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Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt Net Profit Jumps 131% in 9 Months of 2024

Ali Marafi: The Bank sustains growth momentum, thanks to the efficiency of our business model, the prudence of our risk framework, and the agility of our balance sheet structure. (See Page 9)

Zionists pummel south Beirut as Lebanon mulls truce plan

35 killed in Gaza as overall death toll hits 43,799



BEIRUT: Zionists launched a wave of air strikes on Hezbollah bastions in Beirut and south Lebanon on Saturday, a day after Lebanese government officials said they were studying a US truce proposal. A Zionist airstrike on neighboring Syria earlier this week killed two leaders from Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian group which has fought alongside Hamas militants in Gaza, a source told AFP. Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad are all backed by Zionist arch-enemy Iran, which on Friday said it backed a swift end to the nearly two-month war in Lebanon.

BEIRUT: Zionists launched a wave of air strikes on Hezbollah bastions in Beirut and south Lebanon on Saturday, a day after Lebanese government officials said they were studying a US truce proposal. A Zionist airstrike on neighboring Syria earlier this week killed two leaders from Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian group which has fought alongside Hamas militants in Gaza, a source told AFP. Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad are all backed by Zionist arch-enemy Iran, which on Friday said it backed a swift end to the nearly two-month war in Lebanon.

Since September 23, Zionist entity has escalated its bombing of targets in Lebanon, later sending in ground troops after almost a year of limited, cross-border exchanges of fire begun by Hezbollah militants over the Gaza war. AFPTV footage showed fresh strikes on the southern suburbs of Beirut on Saturday, following calls from the army for residents to evacuate. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said "the enemy" carried out three air raids in the morning, later reporting another attack in the neighborhood of Chiyah.

In Hamas-run Gaza, the Zionist military said its forces continued "operational activity" in the northern areas of Jabalia and Beit Lahia, the targets of an intense offensive since early October. Troops also operated in the southern district of Rafah, the army said. Zionist entity says its renewed operations in the ravaged north were meant to stop Hamas militants from regrouping. A UN-backed assessment at the weekend warned famine was imminent in northern Gaza, and UN figures showed the operation had forced at least 100,000 people to flee.

The Zionist military said its aircraft had targeted "a weapons storage facility" and a Hezbollah "command center" in south Beirut. NNA also reported a strike on the southern city of Tyre, in a neighborhood near UNESCO-listed ancient ruins. Elsewhere in south Lebanon, the health ministry said airstrikes

Zionist entity has pushed back against a Human Rights Watch report this week that said its displacement of Gazans amounts to a "crime against humanity", as well as findings from a UN Special Committee that pointed to warfare practices that "are consistent with the characteristics of genocide". A foreign ministry spokesman dismissed the HRW report as "completely false", while the United States said accusations of genocide "are certainly unfounded".

Continued on Page 6

'White orb' UFO sighted off Kuwait

WASHINGTON: A video showing a "white orb" UFO coming out of the ocean off Kuwait has been found on the US Department of Defense's own network, a congressional hearing has heard. Giving evidence to House representatives on unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAPs), the now-preferred term for UFOs, journalist Michael Shellenberger said he had been told of the footage by a source in recent weeks, according to a Sky News report published recently.

Shellenberger, the founder of the Public news service, said the 13-minute-long high-definition, color video was of the "orb" 20 miles off the Kuwait coast and was filmed from a helicopter. "Then, halfway through the video, the person said, the orb is joined by another orb that briefly comes into the frame from the left before rapidly moving again out of the frame." He said the source discovered the video on SIPR, the Secure Internet Protocol Router Network that the Department of Defense "uses to transmit classified information".

UFO sightings should not be dismissed out of hand because they could in fact be surveillance drones or weapons, say Japanese lawmakers who launched a group on Thursday to probe the matter. The non-partisan group, which counts former defense ministers among its 80-plus members, will urge Japan to ramp up abilities to detect and analyze unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP), more commonly known as UFOs. Although the phenomenon is often associated with little green men in the popular imagination, it has become a hot political topic in the United States.

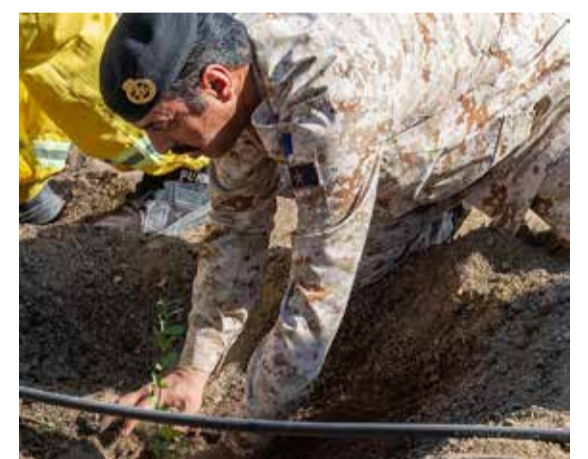
Continued on Page 6

Kuwait ramps up greening initiative

KUWAIT: Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr Mahmoud Abdulaziz Bushehri on Saturday launched a campaign to plant trees on highways in Ahmadi Governorate, in coordination with Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, state institutions, and civil society. The Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources said in a statement that Minister Bushehri praised the great role played by the authority, as the first phase of landscaping

has been completed, which included the airport road, the sixth ring road, and King Fahd Road, in cooperation with the Roads and Transport Authority, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Minister Bushehri confirmed that work is also underway to include landscaping in all governorates of Kuwait. Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed that the campaign aims to enhance environmental awareness and contribute to achieving sustainable development and increasing the green area on the highways, which contributes to combating pollution and beautifying public roads in the governorate. Sheikh Humoud said that the campaign aims to plant 100,000 seeds. — KUNA (See Page 2)



Big Bang: Trump and Musk could redefine US space strategy

WASHINGTON: Should NASA return to the Moon, or go straight to Mars? Maintain its focus on climate science, or pivot away? President-elect Donald Trump's second term, alongside SpaceX CEO and new consigliere Elon Musk, could mark a Big Bang for the US space program. The brash billionaire duo share a knack for disruption and a hunger for making history - qualities tailor-made for space exploration. In short,

"it's going to be a wild ride," said George Nield, president of Commercial Space Technologies, a consultancy group for the private space industry. "People are tightening their seat belts and hoping for the best."

Trump's fascination with space is nothing new. In his first term, he famously created the Space Force and revived the National Space Council, chaired by the vice president. Most notably, he launched the Artemis program, aiming to land Americans on the Moon later this decade as a stepping stone to Mars. Yet even then, he was skeptical about the Moon's necessity.

"We want to reach Mars before the end of my term," he declared during the 2024 campaign - an ambitious goal Musk has long championed. "There's a good chance we'll see at least a re-look at the

Continued on Page 6



NEW YORK: (File photo) Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk gestures as he steps on stage during a rally for former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at Madison Square Garden in New York. — AFP

10 newborns perish in India hospital fire

LUCKNOW: A fire at the neonatal unit of an Indian hospital killed 10 newborns, authorities said Saturday, with another 39 rescued from a blaze blamed on a faulty oxygen machine. Building fires are common in India due to a lack of firefighting equipment and a routine disregard for safety regulations. The fire broke out at about 10:30 pm on Friday night at the Maharani Lakshmi Bai Medical College in Jhansi, around 450 kilometers south of the capital New Delhi.

Footage from the scene showed charred beds and walls inside the ward as a crowd of anguished fami-

lies waited outside. "My child has gone forever," one mother wailed as she clutched her head in grief. Babies rescued from the fire, all only days old, were moved to a new unit inside the hospital where staff were caring for them. "Ten infants have unfortunately died despite our best efforts," doctor Narendra Sengar, the principal of a medical college attached to the hospital, told AFP.

Sengar said all 39 other babies in the ward had been rescued and were in good health, contradicting earlier media reports that 16 had been critically injured. "The postmortem examinations of the babies are being carried out. The 39 infants who have been rescued are unscathed," he added. Doctors and staff on duty had rushed to the rescue of the babies "without caring for their own lives", he said. "Thanks to them we could save 39 babies."

Continued on Page 6



UTTAR PRADESH: Policemen stand guard as mourners protest after newborns died in a hospital blaze in Jhansi on Nov 16, 2024. — AFP



Local

Kuwait ramps up greening initiatives

Project to plant saplings along Ahmadi highways to expand to all governorates: Minister



KUWAIT: Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr Mahmoud Abdulaziz Bushehri (right) plants a sapling.



Minister Bushehri and Sheikh Humoud lead volunteers to the area designated for planting.

KUWAIT: Work is underway to expand greening efforts across all governorates in Kuwait, an official said Saturday. Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr Mahmoud Abdulaziz Bushehri made the remarks Saturday as he officially launched a campaign to plant trees along the highways of Ahmadi Governorate.

The first phase of the project has been completed, said the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources (PAAFR) in a statement. Saplings were planted along the airport road, the Sixth Ring Road, and King Fahad Road, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Electricity and Water. The initiative is being carried out in coordination and cooperation with Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, state institutions, and civil society organizations.

Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud said the campaign aims to raise environmental awareness, contribute to sustainable development, and increase green spaces along highways. This will help combat pollution and beautify public roads in the governorate.

The campaign will see the planting of 100,000



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (left) participates in the planting process.

saplings, which will encourage the community to actively participate in environmental preservation and support volunteer efforts in the field of afforestation across various areas of Ahmadi Governorate.

Director of the PAAFR Nasser Taqi said the launch



Volunteers plant saplings along highways in Ahmadi governorate.

of this campaign represents a new step in the authority's ongoing project to green and replant Kuwait, revitalizing areas that previously had limited or no vegetation. Taqi praised the collaboration between government entities, including the Ministry of



Defense, Ministry of Interior, Kuwaiti oil companies, Ministry of Education, civil society organizations, and volunteers, for their support and participation in the Green Urban Development Program, contributing effectively to Kuwait's greening efforts. — KUNA

Bursa Kuwait renews partnership with KACCH, BACCH for seventh year

KUWAIT: As part of its prominent role in supporting humanitarian and societal initiatives, Bursa Kuwait has renewed its longstanding collaboration with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (BACCH) for the seventh year in a row, contributing over 34,000 services to ailing children and their families in nine hospitals all around Kuwait. The company also sponsored the redesign of uniforms for Child's Play specialists across affiliated hospitals, which were inspired by children's drawings and artwork and aimed to support mental wellbeing and support the specialists with the treatment of children in hospitals.

President of KACCH and BACCH Dr Hilal Mused Al-Sayer hailed Bursa Kuwait's continued support of the healthcare initiatives. "I would like to thank Bursa Kuwait for their unwavering support of the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, which is part of an on-going partnership since 2017. Their generous contributions have transformed children's spaces in many of Kuwait's hospitals, helping provide relief to countless children and their families and impacting their lives positively. This year alone, their sponsorship of playroom supplies across nine hospitals has resulted in nearly 34,000 services for children and families, nurturing environments where therapeutic

play helps children express their emotions, manage anxiety, and face medical challenges with greater courage."

Bursa Kuwait is committed to offer a safe and engaging environment that serve the emotional and psychological needs of young patients and their families. Previously, the company has contributed to the renovation of the pediatric complex care ward at Al-Sabah Hospital, which provides joy and comfort to over 100 children annually. Additionally, Bursa Kuwait has taken a proactive role in acquiring vital medical equipment designed to alleviate the distress often associated with procedures like intravenous injections. These actions underscore Bursa Kuwait's dedication to improving the overall patient experience and ensuring young patients receive the highest quality of care during their treatment journey.

Senior Director of Marketing and Communication at Bursa Kuwait Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi affirmed the company's commitment to its role as a humanitarian entity. "We are committed to continuously supporting the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital and Bayt Abdullah, driven by a deep belief in the importance of creating a safe, supportive environment for children facing serious health challenges. Through this partnership, we aim to enhance the emotional and psychological well-being of patients and contribute to a



better treatment experience by providing innovative therapeutic settings."

He added: "This partnership also reflects Bursa Kuwait's steadfast commitment to supporting the community in which we operate and highlights our investment in initiatives that benefit future generations as we aim to create a positive, lasting impact by working with organizations that share our vision and values. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital and Bayt Abdullah for their dedicated humanitarian efforts and we look forward to strengthening this strategic partnership to achieve even greater successes in the future."

Bursa Kuwait's continuous support for KACCH and BACCH and its mission in hospitals and in Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice comes in line with the objectives of the 'community' pillar of its corporate

sustainability strategy and is in line with Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities – and Goal 17 – Partnership for the Goals – of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

KACCH & BACCH currently operates child life programs in eight hospitals: Amiri, Farwaniya, Jahra, Jaber Al-Ahmad, Adnan, Ibn Sina, Razi, and NBK Specialized Children's Hospital, providing specialized child life and therapeutic play programs for children and their families in hospital wards, playrooms, bedside, and other hospital departments where children are treated. They work closely with doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals to support children undergoing difficult procedures anywhere in the hospital. Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice also provides support for children in Kuwait facing life-threatening health conditions, focusing on multidisciplinary palliative care to ensure the best possible quality of life for these children.



Bursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility, industry best practice standards, and investor expectations. It creates strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Bursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields. The partnerships also help integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture. In all, the strategy achieves longevity and ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

As part of the strategy, Bursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for non-governmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, and environmental protection.

KOC, UAE plant trees to mitigate effects of oil on environment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are collaborating in a project to plant 1,000 plants indigenous to Kuwait in Al-Abdalyah nature reserve. The initiative aims to help in reducing carbon emissions resulting from oil operations, said Nasser Al-Hajri, Head of Maintenance Support and Reliability at KOC. He added that KOC established the Al-Abdalyah reserve over an area of 1.2 million square meters in the western part of Kuwait, near the Kabd area, with the aim of preserving biodiversity and fostering wildlife development within the country.

Mohammad Al-Abduljaleel, Deputy CEO for Planning and Innovation at KOC, said the project highlights KOC's commitment to environmental conservation and sustainability. He also noted the company's firm dedication to achieving the strategic goals of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's energy transition plan through to 2050, including carbon sequestration goals via afforestation.

Matar Al-Neyadi, the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, emphasized that the plants species planted Saturday



Mohammad Al-Abduljaleel

require minimal water and can withstand high temperatures. They also provide food for birds. He praised the efforts of the volunteer teams participating in the initiative, noting that the large number of participants reflected the heightened environmental awareness within Kuwaiti society.

Neyadi said UAE-Kuwait relations are wit-



UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Matar Al-Neyadi plants a sapling.

nessing rapid growth across various fields, with substantial support from the leaderships of both countries. He referenced the recent visit by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the UAE, to Kuwait.

He added that there is ongoing coordination and cooperation between the two countries, with



Nasser Al-Hajri

aligned positions and visions, driven by a shared destiny. "There is growth in trade exchange and significant investment and economic opportunities in both countries. We encourage the private sector, relevant companies, and government bodies to seize these opportunities for optimal benefit," he said. — KUNA

Local

MoH launches national survey

Survey to collect data from 12,000 people of all nationalities

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health is launching a national health survey to collect data on the health status of Kuwait's population. The project aims to help health authorities understand disease patterns and provide a solid database for shaping future health policies to improve public health, said Spokesperson for the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad.

Dr Al-Sanad announced the launch of the first phase of the survey Thursday. The project, commissioned by the Cabinet and in collaboration with various local agencies, is part of efforts to enhance the national health data infrastructure. He highlighted that over the past three decades, Kuwait has experienced significant changes in demographics, lifestyle, social, and economic conditions, which have created a new health reality and altered the prevalence of certain diseases such as chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, all of which affect the quality of life of both citizens and residents.

vey and perform required tests with the consent of the head of the household.

How the survey will work

After coordination and approval from the head of the household, the survey will be conducted using smart devices. It will include physical measurements such as height and weight, dental exams, vision tests, blood pressure measurements, respiratory function tests, and some laboratory tests like cholesterol and blood glucose levels. The survey and tests are expected to take no more than two hours. Results will be provided through the "Kuwait Health" app or "Sahel" app.



Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad



date data to support scientific research for wide-spread publication. He assured that the Ministry of Health is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of participants' personal information according to the highest security standards.

Dr Al-Sanad called on all families to cooperate with the field teams and participate in the survey, as it will enhance the health system's ability to make informed decisions and develop effective policies that will contribute to improving health and lifestyle in Kuwait.

Is it mandatory?

Dr Al-Sanad emphasized that participation in the survey is voluntary but a valuable contribution to improving healthcare services in Kuwait. The data collected will support evidence-based planning and policy-making, assist in identifying health needs, and help analyze the current health indicators in the population. It will also contribute to monitoring diseases and evaluating the usage of healthcare services in Kuwait, providing up-to-

In my view

The Zionist entity's carte blanche



by Nejouad Al-Yagout

Recently, in Amsterdam, there were clashes between Zionist football hooligans and Palestinians. Depending on which news network you believe, the blame was thrust on either the Zionists or the Palestinians. Interestingly enough, a young boy from Amsterdam, host of the Bender channel on Youtube, revealed footage taken the day after the infamous clashes. In his video, there were Zionist hooligans picking up rocks and sticks on the streets of Amsterdam. It was not long before local policemen came to the scene, but what was puzzling is that they were not arrested. Taxi drivers protested the presence of the hooligans with loud honking, but the police seemed to be "escorting" them as they walked menacingly through the streets of Amsterdam. The hooligans were even allowed to storm into an alley and come back out, regroup, and keep walking. At one point, they were surrounded by police in what looked like an impending arrest, only to be led to another part of the city—the same part of the city where they had pulled down Palestinian flags the night before. The hooligans threw rocks at windows without being handcuffed or restrained by the policemen beside them. And the host of the channel wondered aloud why the police took them to the same neighborhood where they tore down Palestinian flags the day before. Even if that may have been where they resided, one wonders why they were allowed to chant loudly and create fear on the streets without being held accountable.

In Europe, Russians are not allowed to play in sporting events. Zionists, on the other hand, are not only given free rein to kill women and children, bomb hospitals, desecrate property, steal the homes of the Palestinians and encroach upon their land, but are also allowed to participate in sports events proudly while their compatriots get away with murder and genocide. What is it about Zionists that allows them to perpetrate such heinous atrocities even as people of the world protest them? Why did the world unite against Nazism and Fascism but now turns a blind eye to the genocidal tendencies of the Zionist movement? How many more times do we need to hear the word genocide for the world to stop a movement that should have never been allowed to start? Why is it that when thousands of Zionists kill the elderly, the defenseless men and the young boys, the mothers and the babies, they are allowed to film their rampage, ridicule their victims, and continue under the pretext of preserving their security? Aren't the Zionist forces terrorizing the people of Palestine? Aren't they creating waves of shock and dismay globally? Isn't that terrorism? Terrorism has no religion or ethnicity. Any movement that creates terror is terrorism.

The truth is that Zionists have carte blanche to do what they want, when they want it, and how they want it. The worst that can happen is a "warning" here or there telling them to agree to a ceasefire or a nation threatening to reduce arms supplied to them. These are all empty threats, because since its inception, the Zionist entity seems to have its own set of rules. While another country would be ostracized and held accountable for threatening the equilibrium of our inbuilt collective moral compass, the Zionists are permitted to project their extreme jingoist philosophy onto the world, while playing the victim card.

Even though their propaganda machine is crumbling as people around the globe have finally woken up to what this movement really is, they have managed to latch (and leech) onto those in positions of power. But what they don't know is that even those in positions of power are growing weary of their antics and brazen madness. And though they use religion to galvanize their followers, they haven't realized that spiritual hypocrisy has an expiry date, and the time will come soon when Zionism, like all movements which thrive on killing the so-called other while preserving their own, will fail.

The world has seen what Zionism is capable of, and that is what stupefies most of us: that it is seen for what it is but is still allowed regardless, and with impunity, to continue. Perhaps that is why most of us are disillusioned with the way of the world. It is no longer devils pretending to be good, but devils revealing themselves and being given the right to perpetrate evil.

We are all shaken up and shocked that the phrase uttered by the Jews after the holocaust — Never again! — seems to only apply to them. And what is most shocking is that the descendants of victims of one of history's most heinous crimes are those who are now committing ethnic cleansing. The phrase "Never again" was appropriated by other leaders, so it was never known whether the phrase applied to Jews or was a universal prompt to avoid any form of genocide. With events in Palestine, the answer is clear. Sadly, heartbreakingly, clear.

Dasman Institute organizes World Diabetes Day event

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), recently hosted its annual World Diabetes Day event for the 17th consecutive year. The event, held on November 14, 2024, at Assima Mall, provided a platform for individuals to engage with diabetes specialists and dietitians, access medical information, and learn about healthy lifestyle modifications.

Dr Faisal Hamed Al-Refaei, Acting Director-General of DDI, emphasized the institute's commitment to promoting awareness about diabetes, striving for positive health outcomes in diabetes management, and empowering individuals affected by diabetes to enhance their quality of life proactively.

The primary objective of the event was to foster awareness about diabetes, promote long-term health outcomes, and empower individuals to take control of their health and well-being. The event was well attended by numerous visitors and their



KUWAIT: People visit the Dasman Diabetes Institute booth at Assima Mall.

families who benefited from the services offered during this event.

DDI showcased various research and studies being conducted by the institute, inviting eligible individuals to participate and benefit from ongoing research initiatives. The event featured booths offering educational sessions on proper dietary habits, pharmacotherapy counseling, physical activities, in addition to glucose and blood pressure testing, and

vital signs assessment.

In a statement, DDI expressed gratitude to Zain for sponsoring this year's event and to Assima Mall for hosting it. The event aligns with DDI's mission to prioritize health promotion and awareness, emphasizing the importance of prevention over cure. Since its establishment in 2006, DDI has been actively involved in organizing events and campaigns to raise awareness about diabetes and related conditions.



Minister Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah walks with Assima Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and other officials during the opening of Mikshat.



Mikshat opens for another season of outdoor fun

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah inaugurated Saturday the Mikshat project at its new location on the northern island of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway. Inspired by the Kuwaiti word 'kashta', the tradition of enjoying picnics in the open desert, Mikshat is a unique entertainment and cultural project first launched by the ministry in 2023.

This year's edition of the project includes many improvements, with the number of food kiosks and establishments increasing to over 30, along with the expansion of the traditional cafe area and an increase in public facilities to meet visitor needs. In her speech during the opening ceremony, Minister Al-Huwailah said the project aims to attract approximately 200,000 visitors. The opening ceremony was attended by several ministry officials and notable figures, including Assima Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

Visitors in previous Mikshat editions enjoyed several activities, such as renting camps for the full



KUWAIT: Visitors enjoy the different facilities of Mikshat.

kashta experience, attending folklore stage performances, enjoying a meal or coffee break at various restaurants and cafes, and shopping for locally-made products. This year, Mikshat will have children playground and a small zoo, allowing children and families to take photos in a safe and enjoyable environment. According to a press statement released by the ministry last October, large screens will be installed

in a designated area to allow visitors to watch the Gulf Cup events and matches.

Entry will be free for children up to the age of four. Mikshat will be open weekdays from 3pm to 11pm, and from 3pm until midnight in the weekend. Visitors can book tickets to enter Mikshat through the Mikshat website, which will launch soon, and via the (Eventat) app. — KUNA

Kuwait working to change local attitudes toward antibiotics use

JEDDAH: Kuwait has imposed strict regulations on the use of antibiotics without prescriptions, said Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi. In a speech he gave while representing Kuwait at the fourth high-level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Minister Al-Awadhi said the country has adopted comprehensive measures to regulate antibiotic use, including health-care provider training programs, boosting research and development in this field, and raising awareness

about antimicrobial resistance across all segments of society. The aim is to bring about a positive and sustainable change in societal behavior towards the correct use of antibiotics.

According to the WHO, AMR is one of the top global public health and development threats. It is estimated that bacterial AMR was directly responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019 and contributed to 4.95 million deaths. The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant pathogens. AMR affects countries in all regions and at all income levels and occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to antimicrobial medicines. As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines become ineffective and infections become difficult or impossible to treat,

increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness, disability and death.

Minister Al-Awadhi said Kuwait is keen on strengthening cooperation with United Nations organizations, international and regional partners, the private sector, and civil society to effectively work in combating AMR.

The high-level conference, which was held in Jeddah and concluded Saturday, was attended by over 40 health, environment, and agriculture ministers from around the world, as well as several leaders of international organizations and NGOs.

The conference serves as a comprehensive platform for bringing together governments, NGOs, scientists, and policymakers to pave the way for effective international cooperation in combating antimicrobial resistance and finding sustainable solutions to reduce its impact on public health. — Agencies

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
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ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
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ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comAUK approves
goals aligned with
Kuwait Vision 2035

KUWAIT: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) board of trustees has approved a forward-thinking strategic plan that positions AUK as a leader in education and innovation, fully aligned with Kuwait's Vision 2035. The strategic plan underscores AUK's dedication to contributing to Kuwait's aspiration of becoming a knowledge-based economy. By providing students with a diverse, globally relevant education, AUK is committed to shaping graduates who will lead and innovate across various sectors in Kuwait and beyond.

Sheikha Dana
Nasser Al-Sabah

"With the approval of this strategic plan, AUK is ready to make a significant impact on developing human capital in line with Vision 2035," stated Sheikha Dana Nasser Al-Sabah, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "The plan's objectives and actionable goals reflect AUK's enduring commitment to academic excellence, community engagement, and sustainable growth. I extend my gratitude to the

entire university community for their unwavering dedication and collaboration in bringing this vision to life."

To advance these strategic goals, the board of trustees has established two new standing committees: the Board Governance Committee and the Board Finance Committee. The Board Governance Committee will focus on ensuring AUK's policies and governance structures adhere to best practices, while the finance committee will oversee the university's financial health, emphasizing accountability and responsible resource management.

AUK President Professor Rawda Awwad remarked: "This strategic plan is the culmination of extraordinary efforts from the entire university community, who have come together to chart a transformative path forward for AUK. This collective commitment highlights our readiness to shape AUK's future. The new committees will offer structured, sustainable support to advance our mission and operational excellence."

In addition to approving the strategic plan, the board reviewed enrollment trends, financial projections, and the Dartmouth-AUK exchange program. Emphasis was placed on initiatives to enhance enrollment diversity and uphold academic excellence through strategic partnerships. The discussions also reaffirmed AUK's dedication to sustainable operations and innovation as part of its alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A full moon rises over Kuwait City on Nov 16, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait to work closely with
EU as GCC president in 2025

Kuwait hosts meeting between Arab ambassadors, Josep Borrell in Brussels

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium and Head of its missions to the European Union and NATO Nawaf Alenezi hosted a meeting at his residence in Brussels with Josep Borrell, Vice President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The meeting was attended by several Gulf and Arab ambassadors accredited in the Belgian capital.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Ambassador Alenezi expressed Kuwait's appreciation for Borrell's positions and his prominent role since taking office in 2019, particularly in strengthening Kuwait-EU relations, as well as Gulf-EU relations. These relations have witnessed significant progress, culminating in the historic first summit between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union, which laid the foundation for a promising future in their relationship.

Ambassador Alenezi emphasized that Borrell represents a voice of wisdom and moderation on the international stage, as evident in his positions defending global peace and stability, as well as protecting international multilateralism, international law, and humanitarian law. He added that Kuwait and the European Union share many common positions and principles on regional and international issues, which are reflected in numerous dialogues between the two sides, as well as in international forums. Both are fully committed to contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security. The ambassador also confirmed Kuwait's readiness to assume the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council starting in December and expressed the country's eagerness to work closely with the European Union to implement the outcomes of the GCC-EU summit, which covered various aspects of cooperation and coordination between the two sides. — KUNA



BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium Nawaf Alenezi (right) poses for a photo with European Commission Vice President Josep Borrell. — KUNA photos



Arab diplomats and European officials pose for a photo at the residence of the Kuwaiti ambassador in Brussels.

Education minister
receives winners of
Arab math olympiad

KUWAIT: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei received Saturday the distinguished students who won medals in the fourth Arab Mathematics Olympiad held in Doha, Qatar, from November 10 to 14. The event was organized by the Arab Organization for Education, Culture, and Science (ALECSO). In a statement, the ministry reported that Minister Al-Tabtabaei praised the role of the students' mathematics instructors in preparing them for participating in the competition, emphasizing that they represent Kuwait's true investment, as they possess skills and abilities that contribute to enhancing the country's standing in international scientific forums.

He expressed his pride and admiration for the participating and winning students — Fajer Al-Saheli, Sarah Al-Humaidi, Marwa Al-Azmi, and Hussein Al-Wazzan — commending their efforts and excellence in representing Kuwait in the Olympiad.

Maryam Al-Enezi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development at the Ministry of Edu-

cation, praised the results achieved by the Kuwaiti students in the competition, which saw the participation of 22 countries and 84 contestants. She stressed the importance of such participation in developing creativity and encouraging innovation among students.

Sheikha Al-Hajraf, the Educational Supervisor for Mathematics in the Assima Education District and head of the Kuwaiti delegation, emphasized that the participating students were keen to represent Kuwait in the best possible way, showcasing their excellence in scientific discussions, which reflected the strong foundation they had received. Fajer Al-Saheli, from Mariya AlQubtiya School, who won the bronze medal in the Olympiad, expressed her gratitude for Minister Al-Tabtabaei and the mathematics department for their support.

Students Marwa Al-Azmi from Al-Rawda Secondary School and Sarah Al-Humaidi from Qurtuba Secondary School, both of whom received the Certificate of Outstanding Performance, also expressed their thanks to all those who helped prepare them for the international competition, enabling them to represent Kuwait at this scientific event. Hussein Al-Wazzan, another participant, praised the efforts of all the teachers and organizers of the competition, dedicating his achievement to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying for his continued health and protection. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei poses for a photo with the students and education ministry officials. — KUNA photos

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Muslims who voted for Trump upset by his pro-Zionist cabinet picks

Japan PM expresses concern to Xi over South China Sea situation

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Displaced Palestinians from shelters in Beit Hanoun cross the main Salaheddine road into Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

Palestinians say north Gaza destruction is widespread

Hospital director receives multiple distress calls from under the rubble

CAIRO: Palestinians displaced from northern Gaza said Zionist entity forces had inflicted widespread destruction on their home districts in their latest six-week-old offensive and a rights group raised concerns Zionist entity might put some areas permanently off-limits. Jabalia, one of the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, as well as the towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun and nearby villages, were among the first targets of Zionist entity's ground offensive in October 2023 after Hamas militants attacked Zionist entity.

Tanks have gone in several more times in what Zionist entity says are necessary operations against militants there who still pose a threat. On Thursday, it said its troops had killed dozens of people and found a large quantity of weapons. Former construction contractor Abu Raed, who was displaced from Jabalia, said Zionist entity forces were blowing

buildings up remotely after booby-trapping them or sending in robots. "The destruction before Oct 5, 2024 was big, but what happened in the past month can't be described in words. Most of the camp was destroyed this time," he told Reuters via chat app. "I have friends and relatives in Beit Hanoun, there are hardly any building standing there. Beit Lahiya also," the 75-year-old said. Video footage of people fleeing the areas shows many destroyed buildings but a lack of access for journalists makes it hard to verify the full extent of the damage. Palestinian health ministry officials said Zionist entity's latest airstrikes killed at least 15 people across the enclave, including four at Gaza City's Salahudeen School, which shelters displaced families. There was no immediate Zionist entity comment.

Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital near Beit La-

hiya, said there were no ambulances working in the north. "Heartbreakingly, I have received multiple distress calls from people trapped under the rubble of their homes, but I could do nothing for them," he told Reuters. "The next day, their voices were gone ... with their homes becoming their graves. This scene is repeated daily."

The Human Rights Watch report was the latest to warn about the dire humanitarian situation. "Forced displacement has been widespread, and the evidence shows it has been systematic and part of a state policy. Such acts also constitute crimes against humanity," it said. It said the displacement "is likely planned to be permanent in the buffer zones and security corridors".

"The Zionist entity military has bulldozed entire areas ... In those areas, Zionist entity has committed ethnic cleansing," Adam Coogle, HRW's Dep-

uty Director of the Middle East and North Africa Division told Reuters in Amman, Jordan. The Zionist entity military has denied seeking to create permanent buffer zones and Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Monday that Palestinians displaced from their homes in northern Gaza would be allowed to return at the end of the war.

Abdel-Hadi, a resident from Beit Lahiya now displaced in Gaza City, was skeptical. "They have torched schools and other shelters where people took refuge before ordering families to head south toward Gaza City. What do you call that if not ethnic cleansing?" he said. "Many families who at the beginning were against leaving were forced to do so after they ran out of water and food," he told Reuters. "Large areas have become empty, under the control of the occupation. Those areas have become off-limits." — Reuters

News In Brief

Man takes staff hostage at restaurant outside Paris

ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX, France: A knife-wielding man on Saturday took several employees hostage in his father's restaurant on the outskirts of Paris as a large police force surrounded the establishment. The pizzeria is located in the town of Issy-les-Moulineaux in the southwestern suburbs of the French capital, not far beyond the Paris ring road. The man was holding "three or four employees" but there were no customers or members of the public among the hostages, a police source told AFP. Police set up a security perimeter around the venue. The man locked himself in the restaurant just before 1 pm local time (noon GMT), the source said. — AFP

US airline says plane hit by gunfire on Dallas runway

WASHINGTON: Southwest Airlines said one of its planes was apparently hit by gunfire while preparing for takeoff at an airport in the US city of Dallas on Friday. The plane "taxied safely back to the terminal at Dallas Love Field after a bullet apparently struck the right side of the aircraft just under the flight deck", the airline said in a statement. The incident happened as the crew was preparing for takeoff, it said. No one was injured and the plane has been removed from service, the airline added. — AFP

Spain arrests 7 Britons after seizing over a ton of hashish

MADRID: Seven Britons have been arrested in southern Spain for drug trafficking after police seized 1.2 tons of hashish, the government said on Saturday. "National police working with Britain's National Crime Agency have dismantled a ring in Marbella and Elche suspected of trafficking drugs in lorries," the interior ministry said. "The officers have seized 1,200 kilograms (2,646 pounds) of hashish and detained seven British citizens," it said. The haul was discovered in the tourist resorts of Marbella and Fuengirola, which have large British expat populations, and in the southeastern city of Elche. — AFP

Trump names Leavitt, 27, as White House press secretary

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump announced Friday that 27-year-old campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt will serve as his White House press secretary. Leavitt "is smart, tough and has proven to be a highly effective communicator. I have the utmost confidence she will excel at the podium, and help deliver our message to the American People," Trump said in a statement. Leavitt will become one of the youngest people to take the key position, acting as the face of the White House and fielding questions from the media. — AFP

Bereaved mother presses UN over Mexico femicides

GENEVA: Norma Andrade's teenage daughter was murdered in 2001, yet nobody has ever faced justice. She is battling the impunity surrounding femicides in Mexico—despite attacks on her own life. "I'm 63 and what keeps me going is courage, the feeling of helplessness at not having what we should be entitled

to justice," Andrade told AFP during a recent visit to Geneva. She was in the city to meet with United Nations representatives, including from the rights office and UN Women, non-governmental organizations and foundations, calling for more international attention to Mexico's extremely high rate of femicides. She was also presenting a documenta-

ry chronicling her struggle, "Norma—A Quest For Justice", produced and directed by Brigitte Leoni. Andrade became a human rights activist in February 2001 after her 17-year-old daughter Lilia Alejandra Garcia Andrade was murdered in Ciudad Juarez, a city on the US border where thousands of women and girls have been killed since 1993. Lilia Alejandra, whose body was found seven days after she went missing, had two very young children of her own, who were left to Andrade to raise.

The documentary focuses on Andrade's relentless struggle over more than two decades for justice for her daughter and other victims, and facing two assassination attempts herself in the process.

The film also focuses on the staggering numbers of femicides in Mexico, where the UN estimates that around 10 women are killed per day. "The problem is widespread," Andrade said.

"We want justice for Alejandra and all the Alejandras in Mexico." The activist said her goal was "also to make known our demands regarding the failings of the Mexican state". Andrade tirelessly denounces irregularities, omissions and negligence during investigations into femicides, as well as corruption within the system. And she is fighting for relatives of victims to be granted a special status, urging public policies to support children orphaned by femicide. Andrade said she was not very optimistic things would change despite the arrival in June of Mexico's first female president, Claudia Sheinbaum, who has vowed to combat violence against women and strengthen women's rights. "I hope, but without much hope", she said. Andrade has reason to be skeptical. She has been waiting for 23 years to see progress in bringing her daughter's killers to justice. — AFP



Georgian anti-government demonstrators protest the results of the parliamentary elections outside the national election commission's headquarters in Tbilisi on Nov 16, 2024. — AFP

Georgia poll body okays ruling party's contested vote win

TBILISI: Georgians protested on Saturday as the poll commission rubber-stamped the ruling party's victory in a controversial parliamentary vote marked by claims of Russian meddling and Western calls to investigate fraud allegations.

The Caucasus nation's pro-Western opposition has denounced the October 26 vote as "fraudulent", while the European Union and the United States have called for a probe into alleged electoral "irregularities". The Georgian Dream party won 53.93 percent of the votes against 37.79 percent garnered by a union of four opposition alliances, the national election commission said.

Critics have blamed the increasingly

conservative party for derailing Georgia from its European path and bringing Tbilisi back into Moscow's orbit. Saturday's final results by the electoral commission give Georgian Dream 89 seats in the 150-member parliament, which the opposition deems "illegitimate" and has refused to enter. The interior ministry said it has initiated a criminal probe against the commission's opposition member who splashed black paint on the face of its chair, Giorgi Kalandarishvili, briefly disrupting the commission's session before the results were announced.

The ministry also said police have detained three anti-government demonstrators at a protest outside the commission's headquarters, the latest in a series of rallies against the disputed results since the October vote. President Salome Zurbishvili—at loggerheads with the governing party—has also described the vote as illegitimate and accused Russia of interference. Moscow has denied meddling. — AFP



Mexican women's rights activist Norma Andrade poses wearing a t-shirt with a picture of her late daughter Alejandra during an interview. — AFP

to justice," Andrade told AFP during a recent visit to Geneva. She was in the city to meet with United Nations representatives, including from the rights office and UN Women, non-governmental organizations and foundations, calling for more international attention to Mexico's extremely high rate of femicides. She was also presenting a documenta-

International

Muslims who voted for Trump upset by his pro-Zionist entity cabinet picks

Community unhappy with president-elect's secretary of state pick and others

WASHINGTON: US Muslim leaders who supported Republican Donald Trump to protest against the Biden administration's support for Zionist entity's war on Gaza and attacks on Lebanon have been deeply disappointed by his cabinet picks, they tell Reuters. "Trump won because of us and we're not happy with his secretary of state pick and others," said Rabiul Chowdhury, a Philadelphia investor who chaired the Abandon Harris campaign in Pennsylvania and co-founded Muslims for Trump.

Muslim support for Trump helped him win Michigan and may have factored into other swing state wins, strategists believe. Trump picked Republican senator Marco Rubio, a staunch supporter of Zionist entity for Secretary of State. Earlier this year, Rubio said he would not call for a ceasefire in Gaza, and that he believed Zionist entity should destroy "every element" of Hamas. "These people are vicious animals," he added. Trump also nominated Mike Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor and staunch pro-Zionist entity conservative who backs Zionist entity occupation of the West Bank and has called a two state solution in Palestine "unworkable", as the next ambassador to Zionist entity.

He has picked Republican Representative Elise Stefanik, who called the UN a "cesspool of antisemitism" for its condemnation of deaths in Gaza, to serve as US ambassador to the United Nations. Rexhinaldo Nazarko, executive director of the American Muslim Engagement and Empowerment Network (AMEEN), said Muslim voters had hoped Trump would choose cabinet officials who work toward peace, and there was no sign of that.

"We are very disappointed," he said. "It seems like this administration has been packed entirely with neoconservatives and extremely pro-Zionist

entity, pro-war people, which is a failure on the side of President Trump, to the pro-peace and anti-war movement."

Nazarko said the community would continue pressing to make its voices heard about ending the war in Gaza. "At least we're on the map," Hassan Abdel Salam, a former professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and co-founder of the Abandon Harris campaign, which endorsed Green Party candidate Jill Stein, said Trump's staffing plans were not surprising, but had proven even more extreme than he had feared. "It's like he's going on Zionist overdrive," he said. "We were always extremely skeptical ... Obviously we're still waiting to see where the administration will go, but it does look like our community has been played." The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Several Muslim and Arab supporters of Trump said they hoped Richard Grenell, Trump's former acting director of national intelligence, would play a key role after he led months of outreach to Muslim and Arab American communities, and was even introduced as a potential next secretary of state at events.

Another key Trump ally, Massad Boulos, the Lebanese father-in-law of Trump's daughter Tiffany, met repeatedly with Arab American and Muslim leaders.

Both promised Arab American and Muslim voters that Trump was a candidate for peace who would act swiftly to end the wars in the Middle East and beyond. Neither was immediately reachable.

Trump made several visits to cities with large Arab American and Muslim populations, include a stop in Dearborn, a majority Arab city, where he said he loved Muslims, and Pittsburgh, where he called Muslims for Trump "a beautiful movement.



Donald Trump (right) stands with local leaders of the Muslim community as they endorse him during a campaign rally at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, Michigan, Oct 26, 2024. — AFP

They want peace. They want stability."

Bill Bazzi, mayor of neighboring Dearborn Heights, who endorsed Trump, said he met the president-elect three times and still believed he would work to end the war, despite the cabinet appointments. Rola Makki, the Lebanese American, Muslim vice chair for outreach of the Michigan Republican

Party, agreed. "I don't think everyone's going to be happy with every appointment Trump makes, but the outcome is what matters," she said. "I do know that Trump wants peace, and what people need to realize is that there's 50,000 dead Palestinians and 3,000 dead Lebanese, and that's happened during the current administration." — Reuters

Kyiv wants to end war by diplomacy next year: Zelensky

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that Kyiv would like to end the war with Russia next year through "diplomatic means", as both countries prepare for Donald Trump's return to the White House. February 2025 would mark the third anniversary of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, with Russia's troops gaining ground in recent months against Kyiv's outmanned and outgunned soldiers.

The prospect of Trump returning to power in the United States next year has raised questions about the future of the conflict, as the Republican has been critical of US military aid to Kyiv.

Zelensky spoke a day after saying the war will end "sooner" than it otherwise would have done



A woman pays her respect near the coffin of the combat medic Maria-Khrystyna Dvoynik, 32, during her funeral ceremony at Saint Michael's Golden-domes Orthodox cathedral in Kyiv on Nov 15, 2024. — AFP

once Trump becomes president. He also spoke a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin held his first phone call with a major Western leader, speaking to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who initiated the call despite Kyiv's objections.

urday that Abdel Aziz Minawi, a member of Islamic Jihad's political bureau, and the group's foreign relations chief Rasmi Abu Issa were killed in the strike on Qudsaya, in the Damascus area. Islamic Jihad still holds several hostages taken during the October 7 attack. Earlier this week, the group released two video clips of Sasha Trupanov, a 29-year-old hostage. As diplomacy aimed at ending the Gaza war has stalled, a top government official in Beirut said on Friday that US ambassador Lisa Johnson had presented a 13-point proposal to halt the Zionist-Hezbollah conflict. It includes a 60-day truce, during which Lebanon will deploy troops to the border. The official added that Zionists has yet to respond to the plan.

A second Lebanese official, similarly requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said he was "optimistic" about the talks. A senior adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei met Lebanese officials in Beirut on Friday, saying Tehran was "looking for solutions". Ali Larijani said Iran supported the Lebanese government and "the resistance"—Hezbollah—"under any circumstances" — AFP

"government efficiency," including at agencies that oversee SpaceX.

Critics fear Musk might use his role to tinker with environmental regulations - long a sticking point for his company's Starship launches - or sway NASA and Pentagon contract awards. SpaceX already enjoys lucrative deals to ferry astronauts to the ISS, launch defense satellites, and provide internet via its Starlink constellation network. Musk's assignment is to "provide advice and guidance from outside the government," Trump said, a phrase that Kathleen Clark, a law professor at Washington University in St Louis, finds troubling. She suggests the choice of words seeks to blur the lines about what constitutes inside and outside the government, "and thus avoid application of conflict of interest rules."

New NASA chief

Musk's commission might also recommend slimming down NASA's sprawling network of ten centers nationwide - a perennial idea often thwarted by senators eager to protect local jobs. "That's probably a good idea," said Nield, though it could spark fierce resistance. And if space has long been politically neutral, Elon Musk's involvement could provoke outcry from Democrats. Outgoing President Joe Biden elevated climate change as a NASA priority like never before.

Under Trump's first term, NASA cut programs like the Carbon Monitoring System (CMS) and Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, Ocean Ecosystem (PACE) satellite - both later revived - and downplayed climate change in strategy documents. Clues about Trump's direction will emerge with his choice for NASA administrator. His first pick, Jim Bridenstine, was a loyalist in Congress. — AFP

"For our part, we must do everything we can to ensure that this war ends next year. We have to end it by diplomatic means," Zelensky said in an interview with Ukrainian radio. "And this, I think, is very important." There have been no meaningful talks between Russia and Ukraine, but Trump's re-election has plunged the attritional conflict's future into uncertainty, with the Republican repeatedly promising to cut a quick deal to end the war.

"We have to understand what the Russians want," Zelensky said. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he will only accept talks with Ukraine if Kyiv surrenders Ukrainian territory that Moscow occupies.

The Kremlin said he repeated that demand in the phone conversation with Scholz on Friday.

Zelensky has rejected Putin's conditions.

Ukraine was angered after Germany's Scholz reached out to Putin on Friday, calling the Russian leader after almost two years of silence. Berlin said Scholz "condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and called on President Putin to withdraw troops". It also said Scholz "urged Russia

to show willingness to negotiate with Ukraine with the aim of achieving a just and lasting peace". But Ukraine accused Scholz of an "attempt at appeasement" and said the call would not achieve anything other than minimize Putin's "isolation".

Scholz said he had spoken to Zelensky before calling the Kremlin chief and also informed other Western allies of the call. On Saturday, the G7 -- which includes many of Kyiv's key backers—said Russia remained the sole obstacle to a just peace in Ukraine, pledging sanctions targeting Moscow.

"We will remain united by Ukraine's side," the Group of Seven industrialized nations said in a statement marking 1,000 days of the invasion. Moscow has made steady advances in eastern Ukraine since this summer, inching closer to key hubs such as Pokrovsk and Kurakhove.

Zelensky said on Saturday that Russian forces were suffering heavy losses and that the advance had "slowed down" in some areas. Ukraine was "at war with a state that does not value its people, that has a lot of equipment, that does not care how many people die", he added. — AFP

Zionists pummel south Beirut...

Continued from Page 1

The Gaza health ministry said at least 35 people were killed in the territory in the previous 24 hours, taking the overall death toll in more than 13 months of war to 43,799. The majority of the dead were civilians, according to ministry figures which the United Nations considers reliable. The civil defense agency reported 11 people killed in strikes across Gaza early on Saturday. In Rafah, Jamil Al-Masry said a house was hit, causing "a massive explosion". "We went to the house, only to find it in ruins, with fire raging and smoke and dust everywhere," he said. People "started searching for martyrs and survivors" with their bare hands, he said, with some "still under the rubble".

In a rare claim of responsibility for a strike on Syria, Zionist said it targeted the Islamic Jihad group on Thursday. A source from the group told AFP on Sat-

Eight dead in China school knife attack

BEIJING: Eight people were killed and 17 others wounded Saturday in a knife attack at a vocational school in eastern China, and the suspect - a former student - has been arrested, police said. The attack took place in the evening at the Wuxi Vocational Institute of Arts and Technology in the city of Yixing in Jiangsu province, police in Yixing said in a statement, confirming the toll. Police said the suspect was a 21-year-old former student at the school, who was meant to graduate this year, but had failed his exams.

"He returned to the school to express his anger and commit these murders," police said, adding that the suspect had confessed. The school - which has about 12,000 students from around the world, according to its website - is located about 150 kilometers west of Shanghai. It offers courses in art, design,

ceramics, and fashion, among others. In Yixing, police said emergency services were fully mobilized to treat the wounded, and provide follow-up care for those affected by the attack.

'Mental health'

No video of the attack was immediately seen on social media - a sign that authorities possibly removed footage from various platforms. Violent knife crime is not uncommon in China, where firearms are strictly controlled, but attacks with such a high death toll are relatively rare. Earlier this week, a 62-year-old man killed 35 people and wounded more than 40 more when he rammed his small SUV into a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai. Web users said they were shocked by the week's two deadly attacks.

"What kind of state of despair must these people be in to go to such extremes?" said one user of the popular X-like site Weibo. "Security on campuses must be boosted, along with more education about mental health, so other dramas like these do not happen," said another user. — AFP

is unknowable, and to keep turning a blind eye to the unidentified," group member and former defense minister Yasukazu Hamada said before the launch. In an embarrassment for Japan's defense ministry, unauthorized footage of a docked helicopter destroyer recently spread on Chinese social media after an apparent drone intrusion into a military facility.

And last year the ministry said it "strongly presumes" that flying objects sighted in Japanese skies in recent years were surveillance balloons sent by China. In Japan, UFOs have long been seen as "an occult matter that has nothing to do with politics", opposition lawmaker Yoshiharu Asakawa, a pivotal member of the group, has said. But if they turn out to be "cutting-edge secret weapons or spying drones in disguise, they can pose a significant threat to our nation's security". — Agencies

'White orb' UFO sighted off Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

Washington said last year it was examining 510 UFO reports—more than triple the number in its 2021 file - and NASA in September said it wants to shift the conversation "from sensationalism to science".

The Japanese parliamentarians hope to bring the domestic perception of UAP in line with its ally's following several scares related to suspected surveillance operations. "It is extremely irresponsible of us to be resigned to the fact that something

10 newborns perish in India...

Continued from Page 1

They are the real heroes." Police superintendent Gyanendra Kumar Singh said the fire likely started in a piece of machinery used to enrich the oxygen level in the atmosphere. "All children rescued are safe and getting medical attention," Singh told AFP.

Deputy chief minister of Uttar Pradesh state, Brajesh Pathak met the parents and relatives of the infants Saturday and assured them of a thorough probe. Pathak said a safety audit of the hospital was carried out in February followed by a fire drill three months later. "The cause of the fire will be probed," he added. "If any lapses are found, strict action will be taken against those responsible and no one will be spared."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the deaths "heart-wrenching" in a post on X. "My deepest condolences to those who have lost their innocent children in this. I pray to God to give them the strength to bear this immense loss," he wrote. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a compensation of 500,000 rupees (\$5,900) each to the bereaved families. "I pray to Lord Shri Ram to provide salvation to the departed souls and speedy recovery to the injured," he posted on X.

Friday's fire comes six months after a similar blaze at a children's hospital in New Delhi that killed six newborns. Authorities said that the hospital was not properly licensed and lacked proper fire exits, and police arrested a doctor and the facility's owner in the aftermath. The May blaze occurred just hours after at least 27 people were killed, including several children, when a fire broke out at a packed amusement park arcade in another part of the country. — AFP

Big Bang: Trump and Musk could...

Continued from Page 1

Artemis program - whether that means speeding it up or even skipping the Moon to focus on Mars," said Nield, a former senior FAA official. Such a shift would be seismic for a program projected to cost over \$90 billion. The Artemis 2 crew is set to fly by the Moon in September 2025, for the first time since Apollo. China's plans could also temper any pivot. Beijing has its sights on the lunar south pole - the same target as Artemis and Trump is unlikely to let China plant its flag there unchallenged.

Self-dealing?

Then there's the question of what rocket will power these missions. NASA's newly certified Space Launch System (SLS) has faced sharp criticism, especially from Musk, for being exorbitantly expensive due to its lack of reusability. By contrast, SpaceX's Starship prototype, designed to be fully reusable, has dazzled with its potential to revolutionize spaceflight.

Trump lavished praise on Starship during his election victory speech, highlighting SpaceX's feat of catching the rocket's booster stage with the giant "chopstick" arms of its launch tower. Could Starship replace SLS? Many in the space sector think it should. But Musk's growing influence raises concerns. Having poured tens of millions into Trump's campaign, he is now set to chair a body tasked with slashing bureaucracy and improving

International

Japan PM expresses concern to Xi over South China Sea situation

Beijing, Tokyo agree to expand cultural exchanges, dialogue on economy at APEC summit

LIMA: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba expressed "serious concerns" over the situation in the South China Sea to Chinese President Xi Jinping in their first in-person talks. Tokyo's foreign ministry said Saturday. But the pair agreed to work to expand cultural exchanges and continue high-level dialogue on the economy, both Tokyo and Beijing said after the talks on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Peru.

The meeting comes after Ishiba kept his job as prime minister in a parliamentary vote this week despite having led the ruling coalition to its worst election result in 15 years.

Relations between Japan and China have worsened as Beijing builds up its military capacity in the region and Tokyo boosts security ties with the United States and its allies.

Ishiba "conveyed serious concerns over the Chinese military's growing activity" to Xi, the Japanese foreign ministry said. He stressed that "the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait is extremely important to Japan and the international community, while also expressing serious concerns over the situation surrounding the South China Sea, Hong Kong and Xinjiang". China has ramped up military pressure on self-ruled Taiwan in recent years to pressure Taipei into accepting its claims of sovereignty, which the island's government rejects.

Beijing has also in recent months pressed its sweeping territorial claims in the East and South

China Seas more stridently. A chain of uninhabited islands claimed by Beijing but administered by Tokyo, known as the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China, have long been a point of tension between the neighbors. Xi said he hoped Japan would work with China to "properly handle major issues of principle such as history and Taiwan" and "manage differences constructively," according to a statement from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

China and Japan, "whose economic interests and industrial and supply chains are deeply intertwined," need to "pursue win-win cooperation and maintain the global free trade system as well as stable and unimpeded production and supply chains", Xi said. Tokyo said they had agreed to "work towards realizing mutual visits by respective foreign ministers, as well as the high-level dialogue on cultural exchange and economy". Another recent flashpoint in bilateral ties was the fatal stabbing in September of a 10-year-old Japanese schoolboy in Shenzhen.

Ishiba urged Xi to "strengthen measures to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens" living in China, while Xi promised that the "safety of foreign nationals including Japanese people will be secured." Japan's foreign ministry said. At APEC, Ishiba also met outgoing US President Joe Biden and held trilateral talks with Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol.

"We strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to



China's President Xi Jinping (center) receives military honors next to Peru's President Dina Boluarte upon his arrival at the government palace in Lima on Nov 14, 2024, on the sidelines of the APEC summit. — AFP

change the status quo" in Asia-Pacific waters, the three leaders said in a joint statement, without mentioning China directly. "We steadfastly oppose

the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels and coercive activities in the South China Sea," it said. — AFP

Super Typhoon makes landfall in Philippines

MANILA: Super Typhoon Man-yi slammed into the Philippines on Saturday, with the national weather forecaster warning of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening" impact as huge waves pounded the archipelago's coastline. More than 650,000 people fled their homes ahead of Man-yi, which is the sixth major storm to batter the disaster-weary country in the past month.

Man-yi brought maximum wind speeds of 195 kilometers (121 miles) per hour as it made landfall on the sparsely populated island province of Catanduanes as a super typhoon, the weather service said, adding gusts were reaching 325 kilometers an hour. "Potentially catastrophic and life-threatening situation looms for northeastern Bicol region as Super Typhoon 'Pepito' further intensifies," the forecaster said hours before it made landfall, using the local name for the storm and referring to the southern part of the main island of Luzon.

Waves up to 14 meters (46 feet) high pummeled the shore of Catanduanes, while Manila and other vulnerable coastal regions were at risk from storm surges reaching up to more than three meters over the next 48 hours, the forecaster said. Man-yi could hit Luzon—the country's most populous island and economic engine—as a super typhoon or typhoon on Sunday afternoon, crossing north of Manila and sweeping over the South China Sea on Monday.

At least 163 people died in the five storms that pounded the Philippines in recent weeks, leaving thousands homeless and wiping out crops and livestock. The government urged people on Saturday to



This handout photo taken on Nov 16, 2024 shows residents sheltering inside a mall made as a temporary evacuation center in Polangui town, Albay province, south of Manila. — AFP

heed warnings to flee to safety. "If preemptive evacuation is required, let us do so and not wait for the hour of peril before evacuating or seeking help, because if we did that we will be putting in danger not only our lives but also those of our rescuers," Interior Undersecretary Marlo Iringan said.

In Albay province, Legazpi City grocer Myrna Perea sheltered with her husband and their three children in a school classroom alongside nine other families after they were ordered to leave their shanty.

Conditions were hot and cramped—the family spent Friday night sleeping together on a mat under the classroom's single ceiling fan—but Perea said it was better to be safe. "I think our house will be wrecked when we get back because it's made of light materials—just two gusts are required to knock it down," Perea, 44, told AFP. "Even if the house is

destroyed, the important thing is we do not lose a family member."

Climate change is increasing the intensity of storms, leading to heavier rains, flash floods and stronger gusts. About 20 big storms and typhoons hit the Southeast Asian nation or its surrounding waters each year, killing scores of people, but it is rare for multiple such weather events to take place in a small window. The weather forecaster warned of "widespread incidents of severe flooding and landslides" on Catanduanes in the typhoon-prone Bicol region.

Power was shut down ahead of the storm, with shelters and the command center using generators for electricity. More than 400 people squeezed into the provincial government building in the capital Virac, with others sent to a gymnasium, provincial disaster officer Roberto Monterola said. — AFP

China frees Taiwan fishing boat captain after four months

TAIPEI: A Taiwanese fishing boat captain held in China for more than four months on allegations of illegal fishing has been released after paying a fine, Taiwan's coast guard said Saturday. The boat called Da Jin Man 88 was carrying five crew members when it was seized by China's coast guard in waters near Taiwan's Kinmen islands on July 2 for violating Beijing's seasonal fishing ban.

The Kinmen islands are administered by Taipei but are located just a few kilometers (miles) from China's mainland. Four of the crew were released in August while the boat and its captain were freed on Friday. Taiwan's coast guard escorted the boat to Penghu, an archipelago where it is registered, and arrived at around midnight (1600 GMT), a Taiwan coast guard official told AFP on Saturday.

In a statement late Friday, Taiwan's coast guard said the boat left the Chinese city of Quanzhou at around 2 pm on Friday after "penalty procedures were completed". The official did not provide details about the fine, but Taiwan media reported that two politicians in Penghu had helped arrange payment of more than 210,000 Chinese yuan (US\$29,000). China's Taiwan Affairs Office confirmed in a statement Friday that "punitive measures" had been taken against the captain and that he had been freed. China claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as part of its territory and has not renounced the use of force to bring the island under control. Beijing maintains a near-daily presence of naval vessels and warplanes around the island to pressure Taipei into accepting its claims of sovereignty.

Chinese coast guard ships have also been spotted around Taiwan's outlying islands, at times briefly entering its restricted waters. A series of incidents involving boats from both sides have fuelled tensions across the narrow waterway separating Taiwan and China. In February, the capsizing of a Chinese fishing boat while being pursued by Taiwan's coast guard further strained relations after two members of the Chinese crew died. Taiwan insisted its coast guard was following legitimate procedures after the Chinese vessel entered "prohibited waters", but Beijing accused them of "seeking to evade their responsibilities and hide the truth". — AFP



Demonstrators block streets with burning tires as they protest to condemn the alleged killing of women and children by suspected Kuki minority forces, in Imphal. — AFP

Restive Indian state orders curfew after six bodies found

GUWAHATI: An Indian state riven by months of ethnic tensions imposed an internet shutdown and curfew Saturday after angry protests over the recovery of six bodies of people believed to have been kidnapped by insurgents. Manipur in India's northeast has been rocked by periodic clashes for more than 18 months between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community, dividing the state into ethnic enclaves. The bodies were suspected to be of those belonging to the Meitei community who went missing in Jiribam district after a gunfight between Kuki insurgents and Manipur police last week.

Three bodies were pulled from a river in Jiribam on Friday while three more were found on Saturday, local media reports said. News of the discovery provoked incensed mobs to attack the homes of seven local politicians, an army source told AFP on con-

dition of anonymity, adding that only minor damage had been recorded. Protesters also burned tires and blocked roads in the capital city of Imphal on Saturday. The Manipur government announced a curfew was in effect in part of the city due to the "developing law and order situation".

The state's home ministry also ordered all internet and mobile data services in Manipur to be shut off for two days in order to bring the latest unrest under control. "Anti-social elements might use social media extensively for transmission of images, hate speech and hate video messages inciting the passions of the public which might have serious repercussions for the law and order situation," a notice said. Internet services were shut down for months in Manipur last year during an outbreak of violence which displaced around 60,000 people from their homes, according to government figures.

Thousands of the state's residents are living in emergency shelters, still unable to return home due to ongoing tensions. Long-standing tensions between the Meitei and Kuki communities revolve around competition for land and public jobs. Rights activists have accused local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain. — AFP

Reliance asks India to review reach of Starlink, Amazon

NEW DELHI: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance has asked India's telecom regulator to review the potential reach of Elon Musk's Starlink and Amazon's Kuiper before awarding satellite spectrum amid concerns local players could suffer, a letter showed on Friday. Reliance's letter, which is not public, is Ambani's last-ditch effort in an ongoing face-off with Musk over how India should grant spectrum for satellite services. While Reliance has called for an auction, India has sided with Musk who - in line with global trends - wanted an administrative allocation.

In the letter, reviewed by Reuters, Reliance said it carried about 15 billion gigabyte of data every month in India after spending about \$23 billion on spectrum auctions over the years, but Starlink would target the same customers with a potential capacity of nearly 18 billion gigabyte of data via its satellites with a likely much lower outlay. Experts say auctions tend to mean higher initial investments which could have deterred foreign players in favor of Reliance. "The authority should critically examine the capacities created by these mega ... constellations such as Starlink and Kuiper," the letter dated Nov 15 said. A senior government source at the telecom regulator said all feedback being received would be reviewed before making final recommendations, tentatively before the year end.

Starlink, Amazon and Reliance did not respond. Starlink is seeking security clearance for a license to offer satellite broadband services in India and will get a permit if it satisfies all conditions, the telecom minister said this week. Ambani once gave data for free on his mobile plans, and Musk has adopted similarly aggressive tactics. — Reuters

Gabon votes on new constitution hailed by junta

LIBREVILLE, Gabon: Gabon extended a night curfew Saturday as it held a referendum on a new constitution the ruling junta says will mark a new chapter after 55 years of dynastic rule in the oil-rich African nation. The estimated 860,000 registered voters have faced an onslaught of calls by authorities on TV, radio and social media to make their ballot count—whether they choose a green one meaning "yes" or a red one for "no".

With the campaign dominated by official propaganda by the junta that took power in August last year in a coup, local media say voter turnout will be a key factor. Voting began late at several polling stations in the capital Libreville with papers still being handed out when the polls opened at 7am (0600 GMT). The 2,835 polling stations nationwide are due to remain open until 6pm.

The junta on Saturday extended a night curfew by two hours, bringing it forward to midnight "during the whole electoral process", according to a decree read on state television. It did not specify until when the extended curfew ending at 5 am would remain in place.

The proposed constitution sets out a vision of a presidency with a maximum of two seven-year terms, no prime minister and no dynastic transfer of power. It would also require presidential candidates to be exclusively Gabonese—with at least one Gabon-born parent—and have a Gabonese spouse. — AFP



A voter casts his ballot at a polling station during Gabon's referendum in Libreville, on Nov 16, 2024. — AFP

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2024

Zain reinforces commitment to clean energy and sustainability initiatives

Company installs solar panel setup at car park in headquarters

KUWAIT: In a step that aligns with its corporate sustainability strategy, Zain has installed a solar panel setup at the outdoor car park in its headquarters. The initiative promotes the use of clean energy to contribute to powering the company's buildings and reducing its carbon emissions. Through this step, Zain renews its commitment to investing in sustainable energy solutions aimed at meeting its strategic sustainability goals, which include decarbonizing its operations and transitioning towards net-zero emissions by 2050. This new solar panel setup contributes to powering the company's main buildings, marking an impactful step towards reducing reliance on conventional energy and accelerating the use of renewable energy.

The step also reduces Zain's carbon dioxide emissions, highlighting the impact of this initiative on the company's carbon footprint and furthering its environmental sustainability goals to tackle climate change. In recent years, Zain has taken major strides to promote climate action and transition to a net-zero economy to mitigate climate risks. This step underscores Zain's proactive approach to environmental responsibility, as part of its overarching strategy to embed sustainable practices across all its operations. Zain continues to exert more efforts into reducing the environmental footprint of its operations, including preserving natural resources, reducing energy consumption, recycling e-waste, implementing green solutions for water and electricity management, monitoring the company's overall effects on climate change, network optimization, and more.

Through its corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, Zain is committed to building climate change scenarios that are aligned with the Paris Agreement (2015) to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate physical and environmental risks. The company is well aware of the urgent need to tackle the climate crisis the world is facing today. Last year, Zain scored A- through its participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), a reflection of its success in meeting the standards and requirements of the project. Zain is also one of the few companies in the region's markets to have a membership in the CDP. The company also developed its first comprehensive Scope 3 inventory process aligned with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol guidelines for a more accurate and transparent evaluation of its value chain



The solar panel setup at Zain's HQ.

Step contributes to reducing company's carbon emissions

emissions. This allows it to not only disclose and report in a more concise manner but be able to identify areas in which it can reduce its GHG emissions.

Zain continues to explore opportunities to address climate change impacts under its sustainability strategy. The company views this as a core

pillar, with three main focus areas: network and energy consumption, strategy and communication, and waste management and circular economy.

NIC co-leads milestone Lulu IPO on ADX

KUWAIT: National Investments Company KSCP (NIC), one of the leading investment banks in the region, proudly announces its role as co-lead bank in the successful completion of Lulu Retail Holdings PLC's \$1.72 billion initial public offering (IPO) on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX).

Fahad Al-Mukhaizim, Board Member and CEO of NIC, stated: "National Investments Company is proud to have co-led this successful IPO for Lulu Retail Holdings, reinforcing our expertise in capital markets transactions and our



شركة الاستثمارات الوطنية
NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY



LULU

commitment to supporting strategic investment initiatives within the GCC. This accomplishment reflects our dedication to delivering exceptional investment opportunities for our clients and underscores the positive momentum in the region's capital markets."

The IPO represents another remarkable milestone for NIC, highlighting its role in the successful completion of the major public offering of Lulu Retail Holding. This accomplishment adds to NIC's impressive track record in recent years, further solidifying its distinguished position in providing a diverse range of services, including asset management, capital markets, investment banking, and advisory services.

This IPO, currently standing as UAE's largest IPO of the year, attracted an impressive \$37



Fahad Al-Mukhaizim

- **National Investments Company (NIC) is proud to participate in this initial public offering of Lulu Retail Holding, further enhancing NIC's expertise in capital market transactions and demonstrating its commitment to supporting strategic investment initiatives in the GCC countries.**
- **This achievement reflects NIC's dedication to providing services that enable clients to capture exceptional investment opportunities, underscoring the positive momentum in the region's capital markets.**

billion in orders from investors worldwide, underscoring the strong demand and confidence in Lulu's growth strategy across the Gulf. Prominent global investors, including Vanguard Group Inc. and Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, GIC Pte, participated in the IPO. The shares were priced at 2.04 dirhams each, resulting in a post-offer market capitalization of 21.1 billion dirhams. Key GCC sovereign entities such as Kuwait Investment Authority, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, Hassana, and Qatar Investment Authority were among the significant participants, reflecting the strength of regional collaboration and investment.

Lulu initially planned to offer a 25 percent stake but increased the offer to 30 percent in response to substantial investor demand. NIC consistently endeavors to design and deliver unique, distinguished investment services to its esteemed clients across various sectors and markets, both regional and global. These services offer Asset Management clients diverse options to diversify their portfolios and mitigate risks, providing a safeguard against market fluctuations. Moreover, NIC ensures flexibility in adjusting portfolio components to align with market developments, effectively fulfilling clients' aspirations.

UK economy slows, hitting growth plans

LONDON: Britain's economy grew less than expected in the third quarter, official data showed Friday, dealing a blow to the Labour government that has set its sights on growth expansion.

Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 0.1 percent in the July-September period, a slowdown compared to 0.5-percent growth in the second quarter, the Office for National Statistics said. The data covers the period of the Labour government's first few months in office and lead up to its highly-anticipated maiden budget at the end of October.

The latest GDP figure lagged behind economist forecasts of 0.2-percent growth, with analysts partly attributing the slowdown to uncertainty ahead of the budget that included business tax rises and plans for higher state borrowing. "Improving economic growth is at the heart of everything I am seeking to achieve, which is why I am not satisfied with these numbers," finance minister Rachel Reeves said in reaction to Friday's data.

"At my budget, I took the difficult choices to fix the foundations and stabilize our public finances," she added. Reeves spoke after addressing business leaders in a keynote speech late Thursday in which she outlined plans to drive forward Britain's economy by creating mega pension funds and cutting red tape that would enable greater risk-taking in the financial sector.

She claimed measures to tighten regulation follow-

ing the 2008 global financial crisis had "gone too far".

Reeves also used her speech Thursday to stress the need for "free and open" trade with the United States under president-elect Donald Trump—and with the European Union. However, she insisted Britain would not reverse Brexit by re-entering the EU single market or customs union.

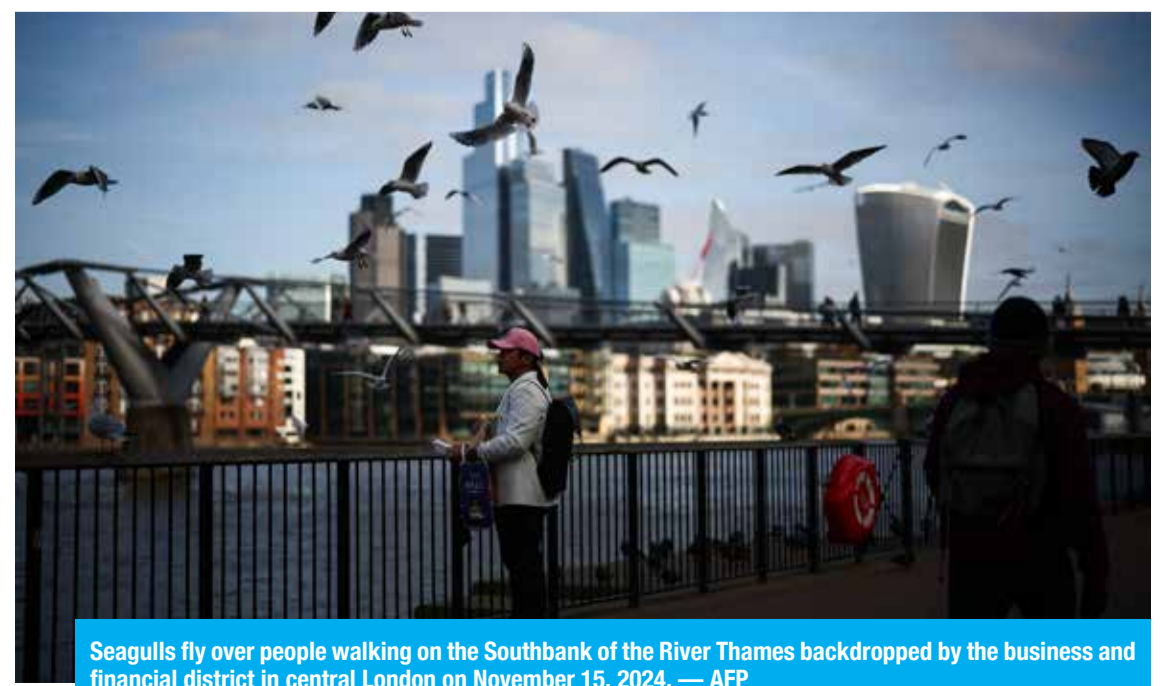
Speaking alongside Reeves, Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey said Britain should "welcome opportunities to rebuild (EU) relations while respecting the decision of the British people" to exit the bloc in a 2016 referendum. Bailey echoed analysis elsewhere by stating Brexit had impacted Britain economically.

"The changing trading relationship with the EU has weighed on the level of potential supply," he said.

"The impact on trade seems to be more in goods than services." The EU on Friday forecast that the eurozone economy is expected to grow 1.3 percent next year from 0.8 in 2024. Friday's UK data also showed that the country's economy shrank slightly in September. Analysts attributed part of the third-quarter slowdown to worries about the impacts of the budget.

Lindsay James, strategist at Quilter Investors, said the persistent "gloomy messaging" in the run up to the event caused "consumers and businesses to pause spending and await what pain was to come".

The budget set out to focus on long-term growth to meet Prime Minister Keir Starmer's pre-election pledge. It was the first Labour budget in nearly 15 years, after the party's re-election in July that ended years of Conservative rule. The government's first few months in power has coincided with a drop to UK inflation, resulting in the Bank of England cutting interest rates, in turn helping to ease cost-of-living pressures. — AFP



Seagulls fly over people walking on the Southbank of the River Thames backdropped by the business and financial district in central London on November 15, 2024. — AFP

Business

ABK-Egypt reports 131% increase in net profit to EGP 5.4bn for 9M 2024

Total assets grow 40% to EGP 136.9bn • Total customer deposits increase 41% to EGP 117bn

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt (ABK-Egypt) proudly announced its robust 9-month 2024 financial results, once again affirming its position as a leading financial institution.

Financial strength

ABK-Egypt has demonstrated remarkable growth across all major financial metrics for the nine-month period ending 30 September 2024. The Bank achieved a significant increase in net profit of 131 percent, reaching EGP 5.4 billion, compared to EGP 2.3 billion in the same period last year. Additionally, Net Interest Income rose by 63 percent to EGP 4.7 billion, up from EGP 2.9 billion in the same period last year. Net fees and commissions income also saw a 44 percent increase, reaching EGP 1.2 billion compared to EGP 838 million during the same period last year.

According to the Bank's recently released financial results, total assets increased by 40 percent, reaching EGP 136.9 billion, up from EGP 97.6 billion in December 2023. Total Customer Deposits grew by 41 percent, amounting to EGP 117 billion compared to EGP 83.1 billion in December 2023, reflecting the increasing trust of the Bank's customers. Additionally, the total gross loans portfolio expanded by 51 percent, reaching EGP 74.8 billion compared to EGP 49.5 billion at the end of 2023. Lastly, the Non-Performing Loans (NPL) ratio stood at 1.30 percent at the end of September 2024, down from 1.48 percent in December 2023.

Commenting on the results, Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, stated, "We take pride in the robust financial performance achieved over the past nine months. This success reflects our steady efforts to strengthen the Bank's position in the Egyptian market and underscores our commitment to serving the best interests of our customers and shareholders. ABK Group maintains a positive outlook on ABK-Egypt's ability to sustain its growth momentum, thanks to the efficiency of its business model, the prudence of its risk framework, and the agility of its balance sheet structure, which has enabled us to adapt to market fluctuations and effectively navigate the evolving economic landscape."

Setting the sustainability standard

Marafi further emphasized ABK-Egypt's commit-



Ali Marafi
ABK-Egypt Chairman

Khaled El Salawy
CEO and MD, ABK-Egypt

• **Ali Marafi:** ABK-Egypt sustains growth momentum, thanks to the efficiency of our business model, the prudence of our risk framework, and the agility of our balance sheet structure, which has enabled us to adapt to market fluctuations and effectively navigate the evolving economic landscape.

• **Khaled El Salawy:** We are advancing with ambitious and measured steps in implementing our phased strategy, focused on enhancing and diversifying revenue streams while maximizing customer and shareholder value.



ment to implementing sustainability standards and actively participating in corporate social responsibility as key drivers of economic development. He stated that the Bank will continue to finance major development projects and support national initiatives led by the Egyptian government to promote economic stability and growth.

The Chairman added that, reflecting its commitment to sustainability, ABK-Egypt recently published its first annual Sustainability Report and Carbon Footprint Report for 2023, adhering to GRI standards.

Concluding his statement, Marafi commended the efforts of the Central Bank of Egypt in achieving financial inclusion by upgrading banking products and services and enhancing access for unbanked segment. He also expressed his appreciation to the Executive Management team for their contributions in solidifying the Bank's position in the Egyptian

market, achieving record growth rates. He commended their efficiency in executing the Bank's ambitious growth strategy, which is based on resilience and innovation. He also noted that the upcoming period will emphasize enhancing performance across all business lines to maximize business volumes and profitability.

Strategic direction

Further affirming the strength of the Bank's financial position, Khaled El Salawy, CEO and Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, stated, "We are advancing with ambitious and measured steps in implementing our phased strategy, which focuses on enhancing and diversifying revenue streams while maximizing value for our customers and shareholders. The Bank has indeed achieved strong and sustainable growth rates, as evidenced by all financial performance indicators throughout the year. Profit Before Tax reached EGP 6.4 billion, reflecting a growth rate of 115 percent compared to EGP 3 billion. These results would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our team and the immense trust of our customers, which we take pride in as we continue on our path to success."

El Salawy further noted that these results demonstrate the success of the Bank's integrated strategy, which emphasizes achieving steady growth and maintaining long-term financial stability. He also

highlighted that the Bank has made substantial investments to enhance its digital platforms, expand its geographical reach, and improve its offerings to meet the highest standards of the banking industry while aligning with the needs and aspirations of both retail and corporate customers.

El Salawy said, "Despite the global and local economic challenges, we still see significant opportunities for growth ahead. We remain committed to developing our strategies to capitalize on these opportunities and strengthen our brand in the market. Our strategy is based on the principles of sustainable growth, striking the right balance between improving financial performance and making meaningful contributions to the broader community. ABK-Egypt's social responsibility has consistently focused on supporting national initiatives in key areas: enhancing the healthcare system, improving access to quality education, supporting youth, unemployed females, and individuals with special needs. This is in addition to combating poverty to elevate the living standards of underprivileged segments."

The Bank is committed to supporting and financing all vital sectors in the Egyptian market, reflecting its belief in the significance of collaborative efforts to achieve national development plans and Egypt's Vision 2030, aimed at supporting economic stability and maximizing benefits for society as a whole.

Banks hope Musk's Trump ties boost X's prospects

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk's political ascendancy has some Wall Street banks hoping they may soon be able to offload \$13 billion of debt that backed the billionaire's purchase of the social media platform X, three banking sources said. Some of the lenders in the consortium, which included Morgan Stanley and Bank of America, think Musk's emergence as a close aide to Republican President-elect Donald Trump could boost the prospects of X, previously known as Twitter, the sources said. If that were to happen, it would allow them to sell the debt without having to take a massive loss on the deal, the sources said.

Musk, X, Morgan Stanley and Bank of America did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Banks typically sell such loans to investors soon after the deal is done, but in the case of X, which Musk bought for \$44 billion in 2022, they have been stuck holding the debt. Musk's sweeping changes to the platform, including laying off many people who worked to moderate content, and one of his posts on X, scared away advertisers and hit revenues. That reduced the value of the debt, as the risk of default increased.

In recent months, one of the sources said, some banks expected X had seen increased traffic as users flocked to the platform around big events like the US elections. Trump, whose account on the platform was restored by Musk after the previous management banned him in January 2021, has been regularly posting on it.

The banking sources said they wanted to see whether that and a robust US economy would translate to increased revenues for the platform. Analysts have said Musk's ties with Trump—who put him in charge of a new government department on efficiency—could benefit the entrepreneur's various business ventures, which range from Tesla electric vehicles to SpaceX rockets. Tesla's market value surpassed \$1 trillion for the first time in two years in the days after the election results.

The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It is unclear to what extent Musk's close connection in the new administration could help revive X's business. One of the sources said it could also further divide its user base. Newer platforms like Bluesky and Meta's Threads have been benefiting from a user exodus from X since the election.

US web traffic on X reached its highest point this year on election day with 42.3 million visits, which climbed another 10 percent to 46.5 million visits the day after the election, according to data from web analytics company Similarweb. But by the weekend, X's web traffic tapered off to more normal levels, Similarweb said. The data firm said 115,000 web users in the US deactivated their X account on Nov 6, higher than any other day since Musk took over the platform.

The social media company is expected to report its latest finances to the lending consortium in the weeks after the quarter ends next month, the sources said. The banks could then decide whether they should continue holding onto the debt or look to engage investors on it, the sources said. Other banks in the consortium include Barclays, Mitsubishi UFJ, BNP Paribas, Mizuho and Societe Generale. — Reuters

Policymakers defend Fed independence amid Trump concerns

WASHINGTON: Two senior Federal Reserve officials praised the US central bank's independence on Thursday, amid concerns that President-elect Donald Trump may seek to influence Fed policy.

The defense was led by Fed Chair Jerome Powell, who told a conference in Dallas, Texas, that rate decisions "cannot be reversed by any other part of the government, except, of course, Congress."

Congress created the Federal Reserve System more than a century ago, and later gave it a dual mandate to tackle inflation and unemployment free from political interference—primarily by raising and lowering interest rates. Powell's praise echoed that of his colleague, Governor Adriana Kugler, who earlier told an event in the Uruguayan capital Montevideo that "central bank independence is fundamental to achieving good policy and good economic outcomes."

Analysts have raised concerns that the Fed's independence could come under strain in the next Trump administration, given the views expressed by the president-elect. Trump is a fierce critic of Powell—whom he first nominated to run the US central bank—accusing him without evidence of supporting



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference in Washington, DC. — AFP

the Democrats, and once even wondering if he was a bigger enemy than Chinese President Xi Jinping. Trump has also said he has "better instincts" on the economy than many Fed governors, and argued that the US president should have "at least" a say in setting interest rates. Trump's comments suggest he may wish to influence interest rate decisions—something he cannot currently do without a change to the law. "Congress created the Federal Reserve by statute and can do what it wishes to do by statute," Powell said Thursday. "But our decisions are not reversible by any other agency."

Powell declined to confirm if he would continue to serve as a Fed governor once his term as Fed chair expires in May, 2026. "I'll certainly serve to

the end of my chair term," he said. "And that's really all I've decided." During his remarks, Powell also addressed the health of the US largest economy, praising its recent performance as "the best of any major economy in the world."

The US central bank recently started cutting back its key lending rates from a two-decade high, turning attention from tackling inflation to supporting the labor market as the rate of price increases has moderated. There has been widespread anger about the cumulative impact of years of inflation, which has pushed up consumer prices by more than 20 percent since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the economic facts today are clear, Powell said during an event in Dallas, Texas, noting that inflation was falling toward the Fed's long-term two percent target, the labor market was "solid," and economic growth remained resilient. Powell noted that inflation, as measured by the Fed's favored inflation gauge, was "running much closer" to the bank's target, but had not reached it just yet.

"We are moving policy over time to a more neutral setting," he said, referring to the level of interest rates over the long run that keep both inflation and unemployment in check. "But the path for getting there is not preset," he continued, adding that the Fed was in no hurry to cut rates. Futures traders currently place a probability of close to 60 percent that the Fed will cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point, according to data from CME Group, down sharply from a day earlier. — AFP

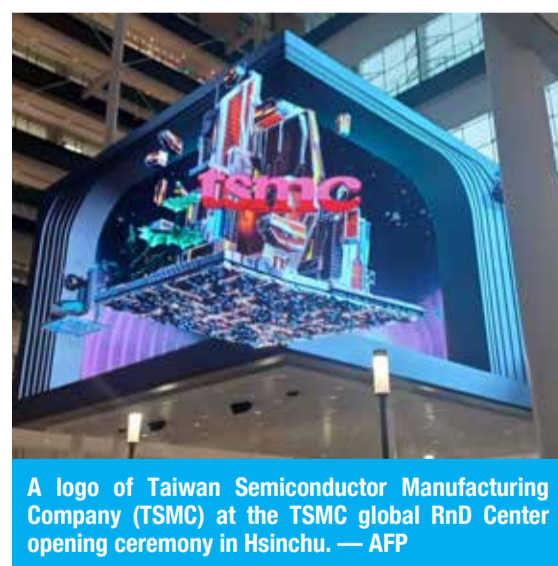
US readies up to \$6.6bn funding for chip giant TSMC

WASHINGTON: The United States will award Taiwanese chip giant TSMC up to \$6.6 billion in direct funding to help build several plants on US soil, officials said Friday, finalizing the deal before Donald Trump's administration enters the White House. "Today's final agreement with TSMC—the world's leading manufacturer of advanced semiconductors—will spur \$65 billion dollars of private investment to build three state-of-the-art facilities in Arizona," said President Joe Biden in a statement. The Biden administration's announcement comes around two months before President-elect Trump takes office.

Trump has recently criticized the CHIPS Act, a major law passed during Biden's tenure aimed at strengthening the US semiconductor industry and reducing the country's reliance on Asian suppliers, including Taiwan. While the US government has unveiled over \$36 billion in grants through this act, including the award to TSMC, much of the funds remain in the due diligence phase and have not been disbursed.

But once a deal is finalized, funds can start flowing to companies that have hit certain milestones.

TSMC is the second company after Polar Semiconductor to finalize its agreement. "Currently, the United States does not make on our shores any leading-edge chips, and this is the first time ever that we'll be able to say we will be making these leading-edge chips in the United States," said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told reporters Thursday. "I want to remind everyone that these are the chips that run AI and quantum computing. These are the chips that are in sophisticated military equipment," Raimondo added. Making these chips in the United States, she noted, helps address a national security



A logo of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) at the TSMC global RnD Center opening ceremony in Hsinchu. — AFP

liability. The first of TSMC's three facilities is set to fully open by early-2025, Biden noted.

At full capacity, the three facilities in Arizona are expected to "manufacture tens of millions of leading-edge logic chips that will power products like 5G/6G smartphones, autonomous vehicles, and high-performance computing and AI applications," the Commerce Department said.

It added that "early production yields at the first TSMC plant in Arizona are on par with similar factories in Taiwan." The investment is anticipated to create around 6,000 direct manufacturing jobs.

A senior US official told reporters on condition of anonymity that they expect at least \$1 billion to go to TSMC this year. Besides the \$6.6 billion in direct funding, the United States is also providing up to \$5 billion in proposed loans to TSMC Arizona.

While the United States used to make nearly 40 percent of the world's chips, the proportion is now closer to 10 percent—and none are the most advanced chips. TSMC shares closed 1.3 percent lower in New York on Friday. — AFP

Fitch upgrades Argentina's debt rating amid crisis

WASHINGTON: Credit ratings agency Fitch upgraded Argentina's sovereign debt rating to "CCC" from "CC" on Friday, citing improved ability to meet upcoming foreign debt payments and successful economic reforms under President Javier Milei.

Fitch said the upgrade, which maintains the country in junk status, reflects growing confidence in Argentina's financial stability, bolstered by significant dollar inflows from a tax amnesty program that has already brought over \$20 billion into the economy. The government of self-described "anarcho-capitalist" Milei has applied a drastic austerity program aimed at erasing the budget deficit and taming the high inflation that has plagued Argentina for years.

Yet Milei has maintained popular support despite implementing the tough economic adjustments, including cuts in 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. Fitch warned that significant challenges remain ahead, with Argentina facing large debt payments of \$4.3 billion due in both January and July 2025.

The country's current international reserves of just \$30 billion remain constrained, with \$18.3 billion tied up in a Chinese currency swap agreement and \$5.4 billion held in gold. — AFP

Business

UN climate chief urges G20 to spur tense COP29 negotiations

Stiell says international cooperation is the best way to survive global heating

BAKU: The UN's climate chief urged G20 leaders on Saturday to push COP29 talks towards a deal to raise money for developing nations as diplomats struggled to find common ground in marathon negotiations.

Negotiators worked through the night in efforts to produce a new draft deal before ministers arrive next week for the final days of the COP29 talks in a Baku sports stadium, but differences remained.

"There is a long way to go, but everyone is very aware of the stakes, at the halfway point in the COP," UN climate chief Simon Stiell said in a statement. Stiell appealed for leaders of the Group of 20, which includes the world's top economies and polluters, to weigh in when they meet in Brazil on Monday and Tuesday. "As G20 Leaders head to Rio de Janeiro, the world is watching and expecting strong signals that climate action is core business for the world's biggest economies," Stiell said.

"G20 Leaders must signal loud and clear that international cooperation is still the best and only chance humanity has to survive global heating," he said. Some developing countries, which are least

responsible for global greenhouse gas emissions, want an annual commitment of \$1.3 trillion to help them adapt to climate impact and transition to clean energy.

The figure is well above what donors including the United States, the European Union and Japan currently pay. But the negotiations are stuck over a final figure, the type of financing, and who should pay, with developed countries wanting China and wealthy Gulf states to join the list of donors.

"We know we need at least 1.3 trillion to be committed to the low and middle income countries. And that has to be the figure at the end," Irish climate minister Eamon Ryan said earlier this week.

"The question is what's that made up of," he said. Rich nations, which face their own economic challenges and political pressure following years of high inflation, are loath to commit large amounts of money from their public budgets alone. Buried in debt, developing countries do not want the money to come in the form of loans.

The latest draft deal was 25 pages long, and still contained a raft of options. Samir Bejanov, deputy

lead negotiator of COP29 host Azerbaijan, said nations were given more time to produce a new text later on Saturday. "There is still much, much to do," Bejanov said in a press conference.

"Over the last few days, some people have doubted whether collectively we can deliver. It's time for the negotiators to start proving them wrong," he added.

Observers described a tense atmosphere in the negotiating rooms in Azerbaijan's capital.

"Stark divisions between North and South prevent negotiators from tackling the main issues at hand," said Iskander Erzini Vernoit, director of the Imal Initiative for Climate and Development, a Morocco-based think tank. Tensions also emerged after some nations specified how much they should be getting from any deal. A bloc of least-developed nations, mostly from Africa, asked for \$220 billion while small-island states at threat from rising seas want \$39 billion.

Friederike Roder, a vice president at the non-profit Global Citizen, said the latest draft contains a "jungle of options" that makes "insufficient



UN climate chief Simon Stiell delivers a speech during the opening of the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. — AFP

progress or even backtracks" on some key points. "What is urgently needed is real political momentum and energy from world leaders as they convene for the G20 summit in Rio," she said. — AFP

NBK offers 15% cashback on flight bookings with four airlines

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced offering 15 percent cashback on selected airlines when using eligible NBK Visa credit/prepaid cards. The offer comes within the bank's dedication to rewarding customers all year round through a diverse package of exclusive benefits and offers tailored to meet their needs and expectations.

NBK mentioned that eligible cardholders can redeem 15 percent of the value of their tickets when booking them between November 15, 2024 and January 31, 2025 directly through the participating airlines app or website, to any destination worldwide, and the travel period is flexible to allow customers take advantage of this offer. The participating airlines are Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Etihad Airways, whereas eligible Credit/Prepaid cards are as follows:

- NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card



Anwar Al-Ballam

- NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways Visa Platinum Credit Card
- NBK Avios Visa Signature Prepaid Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Privilege Credit Card

Commenting on this offer, Anwar Al-Ballam, Senior Products Manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We always strive to elevate customer banking experience by providing premium offers in partnership with leading organizations across different sectors."

"In the new offer, the bank is collaborating with four international airlines to reward eligible NBK Visa credit/prepaid cardholders, by reducing their travel expenses through a 15 percent cashback on their tickets booked during the offer period, from mid-November through the end of January 2025," he explained. NBK Visa Credit/Prepaid Cards provide customers with a variety of benefits, in addition to exclusive offers and discounts, giving them a unique lifestyle with rewards all year round.

NBK offers a wide range of banking products and services that are relevant to customers' lifestyles, as they can choose from NBK Credit Cards that are tailored to meet their different needs and provide them with various benefits and rewards.



China retail sales pick up speed, beat forecasts in October

BEIJING: China's retail sales last month grew at their fastest clip since the start of the year, official figures showed Friday, an encouraging sign for Beijing as it looks to boost sluggish consumption. Officials have since late September unveiled a slew of measures including interest rate cuts and debt swaps intended to boost activity in the world's second-largest economy, which has struggled to regain momentum since the pandemic.

Among the woes facing policymakers are slumping domestic consumption resulting in deflationary pressure, a property sector bust and geopolitically fraught trade disputes. Retail sales expanded 4.8 percent on-year in October, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said, speeding up from the 3.2 percent in September. The reading also significantly outperformed the 3.8 percent forecast in a Bloomberg survey of analysts and represents the best reading since February.

Figures also showed the national urban unemployment rate fell slightly to five percent from 5.1

percent in September. However, industrial production growth edged down to 5.3 percent in October, the NBS figures showed, from 5.4 percent the previous month.

The NBS said in a statement that in October "positive factors accumulated and increased and the national economy was stable, with progress and growth". Beijing is pushing for an official national growth target this year of around five percent, a goal most economists believe it will narrowly miss.

But recent weeks have seen officials announce their most aggressive measures in years in a bid to breathe fresh life into the economy. The new policies have included a debt swap program to ease the burden on local governments, mortgage rate cuts and the elimination of certain restrictions on home purchases. "The economy stabilized in October because of the policy shift in late September," wrote Zhang Zhiwei, President and Chief Economist of Pinpoint Asset Management, in a note.

But Zhang warned that the "property sector has not turned around".

The market is now turning its attention to the new year, with prospects of an intensified trade war under US president-elect Donald Trump, Zhang added. "The key question is how much fiscal stimulus China will run to counter potential export slowdown." — AFP



A worker works on a loader production line at a factory in Qingzhou, in eastern China's Shandong province on Nov 15, 2024. — AFP



Dr Mark Holder poses for a group photo with the employees.

Gulf Bank holds skill development training program for employees

KUWAIT: In its continuous effort to enhance the professional development of its employees, Gulf Bank successfully organized a comprehensive training program in collaboration with Euromoney Learning, led by renowned consultant Dr Mark Holder, who is an advisor for global banks and exchanges. Known for his expertise in derivatives and risk management, he has trained top firms like Goldman Sachs and authored over 50 articles, delivering complex insights with clarity.

The program, which focused on Treasury Risk Management and Asset-Liability Management (ALM), aimed to strengthen the integration of key risk factors such as credit risk, funding costs, collateral adjustments, gap management, and market risks within the banking sector.

The program was designed to enhance the risk management expertise of Gulf Bank's employees, particularly in treasury functions, and aligns with the bank's ongoing commitment to adhering to global best practices in the field of risk management. Throughout the training, participants explored a variety of topics essential for mastering risk management, including:

- **Understanding Risk:** A comprehensive overview of various types of risks and the causes of financial crises, including "Black Swan" events.
- **Market Risk and Gap Management:** The effects of market risk and balance sheet gaps, and the application of duration-based risk management techniques.
- **Foreign Exchange and Derivatives Risk Measurement:** Key metrics for measuring foreign exchange and derivatives risk, along with effective

US retail sales lose steam after hurricanes

WASHINGTON: Retail sales in the United States slowed in October, according to government data released Friday, with analysts noting that devastating hurricanes in recent months likely disrupted consumption.

Sales rose 0.4 percent in October from a month prior to \$718.9 billion, according to Department of Commerce data. This was a smaller uptick than September's revised 0.8 percent increase.

Consumer spending has helped to power the US economy over the past year despite elevated interest rates as the Federal Reserve battled to rein in inflation. But the cooldown in October, which came after the central bank started lowering the benchmark lending rate, could have been influenced by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, which landed in late September and early October, respectively.

Typically, lower interest rates are expected to support economic activity. The storms were likely to have forced some businesses to close temporarily, while people grappled with the aftermath, said economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics in a recent note. "The sectoral breakdown of retail sales also supports the idea that consumers were prevented from shopping," said Samuel Tombs, chief US economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

He noted that sales at furniture stores and personal care shops fell, while non-store sales were up. "More recently, optimism about the econom-

hedging strategies.

• **Funding and Liability Costs:** A detailed review of funding costs and associated risks on the liability side of the balance sheet.

Upon completing the program, participants shared their positive feedback, emphasizing the significant knowledge and skills gained, which will enable them to navigate the complexities of risk management in their daily roles with greater efficiency. Reflecting on the program's success, Sarah AlRifaai, Executive Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank stated: "This program represents a crucial step in our ongoing commitment to developing the risk management capabilities of our employees. By equipping them with the latest tools and knowledge, we ensure that Gulf Bank remains aligned with global best practices, further enhancing our ability to manage risks effectively and efficiently."

She further added, "The participants not only gained a deep understanding of risk management practices and tools but were also able to apply these concepts in real-world scenarios, which helped assess their skills and abilities in tackling complex challenges."

Gulf Bank continues to invest in the professional development of its workforce, reinforcing its role as a leader in the Kuwaiti banking sector and ensuring that its employees are equipped to meet the evolving demands of the industry. Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience. In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

ic outlook among consumers might have increased since the election, driven by expectations of tax cuts and surging stock prices," Tombs added. He was referring to Donald Trump's victory over Kamala Harris in the US presidential election.

In October, retail sales excluding those at auto dealers and gas stations rose just 0.1 percent from the prior month. Sales at restaurants and bars, as well as grocery stores, slowed from September, Commerce Department data showed.

From a year ago, retail sales were up 2.8 percent in October. Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic noted that October's rise in retail sales "comes on the heels of a sharply revised higher spending surge in September." This suggests that consumers maintained "upbeat spending momentum" at the start of the fourth quarter, she said.

Her expectation is that GDP growth will remain robust in the final three months of the year, even as the increase cools from the third quarter.

A September slump in US industrial production extended into October, the Federal Reserve said Friday, with extreme weather and a strike at aircraft manufacturer Boeing weighing on output. Industrial output fell by 0.3 percent in October after declining by a revised 0.5 percent a month earlier, the Fed said in a statement. This was in line with market expectations, according to Briefing.com.

The Fed said industrial production had been affected by "a strike at a major producer of civilian aircraft"—in the wake of the costly recent strike at Boeing over pay and conditions. Production was also hit by impact of both Hurricane Milton and the "lingering effects" of Hurricane Helene. Manufacturing output fell 0.5 percent, while the indexes for mining and utilities rose by 0.3 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively, the Fed said. — AFP

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2024



A general view of an unfinished mud painting by Nozhipo Moyo (not pictured) on a granary is seen in Matobo.



A general view of plates and utensils placed decoratively in a mud painted kitchen in Matobo.



Elgar Maphosa poses for a photograph outside her mud painted kitchen in Matobo.



The women behind Zimbabwe's striking hut painting art



Peggy Masuku demonstrates her painting skills.



Peggy Masuku demonstrates her painting skills.



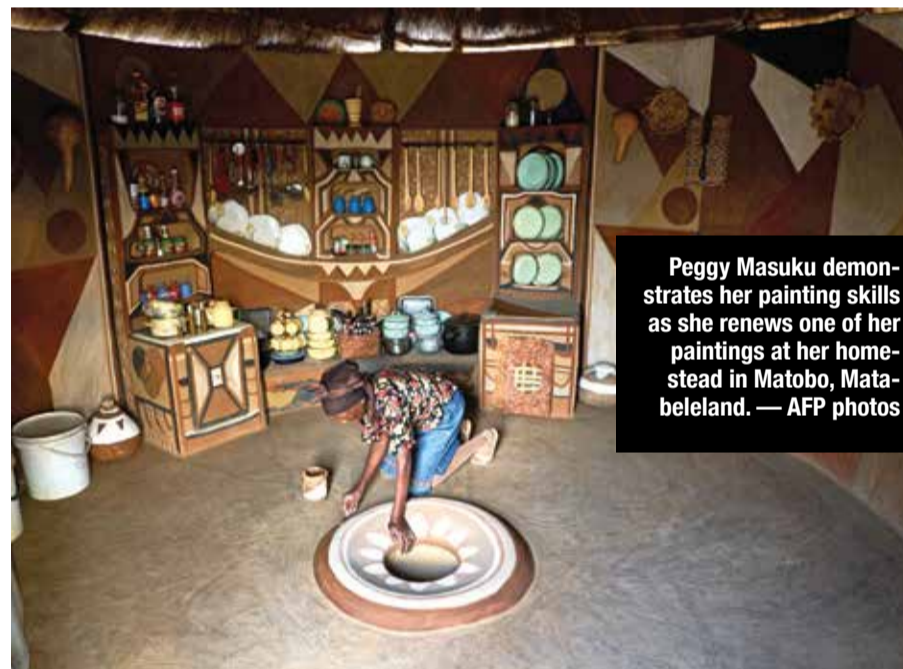
A general view of various decorations inside a house in Matobo.

The golden rays of the afternoon sun enhance the bold, hand-painted patterns on the mud walls of a round, thatched hut in Peggy Masuku's village of Matobo in southwestern Zimbabwe. Outside, at a small table with two curved seats - all fashioned out of mud - Masuku shows visitors how she mixes soil pigments, charcoal and ash to create the earth tones that make the striking motifs. The 54-year-old is admired as one of the best among hundreds of women who practise the traditional art of hut painting in the picturesque granite hills of Matobo, where the rocks hold spiritual value.

The art is gaining recognition beyond this part of rural Zimbabwe, with the bold patterns incorporated into fashion and designs that are finding a small market as far away as Europe and bringing income to its village artists. For the self-effacing Masuku, it all started when her stepmother assigned her, as the youngest girl in the family, the duty of smearing a cow-dung paste onto the walls and floors of the family huts, a traditional technique to maintain the structures. "My stepmother would oversee this chore and make sure I did it to perfection. Initially, I thought this was abuse but I later realized it was good training," Masuku told AFP. "I graduated to doing the hut painting, which elderly women did, and over time became quite good at it."

International interest

Masuku's talent first found recognition through a competition called My Beautiful Home, in which she has fea-



Peggy Masuku demonstrates her painting skills as she renews one of her paintings at her homestead in Matobo, Matabeleland. — AFP photos

tured among the winners several times since its launch in 2014. The annual event is the brainchild of Veronique Attala, a French woman who stumbled on "a beautifully decorated hut" when lost while hiking in the Matobo Hills, a UNESCO heritage site that has one of the highest concentrations of rock paintings in Africa.

Attala, who has lived in Zimbabwe for more than 30 years, was inspired to nurture the tradition and support the women artists and their farming communities. A new project headed by the German Embassy has also started testing out the commercial promise of these de-

signs. In collaboration with Zimbabwe's National Gallery and Fashion Council, it has launched the Matobo Collection featuring the work of selected artists reproduced on saleable items such as textiles, flowerpots and lampshades. The project is helping to find markets in other parts of Zimbabwe and also abroad, mainly in Germany, with the artists receiving a licence fee for their designs and royalties for every sale.

To help the women navigate issues of copyright and compensation, the embassy has also brought in intellectual property lawyers. "The aim is to further promote the artistry of the ladies of Ma-

tobo and, subsequently, create greater awareness of this unique cultural heritage, nationally as well as internationally," the embassy's cultural attache Katrin Simon told AFP. One of those selected for the Matobo Collection is Elgar Maphosa, who is impressed that the traditions of her community have "come this far". "It is something that we do as routine," the 58-year-old villager said. "I never at any time imagined that I would one day get an income out of it while also learning new things."

Younger generation

Hut painting is an ancient Ndebele tradition in which the motifs were originally imbued with meaning. It was a "mode of communicating the worldview or beliefs, as well as ideals and values of communities that lived long ago," said cultural historian Pathisa Nyathi. "Over time the meanings got lost and, owing to the interaction with other cultures including Western, emphasis is now on aesthetics," Nyathi told AFP. Emboldened by her success at My Beautiful Home, Masuku has been commissioned to paint buildings at Zimbabwe's top tourist resort town of Victoria Falls, which she hopes will lead to more projects. Younger women are also learning the craft, including 26-year-old Nozipo, a development studies graduate and civil servant who is currently learning the art from her mother, and hopes to follow the steps of the older women in her community. — AFP



A dog lies inside a rockery decorated with mud painting.



Peggy Masuku poses for a photograph in Matobo.



Peggy Masuku demonstrates her painting skills as she renews one of her paintings.



A general view of a mud painted kitchen roof under renovations in Matobo.



Trynoss Nyathi poses for a photograph at his homestead.

Lifestyle



Egyptian actress Safia Al-Emari



Egyptian actress Sawsan Badr



Egyptian actress Nabila Ebeid



Guests leave after attending the opening ceremony of the 45th Cairo International Film Festival in Cairo on Nov 13, 2024. — AFP photos

CAIRO FILM FESTIVAL
OPENS WITH FOCUS ON
PALESTINIAN CINEMA



Egyptian actor Ahmed Ezz talks before receiving a honor award.

By Sahar Moussa

The 45th edition of the Cairo International Film Festival, which is currently underway from November 13-22, 2024, has unveiled its full lineup, featuring 194 films from 72 countries around the world. The festival opened with the world premiere of the Palestinian film *Passing Dreams*, directed and written by Rashid Masharawi, and starring Ashraf Barhom, Adel Abu Ayyash, and Emilia Massou.

This year's edition includes a variety of competitive categories, including awards for the International Competition, Horizons of Arab Cinema, Best

Feature Films from Africa and Asia, and Best Documentary Film. A special competition for films from Gaza and an award for Palestinian cinema are also part of the festival's offerings.

Egyptian actor Ahmed Ezz (left) receives a honor award from Egyptian Minister of Culture Ahmed Fouad Hano (center), and President of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) Hussein Fahmi during the opening ceremony of the 45th Cairo International Film Festival in Cairo.



Egyptian actor Taha Desouki poses on the red carpet with a Palestinian keffiyeh on his suit.



Egyptian actor and president of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) Hussein Fahmi talks on stage.



Egyptian film director Yousry Nasrallah (left) receives a honor award for life achievement from Egyptian Minister of Culture Ahmed Fouad Hano (center) and President of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) Hussein Fahmi (right).



Egyptian actor Sabry Fawwaz shows a pin with a Palestinian flag as he poses on the red carpet.



Egypt's veteran actress and comedian Lebleba



Palestinian dancers perform on stage during the opening ceremony.



Egyptian actress Nelly

Lifestyle



Egyptian actor Mahmoud Hemeda gestures as he walks on the red carpet.



Palestinian Film Director Rashid Mashharawi walks with his team on the red carpet.



Egyptian belly dancer and actress Dina



Egyptian film director Inas El Degheidy



Egyptian actor Ashraf Abdalbaqi (left) places a pin with a Palestinian flag on his fellow actor Sherif Mounir during the opening ceremony.



US ambassador to Egypt Herro Mustafa Garg and her husband pose on the red carpet.

Mysterious diamond-laden necklace fetches \$4.8 million in Geneva auction

A mysterious diamond-laden necklace with possible links to a scandal that contributed to the downfall of Marie Antoinette, sold for \$4.8 million at an auction in Geneva Wednesday. The 18th century jewel containing around 300 carats of diamonds had been estimated to sell at the Sotheby's Royal and Noble Jewels sale for \$1.8-2.8 million. But after energetic bidding, the hammer price ticked in at 3.55 million Swiss francs (\$4 million), and Sotheby's listed the final price after taxes and commissions at 4.26 million francs (\$4.81 million).



A woman wearing an 18th century diamond jewel necklace composed of three rows of diamonds finished with a diamond tassel at each, weighing approximately 300 carats, poses during a press preview at Sotheby's auction house in Geneva.--AFP

The unidentified buyer, who put in her bid over the phone, was "ecstatic", Andres White Correal, chairman of the Sotheby's jewelry department, told AFP. "She was ready to fight and she did," he said, adding that it had been "an electric night". "There is obviously a niche in the market for historical jewels with fabulous provenances... People are not only buying the object, but they're buying all the history that is attached to it," he said.

'Survivor of history'

Some of the diamonds in the piece are believed to stem from the jewel at the center of the "Diamond Necklace Affair" -- a scandal in the 1780s that further tarnished the reputation of France's last queen, Marie Antoinette, and boosted support for the coming

French Revolution. The auction house said the necklace, composed of three rows of diamonds finished with a diamond tassel at each end, had emerged "miraculously intact" from a private Asian collection to make its first public appearance in 50 years. "This spectacular antique jewel is an incredible survivor of history," it said in a statement prior to the sale.

Describing the massive Georgian-era piece as "rare and highly important", Sotheby's said it had likely been created in the decade preceding the French Revolution. "The jewel has passed from families to families. We can start at the early 20th century when it was part of the collection of the Marquesses of Anglesey," White Correal said. Members of this aristocratic family are believed to have worn the necklace twice in public: once at the 1937 coronation of King George VI and once at his daughter Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

'Spectacular'

Beyond that, little is known of the necklace, including who designed it and for whom it was commissioned, although the auction house believes that such an impressive antique jewel could only have been created for a royal family. Sotheby's said it was likely that some of the diamonds featured in the piece came from the famous necklace from the scandal that engulfed Marie Antoinette just a few years before she was guillotined. That scandal involved a hard-up noblewoman named Jeanne de la Motte who pretended to be a confidante of the queen, and managed to acquire a lavish diamond-studded necklace in her name, against a promise of a later payment.

While the queen was later found to be blameless in the affair, the scandal still deepened the perception of her careless extravagance, adding to the anger that would unleash the revolution. Sotheby's said the diamonds in the necklace sold Wednesday were likely sourced from "the legendary Golconda mines in India" -- considered to produce the purest and most dazzling diamonds. "The fortunate buyer has walked away with a spectacular piece of history," Tobias Kormind, head of Europe's largest online diamond jeweler 77 Diamonds, said in a statement. "With exceptional quality diamonds from the legendary, now extinct Indian Golconda mines, the history of a possible link to Marie Antoinette along with the fact that it was worn to two coronations, all make this 18th Century necklace truly special."--AFP

'Interior Chinatown' satirizes Asian roles in Hollywood... and beyond screen

A "meta" detective series in which a struggling Asian waiter becomes the unlikely hero of a police procedural-style criminal conspiracy, "Interior Chinatown" satirizes Hollywood's stereotypical treatment of minorities--while also nodding to the progress the industry has belatedly made. The new show, out on Disney-owned Hulu next Tuesday, is based on the critically adored novel by US author Charles Yu, who is of Taiwanese descent. Yu's 2020 bestseller delivered a humorous takedown of racism in US society through the adventures of Willis Wu, a Hollywood extra reduced to playing roles like "Background Oriental Male" but who dreams of one day being promoted to "Kung Fu Guy."

Yu now serves as the TV series' creator and showrunner. "I grew up watching TV in the '80s and '90s, and I just never saw Asians on TV. It's as if they didn't exist," he told a press conference in July. "They existed in real life when I'd go outside, but they weren't somehow in my screen. And so, that sort of shaped me in wanting to tell this story." Even a decade ago, Yu's literary creation would likely have been ignored by Hollywood. But in recent years, breakout successes for Asian American productions like "Crazy Rich Asians" and "Everything Everywhere All At Once," not to mention South Korean hits "Parasite" and "Squid Game," have proven the commercial appetite for diverse storytelling. Hong Kong-born US actor Jimmy O. Yang, who appeared in "Crazy Rich Asians," stars as Wu in "Interior Chinatown." Oscar-winning New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi ("Jojo Rabbit") directs the pilot episode.

'Metaphor'

Viewers are introduced to Wu as an ordinary waiter at a restaurant in Los Angeles's Chinatown--but quickly find out that he also appears to reside within a

police procedural. In these scenes, "Interior Chinatown" adopts the visual codes and tropes of a TV cop drama. Wu is relegated to a background character role, as the series' Black and white cop duo solve crimes. Even more strangely, unexplained cameras are shown filming Wu

'Mind-bending'

The series blends English, Mandarin and Cantonese dialogue. Among its characters is Lana Lee, a mixed-race novice cop, who is assigned a case in Chinatown by superiors who incorrect-



(From left to right) Actors Archie Kao, Sullivan Jones, Chloe Bennet, Jimmy O. Yang, Ronny Chieng, director Taika Waititi, creator Charles Yu and actress Lisa Gilroy attend the premiere of Hulu's "Interior Chinatown" at the Linwood Dunn Theater in Los Angeles.--AFP photos

and his colleagues, reminiscent of "The Truman Show." The distortion of reality echoes the premise of the original novel, which was itself written in the form of a television screenplay. "It's such a great metaphor for what it means to be Asian American in this country," said Yang.

"But at the same time, it's a universal story of someone longing to be more, someone finding themselves in their career." When Wu witnesses a kidnapping, twists and turns see this background actor take on increasingly important roles in the narrative of a criminal intrigue. "He moves on to be kind of like a guest star. And then the tech guy, which, of course, I played before. So it really drew a lot of parallels to my own career," said Yang.

ly assume that she must know her way around the Asian neighborhood. The irony was not lost on actress Chloe Bennet, born Chloe Wang to a Chinese father and white American mother, who in real life had to change her last name in order to land roles in Hollywood. "My journey through the industry is so meta for Lana," she told the press conference.

"I literally was told at the beginning of my career... 'You're just not white enough to be the lead, but you're not Asian enough to be the Asian.'" Wu's best friend Fatty Choi, played by comedian Ronny Chieng ("The Daily Show"), provides a hilarious counterpoint to audiences' pre-conceived notions of Asians as the "model minority." A video



Australian actor Chris Pang arrives for the premiere of Hulu's "Interior Chinatown".



US actor Spencer Neville arrives for the premiere of Hulu's "Interior Chinatown".



Actor Chau Long arrives for the premiere of Hulu's "Interior Chinatown".



US director Todd Haynes poses during a photocall for the film "May December" at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 21, 2023.--AFP

US director Haynes to lead Berlinale 2025 jury

US writer and director Todd Haynes will in February head up the jury at Berlin's international film festival, Europe's first major cinema showcase of the year, organizers said Thursday. The Berlinale, as the festival is known, was "overjoyed" to have Haynes leading the panel selecting the winners of the Golden and Silver Bear top prizes. "Todd Haynes is a dazzlingly gifted writer and director with an impressive range," festival director Tricia Tuttle said in a statement.

The filmmaker's "body of work is at

once stylistically versatile but also unmistakably his", Tuttle said. Haynes's debut feature, "Poison", a triptych of stories inspired by the works of French novelist Jean Genet, was awarded the "Teddy" prize for queer films at the 1991 Berlinale. He has since written and directed several other features, receiving a nomination for best original screenplay at the Academy Awards for his 2002 film "Far From Heaven".

The portrait of a housewife in crisis also garnered an Oscar nomination for the lead actress Julianne Moore. Cate

Blanchett was nominated for the same award for her part in Haynes's 2015 drama "Carol". Haynes has also drawn inspiration from the world of music. A 2007 biopic of the singer-songwriter Bob Dylan "I'm Not There" gave the titular role to six actors who played different aspects of the celebrated troubadour's persona.

Haynes has also directed a feature length documentary on New York rock legends The Velvet Underground, which was released in 2021. He succeeds Mexican-Kenyan actor Lupita Nyong'o as the head of the jury. Nyong'o was

the first black person to head the jury in the history of the festival, now in its 75th edition. The Berlinale, which will run February 13-23, ranks with Cannes and Venice among Europe's top three film festivals and serves as an early annual launchpad for the industry. The top prize at the 2024 Berlinale went to the documentary "Dahomey" by Franco-Senegalese director Mati Diop, which probed the issues around Europe's return of looted antiquities to Africa.--AFP

Sports

Ronaldo at double as Portugal book Nations League quarters

Spain remain unbeaten with 2-1 win over Denmark

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Portugal thrashed Poland 5-1 thanks to a rampant second-half display on Friday to reach the Nations League quarter-finals, while already-qualified Spain beat Denmark. Roberto Martínez's Portugal wrapped up top spot in Group A1 with a game to spare, securing their place in the next round in March. France, Germany and Italy are also already through to the last eight. Poland were the better side early on but failed to take their chances in Porto and the home side made them pay, netting four times in the last 20 minutes.

"We couldn't impose ourselves on the game in the first half," said Portugal goalscorer Rafael Leao. "(Coach) Roberto Martínez's approach in the locker room was important: it was the key to changing the pressure at half-time." Ronaldo volleyed over from close range shortly before the interval, as Portugal failed to register a shot on target in the first half. Dominik Marczuk almost broke the deadlock in the 58th minute, but Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa produced a brilliant fingertip save to deny him.

The hosts broke from the resulting corner to score less than 60 seconds later, as Leao powered forward before finding Nuno Mendes, then continuing his run to meet the Paris Saint-Germain full-back's cross with a powerful header. Portugal were awarded a penalty when Diogo Dalot's strike flicked off Jakub Kiwior's hand at point-blank range and was saved by Marcin Bulka. Ronaldo stepped up to dink home a 'Panenka' spot-kick. That goal ended any hopes Poland had of staging a comeback and Fernandes added a third for Portugal with 10 minutes left, crashing the ball in off the crossbar from just outside the box.

Pedro Neto also got on the scoresheet, collecting Ronaldo's pass and rifling past Bulka at his near post.

There was still time for Ronaldo to double his tally and move onto 135 international goals, acrobatically volleying home Vitorinha's cross from close range in the 87th minute. Marczuk drilled in a consolation for Poland, but they can no longer qualify for the knock-out stages and will be relegated if they lose to Scotland next week. In the other match in the group, Scotland gave their hopes of avoiding the drop a massive boost as John McGinn scored a late winner in a 1-0 victory over 10-man Croatia. Petar Susic was sent off in the first half, but Croatia almost hung on for the point they needed to qualify with Portugal, only for McGinn to strike in the 86th minute.

Spain roll on

European champions Spain stayed unbeaten in Group A4 with a 2-1 win over Denmark in Copenhagen. Luis de la Fuente's visitors started strongly and went close to a 13th-minute opener when the in-form Ayoze Perez rattled the crossbar. Spain took an early lead after Denmark carelessly gave the ball away on the edge of their own box. Perez played in Mikel Oyarzabal who took an excellent first touch and slipped the ball past goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel and in at the near post.

Villarreal forward Perez, who only made his international debut in June, doubled Spain's advantage with a low, left-footed finish into the bottom corner after being picked out by Dani Olmo. Gustav Isaksen pulled one back for Denmark late on, pouncing on a terrible mix-up between Fabian Ruiz and keeper David Raya. "A very, very happy night for me (with a goal and an assist), but the most important thing is going through top of the group," Perez told uefa.com. The other game in Group A4



PORTO: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (left) scores their fifth goal during the UEFA Nations League, League A, Group 1 football match between Portugal and Poland at the Dragao stadium in Porto, on Nov 15, 2024. — AFP

saw Switzerland relegated by Aleksa Terzic's late equalizer in a 1-1 draw with Serbia.

Romania's Group C2 game against Kosovo in Bucharest was suspended in injury time and then abandoned with the game goalless after the visiting players walked off the pitch following chants of "Serbia" from the home fans. "The UEFA Nations

League match between Romania and Kosovo has been abandoned. UEFA will communicate further information in due course," said governing body UEFA on its website. In League D, San Marino kept their hopes of an unlikely promotion alive as Nicola Nanni scored an injury-time penalty to grab a 1-1 draw with Gibraltar. — AFP

Ghana bow out as Comoros qualify

JOHANNESBURG: Leicester City striker Jordan Ayew scored for Ghana in a 1-1 draw with Angola on Friday, but could not prevent the four-time champions becoming the biggest casualties of 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying. While Ghana were eliminated, minnows Comoros and Mali, Zambia and Zimbabwe qualified, swelling the list of countries heading to Morocco to 19, leaving five places up for grabs. New captain Ayew struck on 18 minutes in Luanda only for Ambrosini 'Zini' Salvador to equalize after 64 minutes for already-qualified Group F winners Angola.

The draw left Ghana bottom of the table, four points adrift of Sudan in the second qualifying place, with one round left, and AFCON finals absentees for the first time since 2004. Ghana, lacking eight of the original squad due to injuries, including Bournemouth striker Antoine Semenyo, reserved their best performance for the penultimate round, but it was not enough.

Comoros, a tiny island nation off the southeastern coast, scored in the final minute through Myziane Maolida to snatch a 2-1 win over the Gambia and qualification from Group A. Shock winners over former champions Tunisia last month, the Comorans fell behind in the first half to an Alassana Jatta goal, but Rafiki Said equalized five minutes later. Zambia ensured they will be among the 24 title contenders with a 1-0 victory over defending champions the Ivory Coast in Ndola.

It was the second successive defeat for the Ivorians, who suffered a shock Group G loss to Sierra Leone last month. Tanzania-based Kennedy Musonda notched the only goal after 43 minutes—his third of the qualifying campaign. While Ivory Coast were assured of qualification on Wednesday after Chad and Sierra Leone drew, the latest loss is sure to trigger soul searching between coach Emese Fae and his squad. Fae masterminded a remarkable comeback at the 2024 AFCON as the host nation recovered from a four-goal group hammering by Equatorial Guinea to defeat Nigeria in the final.

Mali win in tense Mozambique

Having being barred from the last AFCON qualifying tournament due to government interference, Zimbabwe will make a sixth appearance at the finals after drawing 1-1 with Kenya in Polokwane. Needing one point to secure a place from Group J and eliminate Kenya, Zimbabwe went ahead in the first half through Tawanda Maswanhise, who plays for Scottish Premiership outfit Motherwell. Jonah Ayunga levelled early in the second half for the Harambee Stars, who have qualified for only two editions of the biennial AFCON tournament in the past 30 years. Kamory Doumbia netted after 19 minutes to earn Mali a 1-0 Group I win over Mozambique in Maputo and a 10th straight qualification for the African football showcase.

A tight security blanket covered the top-of-the-table clash after several weeks of protests following disputed election results which saw the Frelimo party retain power. Mali wanted the qualifier moved to a neutral country and later asked for the match to be staged behind closed doors, but the Confederation of African Football rejected both requests. Mozambique need a point from their final fixture, in Guinea-Bissau on Tuesday, to qualify. A win for fellow contenders Guinea-Bissau would see second place decided by the head-to-head rule.

Botswana squandered a chance to qualify as they were held 1-1 by Mauritania in Group C in Francistown. Gilbert Baruti equalised after Aboubakary Koita put the visitors ahead. However, the Zebras do hold a three-point lead in second place ahead of a tough final assignment away to runaway group winners Egypt. — AFP

Pogba's Juve contract terminated despite ban reduction

MILAN: Paul Pogba's Juventus career is over after the Serie A club announced on Friday that the France midfielder's contract had been terminated even though his doping ban was cut to 18 months on appeal. Pogba will be able to return to competitive football in March after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) chopped last month an initial four-year suspension handed down by the Italian anti-doping authority NADO. But Juventus have decided to cut ties with the 31-year-old, whose return to Turin from Manchester United in 2022 was ruined by a string of problems on and off the pitch.

In a statement, Juve said that they and Pogba "have reached a mutual agreement for the termination of their contract as of 30 November, 2024". His contract had been due to expire in 2026. "You gave me a lot, more than what I could ever say, and I'll always keep with me the love you showed me," said Pogba to Juve fans on social media. "You'll always be in my heart. Good luck." Pogba had said in October that he was "willing to give up money to be able to play again with Juve", an appeal which fell on deaf ears at the "Old Lady" of Italian football.



TURIN: French forward Paul Pogba waves as he arrives to attend the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Cagliari at the Allianz stadium in this file photo. — AFP

Juve's announcement is no surprise as coach Thiago Motta and sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli have both repeatedly referred to Pogba in the past tense, saying that "he was a great player". Pogba, a World Cup winner with France in 2018, started just one match after rejoining Juve - with whom he won four Serie A titles between 2012 and 2016 - in the summer of 2022. He last played for Juve at Empoli in September last year, not long before he was provisionally suspended for testing positive for testosterone.



SAN ANTONIO: Max Christie #12 of the Los Angeles Lakers blocks a shot from Blake Wesley #14 of the San Antonio Spurs in the first half of the Emirates NBA Cup game on Nov 15, 2024 in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

Davis, James spark Lakers over Spurs; Cavs stay perfect

NEW YORK: Anthony Davis scored 40 points and LeBron James made more history to spark the Los Angeles Lakers over San Antonio 120-115 on Friday, launching their bid to defend the NBA Cup. James managed a triple double in a fourth consecutive game for the first time in his 22 NBA seasons, the 39-year-old legend delivering 15 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists over a game-high 38 minutes. "I love the game and I'm happy I'm still able to come out here and make some plays to help our ball club win," James said.

James tied a Lakers triple-double record streak and became the oldest player in NBA history with four triple doubles in a row, all in winning efforts, although his seven turnovers stung. "I'm just putting the work in. My teammates trust me with the ball," James said. "I guess they trusted me a little too much tonight with the seven turnovers. I've got to be a lot better than that if I'm going to have the ball in my hands. I'll clean that up."

Davis, who also grabbed 12 rebounds, won a battle of the big men with last season's NBA Rookie of the

Year, Frenchman Victor Wembanyama, who had 28 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Spurs in the West Group B clash. "Another magnificent game by AD," James said. "We lean on AD every night. The ball goes to him not only the first option but also the second option... He has definitely been a beast this year."

After Stephon Castle's basket gave the Spurs a 115-114 lead, Davis made a slam dunk with 91 seconds to play and James sank a layup, his first basket in more than 20 minutes. Castle missed a tying 3-point attempt and James made two free throws to seal San Antonio's fate. Davis drove to the hoop and banged his right knee into the left knee of Wembanyama late in the game but both were playing at the finish. The Cleveland Cavaliers remained undefeated, downing Chicago 144-126 as games were played in all six NBA Cup groups with results also counting in the NBA regular-season standings.

Cleveland improved to 14-0 as Donovan Mitchell scored 37 points to lead the East Group C rout. "It's just so much fun. The vibes are right," Cleveland's Jarrett Allen said. "It just seems like everything is clicking right now." The Cavaliers are only the sixth team in NBA history to start 14-0, matching the fourth-best start in league history. In West Group A, Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox scored 60 points but the host Kings lost to Minnesota 130-126 in overtime as Anthony Edwards led the Timberwolves with 36 points. — AFP

Doping ban

That test came following Juve's opening Serie A fixture of last season the previous month, a 3-0 win at Udinese in which he didn't even play. He was then banned for four years by NADO in February, a sanction which put his career at risk before CAS reduced his punishment. CAS accepted Pogba's argument that the failed test "was the result of erroneously taking a supplement prescribed to him by a medical doctor in Florida".

However, CAS did not completely exonerate Pogba as he "was not without fault" and as a professional football player, "he should have paid a greater care in the circumstances". During the 2022-23 season, Pogba made just 10 appearances for Juve, mainly due to a knee injury that also ruled him out of the World Cup in Qatar where France lost out to Argentina in the final in December 2022.

He was also the victim of a case of organized extortion, for which six men, including his brother Mathias, have been ordered to stand trial. In Pogba's absence Juve switched manager from Massimiliano Allegri to Motta and brought in a host of new players as part of a rebuild. Juve, who finished third last term without Pogba, splashed out over 120 million euros on midfielders Teun Koopmeiners, Douglas Luiz and Khephren Thuram in a busy summer on the transfer market. They currently sit sixth in Serie A but are only two points behind league leaders Napoli and face AC Milan at the San Siro after the international break. — AFP

Wales take on Australia desperate for victory to avoid unwanted record

CARDIFF: Under-pressure Wales take on a resurgent Australia in Cardiff on Sunday desperate to avoid becoming a footnote in Welsh rugby history for all the wrong reasons. Warren Gatland's team are on a string of 10 defeats on the trot, the latest a 24-19 loss to Fiji last weekend. A defeat by Joe Schmidt's Wallabies would set a new national record. "We're desperate for a win," admitted assistant coach Neil Jenkins of the clash against an Australian side fresh from pipping England 42-37 to kick off their bid to emulate the 1984 Grand Slam-winning Wallaby tourists who swept past all four home nations.

Wales have now not won since beating 2023 World Cup pool stage opponents Georgia and skipper Dewi Lake acknowledged that the "pressure is on all of us", with a game against world champions South Africa scheduled six days after the Wallabies. "Nothing has changed from our work from last week to this. We were well in the game (against Fiji) apart from the errors we made ourselves. I think we did enough to win the game," said Lake. Gatland is in his second spell as Wales coach. His first successful stint—which included two World Cup semi-finals and four Six Nations titles—has not been repeated, the New Zealander having overseen just six wins in 22 Tests since returning to Cardiff.

"Gats' isn't on the field, is he? The coaches give us the best platform to go and perform, and we should have comfortably won that game," Lake said of the Fiji match. "The pressure is on all of us as a group when we are on a losing run like we are. We are all feeling it. Of course it hurts. We don't go out to lose. But at some point we need to flip that. Teams have gone on losing runs before. In 2002-03, Wales went on the same run (of 10 defeats under Steve Hansen), and then 18 months later won a Grand Slam. "We need to finish off those opportunities when we get them and make teams work harder for their points against us."

Gatland made four changes from the team that went down to Fiji in a bid to also better Wales' record against Australia: they have lost nine of the last 11 Tests, including a 2-0 away series defeat in the summer. "It is about results. I have tried to not shy away from that. I understand that. Criticism is part of the job and the role," said Gatland amid talk of his future. "We're expecting an Australia side on a high after their win against England." — AFP

Sports

Youtuber Paul outpunches Tyson

Tyson's controversial return ended in one-sided defeat



ARLINGTON: US retired pro-boxer Mike Tyson (left) and US Youtuber/boxer Jake Paul fight during the heavyweight boxing bout at The Pavilion at AT&T Stadium in Arlington.- AFP

ARLINGTON: Mike Tyson's controversial return to boxing ended in a one-sided defeat on Friday, with Youtuber-turned-prizefighter Jake Paul cruising to victory by unanimous decision against the heavyweight icon in Texas. Tyson, 58, barely landed a punch during the eight-round bout at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, with Paul winning by big margins on all three cards - 80-72, 79-73 and 79-73. Paul, 27, used his superior speed and movement to dominate the ageing Tyson with ease, and had the former undisputed heavyweight champion in trouble after landing a flurry of punches in the third round.

Yet the younger fighter was unable to land the knockout blow he had promised to deliver during Thursday's ill-tempered weigh-in, where Tyson slapped him across the face. Tyson, however, looked every bit of his 58 years, managing to land only a handful of meaningful punches during the fight, watched by a live crowd of around 70,000 spectators with an estimated millions more tuning in around the world. Final statistics showed Tyson connected with just 18 of 97 punches thrown while Paul threw some 278 punches and landed 78 of them.

As the final seconds of the eighth round counted down, Paul could even afford to bow in respect to Ty-

son before the bell sounded. "First and foremost, Mike Tyson, it's such an honor. Let's give it up for Mike," Paul said after embracing Tyson following his win. "He's the greatest to ever do it. He's the GOAT, he's a legend. I'm inspired by him and we wouldn't be here today without him. "This man is an icon and it's just an honor to be able to fight him. He's obviously the toughest, baddest man on the planet; it was really tough like I expected it to be."

'I came to fight'

Tyson, meanwhile, said he was satisfied with his performance despite the one-sided nature of the defeat. "I came to fight," he said. "I didn't prove nothing to anybody, only to myself... I'm just happy with what I can do." Tyson had fought with a brace on his right knee but said it had not impacted his performance. "I can't use that as an excuse. If I did I wouldn't be in here," he said.

Tyson, meanwhile, praised the quality of his opponent Paul, who has successfully parlayed a career as a popular Youtuber and content creator into a string of lucrative boxing contests such as Friday's event, bankrolled and broadcast by streaming giant Netflix. "He's a very good fighter," said Tyson, who refused to rule out the possibility that he might even fight again.

"I don't know. It depends on the situation," said Tyson. Pressed on whether Friday was his last fight he added: "I don't think so."

Tyson was reportedly paid \$20 million to sign up for Friday's contest, which came 19 years after his last officially sanctioned professional bout, a defeat to Irish journeyman Kevin McBride in 2005. The former heavyweight champion's return to the ring had been greeted with dismay across the boxing world, which had dismissed Friday's contest as a macabre circus that risked injuring the boxing icon. Those concerns deepened in May when the fight - initially set for July - was postponed after Tyson suffered a medical scare during a flight from Miami to Los Angeles. Tyson later revealed he had vomited blood caused by an "ulcer flare-up."

Tyson, though, brushed off the concerns for his health, insisting that his critics were mostly jealous that he remains a box-office draw decades after his 1980s peak when he terrorized the heavyweight division. Tyson tried to recall that era of dominance in his ring walk on Friday, marching into the arena in his signature black trunks with a black poncho draped over his body. Yet that was as close as Tyson came to reflecting the fighter he once was, with Paul comfortably keeping him at arm's length throughout the contest.— AFP



Turky Al-Shimmari, Duajj Al-Otaibi and Ali Al-Mutairi.



Group photo of officials and shooters.

Kuwait reigns in Crown Prince shooting tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa, KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Shooting Championship and the Arab shotgun tournament, held on its sidelines, concluded on Friday. The seven-day tournaments involved shooters from 15 Arab states, with Kuwaiti shooters bagging the lion's share of medals. HH the Crown Prince championship, which was exclusively for Kuwaiti shooters, was held at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. The Olympic competitions involving men and women featured the

categories of shotgun shooting, skeet, trap, pistol rifle, and archery.

The Kuwaiti shooters bagged 13 medals, including seven gold and six silver. Bahrain ranked second, winning nine medals, including two gold, a silver, and five bronze medals. Qatar ranked third with a single gold, one silver, and three bronze. Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah said after the conclusion of the games that he was honored to hand the trophies to the winners. This championship was marked with broad participation by shooters from Kuwait, Gulf, and Arab states, he said, lauding the orderly organization by the Kuwaiti organizing committee that acted with support by President of Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Arab shooting federations.

Meanwhile, Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi expressed gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince for his gracious support for holding this grand championship. On the final day of the contests, Kuwait's shooter, Turki Al-Shemmari, won in the 50-meter rifle (3-position men) category. The silver medal was won by Abdullah Al-Harbi, while his fellow citizen Ali Farhan Al-Mutairi came in third with the bronze.

In the Olympic Archery (men), Ali Al-Zaid was crowned the champion; next came Habes Al-Shemmari, who bagged silver, while his Kuwaiti peer Abdullah Al-Fodari settled for bronze. In the same competition for women, Nour Al-Sharhan came first; Reem Al-Naqeeb took second, while Suad Al-Bahr grabbed third position. Archer Abdullah Malallah won the gold medal in the compound archery category, followed by Badr Saleh, as Ahmad Al-Shatti ended in third place.

Al-Kharafi wins Club Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Riding Club rider Ali Jassem Al-Kharafi won the Sahari Club Showjumping Championship. Riders from local clubs participated in the tourney. Al-Kharafi won the main round of the 135 cm height in 55.10 seconds despite the tough competition. Nick Chaning from Britain took the second position, followed by Yara Al-Hunaidi, Fawaz Al-Rashed, Khalid Al-Khubaizi, and Abdulrahman Al-Fuzaie. Director of the Sahari Stables, Mushari Al-Qattan, awarded the winners their prizes. He said the competition was very strong in the final round as riders battled for the first position. Nich Chaning won first place at the height of 125 cm, followed by Ghazi Al-Fulaij, Hussein Al-Kharafi, Yara Al-Hunaidi, and Alaa Al-Sultan. Mohammad Al-Shimmari won the fourth round at the height of 115 cm, while Abdelwahab Al-Baloul won the 105 cm round.



Mushari Al-Qattan (center) takes a group photo with the winners.



Farwaniya Governor Athbi Al-Nasser and Duajj Al-Otaibi take a group photo with the mixed doubles winners.

Bagnaia on pole for Barcelona MotoGP

BARCELONA: Francesco Bagnaia took his third successive pole position, his sixth of the season, as he booked his place on Saturday at the head of the grid for this weekend's Barcelona MotoGP. The Italian, who goes into the final weekend of the season 24 points behind championship leader Jorge Martin, did all he could to lay the pressure on the Spaniard who will start on the second row in fourth. "I'm very happy," said Ducati-Lenovo rider Bagnaia. "We managed to do a very good job. It wasn't easy because the conditions were very tricky and a bit risky but everything went well." Bagnaia needs to win the sprint later on Saturday to have any realistic hopes in Sunday's grand prix of overhauling Martin and landing a third consecutive world title. Martin, meanwhile, can claim the title on Saturday if he brings his Ducati through to take the sprint. "This afternoon will not be easy," said Bagnaia. "But we have to try to win and take it into tomorrow.—AFP

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KUWAIT: Minister of State for Amiri Diwan Affairs Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (2nd left), BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi (3rd right), Kuwait Times Deputy Editors-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain (left) and Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (3rd left) take group photos with the organizers during the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sanchez, Josemaria cruise to final



Ari Sanchez plays during the Padel tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa and Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ariana Sanchez Fallada and her teammate Paula Josemaria Martin advanced to the final match by defeating Maria Ortega Gallego and Sofia Araujo in 1 hour and 38 minutes. The match started at an equal level as evident by the score, until the seventh game when Sanchez and Jose Maria broke serve, only for Ortega and Araujo to break back immediately.

The two teams maintained their serves and had to go to a tie break which was totally dominated by Sanchez and Josemaria who won the tie break 7-0 as the first lasted 58 minutes. The second set began with a surprising service break in favor of Ortega-Araujo, but they did not enjoy the moment because Sanchez-Josemaria broke back and went on to win all remaining games to advance to the final in two straight sets with the score of 7-6, 6-1. In other games (the first men's semifinal) F Stupaczuk and M Yanguas didn't face much trouble as they beat F Chingotto and A Galan in two sets 6-3, 6-1. Also, in the second women's semifinal match, Triay-Sanchez eased through to the final match in two sets 6-0, 6-2.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Times spoke to the Padel fans at the arena. At the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament, Kuwait Times had the opportunity to engage with the audience. Fans shared their excitement about the sport's rapid growth in Kuwait, expressing admiration for the world-class players competing at the event. Maryam Al-Hamad described the tournament as a great success, commending the organizers for their exceptional professionalism, noting that the details are leveled up to international games.



Ari Sanchez

She highlighted how events like these are important to grow the engagement of the community with sports in Kuwait, sharing that padel has recently become her latest obsession, a passion sparked by a relative who encouraged her to try the sport. Meanwhile, Yusef Al-Manai, a teenage padel player, told Kuwait Times that he participated in a padel tournament in Kuwait and also he didn't win but it evolved his skills.

He added that he is still observing how others play to enhance his skills and compete in more tournaments. For him and his friends, the game feels relatively easy, which motivates them to engage further in the sport.

As for Ahmed Al-Raqum, Alejandra Salazar Sánchez and Gemma Triay Josemaria are top players who are well-known in padel sport. He praised their exceptional skill and teamwork on the court, noting that their playing technique is a great mix of defensive and offensive and the way they dominate the court shows good skills.

Talking about Padel's equip-

ment, Ronald Celadena who works for Play Padel Academy, said that the availability and sourcing of paddle equipment in Kuwait is still needed, saying "Most equipment including rackets, balls, ball tubes, carts, and textiles are imported from a GCC distributor based in Dubai. However, Kuwait still needs to import more equipment, particularly diverse rackets, shoes, and other training tools, to meet the growing demand." He highlighted that the presence of different brands is important and each can offer unique technologies, especially for balls, which vary in bounce and feel depending on the brand, adding that the choice of equipment often depends on the player's preference.

He noted that the sport's intensity and competitive nature are becoming more evident, especially as it gains recognition, comparing it to watching amateur tennis versus a Nadal-Djokovic match. Celadena said that he is a tennis fan, but recently he has been shifting more towards Padel, appreciating its unique features, such as the walls that are a significant adjustment for tennis players transitioning to Padel. He indicated, "There are lots of challenges for tennis players, compared to Padel players. The use of the wall in Padel courts is a fundamental difference, and it takes time for players to adapt. However, once they overcome this challenge, the transition becomes much smoother".

The Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament has drawn over 150 top-ranked global players to Kuwait, marking the country's significant entry into the Premier Padel circuit, under the leadership of BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi. The tournament (scheduled from November 9-17) is taking place at The Arena, 360 Mall, and the Rafa Nadal Academy.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News PR and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeb and fans watch a match during the Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tournament.

