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Zionist massacres on two fronts

Attack kills dozens in northern Gaza • Strike kills Hezbollah media chief in central Beirut



(Left) The bodies of victims recovered from the rubble of a building are covered with blankets as people continue their search following an overnight Zionist strike that killed scores in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on Nov 17, 2024. (Right) People and first responders gather at the site of a Zionist strike that targeted Beirut's Ras Al-Nabaa neighbourhood on Nov 17, 2024, where a Lebanese security source said a senior Hezbollah official was killed. — AFP photos

GAZA/BEIRUT: Genocidal Zionist strikes on Sunday killed dozens of people in Gaza, civil defense rescuers said, most of them in northern Gaza where the UN and others have decried disastrous humanitarian conditions. In Lebanon, the Zionist entity's second war front, a Lebanese source reported the death of Hezbollah's spokesman in one Zionist raid.

The Zionist entity on Oct 6 began its air and ground operation in the already war-ravaged north Gaza's Jabalia and then expanded it to Beit Lahia. On Sunday, Gaza's civil defense agency said 34 people were killed including children, and dozens were missing, after a Zionist air strike hit a five-storey residential building in Beit Lahia overnight. The Gaza government media office put the number of those killed at 72.

"The chances of rescuing more wounded are decreasing because of the continuous shooting and artillery shelling," civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP. Jaber Ghabayen, who was staying elsewhere but whose family lived in the razed building, said "the whole area was shaking" and "we all thought that death was near".

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NEWS IN BRIEF

37,700 apply for 8,000 hajj spots

KUWAIT: Registration for the coming hajj season has closed, and the ministry of awqaf was set to contact those who were selected to perform the pilgrimage on Sunday. Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Wasmi noted the total number of registered individuals had reached 37,700, from which 8,000 pilgrims were selected. — KUNA (See Page 3)

India tests hypersonic missile

NEW DELHI: India has successfully tested a domestically developed long-range hypersonic missile, it said on Sunday, attaining a key milestone in military development that puts it in a small group of nations possessing the advanced technology. The missile is designed to carry payloads for ranges exceeding 1,500 km for the armed forces, the government said in a statement. — Reuters (See Page 5)

Germany ups skilled worker visas

FRANKFURT: Germany will issue upwards of 10 percent more professional visas in 2024 after it relaxed some rules in a bid to tackle chronic labor shortages, the government said on Sunday. With 1.34 million jobs vacant, last year's liberalization of rules concerning immigration of skilled workers addresses a critical shortage in Europe's largest economy. Following the adoption of a points-based system inspired by Canada, 200,000 professional visas will be issued in 2024, a government statement said. — AFP

Direct Pak-Bangla ship route opens

DHAKA: The first cargo ship in decades to sail directly from Pakistan to Bangladesh successfully unloaded its containers on Nov 11 before departing, as both sides seek to rebuild ties after decades of frosty relations. The 182-m-long container ship — the Panama-flagged Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan — had sailed from Pakistan's Karachi to Bangladesh's Chittagong. Chittagong port authorities said the ship brought goods from Pakistan and the UAE, including raw materials for Bangladesh's key garment industry and basic foodstuffs. — AFP

AI traffic cameras monitor violations as fines increase

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The traffic department has started installing advanced artificial intelligence-aided cameras to catch drivers using mobile phones and those not wearing seatbelts, a traffic department official said on Sunday. Lt Col Abdullah Buhasan, deputy director of the traffic awareness department, told Kuwait Television that as many as 252 cameras will be installed. He said that several cameras have already been installed and "are operational".

Buhasan said that the traffic department has also



KUWAIT: Officers monitor traffic camera feeds in this illustrative file photo. — KUNA

installed smart "point-to-point" cameras that are able to determine if drivers comply with the speed limit on various roads. Under a new draft traffic law, fines and penalties for traffic violators have been increased manifold. Under the new law, fines for using

Pope calls for Gaza genocide investigation

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis for the first time tackled claims of the Zionist entity's ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza in extracts from a forthcoming book published Sunday, urging further investigation into whether the Zionist entity's actions meet the definition. Titled "Hope Never Disappoints. Pilgrims Towards a Better World", the book includes his latest

and most forthright intervention into the more than year-long war.

"According to some experts, what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of genocide," the pontiff wrote in extracts published on the front of Italy's La Stampa daily on Sunday. "It should be studied carefully to determine whether (the situation) corresponds to the technical definition formulated by jurists and international bodies," he added.

The Argentine pontiff has frequently deplored the number of victims of the Zionist entity's operations in Gaza, with the territory's health ministry putting the toll at least 43,846

Continued on Page 6

Xi vows to work with Trump as he meets Biden

LIMA: Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed on Saturday to work with the incoming US administration of Donald Trump as he held his final talks with outgoing President Joe Biden on conflicts from cyber-crime to trade, Taiwan, the South China Sea and Russia. Biden met Xi for about two hours at a hotel where the Chinese leader was staying, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Lima, Peru, for their first talks in seven months.

"China's goal of a stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relationship remains unchanged" after Trump's election, Xi said as he met Biden, acknowledging "ups and downs" between the countries. "China is ready to work with the new US administration to maintain communication,



LIMA: US President Joe Biden meets Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit on Nov 16, 2024. — AFP

expand cooperation and manage differences."

Biden told Xi that the two leaders have not always agreed but their discussions have been "frank" and "candid". Two months before Trump returns to the White House, US officials see magnified risks of conflict during the transition. Biden

mobile phones while driving will be increased from KD 5 to KD 75, while the fine for not using a seatbelt will triple from KD 10 to KD 30.

The law has been approved by legal departments and sent to the Cabinet for endorsement. If approved, it will be sent to HH the Amir to issue it in a decree. Under the law, the lowest fine is KD 15 (from currently KD 5) and the highest can go up to KD 5,000 for drivers who cause death while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The draft law also stipulates that expats are allowed to own only one vehicle. Buhasan also said that the fine for seating infants and children in the front seat has been raised tenfold to KD 50.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry said on Sunday that detectives of the residency department have arrested 389 expats in violation of residency and labor laws in a search campaign between Nov 11 and 14. It added that legal procedures are being taken to deport them, while as many as 497 illegals have already been deported.



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis leads mass for the World Day of the Poor at St Peter's Basilica on Nov 17, 2024. — AFP

told Xi that maintaining leader-to-leader talks would be vital even after he left office, said Biden national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

The president-elect has vowed to adopt blanket 60 percent tariffs on US imports of Chinese goods as part of a package of "America First" trade measures. Beijing opposes those steps. The Republican also plans to hire several hawkish voices on China in senior roles, including US Senator Marco Rubio as secretary of state and Representative Mike Waltz as national security adviser.

Biden has aimed to lower tensions with China, and there were few signs of a breakthrough on the major issues. But Biden and Xi did agree that human beings, not artificial intelligence, should make decisions over the use of nuclear weapons, according to the White House, the first time the countries are known to have raised the issue. The US and Chinese presidents also talked about North Korea, an ally of China whose deepening ties with Russia and deployment of troops in Moscow's war with Ukraine have raised concerns in Washington, Beijing and European capitals.

Continued on Page 6



Local



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya (right) receives a letter from the Prime Minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, delivered by Qatari Ambassador Ali bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud. — KUNA photos

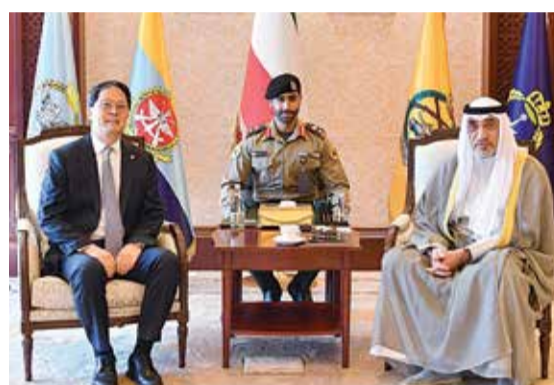


Foreign minister delivers GCC summit invitations

Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef meets with Arab, foreign envoys



ABU DHABI: Minister Al-Yahya delivers a letter from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah (right) meets with South Korean Ambassador Park Chongsuk.



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef meets with Egyptian Ambassador Osama Shaltout.



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef meets with Omani Ambassador Saleh Al-Kharousi

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya delivered a written message from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. The message included an invitation for the UAE President to attend the upcoming Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit, scheduled to be hosted by Kuwait on December 1, 2024.

The meeting took place during the Foreign Minister's visit to Abu Dhabi and was attended by the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The message also emphasized the strong and historical ties between the two countries and peoples.

Minister Al-Yahya departed Abu Dhabi to Oman where he was due to deliver a similar written message from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said the Sultan of Oman.

Earlier Sunday, Minister Al-Yahya, received a written message from the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, regarding the strong brotherly relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them in various fields. This came during a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Minister Al-Yahya was received by the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, on Sunday.

Ambassador meetings

Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, held discussions on Sunday at the Seif Palace with several ambassadors from brotherly and friendly countries to explore ways of enhancing mutual relations and cooperation.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received, indi-

vidually, the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kuwait Saleh Al-Kharousi, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait Matar Al-Neyadi, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Kuwait Osama Shaltout, the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Kuwait Sinan Al-Majali, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Kuwait Ali Bin Issa.

Sheikh Fahad also met with the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Kuwait Nusret Tsharshar, the Ambassador of Georgia to Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtadize, South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Park Chongsuk, the Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to Kuwait Rodrigo de Araujo Jabesh, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Kuwait Manuel Gamallo, and the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Kuwait Juraj Chmiel.

The meetings included an exchange of views on a variety of mutual concerns and topics of interest. Additionally, the discussions focused on ways to strengthen the relationships and cooperation



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef meets with UAE Ambassador Matar Al-Neyadi.

between Kuwait and these brotherly and friendly countries. The latest regional and international developments and updates were also reviewed during the sessions. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Communications Omar Al-Omar (right) receives Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Manuel Hernández Gamallo. — KUNA

Kuwait, Spain eye stronger cooperation in technology

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Communications Omar Al-Omar received Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait, Manuel Hernández Gamallo Sunday to discuss ways to enhance bilateral cooperation. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday, Minister Al-Omar said the two sides discussed opportunities for strengthening collaboration in the telecommunications and digital technology sectors. They also reviewed key future projects that could contribute to the development of these vital sectors in both countries.

He emphasized Kuwait's commitment to strengthening relations with Spain, particularly in leveraging the country's expertise in innovation and technology. The minister highlighted Kuwait's recent participation in an annual communications conference held in Barcelona and underscored the importance of exchanging knowledge and expertise between the two nations. Ambassador Gamallo expressed his eagerness to further enhance the partnership with Kuwait, praising the advancements witnessed in the country's telecommunications sector. — KUNA

Authority to mandate providing low-sugar foods at schools

KUWAIT: Work is currently underway to amend the 2021 school cafeteria food regulations to provide low-sugar foods in schools, officials said Sunday. Speaking to media, Nawal Al-Jazzaf, Head of the School Cafeteria Program, emphasized the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition's role in educating students, starting from the fifth grade, on the importance of reading food labels and understanding how to calculate sugar content. She added that the authority's efforts have led to five local companies reducing sugar in their juices by up to 20 percent, while others have replaced added sugar with lactose.

The comments came as the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition launched Sunday a one-week

Kuwait-Tunisia session to open new horizons for cooperation

TUNIS: The fourth session of the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Joint Higher Committee, scheduled to take place in Tunisia from November 18 to 20, offers a new opportunity to enhance the long-standing bilateral relations and the fruitful cooperation between the two countries. Discussions about establishing a direct air route between Tunisia and Kuwait is on the meeting's agenda.

The cooperative relations between Kuwait and Tunisia date back to the early 1960s, when diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. Estimates indicate that the total volume of Kuwaiti investments in Tunisia is around half a billion dollars, with \$200 million in government investments. These investments are spread across various vital sectors such as financial services, tourism, telecommunications, industry, trade, agriculture, and real estate. Kuwait and Tunisia have signed around 50 agreements since the establishment of diplomatic relations over 53 years ago.

Former Tunisian Foreign Minister Ahmed Ounaiss told KUNA that the relationship between Tunisia and Kuwait serves as a model of Arab bilateral cooperation, based on consultation and consensus on most issues. He highlighted that Kuwait is distinguished by its openness and its recognition of the importance of collaborating with its Arab neighbors for mutual development—a mindset deeply ingrained in Kuwaiti culture. He also noted that Kuwait's political and cultural maturity is a key factor in making Tunisian-Kuwaiti relations both unique and dynamic.

Ounaiss added that Kuwaiti investments are significant across various sectors in Tunisia, with both

campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of added sugar. The campaign aims to help manufacturers improve their product ingredients, reduce sugar levels, and formulate food policies and standards that adhere to global specifications. The campaign is part of the authority's participation in the global initiative "World Action on Salt, Sugar and Health." It will feature a series of events, including an event at Promenade Mall to be held on Thursday and school activities to enhance students' awareness of the importance of reducing sugar consumption.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Shaimaa Alasfour, Deputy Manager of the authority explained that free sugars are those added to foods or beverages by manufacturers, chefs, or consumers, in addition to natural sugars found in honey, syrups, and juices. Excessive consumption of these sugars leads to increased calorie intake with low nutritional value, negatively affecting public health, especially among children.

Dr Alasfour noted that the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that free sugars account for less than 10 percent of an individual's total daily energy intake, with a further preference for keeping

the government and private sector playing an active role in the country's economic development through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. This fund has been instrumental in supporting many of Tunisia's economic sectors, and notably, the Fund's first-ever loan was granted to Tunisia.

The first agreement for economic cooperation was signed in 1963. Kuwaiti investments in Tunisia began in 1976, forming a successful model for investment cooperation in the Arab world. These investments span various sectors, including financial services, tourism, telecommunications, industry, trade, agriculture, and real estate, positively contributing to Tunisia's economic sectors.

The Kuwait Investment Authority has actively supported its investments in Tunisia through its investment arm, Equity Capital, demonstrating strong confidence in the Tunisian market. The authority has invested in high-value sectors, including telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, the automotive industry, financial services, and tourism.

The former minister emphasized that bilateral relations are currently thriving, thanks to the strong and harmonious connection between the political leaderships of both countries, characterized by alignment of views and ongoing communication. He said the fourth session of the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Joint Higher Committee "is an important event between the two countries and will certainly open new and broad horizons for cooperation between them."

During the 162nd session of the Arab League Council of Foreign Ministers held in Cairo last September, Tunisian Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafiti met with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, where both sides emphasized the importance of preparing for the upcoming meeting of the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Joint Committee, which will discuss ways to further develop economic, financial, and technical cooperation between the two coun-

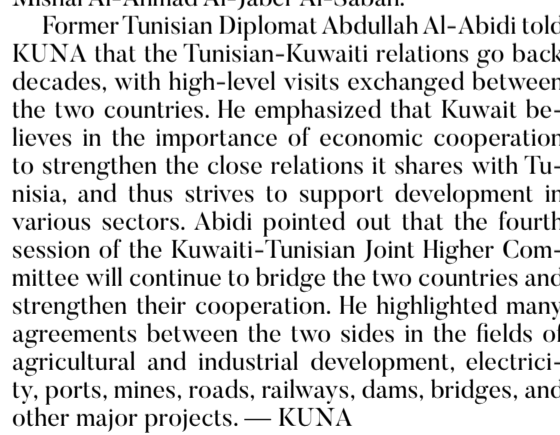
tries. Both sides appreciated the deep-rooted relations between the two countries and the peoples of Tunisia and Kuwait. The Tunisian foreign minister also conveyed the greetings of Tunisian President Kais Saied to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Former Tunisian Diplomat Abdullah Al-Abidi told KUNA that the Tunisian-Kuwaiti relations go back decades, with high-level visits exchanged between the two countries. He emphasized that Kuwait believes in the importance of economic cooperation to strengthen the close relations it shares with Tunisia, and thus strives to support development in various sectors. Abidi pointed out that the fourth session of the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Joint Higher Committee will continue to bridge the two countries and strengthen their cooperation. He highlighted many agreements between the two sides in the fields of agricultural and industrial development, electricity, ports, mines, roads, railways, dams, bridges, and other major projects. — KUNA



CAIRO: Tunisian Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafiti with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya during the Arab League Council of Foreign Ministers held last September. — KUNA

responsibility, beginning with educating individuals and continuing with the active role of the private sector. In recognition of these companies' efforts, an event will be held in collaboration with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce to showcase them as motivational examples, she said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Dr Shaimaa Alasfour, Deputy Manager of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, (center) is seen with officials at the press conference. — KUNA

Local

Archaeological mission unearths 'remarkable' 7,700-year-old pottery

Pottery of a human head, jewelry workshop deepen understanding of Ubaid period



Officials examine the excavated artefacts.



Pieces of pottery found at the site are placed on a table.

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti-Polish archaeological mission has unearthed what appears to be either a courtyard or a workshop for making jewelry and ornaments from shells in the Subiya dessert in northern Kuwait. This discovery is believed to date back to the Ubaid period of Mesopotamia approximately 7,700 years ago.

Assistant Secretary-General for the Antiquities and Museums Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Mohammed bin Redha said the mission has uncovered several pieces of jewelry in front of dwellings of the Ubaid period, in addition to numerous pottery fragments over 7,000 years old. The mission also found a piece of clay depicting a small human head, which is the first of its kind in the Gulf region.

NCCAL has recruited the expertise of various entities in Kuwait to collaborate with the Polish mission, particularly Kuwait University. The co-operation enabled the utilization of modern laboratory equipment to address questions about the

origins of the materials found at the site, as well as to study the types of plants that could have been present at the site.

Hasan Ashkanani, Assistant Professor of anthropological archaeology at Kuwait University, said the discovery of the clay human head, dating back to 7,500-7,700 years ago, is one of the most remarkable finds of the current excavation season. He added that the head, which is crafted from clay, features a distinctive rectangular skull, slanted eyes, and a flat nose — characteristics commonly seen in small statues from the Ubaid culture. Similar statues have been found in burial and domestic contexts in Mesopotamia, but this discovery at the site (called Bahra 1), along with the unearthed jewelry workshop, provides a deeper understanding of the development of human culture during the Neolithic period. Professor Piotr Bielinski, Co-director of the Kuwaiti-Polish archaeological mission, emphasized that the discovery of these artifacts at Bahra 1 raises inter-

esting questions regarding their purpose and the symbolic or perhaps ritualistic significance they held for this ancient community.

The statement also noted other significant discoveries at Bahra 1, including evidence of local pottery production. The discovery of an unburned clay vessel, along with scientific analyses conducted under the supervision of Professor Anna Smogórzewska, provides conclusive evidence that Bahra 1 is the earliest known pottery production site in the Gulf, confirming the development of this ancient settlement.

The Kuwaiti-Polish archaeological mission resumed its work at the Bahra 1 site, which dates back to more than 5,700 years BCE. The site is recognized as the oldest and largest known Ubaid settlement in the Arabian Peninsula and has been a focal point for archaeological research since 2009, thanks to the cooperation between NCCAL and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Warsaw. — KUNA



A piece of clay depicting a small human head dating back to 7,700 years ago was unearthed at Subiya dessert.



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center) views the showcase with the officials. — KUNA



Kuwait's military police forces display their combat skills.



Military officials pose for a group photo.

Showcase highlights military police riot control, combat skills

KUWAIT: Military police units displayed their prowess during a special military showcase on Sunday. Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ah-

mad Al-Sabah attended the showcase alongside the Commander of the Kuwaiti Military Police Brigadier General Mishal Fahad Al-Sabah and Qatari Military Police Forces Staff Brigadier General Rashid Mohammed Al-Hajri, along with their accompanying delegation as part of their visit to the Military Police Command.

Major General Pilot Sabah Al-Jaber praised the military police for being role models in discipline and commitment. He praised the efforts of the military police personnel and the du-

ties and tasks assigned to them, wishing them continued success and prosperity in serving the country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness the Crown Prince. The showcase included a special display of the military police forces showcasing their handling of riot control operations, along with a demonstration of some combat skills and techniques related to security operations for protecting VIPs. — KUNA

37,700 people apply for hajj: Awqaf ministry

KUWAIT: Registration for the coming hajj season has closed, and the Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was set to contact those who were selected to perform the pilgrimage on Sunday. Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Wasmi confirmed on Sunday the success of the hajj registration process for the 1446 Hijri season, highlighting its transparency in terms of numbers, categories, and sects. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Minister Al-Wasmi emphasized that the registration process for hajj pilgrims had been conducted with great

care to avoid any errors and ensure smooth operation. He assured that all obstacles hindering the registration process had been overcome, and that comprehensive services were being provided for pilgrims to choose from various hajj campaigns.

He noted that the total number of registered individuals had reached 37,700, from which 8,000 pilgrims were selected. He also expressed hopes for further collaboration with the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia to potentially increase the number of pilgrims. Minister Al-Wasmi explained that specific regulations and criteria had been established to ensure the efficiency of the hajj campaigns, and expressed pride in the high standard of Kuwaiti hajj campaigns, which have earned recognition both within Kuwait and abroad. Sattam Al-Muzain, Director of



KUWAIT: Awqaf ministry officials are seen during the selection process of pilgrims. — KUNA

the Hajj and Umrah Department told KUNA that the selection process was carried out according to the categories defined by the Supreme Hajj and Umrah Committee.

Muzain confirmed that each category had been assigned a percentage, with priority given to older individuals and their companions, ensuring a trans-

parent process overseen by the representatives of hajj campaigns. He added that text messages would be sent Sunday to those selected, notifying them through the "Sahel" application. Those who fail to complete their registration within five days would be disqualified, allowing for the next eligible individuals to be selected. — KUNA

Non-oil exports down in October: Commerce ministry

KUWAIT: The total value of non-oil exports of Kuwaiti origin to the world in October 2024 has dropped by more than KD 3 million, compared to September 2024, according to a KUNA report. Non-oil exports amounted to KD 21.1 million (approximately \$68.4 million), compared to KD 24.4 million (around \$79 million) in September 2024, said the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Sunday.

The Ministry's International Organizations and Foreign Trade Department explained in a statement to KUNA that the total number of certificates of origin issued for Kuwaiti exports in October to the GCC countries reached 1,823 certificates, with a value of approximately KD 11.9 million (\$38.5 million), compared to 1,781 certificates worth about KD 14.6 million (\$47.4 million) in September.

In addition, the number of certificates of origin issued to Arab countries in October amounted to 322 certificates for 10 countries, with a total value of approximately KD 8.3 million (\$26.9 million), compared to 370 certificates for 11 countries, valued at approximately KD 8.6 million (\$27.9 million) in September.

The statement also noted that seven certificates of origin were issued to five European countries in October, valued at KD 616,107 (\$1.9 million), compared to nine certificates for six countries worth KD 905,209 (\$2.9 million) in September.

For African countries, two certificates were issued for two countries, amounting to KD 29,737 (\$96,000), compared to four certificates for three countries valued at KD 54,299 (USD 176,000) in September.

Certificates of origin issued to the Americas and Australia in October totaled 11 certificates for, valued at KD 116,363 (\$377,000), compared to six certificates worth KD 163,862 (\$532,000) in September.

Regarding certificates issued to Asian countries in October, the ministry issued five certificates for three countries with a total value of KD 88,404 (\$286,000), compared to three certificates for three countries valued at KD 48,366 (\$157,000) in September.

The statement clarified that some Kuwaiti exports do not require a certificate of origin, so the figures above refer only to the exports of Kuwaiti origin issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This is because certain importing entities do not require a certificate of origin for their products. Kuwaiti factories export their products to various global markets, starting with the GCC countries, then the Arab countries, followed by European and African countries, and then to Asian, Australian, and American continents. These products include liquid gases, food products, polyethylene, organic solvents, empty cardboard boxes, white solvent, refined oil, mineral oil fluids, medical oxygen, dairy products, empty glass bottles, and copper rods. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: A man browses the 46th International Book Fair in this file photo. — KUNA photos

Official urges learning from Jordan's expertise in caring for the disabled

AMMAN: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah emphasized Sunday the importance of exchanging expertise and information between Kuwait and the Kingdom of Jordan, especially when it comes to the integration of persons with disabilities into society and providing equal opportunities for them.

This came in a statement made by Ambassador Jawaher Al-Duaij Al-Sabah to KUNA, following her participation in the Regional Preparatory Conference for the 2025 Global Disability Summit for the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, which is scheduled to be held in Berlin next year. The conference concluded its sessions in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

The ambassador held separate meetings with several Jordanian officials on the sidelines of the conference, discussing ways to enhance cooperation between the two countries in the field of human rights, particularly concerning the rights of persons with disabilities. They also discussed empowering women and increasing their participation in decision-making while protecting them from all forms of violence and discrimination.

Ambassador Al-Duaij Al-Sabah also expressed her appreciation for Jordan's pioneering experience in providing care for persons with disabilities, which is reflected in the establishment of the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the issuance of a law protecting the rights of this group and ensuring their integration into society. She further listened to a detailed explanation of Jordan's progress in the police and military sectors, especially regarding women's empowerment and achieving gender equality. — KUNA

47th Kuwait Book Fair to open Wednesday

Fair to feature 243,000 titles, 90 activities celebrating Arab cultural figures

KUWAIT: Kuwait's 47th International Book Fair is launching next Wednesday under the patronage of the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with the participation of 31 Arab and foreign countries through 544 publishing houses.

Assistant Secretary-General for the Cultural Department at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Aisha Al-Mahmoud announced Sunday that the 47th edition of the fair will be held under the theme "The World in a Book," symbolizing the significance of the book and its role in presenting culture to society.

She added that the fair's cultural activities will include three different platforms. The first is the Cultural Corridor introduced last year, which offers various activities targeting youth, including cinema, drama, and poetry-themed evenings. The second platform is the Cultural Café, offering activities in cooperation with NGOs and relevant government bodies, including an honoring ceremony of the fair's personality of the year Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim, who was chosen for his significant contributions to Kuwaiti culture and history. He was awarded a special medal from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for his role in enriching the Quranic dictionary in collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

The third platform, introduced this



NCCAL's Aisha Al-Mahmoud (left) and Director of the book fair Khalifa Al-Rabah address the media during a press conference.

year, is the Author's Corner which will provide sessions with novelists, in addition to information on how to publish a book in Kuwait and the necessary legal procedures to protect the author's rights. Representatives from NCCAL, the Ministry of Information, and the Kuwait National Library will be present at this platform. There will also be a professional program running over two days, featuring panel discussions about the publishing industry, its art, and the future of Arab publishing. The aim is to equip publishers with the necessary tools to develop their business and the industry as a whole.

Mahmoud also noted that the Chil-

ren's Culture Pavilion will offer a range of activities during both the morning and evening sessions. She added that there will be over 90 cultural activities accompanying the fair, including celebrations of prominent Kuwaiti and Arab cultural figures.

She highlighted that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been chosen as the guest of honor for this edition of the fair. Jordan will present four main lectures at the Cultural Corridor, including topics on the bilateral relations between Jordan and Kuwait, the artistic scene in Jordan, the care for Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque under the Hashemite patronage, and

a lecture on creative industries. Director of the fair Khalifa Al-Rabah mentioned that the Kuwait International Book Fair is one of the most distinguished cultural events in the world. This year's edition will feature 31 countries, including 19 Arab and 12 foreign countries, with 544 publishing houses — 400 participating directly and 160 through agents representing other publishing houses.

He added that three halls at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref have been designated for the fair: Hall 5 will host 153 booths for participants from Arab countries, Hall 6 will have 149 booths for Gulf countries, Kuwaiti, Iraqi, and foreign publishers, while Hall 7 will feature 46 booths for government bodies, NGOs, regional organizations, embassies, and the guest of honor, Jordan.

The number of books registered in the fair's electronic system has reached 243,000 titles, including 14,630 new titles, with 47,367 titles dedicated to children, including 1,929 new books.

Regarding services for the public, Rabah mentioned that the fair's administration is offering a 25 percent discount on any book sold at the fair. Additionally, there will be automated information centers for visitors, interactive screens, and a search option available via the fair's website or through QR codes at participating publishers' stands. — KUNA



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KUWAIT: Ambassador Adarsh Swaika kicks off the celebrations marking Kerala Day.

Indian Embassy holds event for Kerala Day

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait celebrated Kerala Day on November 15, 2024 with a wide variety of programs at the embassy's auditorium. The Kerala State Formation Day, commemorated every year on November 1, marks the creation of the state of Kerala on the basis of the State Reorganization Act, 1956.

Several associations from the Malayali expatriate community showcased traditional, cultural and folk performances of their respective districts. The pro-

gram started with traditional chenda percussion with a pooram festival followed by traditional Kairali martial art Kalaripayattu and a ritual art form Theyyam. Other performances included, but were not limited to, Thiruvathira, Kerala Nadanam, Nadavili, Margam Kali, Duff Muttu, Kolkkali, Kolunth Song, Vallam Kali, Oppana and Ghazal.

There were also skits and monologues introducing famous historical Kerala-based characters such as Maharaja Marthanda Varma, Pazhassi Raja, Kunjali Marakkar, Annie Mascarene, Dakshayani Narayanan, Ammu Swaminathan and Herman Gundurt.

The Ambassador congratulated the community for having conducted a successful celebration and putting up stunning performances. Similarly, on November 8, the embassy had also jointly celebrated the formation days of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka with community associations from those states.



People from the Malayali community showcase traditional performances from their districts at the event.





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India tests first hypersonic missile

Nuclear-armed India showcases super-fast high-tech weapon

NEW DELHI: Nuclear-armed India has tested its first hypersonic missile, the defense minister said Sunday, publicizing the super-fast high-tech weapon days after rival China showcased its latest military aviation powers. Hypersonics are the new frontier in missile technology, because they fly lower and are harder to detect than ballistic missiles, can reach targets more quickly, and can be ordered to change target in mid-flight. The United States, Russia, China and North Korea have all tested hypersonic missiles, and several others are developing the technology. "India has achieved a major milestone by successfully conducting flight trial of long

range hypersonic missile," Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh said in a statement.

The test flight comes days after rival and neighbor China showcased its expanding aviation capabilities at an airshow, with the J-35A stealth fighter jet and attack drones displayed. That, according to China's state media, included the debut of the HQ-19 surface-to-air missile system, designed to intercept ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles. India's missile blasted off from Abdul Kalam Island off the east coast on Saturday. Video images released by India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), showed a slender missile blast-

ing into the night sky followed by a surge of flames.

"This is a historic moment and this significant achievement has put our country in the group of select nations having capabilities of such critical and advanced military technologies," Singh added. No further details were given about the missile. New Delhi has deepened defense cooperation with Western countries in recent years, including in the Quad alliance with the United States, Japan and Australia. India is also a major buyer of Russian military hardware, including Moscow's S-400 missile defense system - despite the threat of US sanctions over the multi-billion dollar deal. — AFP

India and Nigeria renew relations as Modi visits

ABUJA: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu met to renew what they called the "strategic partnership" between the giants of Asia and Africa on Sunday. Nigeria's capital Abuja was Modi's first stop in a tour that will take the Indian premier on to the G20 summit in Brazil, and to Guyana. The visit was billed by New Delhi as a meeting of the largest democracy in the world and the largest in Africa, "natural partners" as both push for a more central role in world affairs.

Modi was welcomed to the Nigerian presidency by a military pipe band and honor guard, before entering closed door talks with Tinubu and senior officials at his Aso Rock residence. "Our cooperation is very strong and there are many new possibilities as well for us to take our cooperation forward," Modi said in preliminary remarks as talks got underway.

"As we just said, we have always worked together to address challenges such as terrorism, separatism, piracy and drug trafficking," Tinubu conferred on Modi the Nigerian honor Grand Commander of the Order of Niger, congratulated him on India's democratic credentials and pledged to work together on the "basis of mutual respect and a shared mission". Photos posted on Modi's account showed him arriving late Saturday at Abuja airport to be welcomed by Nigerian officials and a cheering crowd from the country's 60,000-strong Indian community.

Security Council bids

The visit comes amid a revived push by both India and Nigeria for permanent representation on the United Nations Security Council. The five permanent members of the top UN body—the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain—hold a powerful veto that they can use to protect their international interests. In recent years, supporters of a "multipolar" world have pushed for African, Asian and Latin American countries to be given more senior global roles



ABUJA: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) is received by Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Palace in Abuja on Nov 17, 2024. — AFP

alongside the older great powers.

In his prepared remarks, Modi alluded to this drive, telling Tinubu "together we will also continue to highlight at a global level the priorities of the Global South. "And thanks to our joint efforts, we will achieve success as well in this," he promised. Nige-

ria's 220-million-strong population is comfortably the largest in Africa, but in diplomatic strength it is rivalled by South Africa. If UN members bow to the pressure to give increased representation to an African country, Abuja and Pretoria could end up competing for the place. — AFP

5 die as Indian police battle Maoist rebels

RAIPUR: Indian security forces have killed five Maoist rebels in jungle clashes, an officer said Sunday, as security forces seek to quash the decades-long insurgency in the resource-rich central regions. Gun battles took place in the Abujmad forests of Chhattisgarh state on Saturday, taking the toll of the conflict in 2024 to around 200, one of the highest in years. More than 10,000 people have died in the insurgency against the Maoists - known as the Naxalite movement, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalized indigenous people.

"In the gun battle five Maoists have been killed," senior police officer P Sunderraj told AFP, adding that two of the rebels were women. The clash took place in regions bordering Kanker and Narayanpur, with police seizing rifles and ammunition from the corpses. Two officers were wounded in the clash. India's government has warned the insurgents to surrender, with Amit Shah, the interior minister, saying in September that he expected the rebellion to be defeated by early 2026.

The Naxalites, named for the district where their armed campaign began in 1967, were inspired by the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. They demanded land, jobs and a share of the region's immense natural resources for the local people, and made inroads in a number of remote communities. India claimed to have confined the insurgency to about 45 districts in 2023, down from 96 in 2010. Authorities have pumped in millions of dollars for new investments in local infrastructure projects and social spending. — AFP

MG Adel Alghanim Automotive Launches the All-New MG RX9 Premium SUV. A Perfect Blend of Modern Design, Power, and Versatility

- The all-new MG RX9 was unveiled at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center in the presence of the President of Adel Alghanim Automotive, Mr. Marzooq Adel Alghanim, and the Managing Director of MG in the Middle East, Mr. Tom Lee.
- 7-seat configuration and the option of four-wheel

drive designed for families, travel enthusiasts, and those seeking a premium SUV

- Featuring a 2.0T super-efficient engine with a 9-speed automatic transmission and advanced road adaptability for all terrains, backed by a generous 6-year/200,000 km warranty.

MG Adel Alghanim Automotive, part of Alghanim Sons Group, has announced the launch of the all-new MG RX9, a premium SUV that combines elegant design, advanced technology, and powerful driving performance. The MG RX9 is available in three distinct trim levels: the entry-level STD 2.0 Turbo, the mid-tier COM 2.0 Turbo, and the top-tier LUX 2.0 Turbo. Designed to meet the needs of modern families, travel enthusiasts, and drivers who desire comfort and capability in a 7-seater configuration.

The MG RX9's robust and striking exterior design ensures it stands out on the road. At 1967mm wide, it has the widest body in its class, providing a powerful yet elegant presence on the road. The vehicle's Starburst Wing Grille, integrated with the sleek headlight design featuring 245 laser-engraved LED light units, further enhances its striking front profile. Complementing this dynamic front face are 21-inch wheels, which not only elevate the vehicle's look but also ensure

stability and performance on various terrains. The MG RX9 comes in six exterior colours, offering a choice to suit all drivers' preferences.

Inside the MG RX9, drivers are greeted by a luxurious and spacious cabin, crafted for comfort and functionality. This 7-seater SUV offers generous legroom and headroom for passengers and drivers alike, boasting the largest 3-row seating space in its class. The boot space, which can expand to accommodate 1026 litres in the 5-seater configuration, provides plenty of room for luggage, making it ideal for long trips.

Features such as the 12.3-inch touch screen, virtual cluster, and hidden intelligent air-conditioning controls ensure drivers are equipped with all the latest features.

The MG RX9 is designed for exceptional performance across all terrains. Powered by new Net Blue 2.0 Turbo super-efficient engine and paired with a 9-speed automatic transmission, it

delivers smooth, responsive handling in any environment. With five adaptive driving modes - Auto, Eco, Sport, Snow, and Off-road - drivers can easily adjust settings to suit road conditions. Whether in the city, on the highway, or off-road, the MG RX9 offers advanced driving experience, enhanced by its advanced intelligent driving system and all-road intelligent cruise assist.

Safety is at the forefront of the MG RX9's design. Equipped with Bosch's 3rd Generation Intelligent Front View Camera and 5th Generation Millimetre Wave Radar, the RX9 offers advanced driver-assistance systems for all-around protection. The SUV also features HD 360-degree surround view cameras, allowing drivers to have complete visibility, whether parking or maneuvering in tight spaces. Besides these, MG RX9 also comes with "MG Pilot" level 2 ADAS on the LUX trim, which includes Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), Lane Departure Warning (LDW), Lane

Keep Assist (LKA), Emergency Lane Keeping (ELK), Intelligent High Beam Control (IHC), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) and Blind Spot Monitoring System (BSM).

The vehicle's robust structure also incorporates over 81% high-strength steel, with ultra-high strength thermoformed steel in key areas of the passenger compartment for enhanced protection. The RX9 meets the latest C-NCAP crash safety standards, ensuring the highest levels of occupant safety.

The RX9 comes in multiple trim options, the STD 2.0 Turbo is the entry-level trim, offering fabric seats, a panoramic sunroof, and rear parking sensors. The mid-tier trim, COM 2.0 Turbo introduces four-wheel drive capability. At the top of the range, the LUX 2.0 Turbo trim offers the ultimate luxury, with premium leather seats, an advanced 12 speakers premium Bose audio, driver's seat memory, and additional front parking sensors, providing an unparalleled driving experience and the highest level of comfort.



Ahmed Alghanim, Marzooq Alghanim, Tom Lee, Nasser Alghanim and James Kai Wenhui at the RX9 launch event

Tom Lee, Managing Director of MG Motor Middle East, commented: "The launch of the MG RX9 marks a new chapter in our journey to provide customers with modern, premium, and capable vehicles. The RX9 is designed for those who expect more from their SUV, offering space, power, and advanced features. Whether for family outings or off-road adventures, the MG RX9 delivers an exceptional driving experience, while embodying the latest in automotive design and technology." He also praised MG's dealer in Kuwait, Adel Alghanim Automotive, for their efforts in expanding the sales and service networks, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction.

In his speech, the President of Alghanim Sons Group, Mr. Marzooq Adel Alghanim, emphasized the importance of this occasion,

stating: Adel Alghanim Automotive, the automotive arm of Al-ghanim Sons Group, began launching MG cars in Kuwait in 2010, meaning we have been in the Kuwaiti market for 14 years now. Notably, we are among the top five in the Kuwaiti market and achieved second place in sales for March 2024, and we, as Adel Alghanim Automotive, are proud of this accomplishment achieved in such a short period.

Believing in the importance of serving our customers across various regions, we are pleased to announce that the 14th service center will open in two weeks, followed by the 15th service center within two months, making us the most widespread in terms of service centers among all automotive dealers in Kuwait. Additionally, work has begun on constructing the largest MG

facility in the world.

In conclusion, at MG Adel Alghanim Automotive, we provide customers with a complete service experience, starting with competitive pricing when purchasing, excellent service maintenance at attractive rates, and the opportunity to recover a significant portion of their investment when reselling the car.

It is worth noting that all new MG models come with the company's renowned warranty of 6 years or 200,000 km, ensuring complete peace of mind for our customers, in addition to a 3-year or 100,000 km warranty on the car's front suspension components.

You can visit MG Adel Alghanim showrooms in Rai, Shuwaikh, and Jahra to discover the latest models and exclusive offers.



Luxurious and advanced interior of the RX9



Mr. Marzooq Adel Alghanim



The all-new MG RX9

International

US defense nominee's thin CV, tattoos under scrutiny

Alleged sexual assault, medieval-themed tattoos linked to extremist groups

WASHINGTON: Facing questions about an alleged sexual assault and medieval-themed tattoos linked to extremist groups, Donald Trump's defense secretary nominee Pete Hegseth would struggle to be confirmed for the job under normal circumstances. But these are not normal times in Washington. Hegseth, a Fox News host, was picked by Trump on Tuesday in one of several nominations that wrong-footed even some in his remodeled Republican Party and threw down a challenge to the Senate.

To take up the position as head of the Pentagon and oversee 3.4 million employees, Hegseth will require confirmation from the upper house — and Trump is publicly pressuring lawmakers to show loyalty to his agenda. Revelations in recent days about the 44-year-old have made his path to power more difficult, including that the thrice-married former soldier was investigated for sexual assault in California in 2017.

No charges were filed over an encounter in a Monterey hotel that saw an unnamed accuser lodge a police report, but the claim has led to questions about the vetting process for the former soldier. According to the Washington Post, Hegseth paid an undisclosed sum to the woman several years later as



Pete Hegseth

part of a nondisclosure agreement, though he maintained that their encounter was consensual.

His tattoos have also raised questions, leading to him being stood down by his Army National Guard unit when it was called up for the inauguration of President Joe Biden in 2020. Speaking on a podcast with fellow veteran Shawn Ryan earlier this month, he revealed that one of his fellow soldiers had flagged him as a possible white nationalist because of his body art. He claimed it was because of the medieval Jerusalem Cross on his chest, but he also

has the words "Deus Vult" on his bicep — a phrase meaning "God wills it" that was used by anti-Muslim crusaders in the Middle Ages.

European medieval imagery and slogans have been widely adopted by white supremacists and neo-Nazis in recent years, but Hegseth says his tattoos simply reflect his faith. "It's a Christian symbol," the author of a 2020 book entitled "American Crusade" said of the Jerusalem Cross. His handling of medieval weaponry has gone viral in recent days after a video re-emerged of him taking part in a televised axe-throwing contest which saw him miss the target and strike a bystander, who narrowly escaped serious injury.

Trump favorite

His CV includes combat experience in Afghanistan and Iraq and he rose to the rank of major in the National Guard — a lowly status compared to the generals and admirals he would oversee at the Pentagon. Hegseth boasts degrees from elite US universities, including an undergraduate from Princeton and a master's from Harvard. Square-jawed and outspoken, he came to Trump's attention on the "Fox & Friends Weekend" show that he co-hosts. "You know the mil-

itary better than anyone," Trump told him during an appearance in early June, adding that he often thought about putting him in charge of the Pentagon.

A former Republican operative who vetted Hegseth when Trump was considering him for the more junior veterans affairs secretary in 2016 wrote this week that he remained unqualified and an "empty vessel." Lacking major experience in foreign affairs or congressional politics, Hegseth's only civilian management credential was being CEO of a small non-profit, the former operative Justin Higgins wrote for MSNBC. "It's not hard to imagine that he would do and say whatever Trump wants," he added.

Hegseth's main policy focus in his books and media appearances is tackling the armed forces — and he has expressed support for purging the top brass. He told Ryan on his podcast that his experiences taught him that "the bigotry we saw on the outside (of the army) should not be tolerated inside the military" but that progressive efforts to tackle racism and sexism had gone too far. "The army that I enlisted in, that I swore an oath to in 2001 and was commissioned in 2003 looks a lot different than the army of today because we're focused on a lot of the wrong things," he said. — AFP

Senegal votes as new leaders eye parliamentary win

DAKAR: Senegal on Sunday voted in parliamentary elections, with the new leaders aiming for a resounding majority to see through the promise of ambitious reform that swept them to power eight months ago. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye secured victory in March pledging economic transformation, social justice and a fight against corruption — raising hopes among a largely youthful population facing high inflation and widespread unemployment.

But an opposition-led parliament hampered the government's first months in power, leading Faye to dissolve the chamber in September and call snap elections as soon as the constitution allowed him to do so. "I hope that (the ruling party) Pastef will win the elections to gain a majority so that they can better carry out their mandate," said 56-year-old Pascal Goudiaby, who was among dozens waiting to cast their ballots at a polling station in the capital Dakar.

"The priority is unemployment, young people are facing so much unemployment," he added. Faye appointed his firebrand mentor Ousmane Sonko as prime minister, after Sonko's own bid to run for president was blocked following a three-year deadly standoff with the former authorities. The pair promised a leftist pan-African agenda — vowing to diversify political and economic partnerships, review hydrocarbon and fishing contracts and re-establish Senegal's sovereignty, which they claimed had been sold abroad.

The west African country's roughly 7.3 million registered voters will elect 165 MPs for five-year terms. Analysts say Senegalese voters have histor-

ically confirmed their presidential choice during parliamentary elections, and the Pastef party is the favorite to win. "I think that whoever you gave your confidence to in the presidential election, you need to renew your confidence in him so that he can achieve what he started," said 56-year-old voter Toure Aby. "We want life to be less expensive for the Senegalese", she added. "Everything's expensive: water, electricity, food".

'No room for violence'

Voters are continuing a long democratic tradition in Senegal, widely seen as a stable outlier in a coup-plagued region. Prime Minister Sonko cast his vote in the morning in the southern city of Ziguinchor, calling for calm. "Democracy is expressed in peace and stability, and I believe that in a democracy there is no room for violence," he said. Sonko spent three weeks on the campaign trail promising projects and investment in the regions he visited, while applauding patriotism and national sovereignty. Reminiscent of his years as a fiery opposition leader, he had called for vengeance after attacks against his supporters, but later urged restraint.

Despite the heated tone, clashes were sporadic in the run-up to the vote. Though some agreements have been reached between coalitions, the opposition remains fragmented. Former president Macky Sall is leading an opposition grouping from abroad, breaking with the political restraint normally adopted by ex-leaders in Senegal. He left power in April after triggering one of the worst crises in decades with a last-minute postponement of the presidential election. Former prime minister and presidential runner-up Amadou Ba, and Dakar mayor Barthélemy Dias, are also heading coalitions.

Bleak picture

The opposition has accused the new government of inaction, amateurism and a desire to settle scores with

bollah strongholds — hit close to ancient Roman ruins designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites. A petition published Sunday, the day before a crucial UNESCO meeting, was signed by 300 prominent cultural figures, including archaeologists and academics. It called on the United Nations to safeguard Lebanon's heritage and establish "no-target zones". Lebanese authorities say more than 3,452 people have been killed since October last year, with most casualties recorded since September. The Zionist entity says 48 soldiers have been killed fighting Hezbollah.

A UN-backed assessment on Nov 9 warned famine was imminent in northern Gaza, amid the increased hostilities and a near-halt in food aid. Jordan and Qatar urged "immediate" action to "end the unprecedented humanitarian disaster in northern Gaza", their foreign ministers said in a joint statement Sunday, blaming "(the Zionist entity's) failure to allow aid to enter".

The United States, the Zionist entity's top military supplier, last week said the Zionist entity was not violating US law on the level of aid entering Gaza but called for further progress. In the Zionist entity, police said they arrested three suspects over two flares that landed near Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's home in the town of Caesarea while he was away.

The speaker of the Zionist parliament, Amir Ohana, accused anti-government protesters of being behind the incident. Protesters had gathered again in Tel Aviv, about 40 km south of Caesarea, late Saturday to reiterate demands that the government reach a deal to free dozens of hostages still held in Gaza. Qatar last week said it had suspended its mediator role until Hamas and the Zionist entity show "seriousness" in truce and hostage-release talks. — Agencies

Pope calls for Gaza genocide...

Continued from Page 1

people, most of them civilians. But his call for a probe marks the first time he has publicly used the term genocide in the context of Zionist military operations in the Palestinian territory. On the pope's account on X Sunday, he wrote: "Let us #PrayTo-



DAKAR: Voters wait in the line outside a voting station in Dakar on November 17, 2024, during Senegal's parliamentary elections. — AFP

the previous administration. Unemployment stands at more than 20 percent and scores continue to risk their lives every month in a bid to reach Europe by boat. The government said an audit of public finances revealed a wider budget deficit than previously announced, with the International Monetary Fund suspending an aid program pending the audit's review.

Moody's downgraded Senegal's credit rating and placed the country under observation. Since

taking office, the authorities have lowered the price of household goods such as rice, oil and sugar and launched a series of reviews. They have initiated justice system reform and presented an ambitious 25-year development plan aimed at transforming the economy and public policy. Polling stations closed at 6:00 pm. Reliable projections of the new parliament's makeup could be available from Monday morning. — AFP

Zionist massacres on two fronts...

Continued from Page 1

In other deadly strikes, Bassal said attacks on refugee camps in central Gaza killed 15 people, and a Zionist drone strike on the southern city of Rafah killed five. Also in the south, in the Khan Yunis area, civil defense said a Zionist drone targeted a group of unarmed people securing an aid delivery, killing six. Gaza's health ministry on Sunday said the overall death toll in more than 13 months of war had reached 43,846. The majority of the dead are civilians.

A Lebanese security source said Sunday Hezbollah spokesman Mohammed Afif was killed in a strike on central Beirut's Ras Al-Nabaa district, one of relatively few attacks outside the group's strongholds. Previous strikes claimed by the Zionist entity have killed senior Hezbollah officials including its leader Hassan Nasrallah in late September. Afif was part of Nasrallah's inner circle and for years was responsible for Hezbollah's media relations, providing information to journalists, often under the cover of anonymity.

The security sources said it struck a building where the offices of the Baath Party are located, and the head of the party in Lebanon, Ali Hijazi, told Lebanese broadcaster Al-Jadeed that Afif was in the building. The broadcaster later also said Afif had been killed. It showed footage of a building whose upper floors had collapsed onto the first storey, with civil defense workers at the scene.

Further south, Lebanon's official National News Agency reported seven strikes on Jibsheet village in less than two hours, with more attacks on villages closer to the Zionist border. Lebanon's army, which is not a party to the conflict, said the Zionist entity "directly targeted" an army center in south Lebanon, killing two soldiers.

The Zionist army said about 20 projectiles crossed from Lebanon into the Zionist entity on Sunday, and some were intercepted. The United Nations force in south Lebanon said peacekeepers were fired upon around 40 times on Saturday, probably by "non-state actor" individuals who tried to prevent a patrol from passing in the south. No injuries were reported.

Several Zionist strikes in recent weeks on Baalbek in Lebanon's east and Tyre in the south — both Hez-

Xi vows to work with Trump as...

Continued from Page 1

"President Biden pointed out that the (People's Republic of China's) publicly stated position with respect to the war in Ukraine is there should be no escalation, no broadening the conflict, and the introduction of (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) troops runs foursquare against that," said Sullivan. "He also pointed out that the PRC does have influence and capacity, and should use it to try to prevent a further escalation or further expansion of the conflict with the introduction of even more DPRK forces."

Other major issues raised at the meeting included a recent China-linked hack of the telephone communications of US government and presidential campaign officials, stepped-up pressure by Beijing on Taiwan and in the South China Sea, as well as Chinese support for Russia. Biden also raised the cases of Americans he believes are wrongly detained in China. On Taiwan, the leaders appear to have had a sharp exchange. Biden called for an end to Beijing's "destabilizing" military activity around the island, the White House said.

Xi said the "Taiwan independence" separatist activities" of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te were incompatible with peace and stability there, according to the Chinese foreign ministry. Lai plans to stop in the US state of Hawaii and maybe Guam on a sensitive visit that is sure to anger Beijing in the coming weeks, Reuters reported on Friday.

Taiwan's foreign ministry thanked Biden for his comments, and said China was the troublemaker. "China's persistent military provocations around Taiwan are the greatest source of damage to regional peace and

stability and a major threat to global economic prosperity," it said in a statement. Taiwan's former Economy Minister Lin Hsin-i met Biden at the summit on Friday and invited him to visit Taiwan in the near future.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory. The US is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic recognition. Taiwan rejects China's sovereignty claims. At the same time, Beijing's economy is taking a stiff hit from Biden's steps on trade, including a plan to restrict US investment in Chinese artificial intelligence, quantum computing and semiconductors, and export restrictions on high-end computer chips. Biden has described those steps as necessary for US national security reasons and said they do not impede most trade.

During the meeting, Xi said no evidence supported the claim of Chinese involvement in cyberattacks, according to Chinese state media. He also told Biden that Washington should not get involved in disputes in the Spratly Islands, the subject of a dispute between China and the US-allied Philippines. Beijing has rejected a 2016 ruling by The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration, which said its expansive maritime claims over the South China Sea had no legal basis, in a case that was brought by Manila.

"When the two countries treat each other as partner and friend, seek common ground while shelving differences and help each other succeed, our relationship would make considerable progress," Xi told Biden through an interpreter. "But if we take each other as rivals or adversary, pursue vicious competition, and seek to hurt each other, we would roll the relationship or even set it back." The two leaders also privately reflected back on the blunt-spoken dynamics of their long relationship, said Sullivan, the US national security adviser. — Reuters

gether for peace: in martyred Ukraine, in Palestine, (the Zionist entity), Lebanon, Myanmar, and Sudan. War dehumanizes, leading us to tolerate unacceptable crimes. May leaders listen to the cry of the people who long for peace." The new book by the pope comes out Tuesday in Italy, Spain and Latin America, with other releases elsewhere due later.

Francis has not previously described the situation in Gaza as a genocide in public. But last year he was at the centre of a messy dispute after a meeting with a group of Palestinians at the Vatican, who insisted he had used the word with them

in private, while the Vatican said he had not.

On Thursday, a United Nations Special Committee judged the Zionist entity's conduct of warfare in Gaza "consistent with the characteristics of genocide", accusing the country of "using starvation as a method of war". It is, however, not the first time the Zionist entity has been the subject of genocide accusations since the start of the war. South Africa brought a genocide case before the International Court of Justice with the support of several countries, including Turkey, Spain and Mexico. — Agencies

International

China's second mass attack in a week spurs soul-searching

Former student fatally stabs 8 at vocational school

WUXI: A former student went on a stabbing rampage at a vocational college in eastern China, killing eight people and injuring 17, police said on Sunday, prompting further soul-searching just days after the deadliest attack in the country in a decade. Saturday's knife attack took place at the Wuxi Vocational College of Arts and Technology in Yixing, part of Wuxi city in the eastern province of Jiangsu. The suspect, a 21-year-old man, was arrested at the scene and confessed, police said. Also on Saturday, authorities in the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai said they had charged a 62-year-old man who they said rammed his car into a crowd outside a sports stadium, killing 35 people and injuring 43 on Monday night.

In both cases, the suspects lashed out

with fatal violence against unrelated bystanders after suffering an economic loss, according to the sparse details released by police. The killings touched off a rare and heavily censored online discussion over mental health in China, deeper stresses as the world's second-largest economy slows and whether young people will find themselves worse off than generations before them that benefited from China's rapid development.

At least six other high-profile knife attacks have been recorded this year across China. Police in Wuxi said the stabbing suspect was angry over not getting his graduation certificate, failing an exam and his pay. "According to preliminary investigations, the suspect... attacked others after failing an exam and not re-

ceiving his graduation certificate, as well as being dissatisfied with his internship compensation," the Yixing Public Security Bureau said in a statement.

At the school on Sunday, a Reuters witness watched students leaving with suitcases, although one student, who did not want to give her name, said classes were still going on. "They were just 18, 19-year-old kids. It's such a pity and so sad," said a man who arrived to lay a bouquet of chrysanthemums near to one of the school gates, giving his surname as Duan. "We really have to give young people better psychological guidance," he added. Security swiftly removed the bouquet. The Zhuhai suspect was reportedly angry at the terms of a divorce settlement, police there said.

Qu Weiguo, a Fudan University pro-

fessor, said the recent cases of "indiscriminate revenge against society" in China had some common features: disadvantaged suspects, many with mental health issues, who believed that they had been treated unfairly and who felt they had no other way to be heard. "It is important to establish a social safety net and a psychological counseling mechanism, but in order to minimize such cases, the most effective way is to open public channels that can monitor and expose the use of power," Qu posted on the Chinese social media platform Weibo.

The short essay had been removed by the censors by Sunday afternoon. Wuxi Vocational College offers courses to prepare students to work in industries including wire and cable manufacturing, interi-

or design, marketing and other fields, its website says. The junior college and others like it are part of a drive to direct more young people into job-specific training instead of oversubscribed universities as youth unemployment balloons.

Trending online discussion topics over the past year have put a focus on the diminished optimism in China about a turnaround for jobs, income and opportunity. One of those - "the garbage time of history" - took off in the summer as a shorthand for economic despair. In recent weeks, Chinese officials have rolled out a raft of stimulus measures to revive the economy. Monday's car attack also prompted an intervention by President Xi Jinping, who urged local police to "strengthen their control of risks" by identifying people at risk of lashing out. — Reuters

HK's political freedoms under spotlight during bumper trial week

HONG KONG: The erosion of political freedoms in Hong Kong (HK) will come under the spotlight this week with key developments in two high-profile national security trials. On Wednesday, jailed tycoon and pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai will testify in his collusion trial, breaking the silence he has kept over five previous trials and almost four years in jail. He will take the stand the day after the sentencing of 45 pro-democracy politicians and activists for a subversion case triggered by their holding an unofficial election primary.

Both cases could carry sentences of up to life in prison. Western countries and international rights groups have condemned the two trials as evidence of Hong Kong's increased authoritarianism since Beijing imposed a national security law on the city in 2020. "These are two cases that epitomize the collapse of human rights in Hong Kong since (then)," Amnesty International's China Director Sarah Brooks told AFP.

"Not only have these prosecutions been draconian; they have also been cruel - dragged out for several years with no regard for the lives and families shattered along the way." But China and Hong Kong say the law has restored order after the city was rocked by massive, sometimes violent pro-democracy protests in 2019, and have warned against "interference" from other countries.

Lai in witness box

The charges against Lai - founder of the now-shuttered popular tabloid Apple Daily - revolve around the newspaper's publications, which supported the pro-democracy protests and criticized Beijing's leadership. The 76-year-old is facing two counts of "conspiracy to collusion" and one count of "conspiracy to publish seditious publications". He has pleaded not guilty. Lai has been behind bars for nearly four years, with the Apple Daily newsroom and his home among the first targets of major police raids soon after the



HONG KONG: A view of the main street of the North Point district in Hong Kong. — AFP

2020 national security law came into force.

In September, his son said Lai was struggling in solitary confinement inside a 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit) cell. Since the prosecution opened in January, it has sought to mount the case that dozens of Hong Kong and foreign politicians and scholars - including former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo - were Lai's foreign contacts and "agents". Six other Apple Daily executives similarly charged have pleaded guilty, some of whom testified against Lai. Lai is also accused of supporting two young activists lobbying for foreign sanctions via a protest group called "Stand With Hong Kong". Among others, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and US president-elect Donald

Trump have recently appealed for Lai's release.

Largest trial finale

Another national security trial, the city's largest by number of defendants, will come to a close the day before Lai steps into the witness box. Led by Benny Tai, a prominent constitutional and human rights law scholar, the defendants range from former lawmakers, unionists, lawyers, social workers and journalists - a cross-section of the city's once-vibrant political opposition. Initially, 47 people were charged after holding an unofficial primary election in July 2020, which aimed to shortlist pro-democracy candidates for a better chance of a majority in the legislature. — AFP

Typhoon batters Philippines' most populous island

MANILA: Super Typhoon Man-yi pummeled the Philippines' most populous island on Sunday, with the national weather service warning of flooding, landslides and huge waves as the storm sweeps across the archipelago nation. Man-yi was still packing maximum sustained winds of 185 kilometers per hour, with gusts reaching 305 kph, after making its first landfall late Saturday on the lightly populated Catanduanes island.

More than 1.2 million people fled their homes ahead of Man-yi, including several thousand in the capital Manila, as the weather forecaster warned of a "life-threatening" impact from the powerful storm, which follows an unusual streak of violent weather. Man-yi uprooted trees, brought down power lines and smashed flimsy houses to pieces after hitting Catanduanes in the typhoon-prone Bicol region.

No deaths have been reported, but there was "extensive" damage to structures on Catanduanes, civil defence chief Ariel Nepomuceno said. Man-yi remained a super typhoon as it hit heavily populated Luzon - the country's economic engine - forecasters

said, warning of a "potentially dangerous" situation in Aurora province. "I saw roofing sheets flying off the houses around our building. Branches were being torn off trees," said Julius Fabianes, a rescuer with the Aurora disaster agency in Baler town. The weather service forecast "significant weakening" as Man-yi traversed the mountainous island.

But it said severe flooding and landslides were expected as Man-yi dumped "intense to torrential" rain over provinces in its path. Forecasters also warned storm surges reaching more than three meters could swamp vulnerable coastal communities, including in Manila. Pangasinan municipality in the northeast of Catanduanes took a direct hit from Man-yi. Photos and a drone video shared on the Facebook page of Mayor Cesar Robles showed fallen power lines, damaged and destroyed buildings, and trees and corrugated iron sheets strewn on the roads.

'So strong'

"Pepito was so strong, I have never experienced a typhoon this strong," Robles said in a post, using the local name for Man-yi, as clean-up efforts got underway and people returned home. Mother-of-three Marissa Cueva Alejandro, 36, who grew up in Catanduanes and sheltered with a relative during Man-yi, said typhoons were getting stronger. "Before, we would only experience (typhoon) signal number three to four, but now typhoons are getting as strong as signal number five," she said, referring to the



VIRAC, Philippines: This handout photo shows the aftermath of Super Typhoon Man-yi in Virac, Catanduanes province. — AFP

weather service's five-tiered wind warning system.

Man-yi is the sixth storm in the past month to batter the archipelago nation. At least 163 people died in the previous storms, which left thousands homeless and wiped out crops and livestock. 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. — AFP

Russia pounds Ukraine with 'massive' attack in 'hellish' night

KYIV: Russia on Sunday pummeled Ukraine with a "massive" aerial barrage of missiles and drones, killing at least nine people across the country in the largest attack in months that Kyiv branded "hellish". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Moscow launched 120 missiles and almost 100 drones, targeting the capital as well as southern, central and far-western corners of the country. Civilians were killed in the Mykolaiv, Lviv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk and Odessa regions in what officials in Kyiv called it one of the biggest barrages of the almost three-year long Russian invasion.

The devastation comes at a time when Moscow has been steadily advancing in Ukraine's east and with the imminent return of Donald Trump to the White House raising fears over the future of US support for Kyiv. "A hellish night," the spokesman for Ukraine's airforce Yuriy Ignat said on social media, adding that Kyiv downed "144 targets". The giant attack followed two days after German Chancellor Olaf



KYIV: A hoisting crane removes a large fragment of a downed Russian hypersonic missile Zircon, after it struck a five-storey residential building in Kyiv during a 'massive' aerial barrage on November 17, 2024, amid Russian invasion in Ukraine. — AFP

Scholz called Russian leader Vladimir Putin for the first time in almost two years, calling on the Kremlin chief to end Moscow's devastating offensive. Kyiv had slammed Scholz for reaching out to Putin and Sunday said the attack was the Kremlin's real answer.

"This is war criminal Putin's true response to all those who called and visited him recently," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga said after the attack. "We need peace through strength, not appeasement." Scholz on Sunday defended the call and in-

sisted that Berlin's backing for Kyiv was unwavering. "Ukraine can count on us," the German leader said ahead of flying to a G20 meeting in Brazil, promising that "no decision will be taken behind Ukraine's back" on ending the conflict. But Poland's prime minister joined the backlash on Sunday. "No-one will stop Putin with phone calls. The attack last night, one of the biggest in this war, has proved that telephone diplomacy cannot replace real support from the whole West for Ukraine," Donald Tusk wrote on X.

Civilian deaths in Ukraine

The strikes caused massive power cuts across the country, with fears of a precarious winter to come. "A massive attack on our country," Zelensky said. "Over the past week, the aggressor used nearly 140 missiles of various types, more than 900 guided aerial bombs, and over 600 strike drones," he said, accusing Moscow of trying to "intimidate us with cold and blackouts". AFP journalists heard explosions in the early morning in Kyiv and close to Sloviansk in the Donetsk region. Moscow, meanwhile, said it had hit all its targets, claiming it had targeted an "essential energy infrastructure supporting the Ukrainian military-industrial complex". But civilian deaths were reported across the country. — AFP

Ukrainians brave arduous journeys to occupied homeland

WARSAW: War, interrogations and a journey lasting days are not enough to stop Anna visiting her parents and beloved little brother in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine. She left her family behind in the months after Russia's invasion of her homeland and, like several million other Ukrainians, has been living in Europe since. The 25-year-old has twice made a massively circuitous journey to see her family in the Russian-occupied Lugansk region - travelling from Poland to Belarus, flying to Moscow, continuing south by night train and then driving by road into eastern Ukraine.

In Moscow, Ukrainians face an intense grilling before they can travel on to Russian-occupied areas of their home country. "It is not for the faint-hearted," Anna told AFP in her flat outside Warsaw, where she works as a dog walker. For a year now, Russia has only been letting Ukrainian citizens travel to occupied zones through a special checkpoint set up in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. There are security checks and interrogations and many Ukrainians get rejected and sent back, according to people who have been through the process.

'Psychological stress'

Most Ukrainians reach the Sheremetyevo checkpoint via the Belarusian capital, Minsk. Belarus, Russia's ally and neighbor, is one of the few places in Europe from where there are flights to Moscow. Once in Moscow, eastern Ukraine is reachable by train and car drive. "It's a lot of psychological stress," Anna told AFP. She is not alone in making the arduous trip. After 32 months of war, thousands are travelling from Europe to Moscow-controlled Ukrainian territory to visit family, to check on property or - in rare cases - to return home. At Warsaw's Zachodnia bus station, Belarusian drivers told AFP there were several buses a day to Minsk and on each journey they took about 10 Ukrainian passengers travelling onwards to Moscow and occupied territories.

'Like in the Soviet Union'

Ukrainians who make it through are among the few people who have been on both sides of the front line in the almost three-year war. Anna did not want to reveal her surname or the name of her town, fearing for her family's safety. The town had been under separatist control since 2014 but on her two visits home after Moscow's full-scale invasion, Anna said it was overrun by Russian soldiers. "They are well paid, so there is a lot of money around. The prices of flats have gone through the roof," she said.

Members of her pro-Ukrainian family keep their opinions to themselves and make sure those "never leave home". "It's like in the Soviet Union," Anna said, smiling. "In the outside world, you agree with everything. And when you get home you can talk about how bad it is." While Russian soldiers have come with cash, their arrival also brought a level of lawlessness. At some point, she said, shopkeepers in her town were told not to sell alcohol to soldiers because of recurring "incidents".

At Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport, Anna was asked to fill in a questionnaire that asked: "Do you support the special military operation?", the name the Kremlin uses to describe its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. She said she put "no" and argued that this was because she was in favor of peace. Then she said she played the "dumb little girl" and, several hours later, was let through. Ukrainians AFP spoke to at Warsaw bus station said checks at Sheremetyevo could take anything from several hours to a whole day. — AFP



WARSAW: 25 years old Anna from Lugansk region opens kitchen cupboard in her apartment in the suburbs of Warsaw, Poland, during an interview with an AFP journalist. — AFP

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Zain Group's ground-breaking efforts in ICT, fintech and digital services earn 3 awards

Awards at SAMENA Council-endorsed MEA Business Achievement Awards

DUBAI: Zain Group was recently presented with three distinguished awards at the prestigious SAMENA Council-endorsed MEA Business Magazine Technology Achievement Awards 2024, as part of a multi-sector recognition awards program aimed at highlighting significant technology achievements in the ICT industry held during GITEX GLOBAL 2024.

The first award was in the category of 'Innovative Collaborations and Partnerships' in acknowledgement of the launch of the strategic go-to-market agreement ZainTECH and Datanuum, a comprehensive customer data enrichment, engagement and

Awards to ZainTECH, TAMAM and Dizlee are a testament to Zain's continual innovation in providing digital transformative solutions to enterprises and consumers across the region

retention platform for retailers and healthcare businesses. This collaboration aims to provide innovative solutions that enhance customer data driven growth and retention capabilities for businesses across the Middle East and beyond.

This partnership leverages ZainTECH's extensive regional expertise in implementing compliant cloud infrastructures with DATANUUM's cutting-edge platform, to address the growing need for data privacy and regulatory compliance in the region. This will appeal to businesses looking for robust solutions to handle data securely while optimizing customer relationships, engagement and marketing spend.

The second award was in the 'Financial Technol-



ogy' category saw TAMAM, Zain's fintech in Saudi Arabia recognized for 'Outstanding Sector Leadership and Growth Achievements'. Tamam is revolutionizing the consumer finance landscape in the Kingdom, providing personalized, data-driven financial solutions that cater to the evolving needs of Saudi customers.

Tamam provides individuals with the opportunity to receive Shariah compliant loans without physical-

ly visiting a bank location. The platform's end-to-end application and award process takes just minutes from the time of downloading the app to the loan amount being paid out. Loans are provided to Saudi nationals and residents, without the requirement of a salary transfer or guarantor.

The third award was in the category of 'Data Platforms' recognized Zain's groupwide API platform DIZLEE for 'Exceptional Products and Ser-



vices'. As a dynamic API Platform and digital monetization ecosystem, DIZLEE offers innovative entertainment and gaming solutions, direct operator billing, messaging, digital authentication. By exposing its APIs through the Dizlee platform, Zain removes a significant barrier to the development of profitable digital partnerships from across the globe, enhancing the time-to-market rollout of appealing entertainment and gaming services to our customers. Currently, Dizlee has partnership agreements with more than 42 global OTT and solutions providers offering 213 different digital innovations and processing over 200 million payment transactions that has generated over \$340 million in gross revenues since launching mid-2018.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council is a tri-regional, non-profit telecoms association that embodies a community of South Asian and MENA regional telcos, manufacturers, regulatory authorities, and academia that focuses on issues pertinent to operators and providing advocacy. MEA Business is the region's first augmented reality business publication committed to reporting positive business developments in the Middle East and Africa with focus areas that include Training and Education, Aviation, Travel, Energy, Hospitality, Travel and Technology.

These three prestigious accolades underscore Zain Group's ambitions to expand the range and quality of business and consumer services made available to its individual, enterprise and government customers across the region.

Egyptian middle class cuts costs as reforms take hold

CAIRO: Egypt's economy has been in crisis for years, but as the latest round of International Monetary Fund-backed reforms bites, much of the country's middle class has found itself struggling to afford goods once considered basics.

The world lender has long backed measures in Egypt including a liberal currency exchange market and weaning the public away from subsidies. On the ground, that has translated into an eroding middle class with depleted purchasing power, turning into luxuries what were once considered necessities.

Nourhan Khaled, a 27-year-old private sector employee, has given up "perfumes and chocolates".

"All my salary goes to transport and food," she said as she perused items at a west Cairo supermarket, deciding what could stay and what needed to go. For some, this has extended to cutting back on even the most basic goods—such as milk. "We do not buy sweets anymore and we've cut down on milk," said Zeinab Gamal, a 28-year-old housewife.

Most recently, Egypt hiked fuel prices by 17.5 percent last month, marking the third increase just this year. The measures are among the conditions for an \$8 billion IMF loan program, expanded this year from an initial \$3 billion to address a severe economic crisis in the North African country.

"The lifestyle I grew up with has completely changed," said Manar, a 38-year-old mother of two, who did not wish to give her full name. She has taken on a part-time teaching job to increase her family's income to 15,000 Egyptian pounds (\$304), just so she can "afford luxuries like sports activities for their children". Her family has even trimmed their budget for meat, reducing their consumption from four times to "only two times per week".

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is facing one of its worst economic crises ever. Foreign debt quadrupled since 2015 to register \$160.6 billion in the first quarter of 2024. Much of the debt is the result of financing for large-scale projects, including a new capital east of Cairo. The war in Gaza has also worsened the country's economic situation. Repeated attacks on Red Sea shipping by Yemen's Houthi rebels in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza have resulted in Egypt's vital Suez Canal—a key source of



In this file photo a young worker stacks trays of freshly-baked bread at a bakery in Cairo.

foreign currency—losing over 70 percent of its revenue this year. Amid growing public frustration, officials have recently signaled a potential re-evaluation of the IMF program. "If these challenges will make us put unbearable pressure on public opinion, then the situation must be reviewed with the IMF," President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said last month.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly also ruled out any new financial burdens on Egyptians "in the coming period", without specifying a timeframe. Economists, however, say the reforms are already taking a toll. Wael Gamal, director of the social justice unit at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, said they led to "a significant erosion in people's living conditions" as prices of medicine, services and transportation soared. He believes the IMF program could be implemented "over a longer period and in a more gradual manner".

Egypt has been here before. In 2016, a three-year \$12-billion loan program brought sweeping reforms, kicking off the first of a series of currency devaluations that have decimated the Egyptian pound's value over the years. Egypt's poverty rate stood at 29.7 percent in 2020, down slightly from 32.5 percent the previous year in 2019, according to the latest statistics by the country's CAPMAS agency.

down the shop and rushes out. Despite the ever-present fear and the steep decline in business activity, Khalil does what she can to keep her business afloat, like many other shopkeepers in Beirut's southern suburbs.

The vast majority of the area's estimated 600,000-800,000 residents have fled, seeking refuge elsewhere. "With the drop in customers, the financial impact has been severe," Khalil told AFP, adding that she has had to halve the salaries of her employees due to the pinch. Khalil has moved most of the pharmacy's stock to her second home in the mountains for safekeeping.

To serve the few customers she still has, she drives up to collect the medicine they need, and even delivers it to their homes when they can't reach the pharmacy. Some areas of south Beirut have been devastated by strikes since Zionist entity intensified its campaign against the powerful Hezbollah movement on September 23, af-

ter nearly a year of limited cross-border clashes over the Gaza war.

South Beirut grocer Mehdi Zeitar, in his 50s, has had to find a place to live after a Zionist entity strike destroyed his home. For the time being, his vegetable stall has survived, but "all the surrounding buildings have been damaged", he said.

"We're playing hide-and-seek," Zeitar added bitterly, referring to Zionist entity's attacks. "We leave by car until the strikes are over, then we go home." He comes in for two or three hours a day to run his shop, saying he has no other option to support his family. But he told AFP that he spends much of his time waiting for customers, who never come. "We are truly unemployed." In a recent report, the World Bank estimated that the Lebanese commercial sector incurred losses of \$1.7 billion over 12 months of conflict, on top of billions more in losses to the economy and material damage. — AFP

Trump taps fracking magnate and climate skeptic as energy chief

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump nominated fracking magnate and climate change skeptic Chris Wright as energy secretary on Saturday, tasking him with "cutting red tape" which the new administration hopes will drive investment in fossil fuels.

"As Secretary of Energy, Chris will be a key leader, driving innovation, cutting red tape, and ushering in a new 'Golden Age of American Prosperity and Global Peace,'" Trump said in a statement.

Wright is a founder of Liberty Energy, which serves the energy companies that have massively increased US fossil fuel production in recent years by extracting oil and gas from shale fields in a process known as "fracking." "My dedication to bettering human lives remains steadfast, with a focus on making American energy more affordable, reliable, and secure," Wright said on X after Trump's announcement.

"Energy is the lifeblood that makes everything in life possible... I am looking forward to getting to work." In a previous LinkedIn post, Wright had denied there is a "climate crisis."

"There is no climate crisis and we are not in the midst of an energy transition either," he said, adding that "the term carbon pollution is outrageous" because all life depended on carbon dioxide. "There is no such thing as clean energy or dirty energy, all energy sources have impacts on the world both positive and negative," he added.

During his election campaign, Trump—who calls climate change a hoax—promised to boost the domestic fossil fuel industry in order to bring down energy prices that have driven inflation. He also pledged to tear up environmental regulations and the United States' commitments to combat climate change under the landmark 2015 Paris accord.

Wright will devise policy alongside North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, head of the newly created National Energy Council. "We will DRILL BABY DRILL, expand ALL forms of Energy production to grow our Economy, and create good-paying jobs," Trump said Friday as he announced Burgum's appointment. Wright has repeatedly criticized efforts by outgoing Democratic President Joe Biden to encourage America's transition to a low-carbon energy model and has downplayed the importance of solar. His views put him notably at odds with Trump's key backer and informal advisor Elon Musk, the boss of Tesla, who started the electric car company and invested heavily in solar out of fear of the impact of climate change.

Trump, 78, began shaping his new administration this week with a series of relatively mainstream Republican choices, including conservative Florida senator and foreign policy hawk Marco Rubio for secretary of state. But then came nominations for leaders of sprawling federal departments in his new government who have little or no relevant experience—but a history of loyalty to the incoming president. — AFP



Chris Wright

Beirut businesses struggle to stay afloat under raids

BEIRUT: Lina Al-Khalil has fled her south Beirut home to escape escalating Zionist entity attacks on Hezbollah, but she still returns daily to the bombarded area to keep the family business running. "It's more important than my house," said the pharmacist, in her 50s, of the business she inherited from her father in Haret Hreik, a southern suburb of the Lebanese capital where Iran-backed Hezbollah militants hold sway.

Whenever the Zionist entity military issues a warning to evacuate before a strike—a near-daily occurrence for nearly two months—she closes

Egypt Kuwait Holding Company records \$124 million in net income in 9 months

Company earns total revenues of \$475 million, maintaining profitability levels

KUWAIT: Egypt Kuwait Holding Company (EKH) announced on Sunday its consolidated financial results for the period ending September 30, 2024, prepared in accordance with Egyptian Accounting Standards for the first nine months of 2024. EKH recorded revenues of \$475 million, maintaining profitability levels throughout the period. Net profit was \$139 million, with a net profit margin of 29 percent, while net income attributable to EKH shareholders reached \$124 million.

In the third quarter of 2024, EKH reported revenues of \$154 million, a 20 percent quarter-on-quarter growth, driven primarily by the Energy and Energy-Related segment. Net profit was \$39 million in the third quarter of the year, with net income attributable to EKH shareholders totaling \$34 million for the same period.

Commenting on the Group's performance during the first nine months of 2024, Loay Jassim Al-Kharafi, Chairman of EKH, stated that the results underscore the resilience of EKH's investment model and the strength of its operational capabilities. He added that this performance reflects EKH's success in delivering sustainable value to shareholders and advancing its growth trajectory, as the Group maintained strong profitability levels despite economic challenges.

Al-Kharafi noted that management observed signs of revenue recovery on a quarterly basis, attributed to positive factors including gradual price recovery, cost management strategies, and the positive impact of recent investments. These factors have contributed to strong profit margins across EKH's portfolio, reinforcing confidence in the strength and sustainability of the Group's business model.

He further highlighted that EKH has started reaping the benefits of its recent investment expansions in the energy sector. Positive results were achieved at the North Sinai offshore gas concession, where production commenced at the Aton-1 well (the second well in Phase 3B) in the third quarter of 2024 with a production rate of 15 million cubic feet per day. The Group aims to maintain gas production rates at 55 million cubic



Loay Jassim Al-Kharafi

- The results confirm the resilience of EKH's investment model and the strength of its operational capabilities.
- EKH's strong financial performance reflects its success in creating sustainable value for shareholders and driving continuous growth.



Jon Rokk

- The solid results underscore the company's ability to turn opportunities into tangible outcomes.
- Thoughtful investment and strategic planning are the foundation of EKH's success in overcoming challenges and achieving profits.

feet per day until the end of 2026.

Al-Kharafi noted that since acquiring the North Sinai offshore concession, EKH has invested \$247 million in exploration and development activities, adding approximately 223 billion cubic feet to gas reserves. He added that the Group is focused on maximizing sustainable value for shareholders through a proactive capital recycling strategy. This approach involves optimizing the performance of its investment portfolio by leveraging competitive advantages and export potential, in addition to enhancing collaboration among subsidiaries.

Meanwhile, Jon Rokk, CEO of EKH, expressed pride in the strong results achieved by the Group during the first nine months of the current year, despite the adverse impact of the EGP devaluation against the USD on Group revenues. He noted that the solid results underscore the Group's ability to turn opportunities into tangible outcomes, and that thoughtful investment and strategic planning are the foundation of success in achieving profits despite challenges.

As the year-end approaches, Rokk stated that the company remains committed to achieving positive growth rates in the coming period. He highlighted that growth is supported by recent expansions, especially amid expectations of price recovery and stability, which are expected to contribute to profit growth and enhance operational efficiency across the investment portfolio. He attributed the achievements to the dil-

igent efforts of the management team and employees, along with the strategic initiatives undertaken by the company. Rokk expressed confidence in the Group's ability to capitalize on attractive growth opportunities, ensuring continued growth and success amid dynamic operating conditions.

Fertilizers and petrochemicals sector

Rokk noted that revenues from the fertilizers and petrochemicals sector reached \$74 million during the third quarter of 2024, while net profit totaled \$28 million, with a 4-point improvement in the net profit margin to reach 38 percent.

He pointed out that the Group benefited from an increased stake in Alexandria Fertilizer Company (AlexFert), enabling the company to achieve positive results driven by an 11 percent quarter-on-quarter increase in urea export prices to \$335 per ton. He expressed confidence in the company's ability to continue achieving strong results in the coming period, supported by global urea price increases and steady gas supplies thanks to recent Egyptian government efforts. AlexFert recorded revenues of \$47 million during the third quarter of 2024, with net profit reaching \$18 million, and the net profit margin expanding to 38 percent.

Meanwhile, Sprea Misr recorded revenues of \$27 million during the third quarter of 2024, reflecting a quarter-on-quarter increase of 3 percent, supported by gradual price recovery. Net profit reached \$10 mil-

lion, with the net profit margin expanding to 38 percent in the third quarter of 2024.

Energy sector

On a related note, revenues from the Energy and Energy-Related segment totaled \$57 million during the third quarter of 2024, marking a year-on-year increase of 12 percent and a 57 percent quarter-on-quarter increase. This performance was driven by strong results from both NatEnergy and the North Sinai offshore gas concession. The segment's net profit amounted to \$15 million, with an increase in the net profit margin to 26 percent.

NatEnergy reported revenues of \$42 million in the third quarter of 2024, representing a year-on-year growth of 15 percent, supported by growth in Kahraba's electricity distribution activities, along with progress by Fayum Gas in its high-pressure steel pipeline project. NatEnergy achieved net profit of \$10 million in the third quarter of 2024, with positive future prospects supported by anticipated increases in natural gas connection fees and electricity tariffs, which will help improve profit margins.

Furthermore, the North Sinai offshore gas concession generated revenues of \$15 million during the third quarter of 2024, representing a year-on-year growth of 5 percent and an 11 percent quarter-on-quarter increase, driven by successful commissioning of new wells that boosted production volumes. Net profit

for the period reached \$6.5 million, with a net profit margin of 43 percent.

Insurance sector

Revenues from the insurance and diversified segment amounted to \$22 million during the third quarter of 2024, supported by the segment's continued strong performance from the previous quarter. Delta Insurance, the largest contributor to the segment's revenues, generated \$18 million during the third quarter of 2024, a year-on-year growth of 20 percent, driven by revaluation of insured assets and rising insurance premiums, along with improved returns on the insurance portfolio supported by high interest rates. Delta Insurance's net profit contribution to EKH grew by 28 percent year-on-year to \$4 million in the third quarter of 2024, translating to a growth of over 97 percent in EGP terms, reflecting the strong fundamentals and significant growth potential of the sector.

It is worth noting that Egypt Kuwait Holding Company, established in 1997 with issued and paid-in capital of \$282 million and listed on both Boursa Kuwait and the Egyptian Exchange, is one of the Middle East's leading and fastest-growing investment entities. The company's diversified investment portfolio spans five main sectors, including fertilizers and petrochemicals, gas distribution, power generation and distribution, as well as insurance and non-banking financial services.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US inflation ticks higher; British growth slows

KUWAIT: Inflation in the US rose in October, with the year-over-year figure rising 2.6 percent, up from 2.4 percent the previous month. The month-over-month figure rose 0.2 percent, meeting expectations and matching the rise seen in the previous month. Meanwhile, core inflation rose 3.3 percent y/y, unchanged from the previous month. The monthly core price increase stood at 0.3 percent, meeting expectations and the same pace seen in September. The main contribution to the rise in the figures came from housing and shelter, which accounted for half of the monthly all items increase. Expectations for a rate cut in December are currently around 58 percent.

US producer price index

In October 2024, US factory gate prices rose by 0.2 percent month-on-month, following a revised 0.1 percent increase in September, aligning with expectations. Services prices increased by 0.3 percent (up from 0.2 percent in September), driven significantly by a 3.6 percent rise in portfolio management costs. Other sectors with price increases included machinery and vehicle wholesaling, airline services, computer retailing, outpatient care, and cable services. Goods prices rose slightly by 0.1 percent, ending a two-month decline, with carbon steel scrap prices surging 8.4 percent and increases noted for meats, diesel, vegetables, and oilseeds. Year-on-year, the Producer Price Index (PPI) rose by 2.4 percent, above September's 1.9 percent and the 2.3 percent forecast. Core PPI increased by 0.3 percent monthly (up from 0.2 percent), and the annual core rate reached 3.1 percent, surpassing expectations of 3 percent.

Unemployment claims

In the week ending November 9th, US unemployment benefit claims dropped by 4,000 to 217,000, the lowest since May, and below the expected increase to 223,000. Continuing unemployment claims decreased by 19,000 to 1,873,000 in late October. This data reinforces the strength of the US labor market despite recent Federal Reserve tightening, giving the central bank flexibility to slow monetary easing if inflation persists. The four-week average for initial claims, which smoothens out fluctuations, decreased by 6,250 to 221,000. On a non-seasonally adjusted basis, initial claims rose by 16,735 to 229,478, mainly due to a rise in California offsetting a decline in Michigan.

Retail sales

In October 2024, US retail sales rose by 0.4 percent month-over-month, surpassing expectations of a 0.3 percent increase, following a revised 0.8 percent gain in September. The largest sales increases were seen in electronics & appliance stores (2.3 percent), auto dealers (1.9 percent), and food services & drinking places (0.7 percent). Gains were also recorded in building materials, nonstore retailers, general merchandise, food & beverage, and gasoline stations. However, sales fell in categories like miscellaneous store retailers (-1.6 percent), furniture (-1.3 percent), sporting goods, and clothing. Excluding autos, sales edged up 0.1 percent. Core retail

sales, excluding key categories tied to GDP calculations, decreased by 0.1 percent. The US Dollar Index closed the week at 106.69.

Words from ECB

The European Central Bank (ECB) indicated a potential move towards rate cuts during its December meeting, driven by expectations of easing inflation, particularly from lower energy prices. However, concerns remain over domestic inflation pressures like strong wage growth and weak labor productivity. Despite a positive inflation outlook, the ECB emphasized the need for more data before making policy decisions. Policymakers highlighted that any rate cut would rely on the economic outlook and clear evidence of reduced inflation pressures, signaling a cautious, data-dependent approach. The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0541.

UK GDP

The UK economy slowed more than expected in the third quarter, following an unexpected contraction in September as concerns mounted over the Labor government's fiscal plans. According to the Office for National Statistics, GDP rose by just 0.1 percent compared to the previous quarter, falling short of the 0.2 percent growth economists had anticipated. In September alone, the economy shrank by 0.1 percent, contrasting sharply with the forecasted 0.2 percent expansion. The disappointing figures pose a challenge to Prime Minister Keir Starmer's pledge to boost UK growth to 2.5 percent annually, aiming to make it the fastest among the Group of Seven economies. After leading G-7 growth in the first half of the year and rebounding from last year's mild recession, the UK's growth slowed significantly from 0.5 percent in the second quarter. The decline appears linked to growing concerns over Labor's fiscal policies, with consumer and business confidence plunging in September amid fears of tax increases. These fears materialized on October 30, when Labor announced £40 billion (\$50.7 billion) in tax hikes, with businesses bearing most of the burden. The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2617.

Australia's unemployment

Australia's unemployment rate came in at 4.1 percent, marking the third month of steady unemployment after reaching 3.5 percent in June. The participation rate increased to 67.2 percent, while the underemployment rate remained at 6.3 percent. Meanwhile, markets are currently expecting no change from the Reserve Bank of Australia, with only 2.5 bps priced in for a December cut.

Australia's wage growth

Australia's wage growth showed signs of moderation in Q3 2024, with the seasonally adjusted wage price index rising 3.5 percent year-on-year, down from 4.1 percent in the previous quarter. This marked the weakest growth since late 2022 and fell short of expectations for a 3.6 percent increase. Public sector wage growth outpaced private sector growth for the first time since 2020, at 3.7 percent compared to 3.5 percent. Meanwhile, quarterly wage growth remained steady at 0.8 percent, unchanged from the prior two quarters, and below market forecasts of 0.9 percent. These figures underline a cooling in wage growth momentum. The AUD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6461.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30760.



Egypt Kuwait Holding

STRONG FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REFLECTS THE GROUP'S RESILIENCE

9M 2024 Key Performance Indicators

Net Profit

USD 124 Million

Total Revenue

USD 475 Million

Earnings Per Share (EPS)

9.43 US Cent/Share

Total Shareholders' Equity

USD 483 Million

Total Assets

USD 1.5 Billion

www.ekholding.com

Business

Gulf Bank receives Mastercard award for 'highest tokenized debit portfolio in Kuwait'

Recognition during Mastercard East Arabia Business Forum

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has received the prestigious "Highest tokenized debit portfolio in Kuwait" award from Mastercard, recognizing the bank's outstanding efforts in advancing digital security and providing innovative digital payment solutions for its cards and services. This award is an international recognition from Mastercard for Gulf Bank's exceptional achievements in Tokenization – the process of converting sensitive data, such as card numbers, into secure tokens that can be used for digital payments without exposing the original information. This technology reduces security risks and enhances the customer experience by providing an additional layer of protection for digital payments.

After the award presentation at the recent Mastercard East Arabia Business Forum in Singapore, attended by numerous banking industry leaders, Mohammed Taqi, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said, "We are proud to receive this distinguished award from Mastercard, which reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation and delivering secure, advanced banking solutions to our customers."

Taqi added, "We are always striving to offer the best digital banking services that align with the latest developments in the payment world, and we believe that Tokenization technology is a key component in enhancing the security of electronic payment transactions for our customers."

He continued, "This award marks an important

Mohammed Taqi: The award reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation and delivering secure, advanced banking solutions to our customers.

milestone in Gulf Bank's strategy to offer modern and secure banking services, reinforcing our position as a leading banking institution in Kuwait and the region." Mastercard is a global leader in digital payment solutions, dedicated to delivering innovative technologies that improve the payment experience while ensuring security and convenience for both online and in-store transactions. 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.



Strong data feeds doubts about Fed December rate cut

WASHINGTON: Strong US economic and inflation data continue to reshape the debate among Federal Reserve policymakers over the pace and extent of interest rate cuts as investors on Friday further downgraded their expectations for a rate reduction at the central bank's December meeting.

In the latest round of comments on US monetary policy, US central bankers continued to express faith that inflation was coming under control and would allow the central bank to lower its benchmark rate over time from the current 4.5 percent-4.75 percent range, a level felt to discourage spending and investment, to a more neutral setting. But how fast they do that, and what level represents "neutral," remain under debate.

with Fed Chair Jerome Powell on Thursday saying the economy's continued strength meant the Fed could take its time with the discussion.

The signs of increasing hesitancy over what a month ago had been baked-in expectations for a quick run of cuts into next year come as a major political shift is underway following Donald Trump's victory in last week's election, with Wall Street trying to reconcile what it sees as further inflationary pressures arising in the year ahead as the incoming Republican president pushes for tax cuts, higher tariffs and a crackdown on immigration. Fed officials have been reluctant to say they are taking that into account, but investors already are and market bets on how quickly and how much the Fed will cut rates have ratcheted down over the last week.

Boston Fed President Susan Collins said she did not see a big urgency to lower rates but did not rule out another rate cut at the Fed's next meeting on Dec 17-18.

"I certainly wouldn't take December off the table. But again, we're not on a preset path and

so we'll have a look carefully at the data and see what makes sense when we get" to the next Federal Open Market Committee meeting, she told Bloomberg TV. And while several Fed policymakers appear to be on the fence over another rate cut in December, they have also signaled that skipping a meeting would mean they are going slower on rate cuts rather than stopping altogether.

Thomas Barkin, president of the Richmond Fed, told Yahoo! Finance that he liked how Dallas Fed President Lorie Logan put it earlier this week: that a captain should be "slowing the boat down as you approach the dock."

Data that arrived Friday morning continued firmer than expected, with strong retail sales and rising prices for imported goods. After the data, traders reduced bets on a December rate cut to around a 60 percent chance from about 70 percent on Thursday. Citigroup's gauge of the degree to which incoming data exceeds consensus expectations among economists was at a seven-month high as of Thursday ahead of the stronger-than-expected retail sales figures.

Speaking to CNBC, Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee acknowledged that one important indicator of inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index stripped of food and energy costs, remains "too high" at an estimated 2.8 percent for October. And, he said, if officials disagree on where they see the "neutral" stopping point, "it does make sense to start slowing at some point how rapidly you are getting there just to figure out ... are we at neutral, are we getting close?"

But he also reiterated his broad expectation that inflation will continue to fall towards the Fed's 2 percent target, and in an interview with Bloomberg TV later Friday signaled he feels the Fed will end up cutting rates by a quarter of a percentage point next month and by another full percentage point over the course of next year, as Fed policymakers projected in September. Those projections also reflected an expectation that the policy rate would fall to 2.9 percent some time in 2026. Investors in contracts tied to that rate now see rates staying as much as a percentage point higher than that. — Reuters

شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 14 NOVEMBER 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,805	7,830.71	1.7%	2.1%	4.7%	812,042,061	254,500,359	44,217	16.3	1.3	81.0%
Main Market	8,397	6,621.85	1.3%	1.5%	18.9%	1,840,821,111	262,846,676	81,401	15.3	1.0	19.0%
All Share	44,202	7,298.84	1.6%	2.0%	7.1%	2,652,863,172	517,347,036	125,618	15.4	1.1	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,810	1,789.59	1.9%	2.5%	8.6%	250,202,799	114,846,106	16,539	17.8	1.5	60.65%
Basic Materials	475	841.78	-0.2%	-1.0%	12.8%	3,049,145	2,007,616	601	8.8	2.1	1.07%
Consumer Discretionary	1,457	2,127.23	4.1%	7.6%	32.6%	195,801,817	55,682,913	14,983	22.9	1.5	3.30%
Consumer Staples	305	1,003.86	-7.0%	-7.7%	52.4%	2,398,379	1,260,943	429	27.2	1.6	0.69%
Energy	239	1,174.07	5.0%	2.1%	23.7%	37,297,331	3,080,651	1,920	10.0	1.2	0.54%
Financial Services	5,182	1,480.27	1.2%	2.1%	22.1%	1,130,116,498	172,327,998	44,467	13.7	1.1	11.72%
Health Care	218	454.22	-3.5%	-3.5%	-5.8%	98	75,786	2	47.2	1.5	0.49%
Industrials	2,418	713.02	1.4%	2.1%	-21.5%	420,621,891	71,647,098	20,370	14.1	1.0	5.47%
Insurance	818	1,995.41	-0.6%	-3.4%	-13.0%	8,972,976	865,024	733	9.6	1.1	1.85%
Real Estate	2,951	1,390.73	-0.3%	-1.3%	14.7%	553,054,982	78,789,093	20,864	16.1	0.8	6.68%
Technology	15	1,098.52	2.7%	1.3%	89.9%	2,993,018	454,750.66	257	457.6	1.3	0.03%
Telecommunications	3,136	1,026.38	2.0%	1.3%	-7.1%	28,468,568	13,278,726	3,602	15.8	1.4	7.10%
Utilities	178	426.32	7.3%	4.5%	-6.4%	19,885,670	3,106,042	851	18.4	1.4	0.40%

Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFIC	110	48.45%	46,673,999	4,342,158,925	1,052
KGL	65.9	40.21%	33,117,823	1,910,359	1,372
OULAFUEL	360	35.85%	110,445,349	39,430,120	7,986
TAHSILAT	49	24.05%	11,451,618	536,580	519
WARBACAP	217	21.91%	38,201,565	8,072,416	2,779

Top Losers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
PAPCO	230	-22.03%	3,149,826	794,430	840
KBT	122	-10.95%	188,322,754	25,823,758	3,623
UNICAP	227	-10.28%	18,208,138	4,596,582	1,757
HAYATCOMM	69.8	-9.11%	1,865,630	132,260	127
MEZZAN	901	-7.40%	1,187,226	1,120,872	259

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KBT	122	-10.95%	188,322,754	25,823,758	3,623
AGLTY	269	5.08%	121,126,590	33,125,638	5,688
OULAFUEL	360	35.85%	110,445,349	39,430,120	7,986
MENA	180	7.78%	110,199,912	21,016,553	5,865
ALSAFAT	114	5.56%	108,245,952	12,331,965	2,527

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	743	2.48%	68,165,499	50,309,985	6,395
OULAFUEL	360	35.85%	110,445,349	39,430,120	7,986
AGLTY	269	5.08%	121,126,590	33,125,638	5,688
KBT	122	-10.95%	188,322,754	25,823,758	3,623
NIH	356	14.84%	59,808,454	23,538,117	7,703

VALUE TRADED

All Share Price Index YTD

Market Summary:

- Premier and Main markets' volume and value rose by 35%, 38%, and 50%, 65%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indexes continued to move strongly in an upward trend.
- Technically, the All-Share Index closed at 7,298, with support levels at 7,286, 7,248, and 7,233, and resistance at 7,303. The Premier Index closed at 7,830, with support levels at 7,811, 7,767, and 7,737, and resistance at 7,834. The Main Index closed at 6,621, with support levels at 6,603, 6,562, and 6,523, and resistance at 6,625.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Mushroom houses for Gaza? Arab designers offer home-grown innovations

As winter descends on Gaza's tent cities, emergency housing made from mushrooms could keep out the cold -- just one of several sustainable, home-grown innovations put forward by Arab designers at an expo in Dubai. Lightweight, warm and versatile, mushroom-based structures are an appealing alternative to the flimsy shelters now housing many thousands of Gazans displaced by more than a year of war, according to Dima Al Srouri, a member of the ReRoot initiative. "Right now, there is a huge problem with the shelters that they're receiving from NGOs," she said at Dubai Design Week, which featured a range of environment-friendly innovations.

"When the winter comes, when it rains, when it's too cold, they're not working really." Mycelium, the root-like part of a fungus, can be grown in combination with organic matter to fit different-shaped moulds, producing a strong building material that can be cultivated anywhere. It's "a healthy material because it's fully natural", urban planning expert Srouri, who is Palestinian, said next to a prototype shelter -- a roomy, enclosed structure with windows and a sloping roof. "It's something that can provide the solution to extreme weather conditions to protect them from the extreme cold."

ReRoot's emergency housing was not the only example of sustainable Arab design at the annual exhibition in



Visitors walk past a mycelium-based modular shelter, designed by the ReRoot initiative, as an alternative to the flimsy shelters now housing many thousands of Gazans displaced by more than a year of war, during the annual Design Week in Dubai. — AFP photos

Dubai, which closed on Sunday. Contrasting with the towering high-rises that dominate the city's skyline, Emirati architect and designer Abdalla Almulla is championing a very different approach: low-rise buildings made from recycled construction waste. Almulla has teamed up with the Swiss company Oxara, which makes a low-carbon cement replacement, to create structures built with discarded concrete from demolished buildings and roofing made from palm fronds -- a nod to the Gulf's ancient construction techniques.

"When I look back, especially in the region where I'm living, a lot of the ar-

chitecture and designs were based on finding what's surrounding you, finding material around you and then being innovative and creating out of it," Almulla said. The model is intended as a riposte to the "world of abundance" that has come to characterize modern design, he added. "Whenever you want... something, you need to ship it from halfway around the world."

Sustainability 'not a luxury'

As well as the large-scale installations, smaller objects were on display, including furniture made from recycled materials and a 3D-printed electric mo-



torcycle. Faheem Khan, a Qatar-based designer, developed a bottle that minimizes water consumption during Wudu, the ritual washing performed by Muslims before prayer. Elif Resitoglu of Isola Design, the Milan-based studio that organized the exhibition, said sustainability was a "new thing" for Arab designers.

But they "blended it into their culture", designing objects that "a Western designer could not actually design", she said. While the region is more concerned with conflicts than environmental matters, tackling the issue "is not a luxury", said Srouri. "For me, I always believe that the best way to do activism is

through your work," she said. "You don't have to shout out loud on the streets... Sometimes the solution can be through your knowledge and expertise and sharing it to solve other people's challenges."

The UAE, a major oil producer which hosted the UN's COP28 climate talks last year, is one of the world's largest emitters of CO2 per capita. It is also one of the hottest regions in the world, making it especially vulnerable to climate change. According to climate data, the Middle East is warming at a rate nearly twice as fast as the global average. —AFP



Mountmakers specialists work on assembling the skeleton of an Apatosaurus named "Vulcain", displayed at the Dampierre castle prior to an auction in Dampierre-en-Yvelines, south of Paris, on July 10, 2024. —AFP

Dinosaur skeleton fetches €6 million in Paris sale

The skeleton of a 22-metre-long dinosaur (70 feet) fetched six million euros (\$6.4 million) Saturday, AFP learned from auction houses Collin du Boscage and Barbarossa. An anonymous collector snapped up the vegetarian apatosaurus, which was dug up in the United States, for 4.7 million euros rising to 6 million including costs. The buyer pledged to allow it to be displayed in a museum. "We are happy that the buyer intends to lend it to an institution," said Olivier Collin du Boscage.

The skeleton of the giant herbivore is made up of 75 to 80 percent of the original bones and is roughly 150 million years old. Auctioneers Barbarossa said on its website that it was "the biggest dinosaur ever sold at auction worldwide". Once excavated, the remains were sent to France for two years' of restoration work at the Paleomooove Laboratory in Luberon, south-east France.

The giant creature's skeleton, which weighed around twenty tons during its lifetime, spent the summer in the orange of Dampierre-en-Yvelines, a chateau some 50 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Paris, where the sale took place. The remains of the apatosaurus, nicknamed Vulcan, were discovered in 2018 in Wyoming, the United States, where the law allows individuals to acquire concessions in the hope of excavating prehistoric bones.

Excavations took place between 2019 and 2021, financed by a French investor. The fossil, which includes 300 bones, was then shipped to France to be restored. Its presale value at auction had been estimated at between three and five million euros. Under the contract of sale the future owner undertakes to give paleontologists access to the dinosaur to study it. —AFP

Noel Gallagher's 'best' guitar sells for £226,800

The guitar described by Noel Gallagher as "the best in the world", which he played on the third Oasis album "Be Here Now", sold at auction on Saturday for £226,800 (\$286,000). The custom Silver Sparkle Gibson Les Paul Florentine guitar that starred on the 1997 album was one of Gallagher's primary guitars during the height of Oasis's fame.

It was made for him at Gibson's custom shop and appeared in performances on The David Letterman Show and Saturday Night Live. "It's not one of the best guitars. It's the best guitar," Gallagher said of the instrument in a 1997 interview with Spin magazine. The guitar was sold in a sale of entertainment memorabilia by online auction group Propstore. —AFP



A man carries the guitar described by Noel Gallagher as "the best in the world". — AFP

Sotheby's to pay \$6.25 million in tax fraud case

The auction house Sotheby's will pay \$6.25 million to settle charges that it helped art buyers avoid paying taxes. The office of New York state attorney general Letitia James said Sotheby's, whose headquarters is in New York, helped collectors dodge taxes of tens of millions of dollars in art from 2010 to 2020. It said the auction house encouraged buyers to state fraudulently that they were acquiring works for resale later. Such acquisitions can be tax-exempt whereas works bought for private use are in fact subject to tax.

Sotheby's defended itself saying these transactions happened "many years ago" and the auction house actually provided evidence that James used to obtain the settlement now being announced. "Sotheby's admitted no wrongdoing in connection with today's settlement," it said in a statement seen by AFP.

James, who brought the case in 2020, said the tax-dodging clients included one identified as the "Collector" who bought \$27 million of art from Sotheby's between 2010 and 2015 using tax exemption forms known as resale certificates. These papers certify that a buyer is exempt from paying sales tax because the purchase is only for resale, not for private enjoyment. —AFP

Yoko Ono owns Lennon's watch, Swiss court rules

Yoko Ono is the rightful owner of a watch she gifted to her husband John Lennon shortly before he was murdered, Switzerland's supreme court ruled Thursday after it resurfaced at an auctioneers. The highly rare Patek Philippe 2499 timepiece was given to the former Beatle on October 9, 1980 for his 40th birthday, two months before he was shot dead. The 18-carat yellow gold Swiss watch was stolen and passed through various hands before a collector took it to a Geneva auction house for a valuation in 2014. The auctioneers contacted Ono, who did not know the watch was missing.

"Yoko Ono is the owner of John Lennon's watch," the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland ruled, as it dismissed the collector's appeal against a judgement by the Geneva Cantonal Court of Justice. Ono bought the watch in New York City in 1980 and had the back engraved with the inscription: "(JUST LIKE) STARTING OVER LOVE YOKO 10-9-1980 N.Y.C.". Released in late October 1980, a few months after it was recorded, "(Just Like) Starting Over" was Lennon's last single issued during his lifetime. Lennon was shot dead outside the couple's apartment building in New York on December 8, 1980. The watch was the last gift Ono gave Lennon before his murder.

Stolen by Ono's driver

The Patek Philippe was listed in the inventory of Lennon's estate and was kept in a room in their apartment. A Turkish man who had been Ono's driver from 1995 to 2006, handed over the watch to an intermediate owner in 2010, along with 86 other items that had belonged to Lennon, court documents showed. It was later handed to a German auction house, which sold it in 2014, for 600,000 euros, to an Italian collector living in Hong Kong.

The collector gave it to a Geneva auction house for a valuation later that year. They raised the alarm with Ono.

In 2018, the collector filed a court action seeking to establish his status as the watch's owner, with Ono opposing the move. In 2022 a Geneva lower court found Ono was the sole owner—a decision upheld on appeal in 2023 by the higher Geneva Cantonal Court of Justice. The Italian collector then appealed to the Federal Supreme Court, which upheld the cantonal court decision.



British musician John Lennon (right) and his wife Yoko Ono pose for photographers in Cannes on May 17, 1971 where they presented their movies "Apotheosis" and "The Flu" at the 25th International Film Festival. —AFP

The Supreme Court said it was not disputed that Ono had inherited the watch after Lennon's death. The Cantonal Court of Justice found that the watch "had been stolen by the former driver", the Supreme Court said, adding that there was no evidence to show that Ono intended to donate "something as special as the watch", with its particular inscription. "Since it is a stolen item, the collector, now the appellant, could not acquire ownership of the watch" when he purchased it in 2014, and according to German law, this applies "regardless of whether or not the purchaser was in good faith as to the origin of the item". Lennon's watch is being held by the Italian dealer's lawyer, under an agreement that it can only be released to the owner designated by a state court. It should therefore return to Ono, now 91. —AFP

Comedian Conan O'Brien to host Oscars

Comedian Conan O'Brien, a former late-night television host, will be the emcee for the Oscars for the first time, taking over from fellow funnyman Jimmy Kimmel, organizers said Friday. O'Brien, 61, will preside over Hollywood's biggest night next March, hoping to maintain -- and even perhaps improve -- on an uptick in ratings seen earlier this year. "America demanded it and now it's happening: Taco Bell's new Cheesy Chalupa Supreme. In other news, I'm hosting the Oscars," O'Brien quipped in a statement from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Academy CEO Bill Kramer and President Janet Yang called O'Brien "the perfect person to help lead our global celebration of film with his brilliant humor, his love of movies and his live TV expertise." "His remarkable ability to connect with audiences will bring viewers together to

do what the Oscars do best -- honor the spectacular films and filmmakers of this year," they said in the statement.

Executive producers Raj Kapoor and Katy Mullan hailed O'Brien as "incredibly witty, charismatic and funny." O'Brien, a



US TV host Conan O'Brien performs during the "Nobel Peace Prize concert" on Dec 11, 2016 in Oslo, Norway. — AFP

five-time Emmy winner, hosted several late-night talk shows, including "The Tonight Show," and currently hosts the podcast "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend." He previously served as a writer for "Saturday Night Live."

Kimmel first hosted the Oscars in 2017 and 2018. He was then brought back in 2023 after the previous year's ceremony featured actor Will Smith's infamous on-stage slap of Chris Rock. Kimmel also hosted the gala this past March. Almost 20 million tuned in for the last Oscars -- a welcome upward trend for organizers of live awards shows, which have been shedding viewers as they compete for viewers with streamers and social media highlight clips. The 97th Academy Awards will be held on March 2, 2025 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. —AFP



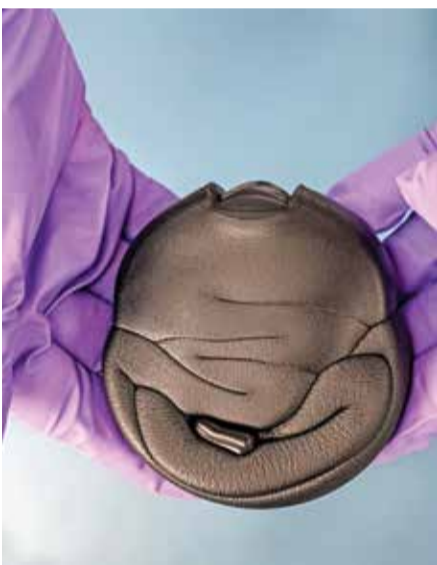
India's vinyl revival finds its groove



An employee inspects a freshly stamped vinyl record at Samanvii Digimedia Art and Solutions pressing plant in Navi Mumbai.



An employee places a hot PVC puck in a vinyl stamper unit.



An employee holds a hot PVC puck before placing it in a stamper unit.



Royal Music Collection store owner Abdul Razzak, searches for a vinyl record from his collection, for a customer at his shop in Mumbai.

Melting plastic pellets into chunky discs then squashed flat, a worker presses records in what claims to be the first vinyl plant to open in India in decades. Warm music with a nostalgic crackle fills the room -- a Bollywood tune from a popular Hindi movie. "I'm like a kid in a candy shop," grins Saji Pillai, a music publishing veteran in India's entertainment capital Mumbai, who began pressing in August. The revival of retro records among Indian music fans mirrors a global trend that has seen vinyl sales explode from the United States to Britain and Brazil.

Pillai, 58, entered the music industry as "vinyl was just going out". He spent the last few years importing records from Europe for his music label clients. But he took the decision to open his own plant -- cutting import taxes and shipping times -- to focus on Indian artists and market tastes from Bollywood to indie pop after recording "growing interest". Retailers including Walmart have embraced the retro format, and megastars including Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish and Harry Styles have sent pressing plants around the world into overdrive. In India, the scale of revival is far smaller -- in part due to lower household incomes -- but younger fans are now joining in the trend. Pillai admitted the industry was still "challenging" but said the market was "slowly growing".

'Show their love'

Vinyl record systems do not come cheap. A decent turntable, sound system and 10 records cost fans 50,000-100,000 rupees (\$600-\$1,180), the lower end of which is more than double the average monthly salary. But for those who can afford it, the old system offers a new experience. "You go to the collection, take it out carefully... You end up paying more attention," said 26-year-old Sachin Bhatt, a design director who grew up downloading songs. "You hear new details,

you make new mental observations... There is a ritual to it."

Vinyl records create a "personal, tangible connection to the music we love", Bhatt added. "I know a lot of young kids who have vinyl, even if they don't have a player. It's a way for them to show their love for the music." Vinyl is a "completely different" experience than "shoving his AirPods" into his ears and going for a run, said 23-year-old

Mumbai record store The Revolver Club, saying the growing interest dovetailed with the wider availability of audio gear and records. Listening sessions organized by the store bring in more than 100 fans. Despite the growth in popularity, India's vinyl sales remain a drop in the global ocean. While the world's most populous country has one of the biggest bases of music listeners, with local songs racking up big views

side store, 62-year-old Abdul Razzak is the bridge between India's old vinyl culture and newer fans, selling up to 400 second-hand records each month to customers aged from 25 to 75. He sells records for 550-2,500 rupees (\$6.50-\$30), and believes new vinyl pressed in India will prove popular if it is priced within that bracket.

For Pillai and his small factory, it provides an opportunity. He could -- if



Royal Music Collection store puts vinyl records on display at his shop in Mumbai.



An employee reviews the labels of a new batch of vinyl records before stamping at Samanvii Digimedia Art and Solutions pressing plant in Navi Mumbai.

Mihir Shah, with a collection of around 50 records. "It makes me feel present," he said. Catering to these fans is a group of record stores, complementing the old records on sale in alleyway shops and flea markets.

'Romance'

"There's been a huge resurgence," said Jude De Souza, 36, who runs the

on YouTube and music streaming platforms, its publishing industry is small by global revenue standards.

Music publishing revenues hit about \$100 million in the 2023 fiscal year -- far smaller than Western markets -- according to accountancy giant EY. That is partly due to the lower spending power of its fans, coupled with runaway piracy. At a small road-

demand was there -- "easily" triple the factory's monthly production capacity of more than 30,000, something he hopes will come. "Even though people love digital, the touch feel is not there," Pillai said. "Here there's ownership, there's love for it, there's romance, there's love, there's life." -- AFP



Vinyl records on display.



Royal Music Collection store owner Abdul Razzak, arranges vinyl records after opening his shop in Mumbai.



Employees inspect vinyl records for dust and scratches before packaging at Samanvii Digimedia Art and Solutions pressing plant in Navi Mumbai. — AFP photos

Glastonbury 2025 tickets sell out in 35 minutes

Tickets for next year's Glastonbury Festival sold out within 35 minutes on Sunday, with more than 200,000 people expected to attend the world-renowned musical celebration in rural southwest England. Sales opened at 9.00am (0900 GMT) and event organizers posted on the social media platform X at 9.35am that "Tickets for Glastonbury 2025 have now sold out."

"Thanks to everyone who bought one and sorry to those who missed out,

on a morning when demand was much higher than supply. There will be a resale of any cancelled or returned tickets in spring 2025," they added. British-Albanian pop sensation Dua Lipa and indie-rockers Coldplay were among the headliners in 2024, and talks are reportedly already under way to secure acts for next year's festival, which will run from June 25 to 29.

The sight of thousands of tents dotting the fields at Worthy Farm in the

village of Pilton has become one of the symbols of British summer since the festival was first held 1970. Alongside around 3,000 performances set to take place across some 80 stages, the festival also features night-long parties, art installations and lively parades. The standard ticket for next year's event was priced at £373.50 (\$471.50). Glasto, as the festival is popularly known, was inspired by Britain's 1960s counter culture and hippie

movements, with its first iteration as the Pilton Festival in 1970.

Glam rockers T.Rex were the first headliners. Since then, it has attracted cult status and big names from David Bowie and Paul McCartney to Stormzy and Elton John, who last year played his final UK gig. Organizer Emily Eavis has said the event is set to take a break in 2026 to "give the land a rest". -- AFP



Victoria Kjaer Theilvig from Denmark reacts as she is crowned after winning the 73rd edition of the Miss Universe pageant in Mexico City on Nov 16, 2024. - AFP photos



Newly-crowned Miss Universe 2024 Victoria Theilvig celebrates amid other participants.

DENMARK'S VICTORIA THEILVIG CROWNED MISS UNIVERSE



Victoria Kjaer Theilvig was crowned Miss Universe on Saturday, the first contestant from Denmark to achieve the honor. The 21-year-old dancer, entrepreneur, and animal rights activist beat out more than 120 contestants in the pageant's 73rd edition held in Mexico City. First runner-up was Chidimma Adetshina, a law student representing Nigeria, followed by Maria Fernanda Beltran of Mexico, Suchata Chuangsri of Thailand, and Ileana Marquez of Venezuela. Marquez, 28, had earlier made history as the first mother to be crowned Miss Venezuela.

After the 2023 competition included married, plus-sized and transgender contestants, this year's featured women older than 28 – the cutoff in previous

pageants. Among them was Beatrice Njoya of Malta, who at 40 became the oldest woman to reach the grand finale. Adetshina was formerly a Miss South Africa finalist before she was hounded over a nationality row which forced her to represent Nigeria.

It was the fifth time Mexico has hosted the contest, which has been criticized for promoting outmoded ideas of femininity. The pageant has sought to evolve and rebrand itself after being acquired by JKN Global Group, headed by Thai media mogul and transgender rights campaigner Anne Jakapong Jakrajutatip. In January, the Mexico-based Legacy Holding acquired a 50 percent stake in Miss Universe. - AFP



Newly-crowned Miss Universe 2024 Victoria Kjaer Theilvig from Denmark reacts next to Miss Nigeria, Chidimma Adetshina, after winning the pageant.



Contestants compete during the Miss Universe pageant.

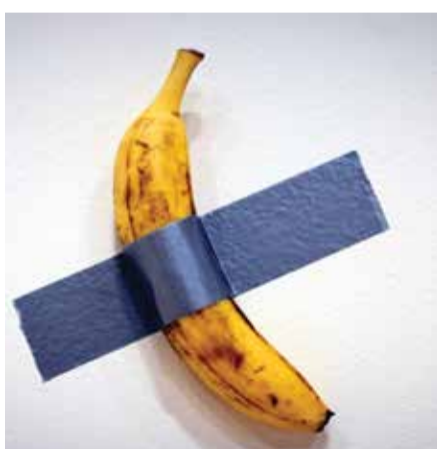


Contestants compete during the Miss Universe pageant.

New York auction records expected for a Magritte... and a banana

With a Magritte painting estimated to sell for nearly \$100 million, drawings by pop artist Keith Haring and... a rather gnarly banana, New York's auction houses will try this week to shake up a stale market. The sale of Magritte's "Empire of Light" ("L'Empire des lumieres"), which will go under the hammer Tuesday night at Christie's, will surely be one of the high points of the autumn season, which will see hundreds of works sold—and hundreds of millions of dollars spent. The seminal 1954 work is one of a series of paintings from the Surrealist master depicting the interplay of shadow and light. Its estimated price is \$95 million, which would easily shatter the previous record for a Magritte, \$79 million in 2022.

Christie's is hoping that with the Magritte and a celebrated 1964 painting of a gas station by the 86-year-old American pop artist Ed Ruscha, it can reinvigorate an art market that has slowed since 2023. The auction house—which is controlled by Artemis, the investment holding compa-



Italian visual artist Maurizio Cattelan's duct-taped Banana entitled "Comedian," is on display during a media preview at Sotheby's in New York.

ny owned by the Pinault family—said sales totalled \$2.1 billion in the first half of 2024. That is down for the second straight year, after a peak of \$4.1 billion in 2022, as the world emerged from the coronavirus pandemic.

'Correction'

"The current market correction, which began in 2023 with global geopolitical unrest, high inflation and interest rates affecting collectors, has spilled into 2024," Bank of America said in a note. "Less marquee estate property in the May sales potentially also dampened bidders' confidence and enthusiasm." For Max Carter, the vice chairman for 20th and 21st century art at Christie's, "our market is very much defined, certainly now, by supply more than demand."

"And this season, we happen to have all of the great estate material, all the great discretionary sales, and we feel very optimistic," Carter said. Sotheby's is hoping to make a tidy profit from the sale of private collections, like that of Sydel Miller, a beauty industry mogul who died this year and whose Florida home reputedly looked like a museum.

The auction house is hoping the collection will generate \$170-205 million in sales, including one of Claude Monet's celebrated paintings of "Wa-

ter Lilies" ("Nymphaes"), which is expected to rake in more than \$60 million alone. Sotheby's, owned by French-Israeli billionaire Patrick Drahi, is also selling a series of 31 crayon drawings done by Haring in the 1980s in blank advertising spaces in the New York City subway system. And one of the highlights of the week will be a fresh banana taped to a wall, a provocative work by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan.

The debut of "Comedian" at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2019 sparked controversy. This is its third iteration—the first two were eaten, according to Sotheby's website. This time, the auction house believes the work, a commentary on what qualifies as art, could go for \$1-1.5 million. The buyer will receive a certificate of authenticity and instructions about how to replace the fruit when it goes bad.—AFP



Yayoi Kusama's sculpture "Pumpkin" is on display during a press preview for Christie's Fall 20/21 Marquee Week in New York.



Important Pair of 'Chameaux' sculpture by François-Xavier Lalanne is on display during a press preview for Christie's Fall 20/21 Marquee Week in New York.



Rene Magritte's "L'empire des lumieres" is on display during a press preview for Christie's Fall 20/21 Marquee Week in New York, Nov 8, 2024.--AFP photos



Claude Monet's painting "The Nymphaes" (left) is on display during a Media Preview at Sotheby's in New York.

Sports

Davis, LeBron power Lakers over Pelicans as Celtics win

Lakers stretch their NBA win streak to five games

WASHINGTON: Anthony Davis had 31 points and 14 rebounds and LeBron James added 21 points to spark the Los Angeles Lakers over New Orleans 104-99 on Saturday. The Lakers, who also got 27 points from rookie Dalton Knecht, stretched their NBA win streak to five games and grabbed a share of third in the Western Conference at 9-4 despite James not managing a fifth consecutive triple double. James finished with 21 points, seven rebounds and five assists while Brandon Ingram had 32 points for the host Pelicans in a losing cause.

"Big time win," James said. "We want all the wins we can get. We don't have no time to feel out the first month or two. Every game is important. To get this win in a hostile environment was big for us." James made back-to-back 3-pointers, the last with 37 seconds remaining to give the Lakers a 101-97 lead. "It was about executing down the stretch and making big plays," said James, who was emotional about his late heroics at age 39 in his 22nd season. "Just living in the moment. Being able to still make plays and make big shots at this point in my career, that's what you live for and you'll never be able to get those moments back when you're done."

A layup by Jeremiah Robinson-Earl lifted the Pelicans within two but James and Knecht sank free throws in the final seconds to seal the victory. "He was spectacular," James said of Knecht, the 17th pick in this year's NBA Draft. "We needed every shot he made. He came through big time for us." At Toronto, Jayson Tatum sank a 28-foot 3-pointer at the buzzer to give the Boston Celtics a 126-123 overtime victory over the Raptors. "I had to make a play," said Tatum, who went only 7-of-19 from the floor but was 5-of-12 from 3-point range. "I missed so many shots in the

second half I was bound to hit one."

Tatum said he takes direction from Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla to have an impact every night, even if it is not always in the same manner. "Joe always challenges me to dominate, however that looks on any given night. Shots aren't always going to fall but are you impacting the game, are you impacting your teammates? That's just what I try to do." Jaylen Brown led the Celtics with 27 points while Tatum just missed a triple double with 24 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists. Austrian center Jakob Poeltl led Toronto with an NBA career-high 35 points.

No Wemby in Spurs loss

At Charlotte, LaMelo Ball scored a game-high 26 points and sank two deciding free throws with 7.1 seconds remaining to give the Charlotte Hornets a 115-114 victory over Milwaukee. Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo - who had his first triple double of the season with 22 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists - missed a potential game-winning jump shot with two seconds remaining. Taurean Prince scored 23 points for the Bucks and Bobby Portis added 21 off the bench.

In another nail-biter, Sacramento star De'Aaron Fox scored 49 points to lead the Kings over visiting Utah 121-117. At Dallas, Kyrie Irving and reserve Daniel Gafford each scored 22 points and Luka Doncic added 16 to lead the host Mavericks over San Antonio 110-93. At 6-7, Dallas snapped a four-game losing skid. "It's good. Our approach for the game was good, shootaround was great, energy was good, everybody was having a positive mindset going into today's game," Gafford said. "We know what we have to do. We're trying to figure it out on the fly."



NEW ORLEANS: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers scrambles for a loose ball with Yves Missi #21 of the New Orleans Pelicans during the first quarter of an NBA game at Smoothie King Center on November 16, 2024. — AFP

The Spurs (6-8) were without star French big man Victor Wembanyama, who missed his first game of the season with a bruised right knee. He suffered the injury on Friday when he banged knees with Davis in

the fourth quarter of a loss to the Lakers. "Wemby" - last season's NBA Rookie of the Year - has averaged 22.7 points, 10.5 rebounds and 3.7 blocked shots a game this season. — AFP

Tough questions as England suffer 5 defeats in a row

TWICKENHAM: England suffered a fifth straight defeat as world champions South Africa won 29-20 at Twickenham on Saturday. It was also their third loss in as many November internationals after last-gasp 24-22 and 42-37 reverses against New Zealand and Australia. England wrap up their 2024 at home to Japan next weekend but beating the Cherry Blossoms is unlikely to ease the pressure on the Red Rose brigade, who have a tough start to next year's Six Nations against champions Ireland before playing France. AFP Sport looks at some of the key issues facing England coach Steve Borthwick and his players.

Leadership

England have lately been found wanting in the final quarter, failing to close out games against the All Blacks and the Wallabies, while on Saturday they were unable to capitalize on the Springboks being a man down when Gerhard Steenekamp was sin-binned with 12 minutes remaining. One reason to appoint a captain is so he can provide leadership in tough situations. Yet England skipper Jamie George, who plays in the physically demanding position of hooker, is routinely replaced early in the second half of games, as happened against South Africa.

"I cannot get my head around why you would take your captain off in the 50th minute?," said Matt Dawson, England's 2003 World Cup-winning scrum-half, told the BBC. George, meanwhile, defended the England set-up by saying: "I think you look at the team that was on at the end, there was plenty of leaders in that team. I think every player, if you speak to every player, they would always want to play every moment of every game." He added: "The hooker jersey is an 80-minute performance across two players."

Leaky defense

England have conceded 12 tries in three Tests this month, with the Springboks running in four at Twickenham on Saturday, including a double for electric wing Cheslin Kolbe. They missed 25 tackles against South Africa and 35 against New Zealand, with those figures a clear sign of their defensive woes. England's cause has been hampered by defence guru Felix Jones quitting just months after joining Borthwick's staff, having helped South Africa win the 2019 and 2023 World Cups. In his absence, England have looked uncertain in deploying Jones's famed "blitz defense", with players not holding their positions in a seeming lack of faith in their team-mates. England's ruck defense has also been a problem, with scrum-half Grant Williams the latest opponent to exploit this vulnerability when bursting between prop Ellis Genge and lock George Martin to score the Springboks' opening try on Saturday.

Smith needs support

A fly-half is often dubbed "the conductor of the orchestra", so important is the No 10 to initiating attacks. But England's Marcus Smith has also appeared to be the Red Rose equivalent of a concert soloist as well in recent times. The 25-year-old Harlequins playmaker enjoyed a superb start against the Springboks, his dummed drop-goal and slick pass to Henry Slade creating the first try of the match for Ollie Sleightholme inside four minutes. England, however, have been without influential scrum-half Alex Mitchell due to injury this month and Smith is being asked to do too much in attack, with the fly-half in need of greater creative support, be it in midfield or from the back three. — AFP

Dominant Sinner cruises into ATP Finals title decider

TURIN: Jannik Sinner has his first ATP Finals crown firmly in his sights after crushing Casper Ruud 6-1, 6-2 on Saturday to set up a title decider with Taylor Fritz, the man he beat to win the US Open two months ago. Roared on by a partisan home crowd in Turin, Sinner extended his winning streak to 10 matches with another dominating display which showed why he is the first Italian to top the ATP's end-of-season world rankings.

The 23-year-old has reacted to losing last year's final to Novak Djokovic by displacing the Serbian tennis icon at the top of the game, winning seven tournaments this season including his debut Grand Slam victory at the Australian Open before triumphing in New York in September. Sinner barely gave Ruud time to breathe as he rattled off the first three games and took the first set in half an hour, before sweeping to a comprehensive victory. "It's a great, great feeling. It's really special playing here," said Sinner. "It's a really important tournament, last year we lost the final, this year we've got a chance to try again and do better than we did last season."

"But regardless of how it goes tomorrow it's been an emotional week with some great moments." Ruud, who hadn't played Sinner for three years before Saturday, compared the shots he faced to "rockets" and was struck by how much he has improved. "You feel like unless you hit a ball with really good depth or close to the sidelines, and even if you hit close to the sidelines but not fast enough, he's going to rip it back at you," Ruud told reporters. "I got to practice with him here earlier leading up to the tournament. In a way I knew what I was facing today."

Fritz's revenge chance

Fritz has a task on his hands to become the first American Finals winner since Pete Sampras 25 years ago as he has been comfortably beaten both times he has faced Sinner this year, with straight sets victories in the US Open final and the group stage in Turin. The world number five is the first US man to make



TURIN: Italy's Jannik Sinner hits a return to Norway's Casper Ruud during their semi-final match at the ATP Finals tennis tournament in Turin on November 16, 2024. — AFP

the final since James Blake in 2006 after a thrilling 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3) triumph over Zverev. Fritz has a chance for revenge on Sinner for the US Open final defeat, following a gruelling match in northern Italy. Both players had chances to take control in a topsy-turvy third set, but failed to capitalize on a host of break points before Fritz held his nerve better in the tie-break to claim a spot in the final.

Fritz managed to save three break points in game five of the third set, just when it looked like Zverev was set to take control of the match. "That was probably the biggest turning point, I lose one of those points and that's probably it. That's kind of how it goes with playing Sascha," said Fritz, who got to the semis two years ago. Zverev was aiming for a tour-leading 70th win of the season but his winning streak was snapped at eight matches after coming into Saturday's clash having not dropped a single set or service game in Turin.

The 27-year-old admitted that he failed to take his chances when it counted after playing arguably the better tennis in the closing two sets of the match. "It was one of those days where everything, it takes times to get going," said Zverev. "It's like it's not a natural flow to movement patterns, to your shots as well, to just how you wake up in the morning. Everything is a little bit more tiring. I felt that way today." On Friday night Zverev described the men's tennis calendar as "crazy", saying that he had not spent more than three consecutive days at home all year. — AFP

Li beats Leong for Kumamoto Masters title in Japan

KUMAMOTO: China's Li Shifeng won his first badminton title since last year's Asian Games after beating Malaysia's Leong Jun Hao in the Kumamoto Masters final in Japan on Sunday. In the women's singles final, Japan's second-seeded Akane Yamaguchi beat Indonesia's fifth seed Gregoria Mariska Tunjung. Li, ranked ninth in the world, won 21-10, 21-13 to see off world number 31 Leong, who was appearing in his first Super 500 final on badminton's world tour.

Li beat Denmark's double Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen in the semi-finals and he was again in superb form in the final, winning in 44 minutes. The 24-year-old celebrated with an acrobatic flip on the court. "Mostly things went to plan," Li told the Badminton World Federation. "Leong is powerful, both of us wanted to win the title. It was my goal to win and it's a really important experience for me." Leong beat a host of top players this week in Japan, including an epic semi-final comeback win over Indonesia's fourth-seeded Jonatan Christie.

But all four of his matches on the way to the final went to three games, and he looked like he had little left in the tank to face Li. "I did my best," said Leong. "In that match I gave it all I had to be my best today." Yamaguchi cruised past Tunjung 21-12, 21-12 in the women's final. It was the two-time world champion's second title of the year, after winning the Japan Open in Yokohama in August. "Playing at home motivated me a lot because of the fans, and my parents were here," she said. "I heard them cheering for me and that gave me extra energy."

In mixed doubles, Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran beat France's Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue 21-16, 10-21, 21-17. China's number two seeds Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning took the women's doubles title, beating Japan's Yuki Fukushima and Mayu Matsumoto 21-15, 21-5 in the final. Indonesia's number three seeds Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto triumphed in men's doubles, beating Japan's Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi 21-15, 17-21, 21-17. — AFP



LEVI, Finland: (Left to right) Second placed Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, winner France's Clement Noel and third placed Switzerland's Loic Meillard celebrate on the podium after the men's slalom event during the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Levi, Finland on November 17, 2024. — AFP

Noel wins first slalom in Levi as Hirscher struggles

PARIS: Olympic champion Clement Noel won the first slalom of the World Cup season in Levi, Finland on Sunday but former champion Marcel Hirscher finished well off the pace in his return to the discipline. Leading after the first run, Noel crossed the line second time round in 54.31 seconds to record a total of 1min 53.98sec as he claimed his 11th victory at the circuit and first since January 2023.

Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen finished 0.80sec off the Frenchman in second place, with Loic Meillard of Switzerland completing the podium a further 0.15sec behind. "It was a hard fight and I'm very happy with my second run. I knew that Henrik (Kristoffersen) had set the bar high and so I gave it my all because I knew it was going to be close," Noel told the International Ski Federation. However, the event did not go so well for Hirscher, back on the circuit at the age of 35 after five years in retirement. The former Austrian skier, who is now racing in the Dutch jersey, has 32 World Cup slalom wins to his name as well as six discipline globes and two world championships. He finished 23rd in his return in the giant slalom in Soelden three weeks ago but struggled to impose himself in Levi. His first run of 1min 02.26sec was a massive 2.59sec behind Noel. — AFP

Sluggish Italy fight to a narrow win over Georgia

GENOA: Italy fought back to beat Georgia 20-17 in their second November Test match on Sunday, a second-half rally saving the Azurri's blushes in Genoa. D deservedly trailing 17-6 at half-time, Italy managed to get their first win of the autumn thanks to a penalty try in the 53rd minute and Alessandro Fusco bundling over the line 10 minutes later. However, Sunday's display was far from the sort which gave Italy their best-ever Six Nations results earlier this year and won't calm fears of a potential hammering at the hands of New Zealand on Saturday.

Gonzalo Quesada's team were thumped by Argentina last weekend and were again suffering from the sluggishness their coach has suggested would affect their performances this month. Italy spent much of the second half bumping up against Georgia's rugged rearguard action and struggled to create openings. They got back into the game when Aka Tabutsadze was penalized for a knock-on which stopped Monty Ioane from scoring a try, and afterwards Italy laid siege to Georgia's try-line until Fusco finally snuck in to dot down the decisive score. — AFP

Sports

Netherlands outclass Hungary, book Nations League quarters

Germany hammer Bosnia and Herzegovina 7-0

PARIS: Netherlands outclassed Hungary with a 4-0 victory in their winner-takes-all Nations League encounter on Saturday while record-setting Germany hammered Bosnia and Herzegovina 7-0. Netherlands and Hungary went into the match tied on five points each and with the winner set to join Germany in ensuring their progress from Group A3 to the quarter-finals.

First-half penalties by Wout Weghorst and Cody Gakpo sent the Oranje on their way, before Denzel Dumfries and Teun Koopmeiners made the game safe in the second period. "There are always things we can improve upon," Dutch captain Virgil van Dijk told SBS6. "But in the end, we deserved to win." The match at the Johan Cruyff Arena was briefly interrupted in the seventh minute following a medical emergency on the Hungarian bench.

The referee stopped play for some 10 minutes while Hungary's assistant coach Adam Szalai received treatment, shielded from view by huddled players and staff members, as well as a large white sheet. Szalai, 36, was stretchered off to applause from spectators and players alike, the Hungarian FA later released a statement saying he was "conscious" and in a "stable condition" at an Amsterdam hospital. "It was a scare of course," Gakpo told NOS. "Fortunately, I just heard he regained consciousness on the pitch. Things like this are more important than football."

Almost forgotten in the aftermath of the worrying incident was the handball by Tamas Nikitscher as the ball was crossed into the Hungarian box. The referee consulted the touchline video monitor and promptly restarted play by pointing to the spot, allowing

Weghorst to sweep the Netherlands in front. Denes Dibusz was the busier of the two goalkeepers as the first period wore on and had to be alert to keep out efforts from Tijani Reijnders and Donyell Malen.

In the 11th minute of added time, Dutch dominance told and Malen was clipped by Zsolt Nagy in the box. Gakpo dispatched the resulting spot-kick, sending Dibusz the wrong way and Netherlands into a two-goal lead. Right-back Dumfries sealed the Netherlands' spot in the quarters as he latched onto Malen's flick-on at the back post and fizzed a volley back into the far corner shortly after the hour. Koopmeiners marked his first international match since 2022 by nodding in a fourth in the 86th minute.

'Good fun'

Germany cemented their spot at the top of the group with a 7-0 win over Bosnia - the heaviest in the six-year history of the Nations League. "It was good fun tonight. After a couple of goals we did the work defensively and then everything came together offensively. The more that happens, the more fun we have on the pitch," German attacker Jamal Musiala told UEFA's website. Musiala opened the floodgates after two minutes with a header from Joshua Kimmich's cross. Tim Kleindienst scored his first goal for Germany in the 23rd minute and Kai Havertz made the game safe eight minutes before the break, slotting home after a slick one-two with Florian Wirtz.

Wirtz then made it four on 50 minutes with a sublime swerving free-kick from wide on the left, before doubling up seven minutes later. "Seeing Flo (Wirtz's) free-kick was kind of nice but just in general everyone played well, had good moments. We're



FREIBURG IM BREISGAU: Germany's midfielder #10 Jamal Musiala (left) scores the opening goal during the UEFA Nations League football match between Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Freiburg on November 16, 2024. — AFP

just playing good football," added Musiala. Substitute Leroy Sane scored Germany's sixth in the 66th minute and Kleindienst completed the rout just over 10 minutes from time as he guided home a pinpoint cross from centre-half Antonio Rudiger. The emphatic result leaves Germany five points ahead of Netherlands with only one match left to play.

In Group B1, Georgia played out a 1-1 draw at home to Ukraine and stay two points ahead of the

fourth-placed visitors. The Czech Republic drew 0-0 in Albania and remain top of the group on eight points, one ahead of Georgia in second and their third-placed opponents. Turkey stayed top of Group B4 with a 0-0 draw at home to Wales, while Iceland beat Montenegro 2-0. Turkey were presented with a golden opportunity to grow their two-point lead over Wales but Kerem Akturkoglu sent his 89th-minute penalty wide. — AFP

NZ win revives France on their road to 2027 World Cup

PARIS: France's hangover from last year's Rugby World Cup included a chastening defeat to Ireland, a drab draw with Italy and a scandal-hit tour of South America. It was far from the ideal way to banish the demons from the one-point quarter-final defeat on home soil to eventual champions South Africa. However, Saturday's 30-29 victory over New Zealand marked a watershed, a clear indication of France's ability to win tight games against the best with their mind now totally switched to the 2027 tournament in Australia.

"That World Cup, we no longer talk about it," France captain Antoine Dupont told reporters. "We're in a different place now. We are looking to the future, what is ahead of us. It is one step in a long journey." During the Six Nations, Fabien Galthie's side was sluggish, missing the key figure of Dupont who stepped away to focus on his Olympic sevens commitments.

Galthie then suffered off the field in Argentina in July with allegations of sexual assault against two of his rookie players while full-back Melvyn Jaminet was hit with a lengthy ban after making racist comments on social media. "It's been a transition year, post-World Cup," Galthie said. "It has been rich but difficult to come through," the former France captain added. France end their November internationals campaign against the Pumas next Friday, having already lost to Felipe Contepomi's outfit earlier in the year in Buenos Aires.

In mitigation that defeat came in the chaotic days after the two scandals that followed the first Test win in Mendoza. Les Bleus could welcome back winger Damian Penaud, who has missed their two Tests this November with an illness but replacement lock Romain Taofifenua will be sidelined with concussion. "We move on to Argentina which will come around quickly," Dupont told reporters. "The squad are conscious, with its experience, that we have accomplished one thing. But the job's not done."



SAINT-DENIS: New Zealand's centre Rieko Ioane (center) is tackled by France's fly-half Thomas Ramos (center left) and France's scrum-half and captain Antoine Dupont (center right) during the Autumn Nations Series international rugby union test match between France and New Zealand at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis on November 16, 2024. — AFP

New Zealand 'pride'

For the All Blacks, the defeat in Paris was a third straight loss to France and came on the heels of their 12-11 defeat by South Africa there in the World Cup final. Head coach Scott Robertson is just 13 games into his tenure and after an unconvincing start, the former Crusaders boss steadied the ship with victories over Japan, England and Ireland.

The loss in front of a hostile, sold-out French crowd has put the breaks on his side's development. "I'm pleased but Test footy comes down to just a little bit of a moment," Robertson said. "We pride ourselves on how much work we get through, game management, game understanding, discipline. "We didn't do enough of that," he added. Next Saturday's season-ending trip to Italy should pose fewer

problems for Robertson. He is set to be boosted by the return of Test centurion Sam Cane, on his final international appearance. Cane missed the Test in Paris because of a head injury he collected in the win over Ireland in Dublin.

Winger Mark Tele'a, who scored two tries in the All Blacks' thrilling win at Twickenham a fortnight ago, is also due to come back after a hand injury ruled him out against France. Another cause to smile is the good form of try-scoring scrum-half Cam Roigard who spent seven months of the year recovering from a serious knee issue. "I thought Cam took some great opportunities on his birthday," Robertson said of the 25-year-old. "He's fought really hard, rehabbed his injury really well and deserved his opportunity to start. "He had some nice touches and had a good head-to-head with Antoine Dupont). — AFP

End of an era as Nadal aims for winning Davis Cup farewell

MALAGA: Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal is aiming to cap his emotional farewell from tennis with another Davis Cup triumph in Malaga next week. Nadal, 38, has battled injuries over the past few years and the extent to which he can compete for his country is unknown, but all eyes will be on the 22-time Grand Slam winner. The veteran led Spain to victory in Madrid five years ago - the last time they won the trophy and Nadal's fourth. However, he admitted Saturday that his role in Malaga may be limited to doubles rather than singles.

"First off, we'll have to see how I feel in training and, if I really don't feel I have a chance to win the singles, I'll be the first to not want to play," Nadal said in comments to the Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET). "If I don't feel ready, I'll be the first to speak to the captain (David Ferrer). I've already told him on a few occasions not to make any decisions based on the fact that it's my last week as a professional tennis player." French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz will be Spain's leading player and his presence offers Nadal a real chance of retiring on a high note.

"Probably one of the most special tournaments that I'm going to play. Last tournament of Rafa. I'll be able to be next to him in the last moments on a tennis court for him," said Alcaraz who played alongside Nadal in doubles at the Olympics in Paris this year. "I think it's most important for Rafa, for his last tournament. I really want him to retire with a title. It's going to be really, really emotional and a really special tournament for me." Representing Spain, Nadal won singles gold at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and triumphed in the doubles at Rio 2016 alongside Marc Lopez.

But former world number one Nadal's injury setbacks in the twilight of his career have seen his ranking slump to 155. The last of his 92 career titles came with his 14th French Open and 22nd major at Roland Garros in 2022. He hasn't played a competitive singles match since losing to Novak Djokovic at the Olympics in July while in 2023 he played just four times. Many are hoping for Spain and Alcaraz to meet world number one Jannik Sinner's Italy, the defending champions, in the final, as the two young stars continue to build on a gripping rivalry.

Record 32-time champions the United States have selected a strong team spearheaded by US Open finalist Taylor Fritz and are also among the most likely contenders. Nadal clashed with Alcaraz in Saudi Arabia at the "Six Kings Slam" exhibition in October, losing in straight sets, but they will be fighting for the same goal in Andalusia. The start of the Billie Jean King Cup was delayed because of a weather alert in the Malaga region, in the wake of devastating floods in the east of Spain.

Alcaraz, ranked third in the world, said the flooding in Valencia increased his motivation to help his country triumph. "I'm here to give my grain of sand because playing for Spain is the biggest thing that there is for me," he continued. Tennis greats and stars from other sports are among those clamoring to watch Nadal's farewell, with career rivals Djokovic and Roger Federer among those expected to attend. Spain face the Netherlands on Tuesday in the last eight, with the winner taking on Germany or Canada in the semi-finals.

Italy ended a 47-year wait to win the Davis Cup again a year ago as they beat Australia in the final with Sinner their key player and are favorites to defend their title. The Australian Open and US Open winner is still waiting for an appeal from the World Anti-Doping Agency against him to be resolved. Sinner twice tested positive for traces of an anabolic steroid in March but the International Tennis Integrity Agency cleared him of blame in August. Italy face Argentina in the quarter-finals with the winner taking on the United States or Australia. Captained by Lleyton Hewitt, Australia were runners-up last year and are second only to the US in Davis Cup triumphs, winning the title 28 times. The final takes place next Sunday with all matches held at the indoor hard-court Martin Carpena arena. — AFP



NEW YORK: UFC Heavyweight Champion Jon Jones (left) kicks challenger Stipe Miocic during their UFC 309 heavyweight title bout at Madison Square Garden in New York, on November 16, 2024. — AFP photos



NEW YORK: US President-elect Donald Trump, Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk and Donald Trump Jr (right) watch a fight during UFC 309 at Madison Square Garden in New York. — AFP

Trump, team get warm welcome at UFC fight night

NEW YORK: US President-elect Donald Trump was greeted by chanting fans as he attended the Ultimate Fighting Championship heavyweight bout at New York's Madison Square Garden on Saturday. Trump entered the arena shortly before the start of the main card accompanied by UFC chief executive Dana White, who was a prominent backer during his election campaign. Several political allies of Trump were also in attendance for the mixed-martial arts fights, including entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, who have been asked by Trump to lead efforts to cut government inefficiency.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who Trump has nominated to be health secretary, was also at the fight and a photo posted on X showed the pair flying to the event together on Trump's private plane. The night had the feel of a post-election night out for the Republicans. Tulsi Gabbard, the former Democratic congresswoman tapped for the role of director of national intelligence, was also in the crowd along with Trump's sons Eric and Don Jr and musician Kid Rock - a regular at Trump rallies.

After waving to the chanting crowd, Trump warmly greeted UFC broadcast analyst Joe Rogan, the popular podcast host who also endorsed Trump after he appeared as a guest on his show. The venue's "jumbotron" giant screen above the cage where fighters did battle then showed a video featuring highlights of the election campaign with soundbites from Trump. The film ended with the numbers 45 and 47 on the screen, representing the Republican's previous and upcoming presidency.

Fans chanted "USA, USA," a refrain frequently heard at Trump rallies, including one he held at

Madison Square Garden last month. Trump watched the fights alongside Musk from front row seats next to the caged octagon. After Jon Jones defended his heavyweight title with a third-round technical knock-out against fellow American Stipe Miocic in the main event, the fighter celebrated with Trump's trademark "YMCA" dance. "I want to say a big thank you to President Donald Trump for being here tonight," said Jones, receiving a huge roar of approval from the crowd.

After leading the crowd in another round of "USA, USA" chant, Jones then passed his heavyweight championship belt to Trump and spent some time in conversation with the President-elect. Trump frequently attends UFC events and attended three fights during his campaign for the White House. His ties to the fight world run deep. He featured retired WrestleMania star Hulk Hogan at the Republican convention in August and hosted UFC bouts at his casinos in the early days, when the series struggled to gain traction and well before it became today's multi-billion success. — AFP

'Emotional' Martin claims first MotoGP world championship

'Martinator' outshines two-time champion Bagnaia



MONTMELO: Ducati Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia (right) followed by Ducati Spanish rider Marc Marquez and Ducati Spanish rider Jorge Martin (left) compete during the MotoGP Solidarity Grand Prix of Barcelona at the Circuit de Catalunya on November 17, 2024. — AFP photos

BARCELONA: Spaniard Jorge Martin produced an ice-cool ride to finish third in the season-ending Barcelona GP on Sunday, which was good enough to secure him a first MotoGP world championship title. The 26-year-old, nicknamed the 'Martinator', also ensured that Ducati-Pramac became the first independent team to win the rider's title since Valentino Rossi in 2001, the final year of 500cc racing.

Defending two-time champion Francesco Bagnaia, who started the race 19 points behind Martin, took the chequered flag for the 11th time this season but it was not enough to wrest the title from the Spanish rider who finished the season 10 points clear of his close rival. "It sounds amazing," said an emotional Martin after being addressed as a world champion for the first time. "I don't know what to say, I am completely shocked."

"This is for my people, for my family, for the people who are supporting me, this is for them. "I started crying at the end, it was a very emotional race. It's been a long journey, a lot of crashes, big injuries but finally we are here. "I hope we can keep improving and enjoy the moment. This is the most important thing: live the present and enjoy the moment." Mar-

tin, who will be leaving Pramac for Aprilia next season after being denied a ride alongside Bagnaia in the factory Ducati team, had made himself the favorite for the title with a remarkably consistent season.

He only won three grand prix all season but his third-place on Sunday was the 32nd time this season across the 40 sprints and grand prix that he made the podium. After finishing third in Saturday's sprint he knew he had only to finish in the top nine to secure the title, turning the tables on Bagnaia who went into last year's final race with a 21-point lead. Bagnaia, however, has finished the season in blistering form, his victory in Barcelona giving him his fourth win over the final five races of the season. Victory in Saturday's sprint, his seventh of the season, gave him a sniff of a chance.

'Today is for Jorge'

Starting from pole, the Italian made a perfect start but was soon under pressure from Marc Marquez who slipped past Martin. Martin let them battle it out up front, guarding his track position as Aleix Espargaro and Alex Marquez toughed it out behind him. Bagnaia had the control and pace to see off Mar-



MONTMELO: The new world champion Ducati Spanish rider Jorge Martin celebrates on the podium after the MotoGP Solidarity Grand Prix of Barcelona at the Circuit de Catalunya on November 17, 2024.

quez, who won the vote ahead of Martin to be his Ducati teammate next season, and duly crossed for a well-deserved if ultimately pyrrhic victory.

"This weekend we did all things possible," Bagna-

ia told TNT. "Winning 11 races leaves me speechless. Not many have done that so I'm happy about that. "We missed a bit of luck this season. We were the strongest all season, winning all those races, being consistently fast. "But today is for Jorge who did a very good season. "He understood that with our potential, he was good enough to finish second many times. I think he did it 17 times, me just two. These things can make a difference in a championship. "It's great to have this kind of rider. He's a very fair guy and we know each other very well. "I enjoyed the season. I would like to be the champion but sometimes that cannot happen."

When Martin crossed the line, the celebrations began in the Pramac garage and amongst the many Spanish fans who had made the journey to the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. The race was due to take place in Valencia but had to be moved after the region suffered its worst floods in a generation which have killed more than 220 people. The race was switched to Barcelona and has been dubbed the Solidarity GP to show support for the people of Valencia, with all proceeds of the event going to the Valencia relief fund. — AFP

Mcllroy clinches Race to Dubai title with DP World Tour win

DUBAI: Rory Mcllroy won the DP World Tour Championship for the third time and claimed his sixth Race to Dubai title in the process on Sunday, matching the tally of legendary Spaniard Seve Ballesteros. The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland made a crucial birdie on the par-4 16th hole to break a deadlock with Denmark's Rasmus Hojgaard. He then birdied the par-5 18th hole for a three-under-par 69 that took him to 15-under for the four days and was enough for a two-shot win that also secured him a sixth Order of Merit.

The four-time major champion broke down on live television when asked what it meant to equal Ballesteros' record. "It's really cool. I think everyone knows what Seve means to European golf. In the European Ryder Cup locker room, all we have are quotes of Seve," said Mcllroy, who is now two behind all-time record holder Colin Montgomerie's tally of eight. "We had a Seve shirt from 1995 when he played his last Ryder Cup in our changing room last year... For me to be mentioned in the same breath as Seve, I am very proud."

Rasmus, who was trying to follow in the footsteps of his twin brother Nicolai and take the trophy back to Denmark for a second year in a row, made a stunning 22-footer par save on the 17th hole, but could not put the pressure on Mcllroy on the 18th as he settled for a par and a final round score of 71. Mcllroy, who started with a bogey and then made four successive birdies, dropped a couple of shots around the turn to be tied with Hojgaard after 15 holes at 13-under. He finally edged ahead with a stunning second shot on the par-4 16th hole from 137 yards to less than a foot for his fifth birdie of the day and drained a six-footer on the final hole.



DUBAI: Northern Ireland's Rory Mcllroy poses for a picture with his wife and daughter next to the trophy after winning the DP World Tour Championship golf tournament at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai on November 17, 2024. — AFP

'Fitting end to 2024'

"I think I would have been miserable for a few weeks if I hadn't won today. I've been through a lot this year professionally and personally. It feels like the fitting end to 2024. I've persevered a lot. Had close calls. Wasn't able to get it done. "So, to be able to get over the line, when I got off to a great start and didn't have my best in the middle of the round, was very satisfying. I felt a lot of pressure out there, most of them self-inflicted. But to finish the way I did, I can now go and have a good few weeks off," added Mcllroy. Including the Zurich Classic that the world number three claimed alongside Shane Lowry, it was Mcllroy's fourth worldwide win of the season.

Hojgaard was disappointed at not winning the title, but happy to have secured the No1 card of the 10 PGA Tour cards on offer at the end of the week for the top 10 players who are not already members. The

No1 card gives him entry into some of the big events, including the Players Championship. "I came to Abu Dhabi (the previous week) with the goal of securing the No1 PGA Tour card, and I am happy that I have done it," said Hojgaard, who missed the card by one spot last year. "It sucks to lose, but you need to make birdies in the end and Rory did that. I battled hard through the day."

Australia's Adam Scott and Ireland's Lowry shot final-round 68s to tie for third place at 11-under par alongside France's Antoine Rozner. England's Tyrrell Hatton was solo 6th at 10-under. The 10 players who earned their PGA Tour cards are Hojgaard, Thriston Lawrence of South Africa, England's Paul Waring, Dane Niklas Norgaard, Swede Jesper Svensson, Antoine Rozner of France, Italy's Matteo Manassero, Thorbjorn Olesen of Denmark, Japan's Rikuya Hoshino and Tom McKibbin of Northern Ireland. — AFP

Slovakia beat Australia to book BJK Cup semis

MALAGA: Slovakia overcame Australia 2-0 on Sunday to reach the semi-finals of the Billie Jean King Cup. The country of 5.4 million, which beat the United States in the first round, is into the semi-finals of the competition for the first time since 2013. Viktorija Hrucakova and Rebecca Sramkova both won their singles ties to give Slovakia an unassailable lead ahead of the scheduled doubles match.

World number 241 Hrucakova emerged victorious against Kimberly Birrell 7-5, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 after over two-and-a-half hours on court to give the central European country the lead over Australia. Sramkova then needed just over an hour to win 6-1, 6-2 against former world number 32 Ajla Tomljanovic, who injured her knee in the third game of the first set. Later on Sunday, Britain will play holders Canada with the winners set to face Slovakia in the semi-finals. On Monday, five-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek will lead Poland as they take on world number four Jasmine Paolini's Italy in the other semi-final. — AFP



MÁLAGA: Slovakia's Viktorija Hrucakova returns the ball to Australia's Kimberly Birrell during their quarter-finals singles tennis match between Australia and Slovakia on November 17, 2024. — AFP