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G20 tackles wars, climate, Trump

Alliance launched to fight hunger • Biden allows Ukraine to use US missiles to hit Russia

Amir swears in new National Guard chief



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace on Monday newly appointed Chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who took the constitutional oath before him. — KUNA

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva opened the summit of the Group of 20 major economies on Monday with the launch of a global alliance to combat poverty and hunger that more than 80 countries have agreed to back. As G20 leaders met at Rio de Janeiro's Modern Art Museum for two days of talks, their agenda highlighted a shifting global order as US President-elect Donald Trump returns to power.

Their discussions of trade, climate change and international security will run up against the sharp US policy changes that Trump vows upon taking office in January, from tariffs to the promise of a negotiated solution to the war in Ukraine. In his opening remarks, Lula said the devastating effects of a changing climate can be seen around the world, calling for action by leaders on hand to address

global warming and poverty. The alliance he launched, coordinating global efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty, is backed by the African Union and European Union, international organizations, development banks and philanthropies such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Argentina was the only one of the 19 countries in the G20 to initially hold off signing on to the initiative. But it eventually came around after negotiations, a Brazilian government source said.

"Hunger and poverty are not the result of scarcity or natural phenomena ... they are the product of political decisions," said Lula, who was born in poverty and entered politics organizing a metalworkers union. "In a world that produces almost 6 billion tons of food per year, this is unacceptable," he said.

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Zionist carnage in Gaza amid strikes in Beirut

BEIRUT/GAZA: Zionist military strikes across the Gaza Strip killed 20 Palestinians on Monday, including six people in attacks on tents housing displaced families, medics said. Four people, two of them children, were killed in a Zionist airstrike on a tent encampment in the coastal area of Al-Mawasi, which is designated as a humanitarian zone, while two died in temporary shelters in the southern city of Rafah and another in drone fire, Gaza health officials said.

In the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia, medics said a Zionist missile struck a house, killing at least

two people and wounding several others. On Sunday, medics and residents said dozens of people were killed or wounded in a Zionist airstrike on a multi-floor residential building in the town. Another airstrike on a house in Gaza City killed seven people and wounded 10, medics said. Later on Monday, a Zionist airstrike killed four people in the Nuseirat camp in the central area of the coastal enclave, they added.

The Gaza health ministry said Zionist strikes had killed 76 Palestinians across the territory over the past 24 hours. In Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, relatives of Palestinians killed in an airstrike on tents housing displaced families sat beside bodies wrapped in blankets and white shrouds to pay farewell before walking them to graves. "My brother wasn't the only one; many others have been martyred in this brutal way - children

Continued on Page 6



BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi welcomes Deputy PM and Minister of Interior and Defense Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah (left) and Sheikh Talal Al-Mishal Al-Sabah (right).



Premier Padel Kuwait P1 tourney concludes with thrilling finals

By Abdellatif Sharaa & Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Premier Padel P1 tournament ended on a high note Sunday night with standout performances in both the men's and women's finals. Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia defeated Franco Stupaczuk and Mike Yanguas 6-4, 6-2 in the men's final, dominating the second set after a closely contested first.

In the women's final, BNK-sponsored Ariana Sanchez and Paula Josemaria edged out Gemma Triay and Claudia Fernandez 7-5, 7-6, winning the tiebreak 7-1. The match was intense and lasted over two hours, with Sanchez and Josemaria excelling in key statistics, including breakpoints and second serve returns.

Fans praised the event's organization, with Kuwaiti player Mariam Saraj lauding BNK's efforts and sharing her support for Triay and Fernandez. First-time attendees, like Bosnian spectator Suad and Kuwaiti Aisha, enjoyed the unique experience, calling the event exciting and memorable. The tournament highlighted top-tier competition and introduced many to the growing sport of padel in Kuwait. (See Pages 14 & 15)



ILAGAN, Philippines: An aerial view shows submerged homes of a village in Isabela province on Nov 18, 2024. — AFP

Typhoon forces dam release in Philippines

MANILA: Floodwaters hit hundreds of houses in the northern Philippines on Monday after water released from a dam following Typhoon Man-yi caused a major river to break its banks. Packing maximum sustained wind speeds of 185 kmph, Man-yi slammed into Catanduanes island late Saturday, and the main island of Luzon on Sunday afternoon.

The sixth major storm to batter the Philippines in a month dumped heavy rain, smashed flimsy buildings, knocked out power and claimed at least eight lives. The national weather service had warned of a "potentially catastrophic" impact from Man-yi, which was a super typhoon when it hit, but President Ferdinand Marcos said Monday it "wasn't as bad as we feared".

As people cleaned up on Monday, floods began hitting communities in the north after water from

Magat Dam was released, causing the Cagayan river and some tributaries to overflow. Rooftops could be seen poking through brown water in Ilagan city in Isabela province while buildings and roads near Tuguegarao city in Cagayan province were inundated.

"If Magat Dam continues to release water on all of its seven gates, Ilagan city might get erased from the map due to flooding," Jun Montereal, chairman of the city's disaster preparedness committee, told AFP, estimating 500 houses had been flooded. "This is one of the gravest incidents that we have ever experienced because of the typhoon."

Carlo Ablan, who helps oversee operations at the dam, said water was released after a "huge volume" of inflows due to rain from Man-yi. "If we won't be releasing water, the worst possible scenario will be our dam would collapse and that will be a much bigger problem," Ablan said.

At least eight people were killed when typhoon Man-yi slammed into the islands over the weekend, including a 79-year-old man, who died in Camarines Norte after his motorbike was caught in a power line, police said.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Winners Ariana Sanchez, Paula Josemaria, Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia pose on the podium with BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Premier Padel General Manager David Serrahima and Tournament Director Mishal Al-Ansari. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Foreign Minister in Qatar, Oman to deliver GCC Summit invitations

Kuwait set to host 45th Gulf Summit on December 1



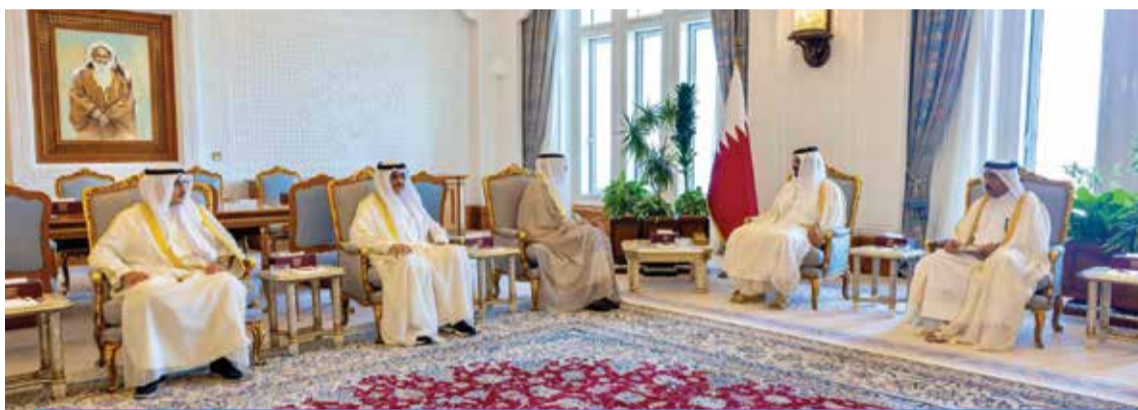
MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi receives His Highness the Amir's GCC Summit invitation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said from Minister Al-Yahya.



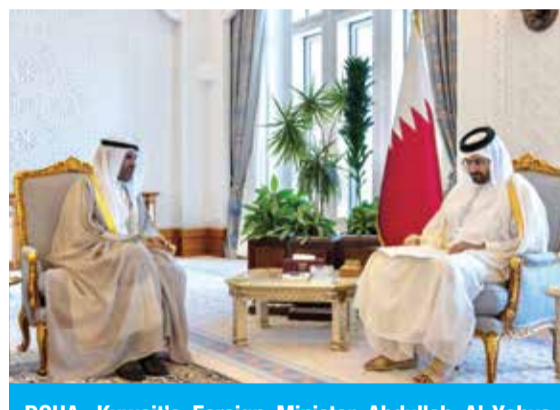
Minister Al-Yahya is received by Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi in Muscat.



Minister Al-Yahya meets with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi.



Officials, including Deputy Amir of Qatar Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani, receive Minister Al-Yahya in Doha. — KUNA photos



DOHA: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya delivers the GCC Summit invitation to Deputy Amir of Qatar Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani.



Minister Al-Yahya meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani.

In my view

Indeed, we are in need!



Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Goodness is abundant in our nation, and this is something that does not require confirmation. Many of Kuwait's wealthy people allocate part of their wealth for charity. This money is often given to the poor and needy, with only a small portion directed toward helping students or those suffering from illness. However, today we need to change this approach. We need donors who will allocate part of their wealth to support noble values.

Giving to the poor and needy is undoubtedly a great source of goodness, and as Muslims, we cannot ignore the specific obligations of Zakat. But we often forget that our Creator, the Almighty, has divided charity into nine distinct categories, covering various areas. Among these categories, for which we rarely see the wealthy allocate funds despite its importance, is the category of beneficial knowledge.

My message to the wealthy of our nation, who are considering leaving part of their wealth for charity, is that they must designate funds to support noble values and fundamental needs that preserve our nation. This category of charity is one that does not cease to benefit its owner after death.

We can imagine funds dedicated to fighting deviation, defending the Arabic language and restoring its status as a language of science, and combating the scourge of drugs. Such funds would undoubtedly contribute to the revival of noble values in our societies and help create generations that are proud of their culture.

Today, if you want to help patients, you will find many wealthy individuals rushing to provide support. But if you ask for funding to build a university for the Arabic language, you will find little to no interest. Many complain about the spread of drugs, yet no wealthy individual has provided support for a project to monitor, analyze, and provide solutions for this tragedy.

Today, we all see what is going on in our Arab countries, in the form of ferocious attacks on the language of our nation. A ferocious attack that seeks to replace our Arabic language with English. Scholars recognize the danger this poses to our nation's future and development, yet they find no wealthy individuals willing to allocate a third of their wealth to establish institutions that teach in Arabic. Our language needs the opportunity to compete and demonstrate its true value.

I ask Almighty Allah to inspire those who are able to dedicate a third of their wealth to this noble cause. Knowledge, when invested in, will have an impact not only on individuals but on the entire nation. I also ask those among the wealthy who are still alive and seeking a charitable cause that will benefit them in front of their Lord, to consider allocating part of their wealth for beneficial knowledge. This could be done by establishing institutions with a clear mission — institutions that, for example, revive the Arabic language and open schools where Arabic is the language of instruction. This is wealth invested in the revival of a nation.

DOHA/MUSCAT: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent an official invitation to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to attend the upcoming 45th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, which is scheduled to be hosted in Kuwait on December 1.

The invitation was conveyed by Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, during a meeting on Monday in Doha with the Deputy Amir of Qatar Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani. The message underscores the deep historical ties and brotherly relations between the two nations and their peoples.

During his visit, His Highness the Amir's representative, Minister Al-Yahya met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani. Both sides reviewed the strong ties between Kuwait and Qatar, discussing ways to further strengthen and develop these relations in various fields. They also addressed the latest regional and international developments and key issues of mutual interest.

Preparations for the summit are in full swing in



Minister Al-Yahya is seen with Qatari officials during his meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani.

Kuwait, with ministries collaborating to ensure it runs smoothly. Notably, the public works ministry is overseeing necessary road works in streets where the GCC leaders will travel, while the information ministry has launched a public awareness campaign about the summit this week.

Minister Al-Yahya visited Oman on Sunday to deliver an invitation to the GCC summit from His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said, Sultan of Oman. The message was received by Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi during a meeting in Muscat. Minister Al-Yahya also visited the United Arab Emirates on Sunday, where he delivered a GCC summit invitation to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Aid supplies are loaded into the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's fourth relief plane destined for Lebanon. — KUNA photos



Fourth relief plane arrives in Lebanon with 40 tons of aid

BEIRUT: The fourth relief plane of Kuwait's air bridge to Lebanon arrived in Beirut Monday, carrying 40 tons of food, blankets, and other supplies as part of the "Kuwait is by Your Side" campaign.

"The fourth Kuwaiti airlift plane was dispatched as part of Kuwait's humanitarian air bridge to Lebanon in order to continue addressing the displacement crisis and mitigate its consequences following the ongoing Zionist aggression against Lebanon," Charge d'Affaires at Kuwait's Embassy in Lebanon Minister Plenipotentiary Abdullah Al-Shaheen told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The plane is carrying an estimated 40 tons of supplies provided by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to the Lebanese Red Cross. Previous relief planes have

Tunisia eyes boosting Kuwaiti investments across various fields

TUNIS: Tunisia is keen to launch a "new phase" of cooperation in investment with Kuwait, based on the known successes achieved by Kuwaiti investors in Tunisia over decades, particularly in the tourism sector. Speaking during the fourth session of the Kuwait-Tunisia Joint Higher Committee, Samir Al-Mansar, Director-General for Bilateral Relations with Arab Countries at the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the joint committees will work to overcome some of the challenges faced in bilateral trade, emphasizing the importance of resuming direct air links

delivered supplies to the the Lebanese Ministry of Health and the High Relief Commission (HRC), he said.

Lebanese Red Cross Relief Coordinator Yousef Boutros praised Kuwait for its continuous solidarity with Lebanon. "Kuwait has always been present alongside Lebanon in these difficult circumstances, which have caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people," he said. He expressed gratitude to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for its proactive role in providing humanitarian aid and its continuous efforts in Lebanon. "We at the Lebanese Red Cross are witnesses to this through our coordination and close relationship with them."

The Kuwaiti relief plane was received at the airport by Minister Al-Shaheen and members of the Kuwaiti embassy, along with a delegation from the Lebanese Red Cross. Kuwait Red Crescent Society has been providing humanitarian aid during the current Zionist aggression on Lebanon, helping thousands of Lebanese families in southern villages and towns near the border, in addition to launching urgent relief campaigns for displaced families whose homes were damaged by Zionist airstrikes.

between Tunisia and Kuwait to facilitate the movement of people and improve the flow of goods and commodities between the two countries.

The fourth session of the Kuwait-Tunisia Joint Higher Committee began Monday in the Tunisian capital, with preparatory committee meetings attended by representatives from various sectors of both countries. The committee will see the signing of over 14 agreements in various fields, including health, education, transportation, culture, sports, trade, and industry.

Mansar said Tunisian-Kuwaiti relations provide an opportunity to establish successful partnerships in various fields, such as food and water security, health, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, and technological innovation.

"The convening of this committee reflects the mutual desire of both countries' leadership to sup-

port the cooperation between Tunisia and Kuwait and strengthen the historical brotherly ties between them," he said. Mansar highlighted that the committees would work on drafting memorandums of understanding in cultural, educational, social, and health fields.

Ambassador Ahmad Al-Baker, Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs and head of the Kuwaiti delegation, affirmed the importance of the Tunisian-Kuwaiti relationship, describing it as "a solid and deep-rooted relationship that has overcome challenges and has been characterized by cooperation and sincere brotherhood over many decades."

Baker explained that the committee's work will build on the discussions held at the third session in Kuwait in 2015, with mechanisms in place to further develop joint cooperation to achieve the desired benefits for both sides. — KUNA

Local

MoH collects over 80,000 blood bags in 2024 so far

Latest technologies including viral detection systems, cooling techniques ensure blood quality

KUWAIT: Kuwait's health ministry has collected 80,000 blood bags since the beginning of the year. Director of the ministry's Blood Transfusion Services said Monday, of which 15,800 were collected through 248 donation campaigns. Overall, over 190,000 blood products (including platelets and plasma) were produced, and 140,000 blood units were provided to meet clinical needs, particularly for cancer patients, thalassemia patients, and accident victims, said Dr Reem Al-Radwan. Dr Al-Radwan was speaking at 5th Conference on Blood Transfusion Services inaugurated by Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi. The conference serves as a platform for sharing innovations and policies to improve blood transfusion services and healthcare quality.

Latest technologies

Minister Al-Awadhi commended the efforts in organizing blood donation campaigns, which have fostered a culture of giving and become an integral part of societal awareness. These initiatives have helped build a strategic blood reserve, which is fundamental to the country's healthcare system.

He also emphasized the importance of adopting the latest global technologies to ensure the safety and quality of blood supplies. These technologies include advanced virus and microorganism detection systems and the implementation of electronic linkage between hospitals and

the Blood Transfusion Services to provide swift and accurate responses to emergency needs. This initiative is aimed at enhancing the overall efficiency of the country's healthcare system.

He added that the blood donation process involves rigorous testing procedures using the latest technologies to ensure community safety and build public trust. Advanced cooling and preservation techniques help extend the shelf life of blood products, ensuring their quality even during long-distance transportation.

International recognition

Dr Al-Radwan noted that the country's laboratories have implemented the latest global protocols, ensuring that blood transfusions are performed with the highest safety standards. She highlighted the international recognition of the Sheikhha Salwa Al-Sabah Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord Centre, which received molecular testing accreditation from the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB), making it the first institution in the Arab world and the second worldwide outside the United States to achieve this prestigious certification.

Furthermore, the Central Blood Bank has received renewed international accreditation from AABB, further demonstrating Kuwait's commitment to maintaining high standards in blood transfusion services. The two-day conference marks a significant step in advancing blood transfusion practices, contributing to



KUWAIT: People donate blood in this file photo. — KUNA

saving lives and improving public health, said Dr Al-Radwan. It includes 14 scientific lectures and workshops by 16 international experts address-

ing innovative solutions, blood diseases, blood inventory management, and crisis management in blood supply. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Dr Faisal Al-Refaei with officials from Zain and Dasman Diabetes Institute.



Assima mall patrons visit the diabetes awareness day booth, which featured several awareness activities.



A woman gets her medical information taken for a medical checkup.

Zain contributes to raising awareness on World Diabetes Day

KUWAIT: Zain announced its exclusive support for the awareness day held at Assima mall to commemorate World Diabetes Day, which takes place annually on November 14. The event was organized by Dasman Diabetes Institute — a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) — with the goal of raising public awareness about diabetes, offering medical checkups and consultations, and sharing tips on prevention and treatment. The event was attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf

Al-Gharabally, Dasman Diabetes Institute Acting Director General Dr Faisal Hamed Al-Refaei, and officials from both organizations. Zain's support for this initiative stems from the company's commitment to contribute and engage with various efforts and activities led by public and private sector institutions to enhance public health within the community, especially when it comes to raising awareness about chronic diseases like diabetes, which is highly prevalent in Kuwait.

The awareness day — organized by Dasman Diabetes Institute for the 17th consecutive year — featured a range of health and awareness activities, including free medical tests for blood sugar and vital signs, medical and nutritional consultations, fitness exercises and tips, podiatry advice, and special activities for children. The event also provided an opportunity for attendees to learn about the institute's

research initiatives, with a specialized team present to explain ongoing research efforts and encourage community members to participate in various health research projects. Dasman Diabetes Institute organized this open day as part of its mission to combat diabetes in Kuwait through research, prevention, training, education, and treatment. The institute remains committed to organizing awareness programs throughout the year to highlight this disease and deliver a message to all members of the community on managing diabetes, understanding its risks, and learning preventive measures. Zain is keen to strengthen its collaboration with various health organizations across the nation — including Dasman Diabetes Institute — to deliver interactive programs and initiatives that help achieve shared goals and support the healthcare system, while also enhancing public health awareness within the community.

Envoy courts more robust French-Kuwaiti business partnership

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ambassador of France to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin said his ultimate aspiration is to successfully establish a robust framework for French business consulting in Kuwait. During the ambassador's meeting with local media, he emphasized the significance of strengthening ties, noting that currently, 39 French companies are operating in Kuwait. He highlighted the need to boost Kuwaiti investments in France, saying that although real estate investments are performing well, overall investment levels remain low and require further efforts to improve.

The ambassador affirmed his commitment to further developing economic and commercial relations with Kuwait. "With more than 30 companies present in Kuwait, France is the leading European economic partner of the country, across sectors such as defense, energy, hospitality, healthcare, infrastructure, agrifood, and luxury goods. Our companies showcase French excellence and expertise," he said.

He emphasized the interest of French groups in development projects within the Kuwait Vision 2035. "French companies offer innovative solutions

in areas such as healthcare, logistics, transportation, sustainable economy, and the management of climate-related challenges. I am committed to fostering these beneficial partnerships and encouraging French contributions to Kuwait's major development projects," he said.

Study in France

The French ambassador said there are currently 120 Kuwaiti students studying in France, expressing his ambition to strengthen academic exchanges, increasing the number of Kuwaiti students studying in France. He added: "Many Kuwaitis, recognized experts in fields such as science, law, security, international relations, or the humanities, have studied in France and speak of how this experience was a valuable asset in their careers. I am impressed by the high number of French speakers in Kuwait, whom I often discover by chance in conversation, particularly in diwanias."

At the same time, through institutions such as the French Center for Research of the Arabian Peninsula (CEFREPA), an increasing number of French and European students are staying in Kuwait for intensive training in standard Arabic and Kuwaiti dialect. "The intensification of these student exchanges builds long-term ties that embody and enrich the relationship between our two countries, creating shared stories and deep, lasting friendships. Our Kuwaiti and French alumni are exemplary ambassadors of the friendship that unites our two nations," he said.

Warm weather, people

During the event, the Ambassador and his wife expressed their sincere gratitude to the people of Kuwait, praising an exceptional sense of hospitality and many welcoming gestures. Reflecting on his initial impressions of Kuwait in late August 2024, he said: "I was impressed by the heat, not being accustomed to such temperatures. Indeed, Kuwait's climate is warm, but people are even warmer. It is the warmth of its people that has most impressed me!"

The ambassador continued "Representing France in Kuwait is an honor. During my mission, I will dedicate all my energy to strengthening our bilateral relationship in its richness and diversity, across the political, defense and security, economic and commercial, cultural, and educational sectors. Ambassador Gauvin presented his credentials to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on October 9, 2024. This meeting with His Highness the Amir provided the opportunity to discuss the priorities for developing the bilateral relationship.

Prized Kuwaiti pearls

Ambassador Gauvin highlighted the deep historical and multifaceted relationship between France and Kuwait, tracing its roots to the 17th century when French geographers first mapped the region, and Kuwaiti pearls were prized by French jewelers like Cartier in the early 20th century.

He emphasized Kuwait's role as a key energy supplier to France during the 1960s and France's

MoH adds more clinics for diabetes, children, mental health

KUWAIT: The Central Administration for Primary Health Care at the Ministry of Health has announced an expansion of its services, including increasing the number of child clinics to 94, chronic disease clinics to 102, and diabetes clinics to 105. More specialized mental health clinics, now considered an integral part of both mental and physical health, have also opened, bringing their total to 72.

In a statement on Monday, Director of the Administration Dr Deena Al-Dhubaib emphasized the importance of primary healthcare as the first line of defense and the backbone of Kuwait's healthcare system. The ministry is committed to serving all age groups with distinguished services based on the latest global protocols.

Chronic diseases, especially diabetes, are a top priority for the ministry due to their long-term health impact, she said. She explained that the number of diabetes clinics has been increased in response to the notable rise in diabetes cases across various age groups in Kuwait.

Specialized home visits will be carried out for elderly patients and individuals with disabilities, particularly bedridden patients. These visits will be conducted by specialized medical teams trained to deliver multidisciplinary services aimed at improving the quality of life and meeting healthcare needs in a safe home environment.

Dr Al-Dhubaib announced that the Annual Primary Health Care Conference will be held on December 4, 2024, under the theme "Comprehensive Team-Based Integrated Care," and will be sponsored by Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi. The conference will feature 41 speakers from around the world to discuss important topics such as common diseases in children and adolescents, updated protocols for home visits, the role of primary healthcare in mental health, combating chronic diseases, and focusing on women's health and maternity care. — KUNA



Ambassador of France to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin

strong political and military support, including its early recognition of Kuwait's independence in 1961 and the deployment of 18,000 French troops during the Gulf War in 1991. This enduring friendship, built on trust, respect, and solidarity, is symbolized by the sacrifices made by French soldiers in defense of Kuwait's sovereignty.

At the end, the ambassador praised the high quality of the press and media in Kuwait stating, "In a context where fake news challenges our information environment, your commitment to verify and high-quality information is invaluable. I know I can rely here on journalists with impeccable professionalism. I am grateful for your work and for your insightful articles, which provide the Kuwaiti public with a clear view of France, of Team France's action in Kuwait, and of the France-Kuwait relationship."

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KUWAIT: The 24th edition of the International Music Festival kicks off with a ceremony to honor Kuwaiti artist Mohammad Al-Bloushi and other Arab artists at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



Mohammad Al-Bloushi (center) is honored by NCCAL's Mohammed Al-Jassar (right) and Musaaed Al-Zamil.

24th International Music Festival kicks off

Festival celebrates Arab, western art, with focus on preserving Kuwaiti musical heritage

KUWAIT: The 24th edition of the International Music Festival kicked off on Sunday evening under the patronage of the Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. The opening night was dedicated to honoring Kuwaiti artist Mohammad Al-Bloushi, one of the most prominent figures in the history of Kuwaiti music.

The festival was established by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) in



Fahad Al-Salem performs a selection of the most notable songs and compositions by Mohammad Al-Bloushi. — KUNA photos

1998 to preserve and celebrate both Kuwaiti and Arab musical heritage. "We, at the council, prioritize the preservation of our artistic heritage in all its forms, in collaboration with various institutions and sectors both inside and outside the council. Today, we continue our artistic journey, carrying with us a rich artistic and cultural legacy that we are proud of," said Mohammed Al-Jassar, Secretary-General

of NCCAL during his opening speech.

He added that the festival aims to revive the history and legacy of the arts for future generations and to reintroduce the melodies immortalized by Kuwait's and the Arab world's musical stars. "Since music is a universal language, in this international music festival, we also celebrate western and foreign music," Al-Jassar said, noting the participation of a select group of international musicians and talented artists from around the world. He emphasized that the council challenges itself every year to elevate its festivals and activities to meet the demands of the youth and keep pace with the rapid changes of the times, while preserving national heritage and artistic traditions.

"The 24th International Music Festival draws its efforts and spirit from Kuwait's artistic energies. Tonight and the upcoming nights will be filled with Kuwaiti, Gulf, and Arab melodies, with the sound of Arab music resonating globally," said Assistant Secretary-General for Arts at the council and festival director Musaaed Al-Zamil.

He added that the festival's 24th edition was carefully planned with the partnership of academic and cultural institutions, including the Higher Institute of Musical Arts, the Music Department at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, and the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

Dr Al-Jassar explained that the 24th edition of the festival was designed to foster cultural and artistic exchange between countries from the Gulf, Arab, and western regions, focusing on diverse musical evenings, workshops, and accompanying seminars throughout the festival. The festival also aims

to honor artists who have left a lasting musical and cultural legacy.

Mohammed Al-Bloushi expressed his joy at being recognized in the presence of his colleagues and fans from both Kuwait and abroad, who had come especially to celebrate with him. During the ceremony, several other artists were honored for their contributions to music, including Youssef Al-Rashid from Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Marzouqi from Qatar, Ibrahim Habib from Bahrain, Hanaa Al-Ashmawi from Egypt, and Latifa from Tunisia. The evening featured a selection of the most notable songs and compositions by Mohammad Al-Bloushi, with performances by Kuwait's top artists, including Faisal Al-Saad, Hamad Al-Manaa', Musa'ad Al-Bloushi, and Fahad Al-Salem, conducted by Maestro Dr Mohammed Al-Baijan. — KUNA



Latifa gives a speech as she receives an award.



An artist performs to pay tribute to Mohammad Al-Bloushi.

Jordan's participation in book fair sign of strong ties with Kuwait

AMMAN: Jordanian Minister of Culture Mustafa Al-Rawashdeh said Sunday that Jordan's participation as the guest of honor at the 47th Kuwait International Book Fair is a crowning achievement of the cultural relations between the two countries. He emphasized that this participation highlights the prominent position that Jordan and its intellectuals hold in the Arab cultural scene.

Rawashdeh expressed his gratitude to Kuwait for

selecting Jordan as the guest of honor at the fair. He also expressed pride in Jordan's unique participation, which is represented through a pavilion designed to reflect Jordanian architectural and cultural heritage, incorporating elements connected to the culture of the people, as well as diverse historical and cultural symbols.

He added that Jordan's involvement in the Kuwait International Book Fair represents a collaborative effort among Jordanian cultural institutions to present a vibrant image of the Jordanian cultural scene, with its diversity, richness, and creativity across various fields. Rawashdeh affirmed that Kuwait has long been a beacon for the Arab intellectual community, with its pioneering publications such as Al-Arabi Magazine, in addition to numerous cultural institutions that have enriched the Arab and global cultural scenes, such as the Al-Babtain Foundation. — KUNA

Dickson family grandchildren visit Kuwait

KUWAIT: As the UK and Kuwait continue celebrations to mark 125 years of official diplomatic relations, two grandchildren of the Late Lt Col Harold Dickson, who served as the British Political Agent to Kuwait from both 1929-1936 and May-August 1941, and his wife Violet, popularly known as Umm Saud, have arrived in Kuwait City for a week-long visit.

Lt Col Harold and Violet Dickson's grandson, Stephen Freeth, said: "Penny and I are delighted to be back in Kuwait. We have always been very proud of our grandparents' genuine love for the Arab people and culture and their contributions to local history. We hope that the relationship between Kuwait and Britain continues to grow in the spirit of mutual respect, admiration and cooperation."

The visit, coordinated by Essa Yahya Dashti, Researcher on Kuwaiti-British Relations, in collaboration with the National Library of Kuwait, will see Stephen and Penny Freeth open an exhibition titled "Dickson Family Memories in Kuwait" at the National Library; meet old family friends such as the Al-Hendal family, Sheikha Halah Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Claudia Al-Rashood, and Vera Al-Mutawa; and take in several of Kuwait City's most historically significant sites including Dickson House, where they lived alongside their late grandmother Violet until 1990.

Welcoming the Freeth's visit, Dashti said: "I am pleased to cooperate with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters — specifically the National Library of Kuwait — to host, for the second time, the family of the late Lt Col Harold and Violet Dickson in the State of Kuwait."

The Freeths visited the British Embassy for a special "Service of Thanks" honoring, at his graveside, the legacy of their late grandfather Lt Col Harold Dickson. Notable attendees included: Reverend Michael Mbona; Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait; Jaber Al-Hendal, a longstanding friend of the Dickson family; and Essa Yahya Dashti, Researcher on Kuwaiti-British Relations.



"The Dickson family has a strong connection to Kuwait's history and remains very much loved by the Kuwaiti people — as reflected in our continued commitment to maintaining Dickson House, their home of 61 years. The Dickson family's visit symbolizes the strength of relations between the Kuwaiti people and our British friends, who — despite differences in language and traditions — are united by respect and love for each other," said Dashti.

Ambassador Lewis said the Dickson family is part of the "very fabric of Kuwait, with a legacy of important contributions to diplomacy, the economy, horticulture and tribal society." "Today's service paid tribute to our shared story of progress which we will continue to reflect on throughout Stephen and Penny's visit," she added.



KUWAIT: Stephen and Penny Freeth visit the British Embassy to honor their grandfather Lt Col Harold Dickson at his graveside, in the presence of Reverend Michael Mbona, Ambassador Belinda Lewis, and family friends and researchers.



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US and Philippines sign deal on sharing military information

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LOPBURI: Macaque monkeys gather outside the Phra Prang Sam Yod temple in Lopburi province, north of Bangkok in this photo. — AFP

Law and disorder as Thailand police station comes under monkey attack

Menacing mob of 200 escaped monkeys run riot

BANGKOK: Police in central Thailand said they barricaded themselves into their own station over the weekend, after a menacing mob of 200 escaped monkeys ran riot on the town. The human inhabitants of Lopburi have long suffered from a growing and aggressive monkey population and authorities have built special enclosures to contain groups of the unruly residents. But on Saturday around 200 of the primates broke out and rampaged through town, with one posse descending on a local police station.

"We've had to make sure doors and windows are closed to prevent them from entering the building for food," police captain Somchai Seedee told AFP on Monday. He was concerned the marauders could destroy property including police documents, he added. Traffic cops and officers on guard duty were being called in to fend off the visitors, the Lopburi police said on Facebook on Sunday.

Around a dozen of the intruders were still perched proudly on the roof of the police station on Monday, pho-

tos from local media showed. Down in the streets, hapless police and local authorities were working to round up rogue individuals, luring them away from residential areas with food. While Thailand is an overwhelmingly Buddhist nation, it has long assimilated Hindu traditions and lore from its pre-Buddhist era. As a result monkeys are afforded a special place in Thai hearts thanks to the heroic Hindu monkey god Hanuman, who helped Rama rescue his beloved wife Sita from the clutches of an evil demon king.

Thousands of the fearless primates rule the streets around the Pra Prang Sam Yod temple in the centre of Lopburi. The town has been laying on an annual feast of fruit for its population of macaques since the late 1980s, part religious tradition and part tourist attraction. But their growing numbers, vandalism and mob fights have made an uneasy coexistence with their human neighbors almost intolerable. Lopburi authorities have tried quelling instances of human-macaque clashes with sterilization and relocation programs. — AFP

Delhi shuts schools as death trap smog chokes city

NEW DELHI: India's capital New Delhi switched schools to online classes Monday until further notice as worsening toxic smog surged past 60 times the World Health Organization's recommended daily maximum. Various piecemeal government initiatives have failed to measurably address the problem, with the smog blamed for thousands of premature deaths each year and particularly impacting the health of children and the elderly.

Pollution extended across a swathe of northern India - with the tourists at the Taj Mahal in Agra snapping photographs of the barely visible white marble monument - and choked residents of Lahore in neighboring Pakistan. "My eyes have been burning for the last few days," said rickshaw puller Subodh Kumar, 30. "Pollution or no pollution, I have to be on the road, where else will I go?" he said, pausing from eating at a roadside stall. "We don't have an option to stay indoors... our livelihood, food, and life - everything is in the open."

The city is blanketed in poisonous smog each year, primarily blamed on stubble burning by farmers in neighboring regions to clear their fields for ploughing, as well as factories and traffic fumes. A

report by The New York Times this month, based on samples collected over five years, revealed dangerous fumes also spewing from a power plant incinerating rubbish from landfill garbage mountains.

'Hazardous'

Levels of PM2.5 pollutants - dangerous cancer-causing microparticles that enter the bloodstream through the lungs - peaked at 921 micrograms per cubic metre at midday on Monday, according to IQAir pollution monitors, with a reading above 15 in a 24-hour period considered unhealthy by the WHO. Individual monitoring stations noted even higher levels - one government-run monitor recorded PM2.5 pollutants at 1117 micrograms, 74 times the WHO maximum. Dense grey and acrid smog smothered New Delhi, with IQAir listing conditions as "hazardous".

Primary schools were ordered to cease in-person classes on Thursday, with a raft of further restrictions imposed on Monday, including limiting diesel-powered trucks and construction. Authorities hope by keeping children at home, traffic will be reduced. The government urged children and the elderly, as well as those with lung or heart issues "to stay indoors as much as possible". Air filters are too expensive for many, and most do not have homes they can effectively seal from the misery of dangerous foul-smelling air.

"The rich ministers and officials can afford to stay indoors, not ordinary people like us," said rickshaw taxi driver Rinku Kumar, 45. "Who can

in the conflict. At one makeshift market, shoes, shirts, sweaters and sneakers were laid out on dusty blankets. A girl tried on a single worn-out boot, which could come in handy this winter if she can afford it in Gaza's ruined economy. A trader got an edge on his competitors by shouting out that his wares were European. One man laughed as he got a young boy to try on a green jacket.

"We get clothing from a man whose house was destroyed. He was digging in the concrete to get some (clothing) and we buy them like this and sell them at a good price," displaced Palestinian Louay Abdel-Rahman said. He and his family arrived in the city from another part of Gaza with only the clothes they were wearing. So he also keeps some back for them. "The seasons have changed from summer to winter and we need clothing," he said. Zionist military campaign since Oct. 7, 2023 attack has devastated the enclave, leaving an estimated 42 million tons of debris piled where houses, mosques, schools and shops used to stand.

In April, the UN estimated it would take 14 years to dispose of the wreckage. The UN official oversee-



NEW DELHI: Pedestrians walk across a street on a cold smoggy morning in New Delhi on November 18, 2024. — AFP

even afford an air purifier when paying monthly bills is a challenge?" India's Supreme Court ordered the authorities to take "all possible" action. "It is the constitutional obligation of the central government and state governments to ensure citizens live in a pollution free atmosphere," the court said.

Long-time Delhi resident William Dalrymple said he was shocked to "find the city embalmed in an all-enveloping burial shroud of pollution", he wrote on social media. "I've never seen anything like this in 40 years of living here," the Scottish historian wrote, saying the "most fascinating of cities" was "currently a tragic, choking death trap". — AFP



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians fleeing Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip walk on the main Salah Al-Din road on November 17, 2024. — AFP

ing the problem said the clean-up would cost at least \$1.2 billion. More than 128,000 buildings have been destroyed or severely or moderately damaged in Gaza as a result of the conflict, the UN says. Underneath all of that are seams of mangled clothes. "All our children only have short-sleeve clothing and nobody is helping them," Saeed Doula, a father-of-seven, said. "The war is all-encompassing." — Reuters

Desperate for cash, Gazans sell clothes plucked from rubble

GAZA: Moein Abu Odeh clambered up a pile of rubble in southern Gaza, searching for clothes, shoes, anything he could sell to raise cash more than a year since Zionist entity started its relentless bombardments. The father-of-four delved under blocks and brushed away piles of concrete dust at the site of one airstrike in the wrecked city of Khan Younis. His plan was to sell what he found to buy flour. "If food and drink were available, believe me, I would give (these clothes) to charity," he said. "But the struggles we are going through (mean we) have to sell our clothes to eat and drink."

Widespread shortages and months of grinding war have generated a trade in old clothing, much of it salvaged from the homes of people who have died

Germany to send 4,000 AI-guided drones to Ukraine

BERLIN: Germany on Monday said that it was delivering 4,000 AI-guided drones to Ukraine, even as it has refused to send Kyiv the long-range Taurus missile system. Berlin has been the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion. Defense Minister Boris Pistorius told reporters at an event in Bavaria that the drones being provided "were directed and supported by artificial intelligence" and that they could "take out the enemy's electronic drone defenses".

The drones "can be delivered very quickly" and could be "deployed 30-40 kilometres (19-25 miles) behind the front line and hit combat posts, logistics hubs among other targets", Pistorius said.

Along some parts of the front line in Ukraine, such a distance would reach into Russian territory. Berlin had announced in June its intention to deliver drones to Ukraine but had not given details on their specifications. Despite the unmanned aerial vehicles being nicknamed "mini-Taurus" by the German media, the government was careful to point out they don't have the same range. "These are tactical drones with a restricted range," defence ministry spokesman Natalie Jenning told reporters at a government press conference on Monday. "There is no connection to the Taurus (system) as has been sketched out in some of the media coverage," she added.

The current government headed by Social Democrat Chancellor Olaf Scholz has refused to supply Ukraine with the Taurus system, fearing that the move could draw Russia and the West into a more direct conflict. Kyiv's repeated appeals for the missiles, which have a reach of more than 500 kilometres (310 miles), have been in vain.

The government on Monday stressed that its position was unchanged, despite US President Joe Biden's decision Sunday to allow Ukraine to use long-range US missiles to strike targets inside Russia.

Scholz's continued resistance comes despite Russian forces having made rapid gains in recent weeks, and Moscow's decision to deploy North Korean troops to aid its war effort. Some in the chancellor's own government have contradicted his stance. Vice-Chancellor and Economy Minister Robert Habeck, who will lead the Green party into a snap general election in February, said that he would deliver the Taurus system to Ukraine if he were chancellor. The main opposition party, the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which is currently leading in opinion polls, has also said it is in favour of sending the missiles to Kyiv. — AFP

International

Trump taps big tech critic Carr to lead US communications agency

'We must dismantle the censorship cartel and restore free speech rights'

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump tapped Republican Brendan Carr, an Elon Musk-backed critic of big tech, to lead the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), calling him a "warrior for Free Speech" in a statement on Sunday. Carr has "fought against the regulatory Lawfare that has stifled Americans' Freedoms" and will "end the regulatory onslaught that has been crippling America's Job Creators and Innovators, and ensure that the FCC delivers for rural America," Trump said in the statement.

Carr said on Musk's social platform X that he was "humbled and honored" to take on the role of FCC chairman. "We must dismantle the censorship cartel and restore free speech rights for everyday Americans," he wrote in another post Sunday. It is a phrase he has used repeatedly, posting on Friday: "Facebook, Google, Apple, Microsoft & others have played central roles in the censorship cartel," adding that it "must be dismantled." Carr was already the senior Republican on the FCC, an

independent agency that regulates licenses for television and radio, pricing of home internet, and other communications issues in the United States.

Long rumored as a contender for FCC chair, he has built an alliance with billionaire Musk - Trump's wealthiest backer, whose Starlink satellite internet service could benefit from access to federal cash. The New York Times reported that Starlink received an \$885 million grant in late 2020 from the FCC - but that the Democrat-led commission later revoked it because the service couldn't prove it would reach enough unconnected rural homes. Carr "vociferously" opposed the decision, the newspaper reported. "In my view, it amounted to nothing more than regulatory lawfare against one of the left's top targets: Mr. Musk," he wrote in a Wall Street Journal opinion article last month.

Carr has also publicly agreed with the incoming Trump administration's promises to slash regulation and punish television networks for what they say is political bias. Trump

has repeatedly called to strip major broadcasters such as ABC, NBC and CBS of their licenses. During the 2024 campaign he singled out CBS, saying its license should be revoked after its flagship news program "60 Minutes" aired an interview with his Democratic opponent, Kamala Harris. Trump had declined to sit for a similar interview.

Carr also authored a chapter on the FCC in the controversial Project 2025 document that purported to lay out a vision for a second Trump administration, in which he also called for the regulation of the largest tech companies, such as Meta, Google and Apple. The FCC needs to bring new urgency to four main goals: reining in big tech, promoting national security, "unleashing" economic prosperity and ensuring FCC accountability, he wrote in the document by the conservative Heritage Foundation. Carr first joined the FCC in 2012. In 2017, during his first term as president, Trump appointed him as one of the agency's commissioners. Carr had previously worked as a lawyer specializing in regulatory issues. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Commissioner of Federal Communications Commission, Brendan Carr, testifies during an oversight hearing to examine the Federal Communications Commission in this file photo. — AFP

France mass rape trial enters final stage

AVIGNON: The trial of a French man who for a decade drugged his wife to have her raped by dozens of strangers entered its final stages on Monday, with the final set of accused set to testify ahead of sentencing requests later in the week and a verdict next month. The case of 71-year-old Dominique Pelicot has sparked horror, protests and a debate about male violence in French society. If convicted, he would emerge from the historic trial with a record as one of France's worst sex offenders.

Since early September Dominique Pelicot has been in the dock in the southern city of Avignon along with 49 other men. Another defendant is still at large. The victim, Pelicot's former wife Gisele, has become a feminist icon by refusing to be ashamed and demanding the trial be open to the public to raise awareness about the use of drugs to commit sexual abuse. "The

shame isn't ours to feel, it's theirs," she said.

For the past 10 weeks the court has considered the charges against the 47 defendants, and the last four men were due to take the stand on Monday. Like the other accused, these four defendants come from everyday backgrounds. They are Nicolas F, a 43-year-old freelance journalist, Boris M, a 37-year-old employee in a transport company, Philippe L, a 62-year-old gardener, and Joseph C, a 69-year-old pensioner.

'We are tired'

Previous defendants have claimed they believed they were taking part in a game played by a libertine couple, in which the wife pretended to sleep, and were unaware Gisele Pelicot had been rendered unconscious with drugs. Like most of the accused, they will likely be confronted with the videos of their acts, filmed and meticulously catalogued and filed away by Dominique Pelicot. Investigators counted around 200 instances of rape, most of them by her husband and more than 90 by strangers.

"We're tired," said Antoine Camus, one of the two lawyers representing 71-year-old Gisele Pelicot and her three children. He said Gisele Pelicot was tired of hearing "the same explanations from the defendants" that she was the victim of rape "by accident" or rape "by error of judgment." Dominique Pelicot has confessed to being a rapist. Of the co-defendants, only 14 have admitted the charges of aggravated rape, for which most of them face up to 20 years' imprisonment. The 35 others deny having raped Gisele Pelicot and maintain that they thought they were taking part in sex games. Gisele Pelicot said she had never given her consent.

Final phases

Her life was shattered in 2020 when she discovered that her partner of five decades had for years been secretly administering her large doses of tranquilizers to rape her and invite dozens of strangers to join him in their home in the village of Mazan. Dominique Pelicot documented his actions with meticulous precision on a hard drive in a folder labeled "abuse", leading police to track down 50 suspects beside the husband.

For years Gisele had strange memory lapses and

other health problems and thought she might have had Alzheimer's. Then police told her she had been drugged and raped for nearly a decade. None of her abusers alerted the police. Dominique Pelicot was caught by chance when he was detained in 2020 for filming up women's skirts in a local supermarket. The couple's two sons and daughter have regularly appeared at the trial to support their mother. David and Florian were expected to testify Monday afternoon or Tuesday.

Their sister, who uses the pen name Caroline Darian, has already been heard during the first week of the trial but her lawyer said on Monday she would like to testify again. Darian believes she was also drugged by her father. Naked photomontages of her had been found on Dominique Pelicot's computer. Once David and Florian are heard, Dominique and Gisele Pelicot will be given a final opportunity to speak. Prosecutors are then scheduled on Thursday and Friday to give their closing arguments and make their sentencing demands for the defendants. The verdict is expected to be delivered by December 20 at the latest. — AFP

'Cut the theatrics': UN climate chief to nations at COP29

BAKU: The UN's climate chief on Monday told countries at the deadlocked COP29 summit to "cut the theatrics", as pressure mounts on G20 leaders to deliver a breakthrough. As the UN climate talks limp into a second week in Azerbaijan, the world is no closer to a finance deal for poorer countries that will determine the success or failure of COP29. UN climate boss Simon Stiell said that "bluffing, brinkmanship and premeditated playbooks burn up precious time and run down the goodwill needed".

"Let's cut the theatrics and get down to business," he told delegates assembled in a cavernous football stadium in Azerbaijan's capital Baku. COP29 president Mukhtar Babayev, a former oil executive turned ecology minister, urged countries to "refocus and pick up the pace". Government ministers at the negotiating table have until Friday to break the impasse over how to raise \$1 trillion a year for developing countries to cope with global warming. With the clock ticking, pressure is mounting on G20 leaders to throw their weight behind the stalled process in Baku when they meet in Brazil for their annual sum-



BAKU: UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and COP28 President Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber and COP29 President Mukhtar Babayev attend the official handover of the COP presidency during the opening of the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. — AFP

mit on Monday and Tuesday.

"A successful outcome at COP29 is still within reach, but it will require leadership and compromise, namely from the G20 countries," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sunday in Rio de Janeiro, where he is attending the G20 summit of the world's biggest economies. "The spotlight is naturally on the G20. They account for 80 percent of global emissions," Guterres said, calling on the group to "lead by example." In a sign that a solution

some 20 km west of the G20 venue. While Biden arrives as a lame duck with just two months remaining in the White House, China's President Xi Jinping will be a central player at a G20 summit riven with geopolitical tensions amid the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. Xi announced measures to support the "Global South," and said China would support development building a "high quality" Belt and Road Initiative, his signature foreign policy plan that directs large Chinese investments to infrastructure projects in the developing world, Chinese state television CCTV reported.

In a nod to the return of China hawk Trump, Xi told British Prime Minister Keir Starmer the world was "entering a new period of major changes." As leaders lined up to meet the most powerful man in Rio, Xi added that Britain and China would "shoulder the important task of... responding to global challenges." Brazilian officials recognized that their agenda for the G20, focused on sustainable development, taxing the super-rich and fighting poverty and hunger could soon lose steam when Trump starts dictating new global priorities from the White House. Brazil's push for reform of global governance, including multilateral financial institutions, may also hit roadblocks with Trump, Brazilian officials said.

Biden, who visited the Amazon rainforest on his way to Rio, is set to announce a pledge to replenish the World Bank's International Development Association fund aimed at the world's poorest countries, and launch a bilateral clean energy partnership with Brazil, a senior US official told reporters.

G20 leaders are under pressure to try rescue UN climate talks in Azerbaijan, which has stalled on the issue of greater climate finance for developing countries. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on the world's biggest economies, who account for 80 percent of global emissions, to show "leadership" on the issue in Rio. The UN is seeking \$1 trillion a year for developing countries to cope with global warming.

Xi is expected to tout China's Belt & Road initiative as it exerts its economic ascendancy. Brazil has so far declined to join the global infrastructure initiative, but hopes are high for other industrial partnerships when Xi wraps up his stay in the country with a state visit in Brasilia on Wednesday. — Agencies

could emerge from Rio, the head of the Brazilian delegation to COP29, Andre Aranha Correa do Lago, left Baku to prepare for the G20.

Difference between life and death

Besides the finance impasse, a fight is also brewing at COP29 over whether countries should recommit to last year's landmark pledge to move the world away from fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia has been accused of obstructing efforts to address this and other measures to reduce record-high emissions of planet-heating greenhouse gases. The main task at COP29 is negotiating a new deal to provide developing countries enough money to cut emissions and build resilience against worsening climate shocks. Rei Josiah Echano, disaster chief in the typhoon-hit Philippines province of Northern Samar, called for talks to be "radically fast-tracked" to help those in dire need.

Developing countries excluding China will need \$1 trillion a year in outside assistance by the end of the decade, according to independent economists commissioned by the United Nations. Stiell said it was "easy to become slightly anaesthetized" by the numbers. "But let's never allow ourselves to forget: these figures are the difference between safety and life-wrecking disasters for billions of people," he said. "It certainly keeps me up at night."

Hosts criticized

Climate-vulnerable nations want developed na-

Typhoon forces dam release...

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Seven people died and three were injured when a landslide buried their house in Nueva Vizcaya province in Luzon, Kristine Falcon of the provincial disaster agency told AFP. Power outages across the island province of Catanduanes could last for months after Man-yi toppled electricity poles, provincial information officer Camille Gianan told AFP. "Catanduanes has been heavily damaged by that typhoon — we need food packs, hygiene kits and construction materials," Gianan said. "Most houses with light materials were flattened while some houses made of concrete had their roofs, doors and windows destroyed."

In the coastal town of Baler in Aurora province, clean-up operations were underway to remove felled trees and debris blocking roads and waterways. "Most of the

houses here are made of light materials so even now, before the inspection, we are expecting heavy damage on many houses in town," disaster officer Neil Rojo told AFP. "We've also received reports of roofs that went flying with the wind last night... it was the fierce wind that got us scared, not exactly the heavy rains."

Man-yi weakened significantly as it traversed the mountains of Luzon and was downgraded to a severe tropical storm as it swept over the South China Sea towards Vietnam on Monday. More than a million people in the Philippines fled their homes ahead of the storm, which followed an unusual streak of violent weather. Climate change is increasing the intensity of storms, leading to heavier rains, flash floods and stronger gusts.

At least 171 people in the Philippines died in the past month's storms, which left thousands homeless and wiped out crops and livestock. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, in Manila for talks with his Philippine counterpart and President Marcos, announced Monday an additional \$1 million in humanitarian aid to victims of the recent storms. — AFP

entity has hit a target within the capital as it presses it campaign against Hezbollah. Smoke was seen rising from the location of the strike in the Zuqaq al-Blat area, a short distance from the central Beirut district where the Lebanese government is headquartered. Another 18 people were wounded in the attack, the ministry said.

Hezbollah has kept up rocket fire into the Zionist entity's northern, where sirens sounded again on Monday. A woman was killed when a rocket struck a building in a town in the north, the Zionist Army Radio reported. The Zionist military said about five projectiles had been fired from Lebanon. On Sunday, the Zionist entity hit targets in the Beirut city limits for the first time in more than five weeks, killing 10 people in two separate strikes, including Hezbollah's top media official Mohammed Afif. Afif was laid to rest on Monday in the southern city of Sidon.

The Zionist military confirmed it had carried out the strike that killed Afif, but did not comment on a second attack in central Beirut. "In a quarter of an hour our whole life's work was lost," said Shukri Fuad, whose shop was destroyed in the second strike that hit a busy shopping district, sparking a huge blaze. — Agencies

Zionist carnage in Gaza amid...

Continued from Page 1

torn to pieces, civilians shredded. They weren't carrying weapons or even knew 'the resistance', yet they were ripped apart into fragments," said Mohammed Aboul Hassan, who lost his brother in the attack. "We remain steadfast, patient and resilient, and by the will of God, we will never falter. We will stay steadfast and patient," he told Reuters.

Hussam Abu Safiya, director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, said it was under siege by Zionist forces and the World Health Organization had been unable to deliver supplies of food, medicine and surgical equipment. Cases of malnutrition among children are increasing, he said, and the hospital was operating at a minimal level.

Meanwhile, a Zionist airstrike killed four people in a central Beirut neighborhood on Monday, Lebanon's health ministry said, the second day in a row the Zionist

G20 tackles wars, climate, Trump...

Continued from Page 1

Diplomats drafting a joint statement for the summit's leaders have struggled to hold together a fragile agreement on how to address the escalating Ukraine war, even a vague call for peace without criticism of any participants, sources said. A massive Russian air strike on Ukraine on Sunday shook what little consensus they had established, with European diplomats pushing to revisit previously agreed language on global conflicts.

The United States has also lifted prior limits on Ukraine's use of US-made weapons to strike deep into Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has long pushed for authorization from Washington to use the powerful Army Tactical Missile System, known by its initials ATACMS, to hit targets inside Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin did not attend the summit, and Moscow was represented by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The Kremlin accused Biden on Monday of escalating the war in Ukraine. The comments came as Moscow unleashed a second missile attack in as many days on the UNESCO-protected Ukrainian city of Odesa on the Black Sea that left 10 dead and more than 40 wounded. The head of Russian parliament's defense committee in the lower house Duma, Andrei Kartapolov, was quoted by the state RIA Novosti agency as saying that "absolutely nothing will change the course of the operation" in Ukraine.

US President Joe Biden sought to rally support for Kyiv, urging G20 leaders to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He also called on them to "increase pressure" on Hamas for a ceasefire in the Zionist entity's war with the Gaza fighters.

Security in Rio de Janeiro has been strengthened with troops reinforcing police for the duration of the summit. A Brazilian army patrol came under gunfire near a Rio de Janeiro slum in the hours before the summit began, police said. No one was injured in the incident by the hillside Cidade de Deus community

International

11 Bangladeshi former ministers face 'massacre charges' in court

Prosecutors demand extradition of exiled ex-leader Sheikh Hasina

DHAKA: Thirteen Bangladeshi former top government officials arrested after the revolution in August appeared in court Monday accused of "enabling massacres", with prosecutors repeating extradition demands for exiled ex-leader Sheikh Hasina. Dozens of Hasina's allies have been taken into custody since her regime collapsed, accused of involvement in a police crackdown that killed more than 700 people during the unrest that led to her ouster. Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam said the 13 defendants, who included 11 former ministers, a judge and an ex-government secretary, were accused of command responsibility for the deadly crackdown on the student-led protest that ousted the regime.

Hasina, who fled to old ally India by helicopter on August 5, was also due in court in Dhaka on Monday to face charges of "massacres, killings, and crimes against humanity", but she remained a fugitive in exile. "We have produced 13 defendants today, including 11 former ministers, a bureaucrat, and a judge," Islam, the chief prosecutor of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal, told reporters. "They are complicit in enabling massacres by participating in planning, inciting violence, ordering law enforcement officers to shoot on sight, and obstructing efforts to prevent a genocide."

Around half a dozen lawyers supported the defendants, who were brought from custody and led into court surrounded by a ring of security forces to

separate them from the large crowd outside. Hasina's 15-year tenure saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents. The charges the 13 face are so far limited to the police crackdown on student-led protests, but Islam requested more time to compile evidence stretching back further. "The crimes that led to mass murders and genocide have occurred over the past 16 years across the country," he told reporters. The court gave prosecutors until December 17 to submit their investigation report.

'Seeking assistance'

The defendants listened to the charges read to them but were not asked yet to give a plea. At one point, former industry minister Kamal Ahmed Majumdar stood up and spoke, appealing to the judge that he wanted "to say something", an AFP reporter in the court heard. He was not allowed to speak further. Others in court included once powerful ex-law minister Anisul Huq, former Supreme Court judge Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, and former energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

Former social affairs minister Dipu Moni is the only woman among the 13. Islam said efforts are being made to bring 77-year-old Hasina to Dhaka for trial, a day after interim leader Muhammad Yunus said Bangladesh was seeking her extradition. Islam said they had contacted Interpol "seek-



DHAKA: Chief prosecutor of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) Mohammad Tajul Islam (center) addresses media outside the ICT court in Dhaka on Nov 18, 2024. — AFP

ing assistance in arresting her, as she has committed crimes against humanity". Red notices issued by the global police body alert law enforcement agencies worldwide about fugitives. India is a

member of Interpol, but the red notice does not mean New Delhi must hand Hasina over as each country applies their own laws on whether an arrest should be made. — AFP

UK police probe royals Windsor Estate burglary

LONDON: UK police said on Monday officers were investigating a break-in last month on the grounds of the royal Windsor Estate, reportedly while Prince William and his family were at home. Thames Valley Police said the intruders stole two vehicles from a farm building on the estate west of London on October 13 and that no arrests had been made. "At around 11:45 pm on Sunday 13 October, we received a report of burglary at a property on Crown Estate land near to the A308 in Windsor," the force said in a statement, referring to the castle grounds.

"Offenders entered a farm building and made off with a black Isuzu pickup and a red quad bike. "They then made off towards the Old Windsor/Datchet area. No arrests have been made at this stage and an investigation is ongoing." The Sun tabloid, which first reported the incident, said the "masked raiders" struck while William, his wife Catherine, Princess of Wales, and their children slept in their nearby home on the estate. The newspaper reported last month that armed police officers from the Metropolitan Police's diplomatic protection unit had been removed from the two main gates of the Windsor Estate.

It comes as the force faces a shortage of firearms officers, with far fewer candidates joining up, the tabloid said. The Metropolitan Police, which is responsible for royal security, said it does "not comment on any security arrangements for protected individuals or sites". But in a statement, a spokesperson said the arrangements were "kept under constant review to ensure we take into account the latest threat and risk information and assessments that are available to us". The burglary is the latest security breach at Windsor, where William and his family live year-round and was the favored residence of the late Queen Elizabeth II. — AFP

US and Philippines sign deal on sharing military information

MANILA: US and Philippine defense chiefs signed an agreement Monday on sharing classified military information and technology, as the long-time treaty allies deepen cooperation in a bid to counter Chinese influence in the region. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin signed the deal with his Philippine counterpart Gilberto Teodoro at the start of a visit to Manila that also included a closed-door meeting with President Ferdinand Marcos.

The General Security of Military Information Agreement allows for the sharing of classified information that could benefit a US ally's national defense, and streamlines the sale of certain classified technologies, officials said. It will give the Philippines access to "higher capabilities and big-ticket items" from the United States and "open opportunities to pursue similar agreements with like-minded nations", Philippine Assistant Defense Secretary Arsenio Endolung said.

Austin and Teodoro also held a ground-breaking ceremony for a combined command and coordination centre inside the Philippine military's headquarters in Manila. "This centre will enable real-time information sharing for a common operating picture. It will help boost interoperability for many, many years to come," Austin said in a speech. "It will be a place where our forces can work side by side to respond to regional challenges," he added.

'Combine strengths'

Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner said the center would "enhance our ability to collaborate during crises, fostering an environment where our strengths combine to safeguard peace and security in our region". Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said any military agreement or security cooperation must not target "any third party or harm a third party's interests - let alone undermine regional peace, exacerbate regional tensions."

The Philippine defense department said Austin is due to visit the western island of Palawan on Tuesday for a meeting with Filipino forces responsible for pa-



QUEZON CITY: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (left) and Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro pose for a photo after signing the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Metro Manila. — AFP

trolling the South China Sea and defending outposts. Austin's visit comes as the Marcos government pushes back against Beijing's territorial claims over most of the South China Sea and as president-elect Donald Trump prepares to return to office.

China has brushed aside an international ruling that its claims in the South China Sea have no legal basis, and has deployed navy and coast guard vessels that Manila says harass its vessels and stop them accessing some reefs and islands in the waters. This has led to violent confrontations that have resulted in injuries to Filipino personnel and damage to their vessels in the past 18 months. That has sparked concern the United States could be drawn into an armed conflict due to its mutual defense treaty with the Philippines.

Washington has been strengthening its network of alliances aimed at countering China's growing military might and influence. It has ramped up joint military exercises and regularly deploys warships and fighter jets in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea - infuriating Beijing. Austin also announced \$1 million in humanitarian aid to victims of a series of deadly typhoons and storms that hit the Philippines in the past month, the last one of which struck the country over the weekend. That was on top of the \$5.5 million in aid already provided to the Philippines through USAID since September, Austin said on X. — AFP

'No plan B' to assist Palestinian refugees

GENEVA: There is no alternative to the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, its chief insisted Monday, following Zionist order to ban the organization that coordinates nearly all aid in war-ravaged Gaza. "There is no plan B," head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, told reporters in Geneva. Within the UN family, "there is no other agency geared to provide the same activities", providing not only aid in Gaza, but also primary health care and education to hundreds of thousands of children," he said. "If you are talking about bringing in a truck with food, you will surely find an alternative," he said, but "the answer is no" when it comes to education and primary healthcare.

He has called on the UN, which created UNRWA in 1949, to prevent the implementation of a ban on the organization in Zionist entity and occupied east Jerusalem, which was approved by the parliament last month. The ban is due to take effect at the end of January. The ordered suspension of the agency sparked global condemnation, including from key Zionist backer the United States. UNRWA provides assistance to nearly six million Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Lazzarini cautioned that a halt to UNRWA's activities in Zionist entity and East Jerusalem would block it from coordinating massive aid efforts inside Gaza.

"This would mean we could not operate in Gaza ... and thus the environment would be much too dangerous," he said. If UNRWA ceases to operate, he warned, the responsibility for providing all the services it has provided until now "will come back to the occupying power, being (Zionists)". He voiced concern over how UNRWA's employees could be impacted by the ban, saying there was a "real fear that any of them could be harassed, could be arrested, investigated, convicted for belonging (to) an organization which in this context is considered as being a terrorist organization". Tensions between UNRWA and Zionists escalated after Zionist entity in January, accused about a dozen of the agency's staff of taking part in Hamas' unprecedented attack on October 7, 2023. A series of probes found some "neutrality related issues" at UNRWA, and determined that nine employees "may have been involved" in the October 7 attack, but found no evidence for central allegations. — AFP

Taps run dry in the sprawling suburb of Mauritania's capital

NOUAKCHOTT: Khadidjatou Taher has lived for a decade in her ramshackle neighborhood on the far outskirts of Mauritania's capital, but is yet to have running water in her home. Created around 15 years ago to tackle uncontrolled building in Nouakchott, the Tarhil district is one of many areas in the vast desert state in northwest Africa where water access poses a daily challenge. "There's a terrible lack of water in Tarhil," said 42-year-old Taher, wearing a long traditional robe known as a meulleu. Authorities have installed a few tanks in the streets and set up a replacement system with water tankers.

But "they don't come every day and the quantities distributed are insufficient for our families and our animals", she said. Rampant urbanization is driving up the sand dune-surrounded neighborhood's population. While some households have access to running water, others rarely receive it or are not connected to the distribution network. Access to drinking water is an ever-pressing challenge for Mauritania, where temperatures regularly rise to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit). More than 22 percent of the population is deprived of drinking water, one of the lowest availability rates in the world, according to UNICEF.

The already challenging situation in Tarhil has deteriorated since August, when Nouakchott was hit by water shortages due to a faulty pipe network and mud deposits linked to the rainy season. The Mauritanian capital relies on water sources mainly along the Senegal River, which lies some 200 kilometers to the south. The large distances are compounded by poorly maintained infrastructure. "Leaks go undetected, and almost 40 percent of the water is lost,"



NOUAKCHOTT: A young boy fills jerry cans in the Tarhil district, in Nouakchott. — AFP

said Mohamed Tourad, the director of Tenniya, an NGO operating in the water sector. He added that the public company managing water distribution was largely loss-making because many residents do not pay their bills.

'Pipes are still dry'

Vendors with donkey-drawn carts laden with jerry cans roamed the streets looking for water or customers. Others carried the precious liquid in tanks or pick-ups. Taher said cart drivers brought her a few jerry cans of water every day, which she stored carefully in a shed, out of the blazing sun. "Even 100 jerry cans aren't enough to feed our families and animals in the heat," she said. "Water is very hard to come by here, we're thirsty and we'd like to have widespread distribution," said 45-year-old El Id Ahmed, who has

lived in Tarhil for 12 years. "The tankers that come to supply us are often late," he added. Water was supposed to flow freely in the district after authorities began work to ensure a supply several years ago. But "the pipes are still dry", said Ahmed.

Some dust-covered piping lay unused by the side of a small road. To resolve the crisis, Mauritania's newly re-elected President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani had prioritized extending a water catchment area some 60 kilometers east of Nouakchott and constructing a desalination plant in the capital. But the extension of the Idini basin has stalled. The government recently promised a "vast emergency program" to improve living standards in Nouakchott, including a component "that will enable the extension of water supply networks to all target districts", including Tarhil. — AFP

Yemen rebels threaten German shipping firms

BERLIN: Yemen's Houthi rebels have threatened to hit vessels of German shipping firms passing near the Red Sea or using Zionist ports, the German shipowners' association VDR said Monday. The Houthis have waged a campaign against international shipping to show solidarity with Hamas, firing drones and missiles at ships in the Red Sea, a vital route for international trade. The emailed warnings sent to the German industry body and cargo carriers in recent months were "attempts at intimidation", VDR executive Irina Haesler said.

The threats were "directed against ships that call at Zionist ports, as well as against those that pass through the Red Sea, the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean", the association said. "Regardless of their location, ships with supposed links to Zionist entity are considered potential targets," it said. Anger over Zionist campaign in Gaza, which began after an unprecedented October 7, has stoked violence involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

One such email from the Houthis, seen by AFP, warned German shipowners of "a naval blockade on the (Zionist) enemy". It said "all vessels belonging to it, associated with it or bound for it" would be "subject to punishment and ... prohibited from crossing the area of operations of the Yemeni Armed Forces". A VDR spokeswoman told AFP the authenticity of the emails had been confirmed by the German navy and International Chamber of Shipping. Most major shipping companies are avoiding the Red Sea and making the longer and more costly journey around Africa. The United States and other countries have deployed military vessels to help shield shipping from Houthi strikes and carried out repeated air strikes on rebel bases in Yemen. — AFP

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024

Biden: 'Nobody can reverse' US progress on clean energy

US president touts climate legacy in landmark Amazon visit

MANAUS, Brazil: US President Joe Biden paid an historic trip to the Amazon rainforest on Sunday to promote his record on fighting climate change, insisting it would survive Donald Trump's return to the White House. Biden flew over the jungle by helicopter and met with Indigenous leaders in the Brazilian city of Manaus on the penultimate leg of a valedictory South American tour which has been overshadowed by Trump's election win. The 81-year-old Democrat is the first sitting US president to visit the Amazon.

"Folks, we don't have to choose between an environment and the economy. We can do both. We've proven it back home," Biden said in a short speech in a nature reserve, framed by vivid green forest cover. Without referring to Trump by name, he said he would leave his Republican successor and his country "a strong foundation to build on, if they choose to do so."

"It's true—some may seek to deny or delay the clean energy revolution that's underway in America. But nobody—nobody—can reverse it," he declared. On Sunday, the White House announced that the US had hit its target of increasing bilateral climate financing to \$11 billion a year.

It said that the figure reached this year was six times what the US was providing when Biden took over from Trump in 2021. The money, which helps developing countries adapt to climate change, has made "the United States the largest bilateral provider of climate finance in the world," the White House said. The European Union, however, remains the biggest global contributor to climate financing.



US President Joe Biden tours the Museu da Amazonia as he visits the Amazon Rainforest in Manaus, Brazil, on Nov 17, 2024. — AFP

Outshone by Xi

Trump's return to the White House looms large over Biden's last major foreign tour as president, which began with a gathering of Asian-Pacific partners in Lima and ends with a G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro starting Monday. Climate financing for developing nations is one of the topics on the G20 table, with calls for the world's richest countries to rescue stalled UN climate talks taking place at the same time in Azerbaijan. While striking a defiant note about Trump, Biden has cut an at-times forlorn figure on his farewell tour of a region the US views as its backyard.

All eyes in Lima were on Chinese President Xi Jinping, who was received with greater fanfare than the lame-duck US leader. At a meeting with Biden, the Chinese leader was already looking to the new Trump era, saying he was ready to work with the "America First" leader and hoped for a "smooth transition" in relations. America's allies fear Trump could again pull the United States, the world's second-biggest polluter, out of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement on combating carbon emissions, as he did during his first term. On Saturday, he nominated a fracking magnate and noted climate change skeptic, Chris Wright, as his energy secretary.

In another ominous sign, Argentina's right-wing President Javier Milei, a major fan of Trump's, this week pulled his country out of the UN climate talks.

Amazon on fire

The Amazon, spanning nine countries, is crucial to the fight against climate change due to its ability to absorb planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. But it is also one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. A recent study showed that the Amazon rainforest had lost an area about the size of Germany and France combined to deforestation in four de-

cadecades. This year it experienced the worst wildfires in nearly two decades, fueled by a severe drought blamed in part by climate experts on global warming.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has pledged to put a stop to illegal Amazon deforestation by 2030. Biden on Sunday announced an additional \$50 million towards a Brazilian fund aimed at protecting the world's biggest jungle.

Experts have warned that the second Trump presidency could undo progress on the transition to green energy made under Biden, giving heavy polluters like China and India an excuse to scale back their own efforts. — AFP

Is AI's meteoric rise beginning to slow?

SAN FRANCISCO: A quietly growing belief in Silicon Valley could have immense implications: the breakthroughs from large AI models—the ones expected to bring human-level artificial intelligence in the near future—may be slowing down. Since the frenzied launch of ChatGPT two years ago, AI believers have maintained that improvements in generative AI would accelerate exponentially as tech giants kept adding fuel to the fire in the form of data for training and computing muscle.

The reasoning was that delivering on the technology's promise was simply a matter of resources—pour in enough computing power and data, and artificial general intelligence (AGI) would emerge, capable of matching or exceeding human-level performance. Progress was advancing at such a rapid pace that leading industry figures, including Elon Musk, called for a moratorium on AI research. Yet the major tech companies, including Musk's own, pressed forward, spending tens of billions of dollars to avoid falling behind.

OpenAI, ChatGPT's Microsoft-backed creator, recently raised \$6.6 billion to fund further advances. xAI, Musk's AI company, is in the process of raising \$6 billion, according to CNBC, to buy 100,000 Nvidia chips, the cutting-edge electronic components that power the big models.

However, there appears to be problems on the road to AGI. Industry insiders are beginning to acknowledge that large language models (LLMs) aren't scaling endlessly higher at breakneck speed when pumped with more power and data. Despite the massive investments, performance improvements are showing signs of plateauing.

"Sky-high valuations of companies like OpenAI and Microsoft are largely based on the notion that LLMs will, with continued scaling, become artificial general intelligence," said AI expert and frequent critic Gary Marcus. "As I have always warned, that's just a fantasy."



Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang (left) and the CEO of the SoftBank Group Masayoshi Son talk during an AI event in Tokyo. — AFP

• One fundamental challenge is the finite amount of language-based data available for AI training. According to Scott Stevenson, CEO of AI legal tasks firm Spellbook, who works with OpenAI and other providers, relying on language data alone for scaling is destined to hit a wall.

"Some of the labs out there were way too focused on just feeding in more language, thinking it's just going to keep getting smarter," Stevenson explained. Sasha Luccioni, researcher and AI lead at startup Hugging Face, argues a stall in progress was predictable given companies' focus on size rather than purpose in model development.

"The pursuit of AGI has always been unrealistic, and the 'bigger is better' approach to AI was bound to hit a limit eventually—and I think this is what we're seeing here," she told AFP.

The AI industry contests these interpretations, maintaining that progress toward human-level AI is unpredictable. "There is no wall," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman posted Thursday on X, without elaboration.

Anthropic's CEO Dario Amodei, whose company develops the Claude chatbot in partnership with Amazon, remains bullish: "If you just eyeball the rate

at which these capabilities are increasing, it does make you think that we'll get there by 2026 or 2027."

Nevertheless, OpenAI has delayed the release of the awaited successor to GPT-4, the model that powers ChatGPT, because its increase in capability is below expectations, according to sources quoted by The Information. Now, the company is focusing on using its existing capabilities more efficiently.

This shift in strategy is reflected in their recent AI model, designed to provide more accurate answers through improved reasoning rather than increased training data. Stevenson said an OpenAI shift to teaching its model to "spend more time thinking rather than responding" has led to "radical improvements". He likened the AI advent to the discovery of fire. Rather than tossing on more fuel in the form of data and computer power, it is time to harness the breakthrough for specific tasks.

Stanford University professor Walter De Brouwer likens advanced LLMs to students transitioning from high school to university: "The AI baby was a chatbot which did a lot of improv" and was prone to mistakes, he noted. "The homo sapiens approach of thinking before leaping is coming," he added. — AFP

India CB chief's term likely to be extended

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: The Indian government is likely to extend the term of central bank governor Shaktikanta Das for a second time, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters, an unprecedented move that would make him the longest serving chief since the 1960s. Das was one of the most trusted bureaucrats in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration before he was appointed to lead the Reserve Bank of India in December 2018, at a time when the relationship between the government and the regulator was tumultuous. Das, whose current term is due to end on Dec. 10, has already been the RBI's governor for longer than the typical five-year maximum of recent decades and a further extension would make him the longest-serving since Benegal Rama Rau, who filled the role for 7-1/2 years between 1949 and 1957.

Two government sources with direct knowledge of the matter said no other candidates are being considered at this point nor had any selection committee been set up, with Das' term likely to be extended for at least another year. The decision is due to be announced after polling in Maharashtra state elections is complete, a third source, also with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The country's Election Commission bars the ruling party from making ad-hoc appointments that could affect voter behavior. The finance ministry, prime minister's office and the central bank did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment. The three sources, who did not wish to be identified due to the confidential nature of the matter, said the final decision would be taken by the Prime Minister. — Reuters



Singapore's former oil tycoon Lim Oon Kuin arrives to be sentenced at the State Court in Singapore on Nov 18, 2024. — AFP

Disgraced Singapore oil tycoon sentenced to 18 years for fraud

SINGAPORE: The founder of a failed Singapore oil trading company was sentenced Monday to nearly 18 years in jail for cheating banking giant HSBC out of millions of dollars in one of the country's most serious cases of fraud. Lim Oon Kuin, 82, better known as O.K. Lim, was convicted in May in a case that dented the city-state's reputation as a top Asian oil trading hub. His firm, Hin Leong Trading, was among Asia's biggest oil trading companies before its sudden and dramatic collapse in 2020.

Sentencing him to 17 and a half years in jail, State

Courts judge Toh Han Li said he agreed with the prosecution that the offences had the potential to undermine confidence in Singapore's oil trading industry. The amount involved "stood at the top-tier of cheating cases" in the city-state, a global financial hub, he said. The judge shaved off a year due to Lim's age but did not give any sentencing discount on account of his health, saying the Singapore Prison Service has adequate medical facilities.

Lim, however, remained free on bail after his lawyers said they would file an appeal before the High Court. State prosecutors had sought a 20-year jail term, saying "this is one of the most serious cases of trade financing fraud that has ever been prosecuted in Singapore". The defense had argued for seven years imprisonment, playing down the harm caused by Lim's offences and citing his age and poor health. The businessman faced a total of 130 criminal charges involving hundreds of millions of dollars, but prosecutors

tried and convicted him on just three—two of cheating HSBC, and a third of encouraging a Hin Leong executive to forge documents.

Prosecutors said he tricked HSBC into disbursing nearly \$112 million by telling the bank that his firm had entered into oil sales contracts with two companies. The transactions were, in fact, "complete fabrications, concocted on the accused's directions", prosecutors said, adding that his actions "tarnished Singapore's hard-earned reputation as Asia's leading oil trading hub". Lim built Hin Leong from a single delivery truck shortly before Singapore became independent in 1965. It grew into a major supplier of fuel used by ships, and its rise in some ways mirrored Singapore's growth from a gritty port to an affluent financial hub. The firm played a key role in helping the city-state become the world's top ship refuelling port, observers say, and it expanded into ship chartering and management with a subsidiary that has a fleet of more than 150 vessels. — AFP

NBK RISE advances its mission, paving the way to empower women in leadership



Shaikha Al-Bahar signs the pledge on behalf of National Bank of Kuwait.



CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait Abdulaziz Al-Babtain signs the pledge on behalf of Ooredoo.



Salma Al-Hajjaj signs the pledge on behalf of Gulf Bank.



Shaikha Al-Bahar

- The Bank's vision is to create a diverse and inclusive workplace that nurtures and supports talented women to take on leadership roles
- NBK RISE serves as an ideal platform for ambitious women to unlock their potential and pursue their career goals

- The program aims to prepare participants for prominent leadership positions in the future
- Spanning nine months, the program offers a comprehensive series of activities and training courses in partnership with leading global universities
- NBK remains committed to fostering women's empowerment and expanding their leadership presence



Isam Al-Sagar, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Salah Al-Fulaij, Hisham Al-Rifai, Ali Khalil, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Mohammed Abel, Salma Al-Hajjaj and Yaqoub Al-Rifai with the participants.



Shaikha Al-Bahar (center) with Ali Khalil and Abdulatif Al-Nusif.

KUWAIT: Following the success of its inaugural edition, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced the launch of the second edition of NBK RISE, the pioneering program created to empower women leaders and prepare them for senior roles.

The launch ceremony was marked by the presence of Isam Al-Sagar, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK-Kuwait, Faisal Al-Hamad, CEO of NBK Wealth, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology, alongside several of the bank's top executives.

The event was also attended by prominent public figures, industry leaders, CEOs, and representatives from major organizations, including Hisham Al-Rifai, Managing Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait, Dr Yaqoub Al-Rifai, Secretary General of Kuwait Banking Association, Mohammed Abul, CEO of Abyat, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, Ali Khalil, CEO of Kuwait Financial Centre- Markaz, Abdullatif Al-Nusif, Managing Director - Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, in addition to representatives from J's Bakery, and InterVest Capital Partners New York. All participants exemplified a strong, collective commitment to advancing women's representation in leadership roles through their collaboration and dedication, as part of the NBK RISE pledge.

NBK is committed to supporting the NBK RISE program and its mission to foster professional growth and leadership development in women, creating a path of learning and opportunity that empowers them to ascend to higher leadership roles and secure positions on boards and executive committees.

This nine-month program incorporates a blend of training courses and events in partnership with IE Business School and INSEAD, focusing on essential competencies, confidence building, strategic initiative development, transformational leadership, and effective decision-making. Participants also benefit from mentorship, coaching by industry leaders, and collaborative projects that turn ideas into impactful outcomes.

The program is structured in modules targeting leadership and strategic skills, communication, and interaction, with a clear goal of preparing participants for distinguished leadership roles.

Furthermore, the initiative will support a diverse group of participants, including female employees and trainees from the bank, as well as representatives from establishments involved in this year's initiative. NBK is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion, with a particular focus on the critical role of empowering effective women leaders. This year, the program includes 25 participants from diverse professional backgrounds, including NBK employees in Kuwait and international locations, as well as representatives from partner organizations whom NBK Group fully



A group photo of the participants.

sponsors. The program's participants comprise a diverse cohort, including:

- 12 representatives from NBK Kuwait.
- 3 participants from NBK's international branches (Egypt, Singapore, and Bahrain).
- 5 participants from esteemed regional companies: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Ooredoo, Kuwait Banking Association, Abyat, and Gulf Bank.
- Two participants from NBK Wealth and three from Kuwait Financial Centre - Markaz, J's Bakery, and InterVest Capital Partners, New York.

NBK is dedicated to fostering a culture of women's empowerment throughout the entire organization, with a focus on expanding their presence in leadership roles. By offering guidance and career development opportunities, the bank provides specialized programs and workshops in collaboration with renowned universities and international training centers, equipping women leaders with the skills and

strategies needed to excel in leadership positions.

NBK RISE serves as a powerful platform for ambitious women to harness their potential and achieve their professional goals, building on the exceptional success of the inaugural edition. The Bank will persist in its unwavering efforts to empower women in the workplace and advance their careers, grounded in its belief that diversity and inclusion are essential to ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of all organizations. Furthermore, NBK is deeply committed to promoting equal opportunities and fostering diversity, equality, and inclusion within the workplace. Through a range of strategic initiatives and specialized programs designed to support and develop women leaders, the Bank has significantly increased the number of women in leadership and supervisory positions.

Enhancing the representation of women in leadership and providing them with opportunities to

engage in critical decision-making is a key strategic priority for global institutions. This is especially important as women increasingly contribute to addressing social issues, helping to foster an environment that supports sustainable development and generates a lasting positive impact on society. NBK RISE is an inspiring initiative that goes beyond the bank's efforts, extending to several leading organizations in Kuwait that have signed the pledge to increase the representation of women in leadership roles. This collective commitment reinforces their determination to work together to achieve the goals of this global program.

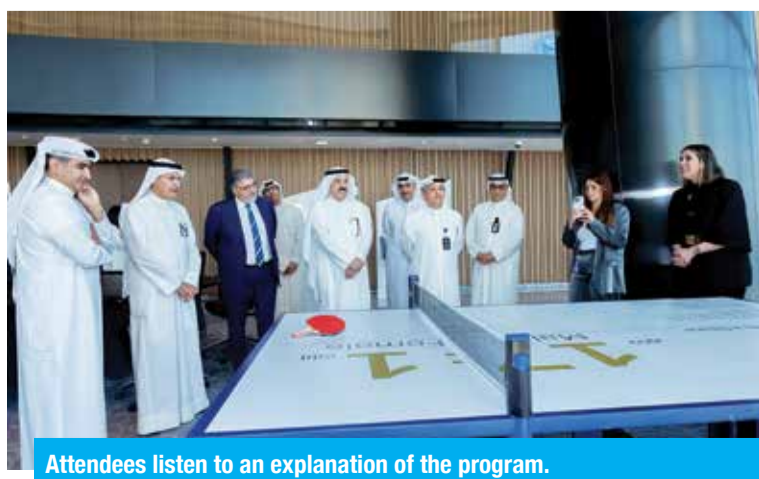
NBK RISE has earned prestigious recognition, including awards from Euromoney Magazine and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), along with MEED Magazine's award for "Best Initiative for Women in Business".

NBK takes pride in its leadership in upholding the principles of workplace equality across all its international locations, where women account for 49 percent of the Group's workforce. Additionally, women represent 29.7 percent of the national workforce in senior management and above. The bank is also proud of the absence of any gender wage gap among its employees. The NBK RISE initiative stands as a testament to the Group's leading role in fostering and advancing its institutional impact on society. In partnership with renowned universities and training centers globally, NBK consistently offers specialized programs and workshops to develop women leaders while raising awareness of gender differences and how to leverage these differences to enhance productivity and foster innovation. Additionally, NBK is expanding its commitment to diversity and inclusion by launching products and services tailored for female customers and entrepreneurs, and will continue to advance these efforts as part of its ongoing dedication to promoting financial inclusion.

NBK remains dedicated to building a workplace culture where women's empowerment flourishes, providing ongoing support for their professional journey and ensuring a sustainable legacy of diversity and inclusion across its global network.



Grant Lowen, Faisal Al-Hamad, Mohammed Al-Othman, Nabil Marouf, Ali Fardan and Salma Al-Hajjaj



Attendees listen to an explanation of the program.



Isam Al-Sagar, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Hisham Al-Rifai, Mohammed Abel, Salma Al-Hajjaj, and Yaqoub Al-Rifai.



Isam Al-Sagar, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Salah Al-Fulaij, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain and Ali Khalil.

Business

From cyclical to sustainable growth

InvestGB's research report provides an overview of student housing in US

- Despite economic challenges and changing demographics, the US student housing market has proven to be a robust and evolving sector.
- With high occupancy rates, steady rent growth, and increased institutional interest, student housing stands out as an attractive subsector within real estate.
- This report provides an overview of sector's dynamics, key drivers, and future prospects.

KUWAIT: A report issued by InvestGB, the investment arm of Gulf Bank, titled "Student Housing in the United States: From Cyclical to Sustainable Growth", provides an overview of the sector's dynamics, key drivers, and future outlook. The report highlights that the student housing sector has experienced strong occupancy rates, particularly in purpose-built properties near leading universities.

The report noted that while pre-leasing rates for 2024 were lower than the exceptional levels seen in 2022 and 2023, they remain in line with historical averages, reflecting a degree of stability amid economic uncertainty. This stability is attributed to Tier 1 universities, which maintain steady demand from students, according to data from RealPage.

Pre-lease occupancy rates remain resilient

The student housing sector has exhibited robust occupancy rates, particularly in purpose-built properties near leading universities. RealPage's data illustrates that although pre-leasing figures for 2024 trailed the exceptional rates of 2022 and 2023, they remain consistent with historical averages, reflecting a degree of stability amid economic uncertainty. The occupancy trend is particularly favorable at Tier 1 universities, which continue to attract consistent student demand.

Supply/demand dynamics

The limited availability of supply has significantly contributed to the recovery of the student housing market. PwC reports a 35 percent decline in the delivery of new student housing in the 2020s relative to the 2010s. The observed decline is noteworthy when viewed as a proportion of the current inventory levels. In Fall 2024, new deliveries accounted for 3 percent of the total student housing stock, marking a substantial decrease from the approximately 8 percent of annual additions seen over the past ten years. This has led to a contraction in supply.

Moreover, on the supply side, an increase in the availability of competitive student buildings may account for the decline in off-campus purpose-built student housing deliveries, as well as the slight softening in demand for the sector.

Enrollment growth trends

On the demand side, the observed trend of de-

clining enrollment growth pre-2024 may be impacting the demand dynamics within the student housing market. Prior to 2024, overall enrollment experienced a modest decline; however, this year has witnessed a reversal. Preliminary data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows a 3 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment for Fall 2024, with growth being across all sectors. However, this overall increase contrasts with a 5 percent drop in freshman enrollment compared to last year, suggesting mixed signals. The drop in freshman enrollment raises concerns about the long-term demand for higher education among recent high school graduates. This trend may be influenced by various factors, including evolving views regarding college, economic constraints, or a movement towards alternative educational and career options. This combination of increasing overall enrollment with a declining freshman cohort introduces a level of uncertainty regarding the sustainability of growth in the forthcoming years.

Nevertheless, on a more granular level, data on RealPage's 175 tracked campuses, which serve as a proxy for Tier 1 or Institutional-grade universities, shows that these institutions have sustained a more stable enrollment base compared to the broader US enrollment figures. This suggests that there is a growing disparity among campuses, with the divergence in enrollment trends at the campus level largely influenced by robust growth at well-known institutions with strong brand recognition.

Rental growth rates still above historical norms

The student housing sector experienced a notable increase in rental growth in recent years, surpassing its historical averages. The effective asking rent changes for off-campus purpose-built housing have consistently exceeded the historical average of 2.6 percent on a year-over-year basis since Fall 2014, according to RealPage Analytics. Notably, Fall 2023 saw an exceptional rent growth of 7.8 percent, which is the highest annual increase recorded in this period. According to PwC's 2025 Emerging Trends in Real Estate report, the student housing rent growth outpaced conventional multifamily in 34 of 56 months since early 2020, highlighting the sector's robust performance. The momentum continued into Fall 2024, with rent growth reaching 5.0 percent. Whilst still well above the



long-term average, the sector is experiencing a normalization of rent growth. The increased availability of competitive student housing, as noted earlier, is another factor contributing to moderation of rent growth.

The data from RealPage above further supports the notion that convergence may be occurring between the broader multifamily sector and student housing markets.

According to PwC's report, the US student housing sector is transitioning into a more mature asset class, characterized by enhanced stability and predictability. The normalization and moderation in rental growth are typical of a mature market, where high volatility gives way to steady, income-focused performance. A key indicator of sector maturity is the shift from what PwC refers to as the "shakeout phase," a period characterized by an increase in market consolidation as competitive dynamics begin to stabilize. This, according to the report, post-shakeout phase is evident, with the majority of off-campus beds now under the control of the top 25-30 ownership groups. This level of consolidation aligns with a mature market profile, where larger players dominate and smaller operators are less prevalent.

Slowdown in transaction activity

The sector has also experienced a decline in transaction volume, largely attributed to rising interest rates and a more conservative lending landscape. Walker & Dunlop's (W&D) data indicates that transaction activity in student housing dropped significantly in 2023, a 71 percent decline from the peak levels observed in 2022. This contraction is consistent with broader trends in real estate, where elevated borrowing costs have made it challenging for investors to obtain favorable financing terms.

As a result, transaction volume has shifted toward well-capitalized private investors and institutional players that have the capacity to allocate equity with minimal dependence on debt financing. W&D reports that private capital was the primary driver of transaction activity in 2023, accounting for around \$5.7 billion in total sales. W&D adds that significant institutional investors are currently engaging in asset acquisitions within premier markets, focusing on purpose-built properties located near major campuses.

The recent rise in competitive student housing availability, coupled with a declining population of 18-24-year-olds, presents challenges for the sector. Going forward, investors should be more selective in their strategy. Prime markets are expected to maintain consistent occupancy levels and experience gradual rent increases, closer to their sustainable historical levels. Yardi Matrix projects that occupancy levels will stabilize at approximately 94-95 percent within major universities, reinforcing the sector's resilience in high-demand markets. The capital markets outlook for student housing remains cautiously optimistic for high-quality assets near top universities. As lenders become more selective, financing is expected to concentrate on properties with stable occupancy and strong rental income, particularly in high-demand Tier 1 university markets.

Cap rates have adjusted upward to reflect higher interest rates, but we anticipate potential cap rate contraction as interest rates decline, creating a more favorable environment for refinancing and transaction activity. Ultimately, for investors, the path forward lies in selective investment in high-demand markets. The sector is anticipated to sustain its position as a robust investment opportunity within the real estate market, offering investors appealing risk-adjusted returns.

Debt-saddled Laos struggles to tame rampant inflation

VIENTIANE, Laos: Suffocating under a mountain of debt to China, communist Laos is struggling to tame rampant inflation, with food prices rising so sharply that a growing number of households are resorting to foraging. At a market in Vientiane, traders told AFP they have never known business to be so slow, as families have seen the value of their money collapse since COVID-19.

While the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent prices around the world spiraling, Laos has found itself incapable of putting the brakes on inflation. Prices rocketed 23 percent in 2022 and 31 percent last year, while they are on course for 25 percent this year, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Families in particular have been hit hard as the cost of basic staples such as rice, sugar, oil and chicken doubled last year. A growing number of households are so desperate for food that they are now having to forage to supplement their diets, according to a World Bank household survey earlier this year. At Vientiane's morning market, a gold trader said that where customers used to come to buy necklaces, rings and earrings for special occasions, now all anyone wants is to sell their valuables to raise cash. "I sometimes sit all day and nobody buys my gold," the 45-year-old told AFP last month, speaking on condition of anonymity because talking to foreign media in authoritarian, one-party Laos is risky. "My shop used to be busy but now nobody buys gold — they all come to sell it to get money."

After 15 years running his shop, the trader said he fears for the future of his business. Despite three de-

cadecades of consistent economic growth, Laos remains one of the poorest countries in Asia, with limited transport infrastructure and a low-skilled workforce mostly employed in agriculture.

Life expectancy is just 69 years and the ADB says that nearly one in three children under five is stunted because of malnutrition — one of the highest rates globally. In recent years, the government has borrowed billions of dollars from neighbor China to fund a \$6-billion high-speed railway and a series of major hydropower dams — aiming to become the "battery" of Southeast Asia. The World Bank warned in a report last week that public debt — over \$13 billion, or 108 percent of GDP — was "unsustainable". Servicing the debt is fuelling inflation by driving down the value of the kip, which lost half its value against the dollar in 2022, and nearly a fifth in the first nine months of 2024.

"Given Laos' heavy reliance on imports, the kip's depreciation has driven up domestic consumer prices and inflation, squeezing domestic demand and slowing economic recovery," Poh Lynn Ng, an economist with the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), told AFP. Interest payments totaling \$1.7 billion are due in 2024 and an average of \$1.3 billion for the next three years, further eroding Laos' foreign exchange reserves. AFP contacted the Laotian finance ministry for comment, but did not receive a response.

Response 'too slow'

The Bank of Lao PDR has raised interest rates and in August, the government launched a plan aiming to bring inflation below 20 percent by December. But Vivat Kittiphongkosol of the Joint Development Bank Laos said the government had been "too slow" to react as problems unfolded.

"To kill this economic problem, you cannot utilize a single transaction and expect it to solve everything. You need to do a lot of things," he told AFP. The World Bank says the government has brought some



Passengers sitting on a high-speed train at the railway station in Laos' Luang Prabang province. Suffocating under a mountain of debt to China, communist Laos is struggling to tame rampant inflation. — AFP

stability to its finances, but mainly through debt deferrals and limiting spending on health, education and welfare. Alex Kremer, the World Bank Country Manager for Laos, warned these austerity measures would have damaging long-term consequences.

"Continued underinvestment in human capital will damage the country's long-term productivity and its future ability to compete in regional markets," he said. Instead, the World Bank has urged the government to boost revenue by cutting tax breaks — and also to try to restructure its debt.

Though small, Laos is too important to Beijing to be allowed to fail, JDB's Vivat said, both politically and as a key leg in the Belt and Road Initiative route that aims to connect southwest China ultimately to Singapore. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman told AFP Beijing was doing "all it can to help Laos ease its debt burden". But Laotians can expect more pain in the short term, with the ADB predicting inflation will stay above 20 percent until the end of next year at least. — AFP



An aerial view of residential buildings under construction in Nanjing, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

Shanghai unveils property tax incentives

BEIJING: Shanghai announced on Monday it would be the first major Chinese city to implement tax incentives to revive its property sector, a move analysts anticipate other 'Tier One' city governments will quickly also adopt as distressed developers drag on growth.

Residents looking to sell their existing properties in the financial capital will be exempt from paying VAT so long as they hold onto it for more than two years, reports in state media said. Shanghai also raised the standard for levying deed tax to properties larger than 140 square meters (1,500 square feet), up from 90. Chinese policymakers urgently need to arrest a slump in the property market, once a key growth driver that at its peak accounted for around a quarter of economic activity. But a broader consumer and investor confidence crisis has glued shut prospective buyers' wallets.

China's finance ministry last week unveiled a tranche of tax incentives on home and land transactions aimed at increasing demand and easing developers' financial difficulties. Those tax measures followed a raft of property measures announced at the end of September, including a cut in the minimum down payment ratio to 15 percent for all housing categories and a relaxation in home purchase restrictions.

"The policy pivot since September has been effective in reviving demand and supporting housing and stock prices," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit. "However, China's economy is not yet on a firm footing, and policy support has to be bold and sustained to revive confidence."

"It's better to act sooner rather than later," he added, pointing to the fact that Shanghai's economy only grew 4.7 percent over the first 10 months of the year, while those of other 'Tier One' cities, such as Beijing and Shenzhen, topped the government's full year growth target of about 5 percent over the same period. An index tracking China's real estate shares .CSI931775 and an index for Hong Kong-listed mainland property developers were both trading higher on Monday. — Reuters

Pakistan discusses \$7bn bailout plan agenda with IMF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan discussed its \$7 billion bailout reform agenda with the International Monetary Fund during an unscheduled staff visit last week, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Sunday, suggesting no new taxes are to be imposed. The talks in Islamabad came within six weeks of the IMF approving the bailout, an unusual move as it is rare for the fund to discuss reforms ahead of a review of the reform plan under the loan program. A first review of Pakistan's reforms is due in the first quarter of 2025. "We discussed reforms in taxation, energy sector, privatization of loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public finance," Aurangzeb said in a recorded video statement

broadcast by state-run television. After wrapping up the visit, the IMF had said it was encouraged by Islamabad's reaffirmed commitment to the economic reforms under the Extended Fund Facility its board had approved in September to reduce vulnerabilities.

The mission did not state the weaknesses, but sources in Pakistan's finance ministry have said some major lapses prompted the IMF's visit. Among these were a shortfall of nearly 190 billion rupees (\$685 million) in revenue collection during the first quarter of the current fiscal year, the sources said.

The period also saw an external financing gap of \$2.5 billion, while Pakistan failed in the bid to sell its national airline. It had prompted fears that Pakistan might need to impose new taxes to bridge the shortfall. But Aurangzeb said the shortfall will be met only with enforcement to get people to pay their taxes, implying there would not be any new revenue measures. — Reuters

Xiaomi reports sales bump on EV deliveries

BEIJING: Chinese consumer tech giant Xiaomi on Monday announced a surge in sales during the third quarter, propelled in part by accelerating electric vehicle deliveries after it entered the highly competitive sector this year. Xiaomi built its name on a wide range of affordable products including smartphones, tablets and home appliances, only expanding into the crowded EV field with its own model earlier this year.

The Beijing-based firm announced revenue of 92.5 billion yuan (\$12.8 billion) during the three months leading up to September 30, up 30.5 percent from the previous year, a filing at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange showed. Deliveries of its SU7 EV — launched in March this year — reached 39,790 during the period, up from 27,307 in the second quarter and bringing in revenue

of 9.5 billion yuan (\$1.3 billion). "In the third quarter of 2024... we continued to ramp up production and achieved our goal of cumulative production of 100,000 vehicles on November 13," the statement said. Revenue from Xiaomi's vital smartphone business stood at 47.5 billion yuan (\$6.6 billion), up 13.9 percent year-on-year but slowing from the 27.1 percent growth recorded in the second quarter. The firm's overall profit during the third quarter reached 5.3 billion yuan (\$730 million), up 9.7 percent year-on-year, the filing showed. Xiaomi's latest results come amid signs of rebounding consumption in China, where household spending has yet to fully recover from the pandemic. Gloomy consumer sentiment has been one of several woes facing policymakers this year in the world's second-largest economy, with sluggish spending raising fears of deflation. But recent indicators suggest that efforts by Beijing to boost consumption—including mortgage rate cuts and easing of home purchasing restrictions — are having an impact. — AFP

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024



Stray dogs in Giza become tourist draw after 'pyramid puppy' sensation

A stray dog wanders around the Great Pyramids on the Giza Plateau.

Beneath the blazing Egyptian sun, crowds at the Giza Pyramids gazed up at the ancient wonders, but some had their eyes peeled for a new attraction. "There he is," one Polish tourist told his wife as they spotted a scrappy dog perched on one of the stones. They were talking about Apollo, a stray who became an overnight sensation last month after being filmed scaling the Great Pyramid of Khafre, one of the seven wonders of the world.

The viral footage, captured by American paragliding enthusiast Alex Lang and shared online by his friend Marshall Mosher, showed Apollo fearlessly climbing the 136-metre monument, barking at birds from the summit. "He was acting like a king," Lang told AFP. As news of Apollo's daring climb spread worldwide, interest grew in the dogs who have long made their homes among the ancient stones. "He is climbing over there," said Arkadiusz Jurys, a tourist from Poland, craning his neck for a better view. "It is unusual," he added, describing Apollo as surveying the picture-snapping crowd from above. Another visitor, Diego Vega from Argentina, felt a special bond with the dogs. "Connecting with them feels like connecting with the pharaohs," he said, while petting a member of Apollo's pack.

Sales up

Apollo's newfound fame has even inspired local guides to include him and his pack in their stories for tourists. "This is Anubis," one tour guide told two American tourists, comparing Apollo, now known as the "pyramid puppy", with the ancient Egyptian god of the dead, often depicted as a man with a jackal's head. "He and his pack are now part of our tour conversations," said Sobhi Fakhry, another tour guide. Businesses around the Giza plateau are also seeing a boost. Umm Basma, a 43-year-old woman selling souvenirs near the Khafre pyramid, reported an increase in sales thanks to the influx of tourists eager to meet the so-called pyramid dogs.

"We've always seen these dogs climbing the pyramids, but we never thought they would become a blessing for us," she said. One pyramid guard, who preferred to remain anonymous, also said that some celebrities had paid for permits to have their own dogs photographed with Apollo. Apollo, a three-year-old Baladi dog, is part of a pack of about eight that has made their home among the ancient ruins. The dogs, a local breed, are known for their resilience, intelligence and ability to survive in Egypt's harsh climate.



A stray dog wanders around of the Great Pyramid of Khoufou (Cheops or Keops), at the Giza Plateau, on the outskirts of Cairo. — AFP photos

Ibrahim el-Bendary, co-founder of the American Cairo Animal Rescue Foundation, which monitors the pyramid dogs, described Apollo as the pack's "alpha male". "He is the bravest and strongest in his pack," he said. Apollo was born in a rocky crevice within the Khafre pyra-

mid where his mother, Laika, found shelter. Sadly, some of Apollo's siblings did not survive the site's perilous heights. A sympathetic guard eventually relocated Laika to a safer spot where Apollo now stands out with his distinctive curled tail and confident nature.



A stray dog sits in front of the Great Pyramid of Khoufou (Cheops or Keops), at the Giza Plateau.



A stray dog wanders around of the Great Pyramid of Khoufou (Cheops or Keops), at the Giza Plateau.

Dog adoptions

The initial focus of Lang and Marshall was the daring canine climber, but their visit led to a deeper connection with Cairo's stray dogs. Intrigued by the challenges they face, Mosher decided to adopt a puppy from the pack: Anubi, who is Apollo's daughter. Anubi will join Marshall in the US after she receives the dedicated care she needs in Egypt to grow up healthy. At the pyramids, local animal care groups are now working with the government in order to set up food and water stations for the strays, as well as for other animals including camels and horses.

A permanent veterinary center will be established at the pyramids with staff set to receive animal care training, said Egypt's tourism minister. Vicki Michelle Brown, the other co-founder of the American Cairo Animal Rescue Foundation, believes that Apollo's story can make a difference. "It sheds so much light on the dogs and cats that are here," Brown said. "I definitely believe him (Apollo) climbing the pyramids can help all of the dogs in Egypt to have a better life." — AFP

Japan eyes Chinese tram for Mount Fuji

Japan has scrapped plans to build a light railway part-way up Mount Fuji and is instead considering a Chinese-made cross between a bus and a tram, a local governor said Monday. Authorities are now considering a hydrogen-powered transport system developed by China's state-owned railway company CRRC, as well as alternatives from Japanese firms. The Chinese Autonomous Rail Rapid Transit (ART) resembles a tram with its different sections but has more in common with a bus, running on rubber tyres and on a road instead of rails.

The "Fuji Tram" option would reduce construction cost significantly while still allowing the authorities to control overcrowding during summer and reduce CO2 emissions, Yamanashi governor Kotaro Nagasaki told a press conference, as he unveiled the project. "While paying due respect to the leading company, my wish is for Japanese firms to take up this project and it would be even better if their production base would be located in Yamanashi," he said. The number of visitors to Japan's most famous mountain has exploded in recent years and authorities have struggled to reduce the environmental impact.

Crowd control measures and an entry fee of 2,000 yen (\$13) succeeded in limiting the number of people climbing up Fuji this summer to around 178,000 climbers, according to preliminary figures, compared to more than 200,000 last year. Authorities in Yamanashi, on the volcano's most popular side, announced plans in 2021 to build the light rail transit system to the so-called fifth station at 2,305 meters (7,562 feet). Currently people can drive up a toll road to this point, from where they walk with the crowds to the 3,776-metre (12,388-foot) summit. The cost has been estimated at 140 billion yen (\$900 million) while an interim report last month highlighted technical challenges including brakes and batteries that work in cold weather. Some local citizen groups have also highlighted the potential damage to the environment. — AFP



Visitors walk across the archaeological site of Pompeii at the bottom of the Mount Vesuvius volcano (rear) on May 26, 2020.



Visitors tour the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, near Naples, southern Italy, on June 9, 2022.

Pompeii rejects 'mass tourism' with daily visitor limit

The world-famous Pompeii archaeological park introduced on Friday a daily limit of 20,000 visitors, the latest Italian tourist hotspot to take action against overcrowding. The "experimental" scheme will see visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage Site required to buy named tickets which, in the summer, will be divided into morning and afternoon slots. Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of Pompeii, told AFP the measure was designed to better manage crowd numbers, leading to a more "sustainable" growth.

"The idea is not to close Pompeii but to expand Pompeii and better manage the flow," he said at the launch of the scheme at the historic site near Naples in southern Italy. Last year more than four million people visited Pompeii, an ancient Roman city buried when Mount Vesuvius erupted nearly 2,000 years ago -- the vast majority during the summer months.

Organizers expect this year's numbers to be even higher. Some 3.84 million people visited between January and October -- including a peak of more

than 36,000 on one Sunday when entry was free. Zuchtriegel said the numbers caused concerns about visitor and staff safety and about the protection of the unique site, where many of the buildings -- and even some bodies of the estimated 3,000 victims -- were perfectly preserved after the eruption. "We want to guarantee all visitors a high-quality experience. It must never be mass tourism," he said.

Tourism worldwide has surged since the COVID-19 pandemic but the numbers of people flocking to top sites has sparked warnings about potential damage to irreplaceable buildings or monuments, and protests by local communities under pressure.

Italy is the fourth most popular tourist destination in the world, welcoming 57.2 million foreign tourists last year who spent \$55.9 billion, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Many of these tourists head to the same sites -- Rome's historic center, Florence, Venice, Pompeii and the Cinque Terre in northwest Italy.

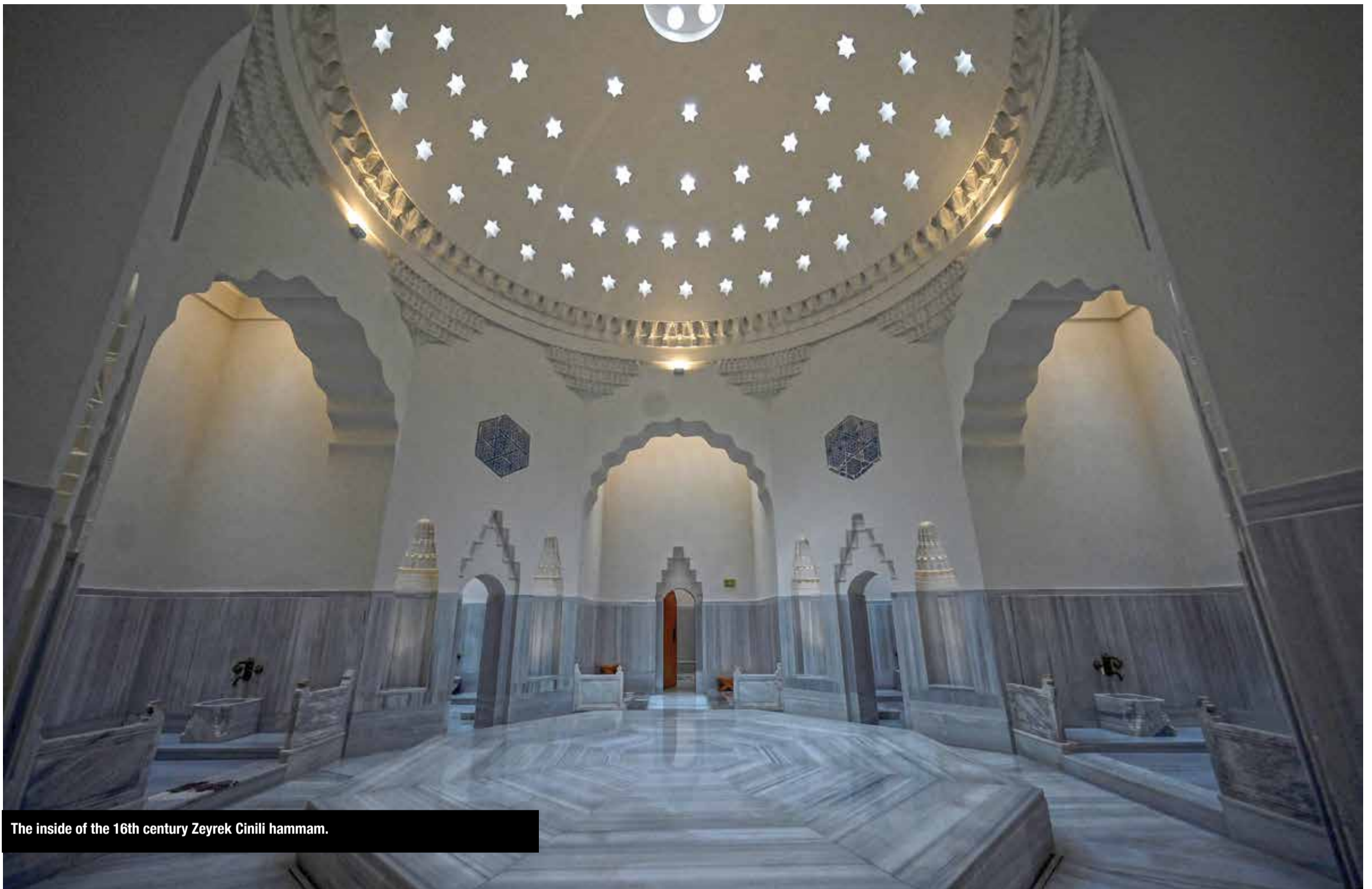
'No negative consequences'

The city of Venice earlier this year introduced a five-euro (\$5.3) entry fee for day trippers during peak periods, in a bid to entice tourists to visit during quieter periods. Meanwhile walking the newly renovated "Path of Love" on the Cinque Terre, where at high season human traffic jams form along the trails between the region's colorful coastal villages, also requires a ticket. In Pompeii, Jan Kubec, a 37-year-old Czech tourist, said setting visitor limits was a "good idea". "Overtourism is a problem in the world in general... If you have too many people visiting, the place may not be inherited by other generations," he told AFP.

Dominique Gilbert, a 54-year-old French tourist, said there were upsides and downsides. "To restrict access for large crowds a bit is interesting because it protects the site. But for people who reserved their plane tickets in advance and are in a group or with a tour operator, it could be complicated,"

he said. Limiting ticket numbers during peak season may seem bad for Pompeii's budget but Zuchtriegel said they were working to ensure "no negative consequences on takings".

The park hopes to tempt visitors to other sites nearby, with the idea that if only an afternoon ticket is available for Pompeii, a tourist might decide to spend the morning elsewhere. Zuchtriegel said efforts were also underway to open alleyways and streets in Pompeii that are currently closed, which would provide more space for visitors and allow organizers to raise the 20,000 daily limit. "It is not a measure against growth. We are focusing on sustainable growth, lasting over time," he insisted. Between April 1 and October 31, a maximum of 15,000 visitors will be allowed in from 9:00am to 12:00pm, and 5,000 from 12:00pm to 5:30pm. — AFP



The inside of the 16th century Zeyrek Cinili hammam.

Turkey scrubs up its baths to keep **hammam tradition** alive



Manolya Gokgoz, public relations manager of the 16th century Cemberlitas Hammam, poses in Istanbul.

For centuries, hammams were central to Ottoman society, and while they mostly fell out of use with the advent of running water, many in Turkey are being restored to revive an ancient ritual bathing tradition. A mainstay of old Turkish films, hammam scenes were highly entertaining, a free space where women would socialize, eat, drink and even dance. Last year, Istanbul's 500-year-old Zeyrek Cinili Hammam — built during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent by the celebrated Ottoman architect Sinan — reopened after a painstaking 13-year restoration.

Alongside a functioning hammam, it also houses a museum explaining its history and the Ottoman ritual of bathing. "The restoration somehow turned into an archaeological dig" that gave insight into how the hammam once looked, museum manager Beril Gur Tanyeli told AFP. "Around 3,000 pieces of missing tiles were found which helped solve the puzzle of why this hammam was called Cinili" — Turkish for "covered with tiles".

The beautiful Iznik tiles that once lined its walls were exclusively produced for the hammam. No other bathhouse had such a rich interior, museum officials say. Although most were damaged by fires or earthquakes, or sold off to European antique dealers in the 19th century, some are still visible. The restoration also exposed several Byzantine cisterns beneath the hammam. "Sinan the Architect is believed to have built the hammam on top of these cisterns to use them as a foundation and as a source of water," Tanyeli said.

From cleansing to celebration

In ancient Rome, bathing culture was very important and it was "traditional for traders to wash before enter-



Men wearing cotton loin cloths lie on a heated marble slab.



Men are scrubbed and bathed in a hammam at the Turkish baths.



ing the city, especially in baths at the (city) entrance," archaeologist Gurol Tali told AFP. During the Ottoman empire, a golden age for bathhouses, the ritual symbolized both bodily cleanliness and purity of soul. In Islam, a Muslim must wash before praying, in an act known as ablution. Hammams were also a place for celebrating births and weddings.

"Baths were used not only for cleansing the body but for socializing, relaxing, healing and even celebrating important life events," with special rites for brides, soldiers and young boys before they were circumcised, Tali said. Since households at the time did not have running water, hammams were an essential part of life until the 19th century, with census figures from 1638 showing there

were 14,536 public and private baths in Istanbul, the museum said.

And that tradition has survived until today. "You come here to get clean and leave handsome," said Zafer Akgul, who was visiting a hammam in the city with his son, telling AFP he visited often, particularly during religious feasts or for a wedding. "We don't want this tradition to die."



A scratched galleon on a brick, found during the restoration of the 16th century Turkish bath Zeyrek Cinili hammam.



The museum of the newly-restored 16th century Turkish bath, Zeyrek Cinili hammam.



Tiles that once decorated the interior of the 16th century Turkish bath, Zeyrek Cinili hammam, and found during the restoration of the bath, are displayed in the museum of the hammam, in Istanbul. — AFP photos



This aerial view shows the 500-year-old Zeyrek Cinili hammam.



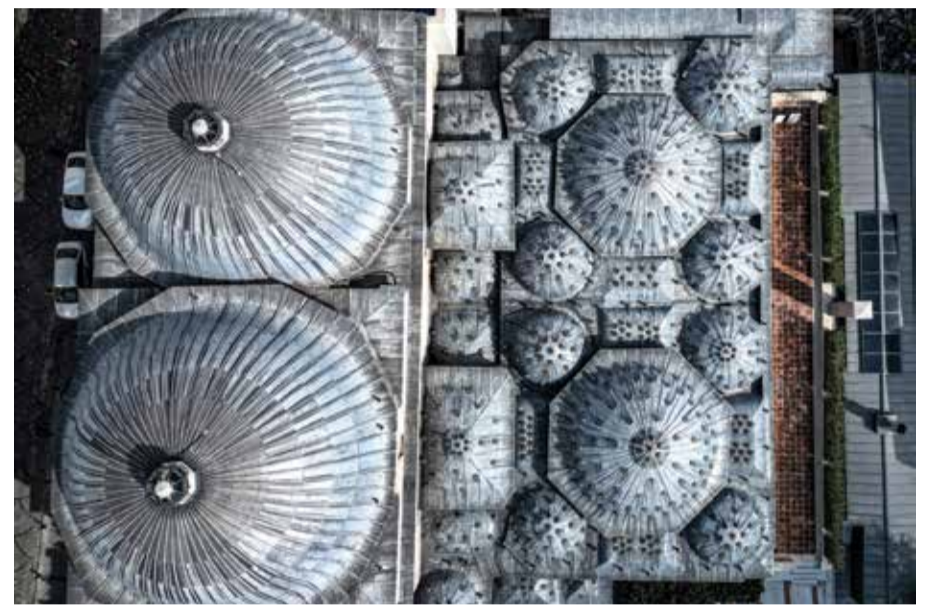
Wooden slippers worn in the Turkish bath are displayed in the museum.



Coins found during the restoration of the 16th century Turkish bath.



This aerial view shows the 500-year-old Zeyrek Cinili hammam.



This aerial view shows the 500-year-old Zeyrek Cinili hammam.



A man bathes in a hammam at the Turkish baths.



Wooden slippers worn in the Turkish bath are displayed.

'Passing on cultural heritage'
That is where Istanbul's ancient hammams can serve a bigger purpose, Tali said. "Restoring historical baths in Istanbul and putting them to use may be the most effective way to transfer cultural heritage to future generations," he said. Another nearby bathhouse from the same era, the Bayezid II Hammam, underwent years of restoration and reopened as a museum in 2015. One of the largest hammams in the city at the time, some historians believe it was where a notorious male bathing attendant, or "tellak," called Halil plotted an uprising in 1730 that overthrew Sultan Ahmed III.

For Manolya Gokgoz, who does publicity for Cemberlitas Hammam, another 16th-century bathhouse built by Sinan, the connection is more personal: her grandmother worked there as a "nati" — a woman's bathing attendant. "When I was two or three years old, I would go to the baths in the morning, wash and play by myself until the evening without

getting bored," she told AFP. For Gokgoz, the tradition lives on — although mostly among tourists, which for her is a shame.

"In the past, we used to go to the hammam with our mothers and grandmothers. Now 70 percent of our customers are foreign tourists and 30 percent locals," she said. These days, the full hammam experience — which lets bathers relax in hot, warm or cool pools alongside extras like massages or peeling — is expensive, with the basic service costing around \$100. Celebrities, both Turkish and international, often visit Cemberlitas, with the last being Spanish actor Pedro Alonso — the character Berlin in the Netflix hit "Money Heist" — visiting in September. "Hammam is not a luxury, but a need," Gokgoz said. "Yes, it's not like in the past because we have hot water at our fingertips, but we need to keep this tradition alive." — AFP

Wooden slippers worn by women in the Turkish bath are displayed in the museum.

Pieces of tiles that once decorated the interior of the 16th century Turkish bath, Zeyrek Cinili hammam, are displayed.



Pieces of tiles that once decorated the interior of the 16th century Turkish bath.



The resting area after a bath, inside the 16th century Zeyrek Cinili hammam.

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Mohammed Askar Nellikanam, holder of Indian Passport No. M6103774 having permanent address, Nellikanam House, Cherani, Karuvambaram PO, Malappuram District, Kerala - 676123, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Askar Ali K and (surname) Keloth.
#6195, 19/11/2024

I, Murtaza Nahliwala, holder of Passport No. S2345600, do hereby change my name to Murtaza Nazarali (as given name) Nahali (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Murtaza Nazarali Nahali and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.
#6193, 19/11/2024



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi welcomes Deputy PM, Minister of Interior and Defense Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi welcomes Sheikh Talal Al-Mishal Al-Sabah.



BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and Premier Padel General Manager David Serrahima.

PREMIER PADEL KUWAIT TOURNEY

Sanchez-Josemaria and Coello-Tapia crowned champions



Former MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem



Chairman of HEISCO Marzouq Nasser Al-Kharafi



Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Bashar Abdullah

By Abdellatif Sharaa & Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Premier Padel P1 tournament concluded Sunday night with standout performances in both the men's and women's finals. In the men's final, Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia overcame Franco Stupaczuk and Mike Yanguas in straight sets, 6-4 6-2. In the women's final, Ariana Sanchez and Paula Josemaria edged out Gemma Triay and Claudia Fernandez in a nail-biting contest lasting two hours and 12 minutes. Sanchez and Josemaria triumphed 7-5 7-6, clinching the second set through a tiebreak (7-1).

The men's final match was somewhat close in the first set, and the games were taking longer to be decided, but in the second set, things went southwards for Stupaczuk and Yanguas as their serve was broken twice, allowing Coello and Tapia to cruise to victory.

Stupaczuk and Yanguas were able to eliminate Fede Chingotto and Ale Galan in the semifinals. Coello-Tapia won 55 percent of the points and converted 60 percent of breakpoints, while the losing team converted none. No double faults, as the winners had 66 percent of the points on the first serve and 67 percent on the second serve. They also won 41 percent of points on the first return.

In the women's final match, Sanchez and Josemaria had 55 percent of the points against 45 percent for their opponents, Gemma Triay and Claudia Fernandez. Sanchez-Josemaria won the match after resorting to a tiebreak in the second set, which was decided by Sanchez-Josemaria by the score of 7-1. There were no double faults in the match, but the breakpoints were



KUWAIT: Winners Ariana Sanchez, Paula Josemaria, Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia pose for a picture with BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Premier Padel General Manager David Serrahima and Tournament Director Mishal Al-Ansari.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

36 percent in favor of Sanchez-Josemaria, while the points won on second serve were dominated by Sanchez-Josemaria by 90 percent to 60 percent for Triay-Fernandez.

Sanchez-Josemaria won 51 percent of first returns, as the opponents had 46 percent. Total points won on serve were 59 percent against 49 percent, while total points won on return were 51 percent against 41 percent. It was a highly exciting match that was up to its potential, as the players gave

all that they had.

Queens of the FIP ranking

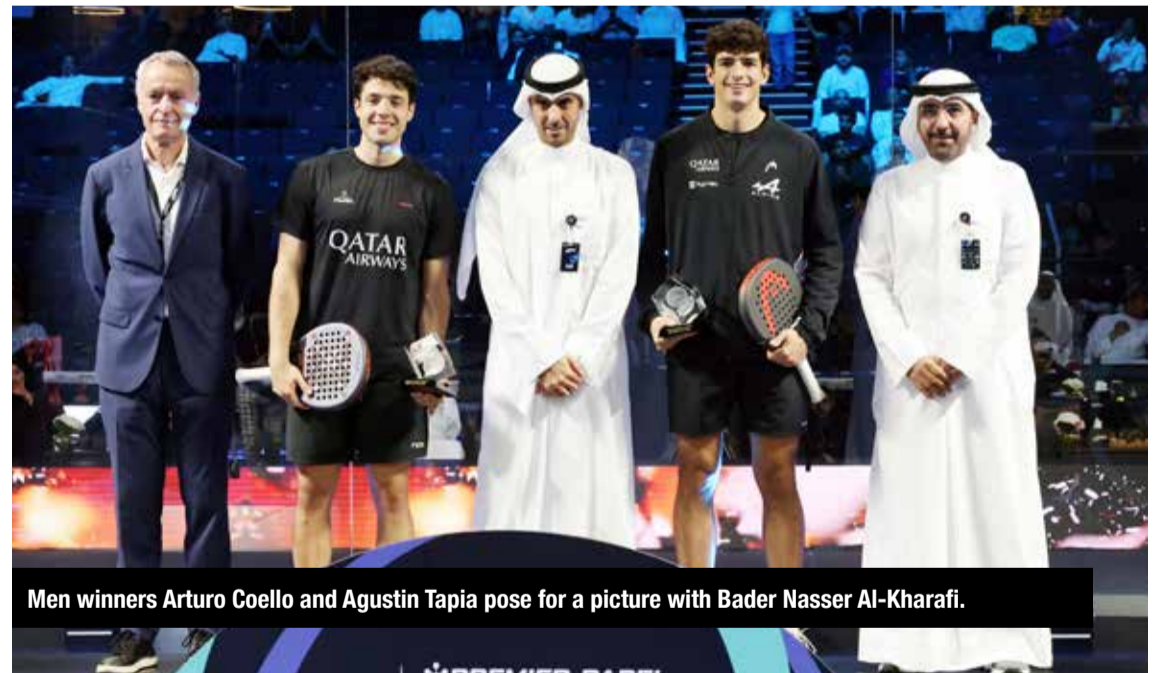
With the ninth title of their fantastic season, Josemaria and Sanchez have made themselves unreachable: The two Spanish champions are now also arithmetically certain to end the season at the top of the world ranking. Triay and Fernandez, number 3 and number 4, respectively, also tried in Kuwait to stop Josemaria and Sanchez, but after two hours and 12 minutes they had to

bow out with a score of 7-5, 7-6.

"I have no words. At the beginning of the week, I didn't know if I would be able to play because of a knee problem, and for that, I also thank the medical staff for treating me every day. Thank you, Ari. I'm really happy to be by your side. Not only the certainty of finishing at number 1 in 2024, but also title number 36 as a pair for Josemaria and Sanchez: a huge number," explained Paula.



Women winners Ariana Sanchez and Paula Josemaria pose for a picture with Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.



Men winners Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia pose for a picture with Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.



Women runners-up Gemma Triay and Claudia Fernandez pose for a picture with Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.



Women champions Ariana Sanchez and Paula Josemaria and men champions Arturo Coello and Agustin Tapia celebrate with their trophies.



Men runners-up Franco Stupaczuk and Mike Yanguas pose for a picture with Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.



BNK Holding Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharaf takes a group photo with the organizers of Padel Premier Kuwait P1 tournament.

ENDS ON HIGH NOTE

"Everything that we are living is a dream. I only have words of thanks for Paula, who, in such a difficult week, came on court next to me. Let's keep dreaming," Ari Sanchez said. After a break at 5-4 in the first set that looked

like it could have been decisive, Paula and Ari suffered a counter break but created another chance for themselves at 6-5, this time not missed. In the second set, however, Gemma and Claudia had risen to 5-2 but had to deal with the comeback of world number 1, who then dominated the tiebreak, winning it with a score of 7-1.



Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain (center) shares a light moment with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel (left) and Chairman of HEISCO Nasser Al-Kharafi (right).

Triumphing in the men's draw, however, for the 12th time this season were Coello and Tapia, also absolute dominators of this 2024, and who won their 35th consecutive match (seven tour-

naments: Malaga, Madrid, Rotterdam, Valladolid, Paris, Dubai, Kuwait City). In the final against Stupaczuk and Yanguas, who had achieved an extraordinary feat in the semifinals (eliminating Chingotto and Galan), Coello and

Tapia closed 6-4 6-2 in one hour and 19 minutes. In a balanced first set, a break in the ninth game made the difference; in the second set, however, from 2-1 for Stupaczuk and Yanguas, Arturito and Agus won five games in a row. "We are super happy and aware of everything we are achieving in this second part of the season, but we don't want to stop," Coello said. "It's easy to play with a partner who wins points, defends, covers the court, and makes my job easier. It was a very nice tournament, and for

that I thank all," Tapia added. The Premier Padel circuit will return in a week with the last major of the season, the one scheduled in Mexico, before the grand finale in Europe with the P1 in Milan and the Finals in Barcelona.

Kuwait Times spoke to fans at the BNK Premier Padel tournament. Among the fans was Kuwaiti padel player Mariam Saraj, who was a competitor in the tournament. Saraj told Kuwait Times: "I play padel for the Kuwait team, and I actually played in this tournament; however, I couldn't get to the championship level. I'm here today as a fan of Triay and Fernandez." She also expressed her admiration for BNK's hosting of this tournament and praised the organization. "As a player and a fan, the organization and everything are beyond perfection."

Similarly, Suad, a Bosnian attending for the first time, spoke about the venue and the organization, describing it as incredibly nice and inviting. He also expressed excitement over the prize. "The Volvo car is a fantastic prize," Suad said, adding that it was his first time seeing a padel tournament. "It is very interesting to be here because I watch tennis mostly, but this is like a smaller version of tennis. I am here because I find it interesting," he explained.

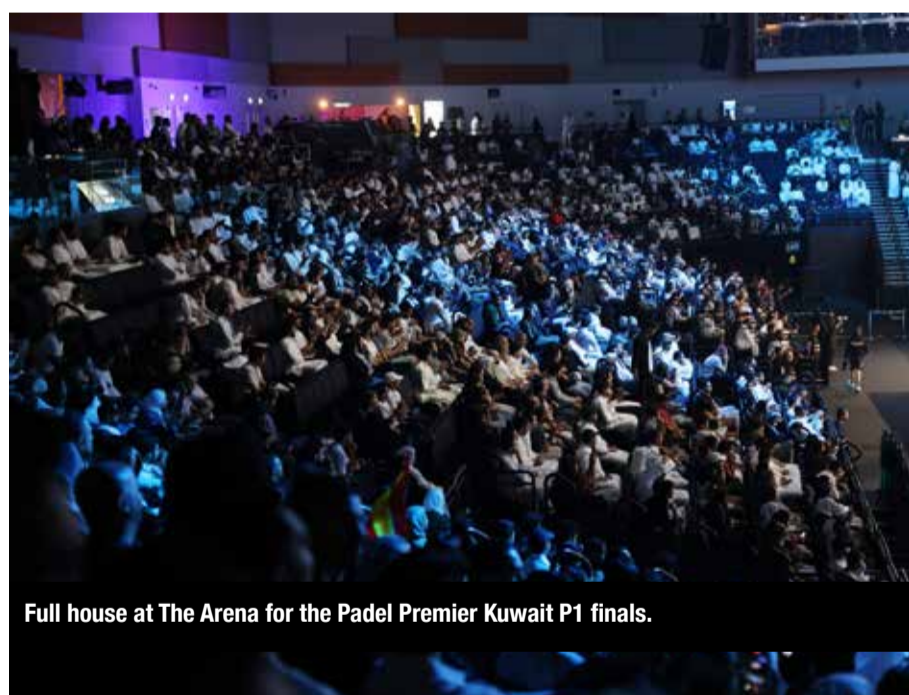
"I came here with my mother and friend. It's our first time to witness a padel match. I'm here today for the fun." Aisha, a Kuwaiti, told Kuwait Times. She also thanked BNK for hosting the showcase tournament, saying it was a new experience in Kuwait.



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi welcomes UAE Ambassador Dr Matar Al-Neyadi (center) and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.



A traditional folk troupe performs during the event.



Full house at The Arena for the Padel Premier Kuwait P1 finals.



A match in progress.



Super Bowl champions Chiefs suffer first loss of NFL season

Pittsburgh Steelers overpower rivals Ravens



NEW YORK: Leo Chenal #54 of the Kansas City Chiefs sacks Josh Allen #17 of the Buffalo Bills during the fourth quarter at Highmark Stadium on November 17, 2024 in Orchard Park, New York. — AFP

MIAMI: Defending Super Bowl champions the Kansas City Chiefs suffered their first loss of the NFL season on Sunday, falling 30-21 at Buffalo after winning their first nine games. The result ends any talk of the Chiefs matching the 1972 Miami Dolphins team with a perfect season and was a reminder of the class of the Bills and their quarterback Josh Allen.

With the Bills leading 23-21, Allen secured the victory in stunning fashion with a 26-yard rush on fourth down and two, demonstrating not only his footwork and speed but also his strength as he broke two tackles to power into the end zone. "I'm just trying to make a play, help our team win a football game," Allen told CBS. "There are some things we want to clean up, some throws I wish I had back, but we're going into the bye week 9-2. We'll take it. "Knowing how things usually play out, we'll probably see this team again at some point."

While the Bills have beaten Kansas City in each of the past four NFL seasons, the Chiefs have eliminated the Bills from the playoffs in three of the past four seasons. The Bills opened a 23-14

lead early in the fourth when Allen found Curtis Samuel with a 12-yard touchdown pass. Patrick Mahomes responded, finding Noah Gray with a one-yard pass to make it a two-point game. Then came Allen's inspired touchdown run, which left Mahomes in need of one of his famous comebacks. But on fourth down, his pass intended for Travis Kelce was intercepted by Buffalo's Terrel Bernard.

Steelers down Ravens

The Pittsburgh Steelers continued their domination of AFC North divisional rivals Baltimore, enjoying an 18-16 win. The Steelers survived a late Baltimore rally as they moved to 8-2 on the season while the Ravens fell to 7-4 with their eighth loss in nine games against Pittsburgh. The Steelers managed the win without scoring a touchdown thanks to six field goals from Chris Boswell.

Boswell's successful 50-yard kick late in the fourth quarter gave the Steelers an 18-10 lead but Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson found Zay Flowers with a 16-yard pass in the end zone with 1:06 remaining. Jackson was unable to make

the two-point conversion attempt and the Steelers closed out the game. Jared Goff threw for 412 yards and four touchdowns as the Detroit Lions crushed the struggling Jacksonville Jaguars 52-6. Running back David Montgomery rushed for two scores for the Lions and put up 75 yards on the ground in what became a rout.

The Jacksonville defense was ineffective on the ground and in the air with Lions receiver Amon-Ra St Brown scoring twice and putting up 161 yards receiving. Sam Darnold threw for two touchdowns and 246 yards as Detroit's NFC North rivals, the Minnesota Vikings, beat the Tennessee Titans 23-13. The outcome was settled when Titans quarterback Will Levis attempted a deep pass to Calvin Ridley on Tennessee's final possession but Harrison Smith showed great agility to make the interception. Quarterback Jordan Love ran in the go-ahead touchdown for the Green Bay Packers against NFC North rivals Chicago.

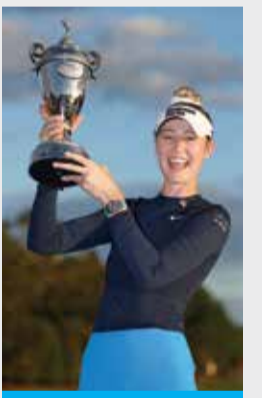
Love's rush made it 20-19, after the two point attempt failed, leaving the Bears knowing a field goal would win

the game. Chicago advanced 42 yards in seven plays to leave Cairo Santos with a 46-yard chance for a walk-off winner. But the Brazilian's kick was brilliantly blocked by Karl Brooks to give the Packers a win, sending them to 7-3 on the season. A last-minute touchdown, with a 13-yard scramble from quarterback Geno Smith, kept the Seattle Seahawks playoff hopes alive with a 20-17 win at the San Francisco 49ers. The result leaves the two teams on 5-5 records in the NFC West.

Aaron Rodgers' disappointing season continued as his New York Jets fell to 3-8 with a 28-27 loss at home to the Indianapolis Colts. The Los Angeles Chargers survived a strong second-half comeback from the Cincinnati Bengals to emerge with a 34-27 win that moves them to 7-3. The Chargers were up 27-6 early in the third before Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow threw three unanswered touchdowns to tie up the game. But Evan McPherson missed two field goals for the Bengals and the Chargers won the game when J K Dobbins rushed in from 29 yards with 18 seconds left. — AFP

No1 Korda wins LPGA Annika for seventh title

MIAMI: World number one Nelly Korda captured her seventh LPGA title of the season and 15th career crown on Sunday, firing a three-under par 67 to win the Annika tournament. The 26-year-old American, playing her first event since being sidelined by a neck injury last month, reeled off five consecutive back-nine birdies to seize the crown by three strokes at Pelican Golf Club in Belleair, Florida. "After taking some time off with an injury it was great to be back out here," Korda said. "There's nothing like being in the hunt. There's nothing like the adrenaline feeling going on the back nine, being in contention. I love it so much."



Nelly Korda

South Korea's Im Jin-hee, China's Zhang Weiwei and England's Charley Hull shared second on 269 with Sweden's Linn Grant and American Rose Zhang sharing fifth on 270. It was Korda's third victory in the event after taking the 2021 and 2022 titles and made her the first player since Taiwan's Yani Tseng in 2011 to win seven tournaments in a season. Annika Sorenstam, the tournament namesake from Sweden, holds the record with 11 titles in the 2002 campaign. Korda is the first American player to win seven LPGA titles in a season since Beth Daniel in 1990 and four of Korda's victories, including Sunday's triumph, came when she trailed entering the final round.

The victory ensured she will be a heavy favorite at next week's season-ending Tour Championship. Korda added to a 2024 LPGA trophy haul that began in January at the Drive On Championship in her hometown of Bradenton, Florida. It continued with wins at the Pak Se-ri Championship in Los Angeles, the Ford Championship and LPGA Match Play ahead of her second major title at the Chevron Championship and the Americas Open in May, her most recent victory until this week.

The neck injury kept Korda from playing in October in Asia and she had not walked a full 18 holes in nearly two months until this week. Korda struggled early with a bogey at the second hole then sandwiched a birdie between bogeys at the sixth and eighth holes. But that only set the stage for Korda's run of birdies from the 11th through 15th holes, going from two adrift to secure the lead for good. "Not a lot of happy thoughts at the beginning," Korda said. "You should have felt the nerves I was feeling on the back nine." — AFP

Mitchell-less Cavaliers rip Hornets as perfect NBA start hits 15-0

WASHINGTON: The Cleveland Cavaliers, playing without top scorer Donovan Mitchell, matched the second-best start to a season in NBA history on Sunday, reaching 15-0 with a 128-114 victory over Charlotte. Mitchell took the night off to rest after averaging 24.6 points, 4.4 rebounds and 4.1 assists for the Cavs during their perfect run. The host Cavaliers, however, made up for his absence with a balanced attack as Darius Garland had 25 points and 12 assists, Ty Jerome added 24 points, Evan Mobley scored 23 points and grabbed 11 rebounds and Jarrett Allen contributed 21 points and 15 rebounds.

"We've always got some fight in us no matter what," Garland said. "Everybody is ready to play. It doesn't matter, one through 15. "Everybody contributed. Everybody had a huge part in this win. That's just us. I'm just as a team effort!" Under new coach Kenny Atkinson, the Cavaliers had become the sixth team in NBA history to start 14-0. Beating the Hornets made them only the fourth team in NBA history to open 15-0, matching the 1948-49 Washington Capitols and 1993-94 Houston Rockets for the second-best start. They now trail only the record 24-0 start by the 2015-16 Golden State Warriors.

The win streak is already the longest in the Cavaliers' 55-year history, eclipsing three 13-win runs when LeBron James was with Cleveland. Charlotte's LaMelo Ball had 31 points and 12 assists in a losing cause. At Oklahoma City, Dallas forward PJ Washington scored

27 points and grabbed 17 rebounds to lead the Mavericks, playing without injured guard Luka Doncic, over the host Thunder 121-119. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led Oklahoma City with 36 points. He made a 3-pointer, stole the ball from Kyrie Irving late and hit a free throw but missed another and Luguentz Dort missed a 3-point shot for the win at the buzzer.

Randle hits late winner

Minnesota's Julius Randle sank a 25-foot 3-pointer at the final buzzer to give the host Timberwolves a 120-117 victory over Phoenix. Anthony Edwards sank two game-tying free throws with 46 seconds remaining to set the stage for Randle's dramatic deciding shot, which produced the last of his 35 points while Edwards finished with 24. Devin Booker led the Suns with a game-high 44 points. Detroit's Cade Cunningham had a triple double with 21 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to spark the Pistons over host Washington 124-104. Jaden Ivey had 28 points and Maikl Beasley 26 for Detroit.

Denver's Nikola Jokic, the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player, was out again for personal reasons in the Nuggets' 105-90 loss at Memphis. Jaren Jackson led the Grizzlies with 20 points. Reserve Julian Strawther led Denver with 19. At Indianapolis, Myles Turner scored a season-high 34 points to lead the Indiana Pacers over Miami 119-110. Tyler Herro scored 28 to lead the Heat. Portland's Shaedon Sharpe stole the ball from Atlanta's Trae Young and sank two clinching free throws, the last of his game-high 32 points, with one second remaining to seal the host Trail Blazers' 114-109 triumph. Young led the Hawks with 29 points.

Turkish center Alperen Sengun had a triple double with 20 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists and Fred VanVleet scored 28 points to lead Houston's 143-



CLEVELAND: Vasilije Micic #22 of the Charlotte Hornets dribbles the ball during the game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on November 17, 2024. — AFP

107 victory at Chicago. Karl-Anthony Towns had 26 points and 15 rebounds to lead the New York Knicks over visiting Brooklyn 114-104. The Los Angeles Clippers defeated visiting Utah 116-105 as James Harden rose to second on the all-time NBA 3-pointer list by hitting his 2,974th in the first quarter. Ivica Zubac had 22 points to lead the Clippers while Harden added 20 points and 11 assists. — AFP