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3 Kuwait warns global community against slipping into endless wars

8 IMF predicts slightly slower global growth in 2024, 2025

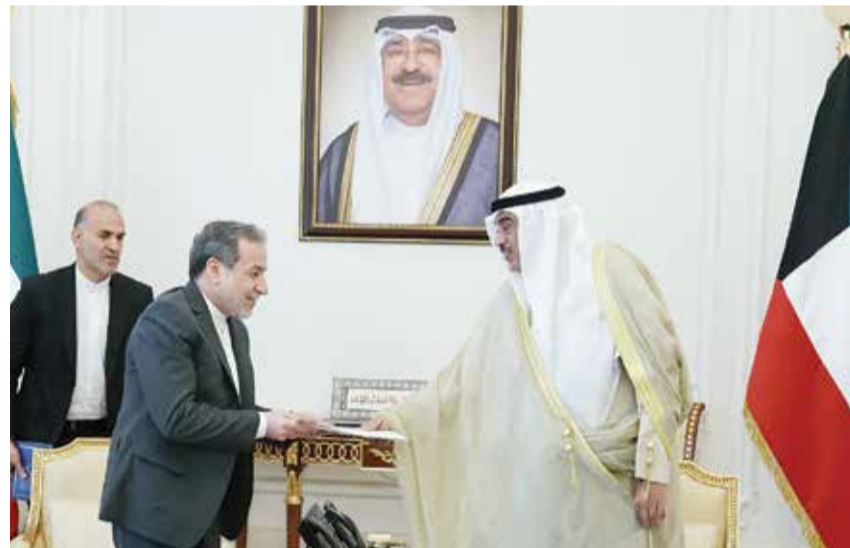
12 Serious business: Influencer degree launches in Ireland

15 Yankees and Dodgers renew epic rivalry in World Series



Iran's neighbors will not allow use of their soil or airspace for attack

Crown Prince receives letter sent to Amir from Iranian President • Kuwait, Iran FMs discuss ties



By Faten Omar & Agencies

KUWAIT: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi confirmed on Tuesday that Iran does not seek war in the region but is prepared for any scenario, adding Iran's neighbors have pledged they will not allow the use of their "soil or airspace" for any attack as the Zionist entity weighs retaliation for the Islamic republic's missile strike.

Speaking at a press conference in Kuwait, Araghchi emphasized that Iran is working to curb the escalation in Gaza and Lebanon, advocating for a comprehensive ceasefire. He said Iran is in continuous communication with all concerned countries, stressing that the situations in Gaza and Lebanon are catastrophic and that "Zionist attacks must stop".

"The Zionist entity has committed heinous crimes, some of which amount to war crimes that must be pursued in international forums," Araghchi said. He warned of the possibility of a full-scale war, adding: "The conflict could spread across the entire region."

Continued on Page 6

KUWAIT: (Left) Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivers a letter to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addressed to HH the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Oct 22, 2024. (Right) Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya meets Araghchi. — KUNA

Over 70 dead in two days of Sudan fighting

KASSALA, Sudan: Sudanese volunteer rescuers reported four children were among 20 people killed in an army air strike in the capital Khartoum Tuesday, adding to dozens killed in Al-Jazira state since Sunday. The strike wounded 27 people, including women and children, and left bodies "charred", according to the emergency response room (ERR) in Khartoum's south belt, one of hundreds of youth-led volunteer groups.

In Al-Jazira state just south of Khartoum, fierce clashes ignited Sunday after a paramilitary commander defected to the army, killing more than 50 people, according to activists. An army air strike on a mosque in the state capital of Wad Madani on Sunday killed 31 people, the local resistance committee said in a statement to AFP on Tuesday.

ERRs and resistance committees have been coordinating life-saving aid for civilians caught in the crossfire since war broke out between Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in April 2023. Wad Madani's committee accused the army of using "barrel bombs", adding that over half of those killed in the mosque strike remained unidentified as rescuers combed through the remains of "dozens of charred and mutilated bodies".

In the state's war-ravaged east, activists said at least 20 people have been killed in paramilitary attacks since Sunday. Across the country, the war has killed tens of thousands of people and created the world's largest displacement and humanitarian crises. The rival armed forces are locked in combat for Al-Jazira state, Sudan's pre-war breadbasket, which has been under paramilitary control since late last year.

On Sunday, the army announced that the RSF's Al-Jazira commander Abu Aqila Kaykal had abandoned the paramilitary force, bringing "a large number of his forces" with him, in what it said was the first high-profile defection to its side.

Continued on Page 6

Hezbollah defiant as Zionist strikes pound Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah movement said on Tuesday there would be no negotiations while fighting continued with the Zionist entity and it claimed sole responsibility for a drone attack on Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's holiday home. The group "takes full and sole responsibility" for targeting Netanyahu's house, Mohammad Afif, head of the group's media office, told a press conference in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

"If our hands didn't reach you the previous time, then days, nights and the battlefield are still between us," he said. The Zionist entity said a drone was launched at Netanyahu's holiday home on Saturday. Netanyahu was not there at the time, but he described it as an assassination attempt.

Hezbollah also for the first time acknowledged that the Zionist entity had captured some of its fighters since it launched a ground offensive in south Lebanon, and said that the Zionist entity

Continued on Page 6



BEIRUT: Smoke rises as a building collapses after a Zionist airstrike targeting the southern suburb of Shayah on Oct 22, 2024. — AFP

BRICS leaders underpin Putin at key summit

KAZAN, Russia: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a quick end to the Ukraine conflict during talks with President Vladimir Putin in Russia on Tuesday, as Chinese leader Xi Jinping praised Beijing's "profound friendship" with Moscow. Putin is hosting around 20 world leaders at a three-day gathering of the BRICS group, an event he hopes will show Western attempts to isolate Moscow over its Ukraine offensive have failed.

"We have been in constant touch over the conflict between Russia and Ukraine," Modi told Putin after the two shook hands and embraced. "We believe that disputes should only be resolved peacefully. We totally support efforts to quickly restore peace and stability," the Indian leader added. Chinese leader Xi Jinping meanwhile praised his country's "profound" ties with Russia in what he called a "chaotic" world. Ties have "injected strong impetus into the development, revitalization and modernization of the two countries," Xi said.



KAZAN: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) on the sidelines of the BRICS summit on Oct 22, 2024. — AFP

India has walked a delicate tightrope since the Ukraine conflict began, pledging humanitarian support for Kyiv while avoiding explicit condemnation of Moscow's actions. Modi visited Kyiv in August and Moscow in July in an effort to encourage talks, casting India as a potential peacemaker. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has also urged an end to the conflict, praised Moscow as a "valued ally" and friend in his meeting with Putin. "We continue to see Russia as a valued ally, as a valued friend, who supported us right from the beginning; from the days of our struggle against Apartheid, right through to now," Ramaphosa said.

The summit, held amidst tight security in the city of Kazan, is the biggest international event in Russia since Moscow's Ukraine offensive began in 2022. Separate talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian are planned for Wednesday, while UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres will meet Putin on Thursday.

Among issues on the agenda will be Putin's idea for a BRICS-led payment system to rival SWIFT, an international financial network that

Continued on Page 6



What if Kuwait's elderly population exceeds 5%?

Individuals aged 65 and older now comprise 5% of Kuwait population

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Kuwait needs to start preparing to meet the needs of its growing elderly population, said Dr Ali Alqattan, Senior Specialist in geriatric medicine. Individuals aged 65 and older now comprise five percent of the country's total population, with over 135,000 people in that age group. This number is projected to grow to 15 percent. So, to effectively address this phenomenon before it's too late, Dr Alqattan called for a collaborative effort across all sectors in Kuwait to enhance access to healthcare services, improve social services and review laws impacting the elderly.

He noted that this demographic shift extends beyond Kuwait, as life expectancy is rising globally, with some countries reporting elderly populations of 25 percent to 30 percent. According to the UN World Social Report 2023, the number of individuals aged 65 and older worldwide is projected to more than double, increasing from 761 million in 2021 to 1.6 billion by 2050.

Life after retirement

"Since the numbers are already on the rise, let's promote active ageing from now," urged Dr Alqattan, who is also the Head of the Geriatric Unit at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital. The World Health Organization defines active ageing as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security to enhance quality of life as people grow older. Dr Alqattan emphasized the need to review retirement laws and establish routines for life after retirement in Kuwait, particularly for mid- to late-career retirees



Dr Ali Alqattan, Senior Specialist in Geriatric Medicine

who do not have alternative plans, such as starting their own businesses.

He noted that without these plans, mental and physical inactivity can become increasingly prevalent among retirees. He advocates for a gradual transition into retirement, rather than an abrupt end to working life, by suggesting moving from full-time to part-time work and gradually reducing hours — from four to two. "Many of the retired people express that working just two hours is the perfect solution for them. They don't want a full-time job, but they also want to ensure their expertise and experience are not completely lost," Alqattan added.

Early management of diseases

Drawing examples from western countries, he said that elderly individuals mostly begin new chapters in their lives after retirement, often returning to



Dr Ali Alqattan is awarded during the International Day of elderly people.

school or pursuing a bachelor's degree. "Promoting mental engagement during retirement is one of the key messages we want to convey to our citizens," said Dr Alqattan. "Please, continue your giving to the society, both mentally and physically. As we often say, 'Life begins after retirement,'" he added.

Proper nutrition, exercise, and mental activities are also among the factors that Dr Alqattan recommended to help in implementing the active

ageing concept. He advised early management of chronic diseases — especially those related to heart conditions, diabetes, and recurrent strokes. He urged against the ignorant behavior of certain conditions that elder people mostly encounter, assuming they are merely a natural part of ageing when they can indicate serious health issues, such as cognitive decline, dementia, falls, incontinence, and polypharmacy.



Najat Ibrahim

AI, cybersecurity in line with vision New Kuwait 2035

KUWAIT: The Acting Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology, Najat Ibrahim, has stressed the importance of enhancing digital empowerment by adopting advanced technical solutions and spreading the culture of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity in line with the vision of New Kuwait 2035 to enhance the country's global competitiveness.

Ibrahim said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of the Digital Empowerment and Artificial Intelligence Forum organized by the Authority in cooperation with the Artificial Intelligence Society that the forum represents a specialized platform that brings together experts, decision-makers, engineers, and technical project managers to discuss ways to apply artificial intelligence techniques in various fields. She added that the three-day forum will also discuss how to improve government performance, enhance operational efficiency and develop advanced cybersecurity solutions.

Ibrahim explained that the forum will provide an opportunity to learn about the latest innovations in the fields of artificial intelligence and information technology, such as machine learning, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, and big data analysis, which contributes to enabling Kuwaiti institutions to adopt these technologies to raise operational efficiency and improve their digital services. The forum comes at a time when the region is witnessing rapid developments in digital infrastructure and communications, as these developments directly affect how businesses are managed and services are delivered. — KUNA

AU wins awards at TICE and EEA

KUWAIT: The College of Engineering at the Australian University (AU) achieved a remarkable success by winning three awards during their participation in the 15th Technological Innovation Conference and Exhibition (TICE) and the 8th Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA). The event, held under the patronage of Sheikh Malik Al-Jaber Al-Malik Al-Sabah, Head of Sustainable Development Initiatives, highlighted AU's impactful contributions. The College of Engineering presented three research projects for the Engineering Excellence Awards, delivered one presentation, nominated two students for the Emerging Engineer of the Year award, and exhibited graduation projects by two student groups.

Dr Suad Al-Radhwan, a faculty member at AU, played a pivotal role as chairperson of the organizing committee. AU's achievements included securing two Gold Awards and one Silver Award. The first Gold Award in the "Engineering Research – Optimization" category was awarded to a project supervised by Dr Suad Al-Radhwan, with contributions from students Abdulaziz Al-Fendi, Ali Al-Ramzi, Mohammad Al-Azmi, and Fahad Al-Owais participating.

The second Gold Award in the "Engineering Re-



Participants are pictured during the ceremony.

search – Data Management" category, was awarded to a project supervised by Dr Rida Elgaddafi and co-supervised by Eng Kingsley Amadi, with students Ahmad Dashti, Mohammad Al Jawad Al Ali, and Mubarak Al Abdullah. The Silver Award in the "Engineering Research – Optimization" category, was granted to a project supervised by Dr Mortad-

ha Alsaba and co-supervised by Eng Asama Husain, with contributions from students Esraa Hasan, Janan Kassim, Fotoun Al-Atwan, Kawthar Mirza and Kawthar Mohammed contributing. In addition, two Petroleum Engineering students, Tesnim Bouhanna and Mohammad Al Jawad Al-Ali, were recognized as Emerging Engineers of the Year.



Kuwait's DGCA discusses cooperation, signs MoUs

KUALA LUMPUR: Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) President Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah discussed on Tuesday enhancing aviation cooperation with Italy and Russia and also signed MoUs on the sidelines of Kuala Lumpur's sixteenth ICAO Air Services Negotiation



(ICAN2024) conference. The two MoUs were signed with Belarus and Turkmenistan to increase flights between Kuwait and the two countries.

In a statement to KUNA, Sheikh Humoud said that his meetings with the officials discussed ways of enhancing cooperation in the fields of civil aviation, training, operations and latest regional and international developments. The Ministry of Transport of Malaysia is hosting this international conference, with 73 countries participating, which would serve as a venue for regional and international aviation collaboration in addition to formulating policies connected with the industry. — KUNA

Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord Center obtains int'l accreditation certificate

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced that the laboratories of Sheikh Salwa Al-Sabah Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord Center have obtained the international accreditation certificate for molecular testing from the Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapeutics (AABB). This enhances Kuwait's position in the field of health care and scientific research.

Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department at the Ministry, Dr Reem Al-Radwan, said in a press statement on Tuesday that the laboratories "are the first in the Arab world and the second globally outside the United States to obtain this accreditation". Dr Al-Radwan explained that this accreditation is a very important step in the field of stem cell therapy as it ensures that laboratories adhere to the highest standards of quality and safety in examination and treatment methods.

The international certificate enhances confidence between health care providers and patients as it ensures that the laboratories adhere to strict regulatory requirements and provide accurate and



Sheikha Salwa Al-Sabah Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord Center building. — KUNA photos

reliable results. The accredited laboratories contain modern technologies that have been verified and follow the best international practices, which reduce the risk of contamination and ensure the safety of stem cell products.

This accreditation opens new horizons for starting programs for collecting stem cells and umbil-



Sheikha Salwa Al-Sabah Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord Center laboratory.

ical cord cells, which represents a fundamental step towards developing innovative and effective treatments. She stated that this achievement will have a significant impact on enhancing scientific research, improving patient treatment outcomes, and enhancing the credibility of stem cell-based treatments in medical circles. — KUNA

Registration opens for Johns Hopkins virtual orientation

KUWAIT: Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) announced on Tuesday opening registration for the virtual orientation meeting organized by the prestigious Johns Hopkins University. The orientation will introduce the university's scientific enrichment programs for distinguished Kuwaiti students from ages 15 to 17. In a statement to KUNA, SACGC Director General Neda Al-Daihani said the orientation would provide the students with useful information necessary for the fields of science and technology at the university.

Al-Daihani called on all gifted students from the aforementioned age group to seize the "rare opportunity" that would enable them to improve their academic and scientific skills in the fields to come. He pointed out that this would be the second orientation held between the Center and the American University, reflecting the success and cooperation in providing high-quality workshops to students. It will be held on October 30 at 3:00 pm, and registration is available on the Instagram account: @sacgc_kw, Al-Daihani noted. — KUNA

Local

Mideast 'slipping into wars with no end,' Kuwait warns

Gulf state seeks a nuclear free region

NEW YORK: Kuwait warned the international community on Monday against Middle East slipping into the abyss of a war with no end in light of the Zionist aggression against Palestine, Lebanon, and the entire region. The Permanent Delegation of Kuwait made the remarks in a speech to the United Nations, delivered by Diplomatic Attache Abdulaziz Al-Saeedi before the General Assembly, which was set to discuss a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Al-Saeedi said, "The (Zionist) occupation that opened multiple fronts of war under the pretext of self-defense is nothing but an actor consciously seeking to destroy the region and create a state of chaos that extends beyond the borders of the Middle East." Al-Saeedi directed Kuwait's appeal to the international community to subject the Zionists to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon party and to subject its facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In this regard, the diplomatic attaché conveyed Kuwait's emphasis on the need to comply with international treaties and resolutions related to nuclear security while respecting the right of states to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. He added that Kuwait is keen to participate permanently in the discussions of the item related to the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency, "based on our commitment to benefit from nuclear applications in capacity building and development away from the arms race or any negative uses of this field."

Al-Saeedi pointed out that Kuwait celebrates the 60th anniversary of its accession to the agency in 1964, stressing the continuation of its close cooperation with the agency through



NEW YORK: Diplomatic Attache Abdulaziz Al-Saeedi addresses the UN General Assembly. — KUNA

the competent Kuwaiti authorities to maximize the benefit from the agency's programs that contribute to supporting developmental, economic and social projects in a peaceful and safe manner. He cited the cooperation in implementing a number of projects that have achieved a high percentage of completion through the current national program for technical cooperation, which consists of nine projects based on Kuwait's plan for the years 2020-2025.

The diplomatic attaché warned that international security and peace were and still are two main axes in the renaissance and progress of the people and these goals cannot be achieved in light of the threats of developing and using nuclear weapons as well. In this regard, he conveyed Kuwait's call to North Korea to abide by international resolutions and nuclear security treaties as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, noting that threatening to use nuclear weapons will not lead to a peaceful outcome but will lead to the world being burdened with risks beyond its capacity.

Al-Saeedi touched on the recent developments related to some countries modernizing their nuclear arsenals and the continuation of the policy of nuclear



GAZA: Photo show displaced Palestinians fleeing Zionist military operations in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

clear deterrence, which is a source of great concern. He said that Kuwait believes that achieving security and peace does not come through stockpiling weapons but through dialogue and cooperation and urges more international efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Save healthcare system

Meanwhile, Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabalia camp on Tuesday sent an urgent appeal to the international community to save the healthcare system that collapsed in northern Gaza Strip after a siege imposed by Zionist occu-

erations. Also, studies in Japan on the "Learning from the Elders" program showed that continuous interaction between young people and the elderly enhances mutual understanding and reduces the cultural gap between generations.

German studies on the "Multi-Generational Homes" initiative showed its role in improving the mental and physical health of the elderly and strengthening social ties among those included. These initiatives contribute to reducing feelings of isolation among older groups, improve children and youth's understanding of the concept of aging and its challenges, and enhance the values of compassion and social integration, which positively reflect on society as a whole.

Charitable work

In another development, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs has emphasized the need to enhance transparency and governance in charitable work in line with international requirements and standards. The minister said during a meeting with representatives of 64 charitable societies and associations that the Ministry is working to protect and support charitable work. She explained that Kuwait is going through a supervisory review phase by international financial organizations, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), indicating that this review requires taking some steps to correct procedures related to charitable work.

She added that the measures taken by the Ministry aim to enhance transparency and maintain the flexibility of charitable work without negative effects, in addition to ensuring compliance with international standards, which enhances the reputation of Kuwait and ensures continuity in the pioneering role of Kuwaiti charitable work.

Regarding the circular issued on the travel ban of charitable delegates to some countries witnessing unstable security conditions, Al-Huwailah said that it aims to protect workers and ensure their safety, calling on representatives of associations to continue cooperating with the Ministry to ensure Kuwait's commitment to the highest international standards in charitable work. — KUNA

'Family Gathering' reflects authentic values of society

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah said Tuesday that the "Family Gathering" initiative, which was recently launched by the Ministry, is aimed at bringing together elderly people in shelters with orphaned children in the social care sector. It also reflects the authentic values of Kuwaiti society. Minister Al-Huwailah added in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the "Family Gathering" initiative represents an integrated humanitarian project that reflects Kuwait's commitment to the approach of social solidarity and contributes to building strong social ties between different generations.

She explained that the initiative comes within the framework of efforts to enhance the values of solidarity in Kuwaiti society through close cooperation between the departments of elderly care and family nursery at the Ministry with the aim of achieving deep human communication between them and reviving the spirit of giving and communication between generations.

The initiative seeks to achieve several pivotal goals, including strengthening human ties between generations through meetings, where both parties can build human relationships that contribute to improving their psychological state, allowing the elderly to transfer their experiences and life experiences to children, while the children find in them emotional support that enhances their psychological balance.

She explained that providing a positive interactive environment between different age groups enhances feelings of familiarity and love and allows the elderly to feel the importance of their role in society by guiding the generation, adding that the initiative consolidates the values of giving and social responsibility. Regarding the ini-

tiative's implementation strategy, Minister Al-Huwailah said that it will be implemented in stages to ensure maximum benefit.

The first stage began with coordinating efforts between the Elderly Care Department and the Family Nursery Department to identify participants from both categories while ensuring psychological and social rehabilitation to achieve positive interaction. She pointed out that work has begun on the second phase, which includes organizing interactive activities between the two parties, including dialogue sessions and recreational activities, as the elderly are encouraged to share their experiences with orphaned children.

Regarding monitoring the psychological impact on those included after implementing the initiative, the minister confirmed that the third phase includes periodic monitoring and evaluation of the psychological and social impact of these meetings with the aim of enhancing the quality of life for both the elderly and the orphans and ensuring the continuity of positive interaction.

She pointed to similar experiences that have demonstrated their success and positive role, such as the Generations Communication initiative implemented by the UAE, which contributed to achieving significant benefits, most notably improving the mental health of the elderly and reducing feelings of isolation, as well as raising awareness among young people about the importance of heritage and experiences carried by the elderly and reducing the gap between generations.

She referred to a British study on the "Adoptive Grandparents" initiative, which concluded that such initiatives contribute significantly to reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation among the elderly and strengthening ties between gen-



Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah

Ali Al-Sabah Military College 'a distinguished institution'

KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, affirmed on Tuesday that Ali Al-Sabah Military College is a pioneering and distinguished educational institution that contributes to preparing and qualifying student officers and military cadres at the highest levels. Lieutenant General Al-Muzain stressed, according to a press statement by the Chief of Staff, during his field visit to the college the importance of quality standards for facilities to ensure an integrated educational environment for student officers studying there.

During the visit, he inspected the college's various facilities and classrooms for student officers and praised the efforts made by all its members, officers, non-commissioned officers, and individuals, stressing the leadership's continuous support for everything that would raise the efficiency and readiness of the armed forces. Lieutenant General Al-Muzain was received by Commander of Ali Al-Sabah Military College Brigadier General Fawaz Al-Musailem. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Chief of the Kuwaiti Army Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain is pictured during a field tour accompanied by the Commander of Ali Al-Sabah Military College, Brigadier General Fawaz Al-Musailem. - KUNA photos



Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, inspects the various facilities and classrooms for officers at the Ali Al-Sabah Military College.

Kuwait seeks to improve quality of education

KUWAIT: Kuwait Acting Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Nader Al-Jallal has affirmed the country's commitment to excellence in education and the continuous improvement of quality education. This statement came during Dr Al-Jallal's participation in the Board of Directors video conference on the Regional Center for Quality and Excellence in Education (RCQE), held online and chaired by Saudi Minister of Education Yusef Al-Benyan.

Al-Jallal emphasized Kuwait's commitment to its regional and international partnerships in achieving mutual goals to enhance education and improve quality standards across all educational sectors. Additionally, Dr Al-Jallal praised Saudi Arabia's leadership role in developing education in the region and expressed his gratitude to Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mudaires, the Director General of the UNESCO Regional Center for Quality and Excellence in Education in Saudi Arabia.

The discussions included proposed projects such as the Research Chairs Project, the Arab Model for Quality and Excellence in Education (AMQEE), and the Future of Spending Quality on Pre-University Education in Arab Countries. The conference was attended by a number of education ministers from Arab countries, along with several educational leaders from local and regional institutions. — KUNA



Dr Nader Al-Jallal

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti jeweler arranges and displays gold items at his shop in Kuwait City on October 21, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Youth Public Authority launches debate and critical thinking project

KUWAIT: The Youth Public Authority launched the Kuwait Debates project in partnership with the Ministry of Education and a number of state institutions and civil society to unify efforts in organizing unified activities and competitions so as to enhance and develop the skills of persuasion, critical thinking, analysis, and scientific research among young people. Abdullah Al-Adwani, Acting Deputy Director General of the Youth Development Sector at the Authority, said in a press statement to the Authority that the committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Education, Kuwait University, the Kuwaiti Debate Club, and representatives of civil society and will include all targeted segments of school and university students until after graduation.

For his part, one of the representatives and the technical director of the Arabic language, Bader Al-Shatti, said on the official website of the Ministry that this cooperation is considered a consolidation of an important principle, which is to invest in young people and develop their methods of thinking to create a generation capable of giving and aims to spread the culture of debate. It also promotes the style of dialogue in society. Al-Shatti explained that the participation of the Ministry of Education in the committee is aimed at supporting the student activity and to give them the opportunity to get acquainted, exchange experiences, and create bridges of communication based on dialogue and logic, in addition to raising the status of the Arabic language as an enriching cultural medium. —KUNA



KFH holds program for frontline staff to enhance customers' fraud awareness

Part of bank's support for Diraya Campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) organized a fraud awareness training program, the first of its kind, for frontline staff across its banking branches and service centers, as well as Allo Baitak service personnel. The initiative aims to build a teamwork that is well versed in effectively mitigating fraud risks and educating customers on their rights and responsibilities concerning banking transactions. It also sheds light on various forms of online fraud while highlighting the importance of customer awareness in this regard.

The training program is part of the various initiatives implemented by KFH to support Diraya financial and banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). KFH Executive Manager social media and PR Services Center, KFH representative in the Joint Public Relations Committee of Diraya campaign, Abdullah Al-Saif, said that the ongoing awareness training program will target all KFH staff that interact with the customers directly, with the aim of enhancing their communication skills when interacting with customers.

The program also helps employees deliver clear messages to customers emphasizing the importance of precision, caution, and refraining from responding to messages from unknown sources and attempts that target customers' banking accounts by identifying their personal information via different evolving means and methods. He added: "The program familiarized participants with Diraya campaign, which was launched in 2021 under the supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association.

It also underlined the significant role of the campaign in disseminating financial literacy among a larger



Abeer Al Armali



Abdullah Al-Saif

segment of society and raising their awareness on the banking sector role and the ways to benefit from the diverse services offered by these banks in the optimal way." Al-Saif pointed out that the program explained several awareness messages regarding cyber fraud and theft attempts that target bank customers through various means, i.e. emails, SMS, phone calls or through specific applications.

"These attempts aim to obtain the confidential banking information of the customer through deceptive ways including the bank account number, password, and OTP in order to steal their funds and data," he remarked. He emphasized that the program leverages a variety of technologies and social media platforms

to improve financial literacy and provide practical examples. This includes awareness videos, introductory materials, and lectures designed to shed light on key topics in consumer protection.

It is worth noting that KFH continues its support for the Diraya campaign. The bank is committed to educating and safeguarding its customers, ensuring they are fully aware of their rights and best practices. Additionally, KFH strives to keep customers informed about the significance of its diverse banking services. To achieve this, the bank actively supports various campaigns, disseminates educational materials and awareness messages across all KFH channels, and provides clear guidelines for filing complaints.



Photo shows some female employees attending the program.

Meraas dermatology campaign launched

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) hosted on Monday the Meraas campaign of the Kuwait Dermatologists Association to provide awareness on chronic psoriasis, its causes, and ways to alleviate and deal with the symptoms. Dr Muhammad Al-Adwani, a member of the association and a dermatologist at Farwaniya Hospital, told KUNA that the association launched its awareness campaign "Meraas" in early October—the month of awareness of psoriasis around the world. The campaign began at Farwaniya Hospital, followed by Al-Adan Hospital, and then KUNA to conclude the campaign at Kuwait University this week.

Al-Adwani added that psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune skin disease that is not completely cured at the present time, but there are several methods to control its symptoms, such as topical creams and ointments, some oral medications, as well as ultraviolet phototherapy. He explained that psoriasis is linked to dietary habits, and its symptoms increase when eating processed and packaged foods and eating red meat, as well as dairy products and refined sugar because they contain high levels of saturated fats and sugars that may increase inflammation.

On the symptoms of the disease, he said that when suffering from psoriasis, the immune system in the hu-

man body mistakenly attacks the body's healthy cells. The factors leading to the infection are genetic causes and a defect in the human immune system, in addition to various environmental and biological factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and psychological factors such as stress.

Al-Adwani indicated that psoriasis has different types, including plaque, which is the most common. Chronic psoriasis, which affects 2 percent of people globally, is usually accompanied by several diseases, including psoriatic arthritis and cardiovascular diseases,

as well as metabolic syndrome (obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol, and type II diabetes), as well as mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Psoriasis is also accompanied by inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and is also associated with liver diseases such as cirrhosis and an increase in the percentage of fatty masses on the liver. Al-Adwani called on people with psoriasis to visit dermatology departments in various hospitals in the country to receive the latest treatments available to curb and control the symptoms ahead of the winter season. —KUNA



Dr Muhammad Al-Adwani



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US election campaigns target overseas voters

As pollution rises, India, Pakistan arrest farmers

Page 7

Page 6



NEAR GAZA: Zionist settlers attend a gathering near the border with Gaza on October 21, 2024, calling to re-establish settlements in the Palestinian territory.

Zionist settlers want back in Gaza

Settlers call for kicking Palestinians out, or even killing them to reclaim 'their land', 'bring about security'



Zionist far-right minister Itamar Ben Gvir attends the gathering. — AFP photos



Women play with children next to tents erected as part of the two-day outdoor conference titled Preparing to Resettle Gaza.

NEAR GAZA: Jewish settlers, including ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet, gathered on the border of Gaza on Monday, where they called for settlements the Zionist entity evacuated two decades ago to be re-established in the Palestinian territory, Reuters reports. The Zionist entity withdrew its military and settlers from Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year occupation, and Netanyahu has said it does not intend to maintain a permanent presence again. But as the Zionist entity's assault on the territory has entered a second year, Netanyahu has yet to provide clarity on who he sees governing Gaza after the war. Some of his government allies, however, have been explicit about their own endgame.

"If we want it, we can renew settlements in Gaza," National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir told the

hundreds who gathered for a two-day outdoor conference titled Preparing to Resettle Gaza, held about 3 km (2 miles) from the enclave. Smoke could be seen rising in Gaza and the loud bangs of artillery sounded in the distance. Ben-Gvir also called for the Zionist entity to "encourage emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza. "It's the best and most moral solution, not by force but by telling them: 'We're giving you the option, leave to other countries, the Land of (the Zionist entity) is ours,'" he said.

'Critical days'

The conference was organized by members of Netanyahu's Likud party and the Nahala organization, a group of ideological settlers in the occupied West Bank, who see themselves as pioneers redeeming Biblical heartland promised by God. All world powers, except the

United States, deem settlements the Zionist entity built in territory seized in the 1967 war as illegal under international law and their expansion as an obstacle to peace, since they eat away at land the Palestinians want for a future state. The Zionist entity disputes this view and cites Biblical and historical ties to the land, as well as security needs.

The settler movement has cast the entity's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza as a fatal mistake that led to Hamas taking the territory over, enabling it to use Gaza as a base to fire thousands of rockets from it at the Zionist entity over the years. Dozens of Zionists, many of which are couples with children, gathered at the conference. "In these critical days, while the (the Zionist entity) is looking to the day after, we want to raise awareness that only settlements will bring about the secu-

urity we had 20 years ago," said Itzik Fitoussi, who was evicted from Gaza's settlements in 2005 and lost his soldier son on October 7, 2023.

Sky News spoke with Reshit, who was there with her friends. She is the daughter of a Zionist soldier who spent months in Gaza and is now fighting in Lebanon. When asked about what should happen to the Palestinians who already live in Gaza, Reshit "doesn't miss a beat," according to Sky News. "We should kill them, every last one of them. And if the government won't do that then we should just kick them out. This is our land. And we deserve it." Avivit John, from nearby Kibbutz Be'eri, was demonstrating against the settler conference. "We are against settlements in Gaza," she said. "We want to live in peace with our (Palestinian) neighbors." — Agencies

Zionist army says Hezbollah finance chief killed in Syria

JERUSALEM: The Zionist army said Monday that a commander responsible for funding the Lebanese Hezbollah group was "eliminated" in Syria. The man, whose name was not released, headed the Iran-backed Hezbollah's Unit 4400 that is "responsible for the transfers and the amount of funds" to the group through Tehran's oil sales, army spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said in a statement. The commander was "eliminated" in Syria "a few hours ago," he added. The unit was previously led by Mohammed Jafar Ksir, also known as Sheikh Salah, Hagari said. "He managed (Hezbollah's) main source of income for years, until we eliminated him in a targeted attack on the capital (Beirut) in early October," he said.

Earlier Monday, Syria's defense ministry announced the death of two people in a strike attributed to the Zionist entity and targeting a car in Damascus. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that a strike targeted a non-Syrian man who was driving his car in a



DAMASCUS: Syrian emergency and security services inspect the wreckage of a car that exploded in Damascus on October 21, 2024. — AFP

neighborhood where a memorial was being held for Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who was killed by the Zionist entity last week in Gaza. Unit 4400

is charged with transporting Iranian oil to Syria, which is then sold in Lebanon. Its value "is about tens of millions of dollars", Hagari said. — AFP

Lebanon needs \$250m a month for displaced: Minister

BEIRUT: Lebanon will need \$250 million a month to help more than a million people displaced by Zionist attacks, its minister in charge of responding to the crisis said on Tuesday, ahead of a conference on Thursday in Paris to rally support for Lebanon. Nasser Yassin told Reuters the government response, helped by local initiatives and international aid, only covered 20 percent of the needs of some 1.3 million people uprooted from their homes and sheltering in public buildings or with relatives. Those needs are likely to grow, as daily waves of airstrikes push more people out of their homes and leave Lebanon's government scrambling to find ways to house them, Yassin said. "We need \$250 million a month" to cover basic food, water, sanitation and education services for the displaced, he said.

Schools, an old slaughterhouse, a fresh food market, an empty complex — all of them have been turned into collective shelters in recent days. "We're transforming anything, any public building," Yassin said. "There is a lot to be done." Yassin — whose official mandate as environment minister meant he was working on preventing forest fires before the current conflict broke out a year ago — now spends much of his time at government headquarters with a crisis team, including other Lebanese ministries, the United Nations Development Programme and the Lebanese Red Cross. They are planning for relief operations on a timeline of four to six months — but Yassin hopes the spreading war will end sooner. "We need to have a ceasefire today, and we need everybody in the international community, for once ... to be brave enough to say what's happening," he told Reuters, a message he said he would stress in Paris. "There is a member state of the UN waging war against a small nation in the most aggressive manner we've ever seen in the history of Lebanon. This should be the message," he said.

Yassin said if the displacement figures continue to grow, Lebanon would be unable to prevent possible illegal migration to Europe. "We won't stop people from leaving here, and taking all routes to leave these atrocities happening every day," he said. Yassin said he estimated the damage to Lebanon to be in the billions of dollars. "Full villages on the border were blown up in the last few days, but also public institutions ... water establishments, pumping stations, hospitals, you name it. All of these need to be rebuilt."

Lebanese authorities have yet to put a firm estimate on the scale of destruction across Lebanon and how much money it will take to rebuild. Nasser Saidi, a former economy minister, told Reuters last week that the Zionist entity's bombing campaign has caused damage that will cost \$25 billion to repair. UNDP's resident representative Blerta Aliko said on Tuesday the damage would be far-reaching and include "a drastic capital loss" — including to Lebanon's ability to feed itself long-term. "I'm not talking from the perspective of what is required in an immediate term, in the next month — I'm talking about the impact that has on the harvesting season ... being impacted in the south, being impacted in the east, which are very, very important for the country," she said. — Reuters

International

US election campaigns target overseas voters

Around 1.6m Americans abroad eligible to vote in seven crucial swing states, says DNC

PARIS: Bob Vallier, a Paris resident who has mostly lived outside the United States for the past 30 years, has already voted in his home state of Michigan for the November 5 election. "I know that whatever happens in America affects the rest of the world. I know this because I've lived in the rest of the world," said Vallier with Democrats Abroad. Vallier's vote, and the ballots of other Americans overseas, may be crucial in the tight races of battleground states like his. Michigan is one of the election's most competitive states, with latest polls showing Democratic candidate Kamala Harris holding a slight edge over Republican rival Donald Trump. The Democratic National Committee estimates that 1.6 million US voters abroad are eligible to vote in one of the seven battleground states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — that will likely determine the outcome of the election.

The group is believed to favor Democrats. Among people who used Vote From Abroad, a nonpartisan voter support tool linked to the DNC, three-quarters of overseas voters in the 2020 election said they were Democrats. So for the first time in a presidential election the DNC has given Democrats Abroad funding — around \$300,000 — to help register Americans overseas to vote and ramp up

its mail-in voting operations and other efforts. It has taken out ads on social media urging Americans abroad to send in their ballots. "This election will be won on the margins, and every single vote counts," said DNC spokesperson Maddy Mundy in a statement. "We're going to win this election by engaging every eligible voter, no matter where they live."

Tax red tape

Republican presidential candidate Trump is also after American expatriates. Earlier this month he said he would end the double taxation of overseas Americans. The former president's campaign has not offered further detail on how the policy would work but it could end a burdensome requirement that mandates US citizens to file income taxes in the United States regardless of where they live.

While Americans abroad do not have to pay US tax on their first \$126,500 in earned income and are eligible for some foreign tax credits, it can be a bureaucratic headache expatriates from many other countries don't face. "For many Americans abroad, including myself, the only consistent interaction we have with the US government is through the IRS every April when we have to file and pay our taxes," said Zennon Kapron, a Singapore-based fintech consultant registered to vote in New York, when

asked if Trump's proposal was a factor he would consider. "If a candidate seriously addresses tax reform for expatriates, that could influence my decision," he added.

Solomon Yue, chief executive of Republicans Overseas, said Republicans had fought to improve taxation policies for Americans abroad for years, adding it could "totally" impact the expatriate vote. "I already see Democrats Abroad panicking," he said. Despite Trump's tax pledge, he has also said, without evidence, that Democrats are pursuing the overseas vote to cheat. The Republican National Committee, which is largely integrated with the Trump campaign, has targeted overseas voting in legal challenges, notably Pennsylvania. If the lawsuit is successful, it would decrease the number of Americans abroad who could vote. The move to try to block some overseas votes prompted six Democrats in the US House of Representatives to write a letter to the defense secretary asking if the lawsuit would "affect the constitutional rights of service members" and referred to House Republicans' allegations as an attempt "to sow discord and misinformation." Two other lawsuits in Michigan and North Carolina filed by Republican officials that aimed to block some Americans living overseas from voting in those states were thrown out by judges on Monday.

The challenge with attracting overseas



KENOSHA: Stickers given to voters sit on a table at the Kenosha Municipal Building where an election official collects mail-in ballots from residents on October 21, 2024 in Kenosha, Wisconsin. — AFP

voters, a group whose size is estimated by major political parties and outside experts to be somewhere between 4.4 million and 9 million, is that only a small fraction are believed to vote. Unlike citizens of many other countries, US voters cannot line up on Election Day at their embassies. Instead, they must submit ballots to the states where they are registered,

usually by mail. According to the US Federal Voting Assistance Program, most eligible overseas voters tend not to vote, with fewer than 8 percent estimated to have sent in ballots in the 2020 presidential election, compared with an overall turnout rate of 67 percent. The overseas voter participation rate in the 2022 midterm elections was just 3.4 percent. — Reuters

Is Elon Musk's \$1m US voter lottery legal?

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump surrogate Elon Musk's offer of a million dollars to one registered voter in a swing state every day until the US Election Day on November 5 has raised questions about the legality of such a move. While Democratic candidate Kamala Harris's campaign has not commented on the contest, Josh Shapiro, the Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania, said on NBC's Meet the Press: "I think it's something that law enforcement should take a look at." Musk, the world's richest man, announced the contest Saturday in Pennsylvania, one of the seven "swing states" that will likely determine who will become the next US president — Harris, or Republican Trump. The contest requires entrants sign a petition "to support free speech & the right to bear arms," Tesla and SpaceX CEO Musk said on X, the social media platform he owns.

The endeavor enters hot water with the requirement that people are registered to vote in swing states in order to participate. Danielle Lang, a professor at Georgetown Law School who specializes in election law, told AFP the contest could be "subject to civil or criminal enforcement by the Department of Justice." "It is illegal to give out money on the condition that recipients register as voters," she said. "As

the terms of this 'contest' to win \$1 million require the recipient to be a registered voter in one of seven swing states (or to register if they have not already), the offer violates federal law," she continued.

Gray area

Rick Hasen, a political science professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Law, expressed a similar sentiment on his Election Law Blog. He cited the specific law that prohibits anyone who "pays or offers to pay or accepts payment ... for registration to vote," adding that the penalty involves a fine of \$10,000 or up to five years imprisonment. Not everyone is of the same mindset, however.

Brad Smith, the former chairman of the Federal Election Commission, told the New York Times what Musk is doing is "something of a gray area." Since Musk is not paying people to register directly, but rather for signing a petition, "I think he comes out OK here," Smith said. For his part, Musk defends his move by saying it is a simple get out and vote effort. "We want to make sure that everyone in swing states hears about this and I suspect this will ensure they do," he wrote on X.

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Musk has pulled out all the stops in recent weeks to support former president Trump, including donating \$75 million to a pro-Trump political action committee and appearing at campaign rallies. "Just go out there and talk to your friends and family and acquaintances and people



PITTSBURGH: SpaceX and Tesla founder Elon Musk awards Kristine Fishell with a \$1 million check during the town hall at the Roxain Theater on October 20, 2024. — AFP

you meet in the street and ... convince them to vote," he told the crowd at the rally where he announced the petition contest. Lang said that schemes such as these occur "each election cycle." "We tend to see

some businesses that engage in some questionable activity along these lines (such as offering a free item for showing an 'I Voted' sticker) but this is notable for its far larger size," she said. — AFP

Iran's neighbors won't allow use of...

Continued from Page 1

However, he expressed optimism that regional countries, given their resources and potential, can prevent a broader war. Araghchi also noted that Iran is closely monitoring US military movements in the region. "We are monitoring closely the movements of American bases in the region and are aware of all their movements and flights," Araghchi said, adding: "If (the Zionist entity) attacks Iran in any form, Iran will respond in the same format."

He said Iran's allies have assured that their territories and airspace will not be used for any attack against the country. "All our neighbors have assured us that they won't allow their soil or airspace to be used against the Islamic Republic of Iran," he told the press conference, weeks after Iran's Oct 1 missile attack on the Zionist entity. He stressed regional countries have informed him of their rejection of any aggression against Iran and its nuclear facilities.

When asked about threats to Iran's nuclear facilities, Araghchi warned: "If Iran's infrastructure is attacked, the (Zionist) enemy knows very well what the Iranian response will be." "Attacking nuclear sites is a big international crime; even threatening (to attack) nuclear sites is a crime and against international rights," he said. "To defend ourselves and our nuclear sites, we have our own tools and methods,

and we count on them," the minister added. The minister highlighted Iran's policy of good neighborliness, particularly with Gulf states. He mentioned that two weeks ago, Iranian officials met with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers for the first time. Araghchi also referred to his visit to Bahrain for positive political discussions, noting that Kuwait is the 11th stop on his regional tour that has also taken him to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.

"There is mutual understanding and awareness of the need to avoid war," he said. Araghchi stressed that Iran's efforts with regional countries aim to promote de-escalation and bring peace and stability to the region. He concluded by emphasizing Iran's commitment to strengthening relations with all neighboring countries, particularly Kuwait, with which he said Iran shares "extremely distinguished ties".

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a letter addressed to HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Masoud Pezeshkian. The message, delivered at Bayan Palace by Araghchi, focused on bilateral relations between Kuwait and Iran, as well as ways to enhance and expand cooperation across various fields. The communication also touched on recent regional and international developments.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met Tuesday with Araghchi on the occasion of his official visit to the country. During the meeting, bilateral ties between the two friendly countries, boosting cooperation and the latest regional and global developments were discussed.

done plans to attend the previous summit in ICC member South Africa. This time, the Kremlin wants to show an "alternative to Western pressure and that the multipolar world is a reality," Kalachev said, referring to Moscow's efforts to shift power away from Western nations.

Ahead of the summit, AFP journalists in Kazan reported heightened security and a visible police presence. The surrounding Tatarstan region, which is some 1,000 km from the border with Ukraine, has previously been hit by long-range Ukrainian drone attacks. Movement around the city center is being limited, residents advised to stay home, and university students moved out of dormitories, local media reported.

Starting with four members when it was established in 2009, BRICS has since expanded to include other emerging nations such as South Africa, Egypt and Iran. But the group is rife with internal divisions, including between key members India and China. Turkey, a NATO member with complex ties to Moscow and the West, announced in September that it wanted to join the bloc. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva cancelled a planned trip to the summit at the last minute after suffering a head injury that caused a minor brain hemorrhage. — AFP

Hezbollah defiant as Zionist strikes...

Continued from Page 1

was responsible for their wellbeing. Previously, the Zionist army said it has captured a total of four Hezbollah fighters since the start of its ground offensive in Lebanon, and released video footage it said showed one of them answering questions. Hezbollah had not captured any Zionist soldiers but had come close, Afif said. "It won't take long before we have captives from the enemy."

He also denied that the group's Al-Qard Al-Hassan Association was involved in financing Hezbollah salaries or weapons and would fulfill its obligations to clients in full even after the Zionist entity targeted it with some 30 strikes on Sunday. The Zionist entity and the US say Al-Qard Al-Hassan, which has over 30 outlets across Lebanon, is used by Hezbollah for money laundering and terrorism financing, assertions the group denies.

The Zionist entity kept up its bombing of Lebanon Tuesday after a late-night strike that killed 18 people near a Beirut hospital, state media reported, as its war on Hezbollah approached the one-month mark. The latest deaths brought the overall toll in Lebanon since Sept 23 to at least 1,552, according to an AFP tally of health ministry figures, although the real number is likely to be higher due to data gaps.

The official National News Agency said four strikes hit Beirut's embattled southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, with AFP footage showing plumes of smoke rising over the area. The strikes forced Hezbollah to cut short the press conference after the Zionist army issued an evacuation order for the area. A Zionist strike hit

a target several hundred meters away from the venue just minutes after reporters left, an AFP video journalist said. One raid in the Ghoberi area levelled an 11-storey apartment complex, AFP images showed.

In the country's south, the Lebanese Red Cross said three paramedics were wounded in a strike on Nabatiyeh as they carried out a rescue mission in coordination with UN peacekeepers. The strikes on Nabatiyeh created a "belt of fire", with scores of residential buildings, shops and cafes wiped out in "less than 30 seconds", NNA said, calling it the heaviest Zionist bombardment of the city since the start of the war. "One street looked like a terrifying battlefield," NNA said.

The Zionist army also bombed Al-Hawsh, just south of the southern city of Tyre, NNA said, with AFP TV footage showing smoke billowing over the area. Tuesday's bombardment followed heavy shelling the previous day that killed a total of 63 people and wounded 234, according to health ministry figures. Monday's toll includes 18 killed, four of them children, in a Zionist strike near a south Beirut hospital, the ministry said.

Another 60 people were wounded in the strike near the Rafic Hariri Hospital, Lebanon's biggest public health facility, located in Jnah a few kilometers from the city center, the health ministry said. There was no evacuation warning for the densely populated neighborhood that has seen an influx of people displaced from areas further south. The hospital sustained minor damage in the strike, with windows shattered and solar panels destroyed, its director said.

But the strike flattened four nearby buildings, an AFP correspondent reported. Rescuers were still combing the rubble for survivors on Tuesday. Among them was resident Ola Eid who said she had watched from her balcony the previous night as her neighborhood was bombed. — Agencies

tary source told AFP, requesting anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Both sides have been accused of war crimes, including targeting civilians, indiscriminately shelling residential areas and blocking or looting aid. The RSF and its allied militias have also been accused of ethnic killings and of using rape as a weapon of war.

In the town of Rufaa, just 50 km north of the state capital, the local resistance committee said on Tuesday that paramilitary attacks on a series of villages in eastern Al-Jazira resulted in at least 20 deaths. The activists accused the paramilitaries of carrying out "vengeful operations against defenseless" civilians, in response to Kaykal's defection. According to the volunteer group Central Observatory for Human Rights, at least seven towns and villages have been hit by "vengeful attacks that pay no heed to the rights of civilians during wartime". — AFP

Over 70 dead in two days of...

Continued from Page 1

A spokesman for army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan said Kaykal and others who defect would receive "amnesty", as war-weary civilians braced for retaliatory attacks.

Mere hours after the army took control of Tamboul — 75 km north of Wad Madani — witnesses reported RSF troops were back "rampaging" through the city. They said paramilitary fighters "shot randomly in the air" and forced civilians to carry away looted goods. By Tuesday, the RSF "repelled an army attempt" to regain the town of Tamboul, a paramili-

BRICS leaders underpin Putin...

Continued from Page 1

Russian banks were cut off from in 2022, as well as the escalating conflict in the Middle East. Moscow has steadily advanced on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine this year while strengthening ties with China, Iran and North Korea — three of Washington's adversaries.

The United States has dismissed the idea that BRICS could become a "geopolitical rival" but has expressed concern over Moscow flexing its diplomatic muscle as the Ukraine conflict rages. By gathering BRICS leaders in Kazan, the Kremlin "aims to show that not only is Russia not isolated, it has partners and allies," Moscow-based political analyst Konstantin Kalachev told AFP.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Putin in 2023 over the illegal deportation of children from Ukraine, and the Russian leader aban-

International

As pollution rises, India, Pakistan arrest farmers

Investigations launched against almost 100 farmers, fines imposed on more than 300 for illegal burning

NEW DELHI: At least 16 farmers have been arrested in India's northern state of Haryana for illegally burning paddy stubble to clear fields, a practice that stokes air pollution in the region around New Delhi at the onset of winter, authorities said on Tuesday. India's national capital region battles pollution each year as temperatures fall and cold air traps construction dust, vehicle emissions and smoke, much of which officials say travels from the neighboring breadbasket states of Punjab and Haryana. Police in Haryana's Kaithal region told Reuters that 22 complaints of stubble burning have been registered this year, and 16 people have been arrested.

Birbhan, a deputy superintendent of police, who uses only one name, said those arrested had been released on bail. Investigations have been launched against almost 100 farmers across Haryana, while fines have been imposed on more than 300, local media reported. Delhi recorded "very poor" air on Tuesday morning, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), with an air quality index (AQI) of 320. An AQI of 0-50 is considered good while anything between 400-500 poses health dangers.

It was the second-most polluted city in the

world on Tuesday, a live ranking by IQAir indicated, after only Lahore in neighboring Pakistan's Punjab province, whose chief minister earlier urged 'climate diplomacy' with India to combat smog. At least 182 complaints have been registered and 71 people arrested for burning stubble and trash, operating prohibited brick-kilns and driving smoke-emitting vehicles, Punjab police said. "Resources have also been allocated for artificial rain and other measures," said senior Punjab minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, adding each instance of artificial rain will cost between 5 million rupees (\$18,000) and 7 million rupees (\$25,200).

India's environment ministry said Delhi's air quality was likely to stay in the 'Very Poor' category (300-400) in coming days due to unfavorable meteorological and climatic conditions. To curb Delhi's pollution authorities have ordered water sprinkling on roads to tackle dust, increasing public bus and metro services and higher parking fees to discourage car use. Environmentalists say the measures are inadequate. "These are only emergency measures... This air pollution mitigation needs a long-term comprehensive solution rather than these ad hoc measures," said environmentalist Vimlendu Jha. — Reuters



AMRITSAR: A farmer burns straw stubble after a harvest, at a paddy field on the outskirts of Amritsar on October 21, 2024. — AFP

Bangladeshis who fled Lebanon recount 'intense' attacks

DHAKA: The first Bangladeshi airlifted home after fleeing Zionist air strikes in Lebanon described the constant fear of living in a city rocked by explosions. Late Monday the first 54 of some 1,800 Bangladeshis wanting to escape the troubled Mediterranean nation flew back to Dhaka on a government-backed flight. Some gave up long-established lives in Lebanon for a deeply uncertain economic future back home. Bangladesh's foreign ministry estimates between 70,000 to 100,000 of its nationals are working in Lebanon, many as laborers or as domestic workers.

For 68-year-old Abul Kashem — who lived in Lebanon's seaside capital Beirut for nearly four decades, including during past heavy fighting in the civil war — the barrage of strikes that began last month was unlike anything he had seen before. "I have never seen any war like this," said Kashem, who worked at a gas station, before it was reduced to rubble. "Everything around the fuel pump where I worked has been destroyed", he said, after arriving

exhausted on a plane chartered by the UN's International Organisation for Migration.

'So intense'

The Bangladeshi workers, striving to earn money to send back home to family in South Asia, were trapped in a conflict that erupted around them. "Five buildings near my residence were brought to the ground," said Mohammad Hossain, 28, who returned from Beirut with his wife and year-old infant. "The attacks were so intense," he added. "The cars are almost melting." Nearly a month of all-out war has killed at least 1,489 people in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry figures.

Bangladesh's Business Standard newspaper has reported at least five Bangladeshi citizens were among those wounded, while thousands have fled Lebanon's border zones. "I feel very good after returning to my home country," Hossain said, speaking as returnees were embraced by relatives welcoming back, some in tears. "When



DHAKA: A Bangladeshi national (left) is received by a relative upon her arrival from Lebanon, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on October 21, 2024. — AFP

the plane left the airport in Lebanon, I immediately felt peace in my mind."

Those returning must now find work at home, with Bangladesh undergoing a political transition after a student-led revolution toppled the autocratic ex-leader Sheikh Hasina from power on August 5. Their income loss will be sorely missed by their families in a nation where more than five percent of

GDP comes from personal remittances, according to the World Bank. Bangladesh's foreign ministry, which said Dhaka is bearing the cost of the flights, added 65 more citizens would return on Tuesday. Ruma Khatun, 30, said she had first fled to Beirut seeking refuge, but said she did not feel safe there either, so was among the first to sign up to leave. — AFP

US pressures India for accountability in Sikh separatist murder plot

WASHINGTON: US officials have told their Indian counterparts they want a speedy result and more accountability after their investigation into Indian involvement in a foiled murder plot against a Sikh activist in the United States, according to a US official. An Indian Enquiry Committee visited Washington last week to discuss India's own investigations after the Justice Department alleged an Indian intelligence official had directed plans to assassinate dual US-Canada citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist, last year. "We've communicated really clearly that the US government isn't going to feel fully satisfied until we see that meaningful accountability takes place," said a US official who de-

clined to be named. "We have been emphasizing that we hope that India will move as quickly as possible through their investigative process."

The Indian embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Washington's message to Indian officials has not been previously reported. Last week, an unsealed indictment showed that the United States had charged Vikash Yadav, described as a former officer in India's Research and Analysis Wing spy service, with directing the plot against a Sikh separatist in New York City.

The indictment alleged that beginning in May 2023, Yadav, described as an employee of the Indian government at the time, worked with others in India and abroad to direct a plot against Pannun. The accusations have tested Washington's relations with India, which the Biden administration sees as a potential counterbalance to China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific. "India remains an incredibly important and valuable strategic partner," the US official said. "We also have to have trust and an ability to work

through very difficult issues like this transparently."

India has labeled Sikh separatists as "terrorists" and threats to its security. Sikh separatists demand an independent homeland known as Khalistan, which would be carved out of India. An insurgency in India during the 1980s and 1990s killed tens of thousands.

Pannun, the Sikh separatist, has alleged that Yadav was a "mid-tier soldier" assigned the task of organizing the assassination by higher-level Indian officials.

India has said little publicly since announcing in November 2023 it would formally investigate the allegations, and it has separately continued a diplomatic dispute with Canada over the June 2023 assassination of another Sikh leader. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in September his country's intelligence agency was pursuing credible allegations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government was behind the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian Sikh separatist. India has denied involvement in both incidents. — Reuters

China unveils first diagnosis guidelines to battle obesity crisis

HONG KONG: China's National Health Commission (NHC) published its first set of guidelines to standardize the diagnosis and treatment of obesity, with more than half of China's adults already overweight and obese, and the rate expected to keep rising. The guidelines, made public on Oct 17, come as China experiences an upward morbidity trend of its overweight and obese population. The rate of overweight or obese people could reach 65.3 percent by 2030, the NHC said. "Obesity has become a major public health issue in China, ranking as the sixth leading risk factor for death and disability in the country," the guidelines said.

China is facing a twin challenge that feeds its weight problem: In a modernizing economy underpinned by technological innovation, more jobs have become static or desk-bound, while a prolonged slowdown in growth is forcing people to adopt cheaper, unhealthy diets. Job stress, long work hours and poor diets are growing high-risk factors in the cities, while in rural areas, agriculture work is becoming less physically demanding and inadequate healthcare is leading to poor screening and treatment of weight problems, doctors and academics say.

The guidelines provide guidance and regulations including in clinical nutrition, surgical treatment, behavioral and psychological intervention, and exercise intervention for obesity. Zhang Zhongtao, director of the guideline drafting committee and deputy head of Beijing Friendship Hospital told the official Xinhua news agency.

China's NHC and 15 other government departments in July launched public awareness efforts to fight obesity. The campaign, set to last for three years, is built around eight slogans: "lifelong commitment, active monitoring, a balanced diet, physical activity, good sleep, reasonable targets and family action." Health guidelines were distributed to primary and secondary schools in July urging regular screening, daily exercise, hiring nutritionists and implementing healthy eating habits — including lowering salt, oil and sugar. Obesity in China is an "unintended consequence of improving living standards in the country", Xinhua said, after China struggled for centuries to feed its population and under-nourishment was a genuine concern for many families before the reform and opening-up in the late 1970s. — Reuters

In South Africa, water shortages are the new reality

JOHANNESBURG: Joyce Lakela runs a nursery in Tembisa, a Johannesburg township, but these days she spends most of her time trying to find water. "It's been going on for five days," she said, lamenting shortages affecting South Africa's largest city where temperatures are rising with the beginning of summer. "This is a big challenge," the elderly woman said, after filling up a large bin with water from a tanker. "The kids have to wash their hands, we have to flush the toilets, and we also have to wash the kids." The crisis is the result of daily restrictions imposed by the city to stop what they say is over-consumption and to allow maintenance work.

While there is enough water in the country's reserves, for individuals like Lakela, who already faced months of electricity shortages last year, the reality is that taps are going dry for hours and sometimes days. Last week, residents of Westbury and Westdene, suburbs to the west of the central business district, blocked the streets in protest against water outages. They burned tires and blocked a road with rocks and debris. Businesses and services have also been affected, including at least one hospital in northern Gauteng, the province of 16 million people which includes Johannesburg and the capital, Pretoria.

Delays, leaks

This comes after Rand Water, the water supplier for Gauteng, this month warned over high water consumption and instructed municipalities to impose



JOHANNESBURG: A general view of the water tower in Northcliff's Eco Park situated some 10 km north-west of Johannesburg on October 22, 2024. — AFP

daily limits. "Water storage could soon be depleted if municipalities do not implement our recommendations. It is essential to act now to prevent the impending disaster," Rand Water said in a statement on October 12. The water company is not just worried about consumers leaving taps on. There are also leaks and "illegal connections", or theft by individuals who divert pipelines and do not pay bills. "We are losing an average of over 40 percent (of our water) if you look at it in Gauteng," Makenosi Marooa a spokeswoman for the utility told AFP.

Leaks are often cited by the municipalities as a reason for maintenance-related outages. "We're not replacing anywhere near as much infrastructure as we should be," said Craig Sheridan, director of the Centre in Water Research and Development at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. For Chris Herold, another water expert, "one of the main problems is that they (the municipalities) are incompetently run, and there's also a lot of corruption which is hindering the efficient running of water systems."

Municipalities insist that they are doing what they can with the resources they have. According to at least one city in the province, Ekurhuleni, it is the utility that is not providing enough water and leaving the reservoirs empty. But Rand Water is only licensed to withdraw a fixed amount approved by the Department of Water and Sanitation. Already back in 2009, it was clear that more was needed as Gauteng's population was rapidly expanding. The government made a deal with neighboring Lesotho to expand the bulk water supply to Rand Water. The project initially meant for 2018 has been delayed until 2028 and as a result, sporadic restrictions to reduce demand are likely to continue.

Climate change

The rules could become more severe if South Africans do not change their habits, authorities have warned, adding that there could also be "financial implications". The country is already considered water scarce, with an average annual precipitation of 450mm per year compared to the global annual average of 786mm per year, and a warming planet will exacerbate the issue.

Under a moderate climate change scenario, in which global emissions peak around 2040 and then decline, the amount of precipitation could fall by as much as 25 percent in South Africa by the end of the century. The estimates were released in a report published this month by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water. "There's definitely a sense of urgency," said Sheridan, who is particularly concerned by the health risks linked to turning water systems on and off, which has been South Africa's short term solution. "When a pipe is full of water, the water leaks out of it. If the pipe is empty, then a leaking sewer next to it can potentially contaminate the supply." — AFP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024

IMF predicts slightly slower global growth in 2024, 2025

Growth in Mideast to pick up • US to lead global growth • India, China slow



WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chief Economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas (second left) speaks during the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank annual Fall meetings in Washington, DC, on October 22, 2024. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Global growth is expected to ease slightly to 3.2 percent this year and remain at that level in 2025, the IMF announced Tuesday, while warning that the stable figures masked "important" regional and sectoral shifts. In its new World Economic Outlook (WEO) report, the International Monetary Fund also estimates that global inflation will continue to ease, hitting 5.8 percent this year, before falling to 4.3 percent in 2025.

"We are seeing inflation moving in the right direction without a major slowdown in economic growth or a global recession," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told AFP in an interview ahead of the report's publication. "In our baseline analysis, in advanced economies (inflation) will be back at central bank targets in 2025," he continued, adding it would take "a little bit longer" for emerging markets. The Fund's WEO report noted that global growth is expected to trend to a lackluster 3.1 percent by 2029, and warned of growing risks to that metric.

Beneath the relatively calm outlook for growth through 2025, "the picture is far from monolithic,"

the Fund said, warning of "important sectoral and regional shifts" taking place over the past six months. The WEO's publication comes a day after the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings got underway in Washington, bringing together finance ministers and central bankers from around the world for meetings on the health of the global economy.

The report finds that the United States has remained an engine of global growth—in sharp contrast with the euro area, where expansion remains slow. The world's largest economy is now expected to grow by 2.8 percent this year, down ever-so-slightly from the 2.9 percent seen in 2023, but still a shade better than the Fund's previous estimate in July. It is then expected to ease somewhat to 2.2 percent in 2025 -- up 0.3 percentage points from July—as fiscal policy is "gradually tightened and a cooling labor market slows consumption," the IMF said.

"The US economy has been doing very well," Gourinchas said, pointing to strong productivity growth and the positive effects of a surge in immigration on economic growth. He added that the

United States is "very close" to achieving a soft landing—a rare feat in monetary policy, where inflation falls to within targets without spurring a severe recession. In Europe, growth is still trending higher, but remains low by historical standards, and is on track to be at an anemic 0.8 percent this year, rising slightly to 1.2 percent in 2025.

While France and Spain saw upgrades in their outlook for 2024, the IMF cut its projections for German growth by 0.2 percentage-points this year, and by half a percentage-point next year, citing its "persistent weakness in manufacturing." There was some good news in the United Kingdom, where growth is projected to accelerate in both 2024 and 2025, "as falling inflation and interest rates stimulate domestic demand."

China and India slow

Growth in Japan is expected to slow sharply to just 0.3 percent this year, before accelerating to 1.1 percent next year, "boosted by private consumption as real wage growth strengthens," according to

the IMF. The Fund expects the growth in economic output in China to continue to cool, easing from 5.2 percent last year to 4.8 percent this year, and then falling further to 4.5 percent in 2025. "Despite persisting weakness in the real estate sector and low consumer confidence, growth is projected to have slowed only marginally," the IMF said, pointing to "better-than-expected" net exports from the world's second-largest economy. The slowdown in India looks set to be more pronounced, with the IMF penciling in growth of 7.0 percent this year, down from 8.2 percent in 2023. It is then set to slow even further to 6.5 percent, as the "pent-up demand accumulated during the pandemic" runs out, the IMF said.

The IMF expects growth in the Middle East and Central Asia to pick up slightly to 2.4 percent this year, before jumping to 3.9 percent in 2025 as the temporary effect of oil and shipping disruptions fade. And in Sub-Saharan Africa, the IMF predicts that growth will remain unchanged at 3.6 percent this year, rising to 4.2 percent in 2025 as weather shocks abate and supply constraints ease. — AFP

Global markets may be underestimating geopolitical risks: IMF

WASHINGTON: Near-term global financial risks are contained, but monetary policy easing could fuel asset price bubbles and markets might be underestimating risks posed by military conflicts and impending elections, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday.

In its semi-annual Global Financial Stability Report, the IMF warned that a "widening disconnect" between escalated geopolitical uncertainty and low market volatility increases the chance of a market shock similar to the gyrations seen in August when a Bank of Japan interest rate hike sparked massive de-leveraging. Buoyant credit and equity markets also seem undeterred by a slowdown in earnings growth and the continued deterioration in more fragile segments of the corporate and commercial real estate sectors, the Washington-based multilateral lender said.

It also flagged that while monetary easing by most other major central banks was creating "accommodative" financial conditions, interest rate cuts could stoke lofty asset valuations, a global

rise in private and government debt, and non-bank leverage. "These mounting vulnerabilities could amplify adverse shocks, which have become more probable due to elevated economic and geopolitical uncertainty amid ongoing military conflicts and the uncertain future policies of newly elected governments," it wrote.

The report was released as global finance chiefs gather in Washington for the IMF and World Bank annual meetings during one of the most geopolitically and economically uncertain periods for the world in decades. In addition to the war in Ukraine and an escalating conflict in the Middle East, half the world's population has elected or will elect new governments in 2024, including the US, the IMF noted. In many cases those new leaders' policy plans are unclear, but will carry significant economic consequences.

In particular, economists and Wall Street executives have raised concerns that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's planned import tariff hikes could reignite inflation, while his promised tax cuts could widen the US deficit. The IMF urged central banks to communicate clearly and cut rates gradually, and said regulators should closely monitor corporate debt and commercial real estate, and ensure robust bank supervision. The rise of artificial intelligence also featured in the report. The IMF noted that increased adoption of AI by financial firms could boost speed and efficiency, but also volatility. — Reuters



Palestinians walk down a street with their belongings after leaving their homes in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip on October 22, 2024. — AFP

War has knocked Gaza back to the 1950s, says UNDP

BERLIN: The war by Zionist entity has devastated the Palestinian economy and left nearly all of Gaza's population in poverty, with quality of life indicators such as health and education knocked back 70 years, the United Nations' development agency said on Tuesday.

Launching a study on the war's socioeconomic impacts, the UNDP's Chitose Noguchi said the economy of the Palestinian territories - the Gaza Strip and the Zionist entity-occupied West Bank - was now 35 percent smaller than it was at the start of Zionist entity's invasion of Gaza a year ago. By some measures the poverty level in Gaza was now approaching 100 percent as a result of the disruption, with unemployment now at 80 percent, Noguchi said.

"The state of Palestine is experiencing unprecedented levels of setbacks," she told a UN press

conference in Geneva over a sometimes crackling line from Deir Al-Balah. "For Gaza, reversing development by an estimated 70 years to 1955."

Even under optimal conditions, with international aid remaining at current levels and flowing into Gaza and the West Bank unhindered, it would still take at least a decade for economic output to recover to pre-war levels, she said. Schools, hospitals and other essential infrastructure have been razed to the ground. Nearly 43,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to health ministry figures.

Some 3.3 million Palestinians, 2.3 million of them in Gaza and 1.5 million of them children, need urgent humanitarian assistance, the report said. The cost of repairing damaged infrastructure was expected to run to \$18.5 billion, almost the entire annual economic output of the Palestinian territories in 2022.

The war had taken a similarly severe toll on human capital, the report added, with 625,000 students in Gaza having no access to education at the end of September and 93 percent of school buildings severely damaged. The situation was similar with regard to healthcare. A total of 986 health workers had been killed by the end of September, and less than half of primary healthcare centers were even partially functional. — Reuters



Activists protest against investment in fossil fuels outside of the World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC on October 21, 2024. — AFP



Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Acting Minister of Education, Dr Nader Al-Jalal accompanied by Emad Al-Ablani and Gadeer Al-Kooheji with the NBK team.



Bank's instant recruitment platform during the fair.

NBK participates in 'Watheefti', the largest career fair in Kuwait

Participation reflects bank's dedication to supporting national talent

KUWAIT: Underscoring its dedication to supporting national talent starting their career, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in "Watheefti", the largest career fair in Kuwait.

The fair was held from October 17 to 19 with the participation of many major organizations, companies and brands. It aims to open direct communication channels between companies and job seekers to discuss job opportunities, in addition to encouraging graduates to navigate their way into the labor market. NBK's participation in this fair reflects its commitment to fulfilling its social responsibility and its historical role in supporting the Kuwaiti economy by recruiting and upskilling national talent in order to prepare a new generation capable of taking over leadership positions in the future.

NBK was the first organization in Kuwait to revolutionize recruitment, during its participation in Watheefti Career Fair last year, using Augmented Reality (AR) and 3D glasses to provide an experience that fully simulates the work environment at the bank's headquarters. In addition, NBK's Talent Acquisition Department has integrated sustainable practices into the recruitment process by conducting virtual interviews using digital platforms to streamline the recruitment process and minimize the carbon footprint, in line with the bank's environmental sustainability goals. On this occasion, Gadeer Al-Kooheji, Head of Talent Acquisition, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are constantly striving to reinforce our position as the top private sector supporter of national talent by attracting, developing and upskilling them to qualify them to join the vital banking sector," she said. "Our strategic priorities are to build a bank that is



Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager, Group Human Resources, at NBK with the NBK team during the fair.

always ready for the future with highly qualified cadres to ensure sustainable growth," she added. "NBK enjoys a unique work environment akin to international peers, which raises the slogan "More Than a Workplace" to foster employees' physical and mental well-being," she noted.

NBK stands out as one of the employers of choice that promote diversity and equal opportunities. It also has the highest national employee retention rates while striving to boost Kuwaitization in the banking sector to support the national economy, in line with Kuwait Vi-

sion 2035," she explained. "NBK not only provides job opportunities at a leading local and regional financial institution, but also a promising and sustainable career path, thanks to its world-class professional training resources and programs, which help develop the skills and capabilities of the youth. This goes in line with the bank's vision of investing in national talent and as well as its job nationalization "Kuwaitization" objectives.

NBK's efforts in national talent acquisition go in line with its development and training plans to invest in national cadres and prepare a promising banking

Gadeer Al-Kooheji

- We seek to reinforce our leading position as the top supporter of national talent
- NBK is the first organization to integrate sustainable practices into its recruitment process through digital platforms
- NBK enjoys a unique work environment raising the slogan "More Than a Workplace" to foster employee well-being
- We don't just offer career opportunities, but rather a gateway to a promising and sustainable career path
- The participation reflects our vision of investing in local talent
- NBK is the employer of choice for Kuwaitis, offering diversity and equal opportunities
- We strive to boost Kuwaitization in the banking sector, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035

generation. The bank also offers a wide range of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for the youth. It is worth mentioning that NBK annually sponsors many career fairs for the Kuwaiti youth to introduce to them suitable job opportunities that meet their aspirations. The bank also provides consistent support to all career fairs that help the youth and fresh graduates in finding the right job.



LuLu Hypermarket in Dajeej, Kuwait.

LuLu Retail kicks off one of UAE's biggest IPOs this year

ABU DHABI: LuLu Retail Holdings, which runs one of the Middle East's biggest hypermarket chains, kicked off an initial public offering on Monday that bankers say could be the UAE's largest this year. The offering by the conglomerate that runs more than 240 stores in the six countries belonging to the GCC comes during a retail spending boom in the region that is spurring domestic listings by companies in the sector. The listing, set to run from Oct 28 to Nov 5, will offer more than 2.582 billion shares, which are expected to start trading on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange on Nov 14. LuLu's IPO document showed. Two sources involved in the transaction said the offering could raise between \$1.7 billion-\$1.8 billion for the 25 percent stake. LuLu declined to comment on the value of the deal.



Yusuffali MA, founder and chairman of LuLu Retail

Founded in 1974 by Indian businessman Yusuffali, LuLu joins other grocery firms that have listed, such as UAE-based Spinneys this year, and Saudi grocery retailer BinDawood Holding in 2020. LuLu said in the IPO document that it aimed to maintain a total dividend payout ratio of 75 percent of annual distributable profits after tax, and to make the payout twice a year, subject to relevant parameters. Its first-half revenue of \$3.9 billion this year was up 5.6 percent on the year, while full-year revenue in 2023 rose 5.6 percent to \$7.3 billion. The annual increase in revenue was primarily driven by sales growth from existing stores and further expansion of the group's store network, as well as growth from its online channel. Core

earnings in the first half of 2024 stood at \$391 million, up 4.3 percent on the year. Annual core earnings in 2023 rose 7.2 percent to \$753 million.

LuLu Group is the largest full-line retailer with stores in all GCC countries by selling space, sales and number of stores in 2023. The Group was the second-largest grocery retailer in UAE and largest in Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait and the fastest-growing and largest pan-GCC retailer in Saudi Arabia, according to market consultants. It currently has a strong omni-channel presence in the form of three formats – hypermarkets, express stores and mini-markets.

By August 2024, the group operated 240 stores, comprising 116 hypermarkets, 102 express stores and 22 mini markets with 103 stores located in the UAE, 56 in Saudi Arabia and 81 across other markets. The group's total selling space as of December 31, 2023, was approximately 1.3 million square meters, which was around three times higher than the average selling space of its listed peers in the GCC. The retailer, on average, served over 600,000 daily shoppers every day in 2023. Sourcing products from 85 countries, it operates a network of 21 distribution centers in the GCC to support its retail operations.

Yusuffali MA, founder, chairman of LuLu Retail, said the firm, which was founded in 1974, has exceeded its own expectations as it operates more than 240 stores across six GCC countries. "Integral to our growth is the vision and ambition of GCC nations where strong national leadership is enabling positive demographic and consumption trends and driving impressive economic growth. We're looking forward to welcoming new shareholders to LuLu and are sure they will share our passion for the company and excitement for the future," he said. "LuLu is a brand synonymous with retail in the GCC and we're incredibly proud to announce the launch of our IPO today. Over the past 50 years, we have grown from one store in Abu Dhabi to the largest pan-GCC retailer by market share and the fastest-growing player of scale in Saudi Arabia. Every day, LuLu serves more than 600,000 shoppers, enabled by our unmatched international sourcing network across 85 countries, ensuring we are deeply rooted in all GCC markets and able to offer over 200,000 active SKUs, catering to all our customers' diverse needs," he added. It plans to pay a dividend for the six months ending on December 31 in the first half of 2025. The company posted \$7.27 billion (Dh26.7 billion) revenues in 2023, up from \$6.89 billion in the previous year.

Japan's election outcome could muddle BoJ plans

TOKYO: The risk of Japan ending up with a minority coalition government after the upcoming general election is raising concerns that the central bank could face complications in its quest to gradually wean the nation off decades of monetary stimulus. Several recent polls have shown the possibility of the ruling coalition losing its majority in parliament, which could cost premier Shigeru Ishiba his job or force his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to look for an additional coalition partner to stay in power.

Such a prospect could deprive the BoJ of the political stability needed to steer a smooth lift-off from near-zero interest rates, some analysts say. It will also cause uncertainty in markets as attention is drawn to the policy stance of opposition parties that could become a potential coalition partner, many of which favor maintaining low interest rates. "Many opposition and ruling parties are calling for steps to boost wages, which could make it hard for the BoJ to hike rates until there is more clarity on next year's wage developments," said Naoya Hasegawa, chief bond strategist at Okasan Securities.

"If the ruling coalition loses, markets will start to price in the chance of aggressive fiscal spending and a delay in further interest rate hikes," he said. Expectations of a rate hike delay could push down short-term interest rates, potentially making it even harder for the BoJ to smoothly execute its plans for exiting accommodative policy, analysts say. When Ishiba dissolved parliament on Oct. 9 and called a snap election to be held on Oct. 27, many analysts expected the ruling coalition to comfortably win a majority and give the new premier a freer hand on policy.

That would have allowed Ishiba to meet his pledge, made in a book he published in August, to roll back former premier Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" radical stimulus measures that included the BoJ's ultra-easy policy.

"Extraordinary monetary policy cannot cure Japan's

ills," Ishiba wrote in the book, blaming Abenomics and ultra-low rates for causing excessive yen falls, hurting commercial banks' profits and eroding fiscal discipline.

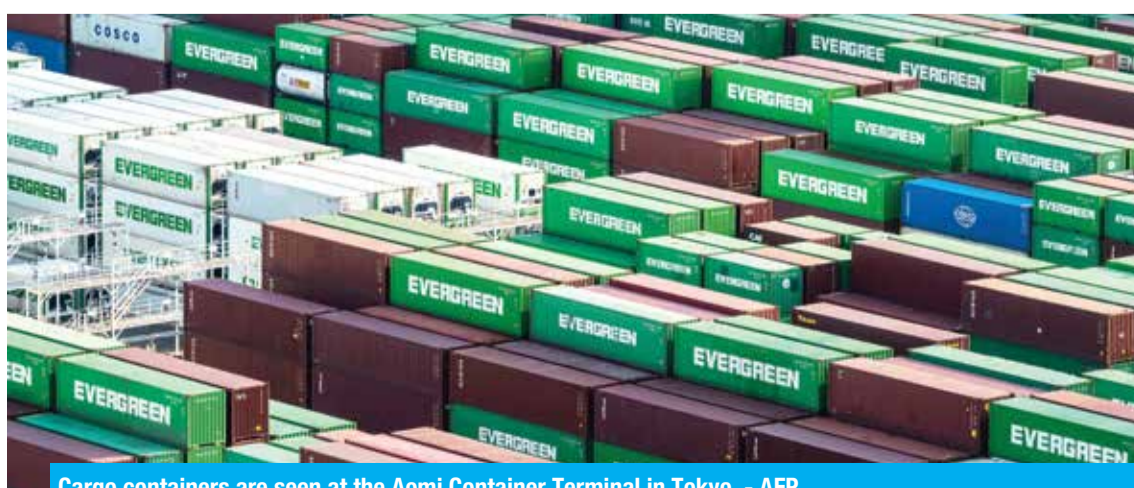
The BOJ ended negative interest rates in March and raised short-term rates to 0.25% in July on the view Japan was making progress towards durably achieving its 2 percent inflation target. BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda has signaled readiness to keep raising rates if the economy moves in line with its projections.

A slim majority of economist polled by Reuters saw the BOJ forging a hike this year, with most expecting the central bank to raise rates again by March next year.

Recent media polls, however, have dashed hopes among policymakers that Ishiba will solidify his standing in the ruling party after the election and support the central bank's gradual exit from ultra-low interest rates. While earlier polls projected the LDP and its coalition partner Komeito would maintain their majority, a weekend poll by the Asahi newspaper showed they may struggle, with the LDP potentially losing 50 of the 247 seats it now has.

Such a huge loss could make Ishiba vulnerable to attack from proponents of aggressive monetary easing like Sanae Takaichi, whom Ishiba narrowly beat in the party's leadership race. If the LDP is forced to court opposition parties to stay in power, that will increase challenges for further rate hikes by heightening uncertainty over the new administration's monetary policy stance. The biggest opposition, Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, has called for modifying the BOJ's inflation target from the current 2 percent to one "exceeding zero" - a move that will leave scope for rate hikes even when inflation slides below 2 percent.

But the party's leader, Yoshihiko Noda, has ruled out the chance of forming a coalition with the LDP. That leaves smaller opposition parties Japan Innovation Party and Democratic Party for the People, as potential coalition partners. The former wants to revise the law giving BOJ independence over monetary policy, and add maximum job creation and sustained economic growth to its mandate. The latter favors expansionary fiscal and monetary policies to achieve higher wage growth. "The hurdle for additional BOJ rate hikes will heighten if such proposals are taken into account in economic policy-making after the election," said Yasunari Ueno, chief market economist at Mizuho Securities. — Reuters



Cargo containers are seen at the Aomi Container Terminal in Tokyo. - AFP

Business

Burgan Bank concludes participation in 'Watheefi' national career fair

Bank confirms its commitment to development of national calibers and aspiring talents



The Burgan Bank team at the bank's booth.

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently concluded its participation in the third edition of Watheefi, Kuwait's largest employment fair, which was inaugurated in the presence of Dr Nader Abdullah Mohammed Al-Jallal, Minister of Higher Education and Acting Minister of Education, in addition to Burgan senior management. The event, held at The Arena Kuwait – 360 Mall, attracted visitors with the participation of over 100 of Kuwait's top companies across various industries. Burgan's active involvement in Watheefi comes as part of its commitment to recruiting and developing Kuwait's top national calibers and preparing a generation of leaders capable of advancing the domestic banking sector and economy. It also echoes Burgan's dedication to adopting the highest Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) banking practices and ensuring that its business success reflects on the growth and development of its community.

"It was a great delight to participate in Watheefi for the third edition, especially following the event's notable success in its first two editions," said Naqeeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources and Development at Burgan Bank. "Through our previous

participation in the employment fair, we were able to meet some of the most ambitious youth and professional talents who are now an integral part of our invaluable human capital. However, it's important to underscore the great responsibility that comes with hiring aspiring and motivated talents; and that is the responsibility to craft a personalized learning and development path that accompanies them throughout their employment at Burgan Bank."

Naqeeb added that Burgan Bank's commitment to advancing talents isn't confined to its staff, highlighting the Bank's efforts in seizing all opportunities to share vital professional and industry-specific knowledge with national talents seeking a career in the banking sector. To this end, Noura Sami Bin Hajji, Senior Officer – Learning and Development, and Raed Saleh Al-Shatti, Senior Officer – Talent Empowerment at Burgan Bank, delivered two workshops at the career advancement event at Grand Hyatt, which took place on the sidelines of the Watheefi employment fair. The workshops, which focused on banking awareness and job interview skills, garnered a notable turnout of participants who were highly engaged with the valuable



A snapshot of the third edition of Watheefi National Career Fair



Abdulwahab Abdullaheem



Naqeeb Amin

presentations and the Q&A sessions that followed. "We were delighted to witness the significant visitor turnout to our booth during the third edition of Watheefi and to have been among some of Kuwait's most prestigious employers and contributors to the country's economic success," said Abdulwahab Abdullaheem, Executive Manager – Talent Acquisition at Burgan Bank. "Burgan Bank's success is the sum

of our brilliant talents' efforts and innovations. To uphold our unyielding standards and commitment to excellence, it is vital that we continue to attract the most aspiring talents who are eager to learn and challenge their own limits – and Watheefi was the perfect setting to meet such calibers."

In line with its committed support for the national financial literacy and banking awareness campaign, "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) – running for its fourth year under the supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the support of Kuwaiti banks – Burgan Bank representatives shared vital information with the booth visitors about safe banking practices as well as the Bank's most recent products and services. It is worth noting that Burgan Bank is a recipient of the Brandon Hall Group Human Capital Management (HCM) Gold Award of Excellence in the "Learning and Development" area under the "Best Use of Social/Collaborative Learning" category as well as the GCC Excellence Award in the Recruitment and Development of Nationals from the Council of Ministers of Labor and Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the GCC States Executive Bureau.

Mercedes opens electric car battery recycling plant

FRANKFURT: Mercedes-Benz inaugurated Monday a plant for recycling electric vehicle batteries in Germany, with the luxury carmaker's boss hailing a "key milestone" in boosting the sector's sustainability.

The plant, in the southwestern town of Kuppenheim, will have an annual capacity to recycle 2,500 tons of material which will feed into producing some 50,000 batteries for the group's electric models.

The factory "marks a key milestone towards enhancing raw-materials sustainability," said Mercedes CEO Ola Kallenius. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who attended the plant opening, said recycling was "key" when it came to EV batteries.

"The circular economy is a green engine and, at the same time, an essential building block for achieving our climate targets," he said. With the clock ticking on an EU deadline to phase out the sale of fossil fuel-burning cars by 2035, there is a growing focus on producing and recycling electric car batteries in the bloc. As well as reducing waste from EVs, recycling is seen as important to boost European sovereignty in the batteries sector, as materials such as cobalt, nickel and lithium mainly come from outside the region. Mercedes has invested tens of millions of euros in the new plant, and says it will be able to recycle more than 96 percent of battery materials.

The plant covers all steps in the process, from shredding battery modules to drying and processing materials, according to the carmaker. The critical metals are extracted individually via a chemical process and will be used to make new battery cells. — AFP

Havana back online as Cuba works to revive power grid

HAVANA: Cuba's power-grid operator said it had restored electricity to most of the capital Havana on Monday even as Tropical Storm Oscar lashed the island's eastern end, downing trees and power lines. Strong winds raked the region as the storm stalled over land, uprooting banana plants and tearing roofs off homes, according to footage from state-run television. More than 10 inches (254 mm) of rain fell in spots, causing landslides and flash floods and cutting off outlying areas.

Most of Cuba's eastern tip remained without power and communications in the latest of multiple grid collapses during the past four days. Energy and Mines Minister Vicente de la O Levy said technicians were working carefully to avoid another electrical collapse given "complex" circumstances.

"The last thing we want is that, as a consequence of a fallen power line, we suffer another collapse of the system," de la O Levy said. Cuban energy officials said they had restored power to 89 percent of Havana by mid-afternoon. Technicians had also re-established service to some outlying provinces as the island's largest power plant, Antonio Guterres, came online, providing a significant boost to generation. — Reuters

Careem launches 'Careem Plus' program in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Careem Rides, the region's choice for facilitating reliable, convenient and stress-free everyday commutes through the Careem Everything app, is excited to announce the launch of the subscription program "Careem Plus" in Kuwait, the fastest-growing subscription program in the region. The newly introduced program aims to introduce benefits to customers using Careem Rides for everyday reliable and convenient commutes around Kuwait, for a fixed monthly fee.

Careem Plus subscribers in Kuwait will receive 10 percent credit back on 10 rides each month, allowing them to save up to KD10 per trip. The credit earned will be added directly to their Careem wallet and can be easily applied towards future rides. Customers will be able to benefit from the program with a 1-month free trial, and following the trial period can continue to enjoy the benefits of Careem Plus for just KD 0.5 per month.

Tokyo Metro: Asia's oldest subway goes public

TOKYO: Every day six and a half million people ride Tokyo Metro's nine lines, part of a dizzyingly complex transport network serving the Japanese megacity and its sprawling suburbs.

Starting Wednesday, Tokyo Metro stock will be traded in Japan's biggest initial public offering (IPO) in six years. It is expected to raise more than \$2 billion to pay off government debts dating from the massive 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Here are some facts about the company and its listing:

Asia's first subway

London built the first public underground railway, but in 1927 Tokyo became the first Asian city with a subway thanks to a 2.2-kilometre (1.4-mile) track from Ueno to Asakusa. The trains ran every three minutes on what is now part of Tokyo Metro's modern-day Ginza Line but were crowded with passengers who previously overran the city's trams.

Having slowed during and after World War II, construction of public transport picked up pace as Japan rebuilt itself into a major economic power. The company Tokyo Metro was incorporated in 2004, adopting its heart-shaped "M" logo in place of the network's previous one: a spiky, space-age "S" for subway.

Complex map

Tokyo Metro's nine lines—named Ginza, Marunouchi, Hibiya, Tozai, Chiyoda, Yurakucho, Hanzomon, Namboku and Fukutoshin—stretch for a total of 195 kilometers (120 miles). The spotless and punctual air-conditioned trains form only one part of a vast underground and overground rail system serving Greater Tokyo, often cited as the world's biggest urban area.

All but two of the nine Tokyo Metro routes connect to other train lines, allowing direct access to the

Commenting on the announcement, Antonio Al-Asmar, General Manager of Careem Rides in Kuwait, UAE, Jordan & Morocco said: "We are delighted to bring Careem Plus to Kuwait and offer customers a program that provides everyday savings and added convenience. The introduction of this subscription program marks an exciting step for Careem's customers in the country, providing not only credit back on Careem rides taken but also access to priority customer support services."

Al-Asmar added: "We understand that many in Kuwait rely on Careem rides for everyday reliable and convenient commutes, and believe this new subscription program will further enhance this experience." In addition to the credit-back benefit, Careem Plus subscribers will also gain priority access to 24/7 customer support services, with top agents available to ensure that any inquiries are promptly and efficiently addressed. This added level of support further enhances the reliability and convenience that customers have come to expect from Careem. As Careem Rides continues to expand its offerings in Kuwait, the company continuously innovates to enhance the experience of both customers and Captains using the platform, and the launch of Careem Plus comes as part of these on-going efforts. Careem's ride-hailing ser-



vice launched in Kuwait in 2017 and has since then been the choice for everyday reliable commutes across the country, bringing a diverse portfolio of products catered for local needs. Customers can choose from a number of options including Taxi; to book everyday affordable taxi rides, Taxi Select which features newer cars with top-rated taxi Captains, Comfort and Comfort Plus which offer reliability and convenience on special occasions or for larger groups, and Luxe for everyday reliable commutes in elegant premium vehicles.

Customers can subscribe to Careem Plus starting from today through the Careem app, and benefit from a 1-month free trial and receive credit back on rides, while enjoying premium customer support when needed.



TOKYO: People ride on the Tokyo Metro underground system in central Tokyo on October 21, 2024. — AFP

capital for commuters in farther flung areas. Four other subway lines are run separately by the Tokyo government, alongside private services and East Japan Railway's overground routes like the Yamanote Line, whose green trains carry millions in a loop around the city.

Unique jingles are played at each Tokyo Metro station when a train is at the platform. For example, at Ginza Station, the Marunouchi line's tunes are called "Tomorrow's Door" and "The March of a Little Bird".

IPO

Wednesday's IPO will be Japan's largest since 2018, when tech and telecoms conglomerate SoftBank Group raised a national record of \$23.5 billion by listing its mobile unit. Currently the national government owns just over half of Tokyo Metro shares and the Tokyo city government owns the rest, with plans to reduce total government ownership to around 50 percent. The funds raised will be used to repay bonds issued to finance the reconstruction of northeastern Japan after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

There has reportedly been strong demand from investors, and Tokyo Metro says those who own 200 shares or more will receive some free tickets to its museum and golf range, as well as free tempura toppings at its noodle stands. The "low volatility" of a firm like Tokyo Metro makes their shares a safe investment prospect for Japanese households, said Hideaki Miyajima, a professor in commerce at Waseda University. "And for institutional investors, the Japanese market is very favorable given the very low exchange rate" of the yen and recent corporate governance reforms, he told AFP.

In earthquake-prone Japan, Tokyo Metro trains are set up to stop just before a powerful jolt hits, using real-time seismic data from monitoring stations. Climate change is also bringing more frequent and intense flooding to the capital, with some Tokyo subway stations inundated in August by torrential rain. Also buried beneath the Greater Tokyo area is the world's largest flood tank, a cavernous subterranean reservoir built to protect the metropolis from storms and typhoons. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024



Three-year-old German 'mini-Picasso' makes splash in art world

Three-year-old Laurent Schwarz may still be wearing nappies but his paintings have earned him social media fame and the nickname of Germany's "mini-Picasso". In a studio his parents have set up at their home in the Bavarian town of Neubeuern, the toddler has been busy creating splashy artworks, often several times bigger than he is.

When he is not playing with his dinosaur toys, he likes to liberally apply acrylic paint to canvas with brushes, rollers or just his fingers to create riot-

ously abstract pieces. His parents said his works have attracted the eye of art lovers and galleries and fetched high prices. They insisted it was Laurent's artistic passion that has fueled the art world hype, media interest and his very early brush with fame.

His 33-year-old mother Lisa Schwarz told AFP that the family discovered Laurent's love for painting on a family holiday last year, at a hotel which had a studio. "When we got home, Laurent just wanted to paint—paint, paint, paint, the whole time," she said. She and her husband Philipp bought him some canvases, brushes and paint, and it was not long before family and friends were clamoring to see the prodigy's work.

They set up an Instagram account to share images of his work more easily and said they were soon bowled over by the response. "Within four weeks we had got 10,000 followers," said Lisa, with enquiries from galleries following

details on sales and buyers.

'Always painting'

Laurent is not the first child artist to capture the public's imagination. In 2022 for example, 10-year-old

everything has been sold", Laurent "is always painting new ones," said Philipp, 43. "There are pictures that we don't sell, for example his first work or ones that he particularly likes," he explained. Laurent's parents said they



Laurent Schwarz (second right) is pictured with his mother Lisa, sister Paulina and father Philipp in his playroom.



Laurent Schwarz paints an artwork in his studio.



Laurent Schwarz gestures as he creates an artwork.



Laurent Schwarz creates an artwork in his studio in his parents' house.



Laurent Schwarz creates an artwork in his studio.



Laurent Schwarz explains one of his artworks.



Laurent Schwarz reacts next to his mother Lisa while creating an artwork.

soon after, and interest from newspapers in Germany and abroad which quickly dubbed him the "mini-Picasso".

The Instagram account now has 90,000 followers and at a sale of Laurent's work in September buyers from around the world showed interest, according to his parents. They said some works have sold for hundreds of thousands of euros, but declined to divulge

American Andres Valencia sold his Picasso-influenced works for several hundred thousand dollars. In the late 1990s, Romanian-American artist Alexandra Nechita also drew comparisons with the Spanish master at the tender age of 12. Laurent's parents said they are still surprised at the reaction to their son's work.

While at the moment "almost ev-

are keeping the money paid for his work in an account in his name which he will be able to access when he is an adult. "He can study painting, buy a car, play an instrument, play football... It's up to him to choose," said Philipp, 43. "The important thing for us is that he's happy." — AFP

Lifestyle



Freshly rolled cigars are displayed on a counter as a Mozambican cigar roller also known as a "torcedor" (right) prepares some tobacco leaves at the Bongani Cigars workshop in Maputo.--AFP photos



Mozambican cigar rollers, also known as "torcedores" assemble cigars at the Bongani Cigars workshop in Maputo.



A Mozambican cigar roller also known as a "torcedor" assembles cigars at the Bongani Cigars workshop in Maputo.



Mozambican cigar rollers, also known as "torcedores" assemble cigars at the Bongani Cigars workshop in Maputo.

In Mozambique, cigars 100% made in Africa

In a small neon-lit factory in Maputo, a dozen workers are hand-rolling premium cigars intended for the global market, seemingly undisturbed by the pungent tobacco smell. Sitting at wooden benches, men and women stack tobacco leaves in one hand — the components must be dry but soft, like the velvety texture of leather. A large wrapper leaf made in Cameroon and recognizable by its delicate finish is torn in half before being rolled around the cigar, its last layer.

"Not many people know about African cigars" and that some are produced in Mozambique, said Eugenia Mauaie, with a proud smile. The 38-year-old has been working at Bongani Cigars since the company was founded eight years ago. The tobacco is mainly made in Mozambique, but for some products it comes from the Dominican Republic, a key producer for cigar aficionados. Anthony Padilla Perez, who runs the workshop, grew up in the Caribbean nation in



Mozambican cigar rollers, also known as "torcedores" assemble cigars at the Bongani Cigars workshop in Maputo.

a family of tobacco producers.

"Each leaf has a function: its burning quality, its strength and its smell," said the 38-year-old, sporting a shaved head and trimmed goatee. Once the tobacco is rolled and a wrapper applied, a worker cuts each end of the cigar to the re-

quired size and places it in a mold for at least 24 hours to get the desired shape. The last step is finishing the tip, which is made round with small pieces of tobacco cut and stuck together with a drop of vegetable gum.

Adventurous bet

"There was a gap to fill here in Mozambique, where the climate and soil are great for quality tobacco production," said Perez. An African cigar, "surprises consumers" he said, and "makes people curious" about the brand, which translates to "be grateful" in Zulu. The founder, Kamal Moukheiber, got the idea "probably one drunken night", he joked, in a cafe in Maputo where he was on a business visit.

"I was with some friends and I saw people smoking cigars. And I wondered: why are there no African cigars?" "Often, raw materials are produced in Africa and shipped elsewhere to be repackaged and rebranded," said

Moukheiber, like coffee or chocolate, depriving the continent of much needed resources. The 55-year-old Lebanese who used to work in finance in London and had "never produced anything", launched the company after thorough research, to try something new.

His first Bongani cigars were sold in a shop in Mozambique in 2016. He now employs a dozen people and manufactures 10,000 to 12,000 cigars per month.

About a third of the cigars are shipped across Africa, with Mozambique and South Africa its largest markets, but they are also available online. Another third is sold in the United States and the last third in Europe, where they are popular among black consumers, Moukheiber said. Priced at 13 dollars a piece, each model has to be perfectly crafted, "otherwise you don't have a business", said the entrepreneur, who travels the world to market his brand in a competitive industry. —AFP

'SERIOUS BUSINESS': INFLUENCER DEGREE LAUNCHES IN IRELAND

It's a job that didn't exist until recently but becoming an influencer is an ever more popular career path among Gen-Z youth in the modern era of social media. Now a first-of-its-kind course at an Irish university is teaching wannabe influencers how to convert online presence and content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube into revenue streams. "Influencing is something that's catching fire," course director Irene McCormick told AFP at South East Technological University (SETU) in Carlow, an hour's drive southwest from the capital Dublin.

The idea grew out of a summer crash course "Digital Hustle" launched by McCormick that was taught by TikTokers and attracted 350 applicants for 30 places. "It got amazing traction, we could see the appetite for more, so we broadened it to degree level," said McCormick, a former television producer and director. After two years of development the course -- a four-year-long bachelor's degree in "Content Creation and Social Media" -- received accreditation and welcomed its first intake of 15 students last month.

On the state-of-the-art campus, students chatted, took selfies and scrolled their social media feeds on smartphones during a break between classes. "My friends tell me I talk a lot so I thought I might as well make money out of it and try this course," Harry Odife, 22, told AFP in the campus TV studio during a roleplay exercise. Most of the students are already immersed in the digital space or working in it and want to expand their toolset and knowledge, McCormick said. "You can try to learn yourself at home but being empowered with practice and theory about how to



Czech Republic student, 19-year-old Denisa Lacinova (left) and Irish student, 22-year-old Harry Odife, are pictured through the monitor of a camera in the media room at the South East Technological University (SETU) in Carlow, eastern Ireland where a new course has started in Content Creation and Social Media. --AFP photos

connect with target demographics online is going to make a big difference to your career," she added.

Person branding

The term "influencer" was officially added to the dictionary in 2019, and refers to a person well-known through use of social media who uses their celebrity to endorse, promote, or generate interest in products and brands, often for payment. Now the most prominent such as YouTube challenge stunt creator Mr Beast and gaming vlogger KSI tap vast online audiences, earning huge sums per sponsored post or via brand sponsorships and advertisements.

Surveys consistently show that most Gen-Z youths -- those born between 1997 and 2012 -- would consider a job as a vlogger, YouTuber or

professional streamer. "Of course people want to make money from influencing, so we look particularly at person branding, how to monetize being influential over large online followings," said McCormick.

Students said they hoped the course would help them leverage their interests and hobbies which range from beauty and fashion to entertainment, social justice, and sport. "I post a lot of the hairstyles I do on TikTok and Instagram, it would be nice to have the knowledge to grow that into an actual business," said Favour Ehuchie, an 18-year-old hairdresser.

Another student, keen equestrian Marta Hughes Bravo, said horse stud farms now seek staff who are social media-savvy. "Companies are all over Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. One

girl who works for a farm has been pulling in brand deals. To know how to do that would be fantastic," she said.

'Serious business'

Degree modules include creative video and storytelling psychology, entrepreneurship, celebrity studies, storytelling psychology, data analytics, and podcasting. "A lot of people think it's an easy life being an influencer, just posting 60-second videos on TikTok, but there is way more to it," said Hughes Bravo.

Creating content involves "editing, planning, organizing, and so on, it takes up more time than you might think, people don't understand that quite yet." Practical elements of the course include camera and microphone learning, and work placements. "Having influencer knowledge like how to be comfortable in front of cameras will help us build our confidence, whatever we end up doing," said another student Naoise Kelly, adding that becoming the next big thing on social media is not her top priority.

McCormick said employment opportunities for influencer talent are multiplying exponentially, either in front of camera or behind the scenes. "Yes, influencer posts on social media may sometimes be frivolous, but the actual business is not, it is a very serious business," she added. "So many Gen Z young people buy a lot of bling, and that bling is being sold through influencers. "Around 70 percent of marketers now believe in influencers as the future of marketing, governments are also using them to message people, that's how we access markets now." —AFP



Irene McCormick, Course Director of the new Content Creation and Social Media course, poses for a photograph.



Irene McCormick interacts with her students at the South East Technological University (SETU) in Carlow.



Czech Republic student, 19-year-old Denisa Lacinova is pictured through the monitor of a camera.



Student Favour Ehuchie poses for a photograph.



Irene McCormick interacts with her students at the South East Technological University (SETU) in Carlow, eastern Ireland.



Students are photographed at the South East Technological University (SETU) in Carlow.

Lifestyle



Rida Fatima speaks during an interview with AFP at her residence in Rawalpindi. --AFP photos



People visit a stall at an event organized by the Wedding Planning Services, in Islamabad.



A consultant (right) writes details of a client at a marriage matchmaking office, in Karachi.

'LOVE MATCH' APPS RIVAL TRADITIONAL MATCHMAKING IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's traditional matchmakers play a revered role in molding daughters into potential brides, but marriage apps marketing themselves as halal are offering women a new route to finding a husband. "When I saw my colleague happy after being married to someone she met online... I thought, since we have tried rishta aunties for four or five years, let's try this too," Ezza Nawaz, a textile designer in Lahore, told AFP.

Rishta aunties -- or traditional matchmakers -- polish up women and present them to the families of potential suitors, in a country where dating is considered dishonorable. But in the last few years, marriage apps for Muslims have emerged in Pakistan promising so-called "love matches". Some offer a "chaperone" option -- which provides a weekly transcript of sent and received messages to a chosen relative, satisfying families wary of their son or daughter connecting with strangers. For Ezza, it was a success: just three months after meeting Waseem Akhtar on Muzz, she was married. "We went on a couple of dates before we got our family involved. We took our time," she said.

More than 80 percent of Pakistanis have arranged marriages, according to a survey by Gallup and Gilani Pakistan, where families decide the union, sometimes settling an engagement without



Fauzia Aazam (right), head of a community of rishta aunties, is being greeted by her fellow matchmaker during an annual meeting in Rawalpindi.

the bride and the groom even meeting. Parents enlist the help of professional rishta aunties to help find a suitable family, with the first impression often based on how the young woman looks as she pours tea for her potential in-laws. The app, however, says 1.2 million Pakistanis have signed up since it launched last year with an advertising campaign in major cities, and 15,000 people have already married.

Marriage apps describe themselves as "halal", or permissible in Islam, offering options to blur profile pictures for privacy and making clear the purpose is to reach a proposal. But they continue



Marriage matchmakers click a selfie during their annual meeting in Rawalpindi.

to battle a stigma linking them to casual dating apps such as Tinder, which has been banned in Pakistan for being "immoral". "I do not tell people how I met my wife until I am sure that the person would not judge us," said Waseem.

Tradition dates modernity

Marriage is viewed as a coming together of two families in Pakistan, where many live in multigenerational households. Choosing your husband or wife yourself can be seen as a challenge to the deeply ingrained reverence towards elders and a threat to the traditional family structure. Rishta aunties are therefore relied upon to find suitors from ac-

ceptable families -- a process that young women, who are widely expected to marry by the age of 25, can sometimes find demeaning.

"I was asked not to tell the guy's family that my hobbies are hiking or photography, but are cooking and cleaning... it made me angry," said Rida Fatima. "They had the audacity to talk about how I looked, what I did, how much I earned, who my family is, how many brothers I have, what are my future aspirations. So every little thing is judged." Fatima was presented with several potential matches through a rishta auntie appointed by her parents, but was asked to pay around \$700 for an introductory meeting with a guy.

The rate fluctuates depending on whether the match has a foreign passport, she added. Eventually, she ditched the process, becoming part of the 18 percent of Pakistanis who have a "love marriage" after meeting her husband by chance. "No matter how the guy looks, even if he is bald or has a big belly, he wants a wife who looks like a model," said Muskan Ali, the managing director at a marriage consultancy in Karachi.

Waste of time

Rishta aunties do not feel threatened yet. Their offices buzz with parents and their children crafting profiles on computers, as matchmakers strive to digitize

their businesses with sleek websites and WhatsApp groups for client communication. Consultants teach young women how to walk, talk and dress to best correspond to the wishes of their future in-laws. Many traditional matchmakers like Fauzia Aazam, the head of a community of rishta aunties in Rawalpindi, reject marriage apps altogether. "People waste time on these apps," she said.

"Chatting together all through the night, I just don't like it." For Aisha Sarwari, a feminist author, the matchmaking process is about exercising "control" over daughters-in-law. "I would say that we need to find a good middle ground, where the respect is equal on both sides and there is no sense of demeaning a human being just because they look a certain way or they are from a particular race," she told AFP. Aneela, a digital media artist, whose name has been changed, tried her best to avoid being poured over by a matchmaker and turned to a marriage app, but found a new set of concerns. "It is hard being on an app... men lie," she said, swiping through her profile at a cafe in Islamabad. She later admitted to using a fake name and pictures on her profile so that men cannot identify her. "The only option left is to go for an arranged marriage instead." --AFP



Visitors sit in a stall during an event organized by the Wedding Planning Services.



People visit stalls at an event organized by the Wedding Planning Services, in Islamabad.



Ezza Nawaz (right), a textile designer who got married through Muzz app, sits next to her husband Waseem Akhtar while watching their wedding photographs on a laptop at their residence, in Lahore.

Toxicology tests show Liam Payne had 'multiple' drugs in system

Pop star Liam Payne had multiple drugs including crack cocaine and methamphetamine in his system when he fell to his death from a hotel balcony in Argentina, according to initial toxicology reports cited by US media on Monday. The British singer and former One Direction member died last week at the age of 31, after plunging from a third-floor hotel room in Buenos Aires.

ABC News and TMZ said a cocktail of drugs called "pink cocaine" -- containing methamphetamine, ketamine and MDMA -- had been found during a partial autopsy, citing anonymous sources familiar with the preliminary tests. Crack cocaine and benzodiazepine were also listed. An "improvised aluminum pipe to ingest drugs" was also found in the room, ABC reported.

Payne -- who was found dead after

staff called emergency services twice to report a guest "overwhelmed by drugs and alcohol" was "destroying" a hotel room -- had spoken publicly about struggles with substance abuse and coping with fame from an early age. Post-mortem results indicated that he was alone at the time of the fall and "was going through an episode of substance abuse," prosecutors had previously said.

The singer suffered "multiple traumas" and "internal and external hemorrhaging," they said. The Clarin newspaper published photos last week of what it said was the interior of Payne's room, with white powder visible on a table next to a piece of aluminum foil and a lighter. The pictures also showed a television with a broken screen. The prosecutor's office said substances that appeared to be "narcotics and alcoholic beverages"

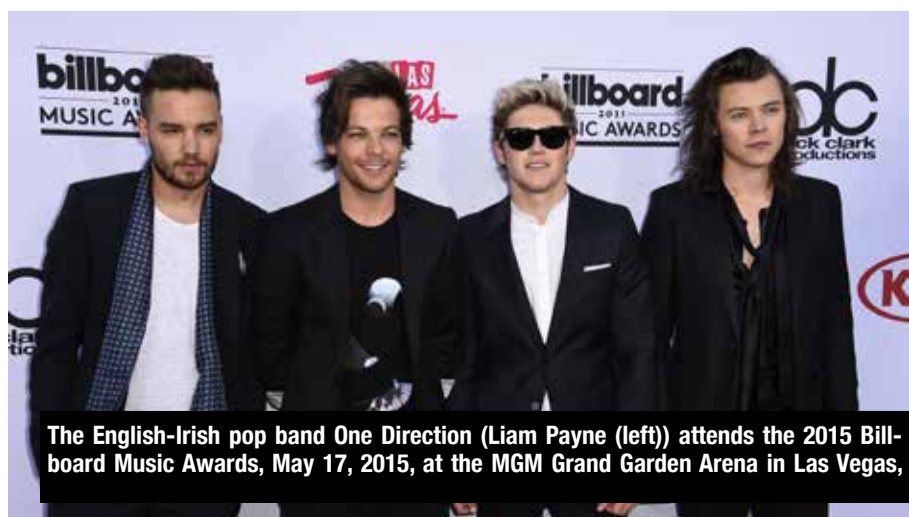
had been found in the room, amidst pieces of broken furniture and other objects.

A hotel employee suspected of providing Payne with drugs on the day he died has been interviewed by officials, but not arrested or charged, local police told ABC News. Payne was a member of One Direction, the hugely successful pop group whose fame began in 2010 on the British television talent contest "The X Factor."

One of the highest-grossing live acts in the world, the group went on indefinite hiatus in 2016. Payne went on to enjoy solo success, but in recent years spoke openly about struggles with alcoholism and fame. He was the father of a seven-year-old boy shared with Girls Aloud star Cheryl Tweedy. --AFP



Handout photo released by the Buenos Aires Police showing a candle and traces of white powder on a table of the hotel room where late British musician Liam Payne was staying in Buenos Aires.--AFP photos



The English-Irish pop band One Direction (Liam Payne (left)) attends the 2015 Billboard Music Awards, May 17, 2015, at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas,

Harvey Weinstein diagnosed with bone marrow cancer

Disgraced Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein has been diagnosed with a form of bone marrow cancer, US media reported Monday, a month after he was indicted on a new sex crime charge. Weinstein, 72, has chronic myeloid leukemia and is undergoing treatment in a New York prison, according to NBC News and ABC News, citing sources. His reported diagnosis comes after a string of health issues for the once-powerful entertainment mogul, who appeared pale and visibly frail during a brief court appearance in September.

He also underwent emergency heart surgery last month, after which his representative said he was "out of danger at the moment." Juda Engelmayer, Weinstein's spokesperson, said it was "troubling" that his health issues "have become a subject of public discourse." "Out of respect for Mr. Weinstein's privacy, we will offer no further comment," Engelmayer told AFP. Weinstein is serving a 16-year prison sentence after being convicted on rape charges in California.

He was also convicted in New York in 2020 of the rape and sexual assault of an actress and of forcibly performing oral sex on a production assistant. He was sentenced to 23 years in prison in that case. However, a New York appeals court overturned the verdict in April, ruling that the trial judge had allowed testimony in error from accusers who were not directly involved with the charges facing Weinstein.

A retrial in the case had been slated



Harvey Weinstein (center) uses a walker as he leaves Manhattan Criminal Court February 20, 2020 after the third day of jury deliberations in his sex crimes trial in New York.--AFP

for November, though prosecutors had deemed that "unrealistic." Allegations against Weinstein helped launch the #MeToo movement in 2017, a watershed moment for women fighting sexual misconduct. More than 80 women accused him of harassment, sexual assault or rape, including prominent actors Angelina Jolie, Gwyneth Paltrow and Ashley Judd. Weinstein has claimed any sexual relations in question were consensual.

In 1979, Weinstein and his brother Bob co-founded prominent Hollywood studio Miramax Films. Their hits included 1994's "Pulp Fiction" and 1998's "Shakespeare in Love," for which Weinstein shared a best picture Oscar. --AFP

Sports

India hopeful on Pant's fitness for second Test

New Zealand's Williamson out of second India Test

PUNE: India remain hopeful that Rishabh Pant will be wicketkeeper in the second Test against New Zealand after injuring his knee in the opener, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said Tuesday. Pant made a valiant 99 in the opening loss to the Kiwis, marking the visitors' first Test victory in India since 1988.

But while keeping wickets, he hurt the same knee that was operated on after a serious car crash in December 2022 that sidelined him for more than a year. His fitness remains in focus as the hosts look to level the three-match series in the Test starting Thursday in Pune.

"Rishabh's pretty good," ten Doeschate told reporters. "He was having a little bit of discomfort at the end range of his movement with the knee. But fingers crossed he'll be good to keep in this Test as well." Pant, 27, has made a remarkable comeback from the night his Mercedes rammed into a barrier, flipped and caught fire near New Delhi.

He was left with a damaged ligament in his right knee, a hurt wrist and ankle and abrasions to his back, and labored through an intensive rehabilitation programme. India were bowled out for 46 in the opening match before Pant helped lead the fightback in a 177-run partnership with Sarfaraz Khan, who hit 150 after coming in for Shubman Gill.

Sarfaraz's first Test ton has left India weighing a problem of plenty, with Gill set to return in the second match and management backing senior batsman KL Rahul, who has struggled with patchy batting form. "There's certainly no concerns about KL," said ten Doeschate.

"He's batting nicely, he's in a good mental space, but yeah, we're certainly going to have to fit seven pieces into six spots for this Test and look at the pitch now and decide what's going to be best for the team."

Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will miss the second match as he recovers from a groin injury back home. New Zealand's quicks made use of the seaming wicket in the first Test in Bengaluru, but the pitch in Pune is expected to be a turner conducive to spinners.

"One thing we can't do is we can't change the surface," New Zealand all-rounder Daryl Mitchell said. "So, for us, it's reacting to what's coming at us and adapting. As Kiwis, that's what we pride ourselves on is we get stuck into the moment, we stay where our feet are and we be as present as possible."

Prolific New Zealand batsman Kane Williamson was on Tuesday ruled out of the second Test against India as he continues to recover from a groin strain.

The former captain was included in the tour squad, but delayed his departure and missed the first Test in Bengaluru, which New Zealand won by eight wickets. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said in a statement that Williamson was making progress, but was still not ready.

"We're monitoring Kane and he's tracking in the right direction, but isn't yet 100 percent fit," he said. "We're hopeful to see further improvement over the coming days and have him available for the third Test."

"We'll give him as much time as possible to get



PUNE: India's Virat Kohli attends a practice session ahead of their second Test cricket match against New Zealand at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune. — AFP

himself ready, but certainly continue to take a cautious approach." The second Test begins on Thursday in Pune. Williamson, who is New Zealand's

greatest Test run-scorer, experienced groin discomfort during the second Test against Sri Lanka in Galle last month. — AFP

Glasgow confirmed as host city for 2026 Commonwealth Games

LONDON: Glasgow has been confirmed as the host city for the troubled 2026 Commonwealth Games, which will be a slimmed-down version of the multi-sport event. The future of the 2026 Games was thrown into doubt when the Australian state of Victoria, the original hosts, withdrew last year, citing rising costs.

But the Scottish government effectively gave the green light to Glasgow last month and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced on Tuesday that the 2014 hosts will stage the next Games, from July 23 to August 2, 2026.

The Games will feature just 10 sports compared with the 19 on show at the 2022 edition in the English city of Birmingham. Para sport will once again be fully integrated as "a key priority and point of difference for the Games", with six para sports included on the programme.

The schedule will feature athletics and para athletics, swimming and para swimming, artistic gymnastics, track cycling and para track cycling, netball, weightlifting and para powerlifting, boxing, judo, bowls and para bowls, as well as 3x3 basketball and 3x3 wheelchair basketball.

Among the sports missing out compared to the 2022 Games are triathlon, diving, hockey, T20 cricket, squash, badminton and rugby sevens. Around 3,000 athletes are expected to compete from up to 74 Commonwealth nations and territories.

The CGF said Glasgow 2026 would deliver more than £100 million (\$130 million) of inward investment into the city. "On behalf of the entire Commonwealth sport movement, we are delighted to officially confirm that the 2026 Commonwealth Games will take place in the host city of Glasgow," said CGF chief executive Katie Sadleir.

Britain and Australia have staged five of the past six editions between them but Sadleir believes a slimmed-down model will increase the potential pool of future hosts. "The 2026 Games will be a bridge to the Commonwealth Games of tomorrow," said Sadleir. "An exciting first step in our journey to reset and redefine the Games as a truly collaborative, flexible and sustainable model for the future that minimizes costs, reduces the environmental footprint, and enhances social impact — in doing so increasing the scope of countries capable of hosting."

Commonwealth Games Scotland chairman Ian Reid said it had not been easy to decide which sports to include. "I think everybody recognizes that these events need to be more affordable, lighter and we would have loved to have all of our sports and all of our athletes competing but unfortunately it's just not deliverable or affordable for this timeframe," he told the BBC.

But he said the programme could vary for future Games and may increase in size depending on venues. The CGF said there would be no need for public funding to deliver the Glasgow Games, with Australia providing part of the costs after Victoria's withdrawal. — AFP

England to face USA in women's Rugby World Cup opener

LONDON: Hosts England will launch the 2025 women's Rugby World Cup against the United States in Sunderland on August 22, World Rugby announced Tuesday. The match will take place at

Bangladesh battle at 101-3, SA threaten innings defeat

MIRPUR: Bangladesh were battling to save the first Test against South Africa on Tuesday after reaching 101-3 at stumps and still needing another 101 to avoid an innings defeat. Mahmudul Hasan Joy (38) and Mushfiqur Rahim (31) were unbeaten at the end of play in Mirpur.

Their 42-run stand for the fourth wicket also made Mushfiqur the first Bangladeshi to cross 6,000 career Test runs. South Africa were all out for 308 in their first innings of 308, which secured a 202-run lead for the visitors thanks to wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne's century.

"It is probably the toughest conditions I have played under in terms of heat and humidity," Verreynne said. "Ninety percent of that innings was just against spin. Things happen quickly. You don't have much time to reset from a concentration point of view. This was certainly my most rewarding innings."

Bangladesh lost two early wickets to quick Kagiso Rabada in reply with Shadman Islam first to go, caught at short leg for one in the third over. Three balls later, Mominul Haque edged and Wiaan Mulder took a sharp catch at third slip for naught, leaving the hosts dangling on 19-2 before tea.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto fell lbw to Keshav Maharaj after a gruelling 23 off 49 balls. Bangladesh would have lost another wicket off the last of the day when Mahmudul went for a wild slog and missed the ball, avoiding a stumping in the nick of time.

Verreynne was last man out in South Africa's first innings after scoring eight fours and two sixes in his 114. He put on 119 for the seventh wicket with Mulder, who made 54, in reply to Bangladesh's first innings of 106. It was South Africa's highest seventh-wicket stand against Bangladesh, after the pair resumed at

England pick Ahmed as third spinner for deciding Pakistan Test

RAWALPINDI: England on Tuesday picked Rehan Ahmed as a third slow bowler for the series-deciding final Test against Pakistan on a dry Rawalpindi pitch which is expected to take spin. The 20-year-old leg-spinner will form a three-pronged spin attack when the match begins Thursday alongside left-arter Jack Leach and off-break bowler Shoaib Bashir.

The three-match series is level at 1-1 after England won the first Test by an innings and 47 runs in Multan. Pakistan used the same pitch for the second match which they won by 152 runs, with their spinners taking all 20 wickets.

Seam bowler Gus Atkinson was recalled with fast bowlers Brydon Carse and Matthew Potts dropping out of the side. "There are two changes from the second Test in Multan with seamer Gus Atkinson returns and leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed is included," said an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

Ahmed, who took five wickets on his Test debut in Karachi in England's thumping 3-0 sweep of Pakistan in 2022, is included for the first time since a Test against India in Rajkot earlier this year. England's decision to bring in a third spinner is prompted by another grass-less pitch prepared at Rawalpindi with

the Stadium of Light, the home of north-east football club Sunderland as organizers look to take rugby union to non-traditional grounds as well as established locations.

New Zealand, who have won six of the nine tournaments to date and are the two-time defending champions, will begin their title defence against Spain at York Community Stadium two days later on August 24.

Traditional rugby strongholds Bristol and Exeter will host all of the quarter and semi-finals, with organizers aiming to set a new record attendance



DHAKA: South Africa's Kyle Verreynne (R) plays a shot during the second day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on October 22, 2024. — AFP

140-6 at the start of play. Dane Piedt, dismissed lbw for 32 by Mehidy Hasan Miraz, partnered Verreynne in a stand of 66 runs for the ninth wicket.

'Sticking to the basics'

Bangladesh quick bowler Hasan Mahmud took two wickets in two balls in the 65th over, the only spot of brightness in a morning session where South Africa added 103. "Test cricket is like that," Hasan said when asked how the hosts had managed to concede 200 runs for the last four wickets.

"In those situations, the focus for bowlers shifts to containing the flow of runs and building pres-

sure on the batsmen. It's all about sticking to the basics." Hasan finished with 3-66 and Mehidy 2-63, finally wrapping up the innings when Verreynne was stumped after facing 144 balls.

Rabada on Monday became the fastest to reach 300 Test wickets as Bangladesh collapsed after winning the toss and choosing to bat. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam passed 200 Test wickets as he finished with 5-122, only the second Bangladeshi to achieve the feat after Shakib Al Hasan.

Bangladesh have never beaten South Africa in a Test and second of the two-match series begins in Chattogram on October 29. — AFP



RAWALPINDI: England's captain Ben Stokes (C), Chris Woakes (L) and Gus Atkinson attend a practice session ahead of their third and final Test cricket match against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on October 22, 2024. — AFP

Pakistan deploying industrial-sized fans and patio heaters to dry the square.

England team for the third Test: Ben Stokes (cap-

tain), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith, Gus Atkinson, Rehan Ahmed, Jack Leach, Shoaib Bashir. — AFP

for a women's rugby international by selling out Twickenham, the 82,000 capacity home of English rugby, for the final on September 27.

Manchester, Northampton and Brighton will also host pool matches. England have lost the last two finals to New Zealand but are favorites to end an 11-year wait for a third World Cup triumph. The Red Roses beat Canada to win the WXV title earlier this month and are currently ranked the top side in the world.

Tuesday's announcement followed last week's pool draw, with New Zealand up against Ireland

— who stunned the Black Ferns with a 29-27 WXV win in Vancouver last month — Japan and Spain in Pool C. England and the USA — the only other women's Rugby World Cup champions, having won the inaugural edition in 1991 — also face Australia and Samoa in Pool A.

France, third in 2021, are in Pool D with Italy, South Africa and Brazil, who are the first South American side to ever qualify. The competition has been expanded from 12 teams to 16 with Canada, Scotland, Wales and Fiji completing the line-up in Pool B. — AFP

Sports

Yankees and Dodgers to renew epic rivalry in World Series

Excitement for the epic renewal is swiping attention in American sports

LOS ANGELES: Two of Major League Baseball's oldest and most storied clubs, the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers, will meet in the World Series for the first time since 1981.

Excitement for the epic renewal of one of baseball's legendary rivalries on Friday is swiping attention on one of the biggest weeks in American sports with the NBA season tipping off, the NFL in mid-season form and the MLS playoffs starting.

It's the 41st time the Yankees will play in the World Series, the first time since winning the 2009 crown, and the 22nd time for the Dodgers, who won their most recent of seven titles in 2020.

It's a showdown of the most popular teams from the largest cities and features the sport's top stars, New York's Aaron Judge and Japanese slugger Shohei Ohtani of the Dodgers.

US television ratings are through the roof. Japanese viewership is even higher as Ohtani's homeland follows every moment of his first playoff appearance.

Tickets on the resale market start at \$1,131 just to get into Dodger Stadium for the opener. Front row seats by the dugout will set you back more than \$30,000 each. Dodgers shortstop Tommy Edman, Most Valuable Player of the National League Championship Series, can hardly believe his luck in getting to be part of the first World Series Dodgers-Yankees matchup in 43 years.

"It's what you always dream about as a little kid

getting to play in the World Series, playing for the Dodgers against the Yankees. It's pretty surreal," Edman said.

"I'm just excited to get to play those big games. Over this next week or so we're going to start preparing against the Yankees. But it's a dream come true, for sure." Ohtani spent six seasons with the Los Angeles Angels without making the playoffs and now could help the Dodgers capture the ultimate prize in his first campaign with the club.

"I really feel like we finally arrived, I finally arrived, at this stage," Ohtani said. "A lot of the games we played were really tough and hard to win. And it was truly a team effort to get here."

Yankees own 8-3 edge

It will be the record 12th time the Yankees and Dodgers meet in the World Series, with New York owning an 8-3 edge in the all-time rivalry but the Dodgers won their most recent championship matchup in 1981. While the creation of interleague play has seen the Yankees and Dodgers play in regular seasons every so often, it is the World Series meetings where the rivalry became legendary.

The Yankees won six of their first seven World Series meetings from 1941 to 1956, losing only in 1955, before the Dodgers left for California.

The Yankees, whose history dates to 1903, have won a record 27 World Series crowns and their



CLEVELAND: File photo shows manager Aaron Boone of the New York Yankees celebrates with the trophy after beating the Cleveland Guardians 5-2 in 10 innings in Game Five of the American League Championship Series at Progressive Field on October 19, 2024 in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

roster has included many of baseball's iconic stars, including Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, Reggie Jackson and Derek Jeter.

The Dodgers were founded in Brooklyn in 1890

and stayed in New York City until moving to Los Angeles before the 1958 campaign. Jackie Robinson became the first black player in Major League Baseball for the Dodgers in 1947. — AFP

Flick's revitalized Barca ready for Bayern challenge

BARCELONA: Hansi Flick has rapidly moulded a ragged Barcelona into a potent threat to Europe's elite and the visit of his former Bayern Munich side in the Champions League on Wednesday is their first acid test.

The Catalans have not reached the semi-finals of the competition since 2019 and were humiliatingly thrashed 8-2 by the German giants in 2020, when Flick was at the helm in Bavaria. Five-time Champions League winners Barcelona lifted the trophy most recently in 2015 and failing to thrive on the road to this season's Munich final would mark a decade in the doldrums since.

Flick's Barcelona have started La Liga in stunning fashion with nine victories and just one defeat in 10 matches, while scoring 33 goals. The league leaders delivered a stylish display of attacking football to rack up a 5-1 win over Sevilla on Sunday ahead of the Bayern Munich clash and Saturday's La Liga Clasico battle against Real Madrid.

Barcelona thrashed Young Boys 5-0 earlier in October in the Champions League after an opening 2-1



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's German midfielder #06 Joshua Kimmich plays the ball during a training session in Munich, southern Germany, on October 22, 2024, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League football match against FC Barcelona. — AFP

defeat at Monaco. Flick, who led Bayern to a sextuple in 2020, has swiftly transformed a Barcelona side who won nothing last season under Xavi Hernandez into a swashbuckling force despite injuries to several key players. Gavi made his comeback from a severe knee injury on Sunday, while Frenkie de Jong, Ronald Araujo, Andreas Christensen, Marc-Andre ter Stegen and others face long spells on the sidelines or are only just returning.

Flick's changes

Perhaps the most crucial difference has been former Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski's return to form. Flick has backed the Polish striker to the hilt despite his struggles last season and the 36-year-old has responded with 14 goals in 12 matches across all competitions.

"Robert is an absolute professional, working hard on his fitness — this body he has, it's not this age," said

Flick earlier in the campaign. "(Scoring) is his job and he is doing this great over years now, not only this year... this is a goal-getter, a striker who scores goals."

Flick has given Raphinha and Lamine Yamal freedom to roam in attack and pushed the team as a whole up the pitch, allowing Lewandowski to spend more time in the area. The forward is getting more chances than he did for swathes of last season and with his confidence high, he is finishing them off.

However Flick said his and Lewandowski's Bayern reunion would not just be a battle between the striker and Bayern hitman Harry Kane. "It's never a battle about players, it's a battle about the (whole) team," said Flick on Sunday.

"Robert scores the goals, that's very important for us (and) he's well connected to the other players — this for me is the way the team has to work." Flick's Barca seem fitter, with players working hard in training and lasting longer in matches without fading.

"The new fitness coaches are really good for us, we work hard and you notice it in the games," said Pedri in September. "The team doesn't dip after the 70th or 80th minute, it maintains the same fitness levels." Barcelona are also pressing with a far greater intensity which helps them out defensively. — AFP

Retegui hunting first CL goal against Celtic

MILAN: Mateo Retegui is gunning for his first Champions League goal as the Italy striker heads into Atalanta's Champions League clash with Celtic in hot form and ready to make up for the incredible double miss which cost his team a win against Arsenal.

Born in Argentina, Retegui has replaced Gianluca Scamacca as starting centre-forward for Italy and Atalanta since his Azzurri teammate suffered a serious knee injury before the start of the season. Scamacca was one of the key figures behind Atalanta's stunning Europa League triumph last season, expertly leading the line and banging in crucial goals in his team's best ever campaign.

But Retegui has had such an impact up front since signing from Genoa in August that by the time Scamacca returns next year he will have a huge task winning back his place in Atalanta's exciting front line alongside Ademola Lookman and Charles De Ketelaere.

The 25-year-old is the leading scorer in Serie A with eight goals and netted in both of rejuvenated Italy's recent Nations League matches against Belgium and Zionist entity. "He was a player that we liked before he came here for his playing style and what he did before at Genoa," said coach Gian Piero Gasperini after Sunday's 2-0 win at Venezia.

"We all hoped that he would develop his game even more and that's what's happening, anyone can see it. But the team is putting him in the right situations so that he can be decisive for us." Retegui's latest effort was an absolute peach, a delightful dink over Filip Stankovic which effectively sealed Atalanta's win at Venezia on Sunday afternoon.

'Quality' Retegui

He was also crucial to Mario Pasalic's early opener, challenging for the ball which dropped to the Croatia midfielder for a simple seventh-minute finish. "He does that really often and I have to say that he's just got great quality," added Gasperini.

"Today's goal was a real quality goal, and it came at a point in the match when it was still all to play for, that made it crucial." Retegui has scored 10 times in total this season but is yet to net in the Champions League, in which Atalanta have collected a very respectable four points from their first two matches against Arsenal and Shakhtar Donetsk.

However Atalanta would surely have had a perfect points tally for Wednesday's visit of Celtic had Retegui not fallen victim to what will surely be one of the saves of the season against Arsenal. Retegui watched on in horror as David Raya first saved his weak penalty and then somehow managed to scramble across goal to keep out what looked like a certain goal on the rebound.

However he has scored six goals in his last four matches for club and country and looks fully settled into a team finding its feet after a bumpy start to the season. Gasperini will be hoping that Lookman will be back in top form after the Nigeria striker was substituted at half-time on Sunday for "not playing for the team" due to fatigue from his national team's boycotted Africa Cup of Nations qualifier with Libya. — AFP

Leipzig host Liverpool under Klopp's shadow

LEIPZIG: RB Leipzig host Liverpool in the Champions League on Wednesday as Jurgen Klopp's recent past and not-too-distant future collide.

The 57-year-old will not be there at the Red Bull Arena on Wednesday but his shadow still looms over the contest. Klopp stepped down as Liverpool manager in the summer citing exhaustion after a successful nine-year spell which included lifting the Champions League and Premier League.

In October, Klopp announced his return to football, not as a coach but running Red Bull's football operations, which oversees clubs in several cities including Leipzig, Salzburg and New York. He will be absent from the game, choosing to wait to attend a match after starting the role in January.

While the appointment was a surprise in Germany and in England, the focus on Leipzig has been particularly acute. In a strange quirk of the fixture

list, Leipzig's five fixtures after the announcement includes games against each of Klopp's former clubs: Mainz, Liverpool and Borussia Dortmund.

Kloppo in Mallorca

Klopp was again a topic of conversation after Leipzig's 2-0 win at Mainz on Saturday, by fans and media alike. Some fans held banners protesting the appointment, while reporters asked if Leipzig coach Marco Rose had asked Klopp for tips on how to beat the Reds on Wednesday.

Rose played under Klopp for several years at Mainz and the two maintain a good relationship. He said he would "not be phoning up" his former coach for tips on how to beat Liverpool. "Kloppo is in (Spanish island) Mallorca, looking after his dog, his wife and his children.

"I will do everything (to beat Liverpool) but I won't call Klopp. "He needs his peace and quiet and needs to rest a bit. "And I'll grant him that." Born and raised in Leipzig, Rose took the ambitious club to the 2023 German Cup title in his first season.

The 48-year-old followed it up with a run to the Champions League last 16, where Leipzig were narrowly eliminat-



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian striker #11 Mohamed Salah takes part in a training session, at the AXA training centre in Liverpool, north west England, on October 22, 2024, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League football match against RB Leipzig. — AFP

ed by eventual champions Real Madrid. This season, Leipzig have managed to hold out most of their young talent, giving rise to hopes of a shot at the league title and a long run in Europe.

Although Leipzig are second to Bayern Munich on goal difference in the Bundesliga, the Champions League

is another story, albeit with a tough draw. Leipzig conceded late goals to lose away at Atletico Madrid and at home against Juventus. The Saxon side have yet to claim a point in Europe this season, making Wednesday's clash with the Premier League leaders even more important. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	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
Ayoum Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

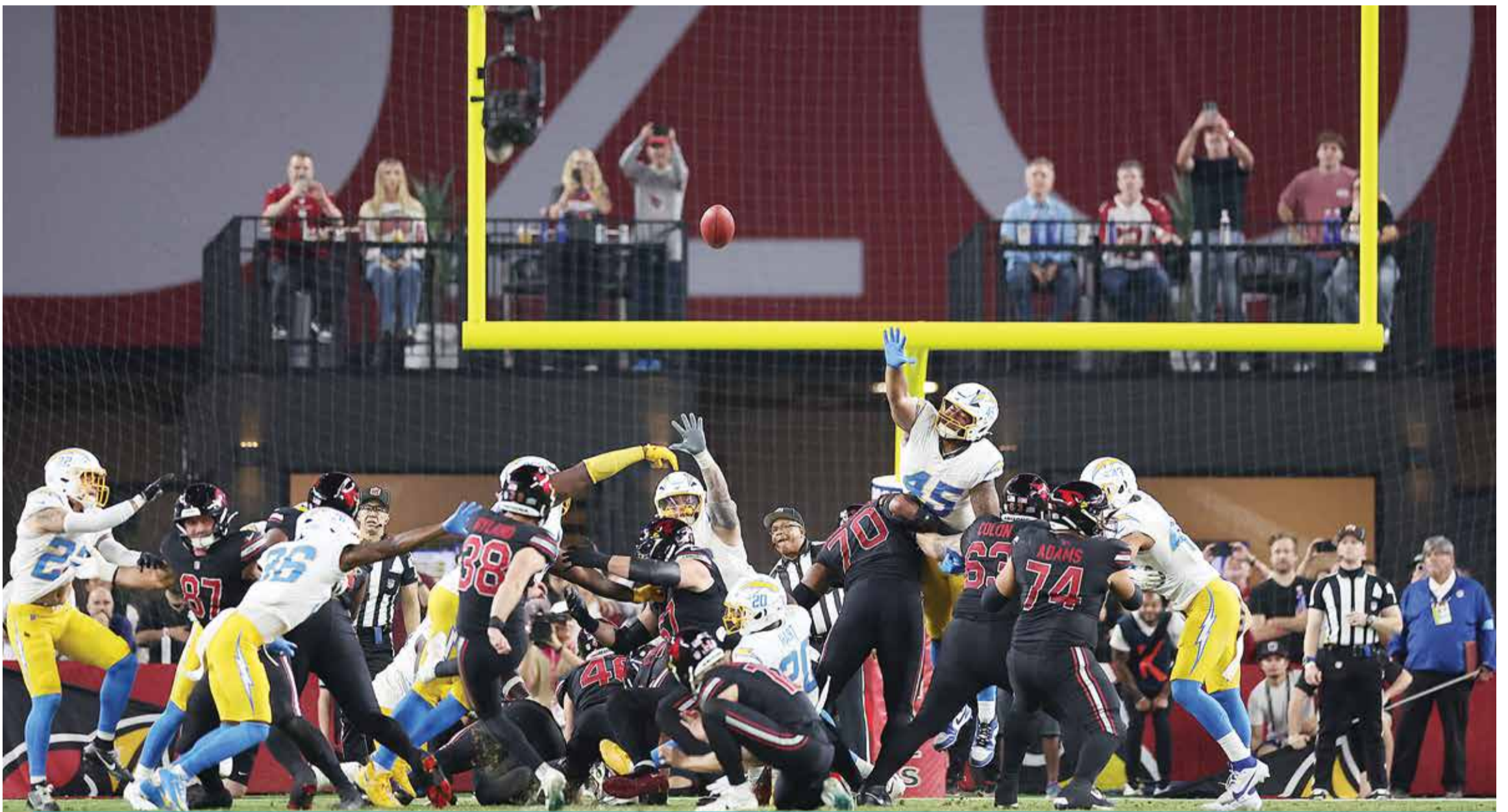
Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Change of Name

I, **ZAHEERUDDIN SHAIK**, holder of Indian Passport No. U0461168 having permanent address 4 73 B Usmannagar, Rajampet, Ysr District, Pin: 516115, Andhra Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: **ZAHEERUDDIN** (given name) and **SHAIK** (surname).
(#6181 22/10/2024)

Jackson, Henry star as Ravens romp past injury-hit Buccaneers

Jackson finished with 281 passing yards from 17-of-22 attempts



GLENDALE: Chad Ryland #38 of the Arizona Cardinals scores a 32-yard game winning field goal against the Los Angeles Chargers at State Farm Stadium on October 21, 2024 in Glendale, Arizona. — AFP

MIAMI: Lamar Jackson threw five touchdowns and Derrick Henry racked up 169 rushing yards as the Baltimore Ravens trampled over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to score a 41-31 victory in the NFL on Monday.

Ravens quarterback Jackson was in superb form, orchestrating another devastating offensive performance to give Baltimore a fifth straight win that leaves them on top of the AFC North with a 5-2 record.

Jackson finished with 281 passing yards from 17-of-22 attempts while adding a further 52 rushing yards from nine carries. Running back Henry was similarly dominant, shredding the Tampa Bay defense with a series of spectacular carries, including one 81-yard blast in the third quarter that set up Baltimore's fourth touchdown of the night.

"We showed we can play with everybody, against anybody," Jackson told ESPN after helping the Ra-

vens amass more than 500 offensive yards. "But it's a long season; we've just got to keep it going one game at a time."

A miserable night for Tampa Bay was exacerbated by injuries to star receivers Mike Evans's hamstring and Chris Godwin's lower left leg, forcing both to leave the game. Godwin's injury came in the final seconds, with the 28-year-old Super Bowl-winner being carted off the field after receiving treatment for several minutes. "Early indications are it's a dislocated ankle," Tampa Bay head coach Todd Bowles said of Godwin's injury. "It doesn't look good."

Bright start

Earlier, the Bucs had started brightly to open up a 10-0 lead after quarterback Baker Mayfield connected with Evans for a 25-yard

touchdown before Chase McLaughlin added a 23-yard field goal with the final drive of the first quarter. But after shaking off their early offensive sluggishness, the Ravens hit back to open the second quarter with a brisk, six-play, 70-yard touchdown drive.

Jackson marched his team upfield to the Tampa Bay nine-yard line, before finding tight end Mark Andrews in space for a simple close-range score. The Bucs looked poised to make an instant response when Mayfield moved the chains to the Baltimore three-yard line on the next possession.

But a short pass intended for Jalen McMillan was picked off by Marlon Humphrey to hand possession back to Baltimore. Jackson took full advantage of that blunder, carving open the Bucs secondary with a 59-yard passing play to Rashod

Bateman that left the Ravens with 1st & goal.

Jackson completed the drive with a touchdown pass to Justice Hill to make it 14-10 after the extra point. Another Tampa Bay interception led to Justin Tucker slotting a routine 28-yard field goal to leave Baltimore 17-10 up at the break.

The onslaught continued in the third quarter, with Baltimore adding two more touchdowns and a field goal to make it 34-10 and effectively put the game to bed. Although Tampa Bay rallied with two fourth quarter touchdowns either side of Baltimore's fifth touchdown of the night, to close within 10 points, the result was never in doubt.

In Monday's other NFL game, the Arizona Cardinals squeezed past the Los Angeles Chargers, winning 17-15 with a 32-yard field goal from Chad Ryland with the final kick of the game. — AFP

World Aquatics to pay financial rewards to swimmers



Group photo with the swimmers.

KUWAIT: World Aquatics announced that it will start paying financial rewards to swimmers who achieve the highest number of points in the world championships.

Meanwhile, in the Shanghai round, France's swimmer Leo Marshall and American Kate Douglas collected the highest total of points and they will receive financial rewards. This is to encourage swimmers to exert their best efforts in the China, South Korea and Singapore rounds.

World Aquatics President Kuwait's Hussein Al-Musallam said this move is



Hussein Al-Musallam speaks to one of the swimmers.

within the long term strategy to encourage world competition and make it more attractive for participants.

Neymar returns for Al Hilal in Al Ain thriller

AL-AIN: Brazil superstar Neymar returned to action on Monday following more than a year out, with the Al Hilal forward appearing as a second-half substitute in his side's gripping 5-4 win against Asian champions Al Ain in the UAE.

The former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain attacker, 32, had not played since rupturing his meniscus and anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee while on international duty in October last year.

Neymar, who underwent surgery and a sustained period of rehabilitation, is his country's all-time leading goalscorer, with 79 goals in 128 appearances. Named on the Hilal bench for the first time since his injury, he was introduced on 76 minutes of the Asian Champions Elite encounter at a heaving Hazzan Bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain.

By then, the record four-time Asian champions, who lead the current Saudi Pro League, were 5-3 up, thanks to goals from Renan Lodi and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, and a Salem Al Dawsari hat-trick. Neymar cannot be registered for the Saudi top-flight until January.

"I need to prepare Neymar with games; that's the only possible means to bring him to his level, which was the idea today," Hilal coach Jorge Jesus said. "There are some risks for the team because we need to use the games to prepare him, but it's the only way to have one of our important players back at the highest level," the Portuguese boss added.

On Monday, Hilal took the lead on 26 minutes, when former Newcastle United and



AL-AIN: Hilal's Brazilian forward #10 Neymar controls the ball during the AFC Champions League group B football match between UAE's Al-Ain and Saudi's Al-Hilal at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in al-Ain. — AFP

Fulham striker Aleksandar Mitrovic played in Lodi down the left, and the ex-Atletico Madrid full-back drilled a low shot past Khalid Essa in the Al Ain goal.

However, Hernan Crespo's side drew level six minutes before half-time, Morocco international Soufiane Rahimi sliding home a cross. Rahimi was the star of Al Ain's Asian Champions League success last season, finishing top scorer and named player of the tournament.

In first-half stoppage-time, Hilal seemed to take the contest away from their UAE rivals. First, Joao Cancelo, a summer signing from Manchester City, crossed for Milinkovic-Savic to head home unmarked from six yards. Moments later, reigning Asian Player of the Year Al Dawsari raced cleared of the Al Ain

defence, skipped around the onrushing Essa and curled home superbly on the angle.

Al Ain reduced the deficit just after the hour, through substitute Mateo Sanabria, only for Al Dawsari to flick home his second of the night from a Milinkovic-Savic centre. Minutes later, Rahimi notched his double as a see-saw clash took another swing. Al Dawsari then restored Hilal's two-goal advantage with a sublime strike from range.

Not long into 12 minutes of the allotted injury-time, and with Hilal reduced to 10 men after defender Ali Al Bulaihi was sent off for an intentional handball, Rahimi won and converted a penalty to secure his hat-trick and give Al Ain hope, but the Saudi champions hung on to claim the win. — AFP