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OPEC to COP29: Oil gift from God

GECF: World will need more natural gas • OPEC+ may stick longer with deep cuts

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey denies Herzog airspace

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that Turkey refused to allow Zionist President Isaac Herzog to use its airspace to attend the COP climate summit in Azerbaijan. "We did not allow the (Zionist) president to use our airspace to attend the COP summit. We suggested alternative routes and other options," Erdogan told reporters at the G20 Summit in Brazil. Herzog ended up canceling the visit. — Reuters

Zionists kill 36 in Palmyra strike

DAMASCUS: The Syrian defense ministry said 36 people were killed and more than 50 wounded in Zionist air strikes in the city of Palmyra on Wednesday. "The (Zionist) enemy launched an air attack from the direction of the Al-Tanf area, targeting a number of buildings in the city of Palmyra," a ministry statement said, adding that it had killed 36 people and wounded more than 50, as well as causing "significant material damage". — AFP



Trump taps 'Dr Oz' for key post

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump announced Tuesday that he was appointing Mehmet Oz, a heart surgeon and TV celebrity known as "Dr Oz", to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the US' massive public health insurance program. The 64-year-old son of Turkish immigrants was championed on daytime television by Oprah Winfrey before he entered politics with an unsuccessful bid for a Senate seat in 2022. — AFP

Magritte painting nets record \$121m

NEW YORK: A painting by Rene Magritte shattered an auction record for the surrealist artist on Tuesday, selling for more than \$121 million at Christie's in New York. The seminal 1954 painting, "Empire of Light" ("L'Empire des lumieres"), had been valued at \$95 million, and the previous record for a work by Magritte (1898-1967) was \$79 million, set in 2022. The painting is one of a series by the Belgian artist showing the interplay of shadow and light. — AFP

Bitcoin bursts past \$94,000

NEW YORK: Bitcoin rose to a fresh record high above \$94,000 as a report that Donald Trump's social media company was in talks to buy crypto trading firm Bakkt boosted expectations of a crypto-friendly regime under his incoming administration. Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, has more than doubled this year. It was last at \$94,291 just under a record high of \$94,378. — Reuters (See Page 8)

BAKU: OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais on Wednesday told the COP29 climate summit in Baku that crude oil and natural gas were a gift from God, and that global warming talks should focus on cutting emissions not picking energy sources. The comments came as world governments seeking to limit the damage from global warming gathered in the Caspian Sea nation of Azerbaijan to hash out a sweeping finance deal meant to help countries cut emissions and adapt to the changing climate.

"They are indeed a gift of God," Ghais, a veteran Kuwaiti oil executive, said about oil and gas in a speech at the conference. "They impact how we produce and package and transport food and how we undertake medical research, manufacture and distribute medical supplies. I could go on forever."

His words echoed those of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, who used his opening address to the summit last week to hit back at Western critics of his country's oil and gas industry, and who also described



OPEC Secretary-General Haitham Al-Ghais

those resources as a gift from God. Ghais said that world governments, which had agreed to limit planetary warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels at the 2015 summit in Paris, could pursue their climate targets without shunning petroleum.

"The focus of the Paris Agreement is reducing emissions, not choosing energy sources," he said.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has said that technologies like carbon capture can tackle the climate impact of burning fossil fuels. Mohamed Hamel, Secretary General of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), a grouping of gas exporter nations, also spoke to the conference on Wednesday in support of fossil fuels.

"As the world's population grows, the economy expands, and human living conditions improve, the world will need more natural gas, not less," he said. He added that he hoped that a COP29 deal on international climate finance would allow support for natural gas projects to help countries transition away from dirtier fuels like coal. "The outcome of COP 29 should facilitate financing for natural gas projects and scaling up cleaner technologies such as carbon capture, utilization and storage," he said.

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US vetoes Gaza truce; Hezbollah ready for long war

GAZA/BEIRUT: The United States on Wednesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza, drawing criticism of the Biden administration for once again blocking international action aimed at halting the Zionist war. The 15-member council voted on a resolution put forward by 10 non-permanent members that called for an "immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire" in the 13-month conflict and separately demanded the release of captives.

Only the US voted against, using its veto as a permanent council member to block the resolution. The Zionist campaign in Gaza has killed nearly 44,000 people and displaced nearly all the enclave's population at least once. Food security experts have warned that famine is imminent among Gaza's 2.3 million people. Members roundly criticized the US for blocking the resolution put forward by the council's 10 elected members: Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, South Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Switzerland.

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GAZA: Palestinians bury relatives killed in a Zionist airstrike in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on Nov 20, 2024. — AFP

Iraq holds its first census in nearly 40 yrs

BAGHDAD: Iraq is holding its first nationwide census in nearly four decades this week, a long-awaited count in a nation that has been blighted by sectarian and ethnic divisions. The census is scheduled for Wednesday

and Thursday, and will provide sorely needed up-to-date demographic data for the country which has an estimated population of around 44 million.

It will be the first census to cover all 18 governorates since 1987, when dictator Saddam Hussein was in power, following repeated delays caused by years of war and political tensions between factions. "More generally across the country, parliamentary representation will change," said Hamzeh Hadad, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).

With one member of parliament allocated by the constitution per 100,000 Iraqis, "having an official census will mean the numbers will have to be adjusted" based on the new demographic breakdown, he said. A count conducted in 1997 excluded the three northern provinces that make up the autonomous Kurdistan region.

The upcoming census has reignited tensions between Baghdad and Kurdistan over disputed territories in the north. The census includes religion but does not differentiate between sects,

such as Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and, unlike previous counts, it excludes ethnicity. "There are some crucial details in this census that might be missing to appease all sides to finally allow it to take place," Hadad added.

Iraq has been keen to conduct the census for budgetary reasons. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani said the census was important for "development and planning steps in all sectors that contribute to the advancement and progress of Iraq"

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Biden makes it into G20 photo as summit ends

RIO DE JANEIRO: The first time G20 leaders took their photo together at a summit in Rio they forgot Joe Biden. On Tuesday they had a reshoot — with the outgoing US president firmly back in the frame. Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni all missed the photo on Monday due to what US officials called "logistical issues". No one was taking any chances the second time around. This time Biden, attending his final G20 summit ahead of Donald Trump's

Continued on Page 6



RIO DE JANEIRO: Leaders pose for a group photo after the third session of the G20 Leaders' Meeting on Nov 19, 2024. — AFP



Interior minister calls for uniting GCC security efforts

'Unprecedented' developments require cooperation to protect region: Sheikh Fahad



DOHA: Kuwait's Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah speaks at the 41st meeting of the Interior Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council. — KUNA photos

DOHA: Kuwait's Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah called for intensifying coordination among Gulf countries in the face of what he described as "unprecedented" regional and international developments.

Speaking at the 41st meeting of the Interior Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Sheikh Fahad, who is also Kuwait's Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister of Defense, said Gulf security agencies should unite efforts to tackle common security threats.

"This includes tackling terrorism, extremism, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and enhancing information-sharing mechanisms to bolster regional stability and safeguard the region's achievements," he said.

Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with His Highness' best wishes for the continued progress and prosperity of Tunisia and its people.

In return, President Saied asked the foreign minister to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him continued health, happiness, and further growth for the State of Kuwait and its people. The two leaders discussed the strong fraternal relations between Kuwait and Tunisia and explored ways to enhance cooperation in various fields that serve the interests of both nations. They also reviewed regional and international developments and other issues of mutual interest. — KUNA

Tunisian president receives Kuwaiti foreign minister

TUNIS: President of Tunisia Kais Saied received Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Wednesday during his official visit to Tunisia, accompanied by a delegation in the capital, Tunis. Minister Al-Yahya conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh



TUNIS: President of Tunisia Kais Saied receives Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya. — KUNA

Lebanon Embassy announces aid collection drive

KUWAIT: In coordination with the official authorities in Kuwait, and under the slogan 'Kuwait Seeks Your Safety', the Lebanese Embassy in Kuwait is launching an in-kind donation campaign aimed at collecting medical supplies, children's and women's necessities for Lebanon, it said in a press release. For this purpose, the embassy will open its doors for three days, from Dec 6 to 8, 2024, between 10:00 am and 7:00 pm to receive donations. These donations will be accepted strictly in-kind.

The items that the embassy will collect include medi-

cations, medical disposables, baby food and milk and hygiene kits for women. Those interested in contributing to the success of this campaign can drop off their donations at the embassy during the campaign period. The Lebanese Embassy in Kuwait has dedicated a special page on its official website with all related details for the campaign: www.embassykw.gov.lb.

This campaign comes amid the extraordinary circumstances Lebanon and the Lebanese people are facing due to the escalation of Zionist aggression since Sept 23. The conflict has claimed nearly 3,500 lives to date, left around 15,000 injured, and caused widespread destruction in numerous villages and towns in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. Entire neighborhoods in Beirut, Nabatieh, Tyre, Baalbek and other major cities have been systematically destroyed, displacing more than 1.4 million Lebanese from their homes. As a result, the need for essential resources has dramatically increased.

ference, titled the role of international community and civil society organizations in promoting and respecting the rights of Palestinian children, opened Wednesday under the patronage of Jordan's King Abdullah II. It is organized by the Arab League General Secretariat in partnership with Jordan's Ministry of Social Development and Palestine's Ministry of Social Affairs.

Marri praised King Abdullah II for his generous patronage of the conference, which serves as a continuation of the first edition of the conference hosted by Kuwait in 2017. That conference was held under the auspices and presence of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

"For over seven decades, we have all witnessed the ongoing human rights violations by (Zionist) occupation forces, who continue to use excessive force against defenseless civilians, a situation that has worsened since the beginning of the war on Gaza."

He explained that this has led to the deaths of thousands, most of whom are children and women, over the past year, resulting in the destruction of infrastructure, vital facilities, homes, places of worship, and hospitals. Furthermore, these forces have targeted humanitarian, medical, and media workers. Marri highlighted Kuwait's urgent humanitarian response to the needs of Gaza, including the establishment of air bridges for relief and numerous civil society humanitarian campaigns since October 7, 2023, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

He affirmed that Kuwait remains steadfast in its position supporting the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, ensuring that they achieve their full legitimate rights and establish their independent state. He also emphasized that Kuwait, through its membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 term, continues to support global human rights issues, including the Palestinian cause, to strengthen and protect them. — KUNA

Palestinian children greatest victims of Zionist crimes: Official

AMMAN: Kuwait affirmed Wednesday that Palestinian children are the primary victims of the daily brutal crimes committed by Zionist occupation forces against defenseless civilians, with little to no meaningful action or accountability from the international community. These actions egregiously violate international law, including resolutions from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Human Rights Council.

This statement was made by Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri during his participation in a two-day international conference in Amman. The con-



JABALIA: Children sit in the back of a donkey cart as Palestinians displaced from shelters in Beit Hanoun cross the main Salaheddine road into Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on November 12, 2024. — AFP



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef (left) meets with Bahrain's Minister of Interior General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa in Doha.

He added that he hoped the meeting's discussions would yield meaningful recommendations that promote joint security cooperation and foster the spirit of brotherhood and integration among GCC countries, thus contributing to the security, stability, and prosperity of the region.

During the meeting, GCC interior ministers discussed several topics related to enhancing joint se-

curity cooperation and the recommendations of the security committees. On the sidelines of the meeting, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef met with Bahrain's Minister of Interior General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, where they discussed various security-related issues, reaffirming both countries' commitment to strengthening and developing their security cooperation in all areas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah (center left) cuts the ceremonial cake with Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi, in the presence of officials. — KUNA

Officials hail strong and deep-rooted Kuwait-Oman ties

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed on Tuesday that the relationship between Kuwait and Oman is one of brotherhood and shared destiny. He described the ties between their leaderships and peoples as strong and deeply rooted. Sheikh Fahad made these remarks during a ceremony hosted by the Omani Embassy in Kuwait to mark Oman's 54th National Day. The event was attended by senior officials and heads of diplomatic missions in Kuwait.

Extending his heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of Oman, Sheikh Fahad wished the country continued progress and prosperity under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin

Tariq. He emphasized that Oman holds a special place in the hearts of all Kuwaitis. Regarding preparations for the 45th summit of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), scheduled to be held in Kuwait on December 1, Sheikh Fahad confirmed Kuwait's full readiness to host the event, stating, "Preparations are clear and well underway."

Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi, in his speech at the event, highlighted the ever-growing relationship between Kuwait and Oman. He noted that this year, bilateral relations were further reinforced through high-level meetings between their leaders and the 10th session of the Joint Omani-Kuwaiti Committee held in October.

Ambassador Kharousi also emphasized the outcomes of these meetings, including the signing of memorandums of understanding and executive programs in various fields. He mentioned the launch of the Duqm Refinery, a joint strategic economic project that benefits both nations, as a key milestone this year. Additionally, he noted a significant increase in bilateral trade, which has exceeded \$4 billion in 2024. — KUNA

SACGC, US firm PNP sign MoU to support startups in Kuwait

WASHINGTON: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) has signed a memorandum of understanding with Plug and Play (PNP), a leading US venture capital firm based in California, to collaborate on developing innovative solutions and services for startups in Kuwait. The MoU was signed on Tuesday during a visit to PNP's headquarters in Silicon Valley by a delegation from SACGC, led by its General Manager Neda Al-Daihani.

The MoU outlines SACGC and PNP's collaboration in various fields, including organizing Hackathons in Kuwait. It will also help direct capital into early-stage technology companies, particularly in areas such as digital transformation, education, and energy.

Daihani told KUNA that the agreement provides Kuwaiti entrepreneurs with access to international platforms and global networks. Praising PNP as a global leader in startup acceleration, Daihani noted that this partnership will help Kuwaiti innovators deepen their understanding of the US market and establish valuable connections with key business partners and potential customers. Founded in 2006, PNP connects



SILICON VALLEY: SACGC General Manager Neda Al-Daihani (left) shakes hands with an official from Plug and Play during a meeting where they signed a deal to support Kuwaiti startups. — KUNA

entrepreneurs with investors worldwide, having forged partnerships with over 550 corporations and helped accelerate the growth of nearly 2,500 startups. Established in 2010 as part of an initiative by the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, SACGC, which is affiliated with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), is dedicated to nurturing talented and creative individuals in Kuwait through knowledge integration and support for gifted individuals. — KUNA

Kuwait's 47th International Book Fair opens doors

Minister Al-Mutairi urges children, young people to read



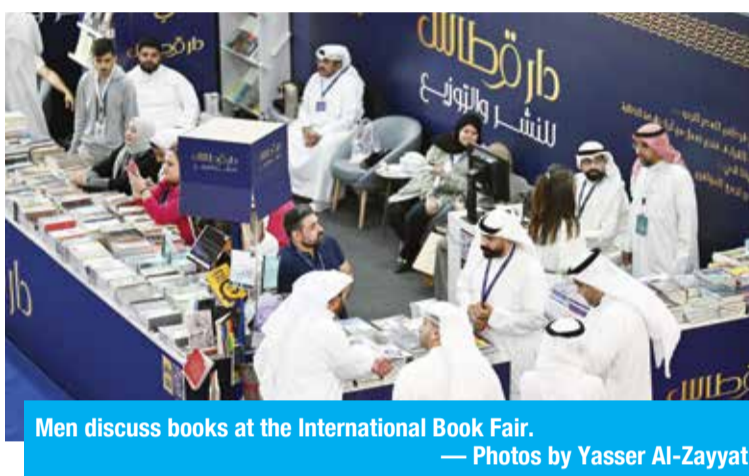
Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (center) cuts a ribbon during the book fair's opening ceremony alongside officials, including Jordan's Minister of Culture Mustafa Al-Rawashdeh. — KUNA photo



Girls look at YA English books at the International Book Fair.



KUWAIT: A visitor checks books during the first day of the 47th International Book Fair in Kuwait City on Nov 20, 2024.



Men discuss books at the International Book Fair. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Parents look for English kids' books at the International Book Fair.

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: The 47th edition of the Kuwait International Book Fair opened Wednesday, welcoming everyone who shares a passion for culture, learning, and books. Running from November 20 to November 30, 2024, the fair offers people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to explore the ever-evolving world of books—a world that continues to captivate and inspire year after year. The fair is held under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabah.

"While the works of creators showcase their talents, today we fulfill our duty by recognizing their achievements, ensuring that these contributions continue to resonate in the hearts of future generations," said Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

At the opening ceremony, Minister Al-Mutairi welcomed all the attendees, including the presidents and organizers of the 47th International Book Fair. He also welcomed representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which is the fair's guest of honor. He noted that their presence reflects their



Young men look at different genres of English books at the book fair.

deep-rooted and rich cultural heritage.

Mutairi also praised this year's book fair honoree Dr Abdullah Yusuf Al-Ghunaim, Chairman of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait (CRSK), for his outstanding contributions to Kuwait. He also emphasized that the Kuwait International Book Fair is considered one of the



A vendor arranges books during the opening of the 47th Kuwait International Book Fair.

most significant cultural events in Kuwait, organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters. "Culture is a way of life and a method of thinking. At this international fair, numerous publishing houses participate, and we have an ambitious strategy to support, sponsor, and develop cultural activities, as they represent a



bright window for Kuwait's cultural and human interaction," he said. He concluded his speech by emphasizing the importance of encouraging children and young people to read, while equipping them with cultural skills that will enable them to face challenges with logic, sound reasoning, and an enlightened perspective.



Zain Kuwait's Hamad Al-Musaibeeh awards the cast and crew of MOUJ.

Zain shines spotlight on talented Kuwaiti filmmakers

KUWAIT: Zain announced its role as the official partner of the Kuwait International Film Festival, organized by the American International University (AIU). The festival celebrated aspiring local filmmakers and national talents in the entertainment industry, while providing a platform for over 150 local, regional, and international films. Zain participated in the closing ceremony, attended by AIU Board of Trustees member Areej Al-Ghanim; AIU Chief Executive Officer Richard Johnson; Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh; acclaimed Kuwaiti actress and the festival's honorary guest Hayat Al-Fahad, along with many artists, filmmakers, and industry professionals.

During the event, the company awarded MOUJ, a film directed by the talented Kuwaiti filmmaker Eman Al-Shaya, with the "Best Kuwaiti Short Film" award. Zain praised the film for its creativity and the professional quality of its cast and crew—all university students—highlighting the boundless potential of Kuwaiti filmmakers and their ability to compete on both regional and international stages.

Zain's support of the festival stems from its belief in the role of the Kuwaiti private sector in backing cultural and artistic efforts within the local community,



KUWAIT: Hayat Al-Fahad poses for a photo with Areej Al-Ghanim, Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, and Zain's team.

especially those that shed light on aspiring talents and foster their creative potential. The company is keen on contributing to portray a positive image of Kuwaiti art and open doors of opportunity for local filmmakers. At the AIU campus in Jahra, Zain had a dedicated booth where it showcased its popular Max entertainment plans, featuring the largest library of entertainment and sports content in partnership with leading regional and global platforms.

The week-long festival featured local, regional, and international film screenings, as well as workshops, training sessions, and panel discussions covering creative fields related to film and cinema, with the pres-

ence of top professionals, experts, directors, artists, and content creators. The festival presented awards across eight categories, including Best Arab Feature Fiction Film, Best Kuwaiti Short Film, Best Cinematography, Best Arab Feature Documentary, Best Arab Short Documentary, Best Arab Short Fiction Film, Best International Short Fiction Film, and Best International Short Documentary Film. Zain remains committed to supporting initiatives and projects that enrich the artistic movement and spares no effort in backing entities with a creative vision that serve the community, particularly those that aim to promote Kuwaiti art and engage with local audiences.

Kuwait to open 2nd child protection center in Sulaibikhat

KUWAIT: The Boys Care Home, part of the Social Care Homes Complex in Sulaibikhat, will become Kuwait's second dedicated child protection center, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs announced Wednesday. The center will adhere to the highest professional and international standards, becoming a pioneering model for providing a safe and comprehensive environment to protect children, said the council in a statement. Acting Secretary-General of the Council, Iman Al-Enezi, said the initiative is part of the council's ongoing commitment to fostering a safe and supportive environment for children.

The council did not specify a date for the opening of the center. Once operational, it will become the second child protection center in the country, following the one that was opened in March in Khaitan.

According to Arabic-language media, the establishment of such centers is not only a repeated request from international organizations, but also a legal obligation for the government, as stipulated in Article 77 of Law No 21/2015 on children's rights. This law mandates the creation of child protection centers in every governorate across the country, under the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

These centers are responsible for receiving complaints about cases where a child is at risk, as outlined in Article 76. Complaints can be filed by the child, their guardian, family members, or professionals working with children. The centers are tasked with taking all necessary actions to protect children from any form of harm and to address the situations involving those responsible for the harm. Their goal is to rehabilitate both the child and the perpetrator, ensuring that the child and their family can successfully reintegrate into society. — Agencies



KUWAIT: The newly inaugurated orphanage complex in Chad by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity. — KUNA photos



Al-Najat Charity opens orphanage complex in Chad

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity inaugurated the Al-Najat Orphanage Complex in Chad on Tuesday, aiming to provide a rehabilitative environment for more than 150 orphans in the region. Mohammed Al-Ansari, General Manager of Al-Najat Charity, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the new complex is designed to improve the living standards of orphans by offering them vital educational, developmental, and healthcare opportunities, ultimately preparing them to become productive members of society.

Ansari highlighted that the complex includes housing for the orphans, a mosque for prayer and Quran memorization, a well to serve both the complex and the surrounding area, and a clinic for the orphans and local residents.

In addition, the complex features endowment shops, a training center for orphans and their mothers, and three classrooms that can accommodate up to 400 students. These classrooms provide education not only for orphans but also for children from neighboring villages. Ansari stressed that the charity continues to focus on executing numerous projects aimed at ensuring a dignified life for poor and needy families, while also caring for and supporting orphans around the world. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Winners of the thirteenth edition of the Kuwait International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran and its Reading and Recitation pose for a photo with officials. — KUNA photos

Kuwait's International Quran competition announces winners

Competition embodies unity of Muslims around Islam's holy book: Awqaf minister

KUWAIT: The thirteenth edition of the Kuwait International Award for Memorizing the Holy Quran and its Reading and Recitation ended Wednesday after a week of competition featuring participants from around the world. Mohammad Al-Wasmi, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, said the competition is a "shining milestone" in Kuwait's ongoing efforts to preserve the Holy Quran. "Under the esteemed patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the award has strengthened Kuwait's position as a global beacon for Quranic knowledge," he said during the competition's closing ceremony Wednesday.



Mohammad Al-Wasmi, Minister of Awqaf

Wasmi said the award reflects Kuwait's commitment to instilling Islamic values and fostering unity among the Muslim ummah through competition in memorizing, understanding, and applying the Quran. He highlighted that the award has brought together a distinguished group of Quranic scholars from around the world, creating a spiritual phenomenon that embodies the unity of Muslims around Islam's holy book. Wasmi also noted efforts to enhance the award each year, utilizing modern technology and increasing cooperation with supporting organiza-



Officials, guests and participants from across the world are present at the competition's closing ceremony.

tions to ensure greater excellence and wider reach. The minister expressed his sincere gratitude to the scholars who participated in this year's edition by conducting scientific workshops and specialized lectures, enriching the event and adding an important educational and cultural dimension.

Winners announced

In the recitation and tajweed category, the first place was awarded to Firdaus Syamsuri from Indonesia, followed by Mohammad bin Mahmoud from Malaysia in second place, Md Abu Dhar Al-Ghafari from Bangladesh in third, Habib Sedaghat from Iran in fourth and Fawzi Hama from Thailand in fifth.

In the full Quran memorization category, the first place went to Kaibto Abdul-Kareem from Uganda,

followed by Shuaib Shafie from Somalia in second, Mohammed Al-Omari in third, Abdullah Al-Enezi from Kuwait in fourth and Mohammad Abdul-Halim from Egypt in fifth.

In the category for young memorizers, Anas Mahfouz from Bangladesh won first place, followed by Yusuf Ali from the United States in second, Mohammad Tabbakh from Algeria in third, Adam Rajab from Palestine in fourth and Mohammad Nazad from Iran in fifth. In the category for the Ten Qiraat (recitations), the first place was awarded to Mohammad Al-Ali from Kuwait, followed by Abdulaziz Abdullah from Ethiopia in second, Abdulhamid Al-Qaryou from Libya in third, Basim Al-Nasyan from Saudi Arabia in fourth and Abdullah Bashir Abdul from the United States in fifth. — KUNA



KUWAIT: NBK conducts a fire drill at its headquarters.



Ezzat Hallal and Ali Al-Nabhan pose for a photo with interior and health ministry officials who participated in the fire drill.

NBK conducts successful fire drill at its headquarters

KUWAIT: In line with its dedication to ensuring the safety and security of its employees, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) successfully conducted a fire drill at its headquarters, with the aim of testing the readiness of the security and safety teams in dealing with emergency situations. The drill was conducted under the

supervision of NBK Security Department, in cooperation with Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) of the Ministry of Interior and Medical Emergency Department of the Ministry of Health.

Commenting on this, Khalid Al-Matrouk, Chief Security Officer and Head of Anti-Financial Crime - Kuwait at NBK said: "We conduct the fire drill practice periodically, in order to determine the readiness of our systems and facilities and employees' knowledge of how to deal with emergencies, in addition to ensuring the effectiveness of evacuation plans and raising the expertise of Security Department employees in such emergencies."

"We place the safety and security of our employees and customers as a top priority and a key consideration in designing all business strategies. Therefore, we always adhere to the highest international standards related to safety and security measures. During the evacuation, the employees showed adherence with the guidelines and instructions, followed the plans, and used the emergency exits under the supervision of the Security Department staff," he noted. Matrouk extended thanks to the government agencies that provided all due support in conducting this fire drill, specially the Ministry of Interior's Fire Service Directorate and General Department of Civil De-

fense, as well as the Ministry of Health's Medical Emergency Department.

National Bank of Kuwait frequently organizes training courses and awareness sessions for its employees about safety and security measures, in line with its commitment to adopting the highest internationally recognized safety standards. NBK's headquarters is an architectural icon whose design is consistent with modern trends, following the highest and most efficient international safety standards, not only in terms of design, but also in the materials used and their distribution, in addition to using the most advanced elevator, firefighting and fire alarm systems inside the building.



Khalid Al-Matrouk



Spread of mosquito fuels malaria surge in East Africa

Putin gifts North Korea a lion, bears and ducks

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BAKU: Activists hold a silent protest inside the COP29 venue to demand that rich nations provide climate finance to developing countries, during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku. — AFP

Wealthy nations pledge 'no new coal' at COP29

Rich nations urged to commit up to \$900bn per year

BAKU: Twenty-five countries at the COP29 climate summit on Wednesday pledged not to build any new unabated coal-power plants, in a push to accelerate the phaseout of the highly polluting fossil fuel. The United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany and major coal producer Australia were among the list of mainly wealthy developed economies to sign the voluntary pledge in Azerbaijan. It commits nations to submit national climate plans early next year that reflect no new unabated coal in their energy systems.

Unabated refers to coal burned without any measures to reduce its emissions, such as carbon capture and storage, technologies criticized as unproven at a large scale. The pledge does not compel nations to stop mining or exporting coal, which produces more planet-heating carbon emissions than oil and gas, and is a major driver of climate change. Many of the world's biggest coal-power generators - including China, India and the United States - did not sign the "call to action" launched in Baku.

EU climate envoy Wopke Hoekstra, who signed the initiative, said coal power was still growing despite a historic commitment made at last year's COP to use less fossil fuels for energy. "The commitment to 'transition away from fossil fuels' needs to turn into

real steps on the ground," Hoekstra said. Britain recently became the first of the Group of Seven industrial nations to end all reliance on coal in its power generation. UK Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said that coal "poses one of the biggest threats" to capping global warming at levels scientists say would prevent the worst consequences of climate change.

This pledge "sends a clear signal from countries around the world that new coal needs to end" by the next COP summit in Brazil, he added. The inclusion of Australia, a major coal user and exporter, was welcomed by activists at COP29 where raising money for poorer countries has been a bigger priority than efforts to cut heat-trapping emissions. "This has closed the door on coal. Now we need to lock it," Erin Ryan from Climate Action Network Australia told AFP in Baku. "It's beyond time that we left it in the past, both in our energy systems and our export markets." Developing countries including Angola, Uganda and Ethiopia were also among the countries to sign the pledge, which was developed in collaboration with the Powering Past Coal Alliance.

\$900 billion targeted

Meanwhile, negotiators at deadlocked UN climate talks said Wednesday that rich countries have been urged to commit as much as \$900 billion per year to help poorer nations take action against global warming. With two days left at the COP29 conference in Azerbaijan, countries are scrambling to bridge their differences over money seen as crucial for the world to curb planet-heating emissions.

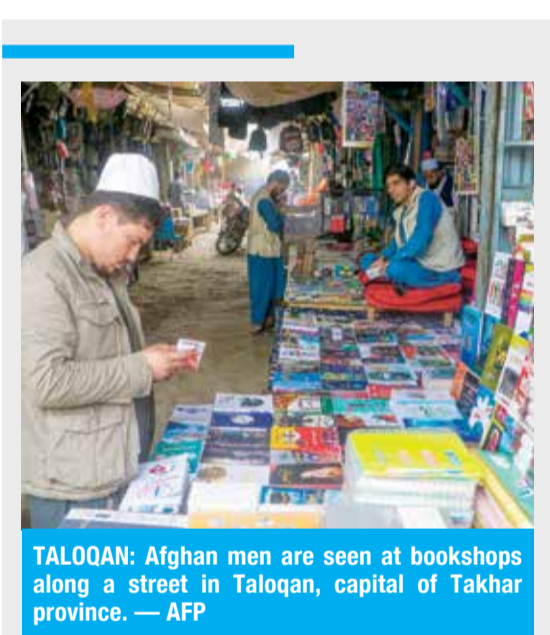
Developing nations, which are least responsible for global emissions, say rich historic polluters have a duty to help pay for their green transitions and the devastating impacts of climate change. While developed nations have yet to put any figures on the table, some developing countries have called for \$1.3 trillion in annual funds. Rich countries, which are facing tighter budgets and political pressures back home, insist that any commitment must also include loans and private money.

They also want countries such as China and Saudi Arabia, which have become wealthy but are still listed as developing nations, to contribute to climate finance. Australian climate minister Chris Bowen, one of two envoys mediating the finance negotiations, said three different figures were suggested for the money that would come from the budgets of developed nations: \$440 billion, \$600 billion and \$900 billion. "Many parties told

us they need to see certain building blocks in place before they can put forward their suggested number," Bowen told COP29 delegates.

Delegates from several countries told AFP the figures were not proposed by developed nations. Bowen said some countries had drawn a "red line" over the type of money, insisting it come "from a wide range of sources and instruments". Bolivia's chief negotiator, Diego Pacheco, said there was a "steadily receding hope of getting an ambitious" deal on climate finance. "We are also hearing in the corridors figures of 200 billion being offered by our partners" on climate finance which would also include contributions from multilateral development banks, Pacheco said.

Buried in debt, developing nations insist that any deal should not include more loans. "Only 200 billion," he told the conference. "This is unfathomable, we cannot accept this." The lead negotiator of COP29 hosts Azerbaijan, Yalchin Rafiyev, urged countries to "pick up the pace" of negotiations and said a new draft deal would be released at around midnight on Wednesday. "Let us embrace the spirit of collaboration, compromise and determination to ensure that we leave this conference with outcomes that make a real difference," he said. — AFP



TALOQAN: Afghan men are seen at bookshops along a street in Taloqan, capital of Takhar province. — AFP

Taleban clearing 'un-Islamic' books from the shelves

KABUL: Checking imported books, removing texts from libraries and distributing lists of banned titles - Taleban authorities are working to remove "un-Islamic" and anti-government literature from circulation. The efforts are led by a commission established under the Ministry of Information and Culture soon after the Taleban swept to power in 2021 and implemented their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or sharia.

In October, the ministry announced the commission had identified 400 books "that conflicted with Islamic and Afghan values, most of which have been collected from the markets". The department in charge of publishing has distributed copies of the Quran and other Islamic texts to replace seized books, the ministry statement said. The ministry has not provided figures for the number of removed books, but two sources, a publisher in Kabul and a government employee, said texts had been collected in the first year of Taleban rule and again in recent months.

"There is a lot of censorship. It is very difficult to work, and fear has spread everywhere," the Kabul publisher told AFP. Books were also restricted under the previous foreign-backed government ousted by the Taleban, when there was "a lot of corruption, pressures and other issues", he said. But "there was no fear, one could say whatever he or she wanted to say", he added. "Whether or not we could make any change, we could raise our voices."

AFP received a list of five of the banned titles from an information ministry official. It includes "Jesus the Son of Man" by renowned Lebanese-American author Khalil Gibran, for containing "blasphemous expressions", and the "counterculture" novel "Twilight of the Eastern Gods" by Albanian author Ismail Kadare. "Afghanistan and the Region: A West Asian Perspective" by Mirwais Balkhi, an education minister under the former government, was also banned for "negative propaganda". During the Taleban's previous rule from 1996 to 2001, there were comparatively few publishing houses and booksellers in Kabul, the country having already been wracked by decades of war. — AFP

Paramilitary forces attack central Sudan, killing 40

PORT SUDAN: An attack by paramilitary forces that began Tuesday evening has left 40 people dead, a medic told AFP from a central Sudan village, following a month of escalating violence in Al-Jazira state. "All 40 people suffered direct gunshot wounds," the medic said from Wad Rawah Hospital, just north of Wad Oshaib village, requesting anonymity for their own protection after repeated attacks on medical personnel.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), at war with the army since mid-April 2023, first attacked the village, located 100 kilometers north of Al-Jazira's capital Wad Madani, on Tuesday evening, eyewitnesses said. "The attack resumed this morning," one eyewitness told AFP by phone on Wednesday, adding that fighters were "looting property". It is the latest in a month-long series of attacks on Al-Jazira villages by the RSF following the defection of a key paramilitary commander to the army's side last month. According to the United Nations, over 340,000 people have been displaced from their homes in the state, a key agricultural region that was formerly considered Sudan's breadbasket.

The UN Secretary-General's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday that the violence in Al-Jazira "is putting the lives of tens of thousands of people at risk". The war between the army, led by Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has already killed tens of thousands of people across the country. It has also uprooted over 11 million people, more than 3 million of whom have fled across Sudan's borders. — AFP



HLUKHIV: Ukrainian rescuers clean rubble of a destroyed dormitory building following a missile attack in Glukhiv, Sumy region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Ukraine criticizes Western allies for embassy closures

KYIV: Ukraine on Wednesday called on its Western allies not to fuel tension inside the country, after a string of embassies in Kyiv announced they would close, citing the threat of a "massive air attack" on the capital. The warnings of fresh strikes come as Moscow looks to retaliate against Ukraine for firing US-supplied long-range missiles on Russian territory for the first time and with the Kremlin accusing outgoing US President Joe Biden of dragging out the war.

Russia has already ramped up a wave of deadly missile strikes in recent days, targeting residential areas and Ukraine's energy grid. Air alerts blare out across the country daily. The United States led the

wave of closures, saying it was shutting its Kyiv office to the public after having received "specific information of a potential significant air attack" on Wednesday. It did not provide further details. Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain - all NATO members - followed suit, announcing the closures of their diplomatic premises in the capital. Ukrainian officials criticized the rare move and called on its allies not to spread yet more fear among Ukrainian society.

Kyiv said the "information" the US was referring to looked to be a "psychological operation" launched by Moscow in a bid to destabilize the country. "We remind you that the threat of strikes by the aggressor state has unfortunately been a daily reality for Ukrainians for over 1,000 days," Ukraine's foreign ministry said in a statement on social media. The GUR military intelligence directorate said a "fake" message was being spread on social media, purporting to be a warning from them over a massive bomb attack on Kyiv. "A terrorist country is conducting a massive information and psychological attack against Ukraine," it said in a statement. — AFP

International

Iraqis face tough homecoming a decade after the reign of terror

IS seized a third of Iraq, ruled self-declared 'caliphate' with iron fist

HASAN SHAMI, Iraq: A decade after Islamic State group extremists rampaged through northern Iraq, Moaz Fadhil and his eight children finally returned to their village after languishing for years in a displacement camp. Their home, Hasan Shami, is just a stone's throw from the tent city where they had been living, and it still bears the scars of the fight against IS.

The jihadists seized a third of Iraq, ruling their self-declared "caliphate" with an iron fist, before an international coalition wrestled control from them in 2017. Seven years on, many of the village's homes are still in ruins and lacking essential services, but Fadhil said he felt an "indefinable joy" upon moving back in August. Iraq - marred by decades of war and turmoil even before the rise of IS - is home to more than a million internally displaced people.

Baghdad has been pushing for the closure of the displacement camps, with the country having attained a degree of comparative stability in recent years. Most of the camps in federal Iraq have now been closed, but around 20 remain in the northern autonomous Kurdistan region, which according to the United Nations house more than 115,000 displaced people. But for many, actually returning home can be a difficult task. After getting the green light from Kurdish security forces to leave the camp, Fadhil moved his family into a friend's damaged house because his own is a complete ruin.

'Beautiful memories'

"Water arrives by tanker trucks and there is no electricity," said the 53-year-old. Although the rubble has been cleared from the structure he now lives in, the cinder block walls and rough concrete floors remain bare. Across Hasan Shami, half-collapsed houses sit next to concrete buildings under construction by those residents who can afford to rebuild. Some have

installed solar panels to power their new lives.

A small new mosque stands, starkly white, beside an asphalt road. "I was born here, and before me my father and mother," said Fadhil, an unemployed farmer. "I have beautiful memories with my children, my parents." The family survives mainly on the modest income brought in by his eldest son, who works as a day laborer on building sites. "Every four or five days he works a day" for about \$8, said Fadhil.

In an effort to close the camps and facilitate returns, Iraqi authorities are offering families around \$3,000 to go back to their places of origin. To do so, displaced people must also get security clearance - to ensure they are not wanted for jihadist crimes - and have their identity papers or property rights in order. But of the 11,000 displaced people still living in six displacement camps near Hasan Shami, 600 are former prisoners, according to the UN. They were released after serving up to five years for crimes related to membership of IS.

Not that simple

For them, going home can mean further complications. There's the risk of ostracism by neighbors or tribes for their perceived affiliation with IS atrocities, potential arrest at a checkpoint by federal forces or even a second trial. Among them is 32-year-old Rashid, who asked that we use a pseudonym because of his previous imprisonment in Kurdistan for belonging to the jihadist group.

He said he hopes the camp next to Hasan Shami does not close. "I have a certificate of release (from prison), everything is in order... But I can't go back there," he said of federal Iraq. "If I go back it's 20 years" in jail, he added, worried that he would be tried again in an Iraqi court. Ali Abbas, spokesperson for Iraq's migration ministry, said that those who committed crimes may indeed face trial after they



HASAN SHAMI: Moaz Fadhil, 53, sits at the Hasan Shami village in northern Iraq, which was damaged during the 2014 attacks by Islamic State (IS) fighters and the battles that followed, some 40 kilometers west of Arbil in northern Iraq. — AFP

leave the camps. "No one can prevent justice from doing its job," he said, claiming that their families would not face repercussions. The government is working to ensure that families who return have access to basic services, Abbas added.

In recent months, Baghdad has repeatedly tried to set deadlines for Kurdistan to close the camps, even suing leaders of the autonomous region before finally opting for cooperation over coercion. Imrul

Islam of the Norwegian Refugee Council said displacement camps by definition are supposed to be temporary, but warned against their hasty closure. When people return, "you need schools. You need hospitals. You need roads. And you need working markets that provide opportunities for livelihoods," he said. Without these, he said, many families who try to resettle in their home towns would end up returning to the camps. — AFP

Djibouti experiments with GM mosquito against malaria

NAIROBI: Tens of thousands of genetically modified mosquitos are being released every week in Djibouti as the tiny Horn of Africa state experiments with a new weapon against an unprecedented malaria surge. East Africa faces a deadly new threat from the arrival of *Anopheles stephensi*, a mosquito native to Asia and the Middle East that thrives in urban areas and is immune to insecticides. The World Health Organization (WHO) says the species is a key factor in an unprecedented spike in malaria cases in Djibouti and Ethiopia, and has been found in six other African countries so far.

In 2019, Abdoulilah Ahmed Abdi, health adviser to Djibouti's presidency, heard about a new invention being used primarily in Brazil against a dengue-carrying mosquito. The so-called "Friendly" mosquito, created by British biotechnology firm Oxitec, is a genetically modified male that carries a protein ensuring its offspring will not survive. Since only females bite, the idea is that GM males can be released in vast numbers without posing an additional risk to humans.

Djibouti launched the program in

May with the release of 40,000 GM mosquitos and on October 6, began weekly releases that will run for six months. "We are trying to find with our partner Oxitec an innovative and sustainable solution that could have an impact on the whole region and the continent at large," said Abdi. "We are very proud of it. It's an initiative for all Africa," he added. Abdi said results were expected by mid-2025 and that Djibouti was also building a factory to produce the mosquito for shipment across Africa.

Hopes and challenges

Oxitec has released well over one billion GM mosquitos in Brazil and Florida in the United States, where it targets the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti*. Its studies indicate it can reduce wild populations by 90 percent or more. "There's nothing better at finding the biting disease-transmitting female mosquito than a male mosquito," Neil Morrison, Oxitec's chief strategy officer, told AFP.

He emphasized the Djibouti program was still at a pilot stage. "Early next year, we'll start to figure out how



CAMPINAS: Transgenic *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos are seen in containers at a laboratory of biotech company Oxitec, in Campinas, 100 km from Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

many mosquitoes we'll need to release to deliver suppression," he said. GM mosquitos are controversial with some environmentalists. A 2019 report led by GeneWatch UK said Oxitec's technology risked altering the evolution of mosquitos and the way diseases spread, in potentially dangerous ways.

It questioned Oxitec's claims of efficacy, saying it could inadvertently release many females alongside its

sterile males, or simply push wild mosquitos into neighboring areas. Oxitec insists its GM mosquito is "completely harmless and non-toxic" and regulators cleared it for deployment in the US in 2022. But if GM mosquitos must be continuously released to be effective, there is the question of cost - a key factor in Africa, which accounts for around 95 percent of the 600,000 malaria deaths each year. — AFP

Spread of mosquito fuels malaria surge in East Africa

NAIROBI: The spread of a mosquito in East Africa that thrives in urban areas and is immune to insecticide is fuelling a surge in malaria that could reverse decades of progress against the disease, experts say. Africa accounted for about 95 percent of the 249 million malaria cases and 608,000 deaths worldwide in 2022, according to the most recent data from the World Health Organization (WHO), which said children under five accounted for 80 percent of deaths in the region. But the emergence of an invasive species of mosquito on the continent could massively increase those numbers.

Anopheles stephensi is native to parts of South Asia and the Middle East but was spotted for the first time in the tiny Horn of Africa state of Djibouti in 2012. Djibouti had all but eradicated malaria only to see it make a slow but steady return over the following years, hitting more than 70,000 cases in 2020. Then *stephensi* arrived in neighboring Ethiopia and WHO says it is key to an "unprecedented surge", from 4.1 million malaria cases and 527 deaths last year to 7.3 million cases and 1,157 deaths between January 1 and October 20, 2024.

Unlike other species which are seasonal and prefer rural areas, *stephensi* thrives year-round in urban settings, breeding in man-made water storage tanks, roof gutters or even air conditioning units. It appears to be highly resistant to insecticides, and bites earlier in the evening than other carriers. That means bed nets - up to now the prime weapon against malaria - may be much less effective. "The invasion and spread of *Anopheles stephensi* has the potential to change the malaria landscape in Africa and reverse decades of progress we've made towards malaria control," Meera Venkatesan, malaria division chief for USAID, told AFP.

'More research is needed'

The fear is that *stephensi* will infest dense cities like Mombasa on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast and Sudan's capital Khartoum, with one 2020 study warning it could eventually reach 126 million city-dwellers across Africa. Only last month, Egypt was declared malaria-free by WHO after a century-long battle against the disease - a status that could be threatened by *stephensi*'s arrival.

Much remains unknown, however. *Stephensi* was confirmed as present in Kenya in late 2022, but has so far stayed in hotter, dryer areas without reaching the high-altitude capital, Nairobi. "We don't yet fully understand the biology and behavior of this mosquito," Charles Mbogo, president of the Pan-African Mosquito Control Association, told AFP. "Possibly it is climate-driven and requires high temperatures, but much more research is needed." He called for increased funding for capturing and testing mosquitos, and for educating the public on prevention measures such as covering water receptacles.

Multiplying threats

The spread of *stephensi* could dovetail with other worrying trends, including increased evidence of drug resistant malaria recorded in Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Eritrea. "The arrival of resistance is imminent," said Dorothy Achu, WHO's head of tropical and vector-borne diseases in Africa. WHO is working with countries to diversify treatment programs to delay resistance, she said.

A new malaria variant is also evading tests used to diagnose the disease. "The increased transmission that *stephensi* is driving could potentially help accelerate the spread of other threats, such as drug resistance or another mutation in the parasite that leads it to be less detectable by our most widely-used diagnostics," said Venkatesan at USAID. Another added challenge is the lack of coordination between African governments. Achu said WHO is working on "a more continental approach". — AFP

Myanmar led world in landmine victims in 2023: Monitor

BANGKOK: Landmines and unexploded munitions claimed more victims in Myanmar than in any other country last year, a monitor said on Wednesday, warning the true toll could be double or triple its estimate of 1,000 people killed or wounded. Decades of sporadic conflict between the military and ethnic rebel groups have left the Southeast Asian country littered with deadly landmines and munitions.

But the military's ouster of Aung San Suu Kyi's government in 2021 has turbocharged conflict in the country and birthed dozens of newer "People's Defense Forces" (PDFs) now battling to topple the military. Anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war killed or wounded 1,003 people in Myanmar in 2023, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) said on Wednesday. There were 933 landmine casualties in Syria, 651 in Afghanistan and 580 in Ukraine, the ICBL said in its latest Landmine Monitor report.

With conflict and other restrictions in Myanmar making ground surveys impossible, the true casualty figure was likely far higher than reported, said Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan of the ICBL. "How many more? Double? Triple? Quite possibly... There's no medical surveillance system in the country that can provide official data in any manner or form," he told a press conference in Bangkok. "No armed group in Myanmar, not the military, not any of the ethnic armed groups, not the PDFs have provided us with any data on the number of casualties they have."

"And we know from anecdotal evidence that it's massive." Myanmar is not a signatory to the United Nations convention that prohibits the use, stockpiling or development of anti-personnel mines. The ICBL said there had been a "significant increase" of anti-personnel mines use by the military in recent years, including around infrastructure like mobile phone towers and energy pipelines. Such infrastruc-



MANTONG: A member of Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) handles a Myanmar military's unexploded landmine in Mantong town, northern Shan State. — AFP

ture is often targeted by opponents of the military.

Landmines used 'indiscriminately'

Myanmar's military has been repeatedly accused of atrocities and war crimes during decades of internal conflict. The ICBL said it had seen evidence of junta troops forcing civilians to walk in front of its units to "clear" mine-affected areas. It said it had reviewed photos that indicated supplies of anti-personnel mines manufactured by Myanmar were captured by the military's opponents every month between January 2022 and September 2024, "in virtually every part of the country." More than three million people have been displaced in Myanmar by the post-coup conflict, according to the United Nations.

All sides in the fighting were using landmines "indiscriminately," the UN children's agency said in April. Rebel groups have told AFP they also lay mines in some areas under their control. The ICBL said at least 5,757 people had been casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war across the world last year, 1,983 of whom were killed. Civilians made up 84 percent of all recorded casualties, it said. Last year's figures are considerably higher than 2022, when the ICBL recorded at least 4,710 casualties including 1,661 fatalities. — AFP

Hospital chief decries 'extreme catastrophe' in north Gaza

GAZA: The World Health Organization expressed grave concern on Tuesday for hospitals still partly operating in war-stricken northern Gaza, where one hospital director described the situation as an "extreme catastrophe". "We are very, very concerned, and it's getting harder and harder to get the aid in. It's getting harder and harder to get the specialist personnel in at a time when there is greater and greater need," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told journalists in Geneva.

She said the organization was "particularly concerned about Kamal Adwan Hospital" in Beit Lahia, where Zionist forces launched an offensive against Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups last month. Kamal Adwan Hospital director Hossam Abu Safiyeh told AFP by phone: "The situation in northern Gaza is that of an extreme catastrophe. "We're beginning to lose patients because we lack medical supplies and personnel," he said.

Abu Safiyeh added that his hospital had been "targeted many times by the occupation forces, most recently" on Monday. "A large number of children and elderly people continue to arrive suffering from malnutrition," the doctor said. He accused Zionists of "blocking the entry of food, water, medical staff and materials destined for the north" of the Gaza Strip. The WHO's Harris estimated that between November 8 and 16, "four WHO missions were trying to get up to go were denied". "There's a lack of food and drinking water, shortage of medical supplies. There's really only enough for two weeks at the very best," she said.

A statement from COGAT, the defense ministry body responsible for civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, said Tuesday: "COGAT-led humanitarian efforts in the medical field continue." It said that on Monday, "1,000 blood units were transferred" to Al-Sahaba hospital in Gaza City, outside the area where Zionist military operations are taking place. — AFP

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024

Automak launches ROX Motor in Kuwait with all-new ROX01 model

ROX vehicles blend elegance with advanced technology: Hussam Al-Kharafi



Automak's founding members, including Group President Hussam Fawzi Al-Kharafi and CEO Ghazi Al-Omar, along with ROX Motor's representatives, CEO and Co-founder Yan Feng, and Vice President Wu Yue, during the launch ceremony.



ROX01

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Automak, Kuwait's leading automotive company, celebrated the launch of ROX Motor, unveiling the innovative ROX01 model as its exclusive agent in the country. The event, held at Al-Salhiya Complex, was attended by Automak's founding members, including Group President Hussam Fawzi Al-Kharafi and CEO Ghazi Al-Omar, along with ROX Motor's distinguished representatives, CEO and Co-founder Yan Feng, and Vice President Wu Yue. Prominent economic, political, and media figures from Kuwait also joined the celebration.

Hussam Al-Kharafi highlighted that ROX Motor adds significant value to Automak's portfolio, known for combining luxury with high performance. He expressed excitement about the collaboration with ROX Motor, calling it a unique opportunity to bring a cutting-edge driving experience to the Kuwaiti market. ROX vehicles blend elegance with advanced technology, making them an ideal choice for those

seeking both adventure and sophistication.

Ghazi Al-Omar echoed these sentiments, stating his pride in launching the ROX01 in Kuwait in collaboration with ROX Motor. He emphasized that adding ROX to Automak's lineup further strengthens the company's position as a leader in offering luxury vehicles with exceptional capabilities. According to Ghazi, the ROX01 provides an unparalleled driving experience, combining powerful off-road performance with refined elegance—perfectly aligning with the preferences of Kuwaiti consumers.

Exceptional safety

The ROX01 is a groundbreaking vehicle featuring Range Extended Electric Vehicle (REEV) technology, which combines a powerful electric motor with an extended-range system, enabling smooth, long-distance journeys without the need for constant recharging. This model blends electric power with range-extending flexibility, making it an ideal choice for both long trips and daily commutes. Equipped

with dual 3D permanent magnet motors at the front and rear, the ROX01 delivers a total power output of 350 kW and 740 Nm of torque, accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.5 seconds, with a top speed of 190 km/h. The standard long-range version boasts an impressive range of up to 1,275 km, suitable for extended journeys across various terrains.

The ROX01 is a true all-terrain 4x4, designed to handle diverse driving conditions with confidence. Its robust engineering and advanced traction systems ensure optimal performance in both desert landscapes and urban environments. Additionally, the ROX01 has achieved a prestigious 5-star safety rating in crash tests, reinforcing its commitment to providing both exceptional performance and unmatched safety for drivers and passengers alike.

The interior of the ROX01 offers a highly advanced cabin featuring a 15.7-inch infotainment system, a 360-degree camera, and a Level 2 advanced driver assistance system. Customers can choose between 6 or 7 seats, providing ample comfort for all passengers.

Automak's commitment to a comprehensive luxury driving experience

Omar Al-Omar, Deputy CEO of Automak, noted that ROX Motor offers Kuwaiti customers a sophisticated engineering experience combined with powerful off-road capabilities and state-of-the-art driving technology. Designed for both desert exploration and urban driving, the ROX01 delivers an exceptional blend of durability and luxury for those seeking a distinguished driving experience.

Omar also stated that Automak's partnership with ROX Motor aims to transform the driving concept, blending resilience and luxury to meet the needs of customers looking for a superior driving experience. Backed by Automak's renowned after-sales support, ROX vehicles come with exciting customization options to suit various preferences. Customers are invited to visit Automak showrooms to explore the complete ROX lineup. For more information about available models, please visit rox.com.kw or contact customer service at 1845555.

Japan ramps up tech ambitions with \$65bn for AI, chips

TOKYO: Japan is readying a \$65-billion push in microchips and artificial intelligence aimed at reclaiming its status as a global tech leader and meeting the urgent challenges of its ageing, shrinking population.

The 10-trillion-yen package, which lawmakers could approve this week, is also seen as preparation for an uncertain world as fears grow of a potential Chinese invasion of chip powerhouse Taiwan.

But analysts warn that question marks remain over worker shortages and whether Japan can generate enough electricity for energy-hungry AI data centers. After dominating in tech hardware during the 1980s, "Japan had a quite a long period of almost just sitting back and observing a lot of this innovation, particularly when it comes to artificial intelligence", said Kelly Forbes, president of the AI Asia Pacific Institute. "What we have seen in the last maybe two to three years is Japan really waking up to the potential" of such developments, she told AFP.

Japanese tech investor SoftBank and US computing giant Nvidia last week unveiled ambitious proposals to build an "AI grid" across the nation.

That followed a flurry of US investments earlier this year, including from Microsoft, a partner of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI. AI-powered automation can help Japan, which has the world's second oldest population after Monaco, said Seth Hays, author of the Asia AI Policy Monitor newsletter.

"Demographically speaking, Japan's just going to be crunched on that," he said. So "they need to utilize AI in order to get those productivity gains that



Visitors walking past a sign (left) promoting ChatGPT, a hugely popular language app that has sparked a rush in artificial intelligence technology, during the three-day 7th AI Expo, part of NexTech Week Tokyo 2023. — AFP

keep the country going".

The new government money will bolster Japan's home-grown Rapidus project to produce next-generation semiconductors. Tokyo has already promised up to four trillion yen in subsidies to help triple sales of domestically produced microchips by 2030. "Semiconductors are really at the core of AI innovation," said Forbes.

Most of the world's chips are made in Taiwan—but fears are growing of a blockade or invasion by Beijing, which claims the self-ruled island as part of its territory. Facing pressure from customers and governments to diversify its production, Taiwanese chip giant TSMC in February opened a \$8.6-billion chip factory in southern Japan, and is planning a second facility in the country for more advanced chips.



AUSTIN: In this photo illustration, a Bitcoin chart is displayed on a cell phone. — AFP

said Stéphane Ouellette, chief executive officer of crypto trading firm FRNT Financial. Earlier this week, the Wall Street Journal reported Trump was meeting privately with the crypto exchange CEO Brian Armstrong, further aiding sentiment.

Trump names China hawk Lutnick as US commerce secretary

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump nominated Howard Lutnick, the co-chair of his transition team, as his commerce secretary on Tuesday—a choice set to bring a tougher stance on China from the incoming administration.

Lutnick will also lead the country's tariff and trade agenda, with "additional direct responsibility for the Office of the United States Trade Representative," Trump said in a statement. Tariffs are a key part of Trump's economic agenda and he has promised sweeping duties on all imports when he returns to the White House. Lutnick is chief executive of financial services firm Cantor Fitzgerald and a Trump ally originally tipped as a front-runner for treasury secretary.

But he was instead named to helm Commerce, a

smaller department that works to boost American industry and has a key role in policy to shore up the US semiconductor sector and reduce reliance on Asia. Under President Joe Biden, the Commerce Department stepped up export controls on critical technologies like quantum computing and semiconductor manufacturing goods, taking aim at access by adversaries like Beijing.

Trump's administration could harden this stance. Lutnick has expressed support for a tariff level of 60 percent on Chinese goods alongside a 10 percent tariff on all other imports.

Both are among proposals that Trump has floated, with the Republican taking aim at countries which have been "ripping us off for years." In Trump's first term he engaged in a tariffs war with China, with the US Trade Representative's office issuing duties on imports from the world's second-biggest economy. Lutnick also previously lamented the loss of manufacturing jobs in the United States and offshoring to China.

"I'm all in with Donald Trump," Lutnick told podcaster Anthony Pompliano last month. In the same interview, he slammed electric cars as "coastal elite nonsense" and blamed China for being the source of fentanyl in the United States. The deadly drug, many times more powerful than heroin, is responsible for tens of thousands of overdose deaths a year. "China is attacking America from its guts," he charged.

Lutnick was initially tipped to head the Treasury Department but a tussle over the position spilled into the public eye last weekend. Trump's health secretary pick Robert F. Kennedy Jr. expressed support for Lutnick, saying on social media that "Bitcoin will have no stronger advocate" than him. — AFP



Howard Lutnick

Bitcoin bursts past \$94,000 for first time

NEW YORK: Bitcoin rose to a fresh record high above \$94,000 as a report that Donald Trump's social media company was in talks to buy crypto trading firm Bakkt boosted expectations of a crypto-friendly regime under his incoming administration.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, has more than doubled this year. It was last at \$94,291 just under a record high of \$94,378. The Financial Times said Trump Media and Technology Group, which operates Truth Social, is close to an all-stock acquisition of Bakkt, which is backed by NYSE-owner Intercontinental Exchange.

"Trump's seeming interest to push further into crypto on a personal level has contributed to optimism that crypto will be a top priority when Trump takes office,"

Cryptocurrencies have soared since the Nov 5 US election as traders bet President-elect Trump's promised support for digital assets would lead to a less restrictive regulatory regime. Options trading over BlackRock's spot bitcoin on the Nasdaq made a strong debut on Tuesday with a bullish call-to-put ratio of 4.4:1, according to QCP Capital. "We expect these options to be popular and, in turn, may positively influence trading volumes of these ETPs (exchange traded products) as the underlying," said Kenneth Worthington, analyst at JP Morgan.

The growing excitement has taken the global cryptocurrency market's value above \$3 trillion to a record high, based on analytics and data aggregator CoinGecko. US spot bitcoin exchange-traded products have attracted about \$4.2 billion in inflows since Trump's election victory, about 15 percent of the total inflows since the products were launched on US stock exchanges in January. Chris Weston, head of research at Australian online broker Pepperstone, said there is real underlying buying pressure for bitcoin, and "another kick higher should bring in a fresh chase from those who like to buy what's strong". — Reuters

Business

NIC successfully executes partial exit of KD 13.3 million from Boursa Kuwait

6.5 million shares sold, representing 3% of Boursa Kuwait's capital



شركة الاستثمار الوطنية
NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY

KUWAIT: The National Investments Company (NIC) announced the partial exit of one of its key investments, Boursa Kuwait, through the sale of 6.5 million shares, representing 3 percent of the stock exchange's capital, for KD 13.3 million. Despite this transaction, NIC retains an influential stake in Boursa Kuwait, amounting to approximately 12.46 percent.

Khaled Waleed Al-Falah, Chairman of NIC's Board of Directors, stated that the move aligns with the company's balanced and strategic investment approach, aimed at maintaining stability across its portfolio. He emphasized NIC's continued confidence in its evolving business models.

The transaction was executed in collaboration with a leading investment firm, which facilitated the sale to high-net-worth international investors. This effort expanded Boursa Kuwait's shareholder base

to include prominent global investment firms and funds with long-term strategies.

Al-Falah highlighted that the sale has positively impacted NIC's liquidity, boosting cash balances by at least KD 13 million. This was accompanied by a reduction in financial assets classified as "listed at fair value through other comprehensive income". The deal also generated a realized profit of KD 11.8 million, which has been reclassified from the cumulative change in fair value to retained earnings in compliance with accounting standards. Importantly, the transaction has no material impact on NIC's consolidated income statement.

The privatization of Boursa Kuwait began in early 2019 under the Capital Markets Authority's initiative, with NIC playing a crucial role in forming a leading investment consortium. This group, which included local companies and the Athens Stock Exchange, acquired a 44 percent stake in Boursa Kuwait for approximately KD 19 million. Additionally, the General Organization for Social Insurance obtained a 6 percent stake, while the remaining 50 percent was offered to citizens through public subscription.

Al-Falah commended the efforts of Boursa Kuwait's Board of Directors in restructuring and refining its business model over the past three years. These efforts have significantly increased revenues and optimized expenses, enhancing profitability. He



NIC Chairman Khaled Al-Falah

Khaled Al-Falah

- NIC retains an influential stake in Boursa Kuwait, approximately 12 percent.
- The company maintains a positive outlook on the evolution of its business models.
- We have strategically selected high-net-worth international investors to broaden Boursa Kuwait's shareholder base.

also acknowledged the Capital Markets Authority's commitment to provide a secure and supportive regulatory environment, which has contributed to the growth of Kuwait's capital markets and the national economy. Furthermore, he lauded the cooperation between Boursa Kuwait's management and Kuwait Clearing Company, which streamlined procedures and ensured the transaction's smooth execution.

Founded in 1987 and listed in 1988, National Investments Company is one of the region's leading investment firms. With a capital of KD 79.8 million, assets of KD 272 million, and approximately \$3.5 billion in funds under management, NIC has estab-

lished itself as a trusted partner for investors, companies and institutions.

The company reported a net profit of KD 10.2 million for the parent company's shareholders, equivalent to 12.8 fils per share, as of Sept 30, 2024. NIC has a history of launching successful listed companies and executing high-value transactions, including IPOs for Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim Company and Beyout Investment Company. Recent milestones include advising on a record-breaking \$200 million education deal and serving as a selling advisor for high-profile transactions involving Americana, Zain, HEISCO and Kuwait Foundry.

Weyay Bank 'Best Digital Bank in Information Security and Fraud Management in Kuwait'

KUWAIT: Weyay Bank has been recognized as the Best Digital Bank in Information Security and Fraud Management in Kuwait at Global Finance's World's Best Digital Bank Awards 2024, reinforcing its position as a pioneer in digital banking innovative services and solutions. This prestigious accolade highlights the bank's commitment to providing its customers with innovative financial services while protecting their data and transactions with the highest level of security.

Winning one of the most prestigious

honors in the financial sector signifies Weyay Bank's exemplary efforts in implementing leading security practices and fostering a culture of continuous vigilance against cyber threats. It also reflects the bank's commitment to exceeding global industry standards for fraud prevention because it serves as a powerful affirmation of Weyay Bank's commitment to protecting its customers' sensitive data, ensuring secure transactions through continuous investment in state of art security technologies and maintaining the highest

standards of financial integrity. The impact of this prestigious recognition extends far beyond industry accolades since it plays a crucial role in enhancing customer trust in today's digital era. For a pioneering digital bank like Weyay Bank, adopting these advanced measures is essential to building customer trust and ensuring a secure, seamless digital banking experience.

By continuously innovating in these areas, the bank positions itself as a leader in the evolving digital landscape, where security and fraud prevention are paramount concerns for customers. This success lies not only in offering convenient and efficient digital banking services but also in providing customers with the confidence that their financial transactions are secure. This recognition further strengthens the competitive position of Weyay Bank in the banking sector as it continues its commitment to stay at the forefront of digital innovation and se-

curity. Weyay Bank is constantly navigating the evolving challenges of cybersecurity and fraud management that come with operating in a purely online environment. By securing this esteemed award, Weyay Bank not only reinforces its position as a leader in digital banking innovation but also reaffirms its role as a trusted app for customers seeking secure and efficient banking solutions.

The Weyay Bank's leading position in digital banking, combined with its advanced security measures, sets it apart as the bank of choice for customers seeking secure, modern, and efficient financial services. Weyay Bank continues to lead the way in transforming the banking landscape, offering a seamless, fully integrated mobile banking experience. The bank's customer-centric approach, paired with its strong security framework, positions it at the forefront of the digital banking world.



Uncertainty clouds shopping season after mixed forecasts

NEW YORK: Retailers are in for a mixed holiday season this year ahead of Black Friday and Christmas, marked by watchful consumers keeping big spending on a tight leash and vigilantly comparing prices on their mobile phones to look for the best deals on apparel, electronics and toys.

Against this backdrop, bellwether Walmart lifted annual sales and profit targets this week, and said a majority of its customers were maintaining holiday plans year over year in the midst of an election year. Walmart has managed to gain market share as its ultra-low prices on groceries and a wide range of discretionary goods attract upper-income households to its superstores.

On the other hand, rival Target's forecasts for the holiday quarter were significantly subdued, with executives saying demand remains weak for higher-margin items such as home goods and electronics.

Despite a rate cut from the US Federal Reserve, the first in four years, consumer spending on non-essential items has remained uninspiring, and industry analysts expect a deal-heavy holiday shopping season yet again. Overall holiday shopping is expected to grow at its slowest pace in six years, according to separate reports from the National Retail Federation and Deloitte.

This year, there are just 26 days between Black Friday — which has traditionally marked the beginning of the holiday shopping period, and Christmas, compared with 31 days last year.

"The fourth quarter will be fun to watch. And the calendar is not our favorite with fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. And I suspect when all that's said and done, it will be similar to the kind of momentum that we've seen in the first three quarters," said Walmart CEO Doug McMillon on a post-earnings call on Tuesday. The shorter calendar prompted retailers to try and pull forward some demand earlier in the year, offering heavier discounts as early as July, around the back-to-school shopping season.

Gen-Z consumers, more comfortable shopping on phones, are driving a shift towards mobile spending,

and are likely to influence families to do the same over the holidays, said Minkyung Kim, Assistant Professor of Marketing at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business.

Mobile phones are expected to account for 53 percent share of online spending from November through December, reaching a total of about \$128.1 billion, according to a forecast from Adobe Analytics which measures online consumer transactions from 5,000 shoppers. Online spending growth is expected to jump to 8.4 percent from 4.9 percent last year, according to Adobe's forecast, with mobile spending growth expected to jump a "staggering" 12 percent.

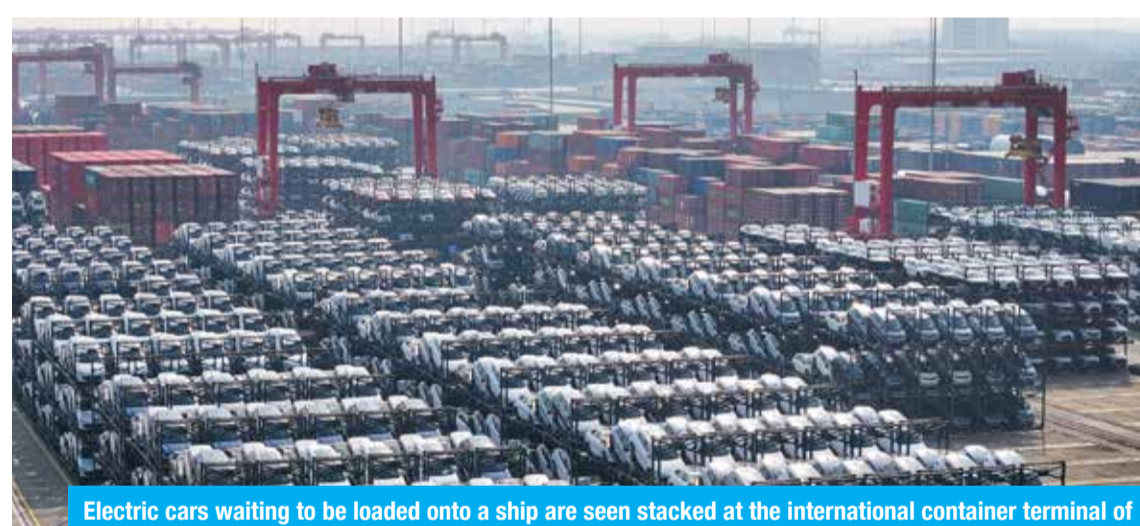
Influencers promoting brands on social media have played a critical role in shaping consumer sentiment and shopping patterns. "I expect that trend to continue, particularly with the advancement of artificial intelligence," Kim added. "These younger consumers are growing in their spending power and they're early in their career development, so to get them as loyalty members and familiar and comfortable regularly shopping with your brand is very important to growing revenue over time," said Wedbush analyst Seth Basham.

In fact, spruced-up loyalty programs with perks such as same-day or free delivery, personalized marketing and quicker check-outs at stores allowed Target and Walmart to induce an early splurge during back-to-school shopping, and the retailers plan to continue to make these programs more appealing as holidays approach. Target's 20 percent growth in same-day delivery, driven by its refurbished rewards program, contributed to double-digit growth in digital comparable third-quarter sales — one of the only bright spots for Target this year.

Walmart also began offering its \$98 Walmart Plus membership at about half price from Oct 28 through Dec 2, and reported a fourth straight quarter of double-digit growth in global membership income.

"The big change that we'll concentrate on this holiday is how much fight there will be for that new incremental customer. I think because of that you'll see increased targeted promotions just try to get new customers at an accelerated rate," said M Science analyst John Tomlinson.

The US port strike in October has added another wrinkle to the holiday shopping season. In October, just weeks shy of the Black Friday frenzy, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) workers union went on strike for higher wages, affecting 36 ports — including New York, Baltimore and Houston. — Reuters



Electric cars waiting to be loaded onto a ship are seen stacked at the international container terminal of Taicang Port in Suzhou, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

Trump could unleash nearly 40% tariffs on China in 2025: Poll

BENGALURU/BEIJING: The United States could impose nearly 40 percent tariffs on imports from China early next year, a Reuters poll of economists showed, potentially slicing growth in the world's second-biggest economy by up to 1 percentage point. The poll, the first on China's economy by Reuters since Donald Trump's sweeping election victory on Nov. 5, also predicts that the President-elect will resist starting off with blanket 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods.

Trump, who is due to take office in January, pledged during campaigning to slap hefty tariffs on Chinese imports as part of a package of "America First" trade measures, causing unease in Beijing and heightening growth risks for China. Not only are the threatened tariff rates much higher than the 7.5 percent-25 percent levied on China during his first term, the economy is also in a much more vulnerable position given the prolonged property downturn, debt risks and weak domestic demand. A poll of more than 50 economists by Reuters from Nov. 13-20 showed a strong majority, both in and outside mainland China, expects Trump to impose the tariffs by early next year, with a median estimate of 38 percent and projections ranging from 15 percent to 60 percent. Most respondents said they do not expect blanket 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods in early 2025 as this could accelerate inflation within the United States.

"We expect the new US administration to bring back the original plan of Trump 1.0," ANZ's chief economist Raymond Yeung said, estimating that the average tariff on Chinese goods could be raised by 32-37 percent. Chinese policymakers, who have ramped up stimulus to spur growth since late September, face increased pressure next year to spur domestic demand to offset an expected drop in exports — a key growth driver this year, analysts say.

On the potential impact on China, the poll pre-

dicted that new US tariffs would reduce China's 2025 economic growth by around 0.5-1.0 percentage point. For now, however, most of the economists polled have maintained their median growth forecasts for this year and 2025 at 4.8 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively, consistent with projections made before the US elections. Growth is expected to slow further to 4.2 percent in 2026. They are awaiting the Trump administration's China trade policies, which could lead to potential downgrades in their outlooks.

"Exports will be a key pillar of growth as global demand holds up, though new US tariffs could shave up to 1 percentage point off GDP growth," said Mo Ji, chief China economist at DBS. "Consumption will remain lackluster due to wealth effects from falling property prices and rising unemployment. Infrastructure investment will drive a moderate fixed asset investment recovery, though private investment lags."

A strong majority of economists, or 19 of 23 who responded in the poll, said the recent fiscal and monetary stimulus measures announced by the Chinese government have had little impact on the economy and more stimulus is needed. Only four said that these measures would boost economic growth.

Chinese authorities hope the burst of stimulus unveiled since late September would help the economy reach a government growth target of around 5 percent this year. China is likely to unveil fresh stimulus measures in the coming weeks to help cushion the economy from any trade tensions with the United States, say analysts, who expect the economy's slowing trajectory will continue despite policy support.

"We think the Chinese government still has time to monitor and react to the US policy and its effect on China growth and then introduce policy responses at a later stage," said Jian Chang, chief China economist at Barclays. Economists polled by Reuters have also lowered their consumer price inflation forecasts to 1.1 percent for next year and 1.4 percent for 2026, down from the previously expected 1.4 percent and 1.6 percent in the October survey. The People's Bank of China is expected to cut its key policy rate — the seven-day reverse repo rate — by 20 basis points to 1.30 percent early next year, with an additional 10 basis point reduction in the second half, according to the poll. — Reuters



People walk in a H&M clothing shop in New York City on November 19, 2024. - AFP

Business

British annual inflation jumps

Households and businesses face higher energy bills

LONDON: Britain's annual inflation rate jumped more than expected in October to back above the Bank of England's target as households and businesses faced higher energy bills, official data showed Wednesday.

The Consumer Prices Index reached 2.3 percent from a three-year low of 1.7 percent in the 12 months to September, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. CPI was last at 2.3 percent in April, the ONS added in a statement, while analysts' consensus had been for the rate to climb back to 2.2 percent. The Bank of England (BoE) target stands at 2.0 percent.

"Inflation rose... as the increase in the energy price cap meant higher costs for gas and electricity compared with a fall at the same time last year," ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner said of October's data.

Britain's energy regulator Ofgem sets a price cap quarterly that suppliers can charge customers. The latest increase in October was 10 percent but this is expected to

drop markedly in January according to forecasts. The regulator had cited rising prices on international energy markets owing to increasing geopolitical tensions, and extreme weather events driving competition for gas, as the reasons behind the sharp rise.

"We know that families across Britain are still struggling with the cost of living," senior Treasury official Darren Jones said in reaction to Wednesday's inflation reading, adding that the Labour government needed to do more to help. Analysts said despite prices rising faster than expected, the BoE remained on course to keep cutting British interest rates.

"But it lends some support... that the Bank will skip the December meeting and cut rates only gradually, by 25 basis points in February and at every other policy meeting until rates reach 3.50 percent in early 2026," forecast Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics research group. The central

bank earlier this month trimmed borrowing costs by 25 basis points to 4.75 percent. Following its decision, the BoE added that a maiden budget from Britain's Labour government in October, featuring tax rises and increased borrowing, would boost growth but also lift inflation.

Major central banks started this year to cut interest rates that had been hiked in efforts to tame inflation, which had soared following the end of COVID lockdowns and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In August, the BoE reduced its key rate for the first time since early 2020, from a 16-year high of 5.25 percent as UK inflation returned to normal levels. UK inflation had soared to above 11 percent in October 2022, the highest level in more than four decades, as the Russia-Ukraine war cut energy and food supplies, sending prices soaring. Companies faced supply constraints also as they struggled to return to the pre-COVID rhythm of working. — AFP



In this arranged photograph a pan is pictured on a gas hob in the kitchen of a property in Guildford, south of London on August 21, 2024. — AFP

Swiss industry gloomy as sales and exports slip

ZURICH: Swiss industry is struggling with falling orders and sales as weaker European demand and a strong franc hit exporters, with two surveys showing companies gloomy about their prospects. Escalating trade tensions, with the possibility of higher export tariffs when US President-elect Donald Trump takes office next year is also raising concerns in Switzerland.

Swissmem, whose members include ABB and Siemens, said sales of Swiss industrial products fell by 4.2 percent in the first nine months of 2024, while exports were 3.6 percent lower. The mood was grim at smaller Swiss manufacturing companies, with a business climate index by another industry association, Swissmechanic, falling to its lowest level since January 2021.

Nearly three quarters of companies see the current business environment as unfavorable, with only 1 percent positive, a third quarter survey by Swissmechanic found. It said capacity use at small Swiss manufacturing companies is now 81 percent, the lowest level since January 2021. Manufacturing is a cornerstone of the Swiss economy, contributing nearly 18 percent of the country's economic output.

"Companies are quite pessimistic at the moment," said Swissmechanic director Juerg Marti, adding that around a third of small Swiss industrial companies have cut jobs and others could follow. "The strong franc is causing them problems, and then there is the downturn in Germany which is also hurting. There are also a lot of geopolitical uncertainties which is making the situation worse," Marti added. Swissmem said that although there was a slight improvement in its figures during the third quarter, this did not point to a recovery as they were compared with weak figures a year earlier. "In the best-case scenario, we can expect a stabilization next year," said Swissmem director Stefan Bruppacher, adding that any trade war between the US, China and the EU would be another drag on the export-driven Swiss tech sector. — Reuters

Rafael hits Cuban agriculture, food becomes scarce

CAIMITO, Cuba: Cuban farmer Leonardo Abreu clambered over fallen banana plants in a field beside his home, taking stock of the wreckage two weeks after Category 3 Hurricane Rafael ripped across Cuba. He lost beans, yuca, mango and avocado trees and an almost unfathomable number of bananas. Fences, too. His power lines are down, his generator broken. He has not had electricity for two weeks. He has no water to irrigate crops.

"We're starting again from scratch," said the 47-year old resident of Caimito, his head in his hands. "Everything has been wiped out." His family's pain will reverberate in Cuba's capital, Havana. Nearly 2 million residents there depend on farms like this one, in neighboring Artemisa province, for food.

Even before the storm, Cubans across the island - including Havana - had seen prices soar, government subsidies dry up and food grow increasingly scarce, the result of the island's worst economic crisis in decades. The hurricane strike underscored the increasing vulnerability of Cuba's already ailing agricultural system - and difficulties many Cubans face finding food.

"If you think things are bad now, wait a month," says Abreu, who has dedicated his life to farming on land he inherited from his grandfather. "We'll be eating the skins off the bananas."

Farmers like Abreu "rescued" as many crops as they could ahead of and immediately after the storm, harvesting not quite ripe fruits and vegetables and rushing them to market. But replacing what was lost is the next big problem, said Jorge Luis Gonzalez, a 60-year-old rancher who followed his cattle through pasture on horseback on Monday. At best, he said, the winter planting season - when such staples as cabbage, lettuce and tomatoes take root - will be delayed.

"We can't plant. There's no water. The pumps work with electricity and without it, we can't do anything," he said. Cuba's government said on Tuesday it had restored electricity to 62% of Artemisa province. The island's farm industry was already in freefall when Rafael hit. Cuba blames US trade and economic sanctions, which the Communist-run government says make it difficult to purchase farm inputs and infrastructure. — Reuters

Turkey asked export group to help ban Zionist trade: Report

ISTANBUL: Turkey's government has asked one of the country's top export associations to help enforce a ban on trade with Zionist entity, slowing the flow of goods in recent weeks, according to three people familiar with the matter. Ankara has faced public criticism that trade may be continuing with Zionist entity given a spike in exports to the Palestinian territories since the ban in May. So it turned to the Central Anatolian Exporters' Association, the sources said. The Trade Ministry has asked the association to require more checks and approvals of proposed shipments, including vetting with Palestinian authorities, they said.

One of the sources, from an export association, said the new system began in mid-October, causing an initial backlog. The "main concern was goods still going to Zionist entity, so there is a procedural change in exports to Palestine", he said. In response to a Reuters query, the Trade Ministry said goods were only

shipped if approved by Palestinian authorities under a bilateral trade mechanism. "The destination is Palestine and the importer is a Palestinian," it said.

The Central Anatolian Exporters' Association did not immediately comment. According to official Turkish Statistical Institute data, Turkey, among the fiercest critics of Zionist entity's war in Gaza, has cut exports there to zero since May, from a monthly average of \$380 million in the first four months of the year. But at the same time exports to Palestinian territories - which must flow through Zionist entity - jumped around 10-fold to a monthly average of \$127 million in June-September, from only \$12 million in the first four months of the year, the data show.

New slower system

The top goods leaving Turkish ports and earmarked for Palestinian territories in recent months are steel, cement, machinery, and chemicals, according to the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TİM). The jump in such exports raised suspicions the trade ban was being circumvented, sparking street protests that questioned one of the main policies President Tayyip Erdogan's government imposed to oppose Zionist entity's war with Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza.

Opposition lawmakers have also sought answers

in parliament. Trade Minister Omer Bolat said this month that, before the ban, some \$2 billion of Turkey's \$6.5 billion annual trade with Zionist entity was goods ultimately purchased by Palestinian buyers. Last week, Bolat told parliament that the Palestinian Economy Ministry vetted all shipments. Turkey's trade ministry told Reuters that Palestinian confirmations then run through an electronic system, after which customs declarations require a separate approval. The Central Anatolian Exporters' Association is an umbrella body for sector-specific export groups. In the past, they all usually quickly approved shipments with little question, the sources said. Under the new instructions from the government, the association is the main approval body, two sources said. It must first confirm receipt of information about the proposed export including the Palestinian authorities' approval, and then approve a separate application for export, they said. The first source said the system was working now, but slower than in the past due to relevant checks.

In the first 10 months of the year, exports to Palestinian territories were up 543% from a year earlier, TIM data show. In the first four months, before the Zionist entity ban was imposed, they were up only 35 percent. — Reuters

VW union proposes \$1.6bn of cuts, but no plant closures

BERLIN/WOLFSBURG: Volkswagen workers offered on Wednesday to back 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) in cost savings if it rules out closing plants in Germany, but warned the automaker would face an historic battle if it pressed ahead with swinging cuts. The proposal comes a day ahead of a third round of crunch talks between workers and management over pay cuts and factory shutdowns in Germany in the fiercest dispute in years at Europe's biggest automaker, which - like other German industrial giants - is reeling from high costs and Chinese competition.

The IG Metall union, arguing the company was trying to push through more than 17 billion euros in cuts, said its offer was also contingent on stakeholders, including Volkswagen's controlling Porsche and Piech families, pitching in. In an internal memo posted to Volkswagen's intranet and reviewed by Reuters, the carmaker's board member for human resources said management welcomed that unions were open to measures tackling labor costs and capacity, but added that factory closures still could not be ruled out.

"Every suggestion which contributes to achieving our goals helps," Gunnar Kilian said. "We will go into a detailed exchange in the negotiations on Thursday to make a financial assessment of the suggestions." Thorsten Groeger, who leads negotiations for the IG Metall union, said that if management insisted on closures - a first for Germany in the group's 87-year history - Volkswagen workers would enter a conflict with the company "the likes of which this republic has not seen for decades". The union's proposal included forgoing bonuses for 2025 and 2026, among other savings.

What the G20 decided on taxing the richest

RIO DE JANEIRO: Anti-poverty campaigners have hailed a decision by G20 leaders meeting in Rio to make sure the world's billionaires "are effectively taxed." Getting the super-rich to cough up more in taxes has been a priority of left-wing Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is hosting the summit of the world's biggest economies.

How much tax do billionaires pay?

Lula, a former metalworker who grew up in poverty, complains that the super-rich pay proportionately much less tax than the working class. A 2021 White House study showed that the wealthiest 400 billionaire families in the US paid an average federal individual tax rate of 8.2 percent, compared to 13 percent for the average taxpayer. According to anti-poverty NGO Oxfam, the richest 1 percent have accumulated \$42 trillion in new wealth over the past decade.

It says the richest one percent have more wealth than the lowest 95 percent combined. Increasing taxes on the wealthiest is also seen as a way to boost state coffers at a time of ballooning budget deficits and as developing countries seek huge amounts of funding to help them weather global warming.

"Tax the rich" has for years been a battle cry of the global left, while a group of US self-described Patriotic Millionaires have themselves called for higher tax bills. In Rio, activists projected giant slides on buildings during the G20 summit marked "Tax the super rich for people and planet." French economist Gabriel Zuc-



A VW Tiguan (top) and an ID.7 electric car inside the car storage tower at the Wolfsburg Volkswagen Plant, the worldwide headquarters of the Volkswagen Group, in Wolfsburg, Germany. — AFP

man, an expert on inequality who authored a report on the issue for Brazil's G20 presidency, estimated that if the planet's 3,000 billionaires paid at least 2 percent of their wealth in income tax each year, governments would rake in an extra \$250 billion in revenue.

Proposals for a minimum global income tax pushed by Brazil, Colombia, France, South Africa, Spain and the African Union have come to naught with the US and Germany among the naysayers.

In a move hailed as marking progress, however, G20 finance ministers in July for the first time agreed to "engage cooperatively to ensure that ultra-high-net-worth individuals are effectively taxed." On Monday, G20 leaders corroborated that decision in a statement with the same wording. Zucman called it a "historic decision." Oxfam Brazil said Lula had "lit a path toward a more just and resilient world."

But it warned that "real change" would only come

were in crises in the 1970s and 1990s," Groeger, the union's chief negotiator, said. "We can see room to take action and make investments to correct the expensive mistakes of the past." Strikes at the majority of the carmaker's German sites are possible from Dec 1. Volkswagen has said deep cuts at its core VW brand are needed to make it fit for the future, including a 10 percent pay cut for workers at the sites.

An internal memo drawn up by Volkswagen's works council, reviewed by Reuters, shows the company spends a higher proportion of sales on labor costs than major rivals. "The problems that we have are not created by the workforce and will not be solved by only looking at labor costs. Yet we are ready to make a contribution with what we have laid out here today," Groeger said. — Reuters

when countries increased taxes enough "to dramatically reduce inequality" and raise trillions of dollars towards fighting poverty and climate change. In 2021, more than 130 countries agreed on a minimum tax for multinational companies, establishing that they should pay at least 15 percent in taxes on their profits.

With US President-elect Donald Trump returning to the White House in January, flanked by the world's richest man, billionaire Elon Musk, in a top role, chances of further progress appear slim in the medium-term. The Forbes magazine billionaires list shows that 16 of the world's 20 richest people are US citizens. Trump has pledged to slash rather than increase taxes.

Argentina's libertarian President Javier Milei, a fan of Trump, on Monday rejected the G20's tax proposals as well as their backing for greater state intervention to fight hunger. He touted "free-market capitalism" as a panacea for poverty. — AFP



General view during the third session of the G20 Leaders' Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on November 19, 2024. — AFP

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024



Marine biologist Anne Hoggett inspecting and recording bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island.



This aerial photo shows tourists snorkeling above bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef, located 270 kilometers (167 miles) north of the city of Cairns. --AFP photos

PARTS OF GREAT BARRIER REEF SUFFER HIGHEST CORAL MORTALITY ON RECORD



This aerial photo shows a coral atoll near Lizard Island.

Parts of the Great Barrier Reef have suffered the highest coral mortality on record, Australian research showed Tuesday, with scientists fearing the rest of it has suffered a similar fate. The Australian Institute of Marine Science said surveys of 12 reefs found up to 72 percent coral mortality, thanks to a summer of mass bleaching, two cyclones, and flooding. In one northern section of the reef, about a third of hard coral had died, the "largest annual decline" in 39 years of government monitoring, the agency said.

Often dubbed the world's largest living structure, the Great Barrier Reef is a 2,300 kilometer (1,400-mile) expanse of tropical corals that house a stunning array of biodiversity. But repeated mass bleaching events have threatened to rob the tourist drawcard of its wonder, turning banks of once-vibrant corals into a sick-

ly shade of white. Bleaching occurs when water temperatures rise and the coral expels microscopic algae, known as zooxanthellae, to survive.

If high temperatures persist, the coral can eventually turn white and die. This year had already been confirmed as the fifth mass bleaching on the reef in the past eight years. But this latest survey also found a rapid growing type of coral -- known as acropora -- had suffered the highest rate of death. This coral is quick to grow, but one of the first to bleach.

'Worst fears'

Lead researcher Mike Emslie told public broadcaster ABC the past summer was "one of the most severe events" across the Great Barrier Reef, with heat stress levels surpassing previous events. "These are serious impacts. These are serious

losses," he said. WWF-Australia's head of oceans Richard Leck said the initial surveys confirmed his "worst fears". "The Great Barrier Reef can bounce back but there are limits to its resilience," he said. "It can't get repeatedly hammered like this. We are fast approaching a tipping point."

Leck added the area surveyed was "relatively small" and feared that when the full report was released next year "similar levels of mortality" would be observed. He said that it reinforced Australia's need to commit to stronger emission reduction targets of at least 90 percent below 2005 levels by 2035 and move away from fossil fuels. The country is one of the world's largest gas and coal exporters and has only recently set targets to become carbon neutral. --AFP



This underwater photo shows fish swimming near bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island.



This underwater photo shows fish swimming near bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island.



Tourists snorkeling above bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island.



This underwater photo shows bleached and dead coral around Lizard Island.



This file photo taken on Oct 6, 2024 shows people visiting the "Dragon Ball Daimatsuri" event, to mark the 40th anniversary of Akira Toriyama's Dragon Ball franchise, at the Tokyo Big Sight in Tokyo. --AFP photos

Japan's manga powerhouse 'Dragon Ball' turns 40

"Dragon Ball" fans on Wednesday celebrated 40 years of the globally beloved Japanese manga, anime and video game franchise, just months after creator Akira Toriyama's unexpected death. The original "Dragon Ball" manga was first serialized on November 20, 1984, featuring a boy named Son Goku who collects magical balls containing dragons to help protect the Earth.

The comic books have since sold more than 260 million copies in Japan and worldwide, according to publisher Shueisha. Toriyama died aged 68 in March because of a blood clot on his brain, sparking an outpouring of grief from fans, including tributes from world leaders.

The first part of the manga series was turned into an anime for TV also called "Dragon Ball" from 1986. Dubbed in different languages, the show captured children's hearts with its madcap battles.

"Dragon Ball Z", an adaptation of the later part of the manga, took the series' popularity to even greater heights.

Films, video games and other spin-offs followed as the franchise grew into a global phenomenon. "Happy birthday to Goku and all his friends. And eternal farewell to Akira Toriyama," anime fan account Catsuka said on its X page, which boasts more than 230,000 followers.

The franchise is particularly popular in Latin America, and several tributes appeared in Spanish on Instagram, includ-



This black and white file photo taken in May 1982 shows Japanese manga artist Akira Toriyama at an unconfirmed location in Japan.

ing from a Mexican newspaper. "It's a seminal work that celebrates victory gained through friendship and hard work. I think the simplicity of the sto-

ry has been an important factor in the series' success," 19-year-old student Tsutomu Tanaka told AFP in Tokyo. The latest anime series in the franchise, "Dragon Ball Daima", began airing last month, and Saudi Arabia has announced it will build the world's first "Dragon Ball" theme park.

"The commercial machine is already there" for "Dragon Ball", said journalist and anime expert Tadashi Sudo. But while the popularity of the franchise is secure in the short-term, "the challenge remains whether it can maintain its creativity without Toriyama". --AFP



This file photo illustration shows books from the popular "Dragon Ball" manga series on a shelf in a store in downtown Tokyo.



This file photo shows visitors trying out the latest Dragon Ball game during the annual Tokyo Game Show at Makuhari Messe in Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture.

Lifestyle



An artwork 'Rule III' by British artist Antony Gormley.



People walk past the artwork 'Resting Place II' by British artist Antony Gormley.



British artist Antony Gormley stands amid his artwork 'Resting Place II'.

SCULPTOR GORMLEY HOPES ART CAN BE BRIDGE TO CHINA DESPITE CURBS

Renowned British sculptor Antony Gormley has told AFP of his concern over the "uglier sides" of China's state control but says artistic engagement with the historic and cultural powerhouse is crucial. The artist most famous for his vast 'Angel of the North' roadside statue in northeast England championed art as a force for fos-



British artist Antony Gormley speaks during an interview with AFP ahead of the opening of his exhibition 'Body Buildings' at Galleria Continua in the Beijing 798 Art Zone in Beijing. — AFP photos

tering cross-societal understanding and said he wants to continue showcasing his work in China. "It's absolutely essential, because art is a bridge between hearts and minds, and people that come from totally different ideological but also geographical places," Gormley said at a factory-turned-gallery in the capital's trendy 798 art district, ahead of a new exhibition opening Thursday.

The 74-year-old, however, expressed dismay at "the uglier sides of

state control", citing the repression of minorities in the northwestern Xinjiang and western Tibet regions. He pointed also to China's "brutal" Covid-19 lockdown policies and a turn towards a "cult of personality" under President Xi Jinping. China's art industry has boomed in recent years, welcoming world-renowned figures like Gormley, but many homegrown artists have faced tighter control from authorities. In August, Chinese police detained artist Gao Zhen, known for his works critiquing the Cultural Revolution, while dissident Ai Weiwei has lived in exile since 2015.

Influenced by China

In a vast warehouse in 798, Gormley's 'Resting Place II' - comprising 132 life-size human figures each made up of 26 to 30 Chinese-made bricks - goes on display alongside five cast iron sculptures and a selection of drawings. Together these pieces form the sculptor's latest exhibition 'Body Buildings' - his 14th in a country he has visited regularly since the mid-1990s. Gormley cited the ancient city of Xi'an, Beijing's hutong alleyways, traditional Chinese medicine and the ancient philosophy text Tao Te Ching among his influences for the collection.

"I was fascinated by the diversity of Chinese culture and its material sophistication in a very early period," he told AFP. 'Resting Place II', Gormley said, is partly a reflection on the individual and collective, and China's rapid economic growth has made it "a very large experimental ground for this relationship". At ground level the stacked bricks appear like scattered buildings,



A woman takes a photo of the artwork 'Buttress' by British artist Antony Gormley.

but from a height they reveal themselves to be a labyrinth of bodies lying in various poses.

"It's much more about this country's transformation from hutong life to high rise, high density, 80-storey towers, and what that means in terms of the social order," Gormley told AFP. In early visits to the south of the country, he said, "what struck me so forcibly... was how much of life was on the street". Urban China has since become a more private, atomized society, and Gormley hopes 'Body Buildings' will allow audiences to reflect on how they exist in their own bodies, in buildings, and in cities. "My work is not activist art that is trying to resist or revolutionize the status quo," he said. "It is simply an attempt to provide a... reflexive evocation of our present situation."



A man takes photos of the artwork 'Resting Place II' by British artist Antony Gormley.

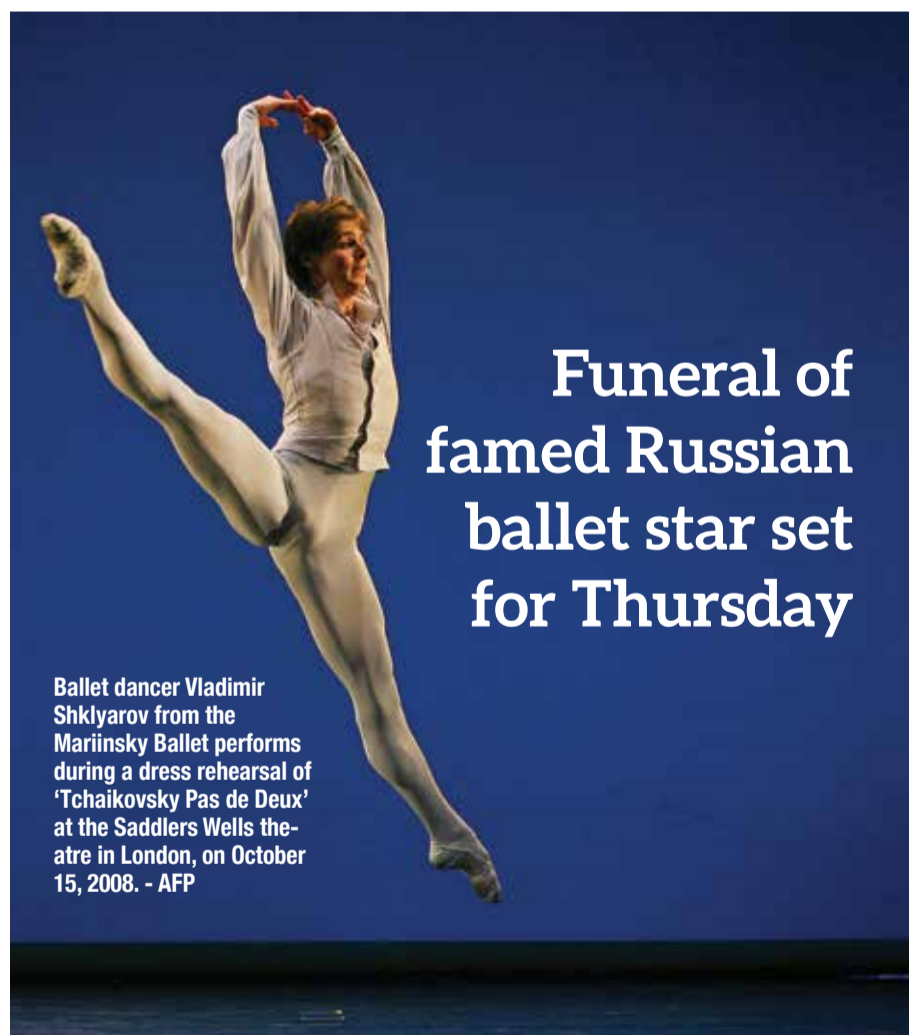
'Democracy is failing'

Activist or not, Gormley is worried about political trends - and not just in authoritarian systems. "We live in a time in which democracy is failing, simply because it can be manipulated by all forms of media," he told AFP. He said the media in the West creates echo chambers, pointing to Donald Trump's recent election victory as evidence: "The Fox News brigade have triumphed by calling everybody else's news 'fake news' and creating their own triumphalist fake news."

Gormley sometimes appeared more optimistic about China's future: "[China] seems to manage to live under this, you could say, lid or absolute ceiling of state control, while actually allowing for a huge range of personal creative freedoms." Among young people and

on Chinese campuses Gormley sees "a wide-ranging, far-reaching interest in other cultures; other ways of being and doing". "We should expect China and India to rise as intellectual... guides for the future development of humanity," he said. Nor is Gormley fatalistic about artificial intelligence.

Though skeptical of AI art, which he said "stinks of artificiality", if AI replaces humans at work "the opportunity for everyone to truly become creative becomes realizable - that's exciting". In an increasingly polarized world, Gormley sees art as more important than ever. "I just absolutely believe that art is a tool of self-determination as well as a tool... for people to think about their condition." "I would trust artists more than politicians these days." — AFP



Funeral of famed Russian ballet star set for Thursday

Ballet dancer Vladimir Shklyarov from the Mariinsky Ballet performs during a dress rehearsal of 'Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux' at the Saddlers Wells theatre in London, on October 15, 2008. - AFP

The funeral of renowned Russian ballet dancer Vladimir Shklyarov, who died at the weekend aged 39, will be held on Thursday, the Mariinsky Theatre has announced. Shklyarov was a star dancer at the Mariinsky, the historic opera and ballet venue in Russia's imperial capital of Saint Petersburg. Citing theatre representatives, Russian media reported that he fell from a fifth-floor balcony on Saturday, when he had been taking painkillers ahead of back surgery that was scheduled for Monday.

"His loss is deeply felt by the entire Mariinsky family and the wider ballet world," the Mariinsky said Monday in a statement, without commenting on the circumstances of his death. Shklyarov had been a principal dancer with the theatre since 2011, "captivating audiences with his expressive artistry and technical brilliance," it said. A memorial service will be held Thursday at the theatre, followed by a church service

and burial in central Saint Petersburg.

Russian investigators have launched a probe into Shklyarov's death, with the RIA Novosti news agency reporting their preliminary assessment is that it was likely to have been an accident. Shklyarov won several prestigious awards for his performances in classic ballets including The Nutcracker, Romeo and Juliet, Sleeping Beauty and Manon, and had regularly toured internationally. Shortly after Russia launched its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine, Shklyarov criticized Russia ordering troops into Ukraine in a now-deleted post on social media. Unlike other performers such as Olga Smirnova, a prima ballerina at Moscow's Bolshoi who left the country in protest, Shklyarov stayed in Russia and continued performing with the Mariinsky under its pro-Kremlin leadership. — AFP

Phone documentary details Afghan women's struggle under Taliban government

A rare inside account of the Taliban authorities' impact on Afghan women hits screens next week with the smartphone-filmed documentary "Bread & Roses." Produced by actress Jennifer Lawrence ("The Hunger Games") and Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, this feature-length film immerses the viewer in the daily struggles endured by half the population of Afghanistan since the withdrawal of US troops paved the way for Taliban leaders to seize power. "When Kabul fell in 2021 all women lost their very basic rights. They lost their rights to be educated, to work," Lawrence told AFP in Los Angeles. "Some of them were doctors and had high degrees, and then their lives were completely changed overnight."

The documentary, which debuted at Cannes in May 2023, was directed by exiled Afghan filmmaker Sahra Mani, who reached out to a dozen women after the fall of Kabul. She tutored them on how to film themselves with their phones — resulting in a moving depiction of the intertwined stories of three Afghan women. We meet Zahra, a dentist whose practice is threatened with closure, suddenly propelled to the head of protests against the Taliban government.

Sharifa, a former civil servant, is stripped of her job and cloistered at home, reduced to hanging laundry on her roof to get a breath of fresh air. And Taranom, an activist in exile in neighboring Pakistan, who watches helplessly as her homeland changes.

Gender apartheid

"The restrictions are getting tighter and tighter right now," Mani told AFP on the film's Los Angeles red carpet. And hardly anyone outside the country seems to care, she said. "The women of Afghanistan didn't receive the support they deserved from the international community." Since their return to power, Taliban officials have established a "gender apartheid" in Afghanistan, according to the United Nations. Women are gradually being erased from public spaces: Taliban authorities have banned post-secondary education for girls and women, restricted employment and blocked access to parks and other public areas.

A recent law even prohibits women from singing or reciting poetry in public. The Taliban authorities follow an austere brand of Islam, whose interpretations of holy texts are disputed by many scholars. "The Taliban claim to represent the culture and religion while they're a very small group of men who do not actually represent the diversity of the country," Yousafzai, an executive producer of the film, told AFP.

"Islam does not prohibit a girl from learning, Islam does not prohibit a woman from working," said the Pakistani activist, whom the Pakistani Taliban tried to assassinate when she was 15. The documentary captures the first year after the fall of Kabul, including moments of bravery when women speak out.

"You closed universities and schools, you might as well kill me!" a protester

shouts at a man threatening her during a demonstration. These gatherings of women — under the slogan "Work, bread, education!" — are methodically crushed by Taliban authorities. Protesters are beaten, some are arrested, others kidnapped. Slowly, the resistance fades, but it doesn't die: some Afghan women are now trying to educate themselves through clandestine courses.

Three years after the Taliban fighters seized power from a hapless and corrupt civilian administration, no countries have officially recognized their new government. In the wake of Donald Trump's re-election to the US presidency, Taliban leaders have made it known that they hope to "open a new chapter" in relations between Kabul and Washington, where a more transactional foreign policy outlook is expected to prevail. For Mani, that rings alarm bells.

Giving up on defending the rights of Afghan women would be a serious mistake — and one the West could come to regret, she said. The less educated Afghan women are, the more vulnerable their sons are to the ideology that birthed the Al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001. "If we are paying the price today, you might pay the price tomorrow," she said. "Bread & Roses" begins streaming on Apple TV+ on November 22. —AFP



(From left to right) Pakistani education activist and producer Malala Yousafzai, US actress Jennifer Lawrence, producer Justine Ciarrocchi and director Sahra Mani attend the Los Angeles premiere of "Bread and Roses" at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. - AFP photos



Pakistani education activist and producer Malala Yousafzai and her husband Asger Malik attend the Los Angeles premiere of "Bread and Roses" at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.



Women of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association use a hive smoker to scare away bees while harvesting honey.

Bees work in a hive managed by the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association at Chilal de La Merced.

Women from the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association walk near the apiary belonging to one of their members after harvesting honey.



How climate funds helped Peru's women beekeepers stay afloat



Apiarist Elba Garcia, member of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association, pumps the beehive smoker before harvesting honey.



Women of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association use a hive smoker to scare away bees while harvesting honey.



Members of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association work at a nursery of plants.

In the mountains of northeast Peru, a group of women beekeepers have plucked millions of the industrious insects from the jaws of death and saved their own livelihoods with the help of UN climate funding.

The women not only rescued the bees' hives from extreme weather events linked to climate change, but built a thriving honey business.

Chilal de la Merced, a village of some 800 souls perched at over 2,600 meters (8,500 feet) in the Andes, in Peru's Cajamarca region, has been battered in recent years by recurring heavy rains, droughts, frosts and hail storms linked to a changing climate and warming oceans.

The weather has played havoc with the bees' ability to forage for nectar and pollen. In early 2022, the rains were so heavy that they didn't venture out of the hive at all, and began to starve.

"When we checked the hives, we found the boxes full of dead bees," Karina Villalobos, the 28-year-old spokeswoman for the Hojuelas de Miel (Honey Flakes) beekeepers association, recalled.

A year earlier, she and 14 other beekeepers had applied for a grant from Avanzar Rural, a program funded by the Peruvian government and the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to help small-scale food producers in rural areas vulnerable to climate change.

It almost didn't work -- climate change doesn't wait for grant money, and even when funds arrive, projects take time to implement.

Months after they secured \$27,000 in climate funding -- a topic at the center of discussions at the COP29 climate conference in Baku -- they were staring ruin in the face. "We asked ourselves, what are we going to do? If we don't take action, the bees will disappear, the project will collapse and our organization will fail," Villalobos said.

Syrup and lilies

Around the world, bee populations are seen as a bellwether of healthy

ecosystems but experts warn they are increasingly vulnerable to climate change as well as pesticide use and habitat loss. Hojuelas de Miel decided to try to adapt to the changing weather cycles, which were disrupting flowering seasons -- hampering the ability of the bees to collect nectar and pollen.

the bees' habitat.

Uplifting rural communities

Less than two percent of all international climate finance goes to rural communities, small-scale farmers and Indigenous populations, Juan Diego Ruiz, IFAD's chief for the Andean re-

benefit of 17,557 people. IFAD contributed \$24 million, with the Peruvian state, which identifies projects in remote areas to support, adding another \$45 million.

Chilal de la Merced's beekeepers had to come up with 10 percent of the cost of their business plan -- \$3,800 --



This combination of pictures shows apiarists of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association at Chilal de La Merced, in the rural region of Cajamarca in northeastern Peru.—AFP photos

To compensate for the bees' depleted food resources, the women fed them with a syrupy mix of sugar and vitamins. But they also planned for the future.

Using the grant, they surrounded the hives in native plants and flowers, including arum lilies and coffee plants, that are more resistant to drought and rain. When the plants grew, they transplanted them into the forest to expand

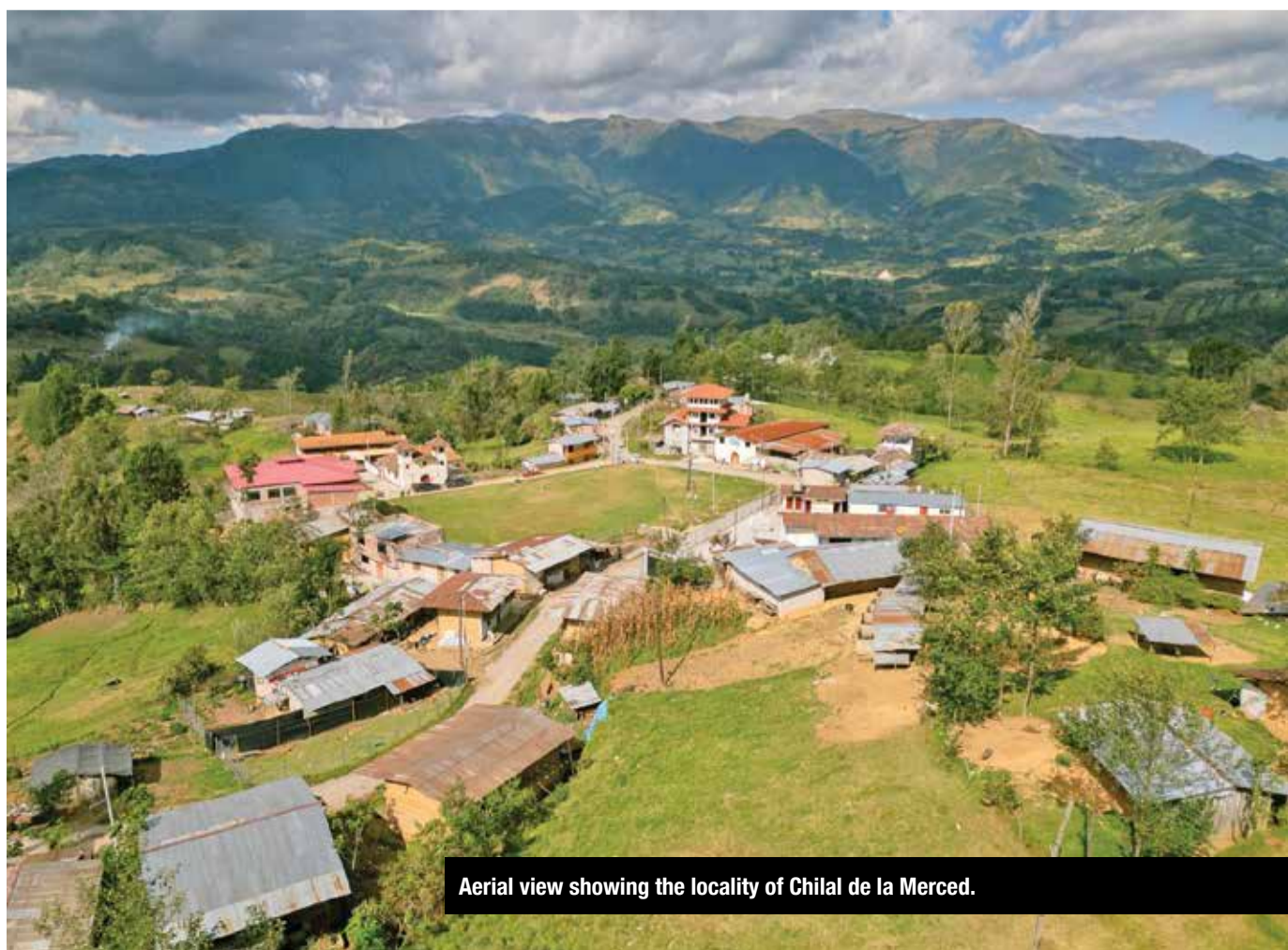
region and the Southern Cone, told AFP.

In Peru, women particularly struggle to secure funding for their businesses. "Because the owner of the land is the man, so how can we get a loan?" Villalobos explained.

Yet, women like her are "on the frontline of the impact of climate change," Ruiz argued. Avanzar Rural has funded 1,031 small businesses in Peru in the last four years, to the

before receiving a first tranche of aid, which they used to buy equipment and hire technical, financial and environmental advisors.

The association now operates 89 beehives and makes about \$13,000 a year. "Today we are empowered and resilient women," Villalobos said proudly.—AFP



Aerial view showing the locality of Chilal de la Merced.



A woman in a country fair buys honey produced by members of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association.



Women of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association use a hive smoker to scare away bees while harvesting honey.



Members of the "Hojuelas de Miel" beekeepers association from Chilal de la Merced, pose with a copy of the cheque they received from the Peruvian state after applying for support to finance their commercial enterprise.

Sports

Hurting India under pressure in blockbuster 5-Test Aussie series

Embarrassing defeat marked by repeated batting collapses

PERTH: India head into a hotly anticipated five-Test showdown against Australia starting in Perth on Friday wounded by their first home series loss in 12 years and with a point to prove. But questions also surround the hosts, who have been casting around trying to find a successor to fill the considerable shoes of retired opener David Warner. India's embarrassing 3-0 defeat to New Zealand last month was marked by repeated batting collapses, with mainstays Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma a shadow of their former selves.

With ageing spin king Ravichandran Ashwin and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja also under pressure, the series against Pat Cummins' men is a chance to prove the doubters wrong - or will add fuel to claims this India side is past its sell-by date. Australian legend Ricky Ponting stirred the pot last week by questioning whether Kohli and Rohit should still be selected after both averaged just 15 against New Zealand.

That prompted a biting response from India coach Gautam Gambhir, who staunchly defended them and asked: "What does Ponting have to do with

Indian cricket? "More importantly, I have got no concerns whatsoever for Virat and Rohit," he added, calling them "incredibly tough men". "I feel there's a lot of hunger, especially after what has happened in the last series."

Former India coach Ravi Shastri also jumped to the defense of Kohli, who has managed just one half-century across his last five Test matches. "Well, the king is back in his territory," he said, referring to the 36-year-old's exceptional record in Australia, where he has scored six centuries and averages 54.08. It appears Rohit is likely to miss the opening Test at Perth Stadium following the birth of his second child, with Jasprit Bumrah assuming the captaincy.

KL Rahul or Abhimanyu Easwaran are in line to open alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, while number three Shubman Gill is also a major doubt after reportedly fracturing his thumb. The visitors are without injured pace bowler Mohammed Shami, with Bumrah leading an attack expected to feature two others from Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Prasidh Krishna, Harshit Rana or Nitesh Reddy. Aside from the fate

of some senior players, the series could decide the finalists of the World Test Championship. The hosts need to win five of their remaining seven Tests this cycle to be assured of a place in the June decider at Lord's. India must win the series at least 4-0.

'A big one'

While India are under the gun they have a proud record in Australia, winning the last two Test series to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Such is the rivalry that the series has been boosted to five Tests for the first time since the 1991-92 summer, putting it on a par with the Ashes in duration. After Perth, they move to Adelaide for a day-nighter, before heading to the Gabba at Brisbane, then Melbourne and Sydney. "We've lost the (last) two series against them (in Australia), so this is a big one," Australia skipper Cummins said. "We feel like our team's in a really good place, so we've got no reason why we shouldn't perform really well."

Australia, who have not played a Test since their 2-0 series win in New Zealand in February, have their

own issues with star all-rounder Cameron Green out for the series after undergoing back surgery. Mitchell Marsh will fill the void as the fourth pace option alongside Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, with Australian groundsmen traditionally preparing lively pitches. Spinner Nathan Lyon will again be their foil, looking to add to his 530 wickets in his 130th Test. The biggest headache for the hosts has been finding a replacement for Warner as Usman Khawaja's opening partner.

While Steve Smith initially stepped into the role, he will revert to his usual number four, behind Marcus Labuschagne. After a "bat-off" in two recent Australia A games, uncapped South Australia captain Nathan McCusker got the nod despite only ever opening once before at first-class level. Chief selector George Bailey is confident the 25-year-old can handle the scrutiny and the Indian attack. "I don't think it's a huge adjustment to go from three to opening," said Bailey. "He's a very organized, composed player at the crease and think he's got a game that will really suit Test cricket." — AFP

News in Brief

Vieira named Gerona coach

ROME: Former France and Arsenal midfielder Patrick Vieira was named on Wednesday as the new coach of relegation-threatened Serie A club Genoa. "Genoa CFC announces that Patrick Vieira has been entrusted with the technical management of the first team," the club said in a statement. "The new coach will direct the first training session this afternoon after the formalization of the contract at the Villa Rostan headquarters." The 48-year-old replaces Alberto Gilardino who was sacked on Tuesday with the club 17th in the table, just one point clear of the relegation zone. Vieira, a 1998 World Cup winner with France, spent the bulk of his playing career with Arsenal driving them to three Premier League titles and two Doubles. He later went on to play for Juventus and Inter Milan, where he won four Serie A titles, before closing his on-field career with Manchester City. — AFP

MLB managers of the year

LOS ANGELES: Rookie Cleveland Guardians skipper Stephen Vogt and Pat Murphy of the Milwaukee Brewers won Major League Baseball's manager of the year awards on Tuesday. Vogt won the American League's Manager of the Year award after a successful first season which saw Cleveland make a deep run in the playoffs. The 40-year-old's successful run came in his first season as a manager following his appointment by Cleveland in November last year. Under Vogt, the Guardians won the AL Central Division with a 92-69 win-loss record. They were eventually eliminated from the postseason by the New York Yankees in the American League Championship Series. Vogt was the overwhelming first choice pick by voters for the award, which is decided by a ballot of the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA). The Cleveland skipper won 27 first choice votes, beating out the Kansas City Royals' Matt Quatraro (2 votes) and the Detroit Tigers A.J. Hinch (1). — AFP

Inter Miami coach quits

MIAMI: Inter Miami coach Gerardo Martino is leaving the MLS club for "personal reasons" a club source told AFP on Tuesday. The former Barcelona and Argentina coach led the team to the top of the regular season standings this season before a shock exit to Atlanta United in the first round of the playoffs. Martino, widely known as "Tata", joined Inter Miami last June as part of the transformation of the club that took place with the arrival of his compatriot Lionel Messi. Inter Miami won the Leagues Cup, a joint tournament between MLS and Mexican Liga MX clubs, in his first season in charge. This year Inter Miami dominated the regular season, winning the Supporters' Shield for the team with the best overall record - an achievement which led FIFA to hand them a place in next year's Club World Cup. But Miami lost out to Martino's former club Atlanta in a best-of-three opening round to the MLS Cup playoffs in what was a major upset. — AFP

Werder Bremen leave X

BERLIN: German club Werder Bremen have joined fellow Bundesliga side St Pauli in leaving social media site X, formerly known as Twitter, citing an "incredible" increase in "hate speech" under owner Elon Musk. Bremen, four-time German champions, announced the decision late on Monday after meeting, saying American billionaire Musk - who bought Twitter in 2022 before rebranding it as X - had turned it into "a political weapon." "Since Elon Musk took over the platform, hate speech, hatred against minorities, right-wing extremism and conspiracy theories have increased at an incredible pace under the guise of freedom of expression," the club said in a statement. Bremen said the platform's "radicalization" was "being driven by Elon Musk himself" and adding "a red line has been crossed". — AFP

Burgan Bank sponsors women handball and volleyball teams

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced sponsoring the women's handball and volleyball teams at Salwa Al-Sabah Sport Club during the fall/winter season: its latest effort to support the growth and development of Kuwait's sports sector and the advancement of its athletic talents. This comes as part of Burgan Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program and steadfast commitment to incorporating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations into its operations and activities. It also reflects the Bank's dedication to empowering Kuwaiti women to excel in their fields of interest and to represent the nation in the different regional and international arenas.



Kholoud Rida AlFeelii

"We are delighted to collaborate with an esteemed sporting club such as Salwa Al-Sabah and to extend our support to its outstanding women's handball and volleyball teams following their great achievements both regionally and internationally," commented Kholoud Rida AlFeelii, Deputy General Manager - Corporate Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank. "This sponsorship is a testament to our firm belief in the great value sports



Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kholoud Rida AlFeelii and Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah take a group photo with the women's team at Salwa Al-Sabah Sport Club.

add to our youths' mental, physical, and emotional development as well as our dedication to empowering aspiring female talents across various fields, especially sports."

"On behalf of the Club and the women's handball and volleyball teams, I would like to thank Burgan Bank for their steadfast support for Kuwait's athletic talents who continue to raise our flag high at the most respected tournaments and championships worldwide," Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors at Salwa Al-Sabah Sport Club, said.

"At Salwa Al-Sabah Sport Club, athletic achievements aren't only measured by performance and medals won, but more importantly, by the character

Tatum stars as Celtics end Cavs unbeaten start

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum scored 33 points as the Boston Celtics ended the Cleveland Cavaliers' 15-game unbeaten start to the season with a hard-fought 120-117 victory in the NBA Cup on Tuesday. The Celtics unleashed a barrage of 22 three-pointers to overwhelm Cleveland, who clawed their way back to within two points of the lead late in the game after trailing by 21 early in the second half. Despite the Cleveland fightback reigning NBA champions Boston held their nerve and kept the scoreboard ticking over to close out a deserved win.

Tatum's 33 points included six three-pointers while the Boston star added 12 rebounds and seven assists in an all-round Celtics effort that saw six players finish in double figures. Tatum said Boston's championship pedigree had helped the Celtics over the line as Cleveland threatened late in the game. "We've played a lot of basketball, we've played in the biggest games," Tatum said. "NBA is a bunch of talented teams - guys are gonna make plays, they're gonna make shots. I say it all the time - how you respond



BOSTON: Evan Mobley #4 of the Cleveland Cavaliers is blocked as he shoots against Al Horford #42 of the Boston Celtics during the third quarter of the Emirates NBA Cup on November 19, 2024. — AFP

shows your growth and how special your team is."

Tatum admitted that ending Cleveland's unbeaten record, which has left them sitting on top of the Eastern Conference, had motivated the Celtics. "They came in 15-0 feeling like they were the best team. We felt like we were the best team - it's all competition. We were ready to play today," Tatum said. Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said his team had been caught off-guard by Boston's superior intensity. "They had playoff force and physicality, we had regular-season force and physicality," Atkinson said. "That's

why we were down by whatever we were down. Second half we turned it up, but it was kind of too late. "We're just going to have to put it in the bank and make adjustments."

Tatum drained a superb three-pointer in the final seconds of the first half to give Boston a commanding 65-48 lead at the break. The Celtics stretched into a 21-point lead early in the second half, but the Cavaliers clicked into gear and came roaring back to close the gap to two points at 88-86. Tatum though had the last word, nailing an imperious three-pointer to give Boston a five-point lead heading into the final

quarter. A nip-and-tuck final period saw Cleveland repeatedly close to two points but Boston pulled clear in the final minutes to seal victory. Donovan Mitchell led Cleveland's scoring with 35 points while Evan Mobley added 22 with 11 rebounds and six assists.

Westbrook bags 200th triple

In other games, Russell Westbrook became the first player in NBA history to amass 200 career triple-doubles, finishing with 12 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists as a depleted Denver Nuggets overpowered the Memphis Grizzlies 122-110. In Dallas, Luka Doncic finished with 26 points as the Mavericks crushed the New Orleans Pelicans 132-91. The San Antonio Spurs shrugged off the absence of French star Victor Wembanyama to record an impressive 110-104 defeat of the Oklahoma City Thunder. The Los Angeles Lakers extended their recent unbeaten streak to six games with a 124-118 win over the Utah Jazz.

Rookie Dalton Knecht was the star for the Lakers, scoring 37 points from 12-of-16 shooting while LeBron James and Anthony Davis each scored 26 points. In New York, the Brooklyn Nets defeated the Charlotte Hornets 116-115 after a 34-point display from Cameron Johnson. The NBA Cup was introduced last season as a way of providing a knockout competition in the early months of the league season. — AFP

Mexico join Canada in Nations League Final Four

MIAMI: Mexico left it late but overturned a 2-0 first-leg deficit with a 4-0 win over Honduras on Tuesday to reach the Final Four of the CONCACAF Nations League. 'El Tri' will face Canada in March's semi-finals in Los Angeles after Jesse Marsch's team took care of business with a 3-0 (aggregate 4-0) win over Suriname. The other semi will see the United States, who eliminated Jamaica on Monday, face Panama, who knocked out Costa Rica.

Mexico struggled to find a way to break down a determined Honduras in the first half with Edson Alvarez missing a good opportunity when he side-footed wide from a central position in the box. But three minutes before the break, Raul Jimenez found the target, slotting home a low cross from Jesus Orozco. It was all Mexico

in the second half and the home side finally drew level on aggregate when Fulham forward Jimenez flicked on a corner which was turned in by the arriving Henry Martin.

Jorge Sanchez then failed to convert a simple tap-in at the back post but within moments he had made amends with the crucial third goal when he chested down Alexis Vargas' lofted pass and blasted past Edrick Menjivar. Javier Aguirre's side made sure of the victory in stoppage time when Kervin Arriaga brought down Martin, who rose to fire in the penalty.

Jacob Shaffelburg scored twice as Canada booked their place in the quarter-finals with a convincing 3-0 win over Suriname in Toronto on Tuesday. Leading 1-0 from the first leg, Jonathan David eased any nerves when he opened the scoring in the 23rd minute, turning home after a goalmouth scramble from a corner. Shaffelburg doubled the lead at BMO Field when he raced on to a long ball and when Suriname keeper Etienne Vaessen charged out of his area but missed the ball, the winger simply had to pass into an empty net. Shaffelburg rounded off the win arriving at the back post in perfect time to convert a low cross from Cyle Larin. — AFP



TOLUCA: Mexico's forward #09 Raul Jimenez, forward #10 Alexis Vega and Honduras' defender #14 Andy Najjar fight for the ball during the National League of Concacaf quarterfinal second leg match between Mexico and Honduras on November 19, 2024. — AFP

Sports

Zionist airstrike leaves Lebanese female footballer Haidar in coma

'They killed her dream' • The latest athlete to become casualty of airstrikes

BEIRUT: Lebanese footballer Celine Haidar was about to make her dream of playing for the national women's team come true, but debris from a Zionist airstrike left the 19-year-old in a medically induced coma. After full-blown war erupted in September, Haidar's family were among more than a million people who fled south Beirut and other Hezbollah strongholds, as Zionist bombs rained down. "But Celine had to come back to (south) Beirut for her studies and training," her father Abbas Haidar told AFP. "She would leave the house after evacuation calls were issued or bombing intensified, then she'd come back home at night to sleep," he said.

Now, she is the latest athlete to become a casualty of airstrikes, which already forced the Lebanese Football Association to postpone all domestic football competitions indefinitely. On Saturday, her father called her to warn of new evacuation orders published by the military online and she left the house. But soon after, "my wife called to tell me Celine was in the hospital," he said. She had been seriously wounded in a Zionist airstrike on her home neighborhood of Shiyah, as the air force pummeled Beirut's southern suburbs.

Cracked skull

Footage of Haidar lying unconscious on the ground, her face covered in blood, while a young man beside her cried in pain took Lebanese social media by storm. "The strike was close and she was hit in the head," her mother Sanaa Shahrour told AFP. "My daughter has a brain haemorrhage, her skull is cracked."

She said her daughter had sent her a message asking her to prepare her favorite dish, but "an hour later her friend called to say she had been wounded". "My daughter is a heroine," she said, her eyes red with tears. "She's strong. She will get back up and play again," she said. "She dreamt of competing abroad. She said she wanted to be like (Cristiano) Ronaldo and (Lionel) Messi... She wanted to be a star and for everyone to talk about her. "Now everyone is talking about her because she was wounded in a war that she has nothing to do with," she said. "She has beautiful dreams," she said, but "they killed her dream."

'A fighter' on the pitch

Haidar was a pillar of her club, Beirut Football Academy (BFA), which won the Lebanese Women's Football League last season without dropping a single point, and was due to don the captain's armband this season. The midfielder was also part of the national women's Under-18 team that won the 2022 West Asian Football Federation championship. Now she is in a medically induced coma, team manager Ziad Saade said. "The doctors are following her very closely," her father told AFP from the Saint George Hospital in Beirut where his daughter is being treated. "But her injuries are serious, we hope she will gradually heal," he said with tears in his eyes.

"We're paying the price for something that's not our fault," Lebanese authorities say more than 3,544 people have been killed since Hezbollah began trading fire with Zionists in October last year,



BEIRUT: An undated handout photo obtained from the Lebanese Football Association (LFA) shows Lebanese footballer Celine Haidar running with the ball during a football match in Lebanon. Haidar was about to make her dream of playing on Lebanon's national women soccer team come true, but debris from a Zionist airstrike wounded the 19-year-old, forcing her into a medically-induced coma. — AFP

with most deaths recorded since Zionists stepped up their campaign in September. "On the pitch, she's a fighter, she was the link between defense

and attack," coach Samer Barbary said, as he and teammates visited her at the hospital. "She is an exceptional girl and an excellent player." — AFP



Kuwait held to 1-1 draw by Jordan in WCup qualifiers

KUWAIT: Kuwait's team were held a 1-1 draw with Jordan on Tuesday in the Group B of Asian qualifiers for the FIFA 2026 World Cup. Jordan's Yazan Al-Naimat scored in the 21st minute, while Kuwait's Mohammad Dahham equalized in the 68th minute. Kuwaiti team attempted several times to score in the rivals' net, but the match ended 1-1, placing Kuwait in the fifth position with four points. South Korea tops the group with 14 points followed by Iraq, 11, Jordan, nine, Oman, six, and Palestine came sixth with three points. Kuwaitis will play against Iraq and Oman next March. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Argentina beat Peru; Uruguay hold Brazil

MONTEVIDEO: A magnificent volley from Lautaro Martinez was enough to give world champions Argentina a 1-0 win over Peru while Brazil were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Uruguay in South American World Cup qualifying on Tuesday. Argentina remain on top of the CONMEBOL standings with their qualification for the 2026 tournament surely just a matter of time.

It was far from a vintage performance from Lionel Scaloni's team, but a moment of magic from Inter Milan's Martinez proved decisive at the 'Bombonera' stadium in Buenos Aires. Lionel Messi floated in a cross from the left and Martinez leapt into the air, leaning back as he cracked a thundering left-footed volley past Pedro Gallese. Argentina's eighth win from 12 games leaves them on 25 points at the top of the table, five points ahead of Uruguay who earned a valuable point at Brazil.

Five-times World Cup winners Brazil labored for long stretches of the game in Salvador and fell behind to a fine finish from Uruguay's Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde in the 55th minute. But seven minutes later Brazil equalized when a headed clearance fell kindly to Gerson who smashed home a perfectly-struck volley. Gabriel Martinelli went close to a winner when he showed a deft touch to switch feet before a volley which brought a fine save out of Sergio Rochet. The draw leaves Brazil in fifth on 18 points, a point behind fourth-placed Colombia who suffered an upset 1-0 home defeat to Ecuador in Barranquilla.

Paraguay held, Chile win

Veteran striker Enner Valencia stunned the home crowd with an outstanding solo effort in the seventh minute, the former West Ham United forward breaking away from three Colombian defenders and powering into the box before slotting home. Colombia forward Jhon Cordoba then missed a golden opportunity to level the score, stumbling off balance and missing from point blank range after being set up by James Rodriguez. Cordoba was central to the 34th

minute incident that left Ecuador short-handed for the rest of the game.

The gangly striker raced clear and rounded Ecuador keeper Hernan Galindez before going down as Piero Hincapie closed in on him. The referee ruled that Hincapie had tripped the forward and despite lengthy appeals and a VAR review the decision stood. Galindez was then alert to keep out the resulting free-kick from Rodriguez and the keeper then had a busy end to the half as Colombia peppered his goal. Liverpool winger Luis Diaz headed a Daniel Munoz cross against the post and Galindez did well to smother Cordoba at close range.

Colombia grew increasingly frustrated as Ecuador's defense held firm in the second half with Galindez parrying to keep out substitute Jhon Duran and the unfortunate Cordoba blasted the loose ball high and wide from a tight angle. Elsewhere Tuesday, Paraguay earned a 2-2 draw at Bolivia with the home side going ahead in the 15th minute with a confident strike from Ervin Vaca. Newcastle United forward Miguel Almiron leveled for Paraguay in the 71st minute with a clinical finish after a smart passing move across the box. — AFP

Germany, Netherlands draw as Nations League group stage ends

PARIS: Germany rounded off their Nations League group stage campaign with a 1-1 draw in Hungary after a Dominik Szoboszlai penalty in the 99th minute rescued a point for the hosts, while Netherlands were held to the same scoreline by Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was little to play for in Group A3 going into the final day. The Germans had already wrapped up top spot. The Dutch were secure in second and Hungary sat four points ahead of the already-relegated Bosnia. "With a win, we would've gone into the break with a nicer feeling but we can still be very satisfied about what we achieved in 2024 and can kick things off again in March," said German midfielder Robert Andrich.

In Group B4, a 4-1 victory for Wales against Iceland ensured automatic promotion to the top division at the expense of Turkey, who went down 3-1 in Montenegro. Czech Republic booked top spot in Group B1 with a 2-1 win over Georgia. Ukraine leapfrogged the Georgians into second place by downing Albania. In Budapest, Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann rang the changes with his team having confirmed top spot last week with a 7-0 thumping of Bosnia.

Felix Nmecha broke a goalless stalemate when he prodded home from inside the six-yard box with 14 minutes remaining. Germany seemed set to close out their fifth win in six outings until the seventh minute of injury time. VAR decided that Robin Koch had committed a handball in the box and Hungarian captain Szoboszlai stepped up two minutes later to dink home from 12 yards. "It's been a real rollercoaster of a year, but I believe that with this match we can go into 2025 in good spirits," said Szoboszlai.

Netherlands finished five points behind their historic rivals as they were held to a draw in Zenica. Brian Brobbey headed in the opener for Ronald Koeman's side midway through the first period but despite dominating the rest of the half the Dutch were unable to double their lead. The Oranje were made to pay in the 67th minute when Hamburg-born Bosnian attacker Ermedin Demirovic adjusted his body magnificently to nod a rebound over goalkeeper Mark Flekken. "I'm not satisfied with a point. I think we had to win," said Koeman.

Wales bounced back from an early Andri Gudjohnsen goal in Cardiff to put four past Iceland and jump to first place in their group. "It's something we set out to do," Wales' Liam Cullen told Sgorio. "We knew we couldn't control what was going on in the Turkey game, but we really wanted to put our stamp on this game and win convincingly, so really happy that we've done that." Cullen scored a double to put the hosts in front by half-time, before Brennan Johnson and Harry Wilson put the seal on the match inside the final half-hour. Wales needed victory to have any chance of obtaining automatic promotion to League A, but they needed Montenegro's upset of Turkey to claim that spot with a one-point buffer. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
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, Juned Ahmed, holder of Indian Passport No. X8047449, 2/88, Main Bazar, Kalikiri, Annamayya, Pin 517234 (Andhra Pradesh), residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Juned Ahmed to Juned Ahmed (given name) and Kamuluri (surname).
#6197 20/11/2024

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, Mohammed Askar Nellikanam, holder of Indian Passport No. M6103774 having permanent address, Nellikanam House, Cherani, Karuvambram PO, Malappuram

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

'Eternal' Nadal leaves legacy

MALAGA: Rafael Nadal said early Wednesday he had left a sporting and personal 'legacy' after retiring from professional tennis, as tributes flooded in for the 22-time Grand Slam winner. The 38-year-old's glittering and historic career came to a close as Netherlands defeated Spain in the Davis Cup and Nadal gave an emotional speech that ran over 10 minutes long to more than 10,000 fans in Malaga. After 23 years in the game and many struggles with injury, Nadal retires as the second-most successful men's singles player of all time.

"I leave with the peace of mind that I have left a legacy, which I really feel is not just a sporting one but a personal one," Nadal said at his retirement ceremony. "I understand that the love I have received, if it was just for what happened on the court, would not be the same." Nadal said he hoped people would remember him for more than just his record-breaking achievements on the court, including 14 French Open titles and a record 81-match unbeaten streak on the red dirt which made him the 'King of Clay'.
The Spaniard never smashed a racquet on court during his career and was adored for his positive attitude. "The titles, the numbers are there, so people probably know that, but the way that I would like to be remembered more is like a good person, from a small village in Mallorca," continued Nadal. "I just want to be remembered as a good person, a kid that followed their dreams and achieved (even) more than what I had dreamed."

Nadal was celebrated with a video montage on the many screens around the Martin Carpena arena in Malaga featuring many tennis greats. Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Serena Williams among others left messages in the video, alongside former football stars including David Beckham, Raul and Andres Iniesta, who retired from playing in October.

"Your tenacity, your fighting spirit, the energy that you brought, the power, is something that will be studied and transferred to many generations coming up," said Djokovic, who has the record of 24 Grand Slam men's singles titles and is the last of the 'big three' still playing. "Congratulations on the most incredible career, it was such a privilege to play with you but also against you," said Federer, Nadal's greatest rival, who retired in 2022 with 20 Grand Slams.

'Eternal'

Nadal's last match was a 6-4, 6-4 defeat by Boti van de Zandschulp in the first singles rubber of Tuesday's Davis Cup quarter-final, and although Carlos Alcaraz forced a doubles decider Spain were eventually defeated to bring the curtain down on his career. "I'm not tired of playing tennis, it's just that my body has reached a moment where it doesn't want to play any more, so I have to accept the situation," said Nadal.

The Spaniard willed up during the Spanish national anthem at the start of the match and admitted it was "an emotional day". World number three Alcaraz, 21, is

one of the game's brightest talents and a player some hope can become Nadal's heir. "His legacy is going to be eternal," Alcaraz told reporters. "He has been great for tennis, for the sport in general, it is difficult - at least for me - to feel that I should continue the legacy that he has left.

"It is difficult, almost impossible, I will just try to do my best, right now it's time to say great things about Rafa..." "It is just great to have had Rafa in tennis, in Spain and in my life." Spain's Davis Cup captain David Ferrer also paid tribute to Nadal. "There are people who will be remembered for their achievements in life, others until the end of their

days, and others eternally," said Ferrer. "You will be remembered eternally." Nadal thanked fans in Spain in his speech but also around the rest of the world where he found many admirers. In Paris, where he won a record 14 French Open titles and earned the nickname the 'King of Clay', his image was projected onto the night sky in front of the Eiffel Tower. "I am crying as we speak... Rafael Nadal... What an absolute icon of sport period! There will never be another one like Rafa!" wrote former world number one Boris Becker on social media platform X. — AFP

Nadal v Djokovic: The most contested rivalry

PARIS: Rafael Nadal's rivalry with Roger Federer will forever be remembered for a series of classic clashes, but his head-to-head record against Novak Djokovic featured more matches and was more closely fought. A record-breaking 60 meetings saw Djokovic come out on top 31 times, although Nadal won 11 of 18 Grand Slam matches. In the Open era, no men met more often on the ATP Tour, with Djokovic and Federer having played 50 times.

"My greatest rival is Novak Djokovic," Nadal told Globo Esporte in a 2022 interview. Djokovic has reigned supreme on hard courts for much of his career, winning a record 10 Australian Opens and four US Open titles. He led Nadal 20-7 on the surface, although Nadal held a 20-9 edge on clay, on which he powered to 14 French Open crowns. The pair only played four times on grass courts, with two victories apiece. "I respect Rafa, probably more than any other player in the world - he is the biggest rival I had in my life," Djokovic said in 2021.

Teenage Djokovic

Nadal first faced a teenage Djokovic in the 2006 French Open quarter-finals, easing to victory as the Serb retired injured after losing the first two sets. He won 14 of their first 18 matches, before Djokovic reeled off three straight victories on hard courts in 2009. Their first major final meeting came the following year at the US Open, when Nadal won in four sets to complete the career Grand Slam.

The early 2010s confirmed their rivalry as a battle for the ages, with several marathon matches on the biggest stages. Djokovic fought back from 4-2 down in a deciding set to win the longest ever Grand Slam final at the 2012 Australian Open, lasting five hours and 53 minutes. Nadal continued to live up to his billing as the 'King of Clay', defeating Djokovic later that year at Roland Garros in a final played over two days due to rain.

Probably their greatest clash on the red dirt came 12 months later, when Nadal kept Djokovic waiting

for the career Slam with a memorable French Open semi-final triumph, prevailing 9-7 in a fifth set. The duo had also faced off in the 2011 Wimbledon showpiece, which Djokovic took in four sets to win the title for the first time. Their only other Wimbledon clash came seven years later, but was another classic. Nadal was denied a first final at the All England Club since 2011 as Djokovic won 10-8 in a fifth set before seeing off Kevin Anderson to win the trophy.

The Spaniard maintained his dominance on clay, taking his French Open record against Djokovic to 8-2 with a dramatic quarter-final victory in 2022. Despite that, Djokovic enjoyed the limelight of being responsible for two of only the four defeats Nadal suffered at the French Open - in the 2015 quarter-finals and semi-finals in 2021. The Serb then made it three wins over his rival in the French capital when he defeated Nadal at the 2024 Olympics on his way to the gold medal. — AFP

A fine bromance: Nadal's epic rivalry with Federer

PARIS: Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer's rivalry started in the sweltering heat of Miami and ended almost two decades later in tears and hand-holding in an emotional London farewell. In between, the great friends met 40 times, battling out epics on European clay, London grass and hard courts from the United States to Australia. "What a career, Rafa! I always hoped this day would never come," said 20-time Grand Slam winner Federer in a post on social media after news of Nadal's retirement broke. "Thank you for the unforgettable memories and all your incredible achievements in the game we love. It's been an absolute honor!"

Nadal edged their head-to-head count 24-16, coming out 6-3 on top in Grand Slam finals including his stunning Wimbledon triumph in 2008, widely regarded as one of the greatest finals at the majors. However, the statistics only scratch the surface. "When Roger leaves the tour, an important part of my life is leaving too," admitted

a tearful Nadal as he played Laver Cup doubles alongside 41-year-old Federer in the Swiss star's final appearance in September 2022.

The two clasped hands as Federer hobbled into retirement. "Very proud to be part of his career but even for me happier to finish our career as friends after everything we shared on court as rivals," said Nadal. When Nadal equalled Federer's haul of 20 Grand Slam titles by lifting his 13th French Open in 2020, the Swiss described it as the "greatest achievement in sport".

Federer never begrudged Nadal moving past him to 22 majors. "I can call up Rafa and talk about anything," said Federer at his emotional farewell in London. "We enjoy each other's company. We have a million topics to cover. I always feel like any evening we ever spent together we never have enough time." Twenty years ago, it was another time, another place. The only thing they had in common then was respect. When they met for the first time in March 2004 at Miami, Nadal was

just 17 and ranked at 34.

Federer was the world number one and had already captured the Australian Open and Indian Wells titles that year. However, a fearless Nadal swept to a 6-3, 6-3 victory in 70 minutes. "I was very worried about him beating me 6-1, 6-1 or 6-1, 6-2, but I really wanted to play this match against the world number one," said Nadal. Nadal fretted if his friends back home could follow the match "on Teletext" while Federer correctly predicted more meetings to come. "I was impressed with what I saw," said Federer.

Wimbledon epic

The pair met at least once every year from 2004 until 2015 while Federer would go on to claim seven of their last eight clashes. Fittingly, they split their last meetings in 2019 - Nadal breezing to a semi-final triumph at the French Open with Federer coming out on top in the last four at Wimbledon just weeks later. Epics were guaranteed. Federer avenged his 2004 Miami loss to Nadal 12 months later, winning the final in five sets from two sets down. Nadal had to dig deep to protect his 'king of clay' reputation in 2006, also needing five sets to defeat the Swiss in the Rome final. Federer struggled to chip away at Nadal's mastery of clay, winning just two of 16 meetings.

At the Swiss star's second home of Wimbledon, he defeated Nadal in the 2006 and 2007 finals before the Spaniard claimed one of his greatest victories 12 months later. In almost total darkness after a final interrupted by rain, Nadal won his fifth Grand Slam title and first outside of the French Open. He missed two championship points in the fourth set but steadied to triumph 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-7 (8/10), 9-7 after four hours and 48 minutes. "For me, it was the most emotional match I ever played in, probably the best," said Nadal.

They would meet again in three more Slam finals - Nadal taking his first Australian Open title in a five-setter in 2009 and the 2011 French Open before Federer claimed the 2017 Australian Open in another marathon. Federer's win in Melbourne came after he had spent six months sidelined by injury the previous year. "Tennis is a tough sport," said Federer who was 35 at the time and had gone 10 years without a victory over Nadal at the Slams. "There are no draws. If there were, I would have been happy to accept one and share it with Rafa." — AFP



Spain's tennis player Rafael Nadal



MALAGA: Spain's Rafael Nadal waves during a tribute to his career at the end of the quarter-final doubles match between Netherlands and Spain during the Davis Cup Finals on November 19, 2024. — AFP photos