iconic animals. East Coast koalas were officially listed as "endangered" by the Australian government in 2022. "I actually, truly, believe we're heading towards extinction," said Meadows, a volunteer with WIRES. "I don't know if there is any coming back from this. I'm scared it's too late."

Chlamydia was first observed in koalas about 50 years ago. In the decades since, it has wiped out entire local populations. The bacteria leads to blindness, bladder infections, infertility, and death. Although some chlamydia-free koala populations exist - such as the area where Ajooni was found - scientists fear these pockets may soon disappear.

World's 'extinction capital'

Annabelle Olsson, director of the University of Sydney Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital, has regularly examined rescued koalas - including seven-month-old Ajooni. On the day AFP visited the centre, a sedated three-year-old koala lay on an operation table, while Olsson and her team took



Annabelle Olsson (center), director of the University of Sydney Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital, works with her team as they administer anesthesia to a koala joey.

the marsupial's blood, did X-rays and examined the koala's face. The koala was chlamydia-free but had a head injury that impacted her reflexes and would require further attention.

Olsson said without better koala protections "our grandchildren, or at least their grandchildren, are going to see maybe koalas in a zoo if they're lucky". "Australia is an island nation with an incredibly high biodiversity and incredibly unique wildlife species and floral species that need to be preserved," she said.

Scientists believe Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinction in the world, with about 100 of the country's unique flora and fauna species wiped out in the last 123 years. Environment minister Tanya Plibersek has said Australia is "the mammal extinction capital of the world." "While there are some rules and guidelines to

protect koala habitats, koala bushland continues to be cleared.

Vaccine hopes

Some have instead focused their conservation efforts on quelling the spread of koala chlamydia. University of the Sunshine Coast researcher Samuel Phillips is part of a team working on a potential vaccine. They have vaccinated and monitored 165 koalas over 10 years and found inoculated marsupials developed chlamydia later in life and their mortality was reduced by 64 percent. A Queensland trial of the vaccination, used in conjunction with traffic and predator controls, was so successful that a local koala population doomed for extinction within 10 years rebounded.

Some marsupials will even need to be translocated to stop overpopulation, Phillips said. "It's been a really positive



Veterinary staff prepare a koala joey for a comprehensive medical examination.

story," he said. However, Phillips warns that more needs to be done to address the other key drivers of koala decline, particularly the deforestation of their habitats. "We can keep protecting these small populations, but without increasing the habitat and protecting it, then they won't be living."

'Make a difference'

Ajooni will remain in Meadow's care until she is big enough to be released back into the wild. It will be a "bittersweet" moment for Meadow, but she says seeing any koala successfully released is the best feeling. That feeling is what keeps her going through the awful parts of her volunteer role: scraping dead koala bodies off the road in the middle of the night, or finding animals that are so severely injured that they need to be put down.

"I continue to do what I do because somebody needs to make a difference, and I feel that this is one way in the world that I can make a difference," Meadows said. — AFP

The astronaut wears Prada as Axiom unveils new spacesuit

Astronauts walking on the moon as part of NASA's first human mission to the lunar South Pole will be wearing Prada, as part of a new venture unveiled on Wednesday. Private space company Axiom Space teamed up with the Italian luxury brand to provide the surface suits and spacewalk systems for NASA's Artemis 3 mission, which is planned for September 2026. The external layer of the space suit, designed to reflect heat, is largely white, as it was on the suits worn by the Apollo astronauts who last walked on the moon more than 50 years ago.

But the update will have a few touches of grey and some red stripes

similar to those seen on Italy's Luna Rossa America's Cup boat, which was also sponsored by Prada. Matt Ondler, president of Axiom Space, told a press launch in Milan that making the suit had required "extreme engineering" and "fantastic manufacturing capability". "They will go in places that are incredibly hazardous, extreme environments," he said. "One of the missions that NASA wants to do is to try to find water craters at the South Pole. These are some of the coldest places in the universe. And so this suit has to be designed very cleverly." At the lunar South Pole, a land of mountains and deep craters, the sun hovers below or

just above the horizon.

As a result, temperatures vary from upwards of 54 degrees Celsius (130 degrees Fahrenheit) in sunlit periods to minus 203 degrees Celsius (minus 334 degrees Fahrenheit) in shadowed areas that have never seen the sun, NASA says. The suit aims to provide maximum comfort to the astronauts, the team said, while also protecting them against radiation, external pressure and provide the power and oxygen they need for up to eight hours of moonwalks.

With the mission set to see the first woman on the moon, the suits are also unisex and can be adapted to different

sizes. "We've blended engineering, science and art to produce the ultimate garments for future moonwalkers, ensuring that astronauts can perform their tasks and missions in safety and comfort," said Russell Ralston, Axiom spacesuit program manager. The design of the boots was a particular challenge, in terms of insulation and to make them robust enough for the terrain. But the materials used are "confidential", said Lorenzo Bertelli, marketing manager for Prada and the son of the fashion house's founder, Miuccia Prada. — AFP



The AxEMU suit patches are pictured during a press conference of Prada and Axiom Space.



(From left) Matt Ondler, CTO of Axiom Space, Lorenzo Bertelli Prada Group Chief Marketing Officer and Russell Ralston, Executive Vice President, EVA Program Manager of Axiom Space attend a press conference of Prada and Axiom Space, as part of the presentation of the Axiom Extravehicular Mobility Unit designed and developed for the Artemis 3 lunar mission in collaboration with Prada, at the MiCo Convention Centre in Milan, northern Italy, on October 16, 2024. — AFP photos



The AxEMU suit is pictured during a press conference of Prada and Axiom Space.

Lifestyle



Ultra-realistic AI robot Ai-Da poses in front of a painting she made during the press preview of the London Design Biennale 2023 at Somerset House, central London, on June 1, 2023. --AFP photos



'Ai-Da', an ultra-realistic robot paints an image during a photocall in central London

Portrait by humanoid robot to sell at auction in art world first

The robot artist Ai-Da, a humanoid powered by artificial intelligence, will be the first of its kind to have a painting sold at a major auction house, organizers said Wednesday. The work, due to go under the hammer at Sotheby's in London next month, is described as a "haunting" portrait of the English mathematician Alan Turing, considered one of the fathers of modern computing.

Entitled "AI God", the 2.2 meter (7.5 ft) high portrait is expected to fetch between £100,000 and £150,000 (\$130,000 and \$196,000). The online sale, featuring

a range of digital art forms, would explore the intersection between art and technology, according to Sotheby's. The ultra-realistic robot is designed to resemble a human female with a face, large eyes and a brown wig and is one of the most advanced in the world. It works by using AI algorithms and has cameras in its eyes and bionic hands.

Aidan Meller, gallery owner and founder of Ai-Da Robot studio, led the team that created it with artificial intelligence specialists at the universities of Oxford and Birmingham in England.

Meller said Turing, who made his name as a World War II codebreaker, mathematician and early computer scientist, had raised concerns about the use of AI in the 1950s.

The artwork's "muted tones and broken facial planes" seemingly suggested "the struggles Turing warned we will face when it comes to managing AI", he said. Ai-Da's works were "ethereal and haunting" and "continue to question where the power of AI will take us, and the global race to harness its power", he added. In 2022, Ai-Da painted portraits of the acts

headlining Glastonbury Festival including Billie Eilish, Diana Ross, Kendrick Lamar and Paul McCartney. Sotheby's Digital Art Sale runs from October 31 to November 7. --AFP



'Ai-Da', an ultra-realistic robot paints an image during a photocall in central London, on April 4, 2022.



This picture shows a general view of Coogee Beach after authorities closed it down to the public in Sydney on October 16, 2024. -- AFP

'Mysterious black balls' close Sydney beaches

Hundreds of mysterious black tar-like balls have washed up on two popular Sydney beaches, prompting lifeguards to close the strands to swimmers. "Mysterious, black, ball-shaped debris" began appearing on Coogee Beach on Tuesday afternoon the local mayor said, leaving flummoxed Australian authorities scrambling to find out what they might be, and where they may have come from. Hundreds of golf-to-cricket-ball-sized spheres could be seen littering the coast, which is usually thronged with Sydneysiders and tourists.

Instead, a few seagulls wandered among the spheres, pecking and examining. The balls were also spotted at nearby Gordon's Bay, an aquatic reserve popular for snorkeling and fishing, which was also closed. "At this stage, it is unknown what the material is," Mayor Dylan Parker said in a social media post. "However, they may be 'tar balls' which are formed when oil comes in to contact with debris and water, typically the result of oil spills or seepage." --AFP

Restored 'Apollo Belvedere' marble back on show in the Vatican

The Vatican Museums on Tuesday unveiled the restoration of the celebrated second-century "Apollo Belvedere" sculpture following five years of work. Once considered to epitomize classical Western ideals of beauty, the 2.24-metre-high (seven-foot-tall) marble statue shows the Greek god of medicine and poetry in motion, his left arm having just let fly an arrow from his bow. Its around 260,000-euro (\$280,000) restoration aimed to fix serious structural defects detected late in 2019, the restorers said.

Those notably included fragilities in the legs and an overall lack of balance in the structure, they told a press conference. Thanks to the introduction of a carbon-fibre rod fixed to the back of the base, the "Apollo Belvedere" was successfully stabilized and presented to public applause at the Vatican's Pio-Clementine Museum. The most difficult thing was "not to touch anything on the sculpture" and avoid having to move and dismantle it, the restoration workshop's head Guy Devreux told AFP.

"We found this new system, which is a dynamic structural system based



A picture shows the marble statue of "Apollo Belvedere" on display at the Vatican Museum on its return following its restoration.

on the use of carbon fibre... and which, used in the right way, can give extraordinary results," he added. For the Vatican Museums' director Barbara Jatta, "the main challenge was to have the courage to close access to such an important icon for our museums". Discovered in 1489 among the ruins of an ancient Roman house, the "Apollo Belvedere" was brought to the Vatican by Pope Julius II.

Besides the carbon-fibre rod, the restorers also replaced the statue's left hand with a cast taken from a fragment of a plaster copy of the original Greek statue made in Roman times. The "Apollo Belvedere" is in fact considered to be a marble copy of a bronze from around 330 BC attributed to Leochares, one of the foremost sculptors of his time. --AFP

'Ainadamar' brings death and dance to the Met Opera

The life and death of Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, whom Fascist forces assassinated during the Spanish Civil War, is the subject of an opera making its Met Opera debut in New York Tuesday. "Ainadamar" -- which means "fountain of tears" in Arabic -- brings flamenco and rumba to the Met's prestigious stage, set against the backdrop of violence and war, in true operatic fashion. The work premiered in 2003 and is Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov's only opera, which earned him Grammy accolades in 2007.

The story in three scenes is told through dream-like flashbacks, recounting Lorca's relationship with the Catalan actor and director Margarita Xirgu. The plot hinges on her memories, and the opera opens with Xirgu, Lorca's muse and friend, who has spent her career portraying Mariana Pineda in the poet's play of the same name.

Her stories have surreal qualities not dissimilar to Lorca's verse, and detail the poet's opposition to the Falange and his 1936 murder over his socialist politics and homosexuality, against the backdrop of Xirgu's story of their friendship. Speaking to AFP, the 63-year-old Golijov said he believes his work "sounds like it belongs at the Met and can sit at the table with the greats."

Dance takes center stage

It is the first opera directed by Brazilian director and choreographer Deborah Colker -- renowned for her work with Cirque du Soleil -- who staged it in Scotland in 2022. Dance takes on comparable prominence with the drama and the music, which includes a mix of traditional opera with electronic sounds and rhythms. Even the protagonists dance, including the soprano Angel Blue, who plays Xirgu. The story is woman-forward: even Lorca is played by the Argentina-born mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack.

Mack also played Lorca in 2022 and said the work offers a challenge because "there are many elements that are not necessarily present in a more traditional opera." "Ainadamar" is the latest effort by



Soprano Angel Blue (center back) in the role of Margarita Xirgu performs a scene from "Ainadamar" by Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov during a dress rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. --AFP photos

New York's Met to draw in new operagoers and broaden its base. It is the second Spanish-language opera in a row to be staged in the Met's hallowed halls, after last year's presentation of "Florencia en el Amazonas." Colker is due to return in 2026 for a staging of another opera in Spanish: "Frida and Diego."

The company has found particular box office success with operas by living composers, including "The Hours" and "Fire Shut Up In My Bones." It premiered this year's season with "Grounded" -- an exploration of contemporary warfare and technology set against the backdrop of motherhood. --AFP

The company has found particular



Mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack (right) as Federico Garcia Lorca performs a scene from "Ainadamar".



Mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack as Federico Garcia Lorca performs a scene from "Ainadamar".



Soprano Angel Blue (center) in the role of Margarita Xirgu performs a scene from "Ainadamar".

India's fireworks boom ahead of Hindu festival of lights



A woman works at a firecracker factory.



A woman works at a firecracker factory.



A man works at a firecracker factory.

Wrapping heaps of cone-shaped sparklers in red paper and trimming lengths of silver fuse by the hundreds, workers at an Indian fireworks factory race to meet orders for Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. Authorities regularly impose bans on the smoky pyrotechnics to reduce the hazardous pollution they

not want her children to follow in her footsteps at a job where she earns up to 800 rupees (\$9.50) a day.

Cigarette lighters and mobile phones are often banned inside the factory, where conditions are bare-bones. Workers, sitting on the floor, dip fuses with bare hands into pots of a silver-colored mixture. Others spread glue onto wrappers with their fingers, while others scatter the handmade paper shells of the fireworks out on mats to dry in the sun. Sivaraj, aged 29, is new to the job. "I know there have been accidents in the factories before, but I need to work to eat," he said. Without formal education, he had few options. "That is why I came to work in a fireworks factory", Sivaraj said, who also uses one name. Diwali this year falls on November 1, and workers are busy packing boxes to meet the nationwide surge of demand.

'Curb high air pollution'

The potent chemicals used to give the sparkling explosives their color and noise add to the deadly toxic haze of vehicle emissions and factory fumes in cities that regularly rank among the worst in the world for air quality. India's capital New Delhi on Monday ordered a "complete ban" on all firecrackers -- both their manufacture and sale -- in view of the "public interest to curb high air pollution". But for many, Diwali would not be the same without the colorful and thunderous roar of crackers, and past bans have been widely flouted.

The spectacular and colorful festival celebrates the Hindu goddess Lakshmi and symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. The national holiday is marked by the exchange of gifts -- and of course, the setting off of fireworks. In addition to the usual factory and vehicle emissions, smog in Indian cities this time of year is exacerbated by seasonal agricultural fires clearing harvest stubble for ploughing. But pollution levels surge even more



A woman sun-dries cones used in the production of firecrackers, outside her house on the outskirts of Sivakasi in India's Tamil Nadu state, ahead of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. — AFP photos



A woman works at a firecracker factory on the outskirts of Sivakasi.

cause, but to many, firecrackers are an integral part of the holiday's celebrations. Toxic chemical fumes hang heavy in the air at the factory in Sivakasi, a city in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, the heartland of India's fireworks production.

It is a risky job, with deadly explosions in factories taking place each year in India, but workers say they have little choice. "There is no other job opportunity in the area", said 49-year-old Rajathi, pausing from the rapid work of sealing explosives in garish wrapping. Rajathi, who uses only one name, said she did

around Diwali, driven by the extra fumes from fireworks.

In New Delhi, levels of fine particulate matter -- cancer-causing microparticles known as PM2.5 pollutants that enter the bloodstream through the lungs -- often hit more than 30 times the World Health Organization's danger limits. Prolonged exposure can trigger strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and other respiratory diseases, according to the WHO. More than seven percent of all deaths in 10 of India's biggest cities are linked to air pollution, according to a study published last year in The Lancet Planetary Health journal. —AFP



A man prepares tubes used in the production of firecrackers.



A man shows tubes used in the production of firecrackers, outside his house.



A woman works at a firecracker factory.



Women prepare cones used in the production of firecrackers.



A worker tapes cartons of firecrackers at a factory.



A woman prepares cones used in the production of firecrackers.



A worker arranges firecrackers for sale, at a shop on the outskirts of Sivakasi.

Sports

Yankees outlast Guardians for 2-0 lead in MLB playoff series

Judge broke open a tight game with his two-run blast

NEW YORK: Aaron Judge smacked his first home run of the Major League Baseball playoffs and the New York Yankees beat Cleveland 6-3 on Tuesday, seizing command of the American League Championship Series.

Judge broke open a tight game with his two-run blast in the seventh inning as the Yankees grabbed a 2-0 lead in the best-of seven series, which continues on Thursday in Cleveland.

"We've got to keep things the same," Judge said. "It's going to be a loud environment, a fun environment. We've got to go out there and keep playing our game... feed off the energy and go from there." The series winner advances to the World Series against either the New York Mets or Los Angeles Dodgers.

Yankees slugger Judge, whose 58 regular-season homers led MLB, crushed a blast over the center-field wall to give New York a 6-2 lead with his 14th career playoff homer. "It was good to add two more runs there," Judge said.

The Guardians stranded 11 base runners as four Yankees relief pitchers baffled Cleveland after starter Gerrit Cole went only 4 1/3 innings. "These guys came in, they're healthy, they're feeling great, some great performances from quite a few guys at the back end," Judge said of New York's relievers.

The Yankees seek their first trip to the World Series since winning it for the record 27th time in 2009 while Cleveland has not reached the event since 2016 and last won a World Series in 1948.

New York's Gleyber Torres doubled down the left-field line, took third base on a Juan Soto single and scored the first run in the opening inning when

Judge reached base on an error by Guardians short-stop Brayan Rocchio.

In the second, Anthony Volpe singled, took third on an Anthony Rizzo single and scored on Alex Verdugo's double down the left-field line to put the Yankees ahead 2-0. Soto was then intentionally walked to load the bases for Judge, whose sacrifice fly off relief pitcher Cade Smith scored Rizzo for a 3-0 lead.

Cole escaped a bases-loaded jam in the fourth by striking out Rocchio, whose third-inning single had given him hits in his first six playoff games to set a Cleveland record.

Kwan's hit streak at 12

The Guardians loaded the bases again in the fifth when Steven Kwan singled, stretching his club-record hit streak to 12 games. Kyle Manzardo singled and Jose Ramirez walked.

Naylor drove home Kwan on a sacrifice fly and advanced Manzardo to third. Lane Thomas walked to load the bases again and Will Brennan hit into a fielder's choice that scored Manzardo to make it 3-2 before Yankees reliever Clay Holmes struck out Austin Hedges to end the threat.

The Yankees padded their lead to 4-2 in the sixth when Volpe walked and Rizzo doubled to right field, with Volpe scoring on a throwing error by Cleveland right fielder Brennan, setting the stage for Judge's homer. Cleveland's Ramirez added a solo homer in the ninth to trim the final margin of defeat. The Guardians dropped game-one pitcher Alex Cobb from the roster due to a lower left back strain, ending his season. Pitcher Ben Lively was added to the lineup. — AFP



NEW YORK: Aaron Judge #99 of the New York Yankees watches his two-run home run in the seventh inning against the Cleveland Guardians during Game Two of the American League Championship Series at Yankee Stadium. — AFP

Root could break 16,000-run barrier: England great Cook

LONDON: Alastair Cook says "generational talent" Joe Root could become the first batter to reach 16,000 Test runs as the retired England captain was named in the ICC's Hall of Fame.

Root, 33, overtook Cook's record England tally of 12,472 runs in the first Test of the ongoing series in Pakistan, in which the Yorkshireman scored a mammoth 262. He is now fifth on the all-time list of run-scorers behind Sachin Tendulkar, who leads the way with 15,921, Ricky Ponting, Jacques Kallis and Rahul Dravid, all of whom have retired.

"I think Joe Root could set a mark, certainly on the English side, which will be very hard to beat," said Cook, who retired from Test cricket in 2018 with a century in his final innings. "But you just never know. I hope he can get very close, if not be the first person to score 16,000 Test runs. It would be a great achievement but it's a fair way off yet."

Cook, 39, said even in a fast-changing landscape, with Test cricket competing for calendar space alongside the white-ball game, it was difficult to say records would stand forever. "Everyone looked to that Tendulkar record of 200 Test matches and I think quite a few people said, 'Well, that's never going to be done'."

"And you've got a fast bowler who has played 188 Test matches and taken more than 700 wickets (retired England quick James Anderson). "So I know the game is changing, the landscape is changing. But something always crops up, someone always does."

'Big Four'

Cook said it was difficult to separate the so-called "Big Four" of Root, India's Virat Kohli, Steve Smith of Australia and New Zealand's Kane Wil-



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

liamson. "They're all wonderful, wonderful players, all very different actually in terms of their methods and ways of playing," he said.

"But one thing which kind of unites them is that hunger and desire to keep improving and keep churning out the runs. "They are generational players who will always be spoken about, and the fact that you can add Joe Root, whether you put him first, second, third, fourth, all personal opinion, it doesn't really matter. "But they are great, great players and make the game, the kind of one which we all started playing, look a lot easier than it is."

Cook on Wednesday became the 113th player to be inducted into the International Cricket Council's Hall of Fame, joining alongside retired India spinner

Neetu David, a star of the women's game, and South African multi-format great AB de Villiers.

"It was a surprise," said the former England skipper. "When you read the list of people that you're joining, it's a great list to have joined. So I feel very privileged." Cook paid a warm tribute to former England captain Graham Gooch, a predecessor at his county side, Essex. "A lot of people know about my relationship with Graham Gooch, Essex and England opener and kind of mentor, friend, coach, you name it," he said.

"He's kind of done everything for me. So it's just we never played on the same team. I thank God, probably. Thank goodness, because he was obviously a far better player than me." — AFP

City Championship in Los Angeles last month and Lee knows her rival will be difficult to stop this week. "You can't really pick one person because the depth of the field is so deep," Lee said.

"But I do think Lydia has had such a great back half of the year so far. She's got really great form." Lee also said she also expects a strong challenge from China's Yin Ruoning, who won her fourth LPGA title last week in Shanghai, and South Korea's Ryu Hae-ran, a winner at TPC Boston last month.

Also competing this week are world number two Lilia Vu, two-time major winner Yuka Saso, Thailand's Jeeno Thitikul and American Lauren Coughlin. Defending champion Lee has yet to win a title in 2024 and she said the course for the 72-hole, no-cut event was in better shape than last year.

"There's much more grass on pretty much every single green," she said. "There are a few patches but I think now to worry about. Overall, I think the greens are in really good condition." — AFP

"The way we've been able to go about our cricket, especially after the start we had against South Africa, we've just bounced back against Scotland, against Bangladesh. "We haven't beat England in about six years. As far as I can remember, the last time we beat them was back in 2018, but everyone still came here with a belief and a fight and it just shows what we can do as a West Indian team."

For many years the West Indies have relied heavily on Matthews, Stafanie Taylor and Deandra Dottin. The return of Dottin from international retirement for this tournament has been key to their success, but other players have also stepped up.

Leg-spinner Afy Fletcher took 3-21 against England, while opening batter Qiana Joseph clubbed a crucial 52. The Windies have struck more sixes than any other country in the event so far, and Joseph and Matthews plundered a tournament-high 67 from the England bowlers in the powerplay.

Their ultimately comfortable chase ensured they finished top of Group B, avoiding a last-four meeting with red-hot favorites Australia. New Zealand them-

selves have exceeded expectations by making the semis, largely courtesy of a victory over India, who were tipped to be title contenders.

Australia power on

Australia, bidding for a fourth consecutive T20 World Cup title, have cruised into the knock-out phase, taking their winning streak in the tournament to 15 matches along the way. The six-time champions face South Africa in Dubai on Thursday in a repeat of the 2023 final. They have been hit by injuries, though, with bowler Tayla Vlaeminck leaving the squad after suffering a shoulder injury.

Australia's main worry is the fitness of captain and opener Alyssa Healy, who missed the crucial group win over India earlier this week with a foot injury and whose participation in the knockouts remains in doubt. "We've been really trying to get around each other as a group, whether it be the injured girls, the girls playing slightly different roles, and just really sticking together as a group and focusing on the job at hand," said stand-in skipper Tahlia McGrath. — AFP



Minjee Lee

Rugby's red card rift splitting opinions across the world

CARDIFF: Rugby union has been adept at law trial for decades, but the proposition to bring 20-minute red cards into the game was a point of disagreement between leading players on Tuesday. On Monday, the French Rugby Federation (FFR) and the body running the top two leagues in France, the National Rugby League (LNR), voiced their concern with the idea.

The sport's global governing body World Rugby trialled the change in the Rugby Championship earlier this year, allowing a team to replace a red-carded player after 20 minutes in the sin-bin. National unions in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand back the proposal.

"The only way I can look at it is it probably devalues the red card," Wales lock Dafydd Jenkins told reporters. "There are pros and cons to both of them, but I think we're trying to change rugby so much. "It doesn't need to be changed," the Exeter forward added at the launch of this seasons Champions Cup.

The French players' union, Provale, supported the two other organizations from the country, claiming there lacked sufficient evidence to continue with the idea. They argued the change would incite dangerous play and, according to the trio, only 60 percent of teams to have received a red card across a sample of 480 games in the Top 14 and international games lost the match.

"I think it's back and forth between player safety and not wanting to ruin a game if there's one or two reds early in the game and for a big spectacle it can have a big effect on a game," Ireland No 8 Caelan Doris said.

"I think it's a good idea to trial it," he added. Head injuries have become a sensitive subject in recent years after a group of former players announced they were suing World Rugby. The individuals allege not enough was done to protect them in their playing days.

"In my opinion you have to look after lads' heads," Ireland winger Jacob Stockdale said. "The downside of that is that with stricter, tough laws and tougher refereeing you're more likely to get more red cards. "A lot of the time, a red card can ruin a game," he added.

'Crucial'

La Rochelle's Samoa centre UJ Seuteni has been handed four yellow cards and one red during his career. In the 2021 Top 14 semi-final loss to Toulouse he was sent off for making head contact with Toulouse's fly-half Romain Ntamack during a tackle when the midfielder was at Bordeaux-Begles. "I think it's a good concept for the game. With the strict rules of the head-on-head collisions," Seuteni said. "You don't go out there to get red cards but there are situations where red cards are questionable."

"It gives an opportunity for the game to continue to be exciting. "Red cards, yellow cards, these days are crucial and cost you a lot in a game," he added. In attempt to improve player safety, World Rugby has reduced the legal tackle height in recent years as the sport is played at a more increased pace.

"Everything happens in less than a second," Racing 92 full-back Tristan Tedder said. "Players are trying to win momentum, by doing that you have to go low, so everyone drops their body height but tacklers are also already trying to lower their body height but it's still potentially get a knock on the chin, or the head or the shoulder. "It is hard," he added. The results of the trial will be studied by World Rugby's executive board and council and put to a vote on November 14. If it is approved, the change could come into force on January 1. — AFP

Lee wary of Ko challenge at BMW Ladies

SEOUL: Defending champion Minjee Lee on Wednesday warned that red-hot Lydia Ko will be the player to beat at this week's BMW Ladies Championship as the US LPGA Tour returns to South Korea. Australia's Lee, born in Perth to Korean parents, beat American Alison Lee in a playoff to win last year's title and returns to compete at Seowon Valley Country Club.

She will face a stiff challenge from 2022 champion Ko, who won Olympic gold in Paris in August and then ended her eight-year major drought at the Women's British Open at St Andrews two weeks later. New Zealander Ko also won the LPGA Queen

Windies dreaming of T20 glory, Australia red hot favorites

DUBAI: The West Indies have proven their doubters wrong by reaching Friday's Women's T20 World Cup semi-final against New Zealand, but have their sights set on repeating their 2016 triumph. The Caribbean side have been knocked out in the group stage in the past two editions and they may have feared a repeat after losing their opener in the United Arab Emirates to South Africa by 10 wickets.

But a magnificent victory against England, their first over the world's second-ranked team since 2018, has left them one win from the final, with only an unfancied New Zealand standing in their way. "I think a lot of people wrote us off coming into this tournament," captain Hayley Matthews said.

Sports

Tuchel appointed England manager from January 2025

Third foreign manager of the Three Lions after Sven-Goran Eriksson and Fabio Capello

LONDON: Thomas Tuchel was named England's new manager on Wednesday, with the Football Association turning to the German to try to land their first major trophy since 1966. Former Chelsea manager Tuchel will start in the role from January 1, 2025 on an 18-month deal to the conclusion of the 2026 World Cup.

The 51-year-old, who has been out of work since leaving Bayern Munich at the end of last season, succeeds Englishman Gareth Southgate as permanent coach and becomes the third foreign manager of the Three Lions after Sven-Goran Eriksson and Fabio Capello.

Tuchel, who has also coached Borussia Dortmund and Paris Saint-Germain, has the trophy-winning pedigree that the FA is seeking to help end a 58-year wait to win a major tournament since the 1966 World Cup on home soil.

The highlight of the German's career to date came during his spell in English football when he won the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021. "To have the chance to represent England is a huge privilege, and the opportunity to work with this special and talented group of players is very exciting," said Tuchel.

"I'm very honored and I will do every-

thing that we can to qualify for the World Cup, first of all, and then have a successful World Cup and try to get a second star on our shirt." However, the FA's move has drawn criticism over their unwillingness to trust an Englishman with its top job, overseeing a richly-talented generation of players including Jude Bellingham who will be among the favorites for the 2026 World Cup.

Southgate resigned shortly after losing the Euro 2024 final to Spain in July, following an eight-year reign that made England a force again on the international stage. Tuchel will be assisted by English coach Anthony Barry, who worked alongside him at Bayern.

One of 'world's best'

"We are thrilled to have hired Thomas Tuchel, one of the best coaches in the world," said FA CEO Mark Bullingham. "Fundamentally we wanted to hire a coaching team to give us the best possible chance of winning a major tournament, and we believe they will do just that."

"Thomas and the team have a single-minded focus on giving us the best possible chance to win the World Cup in 2026." Tuchel won league titles at PSG

and Bayern and the German Cup with Dortmund, but his greatest success came during his time at Chelsea.

On top of leading the Blues to Champions League glory just months after taking charge, he also won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup with the London club. A self-confessed anglophile, Tuchel recently said he felt "more appreciated" in England than his homeland.

But he was sacked in September 2022 in a bold early move by Chelsea's new ownership group that did not pay off. Just six months later he was appointed Bayern boss and led them to an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title. However, Tuchel also oversaw the demise of Bayern's dominance of German football in a first trophyless campaign for 12 years last season.

England captain Harry Kane was signed by Tuchel for Bayern last year and scored 44 goals in 45 matches under his tutelage. "Obviously, I know Thomas well from last year. Fantastic coach, fantastic person," said Kane when asked about the possibility of a reunion.

Lee Carsley was put in temporary charge of England in August following Southgate's resignation and will remain in place for Nations League fixtures against



Thomas Tuchel

the Republic of Ireland and Greece next month. However, the FA were keen to stress a shock 2-1 defeat by Greece last week played no part in their decision as Tuchel signed his contract on October 8, two days before that match.

Bullingham and Tuchel are set to

face the media later at Wembley. His appointment has not been universally welcomed as the Daily Mail labelled Tuchel's arrival as a "dark day for England". The Sun though printed the English fans' chant "it's coming home" in German on its front page. — AFP

Angola, Egypt, Senegal qualify, Ghana in trouble

JOHANNESBURG: Angola, Egypt, Senegal and Democratic Republic of Congo qualified for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations on Tuesday, while title-holders Ivory Coast lost and Ghana are staring at elimination.

Comoros, who shocked Tunisia last week, threatened to repeat the feat when they took the lead in Abidjan, but the former champions recovered to force a 1-1 Group A draw.

A total of eight nations have now secured places at the AFCON with Burkina Faso qualifying on Sunday and Algeria and Cameroon on Monday. Hosts Morocco are automatic participants.

A first-minute goal secured the Angolans victory and a place at the 24-nation AFCON in Morocco from December 21, 2025, but the Congolese, Egyptians and Senegalese relied on late goals to win.

Angola edged Niger 1-0 in Casablanca, DR Congo overcame Tanzania 2-0 in Dar es Salaam, Mohamed Salah-less Egypt beat Mauritania 1-0 in Nouakchott and Senegal pipped Malawi 1-0 in Lilongwe.

Sudan and Sierra Leone are among 34 countries eyeing one of the other 16 qualifying places, but they had cause for celebrations ahead of the final two matchdays during November.

Captain Mohamed Abdelrahman scored the second goal as Sudan beat four-time champions Ghana 2-0 in Benghazi and a late Amadou Bakayoko goal earned Sierra Leone a 1-0 victory over Ivory Coast.

Ghana are in deep trouble as they trail second-placed Sudan by five points in Group F, and still have to visit in-form Angola, who were 2024 AFCON quarter-finalists. Ivory Coast remain top of Group G despite losing to a nation 92 places lower in the world rankings, and second-placed Zambia hold a three-point advantage over Sierra Leone.

Winners and runners-up qualify from 11 of the 12 groups. Morocco are playing in Group B to gain competitive match practice, leaving the other three teams fighting for one place.

Lesser known

A disastrous campaign for Ghana took another turn for the worst soon after half-time as Sudan scored twice within three minutes through Ahmed Mohamed and Abdelrahman.

There was no comeback from the Black Stars, captained by West Ham United midfielder Mohammed Kudus, and are now likely to miss the finals for the first time since 2004.

Bournemouth forward Antoine Semenyo was another Premier League star in the Ghana line-up and the frontline was led by Inaki Williams from Athletic Bilbao.

But a Sudanese side composed of lesser known players followed up a 0-0 draw in Ghana with a deserved victory as they represent a country engulfed in a civil war since April last year.

Sudan need one point from November fixtures against Niger (away) and Angola (home) to be certain of qualifying, and eliminate Ghana.

Senegal took 96 minutes to break down Malawi in Group L with two-time African Footballer of the Year Sadio Mane claiming his third goal of the campaign. — AFP

First defeat for Pochettino as US beaten in Mexico

GUADALAJARA: Mauricio Pochettino suffered his first defeat as coach of the United States on Tuesday, 2-0 to Mexico in a friendly. The United States had been unbeaten in seven games against their North American rivals—a run going back to 2019 -- but goals from Raul Jimenez and Cesar Huerta ended that streak.



Mauricio Pochettino

Pochettino had enjoyed a victory in his first game on Saturday, 2-0 against Panama in Austin. But his team, with several key absences, were second best in their first away game for almost a year. Pochettino had come into this window without midfielder Tyler Adams and forwards Tim Weah and Folarin Balogun.

He made the trip south of the border also without star winger Christian Pulisic and Juventus midfielder Weston McKennie, who have returned to their clubs. Defender Mark McKenzie was a last-minute withdrawal with FC Cincinnati's Miles Robinson handed the start. Mexico lined up with 38-year-old midfielder Andres Guardado making his final appearance for the country—a record 182nd cap. The number 18, who has been offered a role on Javier Aguirre's coaching staff, was substituted after 18 minutes, receiving a standing ovation from the Estadio Akron crowd. Four minutes later the fans were on their feet again, celebrating a wonderful free-kick from Jimenez which flew into the top corner past the outstretched arm of Matt Turner.

Four minutes after the restart, Fulham striker Jimenez had a hand in Mexico's second. Veteran American defender Tim Ream won the ball from Jimenez in the box but the forward's sliding tackle caught the American out and the ball fell to Huerta. The Mexico forward showed quick and light feet to work space for a shot into the corner which gave Turner no chance.

The United States had chances in the latter stages but Kristoffer Lund made a hash of a shot when found unmarked at the back post and substitute Brandon Vazquez saw his low drive blocked by Mexico goalkeeper Luis Malagon. "It wasn't a great performance," said the Argentine Pochettino, who was appointed last month to lead the team towards the 2026 World Cup which the USA will co-host with Mexico and Canada. "But this type of game I think is perfect for us to learn."

"I think we started the game well (but) after we conceded the goal, I think the impact was massive for us and, of course, they started maybe to win the duels and to be a little bit better, a little bit more aggressive than us," added the former Tottenham Hotspur manager. — AFP

Mbappe 'shocked' to see name linked to Swedish rape probe

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe was "shocked" to see his name linked to a Swedish rape investigation and the Real Madrid and France star will take legal action for libel, his lawyer told AFP on Tuesday. Mbappe's lawyer, Marie-Alix Canu-Bernard, insisted that the captain of the French national team was "at ease" because "he has done nothing wrong", after media reports in Sweden said the player was a suspect following a visit with friends to Stockholm.

A Swedish prosecutor said earlier Tuesday that a rape investigation had been opened without mentioning Mbappe. Swedish newspapers Aftonbladet and Expressen, as well as public broadcaster SVT, reported that Mbappe was the target of the investigation, following his two-day visit to the city last week.

Speaking to AFP, Canu-Bernard said Mbappe had "asked my office not to leave things as they are because it is impossible to allow yourself to be slandered and defamed in this way". "This is why we are going to file a complaint for libel." Sweden's Prosecution Authority said that the alleged rape had occurred at a hotel on October 10 but did not name a suspect and said no further information could be shared for the moment.

"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," a statement said. According to a filing with the Stockholm district court reviewed by AFP, the alleged offence took place at the upscale Bank Hotel in the centre of Sweden's capital.

The names of the plaintiff and the suspect were both redacted in the document. Expressen on Monday identified Mbappe as the suspect, citing anonymous sources, while Aftonbladet and SVT said Tuesday they had also obtained infor-

mation confirming Mbappe was the suspect.

Expressen said Mbappe was "reasonably suspected" of rape and sexual assault, the lower of two degrees of suspicion in the Swedish legal system. According to the Prosecution Authority, the higher degree of suspicion, "probable cause," is usually a prerequisite for a suspect to be remanded in custody prior to a formal charge. Lawyer Petra Lund, who represents the plaintiff, told AFP on Tuesday that she "could not give any comment at this stage".

Seized evidence

The French star was not selected for his country's latest round of UEFA Nations League matches, and so visited the Swedish capital with a group of people from last Wednesday. 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.

Photographs showed police officers leaving the Bank Hotel with brown bags on Monday. Mbappe claimed in a post on X on Monday there was a link between the report and the hearing before a French league committee on Tuesday over his bitter dispute with his former club Paris Saint-Germain over what he says is 55 million euros (\$60 million) in unpaid wages.

"FAKE NEWS!!!!. It's becoming so predictable, on the eve of the hearing, as if by chance," he wrote. After the hearing, a source close to Qatari-owned PSG said the league would give its decision on October 25. Mbappe's entourage said in a statement to AFP on Monday that the accusations were "completely false and irresponsible" and added that "all necessary legal action will be taken to re-establish the truth".

Stellar career

Mbappe signed for Madrid in June after seven years at PSG and has up until now stayed clear of scandal in his private life. The forward, who is known



Kylian Mbappe

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 saw him break through as a teenager at Monaco.

A 19-year-old Mbappe 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 he 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 team as Lionel Messi's side won in a penalty shoot-out. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Habibur Rehman holder of Indian Passport No. Z6340353 having permanent address Rajasthan, India, 314025 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Habibur Rehman (given name) and Shaikh (surname)
(#6180 17/10/2024)

Spain reach Nations League quarters, Ronaldo's Portugal held by Scotland

Denmark are best placed to go through with Spain after a draw with Switzerland



GLASGOW: Portugal's midfielder #08 Bruno Fernandes (2nd L) fights for the ball with Scotland's defender #06 John Souttar during the UEFA Nations League, League A Group A1 football match between Scotland and Portugal. — AFP

PARIS: European champions Spain sealed their place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals with a comprehensive 3-0 win over Serbia on Tuesday, while Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal were frustrated in a 0-0 draw with Scotland.

Spain, who are also the reigning Nations League champions, became the second team to clinch a quarter-final spot as they followed in the footsteps of Germany by moving to 10 points from a possible 12 in Group A4.

Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, the two wing stars of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 campaign, were not involved against Serbia on a rainy night in the Andalusian city of Cordoba. Yet that didn't matter as La Roja went ahead through Aymeric Laporte's early header and then shook off Alvaro Morata's penalty miss at the start of the second half.

Captain Morata made it 2-0 with a lovely finish on 65 minutes and Alex Baena, who featured at the Euros before starring in the Spain team that won Olympic gold, made it 3-0 from a free-kick. Serbia finished with 10 men after defender Strahinja Pav-

lovic was sent off. "We're in another final phase, which is the important thing — it might seem easy but we're in all of these final phases in recent years, and that deserves credit," Morata told state broadcaster TVE.

Denmark are best placed to go through with Spain after they drew 2-2 away to Switzerland, who prop up the group. The Danes twice came from behind, with Remo Freuler's opener cancelled out almost immediately by Gustav Isaksen, only for Zeki Amdouni to put the Swiss back ahead with a penalty in first-half stoppage time.

However, Christian Eriksen struck on 69 minutes to ensure Denmark left St Gallen with a point. Portugal dropped points for the first time in Group A1 as they were forced to settle for a share of the spoils with Scotland at Hampden.

On his 216th international appearance, Ronaldo made his 200th start for his country, more than 21 years on from his first. However, the 39-year-old failed to add to his 133 Portugal goals and stormed off the field at full-time ranting at the officials.

The home side needed a wonder save from goalkeeper Craig Gordon to deny Bruno Fernandes a winner for Portugal in the closing stages, but held out to secure their first point in the top tier of the Nations League. That allowed them to end a run of four straight competitive defeats, but they have now won just once — in a friendly against Gibraltar — in their last 16 matches.

Croatia, Poland share six goals

"Their goalkeeper was incredible. We couldn't get a goal, but the performance was positive," Portugal coach Roberto Martinez told UEFA.com. "Results are a consequence of performances and, tonight, we deserved to win."

Croatia are second in the group behind Portugal after playing out a thrilling 3-3 draw with Poland in Warsaw, in a match which featured five first-half goals. Piotr Zielinski of Inter Milan, wearing the captain's armband as Robert Lewandowski started on the bench, gave Poland an early lead.

However, Borna Sosa equalized and further goals

by Petar Susic and Martin Baturina put Croatia 3-1 up after 26 minutes. Nicola Zalewski pulled one back in first-half stoppage time and Sebastian Szymanski secured a draw for Poland with a terrific strike midway through the second half.

Croatia ended the game with 10 men after goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic was shown a red card for catching Lewandowski outside the area. In the third-tier League C, Northern Ireland went top of Group 3 with a 5-0 win over Bulgaria in Belfast.

Isaac Price of Standard Liege in Belgium was the hero with a hat-trick, as the 21-year-old became the country's youngest ever scorer of three goals in a game. Northern Ireland's last hat-trick scorer was David Healy in 2007.

An own goal by goalkeeper Dimitar Mitov and a late Josh Magennis effort completed the scoring, while captain Kiril Despodov missed a penalty for Bulgaria. Belarus and Luxembourg drew 1-1 in the same group, while there were wins for Romania and Kosovo against Lithuania and Cyprus respectively in Group C2. — AFP



Kuwaiti and Palestinian players in action. — KUNA

Kuwait, Palestine play out 2-2 draw in WCup qualifier

DOHA: The Kuwait national football team drew 2-2 with the Palestinian team in the fourth round of Group B AFC Asian qualifiers to 2026 World Cup at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Tuesday. Yousef Nasser scored the opener for Kuwait by a penalty kick in the 31st minute. Nine minutes later, Wassam Abu-Ali equalized for Palestine also by a spot-kick. In the 55th minute, Palestinian player Camilio Saldana received his second yellow card and had to leave the pitch. The Blues tried to capitalize on their numerical advantage and in the 80th minute Nasser scored another goal for Kuwait.

Despite playing with a player less, the Palestinian team fought back and piled pressure until Zeid Qanbar scored the equalizer in the third minute of the extra time. South Korea are now on top of Group B with 10 points, followed by Jordan with seven points and goal difference to Iraq, Oman are fourth with three points and goal difference to Kuwait and Palestine are at the bottom of the group list with two points. — KUNA

Messi nets hat-trick as Argentina hit Bolivia for six

MONTEVIDEO: Lionel Messi struck a vintage hat-trick as world champions Argentina romped to a 6-0 win over Bolivia in CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying on Tuesday. The 37-year-old provided an emphatic reminder of his enduring quality with three clinical finishes, two assists and some of his trademark creativity throughout the game as Lionel Scaloni's side dominated.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner opened the scoring in the 19th minute when Bolivian defender Marcelo Suarez was robbed by Lautaro Martinez, who sent Messi clear and he cleverly slotted into the bottom corner. The home crowd at Buenos Aires' Monumental Stadium were on their feet again in the 43rd minute when Julian Alvarez threaded a brilliant pass through to Messi, who unselfishly squared the ball to Martinez to finish.

Three minutes later, Alvarez was on target himself when Bolivia were caught sleeping at a free-kick, Messi chipping the ball over the top and the Atletico Madrid forward slotted home. After the break, Nicolas Otamendi had a header ruled out for offside but the home fans didn't have long to wait for the fourth when Thiago Almada side-footed home after a superb pull-back from Nahuel Molina.

A classic Messi goal made it 5-0 in the 84th — the Inter Miami forward dribbling centrally before switching from his left foot to his right and burying the ball into the bottom corner. Two minutes later and some fans were in tears after Messi cut in from the right, played a smart wall pass off substitute Nico Paz and again put the ball beyond the reach of goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra. Argentina are top of the 10-team table with 22 points from ten games — three points clear of second-place Colombia, who crushed Chile 4-0 in Barranquilla.

Colombians crush Chile

There was a different look to the team, wearing a



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi and Bolivia's midfielder #17 Roberto Fernandez fight for the ball during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualifiers football match between Argentina and Bolivia. — AFP

special retro white kit, marking the Colombian Football Federation's centenary, featuring the national flag's colors in a hoop. It was a dashing design and the performance of Nestor Lorenzo's team was equally stylish taking apart a woeful Chile side that remain rooted last in the ten-team qualifying group.

Defender Davinson Sanchez opened the scoring in the 34th minute, nodding home after Jhon Lucumi had headed a James Rodriguez corner goalwards. Jhon Cordoba slotted home a Diaz cross in the 45th minute but the effort was ruled out for offside against Diaz.

Chile gifted the Colombians a second, seven minutes after the interval, when Benjamin Kusevic gave the ball away to Rodriguez, who squared to Liverpool winger Luis Diaz to convert. Substitute Jhon Duran made it 3-0 in the 82nd minute after another giveaway, this time in midfield, allowed Sinisterra

to break and then feed the Aston Villa forward, who made no mistake and Sinisterra then wrapped up the win in stoppage time.

Brazil continued to ease any concerns about their qualification chances with a comfortable 4-0 win over Peru in Brasilia. A pair of penalties converted by Barcelona winger Raphinha put the record five-time World Cup winners on their way — the first coming in the 38th minute when Carlos Zambrano handled in the box and the second in the 54th minute after the same defender brought down Savinho. But there was more to appreciate in the third goal, in the 71st minute, with Andreas Pereira producing a superb scissor-kick volley from a Luiz Henrique cross from the right. Luiz Henrique completed the rout in spectacular style with a brilliant left-foot drive from outside the box to make it 4-0 and leave Brazil in fourth. — AFP