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Mohsen Qomi, candidate for the Assembly of Experts casts his ballot at a polling station in Iran's capital Tehran during elections to select members of parliament and a key clerical body on Friday

Iran conservatives secure bulk of seats in elections — media

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian conservatives secured the bulk of seats in elections for a key clerical body and the national legislature, local media reported on Sunday, estimating a record low turnout.

Authorities were still counting ballots two days after Friday's vote for members of parliament and for the Assembly of Experts, which selects the Islamic republic's supreme leader.

The vote was the first since protests broke out

over the September 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, 22, an Iranian Kurd who had been arrested for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women.

The election, in which a vetting process barred many hopefuls from running, took place with Iran suffering a severe economic crisis deepened by international sanctions.

The official IRNA news agency put the turnout at around "41 per cent" among 61 million eligible voters. No official figure

had yet been announced.

The reformist daily Shargh predicted the next parliament would be "in the hands of radical conservatives" who "took advantage of the opportunity created by the low participation".

Etemad, another reformist newspaper, reported that turnout was lower in Iran's bigger cities than its smaller ones, and that there was a significant number of "blank votes".

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'Who will call me mother?': Gazan woman mourns twin babies killed in strike

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — As men searched for survivors beneath a Gaza home pummeled by an air strike, Rania Abu Anza gazed down on Sunday at two children who did not survive: Her infant twins.

The Palestinian woman said she had gone through multiple rounds of fertility treatment to achieve her dream of becoming a mother, only to have it taken away by the carnage in the Gaza Strip.

"Who will call me mother from now on? Who will call me mother?" she said through tears on Sunday as she clutched her lifeless babies, the face of one still spattered with blood.

The health ministry in Gaza said Wissam and Naeem, not yet six months old, were among 14 people killed in the overnight strike in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which it blamed on Israel.

All of the dead were members of the Abu Anza family.

They joined the 30,410 fatalities, most of them women and children, reported by the ministry



Rania Abu Anza (centre) the mother of twin babies Naeem and Wissam, killed in an overnight Israeli air strike, mourns their death ahead of their burial in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday

since Israel launched military operations to eliminate Hamas last October.

The campaign came in response to the Palestinian group's unprecedented October 7

attack on southern Israel that resulted in the deaths of around 1,160 people, according to an AFP tally of official figures.

The Israeli military did not immediately re-

spond to AFP's request for comment on the Rafah strike.

'All of them children'

While Rania Abu Anza waited to bury her son

and daughter, back at the rubble of the family home men shouted the names of those they hoped had survived: "Yasser! Ahmed! Sajjar!"

Continued on page 5

Italian warship downs drone in Red Sea

ROME (AFP) — An Italian navy destroyer shot down a drone that was approaching it in the Red Sea, where Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels are attacking shipping, the defence ministry said.

"In accordance with the principle of legitimate defence, the ship Duilio shot down a drone in the Red Sea" on Saturday, the ministry said in a statement.

"The drone, bearing similar features to those already used in previous attacks, was located six kilometres from the Italian ship and was flying towards it," it added.

The Houthis say they are attacking Israeli-linked shipping in solidarity with war-torn Gaza, where Israel is battling Hamas in a war that has roiled the region since erupting on October 7.

The unrest has forced several companies to reroute shipments in the commercially vital waterway, driving up delivery times and costs.

Key Israel ally the United States has led reprisal strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen in a bid to quash the attacks, creating an international force to protect shipping.

Italy has pledged to take command of a separate EU naval force in the Red Sea, but parliament must first approve the move and the formal procedures have advanced slowly.



Commuters drive along a road as dark clouds are photo over the skies of Islamabad on Saturday

More than 30 killed in heavy rain in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AFP) — More than 30 people have died in rain-related incidents in Pakistan during days of heavy downpours, with thousands of schools closed, officials said on Sunday.

Widespread heavy rain since Thursday has caused severe disruption in some areas of the country, including the closure of all schools in Balochistan province until Thursday.

Eighteen children were among 26 killed in north-western Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa province as a result of collapsed buildings.

"As a result of continuous rainfall over the past four days in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a total of 27 individuals have lost their lives," said Taimur Ali Khan, the spokesperson for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Another person was killed in a landslide and more than 150 houses were also damaged.

In southern Balochistan province, five

people were killed when buildings collapsed on Thursday and Friday, said Jahanzain Khan, head of the disaster management agency.

Damaged roads, floods and landslides have cut villages off from main towns in Balochistan, while major roads were blocked in Gilgit-Baltistan, local media reported.

Pakistan's Meteorological Department anticipates further rainfall and snowfall across the region on Sunday.

CONFLICT

Zelensky vows Ukrainian victory as death toll in Odesa strike hits 10

KYIV, Ukraine (AFP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday called for the world to help Kyiv defeat "Russian evil" as the death toll from a Russian drone strike on Odesa rose to 10, including three young children.

A Russian drone hit an apartment block in the southern port city early on Saturday morning, partially destroying several floors and leaving more than a dozen under the rubble.

"So far, 10 people have died, including three children," Zelensky said on Sunday in a post on Telegram.

Local officials said they expect the toll to rise as there are still people unaccounted for.

Zelensky on Saturday had pleaded with Kyiv's Western allies to supply more air defence systems as Russia continues to pound his country with drones, missiles and artillery fire in the war's third year.



Rescuers clear debris from a multi-story building heavily damaged following a drone strike, in Odesa on Sunday

Ukraine is currently on the back foot with Russia having made recent frontline battlefield gains.

Ukraine's interior ministry separately reported one death and three people wounded in the southern Kherson

region. Zelensky said the attack showed the importance of supporting Ukraine.

"We must win this war," he said on Sunday. "Every Russian loss at the front is our country's response to Russian terror. The world must respond to every manifestation of Russian evil and repel Russia's actions."

Bodies huddled together

There was no comment on the strike in Moscow, which denies targeting civilians despite excessive evidence of Russian strikes on residential areas and the United Nations having verified at least 10,000 civilian deaths since Russia invaded in February 2022. Ukraine's emergency services said they had found the bodies of families huddled together as they sifted through the rubble on Sunday.

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ANNIVERSARY

Turkish Cypriot leader rules out any talks without equal status

ANTALYA, Turkey (AFP) — Turkish Cypriots will not sit at any negotiating table unless their sovereignty and equal status is recognised, the leader of the breakaway self-declared state in northern Cyprus told AFP on Sunday.

This year marks the 50th anniversary since an Athens-backed coup aimed at uniting Cyprus with Greece triggered a Turkish invasion that divided the island in 1974.

Only Ankara recog-

nises the statehood of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which was proclaimed by Turkish Cypriot leaders in 1983.

Efforts to reunify the island have been at a standstill since the last round of United Nations-backed talks collapsed in 2017.

"We are saying, after all these years, and all these fatal negotiations which proved nothing, we are only able to resume or to restart negotiations if our sover-

eign equality and equal international status is reaffirmed or acknowledged," TRNC leader Ersin Tatar said on the margins of an annual diplomacy gathering in Turkey's Mediterranean resort of Antalya.

"Otherwise, we are not going to sit at the negotiating table again, because there is no point," he added.

For Tatar, European Union member the Republic of Cyprus has walked away from negotiations after the col-

lapse of every reunification attempt.

"Because in the past there have been many attempts where we sat again at the table, and at the end of the day the table collapsed — they walked out as the Republic of Cyprus and we just stayed as a community with no gain whatsoever," he said.

"And every time we sit [at talks] we lose something. That's how we feel," he said.

"So unless we get our sovereignty right,

the acknowledgement of our sovereignty, we are not going to get involved in any negotiations."

Tatar on Sunday also ruled out any prospect of reunification for the divided island.

"There is no hope for reunification. We are talking about a two-state solution. This is our new policy after many many years of unfortunately fruitless negotiations," he said.

Continued on page 5

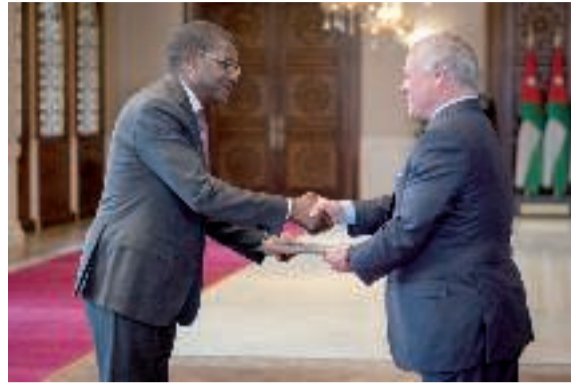


Members of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) from the British army's 71 Engineer Regiment patrol along the buffer zone in Nicosia on February 24

King accepts credentials of new ambassadors



Ambassador Fouad Akhrif of Morocco



Ambassador Chrispen Toga Mavodza of Zimbabwe



Ambassador Dino Seidi of Guinea Bissau



Ambassador Urujeni Bakuramusta of Rwanda

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday accepted the credentials of newly appointed ambassadors to Jordan, during a ceremony at Basman Palace. His Majesty accepted the credentials of ambassadors Fouad Akhrif of Morocco, Irene Riga of Greece, Archil Dzuliasvili of Georgia and Urujeni Bakuramusta of Rwanda, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King also accepted the credentials of non-resident ambassadors Dino Seidi of Guinea Bissau, Chrispen Toga Mavodza of Zimbabwe and Luis Mariano Fernández Rodríguez of Cuba. Royal Hashemite Court Chief Yousef Issawi, and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs and acting Foreign Minister Ibrahim Jazi attended the ceremony.



Ambassador Archil Dzuliasvili of Georgia



Ambassador Irene Riga of Greece



Ambassador Luis Mariano Fernández Rodríguez of Cuba



The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has signed an agreement under the sixth phase of the Deir Alla and Karameh water networks rehabilitation project in Balqa for the drilling of 16 wells in Abu Zyghan area

Ministry signs agreement for water rehabilitation project in Balqa

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has signed an agreement under the sixth phase of the Deir Alla and Karameh water networks rehabilitation project in Balqa for the drilling of 16 wells in Abu Zyghan area. The value of the agreement stands at 97.24 million euros, funded through a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and self-finance, while the funding for the studies, design and supervision aspects was secured via a grant from the USAID, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported on Sunday. Aimed at improving

the water supply across 17 areas in Deir Alla and Karameh districts, this scheme is structured around seven distinct packages. Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abul Saud referred to the ministry's dedication to expediting the deployment of these new networks to deal with the increasing pressures of demand. Through the adoption of natural flow pumping techniques, the project seeks to extend the operational longevity of water networks, enhance service efficiency and promote equitable water distribution. Abu Saud reaffirmed

the ministry's commitment to addressing the challenges posed by surging water demand across the Kingdom. The drilling of the 16 wells in Abu Zyghan, at a cost of \$13.550 million, includes an exploratory well designed to bolster water availability in Deir Alla and Karama. Expressing gratitude for the international support received, the minister referred to the role of the European Union, particularly the EIB and USAID, in facilitating the financial funds necessary to implement projects to face challenges of the water sector in light of increasing demand.

Senate president meets ambassadors over bilateral ties

AMMAN (JT) — Senate president, Faisal Fayeze, on Sunday held separate meetings with several ambassadors over ways to enhance ties between the Kingdom and their respective countries at various levels.

Fayeze held separate meetings with Kuwaiti Ambassador Hamad Rashid Marri, Tunisian Ambassador Mufida Zaribi, Turkish Ambassador Erdem Ozan, French Ambassador Alexis Le Cour and Brazilian Ambassador Marcio Fagundes do Nascimento, the Jordan News Agency, Petra,



Senate president, Faisal Fayeze, on Sunday held discussions with several ambassadors to enhance ties between the Kingdom and their respective countries at various levels



reported. Discussions also went over the latest regional developments, particularly those pertaining to the Palestin-

ian situation. They also called for Arab and global endeavours to halt Israeli aggression in Gaza and the West Bank, ensure continu-

ous relief aid to Gaza, and achieve a political resolution that ends the Israeli occupation. The ambassadors expressed pride in the

"advanced" bilateral relations between their countries and the Kingdom, while expressing keenness to further develop them.

Ramadan official working hours set from 10am-3pm

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh on Sunday set the official working hours during the holy month of Ramadan to extend from 10am to 3pm. The official working hours shall be adhered to in all ministries, offi-

cial departments, institutions, public entities, universities, municipalities, joint services councils, the Greater Amman Municipality and government-owned companies, as of the first day of Ramadan. The decision excludes the employees whose

nature of work requires otherwise, leaving their working hours to be arranged by their department heads, according to a Prime Ministry statement. Khasawneh stressed the need to preserve the sanctity of the holy month, and to be con-

siderate of those who are fasting. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour announced that Khasawneh's announcement specifying working hours during Ramadan, does not include the private sector, the Jordan News

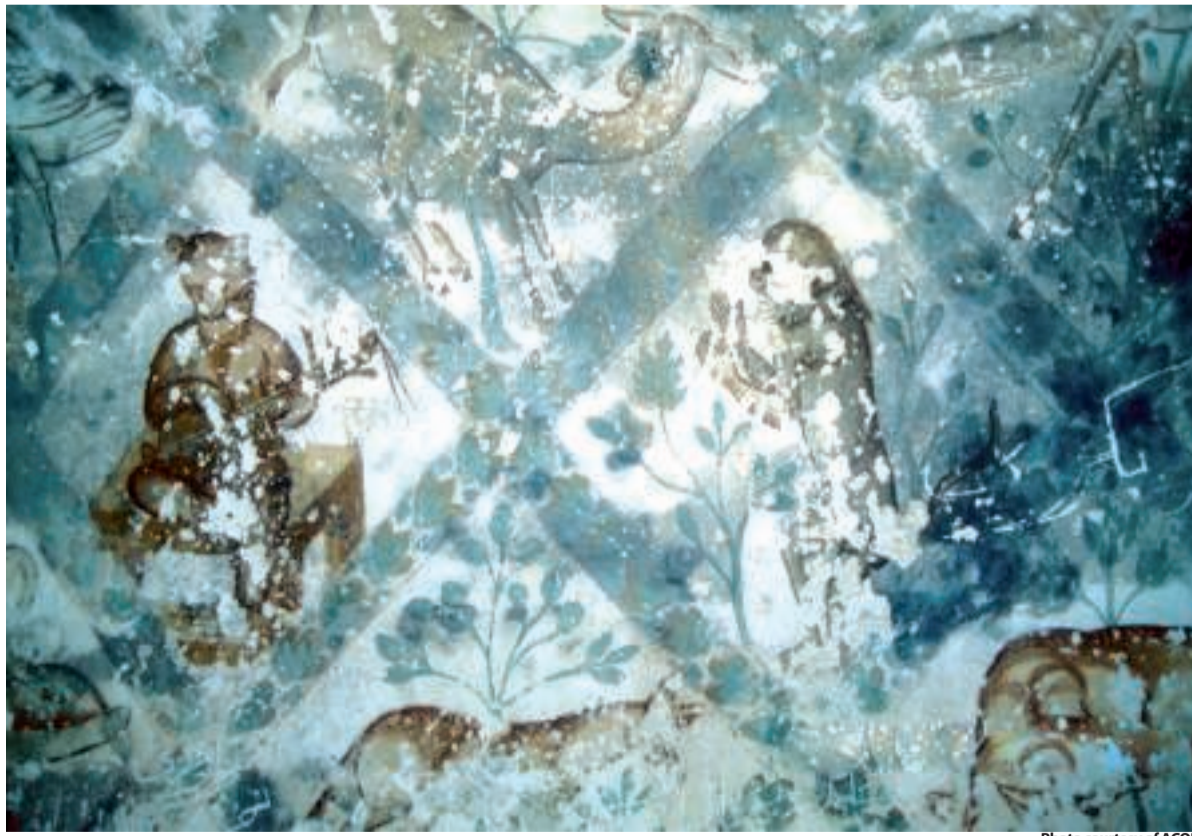
Agency, Petra, reported. The ministry indicated that the hours of workers in the private sector during the holy month of Ramadan are determined by the private sector itself, according to the internal system of each institution.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Umayyad desert castles: Delving into Qusayr Amra's carvings

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Qusayr Amra is one of the so-called "desert castles" of the Umayyad period, situated in Wadi Al Butm, around 80km east of Amman. It was a royal retreat and the various structures included a reception room or hunting lodge and a bathhouse. A complex hunting cycle and different craftsmen were depicted on frescos and after the Abbasid shifted the centre of their realm towards Baghdad in Iraq, Qusayr Amra fell into decline. The walls and ceilings are thickly marked with soot from fires and the wall paintings are defaced by the impact of various projectiles, noted an Australian scholar, highlighting that the walls up to head height and more are covered with graffiti. "Most of this comprises written texts, largely names, but on a recent visit, it was noticed that in a corner of the main chamber, a few animals had also been carved, said Alison Betts from The



A fresco depicting a gazelle sniffing and a bear playing a lute in Qusayr Amra

University of Sydney, adding that these overcut the fresco and thus date to sometime between the early Islamic period and the recent past. Three types of animals can be identified, all apparently quadr-

ped, three examples of which are clearly shown with horns, Betts said, noting that these latter examples are long in the body, with huge back-sweeping horns which extend over the rump. "Horned animals na-

tive to Arabia include the Oryx, with long, straight horns, the ibex with backward curving horns and the gazelle with shorter horns. The Arabian Oryx is known to have existed wild in the Arabian Peninsula up until at least the

late nineteenth century," Betts said, adding that the ibex and the gazelle still exist in the wild in very low numbers. The second type of carving is a smaller animal with either short horns or upright ears

and a thin body. This may be either a goat or a gazelle or possibly a dog. Two examples have short tails curving back over the rump.

'This cartoon style is likely to have a long history and it may well have been used in prehistoric times as well...'

The third type, of which there is only one example, is much more schematised, and it is hard to distinguish any particular features apart from stick-like protuberances above and below the "body", possibly indicating horns and legs, Betts

continued, adding that it may not be the representation of an animal. There is a tendency to assume that, unless directly associated with text, carvings of wild animals are likely to be prehistoric in date, Betts said, adding that the ibex/Oryx figure is very distinctive and the carvings are in the form of cartoons, which identify the key characteristics of the animal without any attempt at serious realism. "This cartoon style is likely to have a long history and it may well have been used in prehistoric times as well as in the Islamic and later periods, while hunting as a sport and means of dietary supplement continued in Arabia up until the mid-twentieth century, essentially until there was nothing left to hunt," Betts underlined, noting that in a field where both absolute and relative dating are virtually absent, the 'Amra carvings at least serve as a note of caution to show that such carvings do not belong exclusively in the prehistoric periods.

Jordanian-Turkish Brotherly Committee enhances bilateral ties

AMMAN (JT) — Members of the Senate's Jordanian-Turkish Brotherly Committee, headed by Senator Yasin Husban, and Turkish Ambassador Erdem Ozan on Sunday went over ties between the two countries in various fields. Husban stressed the importance of benefiting from the Turkish experience in political parties, where the Turkish parliament consists of 14 parties that are represented by 500 members, especially that the Kingdom aspires to activate the role of parties in the upcoming parliamentary elections, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. He also referred to the two countries' similar positions regarding the war on Gaza, commending the Turkish stance that supports the Hashemite custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. Ozan said that his country has dispatched six ships of aid to Rafah.



Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh on Sunday receives a delegation from the US Senate

US Senate delegation commends Kingdom's approach to regional challenges, reform system

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh on Sunday received a delegation from the US Senate, with both sides reaffirming the "strategic" bilateral relations.

During a meeting at the Prime Ministry, Khasawneh voiced appreciation for the US support for Jordan's development efforts, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

Khasawneh cited the support and assistance provided by the US under the Fourth Memorandum of Understanding on the Strategic Partnership between the two countries, emphasising its role in advancing the process of development and economic reform within the framework of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision and the public sector modernisation roadmap.

Khasawneh hailed the

US Congress, including both the Senate and the House of Representatives, for their positive role in supporting the Kingdom's development efforts. He also outlined the comprehensive modernisation project currently underway in Jordan, spanning political, economic and administrative fields.

The Economic Modernisation Vision aims to accelerate economic growth to approximately 5.5 per cent and generate one million job opportunities for Jordanians over the next decade.

Khasawneh also noted that in 2022 alone, 89,500 job opportunities were created, with 72 per cent of these in the private sector, marking a significant increase compared with the annual creation of about 50,000 job opportunities over the past decade.

Khasawneh also briefed the delegation on King Abdullah's efforts to halt Israeli aggression against Gaza, achieve an immediate cessation of hostilities, and deliver urgent humanitarian and medical aid to the people of Gaza. He also mentioned the air-drops of aid conducted by Jordan in Gaza, both independently and in cooperation with other countries, including the US.

The Prime Minister also said that regional security and stability can only be guaranteed through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, comprising the West Bank and Gaza Strip along the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with a two-state solution, adding that the absence of this solution could fuel violence and extremism in the region and the world.

Khasawneh also un-

derscored the importance of supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), given its crucial role in providing essential services to the people of Gaza and in its areas of operation in the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Members of the delegation commended Jordan's approach to addressing regional challenges and commended the content of King Abdullah's recent speech during his visit to the US, particularly regarding the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. They also emphasised the importance of Jordan's reform system in all fields.

The delegation included Senator Cory Booker of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Michael Bennet of the Senate Committee, and several advisors.

Jordan, GCC countries discuss cooperation, war on Gaza

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Sunday attended the 6th joint ministerial meeting, held in Riyadh, between Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance cooperation and end the aggression on Gaza, in addition to various regional and international issues of mutual interest, as reported by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Safadi expressed his gratitude to the GCC countries for their ongoing support of Jordan. He emphasised the importance of the meeting in strengthening the historical strategic relations between the Kingdom and the GCC countries, particularly in the face of the current challenges confronting the Arab nation and the region, including the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

He also said that there is a need to explore ways for boosting cooperation in various fields, especially considering the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza and the urgent need to provide adequate humanitarian aid to over 2.3 million Palestinians facing famine.

Safadi pointed out that the Palestinian cause is a central issue for all and called for col-



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Sunday attends the 6th joint ministerial meeting, held in Riyadh, between Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries

lective efforts to end the aggression and achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, adding that regional stability cannot be achieved unless Palestinians obtain all their legitimate rights.

The foreign minister also urged the international community to halt the aggression against Gaza, end the illegal measures carried out by Israel in the occupied West Bank, and stop the prevention of worshippers from practising their religious rituals, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the Qatari Deputy Prime Minister

and Foreign Minister, who chaired the joint ministerial meeting, expressed hopes for fruitful outcomes in the relations between the GCC countries and Jordan through their joint action plan.

Al Thani pointed out the heavy burden the Arab region has borne with escalating crises since the Gaza war, affecting neighbouring countries and causing an unprecedented security escalation in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. This has complicated the overall political landscape of the region and threatened its security and stability, he added.

He also said that Jordan has a leading role

in seeking a solution to the Palestinian issue, based on its Arab and Islamic obligations and its custodianship over Jerusalem and its holy sites.

Secretary General of GCC Jassem Mohamed Al Budaiw underscored the importance of the initiative launched by Saudi Arabia in partnership with Jordan, Egypt, the Arab League, and the European Union in September 2023, to revive the peace process and establish an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and international legitimacy resolutions.

COORDINATION

Palestinian ambassador to UK hails Jordan's efforts to end Israeli aggression on Gaza

AMMAN (JT) — Palestinian Ambassador to the UK Husam Zomlot has praised Jordan's efforts, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza and provide aid to its inhabitants who are enduring a "brutal" campaign of annihilation and massacres, witnessed by the entire world.

During an interactive meeting organised by the Orthodox Cultural and Educational Association in cooperation with the American University Alumni Club in Cairo, Zomlot said that the situation in Gaza amounts to a genocide aimed at eradicating all



Palestinian Ambassador to the UK Husam Zomlot hails Jordan's efforts, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, to halt the Israeli aggression on Gaza and provide aid to its beleaguered inhabitants

aspects of life and rendering it uninhabitable, even post-war.

He also said the systematic destruction of infrastructure through

air strikes and bombings, which has led to the forced displacement of 2 million Palestinians from their homes in Gaza, is evidence of this.

He also cited Israel's intentional targeting of educational infrastructure, including the demolition of 12 universities and 375 schools, thereby depriving Palestinians of their right to education, in addition to the destruction extending to roads and places of worship.

The ambassador also stressed Israel's longstanding attempts to depict itself as a victim entitled to "self-defence", adding that the reality in Gaza has un-

veiled the truth, exposing the occupying state and its allies, debunking claims of respect for human rights and freedoms and revealing the complicit role of global media.

Gaza has demonstrated its legitimate right to resist the occupation, he added.

Zomlot also called for an immediate end to violence and a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in line with international law and United Nations resolutions, leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the 1967 borders.

Senate passes MPs' amendments to Elections, Right to Access Information laws

AMMAN (JT) — The Senate on Sunday passed a Lower House's proposed amendment to the Elections Law under which at least three lists must win in districts with three contested seats, and two lists in districts with one seat.

Under the amendments, the Independent Electoral Commission has to reduce the 7 per cent threshold by one per cent should the required number of lists is not met, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Upper House also passed the 2023 amendments to the Right to Access Information Law and the Social Development Law as referred from MPs.

Meanwhile, the Senate rejected the Lower House's amendments to



The Senate on Sunday returns the amended draft of the 2019 civil retirement law to the Lower House

the Civil Retirement Law and referred them back to MPs for reconsideration.

Back in 2020, the 18th Lower House rejected amendments to the law, especially those provision on senior government officials' pensions under concerns of potential financial burden on the state treasury.

The Senate insists on applying the law to employees in senior positions, individuals receiving the salary of a working minister along with related allowances and privileges, presidents, full-time members of councils or authorities and CEOs of public institutions.

Man sentenced to 20 years in prison for attempted murder

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a May 2022 Criminal Court ruling, sentencing a man to 20 years in prison after convicting him of attempting to murder a man in the Jordan Valley in June 2021.

The Criminal Court declared the defendant guilty of attempted murder, stemming from "an old feud" with the victim, on June 4. The defendant was given the maximum sentence.

Court papers said the defendant had an old feud with the victim's family and headed to their house to "discuss the matter".

"The defendant was armed with a handgun when he headed to the victim's home," court documents said.

The minute he saw the victim, the court maintained, the defendant drew his gun and fired several rounds striking

the victim in the leg. "The victim ran towards a container and hid behind it," according to court documents.

The defendant guilty of attempted murder, stemming from 'an old feud' with the victim...

The defendant kept firing his gun until he ran out of bullets and then escaped from the area, the court maintained.

The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital and received the proper

medical intervention, the court papers added.

The defendant contested his ruling via his lawyer arguing that his client's charge should be changed to a misdemeanour since the injury was not fatal.

In addition, the lawyer argued that his client fired several rounds and "he could have murdered the victim if he wanted but instead fired at his leg".

"Investigators found five spent shells at the shooting scene, which means that my client fired several rounds and could have shot the victim in the head or chest if he wanted to".

The higher court ruled that the Criminal Court proceedings were accurate and that the defendant was given the appropriate punishment.

The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Mahmoud Ebtoush, Majid Azab, Hayel Amr, Mohammad Shreiri, and Ibrahim Abu Shamma.

FASTING

Kingdom's food industry increases production for Ramadan

By Maria Weldali

AMMAN — The Kingdom's food industry has increased its production volume in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan, according to a stakeholder.

"Local food establishments attach due attention to ensure the flow of food supplies in the local market at consistent levels with stable prices," said Jordan Chamber of Industry board member and representative of the food industry sector, Mohammad Walid Jitan. He affirmed the sector's keenness to meet the increased demand, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.

Staple food products and Ramadan necessities are available and no disruptions were detected in supply chains given the sufficient stock, he said to The Jordan Times. Fur-



The Kingdom's food industry has increased its production volume in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan, according to a stakeholder

ther, he stated that the Kingdom has a productive food industry that produces food to high standards.

"The local food industry covers over 60 per cent of the overall

market size." According to Jitan, who recalled the importance of fully implementing food security programmes that come within the Economic Modernisation Vision.

Moreover, he mentioned the government's efforts geared towards supplying all products to the local market, in addition to reinforcing its monitoring instruments.

Among the main governmental efforts is Trade Ministry's enforcement of price ceilings on basic commodities to prevent their prices from rising above a certain level, particularly during periods of high demand.

Government's efforts geared towards supplying all products to the local market...

According to Jitan, the sector's production volume exceeds JD4 billion, while the number of operating establishments within the sector is 25,000 which employs over 65,000 people of whom the majority are Jordanians.

Shehbaz Sharif voted in as Pakistan's prime minister for second time

ISLAMABAD (AFP)—Shehbaz Sharif was voted in on Sunday as Pakistan's prime minister for a second time, presiding over a shaky alliance that has shut out followers of jailed opposition leader Imran Khan.

Newly sworn-in lawmakers in Pakistan's national assembly elected Sharif by 201 votes, three weeks after national elections marred by widespread allegations of rigging.

"Shehbaz Sharif has been declared to have been elected as prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," said newly appointed speaker of the national assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

Omar Ayub Khan stood against Sharif as the candidate of choice for MPs loyal to Khan, gaining 92 votes.

The Sharif family's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Party allied with their historic rivals the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), as well as several smaller factions, to keep Khan's candidates out.

In return, the PPP — a dynastic party ruled by the family of slain ex-premier Benazir Bhutto — has been promised the office of president for Bhutto's widow, Asif Ali Zardari.

Ex-prime minister Khan was jailed in the run-up to the February 8 polls and barred from contesting, while his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Party was targeted by a crackdown of arrests and



This handout photograph taken and released on Sunday by the Pakistan national assembly, shows Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and leader of the Pakistan Muslim League Party greeting his younger brother and newly-elected Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Parliament House in Islamabad

editorial.

PTI candidates were forced to run as independents, but nonetheless secured more seats than any other party.

They fell short, however, of the figures needed to form a government, paving the way for Sharif's return.

Sharif, 72, first served as prime minister in 2022 at the head of a strikingly similar alliance which ousted ex-cricketer star Khan.

Much like during his first tenure, Sharif will face an overlapping trio of

crises plaguing the nation of more than 240 million.

Pakistan came to the brink of economic default during his first term, before a last-minute International Monetary Fund deal saved the day.

Inflation remains sky-high and Sharif will be the face of unpopular belt-tightening measures likely demanded by the international lender for a new deal needed in the coming months.

Security has also deteriorated, with Islamabad blaming a spike in attacks on the Taliban group's re-

turn to power in neighbouring Afghanistan in 2021.

Analysts warn of a legitimacy crisis, with PTI claiming they were robbed of a majority by rigging on polling day when mobile internet was shut down and results were massively delayed.

Pakistan's powerful military establishment has loomed large over the election, throwing its weight behind PML-N and targeting the charismatic Khan and his followers with a crackdown. While PML-N has found

itself back at the helm in Islamabad, the fact it has had to broker a broad alliance to rule has badly bruised its reputation.

Shehbaz's brother and three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been tipped to lead when PML-N expected a better showing from the elections.

But Shehbaz — considered the more pragmatic mediator, a softer personality, and the military's favourite — stepped into the role after the result was not what they hoped for.

VIOLENCE

'170 people executed' in attacks on Burkina villages —prosecutor

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Around 170 people were "executed" in attacks on three villages in northern Burkina Faso a week ago, a regional prosecutor said on Sunday as violence flares in the junta-ruled country.

On that same day, February 25, separate attacks on a mosque in eastern Burkina and a Catholic church in the north left dozens more dead.

Aly Benjamin Coulibaly said he had received reports of the attacks on the villages of Komsilga, Nodin and Soroe in Yatenga province on February 25, with a provisional toll of "around 170 people executed".

The attacks left others wounded and caused material damage, the prosecutor for the northern town of Ouahigouya added in a statement, without apportioning blame to any group.

He said his office ordered an investigation and appealed to the public for information.

Survivors of the attacks told AFP that dozens of women and young children were among the victims.

Local security sources said the attacks were separate from deadly incidents that happened on the same day at a mosque in the rural community of Natiaboani and a church in the village of Essakane.

Authorities have yet to release an official

death toll for those attacks but a senior church official said at the time that at least 15 civilians were killed in that attack.

Burkina Faso has been grappling with a jihadist insurgency waged by rebels affiliated with Al Qaeda and the Daesh group that spilled over from neighbouring Mali in 2015.

In response, the army and members of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland, a civilian force that supports the military, launched operations that were able "to neutralise several hundred terrorists", according to security sources.

At the beginning of the week, Security Minister Mahamadou Sana described the wave of attacks as "co-ordinated".

"This change in the enemy's tactical approach is because terrorist bases have been destroyed as well as training camps and actions were carried out to dry up the enemy's source of financing, as well as its supply corridors," said Sana.

Mosques and imams have in the past been the target of attacks blamed on militants. Churches in Burkina have also at times been targeted and Christians have been kidnapped.

The ACLED analysis group says that 439 people were killed in such violence in January alone.

The violence has killed almost 20,000 people and displaced more than two million in Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries situated in the Sahel, a region wracked by instability.

Anger at the state's inability to end the insecurity played a major role in two military coups in 2022. Cur-

Survivors of the attacks told AFP that dozens of women and young children were among the victims

The violence has killed almost 20,000 people and displaced more than two million in Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries situated in the Sahel, a region wracked by instability.

Portugal's far-right seduces youths ahead of vote

By Levi Fernandes
Agence France Presse

BARREIRO, Portugal — Rita Matias, 25, is Portugal's youngest lawmaker and a star of the far-right party Chega, which is gaining ground among traditionally left-leaning young voters ahead of next weekend's general election.

"Youth should not be the monopoly of the left," she told supporters gathered at a Lisbon public library ahead of snap polls on March 10.

"Young people are at the heart of our political action."

Matias, who was first elected to the assembly in the last general election in 2022 when Chega, which means "Enough", won 12 seats in Portugal's 230-seat parliament.

She is running for reelection in the district of Setubal, which includes the Portuguese capital's southern suburbs.

The party's youth spokeswoman, she regularly appears alongside Chega leader Andre Ventura, a 41-year-old former tough-talking football commentator.

During a recent appearance in Barreiro, a city that is part of her constituency, voters rushed to greet her with a kiss or take a selfie with her.

Chega has grown rapidly since its creation in 2019, when it won a sin-



Voters queue during early voting at Lisbon's university on Sunday, one week ahead of general elections

gle seat in parliament — the far-right's first gain since a revolution in 1974 toppled Portugal's decades-long dictatorship.

And as in other European nations where the far-right has gained ground, Chega is growing faster among youths than older people.

Polls suggest the populist, anti-establishment party could capture around 17 per cent of the ballot, more than double the 7.2 per cent it captured in 2022.

But its support among those aged 18-34 rises to 26 per cent, making it the most popular party in that age group, ahead of the ruling Socialists with 22 per cent.

Chega, which has made the fight against corruption and illegal immigration a central theme, could emerge as kingmaker if the polls are accurate and the election results in a hung parliament.

Using humorous videos on TikTok, where Chega has an outside presence, the party has succeeded in picking up on existing grievances among young people. They include the lack of affordable housing and good job prospects.

Ventura himself has appeared in TikTok videos using a skateboard and kicking a football. After eight years in power, the Socialists have "left young people in a state of great pressure and misery", Matias told AFP.

"They have to choose every day between staying in the country with limited prospects or going abroad and giving up the comforts of home," she added.

Nearly a third of all Portuguese under the age of 40 who were born in Portugal currently live abroad, according to a study by the Emigration Observatory.

Chega blames a surge in immigrant arrivals

for the lack of affordable housing for young people. She argues the government should do more to encourage young Portuguese who emigrated to return.

Ventura has said the Socialist government has "failed" youths when it comes to housing.

He has promised measures to help young people buy their first home or finance their studies.

Betting on youth

Veronica Varela, a 20-year-old student watching a televised debate between Ventura and Socialist Party leader Pedro Nuno Santos at a cafe, seemed persuaded.

"I haven't found any other party that fights so well for young people," she said.

The election is being held after a Socialist government collapsed in November following a corruption probe.

That investigation involved a police search of Prime Minister Antonio Costa's official residence and the arrest of his chief of staff, though Costa himself has not been accused of any crime.

REFERENDUMS

Swiss to vote on pensions, retirement age

GENEVA (AFP) — Switzerland, with an ageing population facing an ever-swelling cost of living, is holding referendums on Sunday on two initiatives which would reshape pensioners' lives in different ways.

A proposal to gradually raise the retirement age from 65 to 66 looks set to fail, but a second proposal seeking to boost pension payments could squeak through.

That proposal, put forward by Swiss trade unions and entitled "Better living in retirement", calls for a 13th monthly pension payment each year, similar to the "13th month" salary many employees receive in Switzerland and other European countries.

Opinion polls indicate that most Swiss voters favour the initiative, although the "yes" lead has dwindled, and the outcome remains unclear.

Monthly social security payments in Switzerland can rise to 2,450 Swiss francs (\$2,780) for individuals and 3,675 francs for married couples.

The payments do not go far in a country consistently ranked among the most expensive in the world.

Rent for a typical two-bedroom apartment in Swiss cities is at least 3,000 francs, and a coffee costs upwards of five francs.

If the Swiss approve the shift, they would not be the first in Europe — neighbouring Liechtenstein, another pricey nation which uses the Swiss franc, has had a similar system in place for years.

"There is a purchasing power crisis," said Pierre-Yves Maillard, head of the Swiss Trade Union Federation (SGB) and part of the "yes" campaign.

"Retirees are seeing

their living standards erode," he told AFP last week.

"The cost of living just keeps soaring," agreed Jakob Hauri, a retiree quoted by the campaign.

Left-leaning parties support the initiative, but it is being fiercely fought by right-wing and centrist parties, and the Swiss government and parliament officially oppose it.

The government has said the proposed hike would cost more than four billion Swiss francs a year, warning it would require tax increases and could threaten the financial stability of the social security system.

It also maintains there would be limited social benefit from the proposed change, which would hand additional payments to all pensioners, regardless of their financial situation.

"If the initiative passes, a lot of retirees will receive a 13th social security payment even though they don't really need it," he warned.

For the hard-right Swiss People's Party, the "irresponsible" initiative will allow freeloaders to deplete the social secu-

riety system. Switzerland's largest party has been striving to drum up opposition with adverts, including one showing 100-franc notes being sucked down a drain.

"We are hopeful," Maillard said. Switzerland's direct democracy system is also tackling on Sunday a proposal from the youth branch of the right-wing Liberal Party to gradually raise the retirement age from 65 to 66 over the next decade to ensure full financing of the pension system.

The vote comes less than two years after Swiss voters narrowly opted to raise the retirement age for women from 64 to 65, to match the retirement age for men.

But the initiative appears dead in the water. Latest surveys indicate only 35 per cent of those questioned favour such a move, while 63 per cent oppose it.

Most people vote in advance in Switzerland, which holds referendums every few months.

On Sunday, polls will open for just a few hours before closing at noon, with initial results expected by mid-afternoon.

There is a purchasing power crisis'



Members of the initiative committee, with President Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGS) Pierre-Yves Maillard (thirds left), react in Bern on Sunday

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TRAGEDY



Plane wreckage believed to be from Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 is displayed during an event held by relatives of the passengers and supporters to mark the 10th year since the Boeing 777 aircraft carrying 239 people disappeared from radar screens on March 8, 2014 while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, in Subang Jaya on Sunday

Relatives of Malaysia plane crash victims mark 10 years since disappearance

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Relatives of passengers on a Malaysia Airlines plane that mysteriously vanished 10 years ago pushed for a new search on Sunday as they spoke of enduring grief and the struggle to find closure.

Flight MH370, a Boeing 777 aircraft carrying 239 people, disappeared from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has never been found.

About 500 relatives and their supporters gathered on Sunday at a shopping centre near the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur for a "remembrance day", with many visibly overcome with grief.

They lit 239 candles, one for each passenger lost on the flight.

Some relatives came from China, where almost two-thirds of the passengers of the doomed plane were from.

"The last 10 years have been a nonstop emotional rollercoaster for me," Grace Nathan, a 36-year-old Malaysian lawyer whose mother, Anne Daisy, 56, was on the flight, told AFP.

Speaking to the crowd, she called on

the Malaysian government to conduct a new search.

"MH370 is not history," she said.

Liu Shuang Fong, 67, from China's Hebei province lost her 28-year-old son Li Yan Lin, who was also a passenger on the plane.

"We are now awaiting for them to provide suitable dates and I hope to meet them soon"

"I demand justice for my son. Where is the plane?" said Liu, who flew to Malaysia for the event.

"The search must go on," she added.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke told reporters that "as far Malaysia is concerned it is committed to find-

ing the plane... cost is not the issue".

He told relatives at the gathering that he would meet with officials from Texas-based marine exploration firm Ocean Infinity, which conducted a previous unsuccessful search to discuss a new operation.

"We are now awaiting for them to provide suitable dates and I hope to meet them soon."

Ocean Infinity's search in 2018 ended after several months of scouring the seabed without success.

An earlier Australian-led search that covered 120,000 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean found hardly any trace of the plane, with only some pieces of debris picked up.

Considered the biggest search in aviation history, the operation was suspended in January 2017.

The plane's disappearance has long been the subject of a host of theories — ranging from the credible to outlandish — including that veteran pilot Zaharie Ahmad Shah had gone rogue.

A final report into the tragedy released in 2018 pointed to failings by air traffic control and said the course of the plane was changed manually.

Trump's 'Front Row Joes' superfans follow their idol everywhere

RICHMOND, United States (AFP) — As soon as the arena doors open for the Donald Trump rally, they rush to the front row, ignoring "Reserved" signs and grab their spots.

"We got perfect seats, Trump's going to look right at us," beamed Scott Knuth, 57, sporting a red, white and blue jersey labelled "Front Row Joes".

He and a few others here are among a group of the former president's most diehard fans — this is Knuth's 43rd Trump event.

Snagging the prime perch involved negotiating with security and waiting all night in the rain.

"They will need a bulldozer to get me out," he said with a laugh, more than two hours before Trump's speech was scheduled to start in Richmond, the capital of Virginia.

On Tuesday, this eastern US state will join 14 others in holding party nominating contests that are expected to deliver a haul of delegates to Trump, all but sealing his bid to become the Republican White House candidate to take on Joe Biden in November.

Knuth first saw Trump in 2015 and at the time felt alone in his excitement over the real estate mogul's then-nascent political campaign.

Since then, the construction worker has seen crowds swell for Trump, whom he has spoken to eight times and taken multiple selfies with.

He's well-versed in the rhythm of a Trump rally: A sea of red "Make Amer-



Plane wreckage believed to be from Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 is displayed during an event held by relatives of the passengers and supporters to mark the 10th year since the Boeing 777 aircraft carrying 239 people disappeared from radar screens on March 8, 2014 while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, in Subang Jaya on Sunday

ica Great Again" caps bob in an arena filled with lively music, the energy crescendoing as the main event approaches.

"It has a rock show kind of feel with the music, how it builds up, everybody gets going," Knuth explained.

'Warrior'

It's hard to match Edward Young's enthusiasm for Trump — Richmond is his 73rd rally.

"The Trump rallies are the greatest show on Earth," the 64-year-old said with a frenetic energy.

On Friday, he worked until 6pm then drove from New Jersey "all night in the rain" to arrive

in Virginia at 4 am to be in position to snag a front row seat.

"I haven't slept," said Young, who helps small businesses manage their debt.

Young and Knuth attract admiration from Trump fans who are seeing their political idol for the first time.

But this devotion comes at a steep cost. In 2016, Young totally threw himself into Trump's campaign, so much so that he was at the victory party in New York on election night.

"But I had completely exhausted my bank account," he said. "If the campaign lasted one more week in 2016, I was like, I'll be bankrupt."

'Warrior'

The cost of following Trump this election cycle continues to accumulate, with Young spending thousands on gas, hotels and other expenses since January.

"I'm once divorced and once widowed... I got no kids. I don't mind spending the money but I'm dipping into my savings," he said.

His passion for Trump is more than a hobby.

"I believe I'm a warrior now. Because America is dying," he said.

"This is a civil war in America. And I'm fighting with my words. And with my presence at these rallies."

A few seats away, at the foot of the podium, a Front Row Joe who refused to give his name said he was attending his seventh Trump rally.

He came to find the "family" he is creating from attending the events, leaving his wife and daughter at home for the weekend.

"Once you come, you're hooked," he said, as the crowd behind him takes photos and buys snacks while waiting for the former president.

Finally, "Proud to be an American" starts blasting from the speakers.

The crowd stands and roars as Trump takes the stage — and his superfans admire him, once again.

ALLEGATION

Mali colonel held after book alleges army abuses

BAMAKO (AFP) — A Colonel in Mali's army whose recent book alleges soldiers' abuse of civilians has been arrested in Bamako, a military source and his entourage said on Sunday.

Col. Alpha Yaya Sangare was detained late Saturday, a day after a defence ministry statement denounced passages in his book, an anonymous military source said.

A member of Sangare's family confirmed his arrest to AFP.

Friday's defence ministry statement denounced passages in the book that alleged rights violations by the army "with the complicity of the military hierarchy".

The ministry denounced what it said were "false accusations" against the army.

In "Mali: The challenge of terrorism in Africa",

published at the end of 2023, the colonel cites international rights organisations' reports on the army abuses of civilians during anti-terrorist operations.

A February 24 presentation of the book in Bamako appears to have caused a stir among the military regime that has run Mali since 2020.

Terrorists' violence that started in northern Mali in 2012 spread to

the centre of the country in 2015, when Katiba Macina — an Al Qaeda-affiliated group — was established, led by the Fulani preacher Amadou Kouffa.

Attacks by armed groups reached unprecedented levels in the centre of the country in the final months of 2023, according to humanitarian and security sources.

On February 1, UN

rights chief Volker Turk reported what he said were "credible allegations that Malian armed forces accompanied by foreign military personnel summarily executed at least 25 people" in January.

Since the junta took power, they have turned away from former colonial power France and pivoted towards Russia, both politically and militarily.

Iran conservatives secure bulk of seats in elections — media

Continued from page 1

Fears of a low turnout had swirled ahead of the elections after a state TV poll found more than half of respondents were indifferent about the elections.

'Wake-up call'

Turnout in the capital Tehran was around 25 per cent, according to Iranian media, which reported that ultraconservative candidates secured 12 of the 30 parliament seats allotted to the capital.

Some seats have gone

to a second round, which will take place in either April or May, IRNA reported.

The pro-government Iran Daily said authorities should see the low turnout as a "wake-up call and redouble their efforts to fortify their support base".

Reformist daily Ham Mihan said that "the soul of the elections was lost" and that turnout was "far from victorious" which could have "political repercussions" for Iran's system.

Political analyst Mohammad Mohajeri said conservatives and ul-

traconservatives will emerge as the main winner in the elections due to "sharp decline in the participation rate".

A record figure of 15,200 hopefuls were competing for seats in the 290-member parliament.

Another 144 candidates sought a place in the 88-member Assembly of Experts, which is exclusively made up of male Islamic scholars.

By allowing a large pool of candidates, the government wanted "to create local competition and increase participation" to help attract voters, journalist

Maziar Khosravi earlier told AFP.

A record figure of 15,200 hopefuls were competing for seats in the 290-member parliament

Iran's 2020 parliament was elected during the COVID pandemic with a turnout of 42.57 per cent — at the time the lowest

since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Former moderate president Hassan Rouhani cast his ballot on Friday despite his disqualification from running for the Assembly of Experts after 24 years of membership.

Another former president, the reformist Mohammad Khatami, was among those who did not vote, according to a coalition of parties called the Reform Front.

In February, Khatami had said on his official website that Iran is "very far from free and competitive elections".

'Who will call me mother?': Gazan woman mourns twin babies killed in strike

Continued from page 1

Israel says its campaign is intended to eliminate Hamas fighters, but Shehda Abu Anza, who said the home belonged to his uncle, insisted it housed only civilians.

"They were sleeping at eleven-o'clock at night. All of them children. Honestly there was no military presence in the house, only civilians," he said.

"No soldiers, only civilians." Another relative, Arafat Abu Anza, bemoaned the

lack of equipment to extract possible survivors.

"There are 15 people in the house... I'm cleaning the area. We are trying to extract people, to see where they are. Four floors fell."

Nearly 1.5 million Palestinians have sought refuge in Rafah, raising fears of mass casualties should Israel go ahead with a planned invasion of the city.

Mediators are trying to lock in a truce that would at least temporarily halt the fighting before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which be-

gins on March 10 or 11, depending on the lunar calendar.

A senior Hamas official told AFP the group had sent a delegation to Cairo, and Egyptian state-linked media said envoys from the United States and Qatar had also arrived for talks on Sunday.

Any deal will come too late for Rania Abu Anza, who recounted the chaos of the strike and how she was told her children were gone.

"I started shouting. 'My children, my children,'" she said.

Zelensky vows Ukrainian victory as death toll in Odesa strike hits 10

Continued from page 1

"A mother tried to cover her eight-month-old baby with her body. They were found in a tight embrace," the agency said on Telegram.

Russian military bloggers also reported an attempted massive Ukrainian drone attack on the annexed peninsula

of Crimea overnight.

Moscow said it shot down 38 Ukrainian drones, while the Rybar Telegram channel, close to Russia's armed forces, said one hit a pipeline at an oil depot that was the presumed target of the attack.

Kyiv has hit several Russian oil facilities in recent months in what it has called fair retri-

buton for Moscow's attacks on Ukraine's power grid.

A senior Ukrainian commander separately accused Russian forces of dropping explosives containing an unspecified chemical substance over the battlefield, and said the situation on the frontlines was "complicated, but under control".

Turkish Cypriot leader rules out any talks without equal status

Continued from page 1

and being basically amalgamated into a pure Greek republic would mean that that would be the end of us."

After years of tension over immigration, energy rights and maritime borders, Greece and Turkey restarted high-level talks in December when President Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid his first visit to Athens since 2017.

"Obviously we have difficulties, but we have no alternative. The alternative is to give up, and we will never give up because giving up sovereignty

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is set to visit Ankara in May.

Asked if Turkish-Greek rapprochement could have a positive impact on the island, Tatar said he hoped Greece would say to the Greek Cypriots that "enough is enough, let's wake up to the reality of Cyprus that there are two peoples and the states".

"And the best way forward after all these years is cooperation of the two states so that we can have prosperity and enjoy the resources of the eastern Mediterranean," he added.

"I think if we were to find a solution, Cyprus can be probably bigger [economically] than Dubai."

Tatar said the Turkish Cypriots could not forget about past

events which triggered the Turkish military operation five decades ago.

"In 1974 Turkey came in with troops, and now we will be celebrating the 50th year in July. So it's not easy for us to forget all this, especially with Europe now in Gaza" where Israel and Hamas are engaged in a nearly five-month war.

"Therefore, we have to be very careful."

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"In 1974 Turkey came in with troops, and now we will be celebrating the 50th year in July. So it's not easy for us to forget all this, especially with Europe now in Gaza" where Israel and Hamas are engaged in a nearly five-month war.

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THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

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P.O. Box 6710
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National Library registration number: D/1998/2062
Telephone: 5600800 ext. 2392
Facsimile: 5696183
Advertising facsimile: 5696183
Circulation Department: 5600800 ext. 2383

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Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

How AI could reshape medicine

By Junaid Nabi

BOSTON — On a recent international trip, I found myself running late to the airport. Not being fluent in the local language, I used a translation app that enabled me to convey the urgency of my situation to the taxi driver. The app's camera feature also allowed me to understand the road signs, providing real-time updates.

This is just one example of how digital innovations, particularly artificial intelligence, are reshaping our world. With recent studies showing that AI models can now identify early signs of health complications such as sepsis, these technologies are poised to revolutionise medicine, too.

These rapid technological advances also underscore the urgent need for AI regulation. The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, which is expected to be approved in the second half of 2024, is a prime example. This pioneering law classifies AI systems according to their risk levels and explicitly bans specific high-risk applications, such as social scoring and emotion recognition, that pose a threat to personal safety, civil liberties and democratic governance. It also highlights the importance of transparency and explainability, so that users can access information about AI-generated decisions.

The EU's ambitious legislation offers a good starting point for a global discussion on how not to use AI. But given these technologies' vast potential to transform healthcare, it is equally crucial to explore how they can be used to augment the human-centric aspects of medicine.

For starters, AI has the potential to make medicine more compassionate. For example, a recent study published in JAMA Internal Medicine compared responses from ChatGPT to health-related questions with those provided by human doctors. Interestingly, a panel of licensed healthcare professionals preferred ChatGPT's answers 79 per cent of the time, viewing them as more empathetic toward patients. Previous studies have shown that greater empathy and compassion can improve patient outcomes and expedite recovery.

In recent years, healthcare providers have become increasingly overwhelmed by managerial and administrative duties, constraining their ability to establish clinical rapport with patients. This "documentation burden" often leads to burnout and undermines the quality of care. By providing automated answers to routine questions, scheduling appointments and managing paperwork, AI-powered platforms could streamline administrative processes and free up physicians to spend more time with patients.

But AI's applications extend well beyond rationalising administrative tasks. A growing body of clinical evidence suggests that deep-learning algorithms, trained on vast datasets of medical images and patient records, can analyse X-rays, MRIs and other medical scans with remarkable accuracy, frequently surpassing the diagnostic capabilities of human physicians. These innovations could revolutionise precision diagnostics, facilitating the early detection of diseases like pneumonia and cancer and supporting global health efforts, particularly in remote areas with limited access to specialised care.

Policymakers worldwide are increasingly recognising the importance of preventive healthcare, largely owing to its economic benefits. AI is central to this shift, interpreting data from wearable devices and sensors to identify early signs of pathology, particularly cardiac conditions, and thus preventing minor health issues from becoming catastrophic crises. Moreover, smartwatches and fitness bands use AI-powered tracking systems capable of detecting potential sleep apnea and prompting users to seek medical advice before they develop severe health problems.

To be sure, integrating AI into healthcare poses significant challenges and raises numerous ethical questions. In addition to ensuring fairness, combating algorithmic bias, and maintaining data privacy and security, it is crucial to recognise that AI cannot replace the personal touch that is essential to clinical practice. Medical professionals ought to lead this transition, using new technologies to augment their skills. While chatbots are unlikely to replace doctors and nurses anytime soon, AI tools are already supporting healthcare providers by improving diagnostic accuracy and facilitating more personalised, data-driven care.

Given that persistent health challenges, especially chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension, often stem from inadequate investment in public health and a lack of social cohesion, addressing them requires more than just technological solutions. In such cases, comprehensive reform of national health policies is needed.

By adopting the emerging digital technologies in a responsible and ethical manner, we can transform the ways we diagnose, treat and prevent diseases, ushering in an era of data-driven medicine in which health professionals and AI systems work together to deliver better care for all. But while machines can help, the ability to forge a healthier future is ours alone.

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The escalation of conflicts in Middle East

The persistence of the conflict, the failure of nation-states, the lack of enlightenment processes within countries, and the shifting focus, primarily on security, have contributed to deep psychological divisions among the region's populations. In many cases, people coexist in the same geographic area without feeling adequately represented by their governing structures. This sense of alienation persists and often escalates during times of conflict, leading to increased calls for fragmentation along geographic or ethnic lines.

The examples of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon highlight the challenges of recovery without comprehensive solutions. Moreover, ongoing conflicts may fuel demands for new states based on ethnic or religious identities, as witnessed in Yemen, Iraq and potentially Syria. For instance, the emergence of two Yemeni states and the perpetuation of the Shia-Sunni conflict in Iraq demonstrate the complexities of



Amer Al Sabaileh

identity politics within the region. Similarly, the Kurdish pursuit of state recognition and the potential for Alawites and Druze to seek autonomy underscore the

region's persistent challenges in fostering cohesive nation-building efforts. These calls for independence and autonomy represent a fundamental shift in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, heralding the emergence of a "new Middle East" characterised by increased fragmentation and decentralisation of power. As non-state actors assert themselves and traditional power structures erode, the region faces a period of profound uncertainty and instability.

In Yemen, the conflict in Gaza

serves as a cautionary tale of how localised disputes can escalate into broader geopolitical crises. The ongoing conflict between Houthi rebels and the internationally recognised government has already resulted in widespread humanitarian suffering and threatens to further destabilise the region. As external actors intervene and support various factions, the risk of escalation grows, raising concerns about the security of vital maritime trade routes in the Red Sea.

The impact of these conflicts extends far beyond the borders of the Middle East, affecting global security and stability. The proliferation of extremist ideologies and the presence of non-state actors pose significant challenges to international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism. Moreover, the displacement of millions of people and the breakdown of governance structures have created fertile ground for transnational criminal networks and illicit activities.

The conflict in Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the interconnected nature of conflicts in the Middle East and the potential for localised disputes to escalate into broader geopolitical crises. As non-state actors assert themselves and traditional power structures erode, the region faces a period of profound uncertainty and instability.

Considering these developments, it becomes imperative for the international community to address the root causes of conflict and instability in the region. Diplomatic efforts must focus on promoting dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties, while humanitarian assistance should be provided to alleviate the suffering of affected populations. Moreover, efforts to strengthen the capacity of nation-states with enlightenment vision to govern effectively and address the needs of their citizens are essential to preventing further fragmentation and promoting stability in the region.

Carbon credits hold the key to combating de-forestation

By Roselyn Fosuah Adjei

ACCRA — Over the past few years, intense media scrutiny has prompted a growing number of companies to pursue high-quality carbon credits. Seeking to avoid accusations of "greenwashing", many of these firms are no longer content with merely offsetting their emissions and have been actively seeking credits that deliver tangible benefits to local communities.

The Ghanaian government is prepared to help. We have devoted more than 15 years to developing a robust forest-conservation programme. After extensive planning and preparation, we are ready to offer high-integrity credits to buyers in the Global North who are eager to demonstrate their commitment to fighting deforestation.

To be sure, several forest-protection schemes have come under fire in recent years. Critics argue that instead of reducing deforestation, these offsets are primarily aimed at serving the interests of corporations seeking carbon credits to meet their climate targets and validate their claims of carbon neutrality.

But jurisdictional programmes like Ghana's are different. Designed to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, these initiatives cover vast areas while addressing some of the problems facing individual projects. For example, they mitigate the risk of illegal deforestation outside of designated conservation zones.

The concept is not new. Article 5 of the 2015 Paris climate agreement encourages developed countries to offer results-based payments to developing countries for achieving emissions reductions. Over the past two decades, jurisdictional forest-protection efforts have been largely funded by public donors, while corporate support has flowed toward specific emissions-reduction projects through the voluntary carbon market. But this is now changing, and countries like Ghana are leading the way.

Ghana's High Forest Zone, located within the Guinean Forests of West Africa, is recognised as one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots. In 2008, an alarming increase in deforestation rates prompted the Ghanaian government to join the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and develop its forest-conservation program with the goal of harnessing carbon finance to halt and reverse deforestation.

With financial support from the FCPF, the World Bank, and the Green Climate Fund, we identified five critical commodity-linked areas for intervention. Through community engagement, our teams devised benefit-sharing strategies tailored to the diverse needs of various stakeholders. They also developed specialised measurement technologies, enabling more accurate monitoring of the carbon stored in Ghana's forests.

After spending nearly two decades laying the necessary technical groundwork and establishing relationships with local communities, Ghana recently entered the voluntary carbon market. We are preparing to issue jurisdictional carbon credits through the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions process, thereby enabling domestic and international companies to support our conservation efforts. Our objective is to transform carbon credits into a long-term revenue stream. To this end, Ghana recently became one of the first countries to sign an emissions-reduction agreement with the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition. As part of the deal, Ghana is set to receive \$50 million for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by up to 5 million tonnes.

While buyers in the Global North may view carbon credits as instrumental in meeting their climate targets, in Ghana, they represent a more profound shift. The revenue generated from these credits translates into tangible income for local communities, enabling households to benefit financially from forest preservation. These credits are more than a financial resource; they are a testament to years of dedicated work and commitment to environmental stewardship.

But for this programme to be effective, buyers must recognise that integrity and impact require substantial investment. High-quality credits should do more than bolster corporate climate strategies; they should also contribute to preserving the world's

forests. In essence, this means providing communities with financial incentives to conserve trees instead of cutting them down. While the LEAF agreement, which values CO₂ emissions at \$10 per tonne, represents a positive first step, it is not enough, because the returns on illegal deforestation are higher.

Given that carbon pricing appears to have been designed by and for those on the demand side, Global North buyers should consult countries like Ghana to understand the true cost of producing high-integrity credits. Based on our extensive experience fighting deforestation, prices should account for the necessary preparatory work and, crucially, exceed the rates paid to illegal loggers and miners.

Carbon credits are not like aid funds, which are distributed by donor countries according to their own assessments of what they can or should give. Rather, they are payments for emissions reductions that issuers like Ghana have worked hard to achieve, and that are crucial to limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Potential buyers should visit, see for themselves the challenges we face in fighting deforestation, and then discuss pricing that reflects the real value of our accomplishments.

Roselyn Fosuah Adjei is climate change director at Ghana's Forestry Commission and National REDD+ Focal Point for Ghana. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2024. www.project-syndicate.org

To fight climate change, end fossil-fuel subsidies

By Günther Thallinger and Ludovic Subran

MUNICH — In Christopher Nolan's 2010 film *Inception*, the line between reality and illusion becomes increasingly blurred. When it comes to fossil-fuel subsidies, life imitates art. Distinguishing between their perceived benefits and actual impact has proven to be a critical global challenge.

While such subsidies may appear beneficial in the short term, they mask the profound environmental and economic consequences of our dependence on fossil fuels. Given the interconnected threats posed by climate change, the question remains: Can we come to terms with reality and make decisions that genuinely benefit both ourselves and our planet?

Despite the international pledges made at the G20 summit in 2009 and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in 2021 (COP26), along with the European Union's Green Deal and its eighth Environment Action Program, fossil-fuel subsidies remain entrenched. According to the European Environment Agency, annual subsidies in the EU hovered around 56 billion euros (\$61 billion) between 2015 and 2021, with only a few member states taking steps to phase them out.

To be sure, the lack of action is not limited to the EU. The International Energy Agency recently reported that global fossil-fuel subsidies skyrocketed to more than \$1 trillion in 2022, a spike largely attributed to geopolitical shocks like Russia's invasion of Ukraine,

which significantly disrupted energy markets.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) paints an even bleaker picture: Accounting for the insufficient taxation of carbon dioxide emissions implies that fossil-fuel subsidies surged to a record \$7 trillion in 2022. This figure, the equivalent of 7.1 per cent of the world's GDP, surpasses global spending on education and nearly matches worldwide healthcare expenditures.

While subsidies are often viewed as a means to address social inequalities and offer relief to poorer households through reduced food and energy prices, they often have the opposite effect. In reality, these subsidies disproportionately benefit wealthier households and perpetuate unequal access to energy. Moreover, they divert crucial public funds from more effective investments that could reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and improve infrastructure, social protection, and healthcare services, all of which offer greater benefits to low-income communities.

By contrast, the IMF estimates that eliminating these subsidies could prevent 1.6 million premature deaths annually, generate \$4.4 trillion in revenues, and accelerate progress toward global climate goals. By maintaining energy subsidies initially designed as temporary measures, we risk perpetuating our dependence on fossil fuels.

But given that tackling social inequalities requires a phased approach, a balanced long-term climate strategy must include target-

ed financial support to vulnerable populations. This could involve expanding welfare programmes, retaining universal subsidies for essential goods, and boosting investment in public services that primarily benefit low-income households, such as healthcare, education and infrastructure. Means-tested transfers and energy rebates could also facilitate a smoother climate transition.

Similarly, low- and middle-income countries must pursue structural reforms to enhance economic stability, deepen financial markets and strengthen their institutions, thereby improving their credit ratings and reducing their borrowing costs. Transparent sustainable investment disclosures and strategic use of guarantees could also help these countries mitigate investment risks.

The Green Climate Fund underscores the crucial role of blended finance in helping developing countries decarbonise. Created under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Fund currently manages 216 projects with a combined value of \$12 billion. When accounting for co-financing, its overall assets exceed \$45 billion.

The next few years will be critical for the global transition to net-zero emissions, with technological innovations playing a vital role. The EU's plan to achieve energy independence and a 55 per cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030, for example, depends heavily on the development of a thriving climate-tech sector.

But despite the need for rapid emissions reductions, Europe lags behind the United States and China. Our discussions with leaders from European climate-tech companies such as STABL, Proxima Fusion, Claims Carbon and Electra underscored the urgency of the situation, which the EU must address by adopting supportive policies to stimulate the sector's growth.

A future of sustainable growth is within reach if we acknowledge the real costs of fossil fuels and adjust our financial and political priorities accordingly. To this end, global policymakers must outline their plans for the energy sector, transportation networks, and information systems. By redirecting funds currently allocated to fossil-fuel subsidies, governments could meet their climate targets by 2030 and accelerate the shift to a net-zero economy.

As climate change worsens, it is increasingly evident that ignoring the devastating consequences of our dependence on fossil fuels is no longer an option. Achieving net-zero emissions requires bold policies such as the phaseout of fossil-fuel subsidies, as well as investment in technological innovation and a global commitment to a fair and equitable energy transition.

Günther Thallinger, a member of the board of management of Allianz SE, is responsible for Investment management and sustainability. Ludovic Subran is chief economist at Allianz. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2024. www.project-syndicate.org

BUSINESS

Monday, March 4, 2024

BUDGET

UK finance minister dampens down hopes of tax cuts as election looms

LONDON, United Kingdom (AFP) — British Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt on Sunday talked down the likelihood of tax cuts in this week's budget, pledging "prudent and responsible" measures "for long term growth".

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had been widely expected to cut taxes in Wednesday's budget, in a move seen as a way of closing the gap on the main opposition Labour Party ahead of elections.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party is trailing in the polls with pollsters predicting that Labour leader Keir Starmer is on track to win the keys to number 10 Downing Street at a general election later this year.

Voters, hit by a cost of living crisis, have repeatedly punished the Conservatives in a string of recent by-elections.

With the Bank of England's main interest rate sitting at a 16-year high of 5.25 per cent, millions of voters are also suffer-



A handout photo released by the BBC, taken and received on Sunday, shows Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt appearing on the BBC's 'Sunday Morning' political television show with journalist Laura Kuenssberg

ing from soaring mortgage repayments.

"It's going to be a prudent and responsible budget for long term growth," Hunt told Sky News television channel.

Official data last month showed Britain had sunk into recession after the economy shrank in the final two

quarters of 2023.

While economists predicted that the recession could be short-lived, the data has been a big setback for Sunak, who has placed economic growth as a key priority.

But Hunt said he would not cut taxes at the expense of future generations.

"I think the most un-

conservative thing I could do would be to cut taxes by increasing borrowing," he told the BBC.

"Because that's just cutting taxes and saying that future generations have to pick the tax up," he added.

Although he would not be drawn on tax measures expected in

the budget, Hunt did announce an £800 million (\$1.01 billion) package of technology reforms designed to make public services more efficient and reduce paperwork.

As part of the package, police will use drones to assess incidents such as traffic collisions and artificial intelligence (AI) will be deployed to speed up the results of cancer scans in the state-run National Health Service.

"There is too much waste in the system and we want public servants to get back to doing what matters most: teaching our children, keeping us safe and treating us when we're sick," Hunt said in a statement.

According to The Sunday Times, the Office for Budget Responsibility told Hunt on Wednesday that he has £12.8 billion of headroom to play with -- more than £2 billion less than the figure the Treasury is said to have previously been basing its calculations on.

WTO conference — the main issues

GENEVA, (AFP) — Fisheries, agriculture and World Trade Organization's (WTO) reform were at the heart of intense negotiations among trade ministers from around the world who gathered in Abu Dhabi over the past few days.

Here are the main issues that were on the table during the ministerial conference known as MC13 that ended on Saturday, which saw an extension of an e-commerce moratorium but no deals on agriculture and fisheries.

Fisheries: the next step

During the WTO last ministerial meeting, held at its Geneva headquarters in June 2022, trade chiefs managed to nail down a historic agreement banning harmful fisheries subsidies after more than two decades of negotiations.

The agreement banned subsidies that contribute to fishing that is illegal, unreported or unregulated, as well as for fishing of overstretched stocks and in unregulated high seas, with additional flexibility baked in for developing nations.

The agreement, which has yet to take effect, was seen as a major achievement, marking just the second accord concluded by the WTO's full membership since the global trade body was created in 1995, and the first focused on environmental protection.

In Abu Dhabi, countries had aimed to finalise a "second wave" of negotiations towards broadening the net to also include a ban on subsidies that contribute to overfishing more broadly.

While observers had said an agreement on the second portion of the deal was possible, in the end it proved elusive.

One bone of contention was the text's two-tier approach, entailing greater surveillance, constraints and penalties for the countries that dish out most fishery subsidies.

Another sticking point was a demand from India, which single-handedly forced WTO members to water down the initial agreement, for a 25-year transition period — something many countries reject as too long.

Covid booster?

Despite the very vocal

resistance from pharmaceutical companies and their host countries, WTO members in 2022 agreed to a temporary patent waiver for COVID-19 vaccines, aimed at providing more equitable access to jabs.

But they pushed off efforts to extend the waiver to patents for other products needed to fight the pandemic, like tests and treatments.

The plan had been to decide on that issue by December 2022, but the deadline was repeatedly postponed amid continued disagreement.

It now appears that India and South Africa, who championed the waiver, have given up the fight.

In Abu Dhabi, countries had aimed to finalise a 'second wave' of negotiations towards broadening the net to also include a ban on subsidies that contribute to overfishing more broadly

Fallow harvest for agriculture?

Agriculture has always been a highly sensitive issue at the heart of discussions at the WTO, and ministers in Abu Dhabi were unable to agree on a new package of rules.

At a ministerial meeting in 2015, WTO members took the historic decision to eliminate export subsidies for agricultural products.

Many now want action on domestic measures that distort trade, and discussions revolved around issues including market access and export competition and restrictions.

Food security was also once again on the agenda, with deep disagreement over a demand from India and others for a temporary measure, allowing countries to hold public stockpiles of food to be made permanent.

They also wanted it extended to encompass all developing countries and to include other sta-

ples like cotton.

Several countries fiercely opposed those moves, warning that such public stocks, if released beyond a country's borders, could disrupt global food markets.

Elusive reform

Since its creation in 1995, the WTO is credited with facilitating globalisation by making international trade more fluid.

But weighed down with the post-Cold War rules it inherited from its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the organisation is struggling to show it remains relevant.

Since her arrival at the WTO helm in 2021, director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has infused fresh energy into that quest, and during the ministerial meeting a year later, countries agreed to a roadmap towards reform.

But so far the discussions have only progressed on smaller technical issues rather than on reforming the organisation itself and its rules.

Among the rules up for debate is one allowing countries themselves to decide if they should be labelled a developing nation, and access the trade benefits that entails.

The fact that China is among the countries to claim that label has sparked calls from Washington and others to demand an end to the self-declaration practice.

Perhaps the thorniest issue is how to overhaul the WTO's embattled dispute settlement system.

Washington brought the WTO's Appellate Body to a grinding halt in December 2019 after years of blocking the appointment of new judges.

The United States had long accused the appeals court of unfair treatment and overreach, insisting it could not rule on issues involving "national security".

Countries agreed during the 2022 ministerial to get a new system up and running this year, but so far the discussions appear hopelessly blocked.

At Abu Dhabi, the final outcome mainly reiterated the commitment made at MC12 to have a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system in place by 2024.

Parties, cars, curtains — Kenyans upset by gov't spending spree

By Hillary Orinde
Agence France-Press

NAIROBI — Expensive parties, lavish garden parties and jet-setting lifestyles: Kenya's cash-strapped government has been on a spending spree even as austerity measures take their toll on weary citizens.

A report released by the country's auditor general last month said the office of the deputy president spent 10.2 million shillings (\$70,000) on curtains while splashing out on furniture to the tune of some \$50,000.

The purchases, which were "in breach of the law" for flouting procurement rules, according to the report, have struck a nerve with an angry public.

"They have squeezed my finances to the limit as they drink and dine," Kenyan teacher Moses Bett told AFP in the capital Nairobi.

The East African powerhouse — where corruption is a hot-button issue — raised taxes to shore up revenue for govern-

ment debt repayments even as many citizens were already struggling with the high prices of basic commodities.

"I am living on negatives," Bett said, patting the front pockets of his charcoal grey trousers.

"Every day is becoming more difficult to fend for my family with what is left of my salary," the 32-year-old father of two said.

President William Ruto, who served as the country's deputy leader from 2013 to 2022, had vowed to slash government spending, telling Kenyans in his inauguration speech that "we are living beyond our means".

But the businessman-turned-politician, who campaigned on a platform to help the country's poor, is planning to spend more than 1.3 billion shillings (\$8.9 million) to spruce up his eight official residences.

His offices at Nairobi's State House, built a century ago, will be renovated at a cost of more than 700 million shillings.

The cost of the facelift is equivalent to more than 800 houses under a tax-funded housing plan introduced by Ruto last year.

More than 800 million shillings (\$5.5 million) have also been earmarked for the purchase of cars for Ruto, his deputy and the prime cabinet secretary.

The government has not commented publicly on the auditor general's report and has not responded to AFP requests.

'Leaders do not care'

"It appears they forgot us... as soon as they got into power," hawker Sharon Mwaruma said.

In the first six months of his presidency, Ruto — a teetotaler — spent more than 1.49 billion shillings on receptions, parties and other hospitality supplies, according to treasury records.

The president's foreign trips have also come under fire.

According to The Standard newspaper, which nicknamed Ruto

"the flying president", the 57-year-old has spent one in every five days outside Kenya, visiting over 38 countries since taking office in September 2022.

Ruto has defended the trips as central to his duties.

"I don't travel as a tourist. I have been going to plan the affairs of Kenya," he told a church service in December.

"I have been connecting Kenyans with employment and investment opportunities across the world."

But Kenyans are not convinced.

"The leaders do not care about us. Yet, we voted them to power," chef Judith Kamau said, sitting on a broken pavement in the upmarket business district of Kilimani.

'Get rich quick'

For decades, Kenyan administrations have been accused of wanton embezzlement despite repeated promises of a crackdown on graft and waste.

Kenya was added last

MARKET

Stocks rally rolls on into March

LONDON (AFP) — Stocks markets continued to push into record territory across the globe on Friday as investor excitement over artificial intelligence fed a months-long rally.

On Wall Street, both the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index and the S&P 500 both set new intraday records as Dell Technologies surged around 30 per cent following an earnings report that highlighted its growing AI business.

In Europe, Frankfurt's DAX set a new record while the CAC in Paris was also near its record high, with a less-than-expected drop in eurozone inflation failing to derail sentiment.

Meanwhile in Asia, To-

kyo's benchmark Nikkei index almost touched 40,000 points for the first time.

"This week saw risk on sentiment take several global stock indices to record highs, the first day of March being no exception," said Axel Rudolph, senior market analyst at online trading platform IG.

David Morrison, senior market analyst at Trade Nation, said "market sentiment remains bullish, and there seems little appetite for profit-taking".

Stock markets have been on a march higher since late last year, first on hopes that central banks will soon be able to begin lowering their high interest rates as inflation

began to fall closer to normal levels.

While hotter-than-expected inflation data from recent months has pushed expectations for the first interest rate cut to mid-year, stellar results from AI firms has propelled markets higher in recent weeks.

Inflation data continued to disappoint, with data showing on Friday the euro-area annual inflation rate slowed to 2.6 per cent last month from 2.8 per cent in January, missing expectations of a drop to 2.5 per cent.

Core inflation that excludes volatile food and energy prices stayed above 3 per cent.

"With inflation coming in above estimates, trad-

ers will be keeping a close eye out for any change in stance from the European Central Bank (ECB) at Thursday's monetary policy announcement," noted Scope Markets analyst Joshua Mahony.

The ECB is under pressure to cut rates after keeping them unchanged since October at a two-decade high while economic growths stagnate.

"While today's data looks unlikely to lessen the chance of a June rate cut, it does dampen any calls for a speedy return to easing in April."

Markets are eagerly following data for a steer on when both the ECB and US Federal Reserve might start cutting their key rates as inflation cools.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Sunday amounted to JD 4.3 million spread over 5.2 million shares that traded through 2,387 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.12 per cent, closing at 2464.35 points.

Out of 98 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 34 companies rose while the share price of another 25 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Arab Phoenix Holdings by 7.14 per cent, Transport and Investment Barter Company by 5.26 per cent, Al-Faris National Company for Investment and Export by 5 per cent, Dimensions: Jordan and Emirates Commercial Investments Corporation by 4.92 per cent, and Nutri Dar by 4.88 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Specialised Jordanian Investment by 4.9 per cent, Al Tahdith for Real Estate Investments Company by 4.5 per cent, Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 3.7 per cent, Real Estate Development by 3.08 per cent, and Al Quds Ready Mix by 2.83 per cent.



James becomes first NBA player with 40,000 points but Lakers lose

RUGBY

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka ready for series eyeing World Cup

SYLHET, Bangladesh (AFP) — Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said on Sunday he wanted his team to use the three-match Twenty20 series against Sri Lanka to perfect the format ahead of the World Cup in June. The series, which opens on Monday in Sylhet, marks the start of Sri Lanka's month-long tour of Bangladesh, which also includes three one-day internationals and two Tests. Najmul said it was critical to "play as a team", noting that big wins last year were because "everyone contributed". Bangladesh has never defeated Sri Lanka in a Twenty20 series. Sri Lanka coach Chris Silverwood said he was expecting a "very competitive series between two good sides". Bangladesh defeated world champions England 3-0 at home in 2023, and also won series against Ireland and Afghanistan, before drawing a three-match series 1-1 against New Zealand.

GOLF

Ireland's Lowry in three-way tie for lead at PGA Tour Cognizant Cup

MIAMI (AFP) — Former Open Champion Shane Lowry shook off a "disappointing" short par miss to card a five-under par 66 on Saturday and join David Skins and Austin Eckroat atop the leaderboard at the US PGA Tour Cognizant Cup. Lowry, who finished runner-up at PGA National in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida in 2022, had a 13-under par total of 200. English journeyman Skins carded a bogey-free five-under par 66 and Eckroat posted a 68 to join him there — three strokes ahead of a group of five players on 203. Ireland's Lowry, chasing his first global title since the 2022 BMW PGA Championship on the DP World Tour, got off to a hot start with birdies at the first, third and fourth. A birdie at the 10th gave him the solo lead at 12-under, but he missed a three-foot par putt at 13 to fall one back as Eckroat birdied 13. "Thirteen was very disappointing," Lowry said. "I was very proud of myself after that because sometimes I can lose it a little bit when I miss a short putt like that. I was very happy with how I reacted after that," added Lowry, who rolled in a seven-foot birdie putt at the 16th and got up and down from a greenside bunker for a birdie at the par-five 18th. Lowry, whose British Open triumph and a 2015 WGC Bridgestone crown give him two US PGA Tour titles, owns four other DP World tour titles besides and has to be considered the favourite among the leading trio.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — LeBron James became the first NBA player to reach 40,000 career regular-season points on Saturday, the 39-year-old superstar scoring nine against defending champion Denver to achieve the milestone.

But James called the historic effort "bittersweet" because it came in a losing cause as Nikola Jokic scored 35 points to rally the Nuggets late for a 124-114 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

"Being the first player to do something, it's pretty cool in this league 'cause you just know the history, you know the grace that has come through the league," James said.

"But the main thing is always the main thing and that's the win. And I hated that had to happen in a defeat especially versus a team that plays extremely well.

"We played some good basketball but wasn't able to close it out, so bittersweet, but I enjoyed every moment though, while on the floor."

James scored a team-high 26 points, 13 in the fourth quarter, but the Nuggets stretched their win streak to six games.

"I'm glad we're playing good," Jokic said. "We're doing the things we want to do. We don't have too many breakdowns. I just like how we're playing the game right now."

James, who just over a year ago overtook Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the NBA's all-time scoring mark, is a four-time NBA champion and four-time NBA Most Valuable Player as well as the league's oldest active player, now in his 21st campaign.



LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers scores his 40,000th career point during the first half against Michael Porter Jr. #1 of the Denver Nuggets at Crypto.com Arena on Sunday in Los Angeles, California

"Just happy for him. It was a hell of an accomplishment," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "Wish we could have got the win to cap it off. But my hat's off to him. Amazing, amazing run that continues to this day."

James scored his first basket on a fast break layup 6:20 into the opening quarter to give the Lakers an 18-12 edge, then added a 3-pointer from the left corner 63 seconds later for a 23-14 advantage.

He sank a layup 14 seconds into the second quarter to pull within two of the milestone, then

missed a free throw and on the next Laker possession missed a 3-point shot.

James scored the historic basket with 10:39 remaining in the second quarter, banking in a driving layup from the left side of the basket to give the Lakers a 37-32 lead.

The crowd gave James a standing ovation during a timeout and the ball James used for the milestone hoop was removed from the game.

"Much respect and much loyalty to the Laker fan base for showing me

that love during the timeout," James said.

Asked if he thought another NBA player could crack 40,000, James replied, "I have no idea."

"You have to play the game quite a while and have some good luck as far as injuries and things of that nature. You have to take care of your body. You have to be present on the floor and then you have to be productive as well."

The Nuggets equalised at 89-89 entering the fourth quarter and seized command with a 9-0 run in the final minutes to

lead 117-110, Denver hitting 15-of-22 from the floor in the final quarter.

"I just want to be better," James said. "It's always over the last few minutes of the game where they make plays, we don't make plays that can be frustrating."

Denver's Michael Porter Jr. went 10-for-10 from the floor and scored 25 points while matching Jokic's 10 rebounds.

"He was amazing," Jokic said. "It's always a good thing when you have a guy on your team that can shoot like that."

The Lakers, 33-29, rank

10th in the Western Conference while the Nuggets are 42-19, third in the West but only a half-game behind leading Minnesota.

In other games, Mikal Bridges scored 38 points to lead host Brooklyn over Atlanta 114-102 while Jimmy Butler netted 37 points to power the Miami Heat over visiting Utah 126-120.

Anfernee Simons hit 30 points to lead Portland's 107-100 overtime triumph at Memphis while Jalen Green's 34 points led Houston over host Phoenix 118-109.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

FAMILY FLAVOUR

Intuitive eating: Finding Your food freedom

By Tara Ensour, Nutritionist



As social media and the world around us is now saturated with strict views on eating, it is understandable if you find it challenging to have a healthy relationship with food.

Intuitive eating involves listening to your body's needs and growing a connection to it physically, mentally and emotionally. It embodies rational thought and instinct.

The diet culture

Rules around food are now increasing more than ever and it can be difficult to know who and what to listen to. With so many of our feelings around food influenced by diet culture, it can be easy to forget which foods we like or dislike.

Rather than stopping yourself from eating a cookie because you'd feel like it would prevent you from obtaining the "ideal" body image, intuitive eating allows you to enjoy the cookie and move on with your day.

It helps you face your fear of foods. It teaches you how to trust your body and hunger cues

and eat guilt-free while still meeting your body's nutritional needs.

Finding your food freedom

Studies indicate that dieting never works. The cycle of restricting and calorie counting almost always leads to deeper problems. Diets always fail and often bring disordered eating to life.

A brain so obsessed with food will constantly be thinking about things like calories, workouts and how to obtain the next healthy meal.

With intuitive eating, you give yourself more time to focus on things like family, work, relationships and the opportunity to connect with your hobbies and passions again.

This framework helps you find your food freedom.

A few tips for intuitive eating:

1. Remember that food is not the enemy. Make peace with your



food. A food is neither "bad" nor "good". Instead of restricting entire food groups, have all the food you like in moderation.

2. Eat when hungry, stop when full. A lot of us fight our hunger and fullness cues. Instead, practice being in tune with what your body is telling you and honour any cravings.

3. Don't stop moving. Move because it makes you feel good, not because you must. Rather than focussing on how many calo-



ries your workout burns, or whether you reached 10,000 steps today, move your body because you like how you feel afterwards.

4. Change your goals

Instead of having goals that focus on weight loss and body image, rephrase your goals to focus on things like feeling comfortable in your



own skin, at any size.

5. Ditch diet culture. To eat intuitively, you'll need to try and fight everything your mind tells you about food rules and dieting.

While this is easier

said than done, it is still attainable with practice. Intuitive eating can be a viable approach to achieving a healthy relationship with food. It promotes selfcompassion, en-

courages nourishing your body and helps you stay away from restrictive and often harmful diets.

If this concept sounds appealing to you, I recommend you consider incorporating its principles in your daily life and work closely with a nutritionist to reach a more fulfilling and balanced approach to food.

You can contact Tara Ensour at taraensour@nutritional.com

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