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## Kuwait tackling climate change

Crown Prince reaffirms commitment at COP29 • Fossil fuel emissions to hit new record in 2024



BAKU: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, addresses the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP

BAKU: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, said Kuwait has been committed to environmental sustainability, honoring the climate framework agreement and Kyoto Protocol through a series of national measures. HH the Crown Prince, addressing the COP29 climate summit in Baku on Wednesday, said Kuwait is committed to achieving economic growth in parallel with low-carbon development, as well as having flexibility in addressing climate change by 2050.

Kuwait, he added, sought to reach carbon neutrality by 2060 through the adoption of many strategic projects aimed at cutting carbon emissions, including the promotion of clean energy projects. Kuwait, said HH the Crown Prince, also sought to produce 50 percent of electricity from solar power by 2050. Kuwait, he went on, wanted to use new low-carbon technolo-

gies, develop long-term partnerships for sustainable energy investment and looks forward to lower greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2040.

HH the Crown Prince meanwhile said Kuwait supported the initiatives of the presidency — “Truce COP” and “Water for climate change”. Kuwait, he added, called on advanced countries to honor their commitment under the framework agreement, provide financial and technical assistance as well as build capabilities of developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) to enable them to address climate change and carry out national programs.

“There is no doubt that climate change has become a global anxiety, posing a threat to many countries, including the State of Kuwait, which witnessed tangible and rapid repercussions of climate change, including rising temperature, dust storms and rare rainfall that affect daily life,” said HH the Crown Prince. He said Kuwait con-

tributed to addressing climate change through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), which supports developing countries through a bundle of projects aimed at minimizing impacts of climate change. He said KFAED has offered \$23 billion worth of 1,330 loans and grants to achieve this objective.

Global leaders offered competing visions on how to tackle climate change at the UN-led talks on Wednesday as a new report warned that the world must reach carbon neutrality much sooner than planned. Planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from oil, gas and coal rose to record highs this year, according to preliminary research from an international network of scientists at the Global Carbon Project.

Researchers said increases in CO2 emissions from India as well as growth in international aviation drove emissions up, while emissions decreased

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### Kuwait launches visual identity



KUWAIT: The ministry of information launched on Wednesday the country's visual identity, including a comprehensive guide that highlights the components of the identity, represented by the emblem and the national blue color. The ministry said in a press release that the guide explains the emblem's cultural importance, which symbolizes the country's identity and history, as well as guidelines for its use.

The statement added that Kuwaiti expert Mohammad Sharaf assisted the ministry in planning and drawing the emblem and maintaining its authentic elements, such as the ship and the falcon. — KUNA

### BNK unveils new Volvo showroom in Shuwaikh

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The new Volvo showroom in Shuwaikh was unveiled on Tuesday with a pre-launch event featuring renowned padel champions Ari Sanchez and Juan Lebron. BNK Holding's CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi emphasized the facility's expanded service center, nearly triple its previous size, which aims to expedite services for customers. The showroom introduces brands like Polestar and BNK's range of motorcycles, enhancing offerings in Kuwait.

Al-Kharafi also discussed BNK

Group's sponsorship of the Premier Padel Kuwait P1, praising padel's rapid growth among Kuwait's youth and BNK's support for both male and female athletes. Mishal Al-Safran, BNK Automotive & Motion's Vice President, celebrated the showroom's advanced service capacity and technology which can accommodate 70 cars. He highlighted high demand for models like Polestar, XC90, and XC40. Sanchez and Lebron shared their positive experiences with BNK's hospitality and organization, expressing excitement for the tournament and their partnership with the group. (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: Padel champions Ari Sanchez and Juan Lebron sign a Volvo car in the presence of BNK Holding CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and BNK Automotive & Motion's Vice President Mishal Al-Safran at the new Volvo showroom in Shuwaikh on Nov 12, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

### Trump, Biden vow smooth transfer at White House meet

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden welcomed Donald Trump back to the White House on Wednesday, in a show of civility to a bitter rival who failed to extend him the same courtesy four years ago. The US president and president-elect shook hands in front of a roaring fire in the Oval Office as they pledged a smooth transition — a stark contrast to Trump's refusal to recognize his 2020 defeat.

“Welcome back,” Biden, 81, said as he congratulated the 78-year-old Trump and offered brief

opening remarks to the man he has repeatedly slammed as a threat to democracy. Biden, who dropped out of the election in July but saw his successor Kamala Harris lose to Trump last week, said he was “looking forward to having a smooth transition” and pledged to do “everything we can to make sure you're accommodated.”

As the two presidents with a combined age of 159 years shook hands, Biden appeared to look down while Trump leaned forward and looked him in the eyes. Trump riled up a mob that attacked the US Capitol in 2021 and ran a brutal and divisive election campaign this year — but sought to strike a gracious tone on his return visit to the White House. “Politics is tough, and in many cases it's not a very nice world. It is a nice world today and I appreciate it very much,” Trump said.

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden shakes hands with US President-elect Donald Trump during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP

### Court upholds chamber law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court on Wednesday rejected petitions against a law changing the status of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry as an independent body, confirming that the legislation did not violate the constitution. The National Assembly late last year passed a law making the chamber a department under the ministry of commerce and industry. The court, whose rulings are final, said that the legislation “did not breach constitutional guidelines” and that the challenges were not based on correct grounds. The court also said that placing the chamber under the authority of the government does not contradict articles of the constitution and aims at achieving public interests, adding that the new law does not bar the chamber's officials from expressing their views related to its activities.

### Zionist carnage in Gaza after US looks other way

GAZA/BEIRUT: Zionist military strikes killed at least 47 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, as Zionist forces deepened their incursion into Beit Hanoun town in the north, forcing most remaining residents to leave. Residents said Zionist forces besieged shelters housing displaced families and the remaining population, which some estimated at a

few thousand, ordering them to head south through a checkpoint separating two towns and a refugee camp in the north from Gaza City.

Men were held for questioning, while women and children were allowed to continue towards Gaza City, residents and Palestinian medics said. The Zionist campaign in the north of Gaza, and the evacuation of tens of thousands of Palestinians from the area, has fueled claims from Palestinians that it is clearing the area for use as a buffer zone and potentially for a return of Jewish settlers. The US said Tuesday the Zionist entity was not violating US law on the

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians carry the body of a man killed in a Zionist strike in Beit Lahlia in the northern Gaza Strip on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP







The new Volvo showroom.



(From left) Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Dr. Ziad Al-Alyan poses with Founder and CEO of BNK Holding Bader Al-Kharafi and his family.



Padel champion Ari Sanchez signs on a Volvo car.

# Volvo unveils new Shuwaikh showroom

BNK CEO Bader Al-Kharafi tours premises with padel champions Sanchez, Lebron

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The new Volvo showroom in Shuwaikh was unveiled this week, with a pre-launch tour where attendees met top tier padel champions Ari Sanchez and Juan Lebron. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Founder and CEO of BNK Holding, expressed his pleasure at the opening of the new showroom. "We aimed to provide a larger space for our customers, particularly expanding the service center. The new facility has nearly tripled in size, allowing us to expedite service processes for our clients," he told Kuwait Times. "We have also introduced additional brands, including Polestar, a fully electric car company affiliated with Volvo, and BNK's range of motorcycles, such as Vespa, Moto Guzzi, and Aprilia. We are committed to offering outstanding service from our Shuwaikh branch as well as our other locations, and with the capabilities of this new showroom, we can certainly offer the best to our customers."

On BNK Group's sponsorship of the padel championship Premier Padel Kuwait P1, Kharafi highlighted that padel is an exceptional sport and currently the fastest-growing sport in the world. "It has gained significant popularity among Kuwait's youth, and we are dedicated to supporting both male and female athletes as a motivation for our young people. Today's event

is a great opportunity to connect with players and learn from their experiences. We have been supporting the sport for nearly two years now, and our athletes continue to achieve remarkable results, greatly impacting the sports scene in Kuwait," he said.

Mishal Al-Safran, Board's Vice President of BNK Automotive & Mo-

mitted to delivering the best, and we invite our clients and Volvo enthusiasts to experience the new models and explore our showroom."

He added: "The new showroom represents an advanced new chapter for Kuwait. We are honored to have world-champion players here for the opening as partners in the success of

family, making her feel right at home every time she visits. "The organization here is amazing, and I love playing and staying here," she shared, adding that she hopes to deliver a strong performance in the tournament. Juan Lebron, the first Spaniard to reach number 1 in the world in padel, echoed similar sentiments about his experience with



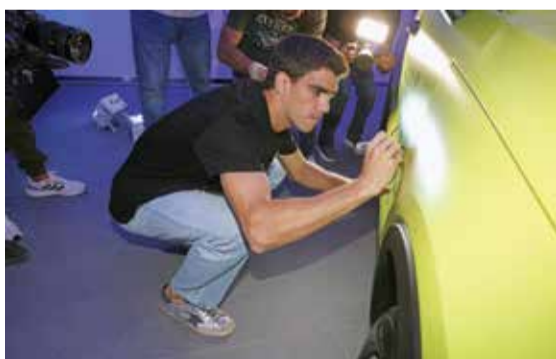
Bader Al-Kharafi welcomes Juan Lebron.



Juan Lebron and Ari Sanchez sit inside a Volvo car.



Bader Al-Kharafi and his wife (left) tour the new Volvo showroom with Spanish padel players Ari Sanchez (second right) and Juan Lebron (right).



Juan Lebron signs on a Volvo car.



Bader Al-Kharafi



Mishal Al-Safran

tion, said: "Today, we celebrate a moment we've anticipated for years with the opening of our new showroom in Shuwaikh, located near Al-Tilal Complex. The new showroom's service center can accommodate nearly 70 cars and includes advanced technology. Our customers are the driving force of this company and the reason our cars are seen on the roads of beloved Kuwait. That is why we are com-

mitted to delivering the best, and we invite our clients and Volvo enthusiasts to experience the new models and explore our showroom."

Spanish padel player Ari Sanchez expressed her enthusiasm for being in Kuwait, saying that BNK treats her like

BNK, saying: "I am very happy to be part of the BNK group and to work with them." He noted how impressed he was with the warm welcome and seamless organization since his arrival in Kuwait. As he prepares to begin his matches, Lebron expressed gratitude for the support and excellent arrangements in place.



Bader Al-Kharafi poses for a photo with his guests.



Guests, including the padel players, officials, journalists and fans, are seen at the new showroom.



Bader Al-Kharafi (center left) poses with padel players and the BNK team.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



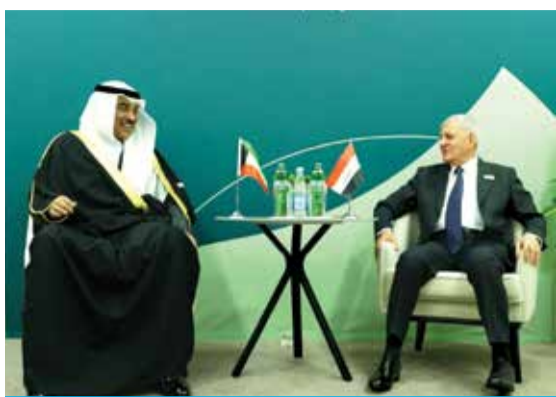
Local

# Crown Prince returns from Azerbaijan

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, returned to Kuwait on Wednesday after leading the Kuwaiti delegation at the UN climate change Conference of the Parties (COP29) held in Baku, Azerbaijan. Accompanying His Highness the Crown Prince was an official delegation that included Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and senior officials from the Crown Prince's office.

His Highness the Crown Prince met with Iraqi President Abdulatif Rashid on the sidelines of the COP29 summit. His Highness the Crown Prince relayed the greetings of His Highness the Amir to the Iraqi President. During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to boost bilateral relations on various fronts, as well as regional and international developments.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met with Managing Director of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva. During the meeting, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir to the IMF managing director and expressed His Highness' desire and interest in exchanging expertise with the IMF. His Highness the Crown Prince emphasized his commitment to focus on the development



**BAKU:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Iraqi President Abdulatif Rashid on the sidelines of the COP29 summit. — KUNA photos



**HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled** meets with Managing Director of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva.



**HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled** waves as he prepares to board his plane bound for Kuwait.

and enhancement of the skills of Kuwaiti youth through sharing expertise of the IMF. The two sides discussed topics related to the economy, exchanged views on the latest global developments and explored ways to enhance cooperation.

Upon his return, His Highness the Crown Prince

sent a cable to express his gratitude to President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his deep appreciation for the warm reception and hospitality extended by Azerbaijan. His Highness the Crown Prince commended Azerbaijan's prominent global role in hosting the successful summit, and voiced

optimism that the summit's positive outcomes would inspire greater international cooperation in combating climate change, mitigating its effects, and developing practical solutions for sustainable development, ultimately leading to a better future for coming generations. — KUNA



## Padel players get a taste of Kuwait at Mubarakiya

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** International players competing in the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament, hosted by BNK Holding, visited Souq Al-Mubarakiya in Kuwait on Tuesday, exploring the rich cultural atmosphere of the markets. Accompanied by local hosts and media, the athletes had the chance to experience authentic Kuwaiti traditional dishes. They also explored the vibrant perfume market, tasted different kinds of dates and wandered through Souq Al-Mubarakiya's many traditional shops.

The padel players expressed their delight at visiting Kuwait, praising the locals for their warm hospitality and generosity. They shared their appreciation for the warm welcome they received. The visit to Souq Al-Mubarakiya allowed them to connect with Kuwaiti culture and provided a unique and memorable experience that strengthened cultural bonds and left a lasting impression on the visiting athletes.



**KUWAIT:** International players competing in the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament, hosted by BNK Holding, explore Souq Al-Mubarakiya.



**KUWAIT:** Dr Munther Al-Hasawi, Dr Mutlaq Al-Sihan, and Waleed Al-Khashti pose for a photo with officials from the Ministry of Health and Zain.



Guests attend the first day of the conference.

## Zain continues support for Zain Hospital initiatives

**KUWAIT:** Zain announced its sponsorship of the 46th Otorhinolaryngology Conference, organized by the Zain ENT Hospital and the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS). Held over three days, the conference aims to highlight the latest research and surgical techniques in otorhinolaryngology. It comes under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi.

Zain participated in the opening ceremony at the Grand Hyatt Kuwait, attended by the event patron's representative, the Undersecretary of Public Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health (MoH) Dr Munther Al-Hasawi; Head of the ENT Council at MoH and Head of the ENT Department at Zain

Hospital Dr Mutlaq Al-Sihan; Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti; along with officials, medical professionals, and specialists from local, regional, and international organizations.

Zain's annual support for this conference reflects its ongoing commitment to supporting Zain Hospital's initiatives. It is also a part of the company's fruitful collaboration with the Ministry of Health throughout the year to support various initiatives aimed at enhancing public health within the community. The conference covers the latest advancements in research and surgical techniques in various fields, including head and neck surgery, robotic surgery, sinus and skull base surgeries, balance and hearing disorders, speech difficulties, and more.

It features lectures, workshops, panel discussions, and the presentation of over 40 scientific papers and research studies. The conference underscores the Ministry of Health's commitment to continuous medical education, the development of research and technical capabilities for phy-

sicians in both public and private sectors, and providing opportunities to explore and adopt the latest global surgical technologies. Zain's support for the event demonstrates its belief in the importance of this mission.

Zain Hospital, established by Zain, features state of the art medical equipment and facilities, and specializes in ear, nose and throat cases. The hospital served over 42,000 patients this year and hosted 19 visiting doctors from various specialties. It conducted approximately 4,120 surgeries, with Zain's volunteer team visiting the center on multiple occasions throughout the year, including during the National Day, Ramadan, and the Eid holidays.

In another collaboration between Zain and the Ministry of Health, the two entities launched a nationwide awareness campaign this year to promote the Child Protection Helpline 147. The dedicated hotline, which was first provided by Zain to MoH's Child Protection Office in 2016, establishes a direct and confidential point-of-contact to report all forms of child abuse, neglect, or harm in Kuwait.

## Kuwaiti-Chinese ties built on strong foundation: Minister

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi underlined the strong Kuwaiti-Chinese ties while representing His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in the opening of a conference celebrating the connection between the two countries on Wednesday. The conference titled "Distance and Close Relations: Silk road connects two worlds" was organized by Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah in Yarmouk Cultural Center, in cooperation with the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait. The minister said Kuwaiti-Chinese relations are built on a strong and steady foundation, noting the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China in September 2023, where the two sides signed memoranda of understanding in different fields.

The conference is part of Kuwait's commitment to preserve its heritage and culture, and a representation of the plan of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) in promoting knowledge and supporting intellectual creativity, he added.

Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei affirmed that his country is eager to enhance cultural exchange with the world, as part of the Chinese President's Global Civilization Initiative, which calls on the world to develop dialogue and promote tolerance and sharing knowledge between nations. He hailed the role of Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah in boosting cultural exchange between the two countries, as the center has a wide collection of valuable Chinese artefacts. — KUNA



Kuwait Times  
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
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YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 359  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 361  
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KUWAIT: (From left) UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Public Works Minister Noura Al-Mashaan and UK's Minister for the Middle East Hamish Falconer cut a cake at the celebration of the birthday of King Charles III.



Sheikh Fahad pots a plant at the event. — KUNA photos



DOHA: Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is seen with officials at the meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers' Undersecretaries. — KUNA

## Kuwait urges stronger security coordination with GCC states

DOHA: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah emphasized Wednesday the importance of enhancing security cooperation and integration among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to face security challenges. He added that exchanging information among the Gulf states would strengthen security control, leading to maintaining the safety and security of their citizens.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior noted that this came during Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf's leadership of Kuwait's delegation to the meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers' Undersecretaries in Doha, preparing for the 41st meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers.

According to the statement, Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf stressed the need to enhance the efficiency of security agencies among GCC states and to achieve greater coordination in combating crimes in general, especially cybercrime, fraud, and drug trafficking, as well as the trafficking of psychoactive substances. He also emphasized the importance of supporting cooperation to pursue the perpetrators of such crimes. The statement added that participants at the meeting exchanged information to tighten security control across the GCC.

Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf conveyed to the participants the greetings of the political leadership of the State of Kuwait and the greetings of the Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and their wishes for success and guidance for the meeting. The meeting, which comes within the framework of the periodic meetings of the Undersecretaries of the Ministries of Interior of the GCC countries, aims at following up and submitting recommendations to Their Highnesses and Excellencies the Ministers of Interior in the next meeting, which will contribute to strengthening joint security work and unifying efforts to maintain the safety of the citizens of the GCC countries. — KUNA

# Deputy Prime Minister lauds Kuwait-UK ties

## UK minister highlights positive progress of free trade agreement with GCC

KUWAIT: Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and Interior, affirmed the strong and historical relations between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of the British Embassy's celebration of the birthday of King Charles III, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef noted that this year marks 125 years of solid diplomatic relations between the two nations. He also recalled receiving military training from the British during his time in the military. He expressed his sincere congratulations to King Charles III on the occasion, wishing him continued health and well-being.

UK's Minister for the Middle East Hamish Falconer, who is in Kuwait on an official visit, traced back Kuwaiti-British ties to trade relations between the two nations which began in 1775. He highlighted that current trade between the countries amounts to 6 billion pounds annually, and expected this relationship to continue growing, par-

ticularly with the upcoming Free Trade Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Falconer also emphasized that, while the economic and military-security relations are strong, what truly binds the two countries is the deep and lasting connection between their peoples. This connection is not only reflected in the relationship between the two heads of state, but also in the thousands of Kuwaiti students studying in the UK, numbering around 10,000.

UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis highlighted the special significance of the year 2024, which marks 125 years of exceptional and strong ties between Kuwait and the UK. She mentioned that this year had seen numerous events, activities, and achievements that have further strengthened these ties. Ambassador Lewis also noted that 2024 saw the introduction of digital visa applications, which will make it easier for Kuwaitis to visit the UK. She further emphasized the success of military and security cooperation, including the joint military exercise "Iron Shield" between Kuwaiti and British



Sheikh Fahad (center left) walks with Noura Al-Mashaan (center right) and Ambassador Belinda Lewis (left).

forces, aimed at enhancing readiness to face regional challenges. Additionally, she mentioned cultural collaborations, such as the joint mural created by Kuwaiti and

British artists at Souq Al-Mubarakiya and the blending of traditional Kuwaiti Sadu weaving and Scottish arts in London this past May. — KUNA



## NBK celebrates graduation of NBK academy's Wave 29

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the graduation of NBK Academy's Wave 29 of newly hired employees who successfully met admission criteria for this intensive course specially designed for Kuwaiti fresh university graduates. The graduation ceremony was attended by Omar Bouhadiba, CEO of International Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait; Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO of the Consumer and Digital Banking Group; Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO and Head of Group Operations and Information Technology; Emad Al-Ablani, GM of the Group's Human Resources; Ahmed Bourisly, GM of Corporate Banking Group; Jad Zakhour, GM and Head of Treasury Group; and Hisham Al-Nusif, GM of the Consumer Banking Group, along with a number of NBK's executives and officials.

The program lasted for seven months, during which fresh graduates from different majors received intensive training on technological, behavioral and other skills that allow them to build a sustainable career at NBK. The course covered various areas of banking principles, such as design thinking, increasing productivity, training on creativity, innovation, and digital trends in the banking sector, in addition to banking business, and comprehensive understanding of all NBK groups and departments.

The participants presented new ideas to the heads of different departments within the "Innovation Challenge" program, which aims to stimulate trainees' creativity and ability to generate innovative solutions. The program included various Blended Learning interventions through in-person and virtual courses in addition to on-site training at different departments to better understand

the nature of work in the banking sector.

"The NBK Academy program embodies the bank's strategy of investing in the human capital by preparing young national banking leaders who are qualified as per the latest and best international standards to sustain the bank's successful story over many decades," Maryam Al-Nasrallah, Talent Management Manager at the NBK Group Human Resources said. "With a legacy of success spanning over 16 years, NBK Academy is a program specifically designed for university graduates with the aim of recruiting, developing, and empowering newly graduated national talent to join the banking sector."

She added that "NBK maintains its leadership in the private sector in terms of attracting, training, upskilling national talent and qualifying them to join the banking sector. The bank also stands out as the employer of choice for national professionals, with the highest Kuwaitization and employee retention ratios across the private sector."

The Academy reflects NBK's vision to foster sustainable human capital development as one of its top strategic priorities and a shared responsibility between the various governmental institutions and the private sector. It is worth mentioning that the content of NBK Academy program is regularly enhanced to keep pace with the latest trends in banking, and administrative sciences.

Launched in 2008, the Academy aims to pave the way for fresh Kuwaiti graduates to join the banking services sector by providing them with the best training programs developed in cooperation with leading international institutions and universities to meet the demands of the labor market.



Maryam Al-Nasrallah

## Kuwait, France discuss military cooperation

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with French military attache to Kuwait Colonel Francois Dickes. The two officials discussed topics of common interest, particularly those related to the military and ways to strengthen and develop cooperation between the two friendly countries. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (right) meets with French military attache to Kuwait Colonel Francois Dickes. — KUNA



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Moscow launches waves of missiles and drones in Kyiv

## US bans flights to Haiti after 3 jetliners hit by gunfire

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GEDAREF, Sudan: A truck carrying gunmen affiliated with Sudan's army drives on a street in this eastern city on Nov 11, 2024. — AFP

# No end in sight to Sudan war

## Both warring sides seek 'decisive' win amid attacks on civilians

CAIRO: Sudan has seen a surge in extreme violence in recent weeks as the warring military and paramilitary push for a decisive victory, with no political solution in sight. Fighting between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has intensified since late October, with reports of attacks on civilians including sexual violence against women and girls raising alarm.

The war that erupted in April 2023 has created what the UN calls the world's worst displacement crisis, with more than 11 million people forced from their homes. It has put the country on the brink of famine, and sparked warnings of intensifying violence in a war that has already killed tens of thousands.

"Over the last two weeks, the situation in the country has been marked by some of the most extreme violence since the start of the conflict," according to Rosemary DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Let me stress that both warring parties bear responsibility for this violence," she said, adding that both sides "seem convinced they can prevail on the battlefield." Since Oct 20, at least 124 civilians have been killed

in central Al-Jazira state and another 135,000 have fled to other states, according to the UN. With global attention focused on other wars, chiefly in Ukraine and the Middle East, civilians in Sudan are paying a steep price for the escalation. "All indicators so far show that both sides are committed to military solutions, with no genuine interest in political resolutions or even easing the suffering of civilians," according to Mohamed Osman of Human Rights Watch.

Amani Al-Taweel, director of the Africa program at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, agreed. "There is no political solution on the horizon," she told AFP, adding that both sides were seeking a "decisive military solution".

### Split

The war in Sudan has pitted army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan against his erstwhile ally Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, leader of the RSF. The country is split into zones of control, with the army holding the north and east, and the government based in Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast. The RSF controls much of the capital Khartoum, the Darfur region in the west and parts of Kordofan in the south, while the center is split.

With no mandatory military conscription, the Sudanese army includes Islamist-leaning forces as well as other factions. The RSF is primarily made up of tribal militias from Darfur's Arab communities. According to local reports, the army has about 120,000 troops while the RSF has 100,000. On the battlefield, Sudan's air force gives the military an advantage.

Rights groups have accused both sides of committing atrocities. The UN population agency published on Tuesday horrific accounts of women and girls fleeing the violence, including one who said she was urged to kill herself with a knife rather than be raped.

### 'Deadlock'

Successive rounds of talks have been held in Saudi Arabia, but the negotiations have yet to produce a ceasefire. In August, the Sudanese military opted out of US-brokered negotiations in Switzerland and an African Union-led mediation has also stalled. "The deadlock in peaceful channels, whether regionally or internationally, is exacerbating the violence," said Mahmud Zakaria, a professor of political science at Cairo University's Faculty of

African Postgraduate Studies. Since October, the RSF escalated its attacks in Al-Jazira state, south of Khartoum, following what the military said was the defection of one of its commanders to the army. Before the war, Al-Jazira was known as Sudan's breadbasket, hosting Africa's largest agricultural project, yielding 65 percent of the country's cotton, according to Zakaria.

### Proxy war?

Some areas have been scarred by conflict before. Darfur saw a major war two decades ago, during which the then-government's allies in the Janjaweed militia faced accusations of ethnic cleansing and genocide. With roots in the Janjaweed, the RSF became a force in its own right in 2013. Sudan's conflict has increasingly drawn in regional powers, prompting the United States to urge all countries to stop arming rival generals.

Former Egyptian deputy foreign minister for African affairs Ali El-Hefny said progress will require global willpower. Instead, foreign powers are "fueling the violence, delaying Sudan's return to stability", he said. — AFP



TITEHENA, Indonesia: Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki spews ash and smoke during an eruption as seen from Lewolaga village on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP

## Airlines ground Bali flights after volcano erupts

DENPASAR: Airlines cancelled flights to and from the Indonesian resort island of Bali on Wednesday, leaving travelers stranded after a nearby volcano catapulted an ash tower miles into the sky. At least 16 international routes were affected after Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki on Flores island spewed a nine-kilometer tower a day earlier, the general manager of Bali's international airport said in a statement.

Flights from Singapore, Hong Kong, Qatar, India, Australia, Malaysia, China's Pudong and South Korea's Incheon were all either delayed or grounded, Ahmad Syaugi Shahab said Wednesday. Animal clinic worker Samsudin, 52, from Indonesia's main island was transiting in Bali to Malaysia and forced to spend the night at the airport. "I'm sleeping here rather than going back to Java. It is far," he told AFP. "I'm waiting here, until tomorrow," he added, saying he bought a new flight after his AirAsia ticket was refunded.

Australia's Jetstar, Qantas and Virgin Australia all grounded flights, while Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, India's IndiGo and Singapore's Scoot also listed

flights as cancelled on Wednesday, an AFP journalist at Bali's airport said. "Volcanic ash poses a significant threat to safe operations of the aircraft in the vicinity of volcanic clouds," said AirAsia as it announced several cancellations. Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific also listed its flights as cancelled, rescheduling routes to and from Bali until Thursday.

Multiple eruptions from the 1,703-metre twin-peaked volcano in recent weeks have killed nine people, with 31 injured and more than 11,000 evacuated, Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency said Tuesday. Eruptions can pose serious risks to flights, disgorging fine ash that can damage jet engines and scour a plane's windscreen to the point of invisibility. The island's tourism head called for calm after the cancellations, saying the island was "very safe" because the volcano is far away. "Bali's tourism activity is still running normally," Tjok Bagus Pema-yun said in a statement Wednesday.

But airlines said the situation was too dangerous to keep their planes in the sky. Jetstar said all flights to and from Bali would be halted until noon on Thursday as it was "currently not safe to operate flights". Malaysia Airlines said it had cancelled six flights Wednesday in a statement on its website, while Scoot said it scrapped two flights and rescheduled four more. The airlines said they would monitor the volcano's status and provide updates. Singapore Airlines was still listing its flights as running on Wednesday. — AFP

## Toxic smog in Delhi smashes WHO's limit

NEW DELHI: Residents of India's capital New Delhi choked in a blanketing toxic smog Wednesday as worsening air pollution surged past 50 times the World Health Organization's recommended daily maximum. Many in the city cannot afford air filters, nor do they have homes they can effectively seal from the misery of foul smelling air blamed for thousands of premature deaths. Cooler temperatures and slow-moving winds trap deadly pollutants each winter, stretching from mid-October until at least January.

At dawn on Wednesday, "hazardous" pollutant levels in parts of the sprawling urban area of more than 30 million people topped 806 micrograms per cubic meter, according to monitoring firm IQAir. That is more than 53 times the World Health Organization recommended daily maximum of fine particulate matter—dangerous cancer-causing micro-particles known as PM2.5 pollutants that enter the bloodstream through the lungs.

By midday, when air usually is at its best, it eased to about 25-35 times above danger levels, depending on different districts. Bikramjeet Singh, 25, who works as an environmental health safety

manager walking on the streets, said breathing in Delhi was like "smoking cigarettes" and he worried for those with asthma. "Older people have difficulties breathing," he said. The city is blanketed in acrid smog each year, primarily blamed on stubble burning by farmers in neighboring regions to clear their fields for ploughing, as well as factories and traffic fumes.

### 'Alarming'

But a report by The New York Times this month, based on air and soil samples it collected over five years, revealed the dangerous fumes also spewing from a power plant incinerating the city's landfill garbage mountains. Experts the newspaper spoke to said that the levels of heavy metals found were "alarming". Swirling white clouds of smog also delayed several flights across northern India.

The India Meteorological Department said that at least 18 regional airports had a visibility lower than 1,000 meters - dropping below 500 meters in Delhi. India's Supreme Court last month ruled that clean air was a fundamental human right, ordering both the central government and state-level authorities to take action. But critics say arguments between rival politicians heading neighboring states—as well as between central and state-level authorities—have compounded the problem. Politicians are accused of not wanting to anger key figures in their constituencies, particularly powerful farming groups. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Commuters drive amid dense smog in New Delhi on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP



## International

# US bans flights to Haiti after three jetliners hit by gunfire

## Powerful and well-armed gangs control 80 percent of the city

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** The United States has banned all civilian flights to Haiti for a month, a day after three jetliners approaching or departing from its gang-ridden capital Port-au-Prince were hit by gunfire. The shootings provided a vivid glimpse of the violent chaos gripping Haiti as a new prime minister took the reins of a nation ravaged by poverty, chronic political instability and other woes. The US Federal Aviation Administration's move came after a Spirit Airlines jetliner arriving from Florida in Port-au-Prince was hit by gunfire and had to reroute to the Dominican Republic.

A flight attendant suffered minor injuries, and images posted online appeared to show several bullet holes inside the plane. Two planes that left the Haitian capital Monday were also hit, with single bullet holes detected in post-flight inspections in each case, the airlines said. Both planes landed safely. They were a JetBlue flight to JFK Airport in New York and an American Airlines flight to Miami. Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aime was sworn in Monday, replacing outgoing premier Garry Conille, who was appointed in May but became embroiled in a power struggle with the country's unelected transitional council.

Haiti remained cut off from the rest of the world, with its main airport closed and bursts of gunfire ringing out in several neighborhoods of the capital. Many stores and schools were shuttered as people feared more attacks by the powerful and well-armed gangs that control some 80 percent of the city, even though a Kenyan-led international force has been deployed to help the outgunned Haitian police restore order. Violent crime in the capital city remains high, with gang mem-

bers routinely targeting civilians and robberies, rapes and kidnappings are rampant.

The transitional council, aiming to put Haiti on a path to voting in 2026, had been tasked with stabilizing a country that has no president or parliament and last held elections in 2016. The United States on Tuesday called on Haiti's leaders to put personal interests aside and concentrate on getting the country back on its feet. "The acute and immediate needs of the Haitian people mandate that the transitional government prioritize governance over the competing personal interests of political actors," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

### Gangs dig in

The Caribbean nation has long struggled with political instability, poverty, natural disasters and gang violence. But conditions sharply worsened at the end of February when armed groups launched coordinated attacks in the capital, saying they wanted to overthrow then-prime minister Ariel Henry. Despite the arrival of the Kenyan-led support mission in June, violence has continued to soar.

A recent United Nations report said more than 1,200 people were killed in Haiti from July through September, with persistent kidnappings and sexual violence against women and girls. The report said the gangs were digging trenches, using drones and stockpiling weapons as they change tactics to confront the Kenyan-led police force. Gang leaders have strengthened defenses for the zones they control and placed gas cylinders and Molotov cocktail bombs ready to use against police operations. — AFP



**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** Haitian police officers deploy in Port-au-Prince as they exchange gunfire with alleged gang members. — AFP

## Somaliland votes amid Horn of Africa tensions

**HARGEISA:** Voters in Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia at the center of rising tensions in the Horn of Africa, flocked early to polling stations on Wednesday to select their president. The territory is an oasis of peace and stability in violence-racked Somalia but has failed to win recognition from any country since declaring independence in 1991. Hundreds of voters in the main city Hargeisa lined up calmly before dawn to avoid the heat, many proudly showing off voting cards and sporting the territory's red-and-white flag.

In the city's main square, under a MIG fighter jet shot down during fighting with government forces in 1988, five polling stations were set up in tents. President Muse Bihi, his main rival Abdurahman Mohamed Abdullahi—popularly known as "Irro"—and third candidate Faysal Ali Warabe all voted early at the nearby Civil Service Training Institute. Bihi tested special glasses introduced this year to identify people by their irises. "It's a very important day because we have to showcase to the world our peaceful co-existence in Somaliland," aid worker Hamza Moussa Ali, 32, told AFP.

The territory has become the focus of an international dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia, raising fears of another conflict in the restive region. In January, Somaliland signed an agreement with landlocked Ethiopia, offering a lease on 20 kilometres (12 miles) of its Red Sea coastline. Bihi says Ethiopia will recognize Somaliland in return, though this has never been confirmed by Addis Ababa and full details of the deal have not been made public. — AFP

## Elon Musk: Rocket man takes aim at Washington

**WASHINGTON:** Billionaire Elon Musk took a wild gamble backing Donald Trump's White House candidacy, but the bet has paid off - at least for now - with the US president-elect handing him an outsized role to overhaul the government. Musk said before the election that a new "Department of Government Efficiency" would slash \$2 trillion from the federal budget - a big promise echoing his sky-high business ambitions that have made him the world's wealthiest person.

With few details released, questions as to how Musk will lead the agency, including how he will juggle his new role while managing SpaceX, Tesla and his other ventures, including X. With Musk's businesses all having varying degrees of interactions with US and foreign governments, his new position also raises concerns about conflict of interest.

In his announcement, Trump said that Musk and another wealthy ally, Vivek Ramaswamy, would co-lead the new initiative and "provide advice and guidance from outside of Government." Endorsing a Republican candidate and helping propel him to victory was a shift towards politics for Musk. The 53-year-old South African-born entrepreneur rose to fame as the face of the nascent electric vehicle industry and has frequently expounded on the threats of climate change. When Trump pulled the United States out of the Paris Climate Accords in 2017, Musk resigned from two presidential advisory councils in protest.

Some of the strongest words came from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, who complained that "our speeches full of good words about climate change, change nothing". Rama skewered the many leaders who skipped this year's event, saying their absences added "insult to injury". Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, meanwhile, urged a "realistic global outlook" that did not prioritize decarbonization over "our production and social system's sustainability".

"We must protect nature, with man at its core. An approach that is too ideological and not pragmatic on this matter risks taking us off the road to success," the far-right leader said. "Currently, there is no single alternative to fossil fuel supply." And Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis warned that countries "cannot drive ourselves into industrial oblivion".

Those views stood in sharp contrast to the line from countries beset by climate catastrophes and rising sea levels. Tuvalu's Prime Minister Feleti Penitala Teo insisted that for Pacific island nations like his, "there is simply no time to waste". He urged countries to "deliver a clear signal that the world is promptly phasing out fossil fuel".

As leaders spoke, negotiators released a fresh draft deal on finance that includes a raft of options to raise funding but leaves unresolved sticking points that have long delayed an agreement. Most developing countries favor an annual commitment from wealthy countries of at least \$1.3 trillion. This figure is more than 10 times the \$100 billion annually that a small pool of developed countries — among them the US, the EU and Japan — currently pay. — Agencies

for Trump to continue US support for Ukraine's fight against Russia, which the Republican has called into question. Biden's Oval Office invitation restored a presidential transition tradition that Trump tore up when he lost the 2020 election, refusing to sit down with Biden or even attend the inauguration.

But by the time Trump took his last flight from the White House lawn on Jan 20, 2021, he had also been repudiated by many in his own party for having stoked the assault on the Capitol. That period of disgrace soon evaporated, however, as Republicans returned to Trump's side, recognizing the billionaire's unique electoral power at the head of his right-wing movement.

Trump enters his second term with a near total grip on his party and is expected to take both chambers of Congress — while the Democrats are in disarray. Ahead of the White House visit, Trump addressed Republicans from the House of Representatives at a Washington hotel. An ebullient Trump suggested that he could even be open to a third term in office — which would violate the US constitution. — AFP



Elon Musk

Years later, Musk has become Trump's most prominent celebrity endorser, leaning fully in to get him and his "Make America Great Again" agenda back in the White House. Musk reportedly spent over \$100 million to help Trump get elected, a massive sum, though a tiny fraction of his estimated \$300 billion fortune. He also used his influence on X, where he has more than 200 million followers, to push pro-Trump messages, as well as inflammatory disinformation about illegal immigration and voting. However, it remains to be seen how two notoriously egocentric personalities like Musk and Trump will get along in the long term.

### Illegal immigration

Born in Pretoria on June 28, 1971, to an engineer father and a Canadian-born model mother, Musk left South Africa in his late teens to attend Queen's University in Ontario. He transferred to the University of Pennsylvania after two years and earned bachelor's degrees in physics and business. After graduating from the Ivy League school, Musk abandoned

plans to study at Stanford University in California. He instead dropped out and started Zip2, a company that made online publishing software for the media industry. During the 2024 campaign - during which illegal immigration was once again Trump's key issue - reports resurfaced that Musk had likely violated his visa when he left Stanford. Musk banked his first millions before the age of 30 when he sold Zip2 to US computer maker Compaq for more than \$300 million in 1999.

Musk's next company, X.com, eventually merged with PayPal, the online payments firm bought by internet auction giant eBay for \$1.5 billion in 2002. After leaving PayPal, Musk embarked on a series of ever more ambitious ventures. He founded SpaceX in 2002 - now serving as its chief executive officer and chief technology officer - and became the chairman of electric carmaker Tesla in 2004. After some early crashes and near-misses, SpaceX perfected the art of landing booster engines on solid ground and ocean platforms, rendering them reusable - a major advancement in the field.

Musk has said he wants to make humans an "interplanetary species" by establishing a colony of people living on Mars. To this end, SpaceX is developing a prototype rocket, Starship, which envisages carrying crew and cargo to the Moon, Mars and beyond. The spaceship, the world's largest, has already completed several tests, most recently a successful "catch" of a booster. Musk, who holds US, Canadian and South African citizenship, has been married and divorced three times: once to the Canadian author Justine Wilson and twice to British actress Talulah Riley. He also dated the artist and singer Grimes. He has had 12 children, one of whom died in infancy. — AFP

## Kuwait tackling climate change...

Continued from Page 1

in the European Union and the United States. In China, which accounts for nearly a third of the global total, fossil fuel emissions are projected to tick up marginally in 2024, with increases in CO2 pollution from coal and gas. Overall global CO2 pollution, which includes emissions from land use change like deforestation, was roughly flat at 41.6 billion tons in 2024.

The report came as leaders gathered in Azerbaijan for COP29 climate talks aimed at reaching a deal to boost funding for poorer nations so they can adapt to climate shocks and transition to cleaner energy. The research found that to meet the Paris Agreement's ambitious goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world now needs to reach net-zero CO2 emissions by the late 2030s — instead of 2050.

The warning comes with growing concern about the future of global climate action after the election of Donald Trump, who has vowed to again pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement after taking over the presidency in January. Some leaders in Baku defended fossil fuels during two days of speeches, while others from countries plagued by climate disasters warned that they were running out of time.

## Trump, Biden vow smooth transfer...

Continued from Page 1

Trump added that the transfer of power would be "smooth as you can get" — despite the fact that his transition team has not yet signed some key legal documents ahead of his inauguration as president on Jan 20.

Absent from the occasion was incoming first lady Melania Trump, who was a shadowy presence on the campaign trail and spent much of Trump's first term away from the White House. Outgoing First Lady Jill Biden joined Biden in welcoming Trump and "gave Mr Trump a handwritten letter of congratulations for Mrs Trump," the White House said. The only other people in the room for talks after the handshake were Biden's chief of staff Jeff Zients and Trump's incoming chief of staff Susie Wiles, the White House said.

Biden was expected to push during the meeting

## Zionist carnage in Gaza after US...

Continued from Page 1

level of aid entering Gaza even as aid agencies said it was still not enough. The Zionist entity had announced the opening of an additional aid crossing into Gaza, just hours before the deadline set by outgoing President Joe Biden's administration to improve the humanitarian conditions in Gaza or risk a cut to military assistance. Last month, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin sent a letter to the Zionist entity setting a deadline of Nov 13 to comply with US law on permitting humanitarian assistance.

Asked if the Zionist entity had met the demands, State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said: "We have not made an assessment that they are in violation of US law. The overall humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to be unsatisfactory. But in the context of the letter, it's not about whether we find something satisfactory or not; it's what are the actions that we're seeing. These actions that we have seen, we think that these are steps in the right direction."

The US finding comes despite the Zionist entity not meeting a series of metrics set explicitly in the letter, including allowing a minimum of 350 trucks per day into Gaza. Patel said the administration was "constantly assessing and evaluating" even after the deadline.

Speaking on Wednesday, Blinken said the Zionist entity "has accomplished the goals that it set for itself" by taking out Hamas' leadership and ensuring the group is unable to launch another massive attack. "This should be a time to end the war," he said. "We also need to make sure we have a plan for what follows," he said, "so that if (the Zionist entity) decides to end the war and we find a way to get the hostages out, we also have a clear plan so that (the Zionist entity) can get out of Gaza and we make sure that Hamas is not going back in."

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Blinken's comments showed: "We are facing one enemy and that the US enmity against the Palestinian people is no less than that of the occupation." Hamas condemned Washington's "claims" that the Zionist entity is "taking measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza" and said in a statement that it was a "a confirmation of the full partnership of

President Biden's administration in the brutal war of genocide against our people".

On Tuesday, the United States stressed at the United Nations that "there must be no forcible displacement, nor policy of starvation in Gaza" by the Zionist entity, warning such policies would have grave implications under US and international law.

Meanwhile, Zionist airstrikes pounded Beirut's Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs for a second consecutive day on Wednesday, as Lebanon waited to hear Washington's latest ceasefire proposals after a US official expressed hope a truce could be reached. Mid-morning airstrikes levelled half a dozen buildings in the Beirut suburb known as Dahiyeh and killed eight people in Dawh Aramoun, a village south of the capital. The dead included three women and three children, Lebanon's health ministry said.

"They used to hit Dahiyeh at night, now they are doing it in daytime. Things are intensifying day after day," said Hassan Moussa, 40, speaking in Beirut, adding that Zionist airstrikes had also widened to areas such as Aramoun. Hezbollah said it used drones to attack Tel Aviv's Hakirya military base for the first time. The Zionist military said a heavy barrage of rockets was fired from Lebanon at the Zionist entity, where sirens sounded in the central areas.

Medics said five people were killed in a Zionist strike that hit a group of people outside Kamal Adwan Hospital near Beit Lahia, while five others were killed in two separate strikes in Nuseirat in central Gaza Strip where the army began a limited raid two days ago. In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, one man was killed and several others were wounded in a Zionist airstrike, while three Palestinians were killed in two separate Zionist airstrikes in Shujaia suburb of Gaza City, medics added. Later on Wednesday, a Zionist strike on a house in western Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip killed eight people, medics said.

"The scenes of the 1948 catastrophe are being repeated. (The Zionist entity) is repeating its massacres, displacement and destruction," said Saed, 48, a resident of Beit Lahia, who arrived in Gaza City on Wednesday. "North Gaza is being turned into a large buffer zone, (the Zionist entity) is carrying out ethnic cleansing under the sight and hearing of the impotent world," he told Reuters. Saed was referring to the 1948 Middle East Arab-Zionist war which gave birth to the Zionist entity and saw the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their hometowns and villages in what is now the Zionist entity. — Agencies



## International

# Iran hangs man 'for second time' after previous execution halted

## Victim's family had suddenly shouted 'forgiveness'

PARIS: Iran hanged a 26-year-old man for a second time Wednesday months after a previous execution was halted half a minute in, an NGO said. Ahmad Alizadeh was arrested in October 2018 on a murder charge, which he denied, and was sentenced to death, Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR), which tracks executions in Iran, said in a statement. His death sentence was carried out on April

27 in Ghezel Hesar prison in Karaj outside Tehran. But just 28 seconds into the hanging he was brought down from the gallows when the victim's family suddenly shouted "forgiveness". His "lifeless" body was successfully resuscitated and the execution was halted, IHR said.

Under Iran's sharia law, a victim's family can ask for blood money to spare the life of the perpetrator or also decide to

forgive. However, in many cases the family of the condemned person cannot afford the sum set and the execution goes ahead, according to activists. Alizadeh remained under the threat of the death penalty in the absence of any deal with the victim's family for blood money.

He was executed again in the Ghezel Hesar prison on Wednesday morning, IHR said. "Ahmad Alizadeh, a talent-

ed student, was hanged for the second time on charges of murder, which he denied and claimed he confessed to under torture," said IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, denouncing the "execution machine of the Iranian regime".

Activists accuse Iran of using the death penalty as a means to instil fear throughout society, particularly in the wake of 2022-2023 nationwide protests which shook the

Islamic authorities. According to IHR, 2024 is seeing a new surge in executions, with at least 166 executions recorded in October alone, the highest number recorded in a single month since the group began documenting executions in 2007. Activists including Amnesty International say Iran carries out more annual executions than any country other than China, for which no reliable figures are available. — AFP

## How China censorship machine blocked news of deadly attack

BEIJING: At least 35 people were killed and dozens more injured when a man ploughed his car into pedestrians exercising around a sports centre in the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai on Monday night. Footage showing bodies lying on the pavement appeared on social media in the hours after the crash but had vanished by early Tuesday morning, and local police reported only "injuries". It took officials nearly 24 hours to reveal that dozens had died - in one of the country's deadliest incidents in years. Here AFP looks at how China jumps into action to block information it does not want shared:

### Social media scrub

China heavily monitors social media platforms, where it is common for words and topics deemed sensitive to be removed - sometimes within minutes. On X-like social media platform Weibo, videos and photos showing the bloody moments after the incident late Monday night were swiftly deleted. Videos of the aftermath posted to Xiaohongshu, China's equivalent to Instagram, were also taken down.

### 24-hour delay

Chinese officials did not reveal that dozens had died until almost 24 hours after the attack, with state media reporting the 35 deaths shortly after 6:30 pm on Tuesday. Soon after, the hashtag "Man in Zhuhai rammed the crowd causing 35 deaths" jumped to the No. 1 trending topic on Weibo and reached 69 million views within an hour. The fatal crash happened on the eve of China's largest airshow, taking place in the same city, a showpiece event promoted for weeks by the country's tightly controlled state media operation.

### State narrative

State media in China also acts as a government mouthpiece. The state-backed newspaper Global Times on Wednesday morning published a short



ZHUHAI: A delivery man (center) lays flower bouquets at a makeshift memorial outside the Zhuhai Sports Centre in south China's Guangdong province on November 13, 2024 days after 35 people were killed when a man drove a car into a crowd in one of the country's deadliest mass-casualty events in years. — AFP

story on the "car ramming case" on page 3 - a stark contrast to the front page feature on fighter jets at the airshow nearby. The Communist Party's People's Daily included Chinese President Xi Jinping's instructions to treat injured residents and punish the perpetrator in a short block of text on its front page. State broadcaster CCTV's flagship evening news program, Xinwen Lianbo, on Tuesday spent about a minute and a half on Xi's directive to "treat those injured" during the 30-minute show, but shared no footage from the city.

### 'Order from the top'

AFP reporters on the scene in Zhuhai late Tuesday night saw delivery drivers placing online orders of flower bouquets beside flickering candles to commemorate the victims. But just a few hours later, cleaning staff cleared away the memorial, with some telling AFP they were

acting on an "order from the top". A handful of people at the site were blocked from taking videos by a police car and security guards shouting: "No filming!"

### Long history

China has a long history of clamping down on the spread of information, sometimes leading to costly delays in response. Authorities in 2008 worked to stifle news of contaminated milk that poisoned about 300,000 children - days before the start of the Beijing Olympics. The Chinese government that year also restricted foreign media access when protests broke out after an earthquake in southwest Sichuan province killed an estimated 70,000 people. And Chinese censors delayed an early response to COVID-19, penalizing local health officials who warned of a fast-spreading coronavirus. — AFP

## Moscow launches waves of missiles and drones in Kyiv

KYIV: Russia escalated its attacks on Kyiv early Wednesday, launching waves of drones and missiles in its first combined aerial assault on the capital in more than 70 days, authorities said. The broadside came as Washington and Seoul echoed warnings from Ukraine that North Korean troops had begun "engaging in combat operations" alongside Russian forces on the border between the warring countries. A security source in Kyiv meanwhile told AFP that Ukraine was behind the assassination of a high-ranking Russian naval officer in a car bombing on the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Ukraine's air force said its units had downed four missiles and 37 drones launched by Russia over eight regions of Ukraine overnight and into Wednesday morning. "It is important that our forces have the means to defend the country from Russian terror," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in response to the attack. Ukraine has for months been appealing to its Western allies to provide more air-defence systems to fend off Russian attacks on cities and critical infrastructure. The large-scale bombardment comes at a critical moment on the battlefield. Russian forces are advancing in the east and concerns are growing over future aid for Ukraine after US Donald Trump's victory in presidential elections.

### Explosions in Kyiv

AFP journalists heard explosions ring out over Kyiv and saw dozens of residents seeking shelter in an underground metro station in the centre of the capital. Kyiv officials said one man was wounded by falling debris from a downed drone in the suburb of Brovary, while emergency services distributed images of firefighters battling flames at one impact site.

A separate drone attack in the Ukrainian-controlled southern region of Kherson, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia, killed a 52-year-old woman, the regional head said. Multiple air raid sirens rang out early Wednesday as authorities said missiles were closing in on Kyiv, which was home to nearly three million people before Russia invaded in February 2022. "As missiles were approaching Kyiv, the enemy simultaneously launched a ballistic missile attack on the capi-



BROVARY, Ukraine: This handout photo shows firefighters extinguishing fire following a Russian strike in Brovary, near Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

tal. The enemy attack ended with another drone strike," city authorities said.

The attack is the latest in an uptick in escalating strikes on Ukrainian cities, mainly in the south of the war-battered country. A Russian strike this week on Kryvyi Rig, Zelensky's hometown, killed a 32-year-old mother and her three children. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied its forces target civilians in Ukraine, a claim its spokesman repeated Wednesday in response to a question over whether Russian forces were working to minimize civilian casualties.

### Crimea assassination

"Russian forces treat the civilian population with great care," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that Russia would continue its attacks. Last week, Moscow and Kyiv launched record overnight drone attacks on each other. Russian ground forces have been making rapid advances in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia. On Wednesday, the Russian defense ministry said its troops had wrested control of the village of Rivnopil, where an estimated 98 people lived before the invasion. As the Kremlin's forces advance westwards, Kyiv has warned that Russia has amassed a

force of 50,000 troops - including North Korean soldiers - to push out Ukrainian forces from the Russian border region of Kursk.

In Brussels, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday warned about the deployment of North Korean troops alongside Russian forces fighting on the Ukrainian border. Blinken said he discussed with NATO chief Mark Rutte the fact that North Korean forces had been "injected into the battle, and now, quite literally, in combat which demands and will get a firm response." South Korea's spy agency said North Korean soldiers were "engaging in combat" in Kursk, hours after US officials confirmed Pyongyang's troops were actively fighting for Moscow against Ukraine.

Separately, a source in the Security Service of Ukraine said the agency had orchestrated a car bomb attack in the city of Sevastopol that killed a senior naval officer in the Black Sea Fleet. The killing of Valery Trankovsky, which was confirmed by Moscow, is the latest in a string of targeted attacks on Russian military officers and pro-Kremlin public figures in occupied Ukrainian territory and within Russia. Crimea was seized by Russia in 2014 in the wake of pro-democracy protests in Kyiv that sparked fighting in the east with Kremlin-backed separatists. — AFP

## Taleban carry out 6th public execution since 2021

GARDEZ: Taleban authorities in eastern Afghanistan on Wednesday executed a convicted murderer by gunfire at a sports stadium, the sixth public execution since their return to power. The condemned man was shot with three bullets to the chest by a member of the victim's family in front of thousands of spectators in Gardez, the capital of Paktia province, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. The evening before the execution the governor's office called on officials and residents to "attend this event" on social media.

"A murderer was sentenced to retaliation punishment," said a statement from Afghanistan's supreme court which named the condemned as Mohammad Ayaz Asad. The execution order was signed by the Taleban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, the court said. The convict had been in detention since before the Taleban came to power for killing another man, Habibullah Saiful-Qatal, and the case was "examined very precisely and repeatedly" by three military courts, the statement said.

The victim's family was given the opportunity to stay the execution, but they refused, the statement added. Among the crowd at the execution were several high-level officials, including Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani. He heads the Haqqani network, a US-designated terrorist group long viewed as one of the most violent militant factions in Afghanistan.

### 'Eye for an eye'

Public executions were common during the Taleban's first rule from 1996 to 2001, but according to an AFP tally only a handful have been carried out since their return to power in August 2021. In 2022, Akhundzada ordered judges to fully implement all aspects of the Taleban government's interpretation of Islamic law - including "eye for an eye" punishments known as "qisas", allowing for the death penalty in retribution for the crime of murder. "Qisas is the order of God, we are Muslims so we need to practice it," said one witness to the execution who gave his name as Sayedullah. "Before it was not practiced, things were not in order... now thankfully, it's an Islamic system," he added.

Another spectator, Mobin, told AFP qisas was beneficial as then "no one will be prepared to commit murder, and they will not kill". Rare executions were carried out under the foreign-backed government ousted by the Taleban. In February, three public executions were carried out within a week. Two men were executed by multiple gunshots to the back in front of a large crowd in eastern Ghazni city, followed days later by a similar public execution in northern Jowzjan province. Corporal punishments - mainly flogging - have been common under the Taleban authorities and employed for crimes including theft, adultery and alcohol consumption. — AFP

## 14 dead in Pakistan wedding bus crash; bride survives

GILGIT: A bus carrying guests home from a wedding plunged into a river in northern Pakistan killing at least 14 people, officials said Wednesday, with the bride so far the only known survivor. "There were 25 people on the bus and so far 14 dead bodies have been recovered while 10 are still missing," said Wazir Asad Ali, a rescue official in Gilgit-Baltistan. "The bride is out of danger and she is being treated in a Gilgit hospital," Ali added. Naik Alam, a senior police official from the area, told AFP the driver appeared to have been speeding when he lost control at a curve.

The groom's family had travelled from Punjab, more than 500 kilometers away, for the wedding and were returning home when the accident happened. Road accidents with high fatalities are common in Pakistan, where safety measures are lax, driver training is poor, and transport infrastructure is often decrepit. In Balochistan in August, 12 men died when their bus crashed into a ravine on the Makran Coastal Highway. In another accident that month, 24 people on board a bus were killed when it plunged into a ravine near the town of Azad Patan on the border between Punjab province and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. — AFP



GILGIT: Mourners carry a deceased's body who died in a wedding bus accident in Gilgit. — AFP



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

# Trump 2.0 looms as world leaders off to South America for summits

## APEC forum takes place this week in Peru, G20 in Brazil

**LIMA:** World leaders are heading to South America for twin summits this month, with one major theme dominating: Donald Trump 2.0. Peru is the first stop, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum on Nov 13-15, followed by a Group of 20 (G20) leading economies meeting in Brazil on Nov 18-19. A busy month of global summits has also seen the COP29 climate change conference in Azerbaijan.

For leaders from the Asia-Pacific region, APEC on Thursday will be the first time they have gathered since the Nov 5 US presidential election, which ended in victory for Republican Trump, who has pledged sharp policy shifts on issues ranging from trade tariffs to climate change. The formal agenda at the forum hosted by resource-rich Peru includes efforts to finance the energy transition, regulate emerging technologies, formalize economies and improve maritime logistics.

But diplomats from the 21-member bloc said Trump's pledge to erect trade barriers for America's partners would overshadow the summit. APEC members, from Canada to Thailand, account for almost half of world trade. The focus will be "what does Trump 2.0 look like," said a senior diplomat of an APEC member nation, on condition of anonymity. Member nations were concerned about Trump's headline approach to China, tariffs, and the dollar's rally hitting global currencies, the diplomat said. The US president-elect periodically railed against a rising dollar during his first term, as it hurt the competitiveness of American products abroad.

Leaders will also be trying to calculate how to navigate other new relationships following a blockbuster year of elections in 2024. There are new leaders of Indonesia, Japan, Mexico and Vietnam, who are all heading to the Peruvian capital.

"A lot of this will be a get-to-know-you for big

leaders," said Erin Murphy, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies based in Washington. "There's going to be less of a focus on the APEC agenda, and more on - how are we going to work together in the new world next year?"

### Trade war, China

Trump has proposed import tariffs of 10 percent across the board on all goods into the US, and even higher levies on imports from China. Simmering rivalry between Washington and Beijing has caught many APEC countries in the crossfire in recent years. Australia, which is looking to diversify trade links across Southeast Asia, says it will support "free and fair" multilateral trade at the summit.

Outgoing US President Joe Biden is due to travel to Lima, with Trump's transition team also likely to send representatives. Biden's impact will be limited, however, given Trump's thumping election win, diplomats said. Any concessions that Biden made would have a question mark over them when policy could change so "drastically" under Trump, said one senior diplomat in South America.

Hosts Peru want to revive an old APEC plan to establish a free trade area for the entire Asia-Pacific, Foreign Minister Elmer Schialer said, but analysts view that as a long shot without US support.

Delegates said APEC could lay the runway for future announcements on the environment, signaling to negotiators at COP29 and the G20. Trump has already said he plans to withdraw the US from the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement, dampening the outlook for climate deals. Executives from Exxon Mobil, TikTok and JPMorgan Chase are scheduled to address delegates alongside leaders from 12 countries, including China's President Xi Jinping.

For President Xi, APEC marks a return to Latin



Aerial view of the Lima Convention Center where the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit will be held in Lima. — AFP

America for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. He will also inaugurate a Chinese-built megaport on the Peruvian coast. Xi will be on a diplomacy blitz at APEC, several China-based analysts told Reuters, as he seeks to improve or consolidate relations

with nations like South Korea and Japan who may be worried about a Trump-led United States. "This is a good opportunity for Xi to show up, especially when it seems like things in the US might be unstable," Murphy said. — Reuters

## Wall St bankers temper optimism after Trump win

**NEW YORK:** As Wall Street financiers gathered in downtown Manhattan on Wednesday, their optimism about President-elect Donald Trump's deregulatory agenda was tempered by uncertainty over his personnel and policies. Bankers were still bullish on deals. They expected friendly regulators to be installed atop key agencies, sweeping away onerous regulations. Yet one week after Trump's election victory, industry experts shifted their focus to Trump's financial policies and how they would play out.

"Banks can't have everything," Erika Najarian, an analyst at UBS, told the industry conference on Tuesday. While they are benefiting from "wide open" capital markets, "we have to sort of temper enthusiasm when it comes to loan growth for next year" if interest rates stay higher for longer.

Attendees also speculated about Trump's potential roster of financial regulators and predicted which companies stood to gain most from the new regime. "The administration is going to be this interesting mix of kind of laissez-faire, plus pro-business, plus populism," said Jon Lieber, Eurasia Group's head of research for the US. "How those three things interact



**NEW YORK:** Gita Gopinath, First Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund speaks onstage during the Global Economics: Risk, and Dealing with Future Uncertainty panel during the Fortune Global Forum 2024 on November 12, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

are going to be happening in weird ways."

For instance, Trump is expected to scrap a proposal for higher capital requirements that was strongly opposed by banking giants. And attendees argued banks are well-positioned to push for further relief and rollbacks of Democratic priorities as economic growth remains a top Trump pledge.

"Sometimes you will win and sometimes you will lose, but the CEOs frankly have to have the back-

bone to fight the regulators when they think they are right," said Jelena McWilliams, the former chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in Trump's first term. But the incoming president's populist leanings could see him do things like extend a Biden-era fight against banks' so-called "junk fees" that are unpopular among consumers. While they did not expect it to become reality, several attendees noted Trump's campaign promise to cap credit card interest rates as the type of populist pitch he is capable of making. Meanwhile, banks that are already in the regulatory penalty box are unlikely to be given easier treatment by the new administration, attendees said, and intense scrutiny of lenders' efforts to prevent money laundering and criminal financing will also remain high as geopolitical tensions escalate between the US and its adversaries.

Trump's focus on crypto could also increase competition for banks, said Aaron Klein, a senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution. While lenders may get a short-term boost in profits from lighter regulation, their business could be eroded in the long term if financial activity migrates to more lightly-regulated areas such as the fintech or crypto industries, Klein said. Bitcoin climbed to a record \$89,982 on Tuesday on expectations that Trump will embrace crypto. "The incoming administration has an opportunity to deliver on campaign promises," said Dante Disparte, the chief strategy officer and head of global policy at Circle, the principal operator of stablecoin USDC. — Reuters

## Oil & gas investment vastly outstrips loss and damage aid: NGO

**PARIS:** The oil and gas sector's production hit an all-time high last year with annual investment in deposit exploration averaging \$61.1 billion (57.5 billion euros) between 2022 and 2024, German NGO Urgewald said in a report Tuesday, contrasting how that outstrips government climate damage pledges.

The report comes amid the COP29 meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan where a crucial challenge is how developed nations can agree on a new financial aid target to assist the developing world to manage ecological transition in the face of climate change. In its Global Oil & Gas Exit List, Urgewald compared the \$61.1 billion spend on gas and oil with financial aid to the most vulnerable countries affected by global warming, noting world leaders have pledged to pay a mere \$702 million to the fund compensating for "loss and damage" in these countries.

Based on data from companies and specialized analysis firms, the list includes 1,769 active companies in the oil and gas industry covering 95 percent of the world's hydrocarbon production, according to Urgewald. "It is perverse to see companies shelling out tens of billions of dollars each year to search for new oil and gas reserves that will lead to even more loss and damage in the future," said Tinaye Mabara, of the Agape Earth Coalition, quoted in the report. Mabara blasted "the paltry sums governments have pledged to the Loss and Damage Fund (which) are only a small fraction of what Big Oil spends to make things worse. World leaders need to make polluters pay and direct this money towards a just transition for all." — AFP

## US consumer inflation rises in October

**WASHINGTON:** US consumer inflation edged higher last month spurred by an increase in housing costs, according to government data published Wednesday, complicating the US Federal Reserve's plans to cut interest rates. The consumer price index (CPI) rose to 2.6 percent in October from a year ago, up from 2.4 percent in September, the Labor Department said in a statement.

This was in line with the median forecast of economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal. While Wednesday's data release complicates the Fed's plans to cut interest rates, it remains broadly on track to slow the rate of price increases, EY chief economist Gregory Daco told AFP. "The truth is that fundamentals today remain disinflationary," he said. "Consumer prudence, reduced markups, easing wage growth, strong productivity growth, those are all fundamentally disinflationary."

A measure of inflation that strips out volatile food and energy costs known as "core" inflation was unchanged at 3.3 percent last month from a year earlier, underscoring the ongoing challenges the Fed faces. "This has been a hard-fought recovery, but we are making progress for working families," White House National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard said in a statement. "We will keep fighting to lower costs for families on key items like housing and health care, and against policies that would undermine our progress on bringing inflation down," added Brainard, who is unlikely to remain in her position once President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House in January.

Monthly headline inflation rose by 0.2 percent, while core inflation increased by 0.3 percent. Both



**ROSEMEAD, US:** People shop at a grocery store on August 14, 2024 in Rosemead, California. — AFP

figures were the same as a month prior. The housing index was responsible for more than half of the monthly rise in headline inflation, according to the Labor Department, jumping by 0.4 percent in October. The October increase puts a slight spanner in the works of the Federal Reserve, which recently began lowering interest rates in response to easing inflation.

At the same time as inflation has cooled, the labor market has shown some signs of cooling while remaining relatively healthy, and growth has remained robust — all good signs for the world's largest economy. The US central bank shrugged off the economic uncertainty raised by Trump's victory in the US presidential race to cut by an additional quarter percentage-point last week to between 4.50 and 4.75 percent. Despite the small uptick, the October CPI data is unlikely to sway the Fed too much, economists at High Frequency Economics wrote in a note to clients.

"Inflation metrics for October printed pretty

much as expected," they said, adding: "There surely is no evidence of any crash in prices, as one might expect to see in a crashing economy."

Futures traders expect the Fed to keep going, penciling in a roughly 80 percent chance of another rate cut next month, according to CME Group data. Next year, the path forward is less clear, with a lot riding on the decisions taken by President-elect Donald Trump when he takes office in January.

"I do think there will be pressure on the Fed to ease monetary policy faster, whether it's direct or implicit pressure," Daco from EY told AFP. "But I think if anything, the Fed is likely to err on the side of caution in '25 because there will be upside risks to inflation." These factors, Daco said, include potential deregulation, immigration restrictions, and the likely implementation of tariffs potential tax cuts, all of which could prove inflationary. "When you combine all of those elements with the Fed that's trying to find neutral, I think they will err on the side of caution," he added. — AFP

## Germany must overhaul debt rules: Experts

**FRANKFURT:** Germany must enforce strict rules that limit borrowing in order to boost spending in key areas, otherwise Europe's top economy risks further stagnation, an influential group of experts said on Wednesday. The government's council of economic experts also became the latest body to downgrade its forecast, and now expects German output to contract by 0.1 percent this year, compared to an earlier prediction of slight growth.

The world's third-largest economy has been battling headwinds ranging from a manufacturing slowdown to weak demand for its crucial exports, and is on course to shrink for the second straight year. "By international standards, Germany is lagging far behind economically," said the five-member council in their annual report, stressing that "structural problems" were increasingly holding the country back. The council, an independent group of economists that advises the government, said that years of underinvestment in key areas like infrastructure, education and defense were central to Germany's problems. Their comments reflect oft heard complaints in Germany: from the decrepit state of the railways to the threadbare condition of the armed forces and the slide of the country's schools down international rankings. Public spending focused on boosting the economy's future prospects had been too low for years, especially when compared to the rest of Europe, the experts said. — AFP



# China unveils tax policies to boost property market

## Beijing hopes slew of tax incentives to support the real estate market

BEIJING: China on Wednesday announced a raft of tax policies aimed at boosting the country's ailing real estate market, state media said, including cuts to property deed taxes and VAT. Deed tax incentives for housing transactions would be "enhanced to actively support basic and improved housing needs", state broadcaster CCTV said, citing various government agencies, including the Ministry of Finance.

The property sector has long accounted for around a quarter of gross domestic product and experienced dazzling growth for two decades, but a years-long housing slump has battered growth as authorities eye a target of around five percent for 2024. China is trying to shore up the sector, and said in October that it would boost credit available for unfinished housing projects to more than \$500 billion.

Beijing has in recent months also announced a slew of measures aimed at boosting economic activity, including rate cuts and the easing of some home purchasing restrictions. CCTV said Wednesday's announcement from China's Ministry of Finance, state tax authority and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development was aimed at clarifying "various tax incentives to support the real estate market".

"The announcement specifies that the deed tax incentives for housing transactions will be enhanced to actively support basic and improved housing needs," CCTV reported, adding "the minimum prepayment rate of land value-added tax will be reduced to ease financial difficulties for real estate companies".

The measures, which come into force on December 1, include an increase in the minimum area for homes eligible for a one percent low tax rate from 90 square meters (970 square feet) to 140 square meters, which used to be taxed up to three percent. The deed tax policy for second homes in the four cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen will also be brought in line with the rest of the country, CCTV said. That means householders buying their only home or second home will pay a unified one percent deed tax rate, provided the area does not exceed 140 square meters.

Other policy reforms include the uniform reduction of the minimum pre-collection rate of land VAT by 0.5 percentage points across regions. And individuals who sell homes that have been owned for two years or more will be exempt from VAT in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

Ahead of Wednesday's policy announcement, China last week unveiled an ambitious plan to relieve public debt, aiming to turn local governments away from belt-tightening practices that have exacerbated the domestic downturn. Policymakers approved a proposal to swap six trillion yuan (\$840 billion) of hidden debt belonging to local governments for official loans with more favorable terms.

Hidden debts are defined as borrowing for which a government is liable, but not disclosed to its citizens or to other creditors. This move would free up space for local governments to better develop the economy and protect people's livelihoods, CCTV said. — AFP



This aerial photo taken on November 12, 2024 shows a general view of residential buildings in Huaian, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

## COP29 spotlights critical minerals amid women's snub

JOHANNESBURG/BAKU: While tens of thousands attend the UN COP29 climate summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, a group of more than 120 grassroots African female activists has snubbed the talks and already attended a "counter-COP" in Senegal. Members of the Women's Climate Assembly (WCA) are seeking reparations for environmental and social damages inflicted by historic mining, and a greater say in the extraction of critical minerals needed for the world's transition to clean energy.

"We see a rush for resources, with communities exploited, rights trampled and environments trashed. We see developing countries ground down to the bottom of value chains, as others grow wealthy on their resources," Guterres said. The panel published a report in September with recommendations to make the sector more sustainable, such as by creating a transparency framework and a fund to address legacy issues caused by derelict or abandoned mines.

Guterres said the report's recommendations "aim to empower communities, create accountability, and ensure that clean energy drives equitable and resilient growth." Africa holds over 40 percent of the world's reserves of transition minerals like cobalt, lithium and copper - all key to green technologies such as electric vehicles and solar panels.

With the right policies to keep more of the pro-

cessing and manufacturing on the continent, Africa could boost its GDP by at least \$24 billion a year and create 2.3 million jobs, research from civil society organization Publish What You Pay found. As COP29 discusses what should happen, female activists in Africa want action so that history does not repeat itself, with minerals enriching international mining companies and local people left with little apart from environmental damage.

The African activists' meeting and WCA said African voices have been largely excluded from COP meetings, where they said Global North governments and corporations renege on promises, such as not delivering climate funds where they are needed. The WCA is working to quantify the historic damag-

es in monetary terms and is building a legal case to demand reparations from polluting companies. "We need to talk to the polluters for the problems they are causing in our communities," said Abie Freeman a Liberia WCA member in a statement. In a declaration last year, the WCA criticized "world leaders of powerful countries who stand with their dirty industries", highlighting the impacts of resource extraction like oil drilling and metals mining in the Congo Basin. While the Congo Basin is extremely rich in minerals such as cobalt and coltan, it is also sometimes described as "the lungs of Africa" as its forests act as the world's largest carbon sink.

Judith Suminwa Tuluka, the first female prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, said several reports link the intensive exploitation of minerals - including those for the energy transition - with war in her country. "For an energy transition to be fair and equitable, it must be built on a foundation which contributes to peace and development," she told the COP29 event.

That means those countries where resources are extracted and their local communities benefit from all of the measures and investments, Suminwa added. The resources needed for green energy devices like solar panels and batteries will entail much more extraction of minerals such as cobalt and lithium, said Samantha Hargreaves, the director of WoMin, a Pan African ecofeminist alliance. Africa should act as a unified bloc to control the mining and trade of critical minerals, she said, as mining projects have often left women with limited access to public services, water and energy, and vulnerable to sexual violence.

The United Nations Trade and Development agency (UNCTAD) contributed to the UN panel report and plans to work with countries to help obtain more community benefits from mining and build "value-added" industries like domestic processing. Luz María de la Mora, director of UNCTAD's Division on International Trade and Commodities said women have lower salaries in the sector, and often have to support families alone when men are forced to leave communities to find mining work.

"We need to make sure that the new era of critical energy transition minerals does not replicate the same kind of models that we have been seeing," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at COP29.

However, de la Mora warned this work will take time, including the creation of a legal regulatory framework that is binding for governments and companies. "I think it starts with a good assessment. And this is where we are right now," she said. — Reuters



A woman cleans the floor in front of the logotype at the venue for the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. — AFP

"We support an energy transition, but if it will involve children in mines, we are against it, if it involves women getting sick and being exploited, we are against it," Oumou Koulibaly, a WCA member based in Senegal, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. At October's African Peoples Counter COP, activists shared experiences of the harmful impacts of mining, from communities displaced by new gold mines in Burkina Faso, to water contamination from Guinea's aluminum mines.

Meanwhile in Baku on Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres spoke following the conclusion of an expert panel on critical minerals. "Too often we see the mistakes of the past repeated in a stampede of greed that crushes the poor," he said.

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## Chinese tech giant Tencent posts 8% revenue growth

BEIJING: Chinese tech giant Tencent on Wednesday posted an eight percent year-on-year expansion in third-quarter revenue, driven by what it called "robust" growth in its gaming business.

The Shenzhen-based firm is one of the top players in China's expansive technology sector, operating the WeChat "super-app" with other offerings across gaming, content streaming and cloud services.

Tencent recorded revenue of 167.2 billion yuan (\$23.2 billion) during the three months ending on September 30, up eight percent from the same period last year, a filing at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange showed. "During the third quarter of 2024, we delivered robust revenue growth in our games business, underpinned by consistent performance of evergreen games globally and contributions from new games with evergreen potential," the filing stated.

Net profits in the period stood at 53.2 billion yuan (\$7.4 billion), jumping 47 percent year-on-year, the announcement showed. Last year saw Tencent bring in its lowest annual profit since 2019, but the firm has bounced back, recording an 82 percent year-on-year surge in second-quarter net profits.

Tencent's latest results are expected to be followed this week by those of fellow tech titans JD.com and Alibaba, all of which are being closely monitored by investors for signs of an improvement in Chinese domestic consumption. China's economy has struggled to fully rebound from the pandemic,



SHANGHAI: China's gaming giant Tencent HQ in Beijing.

with sluggish spending among the hurdles faced by companies in pursuit of stable growth.

Compounding the challenge has been a tougher regulatory environment following Beijing's 2020 crackdown on the tech sector, which imposed closer scrutiny on competition and the handling of personal data after years of relative leniency. Since 2021, Chinese authorities have also imposed a strict weekly limit of three hours of online gaming for those under

18 to curb addiction among younger people. Tencent—among the world's top game providers—has recently sought to build its presence in the promising field of artificial intelligence, like other major Chinese tech firms such as Baidu, Huawei, Alibaba and ByteDance. Wednesday's filing said that the firm is "increasingly seeing tangible benefits of deploying AI", adding that its investment in the technology would continue. — AFP

## Development bank pledge gives COP29 summit early boost

BAKU: COP29 negotiators welcomed an early boost to the two-week summit a pledge by major development banks to lift funding to poor and middle-income countries struggling with global warming. A group of lenders, including the World Bank, announced a joint goal on Tuesday of increasing this finance to \$120 billion by 2030, a roughly 60 percent increase on the amount in 2023.

"I think it's a very good sign," Irish Climate Minister Eamon Ryan told Reuters on Wednesday. "It's very helpful. But that on its own won't be enough", Ryan said, adding countries and companies must also contribute. The chief aim of the conference in Azerbaijan is to secure a wide-ranging international climate financing agreement that ensures up to trillions of dollars for climate projects.

Developing countries are hoping for big commitments from rich, industrialized countries that are the biggest historical contributors to global warming, and some of which are also huge producers of fossil fuels. "Developed countries have not only neglected their historical duty to reduce emissions, they are doubling down on fossil-fuel-driven growth," said climate activist Harjeet Singh.

Wealthy countries pledged in 2009 to contribute \$100 billion a year to help developing nations transition to clean energy and adapt to the conditions of a warming world. But those payments were only fully met in 2022 and the pledge expires this year. With 2024 on track to be the hottest year on record, scientists say global warming and its impacts are unfolding faster than expected. Climate-fueled wildfires forced evacuations in California and triggered air quality warnings in New York. In Spain, survivors are coming to terms with the worst floods in the country's modern history. Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama said he was concerned that the international process to address global warming, now decades old, was not moving swiftly enough. — Reuters

## IMF urged to sell gold to help countries hit by climate change

NAIROBI: The International Monetary Fund should sell 4 percent of its gold to help offer debt relief to low income countries devastated by climate-related catastrophes, a study said as climate financing dominates early talks at the COP29 summit. From the Caribbean to Africa, low income countries have turned to the IMF in recent years for support in the face of shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, driving up repayments to the lender of last resort in subsequent years.

Although the IMF has a facility known as Catastrophe Containment Relief Trust (CCRT), this only covers 30 poor countries and has just \$103 million available, said researchers from the Boston University Global Development Centre. The CCRT is used to pay off an eligible member state's loans to the IMF for up to two years, providing immediate relief and allowing those funds to be targeted at other priorities.

"Many climate-vulnerable countries have been unable to access the CCRT as its eligibility criteria fails to account for climate vulnerability ... and funding is severely limited," the researchers said in a report. The solution lies in selling some of the IMF's 90.5 million ounces of gold reserves, the report said, taking advantage of elevated prices to boost the fund and cover more countries. Selling 4 percent of the IMF's gold would generate \$9.52 billion, the study said, covering debt relief for 86 countries.

"With current gold prices exceeding \$2,600 per ounce, selling a small fraction of gold has the potential to generate significant revenues and easily replenish the CCRT," it said. Gold was trading at \$2,606.42 per ounce on Wednesday. IMF gold reserve sales are rare. The last was in 2009/10, when it offloaded an eighth of its reserves, which was triggered by the need to boost its lending capacity. At its inception in 1944, member states used to pay their IMF quotas with gold, the research report said, meaning it accumulated reserves at a historical cost of just \$45 per ounce. — Reuters



# Trump trade policy seen as wild card for US soybean farmers

## Tariffs may send construction costs soaring, analysts say

CHICAGO/EVANSVILLE, Wisconsin: American farmers are worried that President-elect Donald Trump's sweeping tariff plans will curb their access to top soy buyer China, but tariffs could also lure companies to build more US crushing plants, hungry for domestic supplies. Trump's plans to roll out blanket import tariffs could slam the door on imported vegetable oil supplies, which renewable energy analysts said could in turn lure the US crush industry to revive lagging plans to build new plants and expand capacity.

Such expansion has faltered over the past year, as the US market was flooded with cheaper global supplies of diesel feedstocks like used cooking oil (UCO) from China, tallow from Brazil and canola oil from Canada. Now, these supplies are likely targets for Trump's tariffs while global supplies of other vegoils are tightening and prices climbing, analysts said. USDA data projects that global rapeseed oil supplies will shrink by 13 percent over the coming year with sunflower seed oil stocks down 24 percent. Indonesian palm oil shipments have dropped as that country plans to boost biodiesel production next year.

Potential new demand helped send Chicago Board of Trade soybean futures BOV1 jumping nearly 6 percent last week to the highest in seven months, traders said. Analysts cautioned it remained too soon to know how, or if, the Trump Administration will change President Joe Biden's law providing a decade of lucrative subsidies for clean-energy projects. Building domestic demand for such crops is key for eating through excess stocks, especially without access to the Chinese export market, agricultural economists said.

Hefty global competition could dent incomes for farmers who just harvested the second-largest US soybean crop ever at a time when crop prices hover near four-year lows. If tariffs prompt retaliation by global US soybean importers, big soy processors such as Bunge Global and Archer-Daniels-Midland

Co could benefit from a larger and likely cheaper supply of beans for them to crush in the US, industry analysts said. "If Trump goes the tariff direction, it is friendly for the US crushing industry and capacity," said Kent Woods, owner of advisory firm Crush-Traders. Woods added that US soy demand would also rise if Trump blocks imported oils from benefiting from renewable fuel tax credits.

Farmers in rural Evansville, Wisconsin, were still waiting for the state's first commercial-scale soybean crushing plant, which had been slated to break ground last year. For Nancy Kavazanjian and husband Charlie Hammer, the plant would mean an end to the nearly 400-mile round-trip to haul their soybeans to an Illinois buyer. The savings would be huge, Kavazanjian said. "It's manpower, it's fuel and it's time."

Soaring vegoil demand from biofuels makers triggered a flood of projects to build new soy processing plants three years ago. A mix of state and federal programs aimed at boosting lower carbon intensity fuels got a lift from Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) climate legislation in 2022. Since 2021, US renewable diesel production capacity soared 200 percent. Six new soybean processing facilities or plant expansions in Iowa, Nebraska and North Dakota opened in less than two years. At least four more projects in Nebraska, Ohio, Indiana and Louisiana are slated to launch through 2026.

Yet in about a half-dozen Midwestern towns, the lucrative promise of riches has stalled.

Crushers blame the delays on the flood of biofuel feedstock imports, soaring construction costs and the end of cheap financing as interest rates surged to a 23-year high. US farmers looking to boost domestic soy demand have unsuccessfully tried to get Biden's Treasury Department to exclude imported biofuel feedstocks from IRA subsidies known as 45Z. It remains too soon to know if Trump will try to alter the IRA's clean energy provisions or limit imports of



Pouring soybean grain into tractor trailer after harvest in this file photo.

used cooking oil, said Susan Stroud, founding analyst at No Bull Ag consulting.

Some firms slammed on the brakes on oilseeds plant expansions in order to wait and see how the election will impact biofuels policy. Permitting delays have stalled plant expansions by global oilseeds processor Bunge and joint venture partner Chevron in Destrehan, Louisiana, and Cairo, Illinois, along with slow approvals by the two companies, Bunge told Reuters. Industry sources said Bunge scrapped plans to expand its massive plant in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Bunge declined to comment.

Work on United Cooperative's smaller-scale plant in Waupun, Wisconsin, lagged after construction costs rose and interest rates soared, said Woods of

advisory firm CrushTraders. United Coop CEO David Cramer said it will be online within two years; the only delays were in getting equipment.

Soy processors also expect higher construction costs next year. Tariffs on imported steel and processing plant equipment could prove unpalatable for crushers that have yet to break ground. Evansville Mayor Dianne Duggan said CHS had spoken about approving construction of the local facility as early as spring of 2023. The plant would be able to crush 70 million bushels of soybeans annually - or about two-thirds of Wisconsin's total crop production, according to company and government data. Today, it's an empty field. CHS said the project is still under consideration. — Reuters

## Inflation worries come back to haunt bond strategists

BENGALURU: Donald Trump's presidential election win has forced bond strategists to make a material change in their outlook towards higher longer-dated Treasury yields, a Reuters poll found, as the risk of a US inflation resurgence escalates.

Since Trump's victory, the benchmark US 10-year Treasury yield has risen nearly 15 basis points. That stems from expectations of his proposed policies of tax cuts and tariffs, which, according to estimates from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, could push up US fiscal debt by \$7.75 trillion over the next decade. Coupled with continued resilience in US economic data, that has thrown a wrench into the Federal Reserve's easing plans. Benchmark 10-year yields, which move inversely to prices, are up over 70 basis points cumulatively since the Fed's large September half-percentage point rate cut. Interest rate futures are now fully priced for just three more quarter-point interest rate cuts by end-2025, half of what was predicted even a few weeks ago.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 19 of 30, said their overall view of longer-dated Treasury yields, which account for future growth and inflation expectations, had materially changed since the US election in a Nov 8-13 Reuters survey.

"The situation is two-fold. Initially, we were skeptical about the US's need to cut rates as much as they were saying, or as much as the market was pricing. Central banks typically cut rates if there is a crisis or if inflation is too low, neither of which we're currently seeing," said Lars Moulund, chief rates strategist at Nordea. "Plus, it's hard to argue against a lot of what Trump has proposed as being inflationary. Imported goods will become more expensive, and even if substituted with American goods, which are pricier from the onset, prices will rise ... Perhaps we need to revisit the highs in rates and go even higher in the long end of the curve."

Dan Ivascyn, group chief investment officer at bond giant PIMCO, told Reuters last week the Treasury market selloff on and around the

## US to award Akash Systems \$18.2m for chips production

WASHINGTON: The US Commerce Department said Wednesday it has agreed to provide up to \$18.2 million in government subsidy funding to Akash Systems to support the construction of a 40,000-square-foot clean room space for advanced semiconductor manufacturing.

This proposed funding from the \$52.7 billion semiconductor manufacturing and research subsidy program, will be combined with funding from California-based Akash, venture capital firms, and other private investors, to support a \$121 million investment in West Oakland, California to manufacture various Diamond Cooling substrates, devices and systems at scale.

Akash is utilizing its "Diamond Cooling" technology to improve thermal management with AI-focused data centers. "As a US company developing next-generation semiconductor technology, this validates our vision and strategy, helping us to deliver cutting-edge solutions that address thermal challenges in today's high-performance computing and communication systems," Akash



Consumers shop at an Outlet mall in Los Angeles, California. -- AFP

election reflected "reflationary theme" as well as higher fiscal risks.

But strategists have not yet fully factored in these concerns to their official point forecasts. The 10-year Treasury yield, currently 4.43 percent, was seen falling about 20 bps to 4.25 percent in three months and to 4.20 percent by end-April, according to the median forecasts from nearly 40 bond strategists. Those forecasts were sizeable upgrades from October's survey. "There are two opposing forces here for the market. One is the expectation of fiscal stimulus in 2025, which keeps an upward bias to yields. However, at the same time, there is also the fact the labor market has been weakening. The Fed is on an easing path, which acts in the opposite direction, pulling down yields," said Jabaz Mathai, head of GIO rates and FX strategy at Citi.

"Between these two forces, we find ourselves somewhat neutral at current levels - 4.2 percent is a reasonable target in the near term." Several others in the survey also cited the need for greater clarity around whether Trump's proposed policies

will be implemented in full before taking a definitive call on the future path of yields. While results are still coming in for the House of Representatives, most expect the Republican Party to be in control of both Houses of Congress.

"From here, yields will clearly look for more information not only from economic data, but also from fiscal policy," said Vishal Khanduja, portfolio manager, Total Return Bond Fund at Morgan Stanley Investment Management. "We need to see more details not only about who will lead certain aspects in the administration and certain departments, but also about their focus and actual numbers, whether it's tax cuts or tariffs ... This will give us more direction for Treasury yields."

Asked what was more likely for the US yield curve over the coming month, 95 percent of survey respondents, 20 of 21, said it would steepen, 13 of whom said it would be led by longer-term yields rising faster than short-term ones, or "bear steepening". Seven said "bull steepening" was more likely, one said "bull flattening". — Reuters

## French farmers to protest Mercosur deal

PARIS: Farmers are planning protests from Monday to oppose the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement, saying increased imports from South America will hurt the European Union's agriculture, the head of France's largest farm lobby FNSEA said on Wednesday. This comes as farmers in Belgium have called for demonstrations close to the EU headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday. "This trade agreement, which links part of the South American states to Europe, risks having dramatic consequences for agriculture," FNSEA's Arnaud Rousseau told France Inter radio.

"So we will be in all regions from Monday, for a few days, to make the voice of France heard at the time of the G20 in Brazil, and we hope that all the European countries will join us because the subject is not a country, a French subject, it is a European subject," he added. However, French farmers do not intend to block roads and highways as they had done last year when anger at competition from cheaper imports, including from EU ally Ukraine, and a regulatory burden had led to large-scale protests across the EU. "We are not here to bother the French people, we are here to tell them that we are proud to feed them and that continuing to produce in France," he added. — Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: A man counts one thousand Argentine peso banknotes in Buenos Aires. — AFP

## Argentine monthly inflation falls to three-year low

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's monthly inflation rate fell to 2.7 percent in October, its lowest level in three years, the national statistics agency said Tuesday, a development welcomed by cost-cutting President Javier Milei. Annual inflation, however, remains among the highest in the world, at 193 percent in October, figures from the Indec statistics agency showed. The government of self-described "anarcho-capitalist" President Javier Milei has applied a drastic austerity program aimed at erasing the budget deficit and taming the high inflation that has plagued Argentina for years.

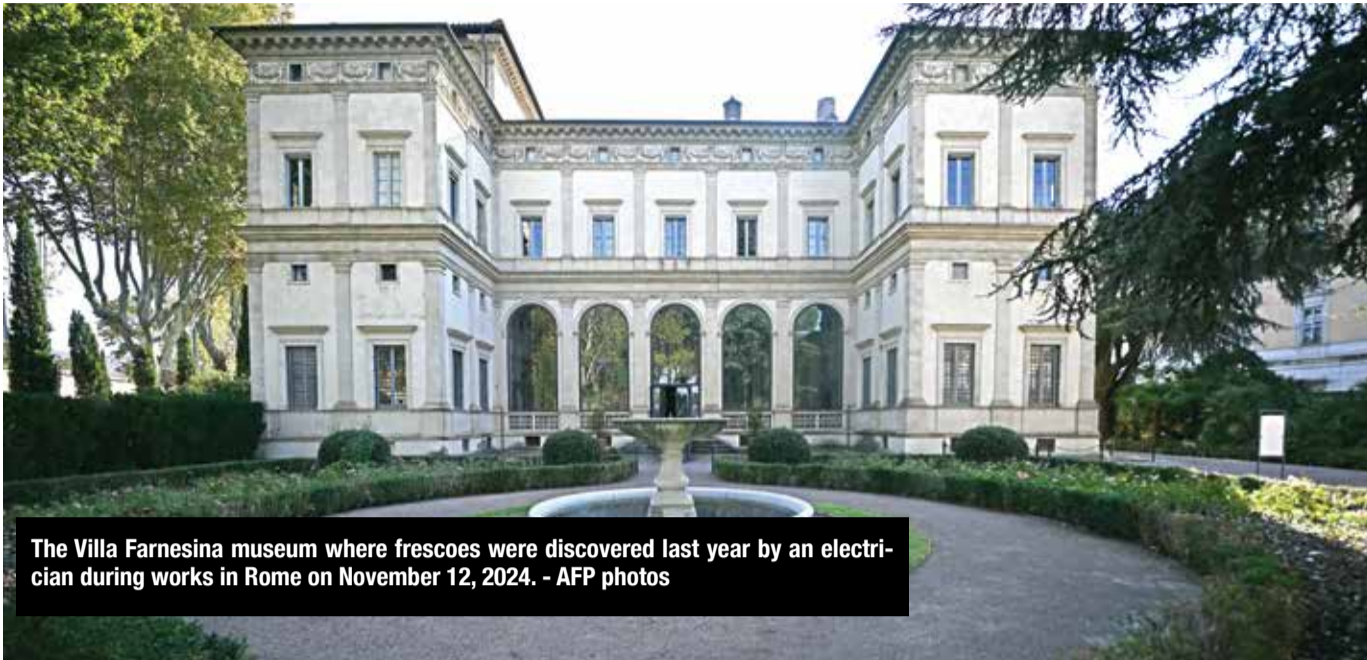
In December, when he took office, monthly inflation leapt by 25.5 percent after he devalued the peso by more than 50 percent. It has since been on a downward trajectory, coming in at under five percent each month since May. "We are decreasing the tax that creates the most distortion: inflation," Economy Minister Luis Caputo told a meeting at the Foundation for Latin American Economic Research. Salaries continue to rise more slowly than inflation—increasing 181.9 percent over the past 12 months, when prices rose by 209 percent, according to Indec.

Milei, who wielded a chainsaw on the campaign trail last year as a symbol of his plan to slash public spending, has cut energy and transport subsidies and thousands of public sector jobs.

His policies have produced Argentina's first budget surplus in 15 years but have also been blamed for plunging the country into a deep recession and driving the proportion of Argentines living in poverty up 11 points to 52.9 percent in the first half of 2024. Addressing a meeting of entrepreneurs last week Milei pointed to a slight increase in industrial output and construction as signs the economy had turned a corner. "We are emerging from the desert, the country is starting to grow again," he said. — AFP



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024



The Villa Farnesina museum where frescoes were discovered last year by an electrician during works in Rome on November 12, 2024. - AFP photos



The Farnese armories and a part of frescoes discovered last year by an electrician during works at the Villa Farnesina in Rome.

## Electrician finds frescoes behind false ceiling in Rome



A part of frescoes discovered last year.

**R**osy-cheeked cherubs surrounded by blues, reds and golds have lost none of their brilliance in 17th-century frescoes discovered behind a false ceiling at the Villa Farnesina palace in Rome. The three paintings were hidden above the vaulted ceiling of what was once the living room of Agostino Chigi, a wealthy banker and Renaissance patron who had the villa built at the start of the 16th century. Electrician Davide Renzoni stumbled upon them by chance a year ago, after climbing through a trapdoor into the long-forgotten space during maintenance work on the villa, which sits on the banks of the river Tiber.

"I went to get a lamp and when I turned it on, everything appeared: it was a marvel," he told AFP on a visit this week. Several cherubs hold up a green festoon, while another brandishes a golden helmet. The frescoes, by a little-known artist, include the coat of arms of the noble Farnese family. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese bought the



villa in 1579 with the idea of connecting it to the Farnese Palace on the other side of the Tiber, though the plan fell through. The villa, bought by the state in 1927, underwent major restoration work and the frescoes fell into oblivion, curator Virginia Lapenta told AFP.

Their rediscovery last year inspired an exhibition on the 17th century in the grounds of the villa, which has long been renowned for its frescoes by Renaissance master Raphael. Although they are not accessible to the public for security reasons,

visitors can see the newly found frescoes through pictures and videos included in the exhibition, which runs until January 12. The displays also allow the villa to monitor the frescoes' conservation, Lapenta said. — AFP

## UK writer Samantha Harvey wins 2024 Booker with space novel

**B**ritish writer Samantha Harvey won the prestigious Booker Prize on Tuesday for her short novel following six astronauts as they contemplate Earth from the International Space Station. Spanning the course of a single day, Harvey's "Orbital" tracks astronauts from Japan, Russia, the United States, Britain and Italy as they observe and reflect on their home planet, touching on themes of mourning, desire and the climate crisis.

The Booker, which comes with a 50,000 pound (\$64,000) cash prize, has launched careers and courted controversy since its creation in 1969. Past laureates include Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes and Kazuo Ishiguro. "I was not expecting that," Harvey said upon learning of her win, the first by a woman since Atwood was recognized in 2019 for "The Testaments" alongside Bernardine Evaristo for "Girl, Woman, Other". In her acceptance speech, Harvey dedicated the prize to "everybody who does speak for and not against the Earth; for and not against the dignity of other humans, other life; and all the humans who speak for and call for and work for peace".

'Everyone and no one'  
Just 136 pages long, "Orbital" is the



The shortlisted novels (from top left to down right) "James" by US writer Percival Everett, "Stone Yard Devotional" by Australian writer Charlotte Wood, "Creation Lake" by US writer Rachel Kushner, "The Safekeep" by Dutch writer Yael van der Wouden, "Held" by Canadian writer Anne Michaels and "Orbital" by British writer Samantha Harvey Britain's during a reception for the Booker Prize Foundation hosted by Britain's Queen Camilla at Clarence House, in London, ahead of the Booker Prize 2024 ceremony.

second-shortest novel to win the award and the first to be set in space, according to the Booker Prize Foundation. It is the 49-year-old Harvey's fifth novel, winning 15 years after her debut book "The Wilderness" was longlisted for the prize. Edmund de Waal, chair of the judges,

described "Orbital" as "a book about a wounded world" with "everyone and no one" as the subject. "With her language of lyricism and acuity Harvey makes our world strange and new for us," he added. Harvey described her work as a "space pastoral" in an interview with

prize organizers after she was named to the Booker longlist.

"I wanted to write about our human occupation of low earth orbit for the last quarter of a century - not as sci-fi but as realism," she said. "Could I evoke the beauty of that vantage point with the care of a nature writer? Could I write about amazement? Could I pull off a sort of space pastoral? These were the challenges I set myself."

### Historic shortlist

A record five women were in the running for the prize, which was announced at a ceremony in London. The others were Rachel Kushner for "Creation Lake", Anne Michaels for "Held", Yael van der Wouden for "The Safekeep" and Charlotte Wood for "Stone Yard Devotional". Percival Everett rounded out the shortlist with his novel "James". Everett and Kushner had been considered the two favorites for this year's prize. The Booker is seen as a talent spotter of names not necessarily widely known to the general public. It is open to works of fiction by writers of any nationality, written in English and published in the UK or Ireland between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024. — AFP



A Christie's employee poses with The Aga Khan Emerald, a cartier emerald and diamond brooch made with a square-shaped emerald of 37.00 carats, marquise-shaped diamonds, platinum and 18k yellow gold during a press preview in Geneva. — AFP

## Aga Khan emerald fetches record \$9 million in Geneva auction

**A**rare square 37-carat emerald owned by the Aga Khan fetched nearly nine million dollars at auction in Geneva on Tuesday, making it the world's most expensive green stone. Sold by Christie's, the Cartier diamond and emerald brooch, which can also be worn as a pendant, dethrones a piece of jewelry made by the fashion house Bulgari, which Richard Burton gave as a wedding gift to fellow actor Elizabeth Taylor, as the most precious emerald.

In 1960, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan commissioned Cartier to set the emerald in a brooch with 20 marquise-cut diamonds for British socialite Nina Dyer, to whom he was briefly married. Dyer then auctioned off the emerald to raise money for animals in 1969. By chance that was at Christie's very first such sale in Switzerland on the shores of Lake Geneva, with the emerald finding its way back to the 110th edition this year.

It was bought by jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels before passing a few years later into the hands of the United States' Harry Winston, nicknamed the "King of Diamonds". "Emeralds are hot right now, and this one ticks all the boxes," said Christie's EMEA Head of Jewelry Max Fawcett. "We might see an emerald of this quality come up for sale once every five or six years." Also set with diamonds, the previous record-holder fetched \$6.5 million at an auction of part of Hollywood legend Elizabeth Taylor's renowned jewelry collection in New York. — AFP



Booker Prize 2024 shortlisted authors (from left to right) Dutch writer Yael van der Wouden, US writer Rachel Kushner, Canadian writer Anne Michaels, Australian Writer Charlotte Wood, US writer Percival Everett and British writer Samantha Harvey pose with British journalist Gaby Wood (second left), Britain's Queen Camilla (center) and British artist Edmund de Waal (right) during a reception for the Booker Prize Foundation at Clarence House, in London.



Lifestyle



Hendrita Mwalada (67) shows the mixture of recycled engine-oil and pepper she uses to lace rags that she integrates into the fencing around her farm land.



Mwanajuma Kibula (right), 48, is assisted by Loise Kawira (left) during routine inspection of bee hives integrated into a fence around an acre of her farm as a deterrent to crop-raiding elephants during the planting seasons at Sagalla village.



Hendrita Mwalada (67) demonstrates how she integrates rags laced with a mixture of recycled engine-oil and pepper into the fencing around her farm land.



# Bees help tackle elephant-human conflict in Kenya



An assistant prepares bee-smokers for Loise Kawira (not pictured), a Consultant Beekeeper and Trainer for research and conservation organization, Save the Elephants near Voi town in Taita Taventa County.

“W e used to hate elephants a lot,” Kenyan farmer Charity Mwangome says, pausing from her work under the shade of a baobab tree. The bees humming in the background are part of the reason why her hatred has dimmed. The diminutive 58-year-old said rapacious elephants would often destroy months of work in her farmland that sits between two parts of Kenya’s world-renowned Tsavo National Park. Beloved by tourists - who contribute around 10 percent of Kenya’s GDP - the animals are loathed by most local farmers, who form the backbone of the nation’s economy.

Elephant conservation has been a roaring success: numbers in Tsavo rose from around 6,000 in the mid-1990s to almost 15,000 elephants in 2021, according to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). But the human population also expanded, encroaching on grazing and migration routes for the herds. Resulting clashes are becoming the number one cause of elephant deaths, says KWS. Refused compensation when she lost her crops, Mwangome admits she was mad with the conservationists.

But a long-running project by conservation organization Save the Elephants offered her an unlikely solution - deterring some of nature’s biggest animals with some of its smallest: African honeybees. Cheery yellow beehive fences now protect several local plots, including Mwangome’s. A nine-year study published last month found that elephants avoided farms with the fer-



A general view of a bee colony in one of the hives being inspected by Loise Kawira (not pictured).

ocious bees 86 percent of the time during peak crop season. “The beehive fences came to our rescue,” said Mwangome.

### Hacking nature

The deep humming of 70,000 bees is enough to make many flee, including a six-tonne elephant, but Loise Kawira calmly removes a tray in her apiary to demonstrate the intricate combs of wax and honey. Kawira, who joined Save the Elephants in 2021 as their consultant beekeeper, trains and monitors farmers in the delicate art. The project supports 49 farmers, whose plots are surrounded by 15 connected hives. Each is strung on greased wire a few meters off the ground, which protects

them from badgers and insects, but also means they shake when disturbed by a hungry elephant.

“Once the elephants hear the sound of the bees and the smell, they run away,” Kawira told AFP. “It hacks the interaction between elephants and bees,” added Ewan Brennan, local project coordinator. It has been effective, but recent droughts, exacerbated by climate change, have raised challenges. “(In) the total heat, the dryness, bees have absconded,” said Kawira. It is also expensive - about 150,000 Kenyan shillings (\$1,100) to install hives - well beyond the means of subsistence farmers, though the project organizers say it is still cheaper than electric fences.



Charity Mwangome (58) carries a stack of hay from her farmland.



A young bull elephant throws sludge onto its back using its trunk to cool himself at a watering pond at the Ngutuni Wildlife Conservancy on the outskirts of Voi town in Taita Taventa County.



Loise Kawira carries out a routine inspection of the bee colonies.



A herd of elephant comprising mostly of females and their young drink from a water pond at the Ngutuni Wildlife Conservancy on the outskirts of Voi town in Taita Taventa County.



Mwanajuma Kibula (48) prepares her bee-smoker outside her house near Voi town in Taita Taventa County.



Charity Mwangome (58) ploughs her farm land using a hoe next to one of the beehives housing colonies of African Honey Bees.



Lifestyle



A young bull elephant runs off a Marabou stork as it approaches a watering pond for a drink at the Ngutuni Wildlife Conservancy.



A young bull elephant pauses in the shade of a tree from the afternoon heat at the Ngutuni Wildlife Conservancy.



Mwanajuma Kibula (right), 48, is assisted by Loise Kawira (left) during routine inspection of bee hives integrated into a fence around an acre of her farm.

'I was going to die'

Just moments after AFP arrived at Mwanajuma Kibula's farm, which abuts one of the Tsavo parks, her beehive fence had seen off an elephant. The five-ton animal, its skin caked in red mud, rumbled into the area and then did an abrupt about-face. "I know my crops are protected," Kibula said with palpable relief. Kibula, 48, also harvests honey twice a year from her hives, making 450 shillings per jar - enough to pay school fees for her children. She is fortunate to have protection from the biggest land mammals on Earth.

"An elephant ripped off my roof. I had to hide under the bed because I knew I was going to die," said a less-fortunate

neighbor, Hendrita Mwalada, 67. For those who can't afford bees, Save the Elephants offers other solutions, such as metal-sheet fences that clatter when shaken by approaching elephants, and diesel- or chilli-soaked rags that deter them. It is not always enough. "I have tried planting but every time the crops are ready, the elephants come and destroy the crops," Mwalada told AFP. "That has been the story of my life, a life full of too much struggling." — AFP

William Mwanduka (38) dons his safety suit as he prepares to inspect beehives housing colonies of African Honey Bees.



A gallery assistant poses next to "Self Portrait" by Frank Auerbach displayed at the "Friends and Relations: Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Michael Andrews" exhibition at Gagosian Gallery in London. — AFP

Painter Frank Auerbach, contemporary of Freud and Bacon, dies at 93

Frank Auerbach, who fled Nazi Germany as a child and became one of Britain's leading 20th-century artists alongside Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon, has died in London aged 93, his gallery announced on Tuesday. "Frank Auerbach, one of the greatest painters of our age, died peacefully in the early hours of Monday 11 November at his home in London", Frankie Rossi Art Projects said.

Focusing on portraiture and quotidian cityscapes, the German-British artist was known for his artworks heavy with paint, created after repeatedly scraping the paint on his canvas and restarting until he was satisfied with his work. He was the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery in 1978 and also represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1986, sharing the grand prize, the Golden Lion, with German artist Sigmar Polke. "We have lost a dear friend and remarkable artist but take comfort knowing his voice will resonate for generations to come," said Geoffrey Parton, director of Frankie Rossi Art. Born in Berlin in 1931, Auerbach came to Britain as a refugee in 1939. His parents were killed in the Auschwitz concentration camp three years later. Excelling in the arts at a boarding school for Jewish refugee children, Auerbach went on to study at London's St Martin's School of Art and the Royal College of Art.

He was active in Soho's artists circles in the 1950s and 60s, friends with influential British figurative painters Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon and Michael Andrews. Auerbach was the last artist alive from the group, who were each other's friends and rivals, sharing ideas, models and an "unfashionable" pursuit of figurative art. The painters "were seeing a lot of each other in the

1950s and 1960s," Richard Calvocoressi, who curated an exhibition on their relationships told AFP at the gallery's opening in 2022. "They, very unfashionably at the time, held out for figurative art... at a time when abstract art was all the fashion."

'Act of creation'

Auerbach, a private artist, said in a 2014 interview with the Guardian newspaper that he felt as though he was "always trying to catch up". "It's only very recently, because I have lived for such an unconscionably long time, that I have felt that I have managed what you might call a little oeuvre," he added. Working from the same "cramped" studio since 1954, Auerbach was described as obsessive, living in Camden Town in north London for most of his life and revisiting the same city scenes he passed every day in his paintings.

During his career spanning seven decades, he constantly returned to the same models for his portraits as well. One of them, Catherine Lampert, who was a curator and a sitter for him over 37 years described him as living in the "immediate present". She told the local Hampstead & Highgate Express newspaper in 2015 that for Auerbach, it was "all about the act of creation and solving problems by instinct and surprise". Auerbach continued to paint through the Covid-19 pandemic, and, when unable to access sitters, turned to self-portraiture. When asked what motivated him, Lampert, who curated a retrospective of his work in 2015, said he was "looking forward to making a few more paintings and having an easy death". — AFP

Top Africa orchestra began with brake cables for strings

When Armand Diangienda founded the Kimbanguist Symphony Orchestra - one of the most famous in Africa - in 1994, they had so few instruments that musicians had to share. They got to play them for only 15 minutes before handing them on to the next person. "When a string broke, we would replace it with bicycle (brake) cables," he told AFP. With the Democratic Republic of Congo at war and in chaos for most of the orchestra's first decade, they had to mend and make do with the poor quality instruments they could find.

"We didn't know how to buy a violin, we didn't know how to buy a string," Diangienda said. "So when a violin broke we had to repair it." But "we were motivated". The orchestra, which began with a ragtag band of around a dozen string musicians, has since gone on to become a trailblazer for classical music in Africa, with fans all over the world. "At the beginning it was really just a dream," Diangienda told AFP from a studio in its Kinshasa headquarters as musicians tuned up outside. The orchestra now boasts 200 highly accomplished members, including a choir.



Armand Diangienda, founder of the Kimbanguist Symphony Orchestra, poses for a photo in the studio of the Kimbanguist Symphony School.

'Real learning curve'

But at the beginning not everyone knew how to read music and the group had just a few instruments between



Armand Diangienda (center), founder of the Kimbanguist Symphony Orchestra, conducts a rehearsal at the Kimbanguist Symphony School.

them. "It was a real learning curve," Diangienda said. The instruments they had were in poor condition - not helped by the hot and humid climate - and there was little money. But by 1999 everyone had their own instrument picked up here and there. The idea for the orchestra was born in 1985 when Diangienda's father, Joseph, asked him to gather up different musical groups from within the Kimbanguist church.

The religious movement - which is said to have millions of members in the DRC - was founded in 1921 by Diangienda's grandfather. The orchestra gave its first concert almost exactly 30 years ago in December 1994. Since its humble beginnings it has played in countries across the world including Germany and the United States and has met celebrities including Angelina Jolie and Lionel Richie.

It has also collaborated with other groups including Germany's Tuebingen Chamber Orchestra and regularly has international soloists play with it. Its conservatory of music in Kinshasa is now home to a school for young people to learn to read and play music.

Persistence pays

But teaching musicians was not always so seamless, and many joined with absolutely no musical knowledge.

Pauleth Masamba, 43, joined up the year the orchestra was founded wanting to play the cello, but accidentally mixed up its name with the violin - two very similar words in French. But as the orchestra grew, so did her love for her instrument. "I bring it everywhere, even if I go on a personal errand I go with my violin. It's my loyal friend," she said, holding the instrument as she talked.

Two years after the orchestra began, the DRC was plunged into the First Congo War, which saw dictator Mobutu Sese Seko ousted, and then the longer and even more bloody Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003. But it has still managed to become one of the continent's leading classical music institutions. Dauphine Mata, a 33-year-old violinist who joined at 19, hailed it for introducing classical music to the country and continent.

"Before (becoming famous) we had a small fan base, people weren't really interested in the music," she said. "Now we are on the stage more people appreciate it," she added. But no one is more proud of their work than Diangienda. "We were patient and we persevered, we always fought for our dreams," he said. — AFP



Flute players play their instruments during a rehearsal at the Kimbanguist Symphony School in Kinshasa. - AFP photos



A musician plays a violin during a rehearsal at the Kimbanguist Symphony School.



# Barcelona demolish St Poelten in Women's Champions League

## Five-goal blitz in the space of 12 minutes

PARIS: A five-goal blitz in the space of 12 minutes sent Barcelona on their way to a 7-0 romp over St Poelten in the Women's Champions League on Tuesday, while Manchester City stayed top of Group D with a win. Arsenal beat Juventus 4-0 in Italy but remain second in Group C after Bayern Munich extended their 100 percent record with a 3-0 victory over Valerenga. For Barcelona, Ewa Pajor, Francisca Nazareth, Aitana Bonmati, Keira Walsh and Claudia Pina all scored between the 32nd and 45th minutes, before Pina and Caroline Graham Hansen added goals in the second half.

Despite scoring 16 goals and conceding none in their last two European outings, holders Barca sit second in Group D after they lost their opening fixture at Manchester City. "Objective met - yes, absolutely," Barca coach Pere Romeu said after his side's second emphatic victory in three games. "Even when we couldn't score in the first half an hour, we were getting in behind them. And I knew once we got the first goal, more would follow." Austria's St Poelten stay bottom of the group with three losses from three. The floodgates opened at the Johan Cruyff Stadium shortly after the half-hour when Pajor slid onto full-back Ona Batlle's cross at the near post and directed the ball into the far corner.

Stand-in captain Marta Torrejon nearly doubled the score soon after she rose highest from a set-piece, but her looping header clipped the top of the crossbar. Fresh from picking up her second Ballon d'Or last month, Aitana Bonmati nearly caught Carina Schlueter out with a chip but the goalkeeper just managed to claw out the ball. Barca were all over the Austrians. When Bonmati got in behind the defence

on the right, her cross was parried to Nazareth who made no mistake on 38 minutes.

Bonmati opened her account in the Champions League this season two minutes later, before Walsh fizzed home a side-footed strike from outside the box in the 42nd minute. On the stroke of half-time, Pina flitted in at the back post to guide home an outside-of-the-foot volley as Barca ran riot. The Spanish forward then completed her brace from 12 yards seven minutes after the interval following a foul on the rampaging Batlle. Substitute Graham added a seventh in the 87th minute. Man City stayed three points ahead of Barca after second-half goals by Laura Brown and Aoba Fujino overcame Sweden's Hammarby 2-0.

### 'Difficult challenges ahead'

Goals by Frida Maanum, Stina Blackstenius, Mariona Caldentey and Caitlin Foord handed Arsenal a 4-0 win in Piedmont against Juventus. The Gunners are second in Group C on six points while Juve sit third with one win and two losses. A superb team passing move unlocked the Italians' defense with Maanum deftly applying the finish on 38 minutes. Blackstenius, Caldentey and Foord stuck inside the final quarter of an hour to make the game safe for Renee Slegers' side. "We are happy with the win, but in a few days we will face Juventus again and we will have to start from scratch. We have to think about that game and not look at the table, because it is still early and there are many difficult challenges ahead of us," Arsenal interim manager Slegers said.

Group C leaders Bayern Munich increased their tally to nine points with a 3-0 win at home to Nor-

way's Valerenga. Pernille Harder put the German champions into the lead on 10 minutes, before Giulia Gwinn added a second from the spot seven minutes later. Sarah Zadrazil powered home a third two minutes into stoppage time. On Wednesday, eight-time Champions League winners Lyon visit Roma and Galatasaray host two-time victors Wolfsburg in Group A. In Group B, Real Madrid play Dutch side Twente and Chelsea travel to Scotland to take on Celtic. — AFP

## Outrage in Argentina as influencer lines up for first division match

BUENOS AIRES: An Argentine club drew the ire of the country's football community after selecting an influencer with no professional experience in its starting XI for a top-flight match. Deportivo Riestra selected a streamer known as "Spreen" for their match against Primera Division leaders Velez Sarsfield on Monday, before substituting the 24-year-old off after 78 seconds. He had not touched the ball. "Spreen" - the pseudonym of Argentine influencer Ivan Buhajeruk - has some 15 million followers on his social media channels, including more than nine million on Twitch.

Riestra's post on X announcing Spreen's presence in their lineup racked up 3.4 million views, compared to the several thousand for a typical match. Football figures in Argentina have lambasted the club. Juan Sebastian Veron, the former Manchester United and Argentina midfielder and current president of Estudiantes de La Plata, denounced a "total lack of

respect for football and footballers". Velez striker Braian Romero also spoke of a "lack of respect towards football", as well as a "bad message sent to society, to children, to those who try until the end" to break into the sport.

Riestra captain Milton Celiz said: "He's a friend of the club, he has a contract... let him enjoy it, everyone would like to play in the first division." But Celiz added that he "understands the criticism", though the decision was "not our responsibility (as players), it's a matter for the owners (of the club)". "At no time was it our intention to disrespect Club Atletico de Velez Sarsfield or Argentine football," Riestra said in a statement, also pointing out that Velez had been informed of the initiative the week before the match.

"Our objective was (and is) to attract new audiences to football, to build bridges between different worlds and platforms, to continue strengthening the product (football) and our club, which is experiencing a historic moment in the First Division." Riestra were promoted to the top flight last season after climbing five divisions in the last 10 years. The Argentine Football Association (AFA) has asked its ethics committee to investigate "possible conduct that could damage Argentinean football's reputation for integrity". — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: Handout picture released by the Deportivo Riestra Club showing Ivan Buhajeruk (2nd right, first row), a streamer known as 'Spreen,' posing for a team photo before the 2024 Argentine Professional Football League Tournament football match between Deportivo Riestra and Velez Sarsfield at the Guillermo Laza stadium in Buenos Aires. — AFP

## France, Italy, Portugal target Nations League quarters

PARIS: France, Italy and Portugal lead the teams attempting to secure a place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals, while England's promotion hopes have been hit by a series of withdrawals. With European champions Spain and Germany already qualified for the last eight, six spots are still to be filled going into the final two rounds of group matches over the next week. Unbeaten Italy and Portugal require just a point to advance, while France are well positioned two ahead of the visit of (Zionist entity) on Thursday - a game that will be played surrounded by a large police presence.

The Paris fixture takes place a week after clashes in Amsterdam around a match between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Dutch team Ajax. Zionist entity has urged fans to avoid the Nations League tie over fears they could be targeted amid a tide of rising anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim abuse since the start of Zionist war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. "I can understand why people don't want to come," said France defender Dayot Upamecano. "It's their choice," he added. "I'm just here to play. I like peace and I hope one day will have it again, in all countries."

Kylian Mbappe is again missing from the France squad, with coach Didier Deschamps insisting the absence of the Real Madrid superstar "is for the best". The national team captain sat out last month's double-header in order to recover from a minor thigh injury and instead travelled to Stockholm for

a short break. It was following that trip that Swedish media reported he was being investigated for an alleged rape. Mbappe himself said those reports were "fake news" while his lawyer said the player would take action for libel.

A Swedish prosecutor confirmed that an investigation had been opened, without naming Mbappe. "I am not going to set out my argument, but I can say two things. The first is that Kylian wanted to come," Deschamps said last week. "The second is that it is not to do with the off-field problems because the presumption of innocence exists." After the match, France head to Milan where they face Group A leaders Italy on Sunday. Italy go to Belgium first knowing that anything but defeat guarantees Luciano Spalletti's side a quarter-final berth. — AFP



FRANKFURT: Germany's defender Nico Schlotterbeck (center) attends a training session with the national team at the stadium in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, prior to the UEFA Nations League A group A3 football match against Bosnia and Herzegovina. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Japanese striker #20 Aoba Fujino (right) heads the ball and scores her team's second goal during the UEFA Women's Champions League football match between Manchester City and Hammarby at the Joie Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

way's Valerenga. Pernille Harder put the German champions into the lead on 10 minutes, before Giulia Gwinn added a second from the spot seven minutes later. Sarah Zadrazil powered home a third two minutes into stoppage time. On Wednesday, eight-time Champions League winners Lyon visit Roma and Galatasaray host two-time victors Wolfsburg in Group A. In Group B, Real Madrid play Dutch side Twente and Chelsea travel to Scotland to take on Celtic. — AFP

day, eight-time Champions League winners Lyon visit Roma and Galatasaray host two-time victors Wolfsburg in Group A. In Group B, Real Madrid play Dutch side Twente and Chelsea travel to Scotland to take on Celtic. — AFP



Group picture of players and officials

## Shooters aim high at Crown Prince tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Competitions at HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Championship continue on Thursday with the skeet 50 targets and the finals for both men and women, as well as the 25m rapid pistol. The results of Tuesday's events were as follows: In the men's 10 meter air rifle, Ali Al-Mutairi won first place, followed by Abdullah Al-Harby (second) and Bandar Al-Mutairi (third). On the women's side, Marian Irzaouqi took first; Ritaj Al-Ziyadi (second) and Al-Jouri Mansour Al-Hashash (third).

In the Arab Shotgun Championship, being held alongside the HH the Crown Prince tournament, Bahrain's mixed team (Saeed Ali and Marwa Buarki) won the first place in the trap event; Kuwait's team (Abdulrahman Al-Faihan and Sarah Al-Hawal) took the second place, while Qatar's Mohammad Al-Rumaihi and Khulond Al-Khalaf and Oman's team of Hussein Al-Shuhoumi and Shamsa Al-Maliki won third place. President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi said the competitions of both events were excellent and the scores were distinguished.

## Performance not results counts for Pumas coach

DUBLIN: Argentina's impressive set of results in the Rugby Championship breeds confidence but for Felipe Contepomi it is more about the performance as he seeks to become the first Pumas head coach to beat Ireland in Dublin on Friday. Contepomi made three changes to the starting line-up he announced on Wednesday, from the one that thrashed Italy 50-18 last Saturday, for a match against a side he knows well having been assistant coach of Irish powerhouse Leinster from 2018 to 2022.

The Pumas will encounter an Irish side hurting after their 19-match home winning streak was ended by the All Blacks last Friday. The experienced trio of Pablo Matera, Guido Petti and centre Matias Moroni return to a Pumas team that recorded its first ever win in New Zealand in the Rugby Championship. They also beat world champions South Africa and Australia to finish with three wins from six Tests.

"Results gives you confidence, definitely, but it's more, for us, the progress we are trying to do," Contepomi said at a press conference. "What we



KSSF Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi with the Kuwaiti winners.

He said the higher organizing committee provided all facilities to participating shooters, and the tournament carried a dear name for all. He congratulated the winners. On behalf of all participants, he thanked HH the Crown Prince for patronizing the tournament, which embodies his support of Kuwait and Arab Sport. Shooter Sarah Al-Hawal (who won two gold and two silver medals in both tournaments) said the levels were high, reflecting the development of women's shooting sports in the Arab world. She added that the victory will be a motivation for her to perform very well in upcoming competitions.

say we are going to do or trying to, what we train or what we train to do and then go and do it on match day. "That's the tough thing in rugby or in any sport. "So for us the confidence comes in doing. We evaluate maybe different to how people from the outside evaluate us."

Contepomi, who also played for Leinster, said from the outside people judged his side on results but he cited one example where things might have been interpreted differently had a kick gone over. "I give you a very simple example. We beat South Africa in Santiago but it came up to the last minute where (Manie) Libbok missed a penalty," said the 47-year-old former fly-half of the Pumas 29-28 win. "What if he would have got that penalty? Would have that changed our way of evaluating ourselves? "No, we don't change the way we evaluate ourselves."

Contepomi, who as a player got the better of Ireland at the 2007 Rugby World Cup where the Pumas finished third, said 33-year-old Moroni's return was due to his considerable experience. "Well, first of all, he obviously brings experience, without a doubt," said Contepomi. "Then he has energy and I think he is a good player. "He is not a natural 12, but he has already played many times in that position, and we believe that, again, for what we are going to do in the game, he is a good alternative and we are convinced that he can play the role that we need." — AFP



Sports

# Curry dazzles on Thompson's return; Warriors down Mavs

## Phoenix Suns down Utah Jazz 120-112

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry scored 37 points as the Golden State Warriors spoiled Klay Thompson's return to the Bay Area with a thrilling 120-117 victory over the Dallas Mavericks in the opening round of the NBA Cup on Tuesday. Thompson - a beloved member of four NBA championship-winning Golden State teams before joining Dallas in July - received a rapturous welcome in his first game back in San Francisco since his departure. The 34-year-old was given a guard of honor by cheering Golden State staff upon his arrival at the Chase Center before fans wearing nautical caps roared their appreciation for the player who famously used to commute to work in his fishing boat.

But despite delighting the home crowd with six three-pointers in a 22-point haul, Thompson was upstaged by former team-mate Curry who produced a stunning fourth-quarter performance to drag the Warriors over the line. The Mavericks looked poised to snatch victory after battling into a six-point lead at 114-108 with just over three minutes remaining. But Curry then took over with 10 unanswered points - including one sensational step-back three from 28 feet - to put Golden State into a 118-114 lead, before adding two late free throws to seal the win.

"There was a lot of emotion but both teams wanted to win," Curry told TNT television. "It was a playoff-like atmosphere, with great players making great plays. That's why we love the competition." Thompson meanwhile said it had felt "surreal" lining up against his former team-mate. "We've guarded each other plenty of times in practice for Team USA or All-Star Games, but a competitive NBA game - it was pretty surreal," Thompson said. "It hurts to be on the other side of one of his flurries. Guy got hot at the end and made some ridiculous shots. It sucks."

### Embiid back but Sixers beaten

In other games, Joel Embiid made his long-awaited first appearance of the season but was unable to prevent the Philadelphia 76ers from sliding to a 111-99 defeat to the New York Knicks. Embiid missed the first six games of the season as the team managed his rehabilitation from a left knee injury, and was suspended for three games after a locker room altercation with a journalist. Embiid's lack of game time was apparent in a sluggish performance that saw him finish with 13 points, five assists and three rebounds.

With Embiid not firing on all cylinders, the Knicks dominated for long periods, leading for almost the entirety of the game before pulling away in the fourth quarter, outscoring the Sixers 33-24. Karl-Anthony Towns impressed with 21 points, 13 rebounds and six assists while OG Anunoby led the scoring with 24 points. In Boston the Atlanta Hawks pulled off the shock of the opening round, defeating the in-form Celtics 117-116 despite missing injured talisman Trae Young.

A game which saw the lead change hands 14 times looked to have swung decisively in favor of the home side midway through the third quarter as the Celtics raced into a 15-point lead. But Dyson Daniels led a late rally which included 11 points in the fourth quarter, and Onyeka Okongwu tipped in the winning basket with 6.1sec left on the clock to snatch victory. Daniels led Atlanta's scorers with 28 points while Larry Nance Jr. added 19 with Jalen Johnson and Clint Capela chipping in with 18 points each. The victory was sweet for Atlanta, who had suffered a 123-93 mauling by the Celtics at home on November 4.

Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said Atlanta "out-



SAN FRANCISCO: Trayce Jackson-Davis #32 of the Golden State Warriors dunks the ball during the game against the Dallas Mavericks during the Emirates NBA Cup game on Nov 12, 2024. — AFP

played us in every facet of the game." "They beat us on all the margins and they deserved to win," Mazzulla said. Elsewhere, the Phoenix Suns downed the Utah Jazz 120-112 while the Milwaukee Bucks beat Toronto 99-85. The NBA Cup was introduced last season as a way of provid-

ing a knockout competition in the early months of the league season. All 30 league teams are drawn into six groups of five, with eight teams advancing to single-elimination knockout rounds, with the semi-finals and final taking place in Las Vegas on December 14-17. — AFP

## Indonesia go Dutch in pursuit of World Cup dreams

JAKARTA: An Indonesian team under Dutch colonial rule sailed to France for the 1938 World Cup - they lost their only game 6-0 and the country has not played at the tournament since. More than 80 years on, football-mad Indonesia is dreaming of a return, with a large contingent of Netherlands-born players spearheading the charge. Indonesia are in the decisive third round of Asian qualifying as they attempt to reach the 2026 World Cup in North America.

Recent squads have included as many as 10 Dutch-born players after football officials intensely recruited from the Indonesian diaspora in its former colonial ruler. "We have our choice to look for quality players," said Football Association of Indonesia committee member Arya Sinulingga. "FIFA provides that space and from our law it is also possible, so why not?" Ahead of Friday's home clash with Japan in front of an anticipated 78,000 fans in the capital Jakarta, Indonesia are fifth of the six teams in their qualifying group. The top two reach the World Cup, with third and fourth going into another stage of qualifying.

Other countries have also naturalized players, but the extent to which Indonesia has done so is striking - nine of the starting XI in a 2-1 defeat to

China last month were born in the Netherlands. Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said that the current Indonesia side under South Korean coach Shin Tae-yong is "different, stronger". "They are a country that has always had a passionate football culture," he said. "What has strengthened them is that they have naturalized players who mostly play in Europe, and now they have quality players in almost every position."

### Top European leagues

In the decade before the COVID pandemic, 17 players were naturalized for the Indonesian team. Since 2020, 15 have made the switch with recruited players having to give up their original passports because Indonesia does not recognize dual citizenship. They include Justin Hubner, who plays in the reserves for Premier League Wolves, and fellow defender Jay Idzes of Venezia in Italy's Serie A.

The newest recruit is another Dutch-born defender in Kevin Diks, who plays for FC Copenhagen and represented the Netherlands at youth level. Others play in the top leagues in the Netherlands and Belgium. There is also striker Rafael Struick, who plays for Australia's Brisbane Roar. While football is immensely popular in the world's fourth most populous nation, and Indonesia is projected to become a top-five economy by 2050, there has been a lack of investment in the grassroots game.

Indonesia's domestic football has been blighted for years by shaky infrastructure, mismanagement and violence, including a stadium stampede that left more than 130 people dead in 2022. That lack of investment has been felt at youth lev-

Carlos Ferrero saying that he had trouble breathing. But the Spaniard, winner at Wimbledon and Roland Garros this season, cruised to the first set in 38 minutes, breaking Rublev in game seven and quickly winning the next two to go one set ahead. And although he had a harder time of it in the second set Alcaraz delighted fans in Turin with a series of spectacular shots which suggested he might be approaching his best form.

Rublev meanwhile drops to last place after losing his sixth straight Finals match, although he put up a battle and had two set points. Alcaraz winning in straight sets means that Casper Ruud will reach the semi-finals if he beats two-time Finals champion Alexander Zverev in the day's late match. On Thursday Jannik Sinner will secure passage to the last four if he claims a single set against Daniil Medvedev, and will top the Ilie Nastase Group with a third straight win. — AFP

el, leading to what some have perceived as the current quick fix. "The goal is improving quality because, honestly, it must be realized that youth development in Indonesia is not as good as in Europe," said Aun Rahman of Indonesia's Box-2box football podcast.

### K-pop comparisons

Aun said that there is hype surrounding the team and the newly recruited players that he compares to the "Korean pop idolizing model". Most of the young Dutchmen immediately amassed millions of new social media followers after committing themselves to their new country. With the naturalization policy so far bringing results on the pitch, Indonesians have happily gone along with it. When Indonesia played China away, thousands of fans massed outside Gelora Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta to watch a live broadcast on large screens.

Football association chairman Erick Thohir, the billionaire former chairman of Inter Milan, says ticket sales for sell-out home matches involving the national side brought in 20 billion rupiah (\$1.27 million) a game. Another bumper crowd is expected when the Indonesia team, known locally as "Timnas", host Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The relative recent success has also seen fans snap up merchandise. Arya, from the football association, also drew comparisons with the immense popularity of K-pop band BTS. "If they idolize BTS, what would they buy? BTS products, right?" he said. "But because they idolize Timnas, who is getting the advantage? "Of course, Indonesia." — AFP

## Sinner turns aside Fritz to close in on ATP Finals last four



TURIN: Italy's Jannik Sinner hits a return to USA's Taylor Fritz during their match at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin. — AFP

TURIN: Jannik Sinner hit the accelerator at the end of each set as he cruised past Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 on Tuesday to close in on a semi-final spot at the ATP Finals in Turin. In September, Sinner had to overcome raucous home support to win his last meeting with the American as he claimed victory in the final of the US Open, also in straight sets. This time, the Turin crowd was nosily behind the Italian. "The crowd is helping me a lot," said Sinner on the court. The hard-hitting Fritz, ranked number five, put pressure on Sinner's serve early in the first set. The American had the first break point of the match in the 14-minute seventh game but could not take his chance.

Sinner responded at once, but wasted three break points in the next game before breaking to 15 in the 10th game to take the set. "I was struggling to return his serve but I am happy with how I handled the situation," said Sinner. The second set also went with serve until the 10th game when Fritz double-faulted on Sinner's first match point. "It was a very tough match," said Sinner. "We got to know each other very well in a Grand Slam final, we knew exactly what to expect today it was very aggressive as I was prepared for."

Victory put Sinner top of the Ilie Nastase group with just Daniil Medvedev to face. The home favorite could still be eliminated with a straight-sets loss. Fritz faces Alex de Minaur who has lost both his matches so far. In the afternoon match, former champion Medvedev brushed aside Finals debutant De Minaur 6-2, 6-4 to bounce back from an opening defeat and boost his hopes of making the knock-out phase. The Russian, who lost his first group-stage match to Fritz, overpowered De Minaur to push his Australian opponent. Medvedev, who lifted the title in 2020, did not face a single break point and broke De Minaur's serve three times. — AFP



TURIN: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz hits a return to Russia's Andrey Rublev during their match at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics

#### 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
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

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### Change of Name

**I, Nabila Tarannum**, holder of Indian Passport No. U0749508 having permanent address J117, Garden Reach Road, Ram Nagar Lane, West Bengal, 700024, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Nabila (given name) and Arman Malik (surname). (#6193-13/11/2024)

**I, Asiya Tarannum**, holder of Indian Passport No. V5158155 having permanent address J117, Garden Reach Road, Ram Nagar Lane, West Bengal, 700024, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Asia (given name) and Arman Malik (surname). (#6193-13/11/2024)

**I, Mohana Dusani** holder of INDIAN passport No. M8399420 having Permanent address as 8-140-A Konda Venuka Palli, Korthikota, Ananthapur Andhra Pradesh Pin 515571 in Kuwait at present do hereby change my name to Dusani Mohan (as given name) Reddy (as surname) for all purpose. I will henceforth be known in the name Dusani Mohan Reddy and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (13/11/2024)

**I, Arshad** holder of Indian passport No. X8048440 having Permanent address as R/O Karawara, Teh. Kherwara, Dist. Udai-pur, Rajasthan-313804 residing in Kuwait

at present do hereby change my name to Arshad (as given name) Makrani (as surname) for all purpose. I will henceforth be known in the name Arshad Makrani and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#6191, 12/11/2024)

**I, Ali Hussain**, holder of Passport No. N7013272, do hereby change my name to Ali Hussain (as given name) Daruwala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Ali Hussain Daruwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#6192, 12/11/2024)





KUWAIT: BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi watches a match at the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament on Nov 13, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Top padel players battle for glory

BNK-sponsored players Ari Sanchez and Juan Lebron shine

By Abdellatif Sharaa and Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** The Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament, hosted at the Rafa Nadal Academy and sponsored by BNK Holding, is in full swing as the competition heats up in the Round of 32. Players are pushing their limits to secure spots in the upcoming rounds, aiming for the prestigious title and a share of the tournament's impressive €470,000 prize pool.

In the women's draw, the team of Ari Sanchez Fallada, a BNK-sponsored player, and Paula Josemaria Martin emerged victorious over Alba Ustero Prieto and Aitana Alonso De Villa with a dominant 6-0, 6-2 win. Marta Ortega Gallego and Sofia Araujo also advanced, defeating Lara Arruabarrena and Jessica Polo Bautista 6-3, 6-1.

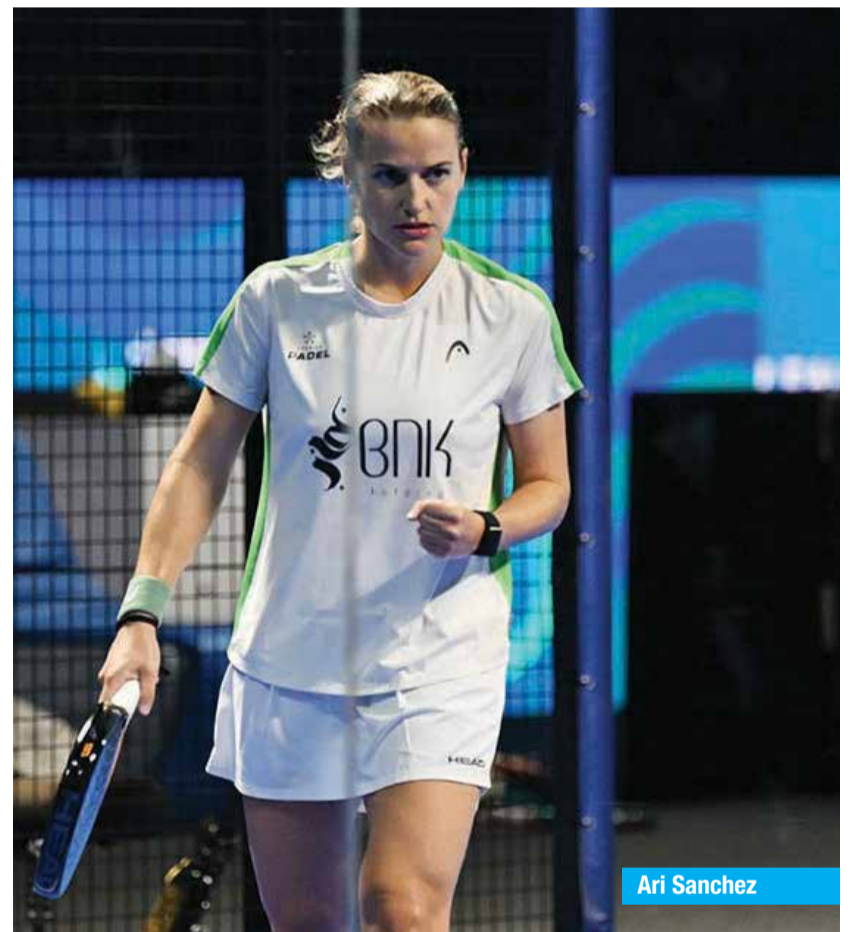
Meanwhile, Marta Barrera De La Fuente and Marta Caparros Maldonado secured their place by defeating Barbara Las Heras and Sara Bellver Frutuoso 6-1, 6-2. In a tight three-set match, Raquel Eugenio Barrera and Marina Fassio Goyeneche triumphed over Maria Riera and Claudia Goenaga 6-3, 4-6, 7-6.

In the men's division, BNK-sponsored Juan Lebron and M Di Nenno defeated J Esbri and F Gil 6-1, 6-1. Enrique Alonso and J Gonzalez dominated Javi Rico and A. Gutierrez 6-0, 6-2, while Juan Garcia and Javi Barahona advanced after a challenging three-set victory over Alex Arroyo and Alejandro Ruiz, 6-4, 6-7, 7-5. Franco Stupaczuk and Martin Yanguas defeated E Torre and J Valdes 6-1, 6-2, and P Cardona with F Navarro beat A Ayats and P Garcia Rodrigo 7-6, 6-2.

Under the leadership of BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, the tournament has drawn over 150 top-ranked global players to Kuwait, marking the country's significant entry into the Premier Padel circuit. Taking place from November 9-17 at The Arena, 360 Mall and the Rafa Nadal Academy, this event aims to elevate Kuwait's position in the international sports landscape and forge a connection between local fans and the global padel community.



Juan Lebron



Ari Sanchez

