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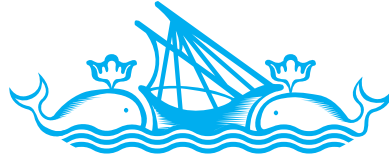
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Macron tours Gulf, discusses regional peace and stability

UAE buys record 80 French fighter jets



JEDDAH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (left) receives French President Emmanuel Macron in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah yesterday. — AFP

JEDDAH: French President Emmanuel Macron met Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler in Jeddah yesterday to discuss regional stability, in particular crisis-hit Lebanon. Macron landed in the kingdom's Red Sea city after visits to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar as part of a short Gulf tour. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shook hands with Macron, who wore a face mask, welcoming him at the royal palace before talks and a lunch together.

He becomes one of the first Western leaders to meet with Prince Mohammed in the kingdom since Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed. Dialogue with Saudi Arabia was necessary to "work for stability in the region", Macron said. During his discussions with Prince Mohammed, Macron pleaded the case of Lebanon, where an economic crisis has been exacerbated by a diplomatic row sparked in October between Beirut and some Gulf states - in particular Saudi Arabia which had blocked imports.

His efforts are likely to receive a boost by the resignation of Lebanese information minister Georges Kordahi whose remarks on the Saudi intervention in Yemen's war sparked the row. Macron on Friday welcomed Kordahi's departure, saying he hopes to "re-engage all Gulf countries in relations with Lebanon". The French president has spearheaded international efforts to help Lebanon out of its worst-ever economic downturn.

The country's fragile government has been struggling to secure international aid, particularly from wealthy Arab powers. Kordahi said Friday his resignation, which he had initially ruled out, became inevitable earlier this week when he met Lebanon's prime minister. "I understood from Prime Minister Najib Mikati... that the French want my resignation before Macron's visit to Riyadh because it could maybe help them start a dialogue with Saudi officials over Lebanon and the future of bilateral ties," Kordahi told reporters.

Lebanon's ties with Gulf states have also grown increasingly strained in recent years due to the growing influence of Iran-backed Lebanese movement Hezbollah. Macron said France had a role to play in the region. "But how can we work for regional stability and on Lebanon and many other issues while ignoring the first Gulf state in terms of geography and size?" he said, referring to the kingdom which is the Arab world's largest economy, and the world's biggest crude exporter.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates signed a record 14-billion-euro contract for 80 Rafale warplanes and committed billions of euros in other deals as French President Emmanuel Macron kicked off a Gulf tour on Friday. The biggest international order ever made for the French jets came as Macron held talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed at the start of a two-day trip which will also take in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

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Lebanon minister resigns to ease crisis with Gulf

BEIRUT: The Lebanese minister whose remarks on the Saudi intervention in Yemen's war sparked a row with Gulf countries that exacerbated Lebanon's multiple crises resigned Friday in hopes it would help end the standoff. Georges Kordahi, speaking during a press conference, said he hoped this decision "could open a window... towards improved bilateral ties" with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies.

"The timing is right because I am offering something that could provide Lebanon with an exit" from the crisis, the former information minister said. Kordahi's resignation has been on the table for weeks and is expected to help end a political and diplomatic quandary that has crippled Lebanon's fledgling cabinet since October.

His announcement coincided with a visit to the Gulf by French President Emmanuel Macron, who has spearheaded international efforts to help Lebanon out of its worst ever economic downturn. Kordahi said the resignation, which he had initially ruled out, became inevitable earlier this week when he met Prime Minister Najib Mikati. "I understood from Prime Minister Najib Mikati... that the French want my resignation before Macron's visit to Riyadh because it could maybe help them start a dialogue with Saudi officials over Lebanon and the future of bilateral ties," Kordahi told reporters.

"Because I am keen to take advantage of this promising opportunity that Macron has... I have decided to step down from my ministerial post," Macron who arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday visited Qatar - and Saudi Arabia welcomed Kordahi's announcement as a step towards revitalizing Mikati's cabinet. "I remain cautious, but my wish is... to be able to re-engage all the Gulf countries in their relationship with Lebanon," both politically and economically, Macron told reporters in Dubai. "We are not at the end of the road yet but I hope that the next hours will see us move forward," he added.

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Omicron variant detected in 38 countries

GENEVA: The Omicron variant has been detected in 38 countries but no deaths have yet been reported, the WHO said, as authorities worldwide rushed to stem the heavily mutated COVID-19 strain's spread amid warnings that it could damage the global economic recovery. The United States and

Australia became the latest countries to confirm locally transmitted cases of the variant, as Omicron infections pushed South Africa's total cases past three million.

The World Health Organization has warned it could take weeks to determine how infectious the variant is, whether it causes more severe illness and how effective treatments and vaccines are against it. "We're going to get the answers that everybody out there needs," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said. The WHO said on Friday it had still not seen any reports of deaths related to Omicron, but the new variant's spread has led to warnings that it could cause more than half of Europe's COVID cas-

es in the next few months.

The new variant could also slow global economic recovery, just as the Delta strain did, International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Friday. "Even before the arrival of this new variant, we were concerned that the recovery, while it continues, is losing somewhat momentum," she said. "A new variant that may spread very rapidly can dent confidence." A preliminary study by researchers in South Africa, where the variant was first reported on November 24, suggests it is three times more likely to cause reinfections compared to the Delta or Beta strains.

Continued on Page 2

Total solar eclipse plunges Antarctica into darkness

SANTIAGO: A total solar eclipse plunged Antarctica from summer into darkness yesterday in a rare astronomical spectacle witnessed by a handful of scientists and thrill-seekers - and countless penguins. "The visibility was excellent," said Raul Cordero of the University of Santiago de Chile (USACH), who was on site to witness "totality" at 0746 GMT, with the "ring of fire" phase lasting just over 40 seconds. Solar eclipses occur when the Moon passes between the Sun and

Earth, casting its shadow on Earth. For the eclipse to be total, the Sun, Moon and Earth must be directly aligned.

Totality was visible only in Antarctica, experienced by a small number of scientists, experts and adventure tourists - who paid some \$40,000 for the privilege. Streamed live by NASA from the Union Glacier camp in Antarctica, the eclipse began at 0700 GMT as the Moon began to move in front of the Sun, coming to an

Continued on Page 2



UNION GLACIER: Chilean and US scientists look at a solar eclipse from the Union Glacier in Antarctica yesterday. — AFP

In Iraq, 'little people' team dreams big

BAGHDAD: Twice a week, a small football pitch in Iraq offers the 25-member national squad of little people a chance to fulfill dreams and tackle prejudice. Omar Abdel Rahman's team has set its sights on an ambitious goal: to travel to Argentina for their first international tournament. Despite modest means, the players come from

across the country to train, leaving behind their daily troubles, discrimination and jibes.

"The team has changed the course of my life and that of the other players," said Abdel Rahman, who works in a Baghdad cafe where he prepares shishas. "I'm good at football, but we're treated with contempt and it's impossible to play in mainstream teams," said Abdel Rahman, who stands at 1.42 meters. "But now everything is changing," said the forward, clad in a number nine jersey, with green socks hiked up to his knees. The team has just returned from a friendly

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BAGHDAD: Members of the Iraqi football team for little people attend a training session at a fitness centre in the capital Baghdad in preparation for international competitions. — AFP

Local

Zain sponsors Kuwait's first Electric Vehicles Show

Company showcased latest solar power solutions in its booth



KUWAIT: Zain and Huawei officials during the event.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the Kuwait Electric Vehicles Show (KEV) titled "Green Kuwait". The event is the first roadshow of its kind in the nation to showcase the latest electric and hybrid vehicles available in the Kuwaiti market and aims at introducing the role of EVs in reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change.

introduces the public to the latest EV and hybrid models available in the Kuwaiti market and features six local dealers that represent the biggest car brands in the world. The event also aims at gathering the public and private sectors to affirm the positive and active role of EVs in mitigating climate change and contributing to achieving carbon neutrality.

Zain recently participated in the Global Digital Power Summit 2021, organized by Huawei on the sidelines of GITEX in Dubai, with the aim of enabling organizations to seize the opportunities inherent in renewable energy by relying on digital technologies to achieve sustainability goals.

Zain joins the global efforts that focus on digital energy business, where hopes are pinned on advancing digital transformation in the energy sector to eliminate carbon emissions. The company looks forward to the success of these efforts that seek to integrate digital and electrical technologies to generate safe energy, which is accelerating after the pandemic. The tech sector is currently looking to rely on safe energy, especially with the stage of economic recovery as a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The telecom sector is taking collaborative measures to be fully transparent about climate emissions resulting from the industry's operations, and the sector has

developed an industry-wide roadmap for climate action. The sector aims at achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and reducing carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 in line with the Paris Climate Agreement. Zain is one of the 50 telecom operators that make up more than two-thirds of mobile telecommunications companies in the world to reveal the impact of its operations on the climate, such as its energy consumption rates and greenhouse gases emissions.

Zain realizes that the risks of climate change are an unfolding crisis that poses serious risks to the prosperity and well-being of the region. The company is taking concerted actions in achieving its goals to reduce carbon emissions and is also committed in its operations to reducing its environmental footprint.

Zain is committed towards initiatives that help reduce environmental impacts and is serious about playing a proactive role in building its operations, as well as managing its products, services, and value chain to achieve its goals related to reducing carbon emissions.

The company is keen on aligning its actions with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report and with the goals of Paris Agreement, along with the recommendations of the Global Mobile Telecommunications Union (GSM), and through digital transformation initiatives, expanding the reach of the list of services as much as possible.



Zain showcased solar power technology at its booth.

The company is working to unleash many opportunities offered by the Sustainability Developmental Goals (SDGs), and as part of these efforts, Zain was keen to be a member of the 'Carbon Disclosure Project' (CDP). The company took a decisive step in disclosing its cli-

mate impacts, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions, and is now rated in this global project in Management Scope (B), making it the first telecom company in the Middle East and Africa region to achieve this rating in addressing climate change.



Supporting efforts to reduce carbon emissions

Zain was present at KEV through its dedicated booth, through which the company showcased the latest solar power and photoelectric technologies in collaboration with its global partner Huawei. Zain introduced visitors to the huge benefits behind solar and photoelectric innovations in preserving natural resources and mitigating climate change. This is especially true as solar power is one of the best sustainable sources for renewable energy to charge electric vehicles.

The Kuwait Electric Vehicles Show (Green Kuwait) is a special gathering that

Lebanon minister resigns to ease...

Continued from Page 1

Kordahi criticized the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen during an interview which was recorded before he became minister but was aired on Lebanese TV after he joined the cabinet. His comments angered Saudi Arabia as well as Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE, which responded by recalling their ambassadors from Beirut. Saudi Arabia also blocked imports and Kuwait said it would limit visas issued to Lebanese, prompting fears that a Gulf backlash could endanger the interests of millions of expatriates living in Arab states of the oil-rich Gulf.

The standoff marked a fresh blow for Lebanon, whose government was only formed in September after a 13-month deadlock. After Kordahi's announcement, Mikati called the resignation a "necessary" move. "It could open a door to address the problem," he said in a statement released by his office, expressing hopes that a "page has been turned". Lebanon is in urgent need of international

aid, particularly from its wealthy Arab neighbors, to lift it out of the financial and political quagmire.

Saudi Arabia is Lebanon's third largest export market, accounting for six percent of the country's exports in 2020, worth around \$217 million, according to the chamber of commerce. Following Kordahi's announcement, the plummeting Lebanese pound regained some of its value against the dollar after dropping to a record low last week.

It was trading at about 22,000 to the greenback, money changers told AFP, up from more than 25,000 just days earlier. But there was no immediate guarantee that Kordahi's resignation would improve Lebanon's ties with Gulf states which have grown increasingly strained in recent years due to the growing influence of Shiite Lebanese movement Hezbollah.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah, which has seats in Lebanon's cabinet and parliament, is branded as a terrorist group by Saudi Arabia and much of the West. Last month, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said that Hezbollah's dominance in Lebanon, and not just Kordahi's comments, had prompted the kingdom to cut ties. "The dominance of Iranian proxies... makes dealing with Lebanon pointless for the kingdom and for... I think, Gulf countries," Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan said. — AFP

The Rafale order, signed on Friday while Macron met with Sheikh Mohammed at Dubai's Expo site, is the biggest made internationally for the Dassault Aviation aircraft since it entered service in 2004. It follows the collapse of a multibillion-dollar submarine deal with Australia in September that left Paris fuming after Canberra negotiated a new defense pact with London and Washington.

French Defense Minister Florence Parly called it a "historic contract" which will contribute "directly to regional stability". The F4 model Rafales, currently under development, will be delivered from 2027. "This is an outcome of the strategic partnership between the two countries, consolidating their capacity to act together for their autonomy and security," the French presidency said in a statement.

By snapping up the fighter aircraft the UAE is eclipsing the fleets of Gulf rival Qatar, which has bought 36 of the planes, and Egypt which ordered 24 in 2015 and 30 earlier this year. The new order will replace the UAE's 60 Mirage 2000-9 jets bought in 1998, and comes 10 years after failed negotiations by then French president Nicolas Sarkozy. The Rafale has since made a breakthrough in the international market despite competition from American and other European manufacturers. It now has six foreign clients including Qatar, India, Egypt, Greece and Croatia. — AFP

Total solar eclipse plunges...

Continued from Page 1

end at 0806 GMT. The Union Glacier camp is situated about 1,000 kilometers north of the South Pole.

In Iraq, 'little people' team...

Continued from Page 1

match in Jordan. Next year, they aim to travel to Argentina to take part in the tournament for little people.

In 2018, a "Dwarf Copa America" was held in Buenos Aires, the first of its kind. The date of the 2022 edition has yet to be set, said Facundo Mariano Rojas, head of the Argentina-based international football federation for little people. This will depend mainly on restrictions imposed for the coronavirus pandemic, he said. "We're also looking for financial resources to help the participating countries." The matches will be played by seven-member teams in indoor stadiums and on futsal fields.

A key difference will be the size of the goals, fixed at

Omicron variant detected in 38...

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The emergence of Omicron was the "ultimate evidence" of the danger of unequal global vaccination rates, Red Cross head Francesca Rocca said. South African doctors said there had been a spike in children under five admitted to hospital since Omicron emerged, but stressed it was too early to know if young children were particularly susceptible. "The incidence in those under-fives is now second-highest, and second only to the incidence in those over 60," said Wassila Jassat from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

In the US, two cases involved residents with no recent international travel history - showing Omicron is already circulating inside the country. "This is a case of community spread," the Hawaii

According to NASA, a partial eclipse was also visible across parts of the southern hemisphere, including parts of Saint Helena, Namibia, Lesotho, South Africa, Chile, New Zealand and Australia. The last total solar eclipse in Antarctica occurred on November 23, 2003 and the next one will not be until 2039. An annular solar eclipse - in which the Moon obscures all but an outer ring of the Sun - is set to sweep across North America in October 2023, followed by a total eclipse in April 2024. — AFP

1.7 meters in height and two metres in width, compared to the regular 2.44 by 7.32 meters. It was the Copa America that inspired Hussein Jalil to start up the Iraqi team in 2019. Other players come from Arbil, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk in northern Iraq, from Nasiriyah in the southeast, and the eastern city of Kut. Salah Ahmed, a 37-year-old forward, takes time off from work as a bike-repairman to attend. "Before joining the team, I suffered from society's attitude towards little people," said the father of one.

Dwarfism is a medical or genetic condition that results in a stature below four foot, 10 inches, according to Little People of America, a support organization. Those with the condition, who refer to themselves as little people, face several challenges when it comes to playing football. "Some players suffer harassment in public places and on the streets," said Jalil. "But the situation is changing, football has given them more confidence." He pointed to other problems, such as finding football kits in the right sizes in the shops, so they have had to improvise. — AFP

Health Department said. US President Joe Biden on Thursday unveiled his plans to battle COVID-19 during the winter, with new testing requirements for travelers and a surge in vaccination efforts.

All incoming travelers will need to test negative within a day of their flights, and rapid tests that cost \$25 will be covered by insurance and distributed free to the uninsured. Australia on Friday reported three students in Sydney had tested positive for the variant, despite a ban on non-citizens entering the country and restrictions on flights from southern Africa, with multiple countries rushing to limit travel from the region in the past week.

"It's quite a kick in the nuts," said Sabine Stam, who runs a South African tour company and whose customers are demanding refunds. "Everyone is too scared to set a new travel date," she said. In Norway, officials said at least 13 people who contracted COVID-19 after an office Christmas party in Oslo last week had the Omicron variant - though so far they have only had mild symptoms, city health official Tine Ravlo said. — AFP

Macron tours Gulf, discusses regional...

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The resource-rich UAE, one of the French defense industry's biggest customers, also inked an order for 12 Caracal military transport helicopters for a total bill of more than 17 billion euros. "French engagement in the region, active cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the clear positions we have taken have allowed us to grow closer with the United Arab Emirates," Macron told journalists in Dubai. "And at a time when questions are being asked about other long-term partners, I think this reinforces the position of France," he added, describing France as a "solid" and "trustworthy" ally that "sticks to its commitments".

Abu Dhabi's Mubadala sovereign wealth fund also pledged eight billion euros in investments in French businesses, while the licence of the UAE capital's branch of the Louvre art gallery was extended for 10 years to 2047. The Emirates was the fifth biggest customer for the French defense industry with 4.7 billion euros from 2011-2020, according to a parliamentary report.

Local

Kuwait calls for charter on safe, orderly immigration

Kuwait highlights need to honor fair demands of the Palestinian people

ROME: Representative of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Fares Al-Otaibi urged enhancing international parliamentary cooperation to tackle the immigration issues and approve the international charter on immigration. The Mediterranean region and the world at large experience the biggest wave of illegal immigration since the World War II, he said in a speech to the seventh edition of the Rome MED - Mediterranean Dialogues. Otaibi, rapporteur of the Kuwaiti parliamentary foreign affairs committee, made the speech before quitting the meeting during the speech of the Zionist entity's representative. He regretted that thousands of people who were forced to immigrate illegally have lost their lives during their pursuit of hope.

"Illegal immigration, whatever its causes might be, has become a fait accompli which results in economic, security and demographic impacts on host countries," Otaibi pointed out. Millions of illegal immigrants continue to live in severe living conditions and suffer from various types of discrimination, he said, noting, that "this requires setting out on a well-calculated process to facilitate the integration of immigrants into host communities."

"Otherwise, the world will definitely face the biggest humanitarian and economic disaster, which risks exacerbating the scarcity of

natural resources, and jeopardizing the food and water security," he warned. The Kuwaiti MP urged backing up the global charter on safe and orderly immigration as a way to protect the rights of immigrants and refugees and improve their living conditions. He highlighted the need for the international community to share the responsibility for finding fairer and more effective solutions that could restore stability and security in the home countries of immigrants, thus creating the conditions for their voluntary return. He also called for scaling up international support to the Arab and Muslim countries that bear the brunt of hosting the refugees who fled conflict in their countries.

Migrants' plight

Underling the need to address the root causes of instabilities, foremost among which is the Question of Palestine, he said the Palestinian people are suffering the ordeal of the Zionist occupation with millions of them living in refugee camps over the past decades. After reaffirming the supportive stance of the Kuwaiti leaders, government and people to the fair demands of the Palestinian people, Otaibi left the hall of the meeting upon the start of a speech by the Zionist representative via a video link.

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi had opened on Friday Rome's Mediterranean Dialogue Forum (MED 2021) for sustainable growth with the participation of several states including Kuwait. In the opening address to the event, Draghi — via video — said that Mediterranean countries were in need of cooperation and ways to address challenges such as the migrants' plight as well as incidents such as the six-day closure of the Suez Canal back in March. Bringing the focus to the GCC region, Draghi indicated there was a need to develop cooperation between the Mediterranean and the GCC region through various new mechanisms. He noted that events such as Expo 2020 Dubai would help bolster regional and international cooperation on various levels. He also brought issues such as the Iranian nuclear issue, the situation in Iraq, the political developments in Libya, Lebanon, and elsewhere, saying that Italy would play its part as a nation as well as the leaders of NATO in its Presidency starting next May.

On the Palestinian cause, the President affirmed that it was paramount to seek the two states solution between Palestine and the Zionist entity, implementing just decision to rid the region from the source of ongoing tension. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah attended



LAS PALMAS: Picture shows the grave of a Malian migrant toddler who died in March this year after arriving in Arguineguin in respiratory arrest on March 16, in San Lazaro cemetery in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, on November 17, 2021. —AFP

the event. He said that the MED 2021 was an event of great importance, encouraging cooperation amongst participating states. MED 2021 will focus during its activities on joint

security and welfare, handling of immigration, civil society and culture development in addition to issues connected with economy, conflicts, and sustainable development. —KUNA

Second session of UN conference on nuke, WMD-free Mideast concludes

NEW YORK: The Second Session of the UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction concluded by adopting final documents that would help in continuing and framing the work of the conference in the future. In a statement to the press, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said: "The second session of the conference, headed by Kuwait, wound up after five days of intense and painstaking work, as several formal and informal meetings were held before and

during the conference".

The conference aims to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to maintain peace and security in the Middle East similar to Latin America, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central Asia, Otaibi said. He added that the conferees had adopted and completed a working list that defined the procedures of electing a President and the voting process, as well as how to establish subsidiary bodies affiliated with the conference.

They also agreed on forming a working team

that would continue holding meetings during the second and third sessions in the next few weeks to prepare for the upcoming events due to be held in coordination with member states, including the Middle East countries, Otaibi noted. A final "objective" report of the conference, including a preview of the stands of member states on WMD, was adopted after many discussions and consultations during the conference, he added.

Ambassador Otaibi continued saying that the Middle East Region has been suffering from tensions and instability for centuries, in addition to other conflicts since 2010, so establishing a WMD Free-Zone is a must. "In 2019 we built on the success achieved during the first session of the Conference, headed by Jordan, and we are looking forward, during the second session, to make further progress for a WMD-free Middle East," Otaibi concluded.



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi attends the Second Session of the UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. —KUNA

KFH hosts handicapped persons in training program



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House and Kuwait Society for the Handicapped in a group photo with the trainees.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has honored the first batch of special needs students from the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH). The students participated in a training program as part of a partnership agreement, which is the first of its kind at the banking sector level to be signed between the bank and the society. The agreement comprises several initiatives and training programs allocated to students with special needs including field visits to KFH branches and departments.

Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH, Abdulwahab Al-Rushood said in the honoring ceremony that KFH is always keen on fostering, supporting, and qualifying various society categories including special needs students. He emphasized that KFH endeavors always to enhance its social role in a comprehensive and integrated manner to cover all society categories and provide the most interesting activities and services for special needs children.

Rushood added that KFH social contributions are some of the main factors to enhance the development process, improve Kuwaiti society capabilities, address main issues and enhance society efforts to build a better future for all. He added that those social initiatives reflect the positive attitude towards the significance of enhancing the role of human capabilities to contribute to the development efforts and assist the state in achieving progress in various fields.

Rushood expressed his delight to participate in honoring the first batch of handicapped interns in collaboration with KSH especially that the ceremony coincided with the International Day for Disabled Persons on 3rd December each year. The honoring ceremony concludes a training program organized by KFH to improve the capabilities of the participants, drive their creativity and innovation, overcome all difficulties, and achieve their goals with the best possible means.

He added: "We started our partnership with the KSH last September to train and qualify this distinguished group of disabled students. We were very much impressed with their enthusiasm and dedication to develop themselves and cope with the practical and theoretical aspects of the training program. We are looking at a highly distinguished and ambitious group who are able to serve their country and themselves and contribute to the achievement of Kuwait's ambitions and aspirations."

Rushood indicated that KFH's initiative to train and

qualify the persons with disabilities was a successful step to merge them into society and practical life and assist them in building a better future for themselves and their families. He reiterated KFH's permanent readiness to participate and cooperate in any programs and activities serving the interests of the disabled.

Rushood expressed his pride in announcing that the human resources sector at KFH comprises a group of ambitious disabled persons in various fields. He extended his appreciation and gratitude to all those who participated in organizing the disabled training program and making it a success. The program covered various KFH departments including bank branches, human resources, banking cards and others.

Director General of the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH), Dr Elham Al-Hamdan said: "With the support, enhancement, commitment and dedication of the employees of both KFH and the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped our students were able to complete roughly 100 hours of occupational training side by side with other non-handicapped colleagues. Today, we celebrate the great collective efforts extended by all those who participated in assisting the disabled to merge into society."

She added: "We are very proud of cooperating with KFH. Our sincere thanks, appreciation, and gratitude are extended to them for training a group of our outstanding students, thus aiming to achieve Society's goals to provide care, education, and innovative support to the persons we serve. Also, it is one of the essential factors to achieve the sustainable development plan 2030."

KFH is always keen on organizing special courses for its employees to acquire certain skills to deal with the ambitions of disabled persons e.g., the sign language to deal with persons having hearing disability. They are also trained on the rules and regulations to deal with the disabled persons at branches and sale points, give them priority along with the aged persons, understand their needs give them assistance and provide them with all automated equipment, e-channels, and technical support.

KFH has facilitated all banking services and products for the disabled persons without bearing any additional fees or costs. KFH has provided a special branch in each governorate for the handicapped including appropriate car parking, wheelchairs, and other necessary aids.

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Book chronicles Suad Al-Sabah's journey in literature, activism



KUWAIT: The Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House recently published book by Kuwaiti writer Fatima Yousuf Al-Ali which chronicles the veteran poet's journey in literature and activism. The book, titled 'Why Suad Al-Sabah', consists of four chapters. The first chapter, titled 'Suad Al-Sabah... three faces of one coin' discusses the poet's family, as well as cultural and poetic identities.

The second chapter is titled 'Suad Al-Sabah... Motherhood is a homeland'. It includes the role Suad Al-Sabah played as a mother as well as her activism in support of motherhood and children in the Arab world. The third chapter is titled 'Suad Al-Sabah... a commando searching for the truth'. It covers the battles the poet had fought in search for freedom at the humanitarian, cultural and intellectual levels, and other battles she fought for human rights.

Finally, the fourth chapter, titled 'Suad Al-Sabah... our civilization's wealth and a nation's future', includes the national achievements Suad Al-Sabah made in defending the Arab world culturally, intellectually, and civilized levels and what she presented for the future of the Arab nation.



Motorist dead in Artal Road collision

KUWAIT: A motorist died in an accident between a car and a truck reported on Artal Road, Kuwait Fire Force said yesterday. The victim, a man in his fifties, was pronounced dead on the scene. Search and rescue center men were called to the scene to handle the situation. An investigation was opened to reveal the circumstances behind the accident, KFF added in a statement.

Meanwhile, KFF said that firemen rescued four persons on a boat before it sank near Failaka island. Sea rescue and Failaka fire stations' men had responded to a mayday call and managed to save the four as water was leaking into their boat. The four were in stable condition at the time of rescue, KFF noted.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This picture taken yesterday shows a general view from Kuwait City. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

UN-Habitat plants trees in Al-Abdaliya Oasis

Promoting environmental awareness and sustainable development

KUWAIT: Head of the UN Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait and GCC Dr Ameera Al-Hassan said that the 'Kuwait Plants' campaign, which was launched in 2019, aims at planting 1,000 trees in Al-Abdaliya Oasis in cooperation with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), in order to promote environmental awareness and achieve sustainable development. During an afforestation campaign organized by the UN-Habitat yesterday, Hassan said that the campaign aims at greening areas to resist the impact of global climate change, face desertification and reduce the severity of climate change caused by high temperature and lack of rains. All the trees that will be planted are all desert trees, resistant to heat and water shortages and help improve the general health of the population, as they are an important element in the nature cycle, noted Hassan. In addition, the participation of more than 50 ambassadors aims to raise awareness about the importance of steps taken to improve the climate.



Head of the UN Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat) in Kuwait and GCC Dr Ameera Al-Hassan



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski (left) plants a tree during the campaign. — KUNA photos



Director of East Kuwait Operations at KOC Omar Sadiq (left) and Ambassador of Tajikistan Dr Zubaydzoda Najot take part in the campaign.



More than 50
ambassadors
participated

Director of East Kuwait Operations at KOC Omar Sadiq said that Al-Abdaliya Oasis is located west of Kuwait in Kabd extending to south of Kuwait, and started working on it 2011, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, where we were provided with wild plants. The Reserve in the first phase was 1,200,000 square meters, where we succeeded in cultivating 20,000 wild plants, we moved to the second phase two years after, with 1,800,000 square meters' area, aiming to preserve biodiversity and developing the local wildlife, explained Sadiq. After the success of the second phase, we proceeded with the third, where the total area space is now 8 million square meters and has 155 thousand plants and wild trees, which includes 40 types of trees and plants such as Al-Arfaj, Al-Arti, Al-Ramth, Al-Qarsi and others.

Meanwhile, the US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski said that this is the second time she

visits the wonderful and distinguished Al-Abdaliya Nature Reserve, where she enjoys being there because she leans a lot about nature, with all its plants, animals, and trees in Kuwait. Kuwait showed a great commitment to protecting the environment during its participation in the 27th UN Summit on Climate Change and the Environment (COP26), which was held in Glasgow, noted Romanowski.

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan Dr Zubaydzoda Najot,

said in the meantime that participating in the campaign is the best way to get rid of global environmental and climatic problems, which lies in adhering to initiatives aimed at protecting the environment, rationalizing the use of natural resources, giving priority to green energy, and developing the green economy. He said that in the interest of strengthening ties between Tajikistan and Kuwait, several seedlings of ornamental and fruitful trees were brought from Tajikistan. —KUNA

Kuwait re-elected to WFP Executive Board

ROME: Kuwait was re-elected as Executive Board member of the World Food Program (WFP) for a further two-year term as of January 1, 2023, until December 31, 2024. This came during the 168th session of the Council of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), currently held in Rome, with the participation of 49 countries, including Kuwait.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to FAO Yousef Juhail lauded the re-election for a new term and the renewal of the FAO Council's confidence in Kuwait. This reflects Kuwait's position and its strong partnership in global humanitarian work, he said. Juhail, who headed the Executive Board, said re-electing Kuwait for a fourth term in ten years is a certificate of appre-

ciation that prompts Kuwait to continue its humanitarian role to serve the vulnerable and marginalized segments across the world. Kuwait, which chaired the Executive Board for the first time on January 1, 2016 until December 31, 2018, has been considered one of the outstanding countries that pays much attention to humanitarian activities of the WFP. —KUNA



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to FAO Yousef Juhail



Dozens held after mob kills Lankan factory boss

Pope hits out at EU migration divisions at start of Greek visit

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VIENNA: This handout photo taken and released on December 3, 2021 by the EU delegation in Vienna shows representatives from Iran (R) and the European Union (L) attending a meeting of the joint commission on negotiations aimed at reviving the Iran nuclear deal in Vienna, Austria. — AFP

US blames Iran for stalled nuke talks

Delegations of 'E3' grouping of Britain, France and Germany will now return home

WASHINGTON: The United States hit out at Iran on Friday, saying nuclear talks between the Islamic republic and world powers had stalled because Tehran "does not seem to be serious" about returning to the table. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned that Washington would not let its adversary prolong talks while continuing to advance its nuclear ambitions, and would pursue "other options" if diplomacy failed.

The rebuke came as diplomats paused a seventh round of international talks aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, with US and European participants voicing concern after five days of negotiation. "What we've seen in the last couple of days is that Iran right now does not seem to be serious about doing what's necessary to return to compliance, which is why we ended this round of talks in Vienna," Blinken told a virtual conference of world leaders.

"But the window is very, very tight because what is not acceptable, and what we will not allow to happen, is for Iran to try to drag out this process while continuing to move forward inexorably in building up its program," Blinken's assessment was echoed by President Joe Biden, whose spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the first six rounds had "made progress," but that "Iran's approach this week was

not, unfortunately, to try to resolve the remaining issues," Psaki said Iran had "started this new round of negotiations with a new round of nuclear provocations" reported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

'Time is running out'

She also blamed Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, for unilaterally pulling the United States out of the deal, sparking a "dramatic and unprecedented expansion" of Iran's nuclear program. Biden has said he wants to re-enter the deal, and the United States has been participating in this week's talks indirectly.

The landmark accord—initially agreed between Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia and the United States—began unravelling in 2018 when Trump pulled out and reimposed sanctions, prompting Iran to start exceeding limits on its nuclear program the following year.



Diplomats said there was "no path forward" based on the offer

"Tehran is walking back almost all of the difficult compromises crafted after many months of hard work," said senior diplomats from the "E3" grouping of Britain, France and Germany. Delegations will now return home before talks resume in the Austrian capital next week "to see whether gaps can be closed or not," the diplomats said.

The E3 "remain fully committed to a diplomatic way forward," they added, but stressed that "time is running out." The talks are aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, which was aimed at putting curbs on Iran's nuclear program to ensure it couldn't develop an atomic weapon, in exchange for sanctions relief for Tehran. Iran has always insisted that its nuclear program is peaceful.

'Nuclear blackmail'

Blinken had already issued a warning about the prospects for an agreement, arguing that it was "not too late for Iran to reverse course." Zionist Prime

Minister Naftali Bennett had used a call with Blinken to call for the "immediate cessation" of the nuclear talks, accusing Iran of "nuclear blackmail."

The talks had resumed in Vienna on Monday after Iran paused them in June following the election of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi. During this week's talks, Iran submitted two draft proposals on sanctions lifting and nuclear-related measures, presenting them as evidence "of our serious will to reach an agreement."

But European diplomats said there was "no path forward" based on the offer. The talks could resume in the middle of next week but speaking on a trip to the Gulf, French President Emmanuel Macron hinted that there could be a longer break before negotiators reconvene. In a telephone call with EU top diplomat Josep Borrell, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the talks were going well "but slowly on all tracks."

Speaking after the end of the latest talks, China's ambassador to the UN in Vienna, Wang Qun, struck a more positive note, saying that "all parties have re-engaged themselves in very substantive terms." He told reporters outside the Palais Coburg hotel where the talks have been taking place that he hoped the pause in talks "will help to provide further political impetus to the negotiations." — AFP

Macron thanks Qatar for Afghan evacuations

DOHA: French President Emmanuel Macron, on a visit to the Gulf, expressed appreciation to Qatar yesterday for helping to organise the latest evacuation to France of more than 250 threatened Afghans. Qatar has played a significant role both in diplomacy and evacuations at the end of a 20-year war in Afghanistan by Western nations. "I thank Qatar for the role it has played since the start of the crisis, and which permitted the organisation of several evacuations," said Macron, before heading to Saudi Arabia for the final leg of his two-day Gulf tour.

Macron met on Friday evening with

Qatar's Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. A flight chartered by Paris flew out the 258 Afghans who were "particularly threatened because of their activities, especially journalists, or because of their links to France, including former locally-recruited civilian personnel for our armies," the French foreign ministry said on Friday.

The same flight carried 11 French nationals and about 60 from The Netherlands, along with dependents. The ministry said that since September 10, 110 French nationals and their dependents as well as 396 Afghans have been evacuated on 10 flights organised by Qatar. "We are going to continue," Macron said.

Around half of the 124,000 Westerners and Western-allied Afghans flown out of Afghanistan in the waning days of the US-led military involvement in Afghanistan transited through Qatar. Several European countries are considering opening a common site for diplomatic representation in

the country's capital, Kabul, after the departure of their ambassadors following the capital's fall to the Islamist extremist Taliban in August, Macron said.

Qatar has long hosted a Taliban political office. After his stay overnight Friday in Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas, Macron was heading to the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah yesterday.

Macron will become one of the first Western leaders to meet the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, since the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Speaking in Dubai, the first stop on his tour, Macron said he had not forgotten Khashoggi but it was impossible to engage with the region while ignoring the powerful Saudis. The United Arab Emirates signed a record 14-billion-euro (\$15.8 billion) contract for 80 Rafale warplanes at the start of Macron's visit. — AFP



DOHA: Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (R) receives French President Emmanuel Macron (L) at the Amiri Diwan in the capital Doha. — AFP

US vows to prevent any Russian invasion of Ukraine

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden said Friday he would make it "very, very difficult" for Russia to launch any invasion of Ukraine, which warned that a large-scale attack may be planned for next month. Washington and Kiev say Moscow has massed troops near Ukraine's borders and accuse Russia of planning an invasion.

Biden and President Vladimir Putin are due to hold a video call shortly to discuss the rising tensions, both sides confirmed Friday. Biden told reporters in Washington he was putting together "the most comprehensive and meaningful set of initiatives to make it very, very difficult for Mr Putin to go ahead and do what people are wor-

ried he may do."

Moscow seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and has since backed separatists fighting Kiev in the east of the country. The conflict has left more than 13,000 dead. "The most likely time to reach readiness for escalation will be the end of January," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov told parliament in Kiev on Friday.

A report in the Washington Post on Friday citing US officials and an intelligence document said Russia was planning a multi-front offensive involving up to 175,000 troops as soon as next year. Reznikov said a "winter training period" had started in Russia and that Moscow had already launched exercises near Ukrainian territory. He estimated that Russia had around 100,000 troops near Ukraine's border. Russia denies any military build-up.

'This is our land'

On the frontline in eastern Ukraine, government troops said they were ready to repel any Russian assault. "Our task is simple: not to let the enemy

enter our country," a soldier named Andriy, 29, told AFP, smoking in a trench near the frontline town of Svitlodarsk.

"All our guys are ready to hold them back. This is our land, we will protect it until the end," another soldier, Yevgen, 24, added. Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters a date had been agreed for the Putin-Biden video summit but would not be announced until final details of the talks have also been set.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the call was expected "in the very near future." Asked if he had spoken to Putin on Friday morning, Biden shouted "no" as he left a press conference in Washington. He gave no further details of his planned "initiatives" on Ukraine. Putin has warned the West and Kiev against crossing the Kremlin's "red lines" over staging military exercises and building up weaponry in Ukraine.

When reporters asked Biden whether he would accept Putin's line, he responded, "I won't accept anybody's red line." Despite increased contacts

between the two rivals since Putin and Biden met for the first time at a summit in Geneva in June, tensions remain high.

As well as the Ukraine conflict, Russia and the United States continue to argue over cyberattacks and the staffing of their embassies, after several waves of diplomatic expulsions.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told AFP on Friday that it rejects any efforts to get it to scrap its plans to join NATO. Moscow wants to see an end to NATO's eastward expansion, after much of Eastern Europe joined the alliance following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Agreeing to abandon its plans to join the alliance "is not an option," Kuleba said on the sidelines of an OSCE meeting in Stockholm. "I reject this idea that we have to guarantee anything to Russia. I insist that it's Russia who has to guarantee that it will not continue its aggression against any country," he said. NATO officially opened the door to Ukraine membership in 2008, though no progress has been made since. — AFP

International

Pope hits out at EU migration divisions at start of Greek visit

Europe 'torn by nationalist egoism' on migration

ATHENS: Pope Francis yesterday blamed the EU's nationalist divisions for a lack of coordination on migration as he began a landmark trip to Greece, aiming to improve complicated relations with the country's Orthodox Church. Francis said that Europe was "torn by nationalist egoism" on migration during a meeting with EU vice-president Margaritis Schinas, Greek President Katerina Sakellariou and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, among other officials.

The European community "continues to temporise" and "appears at times blocked and uncoordinated" instead of being an "engine of solidarity" on migration, the pope said. Francis has long championed refugees, and today will return to the island of Lesbos, which he last visited in 2016 during the early years of the migration crisis.

The 84-year-old's visit to the Greek capital is the first by a pope since John Paul II in 2001, which in turn was the first papal visit to Athens since the 1054 Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Flying in after a two-day trip to Cyprus, the pope landed shortly after 0900 GMT in the Greek capital, where security was heightened over expected protests by Orthodox hardliners among whom anti-papal sentiment remains strong.

Strong wind offered an unexpected challenge, with Francis coming down the stairs of the plane skulcapp in hand. "I ardently long to meet you all, all, not only Catholics, but all of you," he said in a message before embarking on his trip, which began on Thursday with the visit to Cyprus. "By meeting you, I will quench my thirst at the springs of fraternity."

Francis is scheduled to see the head of the Church of Greece Archbishop Ieronymos later Saturday, followed by members of Greece's small

Catholic community, which represent just 1.2 percent of the majority-Orthodox population. Francis flies back to Rome tomorrow.

High security

Up to 2,000 police are deployed in Athens to monitor possible disruptions by Orthodox hardliners, who blame the Catholics for the Schism and the 1204 sacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. Reciprocal excommunications exchanged between the two churches after the Schism were only lifted in 1965. Authorities have banned protests in the Athens centre.

Relations with the Church of Greece are much better than they were ahead of John Paul's visit. Pierre Salembier, head of the Jesuit Catholic community in Greece, told AFP. But he said there were still some "known anti-Catholic fanatics" within the Church's governing body. The bishop of Piraeus called the pope's visit "immoral", according to the union of Orthodox journalists.

'Open arms'

During his visit to Cyprus, Francis condemned "slavery" and "torture" in migrant camps, drawing parallels with World War II. The Cyprus government said Friday that 50 migrants, including two Cameroonians stuck for months in the divided island's buffer zone, will be relocated to Italy thanks to Francis.

On Sunday the pope will again visit Greece's Lesbos, a flashpoint of the 2015 refugee crisis and thereafter, "as a pilgrim to the wellsprings of humanity" to call for the integration of refugees. The island's sprawling Moria migrant camp, which the pontiff visited in 2016, burnt down last year and has been replaced by the temporary facility of Mavrovouni.

“I ardently long to meet you all, not only Catholics, but all of you”



ATHENS, Attica: Pope Francis (2L) holds hands with Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and All Greece (R) during a meeting in the "Throne Room" of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Greece in Athens, yesterday. —AFP

With EU funds, Greece is building a series of "closed" facilities on Greek islands with barbed wire fencing, surveillance cameras, X-ray scanners and magnetic gates that are closed at night. NGOs and aid groups have raised concerns about the new camps, arguing that people's movements should not be restricted.

Thirty-six groups active in Greece this week wrote to Francis raising the plight of people in the camps and requesting his help to halt illegal pushbacks of migrants allegedly by Greek border officers. Greece vehemently denies the claims, insisting its coastguard saves lives at sea. Addressing Francis yesterday, President

Sakellariou insisted Athens "is making every possible effort to prevent the illegal traffic of people and their political exploitation".

The pontiff is expected to visit the camp and will meet two "randomly chosen" families, an official said. "We await him with open arms," said Berthe, a Cameroonian asylum seeker at the camp. She said she hoped the pope "will pray for us to help us overcome the insecurities we have lived, through faith."

On Wednesday, nearly 30 asylum seekers landed near the camp. On Friday, two migrants died when a speedboat overturned near the Greek island of Kos. —AFP

US nurse who raped disabled patient jailed for 10 years

LOS ANGELES: A nurse who raped and impregnated a severely disabled woman in his care has been jailed for 10 years in the US state of Arizona, local media reported Friday. Nathan Sutherland admitted sexually abusing his then-29-year-old patient at the facility in Phoenix, where she had been cared for since she was three.

The victim, who has not been named, suffers from significant mental disability due to seizures early in her childhood, her family has said. "She does not speak but has some ability to move her limbs, head and neck," a statement issued through their attorney said. "Their daughter responds to sound and is able to make facial gestures. The important thing is that she is a beloved daughter, albeit with significant intellectual disabilities."

A healthy baby was born as a result of the assault in December 2019. Staff at the health care center said they were unaware that the young woman was pregnant until the time of her delivery. DNA samples of male employees at the care facility revealed Sutherland was the father.

He initially denied responsibility, but later confessed. Sutherland, who had worked at the institution since 2012, was jailed for 10 years on Thursday by a Phoenix court. He will also be subject to lifetime supervision and will be registered as a sex offender. —AFP

US school shooter's parents charged with manslaughter

WASHINGTON: The parents of a 15-year-old boy who shot dead four students at a high school in the US state of Michigan with a gun bought for him by his father just days earlier were charged with involuntary manslaughter on Friday. Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald, in a rare move by law enforcement, announced that James and Jennifer Crumbley, the parents of Ethan Crumbley, each face four counts of involuntary manslaughter.

"These charges are intended to hold the individuals who contributed to this tragedy accountable and also send the message that gun owners have a responsibility," McDonald said at a press conference. "While the shooter was the one who entered the high school and pulled the trigger, there are other individuals who contributed to the events on November 30 and it's my intention to hold them accountable as well," she said.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said the whereabouts of the parents was not currently known and they were considered fugitives. "We'll have them in custody soon," Bouchard said. "They cannot run from their part in this tragedy." Four students, aged 14 to 17, were killed in the shooting at Oxford High School north of Detroit and six more were wounded, along with a teacher.

Ethan Crumbley has been charged as an adult with state murder and terror charges. While school shootings carried out by teens occur frequently in the United States, it is unusual for parents to face charges. James Crumbley bought the 9mm Sig Sauer semi-automatic handgun used by his son four days before the shooting.

Ethan Crumbley was with his father at the time of the purchase at a local firearms store and the teenager posted a picture of the gun on his

Instagram account, writing "just got my new beauty today" along with a heart emoji. According to police, Ethan Crumbley recorded a video on his cell phone the night before the attack saying he was planning a shooting at the school the next day, but it was not posted online.

That same day, a teacher at the school had observed Ethan Crumbley searching for ammunition on his cell phone during class and reported it to school officials. His mother was contacted by the school but did not respond to voicemail or email messages.

McDonald said Jennifer Crumbley did exchange a text message about the incident with her son that day, writing: "lol I'm not mad at you. You have to learn not to get caught."

'Don't do it'

The parents were summoned to the school on the day of the shooting itself after a teacher was "alarmed" by a note she found on Ethan Crumbley's desk, McDonald said. It featured a drawing of a gun and the words "The thoughts won't stop. Help me."

It also had a picture of a bullet, a person who had been shot and the words "my life is useless" and "the world is dead," she said. The parents were shown the drawing at a meeting with school officials and advised that they needed to get the boy into counselling within 48 hours.

McDonald said they resisted taking their son home and he returned to class. He later entered a bathroom, emerged with the gun, which he had concealed in his backpack, and opened fire. "The notion that a parent could read those words and also know that their son had access to a deadly weapon that they gave him is unconscionable and I think it's criminal," McDonald said.

"I am angry," she said. "I'm angry as a mother. I'm angry as the prosecutor. I'm angry as a person that lives in this county. "We need to do better in this country," she said. "We need to say enough is enough for our kids, our teachers, parents, for all of us in this community and the communities across this nation."

values" and a crackdown on crime and insecurity.

"I bring a programme of real change as France has no more time to lose after Macron's term which has damaged and divided France so much," Pécresse said after making the second round. "I am the only person who can beat Emmanuel Macron. I am a woman who wins and acts," she added. Ciotti, meanwhile, has long argued for radical policy "disruptions" to protect a France he deems at risk of losing its identity from immigration and economic decline.

'French Guantanamo'

Vowing to crack down on insecurity and the Islamist jihadist attacks that have rocked the country in recent years, Ciotti has warned of a "war of civilisations" and promises a "French Guantanamo" to hold suspected terrorists.

His rhetoric has sometimes echoed that of the far-right pundit Eric Zemmour, who declared his candidacy this week. Ciotti said he would vote for Zemmour in a run-off against Macron. The announcement of the Republicans candidate will mean that the main contenders for the April 2022 election are largely set.

Macron has yet to declare but it widely expected to seek re-election. Analysts believe he may wait several more weeks before showing his hand to stay above the fray of day-to-day politics. His main rival in



UNDEFINED: This handout image released by the US Marshals via Twitter on December 3, 2021 shows a wanted poster for Jennifer Crumbley. —AFP

Ethan Crumbley fired off at least 30 rounds, reloading with a fresh ammunition magazine as fellow students fled. Students and teachers barricaded themselves in classrooms, as they had been taught to do in drills, and some escaped the school through windows. McDonald said that Jennifer Crumbley, when she heard about the shooting, had texted her son, saying, "Ethan don't do it."

James Crumbley, when he heard the news, drove home and then called the emergency line 9-1-1 to report that a gun was missing from his house and that he believed his son may be the shooter, McDonald said. Involuntary manslaughter carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison. —AFP

Moderate, hardliner MP vie for French right nomination

PARIS: France's conservative party yesterday chooses between the moderate chief of the Paris region and a hardline MP with controversial views on immigration to challenge President Emmanuel Macron next year, a pick that will likely have major influence on the shape of the campaign.

Members of The Republicans are facing a relatively stark choice between Ile-de-France chief Valerie Pécresse, who would be the party's first-ever female presidential candidate and presents herself as a voice of moderation, and Eric Ciotti, whose views often reflect those of the far-right.

They made the run-off after the first round of voting earlier this week upended expectations, with the favourites ex-minister Xavier Bertrand and former EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier both knocked out. Predictions are fraught with uncertainty as there has been no polling among the almost 140,000 party members who will pick the candidate. But analysts say

Pécresse has the edge after both Barnier and Bertrand pledged her their support after losing.

The result is being keenly watched by the Elysee. While all opinion polls have predicted centrist Macron should win the election, the emergence of a strong candidate on the traditional right who gains momentum during the campaign would be a major factor.

The campaign has so far been waged on the right, with Macron's government ticking rightwards over the last months with tough rhetoric on immigration and preserving France's secular system. The Republicans failed to make the run-off in 2017, after its candidate Francois Fillon was felled by a graft scandal.

But the party, out of power since 2012, makes much of its status as the inheritor of the presidencies of Nicolas Sarkozy and Jacques Chirac as well as post-war leader Charles de Gaulle. The winner will be announced at 1330 GMT by party leader Christian Jacob, half an hour after the electronic voting closes.

'I can beat Macron'

Pécresse is betting that rightwing voters are ready for her brand of conservatism that focuses on economic rigour as much as law and order concerns. She has promised to "restore French pride" with a programme of budget cuts, immigration curbs, a defence of "family



PARIS: Les Republicains (LR) right-wing party's head of the Ile-de-France region and candidate for the 2022 presidential election Valerie Pécresse (C) celebrates flanked by the party's President Christian Jacob (R) and second placed candidate Eric Ciotti (L) after won LR's primary in Paris yesterday. —AFP

the 2017 election, far-right leader Marine Le Pen is standing again, while Zemmour's candidacy is a wild card move that could yet have a major impact or simply fizzle out. The left remains mired in disunity and communication problems, with the campaigns of the Socialist candidate, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo, and Green candidate Yannick Jadot failing to make an impact. Both risk being outpulled by far-left leader Jean-Luc Melançon. —AFP

International

Dozens held in Pakistan after mob kills S Lankan factory boss

‘Manager had torn down a religious poster and thrown it in the dustbin’

SIALKOT: Up to 120 people have been arrested in Pakistan after a Sri Lankan factory manager was beaten to death and set ablaze by a mob who accused him of blasphemy, officials said yesterday. The vigilante attack has caused outrage, with Prime Minister Imran Khan calling it a “day of shame for Pakistan”. Few issues are as galvanising in Pakistan as blasphemy, and even the slightest suggestion of an insult to Islam can supercharge protests and incite lynchings.

The incident took place on Friday in Sialkot, a district in central Punjab province, about 200 kilometres (125 miles) south-east of the capital Islamabad. Zulfiqar Ali, a police official in the area, told AFP: “Rumour spread in the factory that the manager had torn down a religious poster and thrown it in the dustbin.” Police spokesman Khurram Shehzad said up to 120 people had been arrested, including one of the main accused.

Tahir Ashrafi, a religious scholar and special representative of the prime minister on religious harmony, confirmed the arrest and told AFP that workers had complained of the manager being “very strict”. “Police experts are investigating this case from various angles, including that some factory workers played a religious card to take revenge on the manager,” Ashrafi said. Shehzad said raids are continuing.



Body would be handed over to S Lankan Embassy

Crowd watched
Several gruesome video clips shared on social media showed a mob beating the prone victim while chanting slogans against blasphemy. Other clips showed his body set ablaze, as well as the overturned wreckage of what was said to be his car. Many in the mob made no attempt to hide their identity and some took selfies in front of the burning corpse.

Hasaan Khawar, a spokesman for Punjab government, told reporters yesterday around 800 to 900 people—some of them armed with sticks—were dragging the body of the manager. Khawar said a post-mortem examination of the body had been done and the body would be handed over to the Sri Lankan Embassy in Islamabad.

Malik Naseem Awan, a resident and lawyer in Sialkot, told AFP he was worried about the impact it would have on the country’s image. “I can’t tell you how embarrassed I am. It would have been different if someone had done this individually but the crowd present there was watching it silently, and no one tried to rescue him,” he said.

Almost all the political and religious parties condemned the incident including Pakistan’s Army Chief. President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Saturday expressed shock over the killing, asking



SIALKOT, Punjab Province: The charred remains of a damaged vehicle is kept near the premises of a factory in Sialkot after police confirmed that a Sri Lankan factory manager was beaten to death and set ablaze by mob, in an incident local media reported was linked to alleged blasphemy. —AFP

Pakistan to punish all those involved in the “brutal and fatal attack”.

A senior Pakistan official told AFP that Islamabad had been in touch with Sri Lankan diplomats over the incident “and have assured them that all those involved in the heinous crime will be brought to justice”. Rights groups say accusations of blasphemy can often be wielded to settle personal vendettas, with minorities largely the target.

On Sunday thousands of people torched a police station in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after demanding officers hand over a man accused of burning the Quran. In April 2017 an angry mob lynched university student Mashal Khan when he was accused of posting blasphemous content online. A Christian couple was lynched then burnt in a kiln in Punjab in 2014 after being falsely accused of desecrating the Quran. — AFP

Thousands flee as Indonesia’s Mount Semeru erupts

JAKARTA: Indonesia’s Mount Semeru erupted yesterday, spewing out a tower of smoke and ash that plunged local communities into darkness and forced thousands of nearby residents to flee. There were no immediate reports of casualties, the country’s disaster mitigation agency said.

But rescuers moved to evacuate local residents as lava reached nearby villages and destroyed a bridge in Lumajang regency in East Java. “A number of areas went dark after being covered by volcanic ash,” agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said.

“We are building up some shelters in several locations in Lumajang,” he added. A video released by the agency showed locals, including scores of children, running for safety

as Mount Semeru erupted at 3:00 pm local time (0700 GMT) yesterday.

Local authorities established a restricted zone of five kilometres from the crater after the eruption. Semeru’s alert status has remained at its second-highest level since its previous major eruption in December 2020, which also forced thousands to flee and left villages covered.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity. The Southeast Asian archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes. In late 2018, a volcano in the strait between Java and Sumatra islands erupted, causing an underwater landslide and tsunami which killed more than 400 people. — AFP



SLEMAN, Yogyakarta, Indonesia: A villager looks at Mount Merapi, Indonesia’s most active volcano, as seen from Sleman, on December 2, 2021. — AFP



ARZO, Afghanistan: In this photograph taken on November 16, 2021, a teacher sits at the entrance of a classroom at a bullet riddled school in Arzo village on the outskirts of Ghazni. —AFP

Afghans struggle to rebuild homes

ARZO: In the ruins of an Afghan village destroyed by years of war, a deepening economic crisis has left Javid with little hope of rebuilding his home. For years, the strategically located Arzo, which lies along a main road entering the central city of Ghazni, was a battlefield. Taliban insurgents fought government forces at five military outposts in and around the tiny village, often using civilian houses as staging posts.

“There was firing day and night and our house was in the middle,” the 31-year-old Javid tells AFP. He points to the tunnel the Taliban dug inside his ruined home this year to attack one of the army posts. Javid and his family are still sheltering with relatives in another village until they can find enough money to rebuild their home.

He has nothing left, having already borrowed 160,000 Afghanis (\$1,680) to revive his small shop. “We need help from NGOs and the government, or my family can’t come back,” Javid says. After more than a year of relentless fighting, the last inhabitants fled Arzo in June.

Two months later, Afghanistan fell to the Taliban and an economic crisis ensued with the international community largely freezing funding to the aid-dependent nation. On top of that

hardship, a devastating drought has sparked warnings of serious food shortages and a humanitarian disaster.

Unexploded bombs

Rural areas such as Arzo bore the brunt of the two-decade conflict that saw Taliban insurgents face US, NATO and Afghan forces, with civilian casualties inflicted by both sides. Families are slowly returning to the rubble of Arzo to try and rebuild. Arzo villager Lailuma, 55, lost her daughter in the crossfire between Afghan forces and the insurgents.

Her husband survived a bullet to the head, but can no longer work. The first time her house collapsed in the fighting, she rebuilt it. This time, she has no money. Rafiullah, 65, a teacher at the local girls’ school, lost his daughter, killed by a stray bullet.

She died two weeks before her wedding. The school has resumed classes, and Rafiullah tries to rejoice at being reunited with his students, but still he mourns the loss of his child. The blue gate of the school is riddled with dozens of bullet holes, the windows are broken, and the walls are scarred by artillery fire.

Between the spring of 2020 and the capture of the village, 40 civilians were killed. To avoid more deaths, villagers collect unexploded ordnance and hide it in a vacant lot. “We do it to protect the children,” says village elder Abdul Bari Arzoi. — AFP

Suspected jihadists fire rockets on Nigerian city

KANO: Suspected jihadists fired two rockets on the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri yesterday, hitting two homes near the airport and an air force base, without causing casualties, residents said. The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and rival Boko Haram group have previously launched deadly rocket attacks on the capital of Borno state, home to about three million people.

The rockets, fired from an unknown location at 0500 GMT, fell on houses in a residential area near the Gomari Airport neighbourhood, which is close to a Nigerian Air Force base, two residents told AFP when reached by telephone. “I was inside when I heard the first explosion and I instinctively looked out the door to see what was happening,” said resident Idris Muhammad. “Shortly after a second rocket flew over my house before hitting the second house at Gomari,” he said.

“No one was hurt in both houses as the rockets fell on vacant parts of the houses.” Kyari Ali, who lives in a street where the house was hit by the second rocket in the Gomari Airport neighbourhood, said it destroyed a section of the house. “Luckily, there was no one in the affected part when the rocket landed,” said Ali who visited the house. Security officials were yet to comment on the incident. Residents said they suspected the attack was carried out by ISWAP which has consolidated its influence since the death in May of Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau.

The early morning attack happened a day after seven soldiers were killed by ISWAP jihadists near a base in Rann, close to the Cameroonian border. In February, at least 17 people were killed and 43 others injured when ISWAP fighters fired multiple rockets on the city.

Jihadists have also blown up electricity towers on several occasions, plunging the city into darkness for months. On February 23, 2019, a soldier was killed and 20 others wounded when Boko Haram launched 13 rocket attacks on Maiduguri hours before voting began in Nigeria’s presidential election. Over 40,000 people have been killed since the insurgency began 12 years ago and more than two million are displaced from their homes. — AFP

News in brief

Putin-Modi talks to tackle energy

MOSCOW: Talks next week between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be dominated by energy and defence issues, the Kremlin said on Friday. Putin’s visit to India tomorrow will be only his second trip beyond Russia since the pandemic took hold, after a June summit in Geneva with US leader Joe Biden. “We attach great importance to developing relations with India,” Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters, noting that Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and energy giant Rosneft’s boss Igor Sechin would also travel to India. The meeting—the first between Putin and Modi since November 2019, according to Ushakov—will focus on defence and energy issues, he said, without elaborating.

Rebels kill police officer

BANGUI: An attack by rebels killed a police officer in southern Central African Republic, a region plagued by fighting between armed groups and the army, the government said yesterday. The rebels struck the town of Kouango, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Thursday and “looted several households” as well as killing the on-duty officer, the government said on its Facebook page. The Central African Republic, the second least developed country in the world according to UN rankings, was plunged into a bloody civil war after a coup in 2013. The conflict has calmed over the past three years, although large swathes of territory remain outside central government control.

Jihadists kill 30 in central Mali

BAMAKO: Suspected jihadists killed at least 30 civilians in an attack on a passenger vehicle in central Mali’s volatile Mopti, local officials said yesterday. “The passengers were sprayed with bullets and the vehicle was torched,” during an attack by “terrorists” near the town of Bandiagara on Friday, the officials told AFP. “The state has sent security forces to the scene,” they said, speaking on condition of anonymity. An elected official in Bandiagara confirmed the death toll, saying the victims included women and children. The attack has not been claimed by any of the numerous armed groups active in the West African country.

I Coast women march against rape

ABIDJAN: Hundreds of women in Ivory Coast took to the streets of Abidjan yesterday to protest a surge of violence against women, in a country where 800 women reported rapes in 2020. The movement, dubbed “Offensive Orange”, saw more than 2,000 women march against rape in the Ivorian economic capital, calling it “a weapon of mass destruction with side effects spanning many lives and generations”. Dressed in orange T-shirts, the demonstrators marched through the bustling Treichville district brandishing placards emblazoned with slogans that included “Rape is a crime, oppose it” and “Zero rape in my country”. “Time up for rapists!” said the Ivorian women’s minister Nasseneba Toure, who was flanked at the front of the march by the EU’s ambassador to Ivory Coast and a UN women’s representative.

Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021

Georgieva warns Omicron could slow global growth

IMF says inflation a concern, US Fed should accelerate rate hikes

WASHINGTON: The new Omicron variant of COVID-19 could slow the global economic recovery, just as the Delta strain did, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said Friday. "A new variant that may spread very rapidly can dent confidence and in that sense, we are likely to see some downgrades of our October projections for global growth," she said at a Reuters event.

In its most recent World Economic Outlook, the fund projected global growth of 5.9 percent this year and 4.9 percent in 2022, but the United States and other major economies suffered sharp downward revisions after the spread of the Delta variant "caused some friction," Georgieva said. "Even before the arrival of this new variant, we were concerned that the recovery, while it continues, is losing somewhat momentum," the IMF chief said, noting that policymakers are now dealing with new issues like inflation.

The IMF's most-recent forecasts raised concerns that global supply chain issues and uneven distribution of vaccines were slowing the rebound, and causing some countries to be left behind. A surge in demand in many advanced economies coupled with shortages of key components like semiconductors has fueled a wave of price increases.

Less than two months ago, Georgieva expressed confidence that inflation would not become a "run-away train" but on Friday she said the US Federal

Reserve will have to increase interest rates in 2022, rather than in 2023, as the IMF previously predicted. The Fed, which cut the benchmark lending rate to zero in the early days of the pandemic, already has started to pull back on its stimulus measures and has signaled it will speed up that process, which would put it in position to lift rates off zero by midyear.

"We do believe that the path to policy rate increases may be walked faster," Georgieva said.

With the recent wave of price increases likely to remain a concern for some time, the US Federal Reserve should raise interest rates sooner, the IMF said Friday. It was an unusually direct policy recommendation from the Washington-based crisis lender that comes as surging demand coupled with supply bottlenecks and shortages of key materials like semiconductors has driven US consumer inflation to its highest level in three decades.

The Fed already has signaled that it will remove stimulus measures more quickly, opening the door to a rise in lending rates before mid-2022. Many economists now expect two or three interest rate increases next year. "Inflation is likely to be higher for longer than previously thought," especially in economies that have recovered faster from the pandemic like the United States, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath and Tobias Adrian, director of the IMF's Monetary and Capital Markets



PARIS: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaks during a joint press conference at the end of the Summit on the Financing of African Economies in Paris. — AFP

Department, said in a blog.

With the US economy recovering strongly from the pandemic and facing tight labor markets and broad price increases, "It would be appropriate for the Federal Reserve to accelerate the taper of asset purchases and bring forward the path for

policy rate increases."

The Fed last month began to slow its monthly bond buying program put in place to shore up the financial system at the start of the pandemic, when it slashed the benchmark borrowing rate to zero. Fed Chair Jerome Powell earlier this week said he would advocate ending the bond buying more quickly, which would mean the bank would be in position to hike rates in the first half of next year.

The IMF officials said central bankers should continue to telegraph their moves in advance to prevent surprising markets and sparking a wave of volatility. It is "essential for major central banks to carefully communicate their policy actions so as not to trigger a market panic that would have deleterious effects not just at home but also abroad," they said.

Given the "sharply higher uncertainty associated with Omicron," the newest Covid-19 variant, policymakers will need to watch data closely, since another outbreak could exacerbate supply snags, they said. However, they continue to believe the "mismatch in supply and demand" will ease over time. "Reducing some price pressures in countries."

"Shipping delays, delivery lags and semiconductor shortages will likely improve in the second half of 2022" and demand will ease as the effects of government stimulus retreats, they forecast. — AFP

Lackluster hiring complicates Biden's plans

WASHINGTON: The United States added just 210,000 jobs last month, the government reported Friday, less than half the increase analysts were expecting in the latest headwind for President Joe Biden. The White House has been banking on a solid economic recovery to bolster support for Biden and his massive Build Back Better spending bill that is inching its way through Congress.

But the new data presented a complicated picture of the labor market as American businesses try to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic but struggle to find workers. The administration got good news in the big drop in the unemployment rate to 4.2 percent, a decline of four-tenths of a point from the prior month, according to the Labor Department.

And despite the lackluster hiring, the country has gained an average of 555,000 jobs a month this year. But major sectors such as retail and leisure and hospitality saw underwhelming hiring, while businesses are bracing for the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, which could hamper the recovery just as the Delta wave did over the summer.

"We're looking at the sharpest one-year decline in unemployment ever. Simply put, America is back to work," Biden said in a speech at the White House, where he called the

report "very strong." But his political opposition blamed him for the under-shoot, with the Republican National Committee tweeting that "Biden's disastrous November jobs report is the worst of his time in office."

Another threat to the Democratic president's agenda is inflation, which has surged across the world's largest economy this year and pushed him to launch a series of measures aimed at cutting prices. However, the Federal Reserve—which is independent from the White House—is the institution best equipped to fight inflation, and economists believe the lackluster jobs data will not dissuade the central bank from moving more quickly end its stimulus measures, which then would allow it to hike interest rates from zero earlier than expected.

"While this report is disappointing, it does not change our view that faster tapering will be announced in December, unless the scientific news on the Omicron variant over the next couple weeks is disastrous," said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Gaining ground

The economy remains short nearly four million jobs compared to where it was before the pandemic, but the data nonetheless contained signs of improvement. The number of unem-



WASHINGTON: The United States added just 210,000 jobs last month, the government reported Friday, less than half the increase analysts were expecting in the latest headwind for President Joe Biden. —AFP

ployed people dropped 542,000 to 6.9 million, the report said, though that remains higher than the pre-pandemic level of 5.7 million. The number of people on temporary layoff, which hit 18 million in April 2020 when the pandemic disruptions were at their worst, dropped to 801,000, about where it was before Covid-19 struck the economy.

And hiring last month may have been more robust than it appears in the headline figures. The Labor Department's household survey showed 1.1 million additional people reported being employed compared to October. However, even though the

unemployment rate for most racial groups declined in November, wide disparities remain.

Unemployment for Hispanics was at 5.2 percent and for Black Americans 6.7 percent, while for the white population, it was at 3.7 percent. There was a slight improvement in the share of people employed or looking for a job, which has been stagnant in recent months as many Americans opted to stay out of the labor force. The participation rate rose slightly to 61.8 percent, its highest level since the pandemic, but 1.5 percentage points below where it was before COVID-19 hit the economy. —AFP

Canada adds 154,000 jobs in November

OTTAWA: Canada added 154,000 jobs in November, pushing its unemployment rate down to 6.0 percent—just shy of pre-pandemic levels, the government said Friday. The unemployment rate fell 0.7 percentage points, marking a sixth consecutive monthly drop, with job gains in both services-producing (+127,000) and goods-producing sectors (+26,000). Statistics Canada said.

It was "an outcome that nobody seemed to be expecting," CIBC analyst Royce Mendes said about the "massive re-acceleration in hiring during the month of November."

Economists were expecting only 38,000 net new jobs in the month. The actual job gain figure, Mendes said, "suggests that, even if GDP isn't near its prior trend, labor markets are tightening sharply." "And that positions the Bank of Canada to hike earlier than we had expected, although the impact of omicron is of course still creating a significant degree of uncertainty to any such forecasts."

The central bank recently signaled that it could raise interest rates from a record low of 0.25 percent as early as April. Statistics Canada said the service job gains were led by health care and social assistance, retail trade and professional, scientific, and technical services, while manufacturing accounted for nearly all the gains in the goods-producing sector. There was little change, it said, in public sector employment and self-employment. —AFP

IMF reaches deal with Zambia on \$1.4bn aid deal

LUSAKA: IMF staff on Friday reached an agreement with Zambia on a \$1.4 billion, three-year aid program that they said would be based on a package of "bold" economic policies in the African nation. The Extended Credit Facility loan, which is subject to approval from the International Monetary Fund's board, is a major boost for new President Hakainde Hichilema during his first months in office.

The government of the southern African country had said it was imperative to win funding from the Washington-based crisis lender to help it deal with its crippling debt, which swelled to \$14.7 billion and caused the nation to default during the COVID-19 pandemic. The agreement "paves the way for debt restructuring talks with our creditors," Finance Minister Situmbeko Musokotwane said in a statement.

Concluding a deal with the IMF was a key priority of the businessman-turned president who won July elections with a landslide victory. "This is exactly what we have done," said the minister, hailing the IMF deal as providing "much needed fiscal space to Zambia and anchor our domestic economic program". In late October, the new government presented a budget that laid out its plan to restore financial stability to allow it to negotiate a restruc-

turing agreement with creditors.

"This agreement is based on the authorities' plans to undertake bold and ambitious economic reforms," IMF mission chief Allison Holland said, noting that more details of the arrangement will be released tomorrow. The fund launched the talks in early November with Musokotwane, Bank of Zambia Governor Denny Kalyalya and other senior officials.

The country has also sought debt relief under the G20 "common framework," and is in discussions with private creditors. Early in the pandemic, G20 nations agreed to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, which offered 73 low- and middle-income countries the ability to halt debt payments during the pandemic. That program expires at the end of the year. IMF spokesman Gerry Rice had recently described Zambia's debt as "unsustainable".

Zambia last year became the first African country to default on its Eurobond repayments during the COVID pandemic. Hichilema has been critical of the billions of dollars of sovereign debt his predecessor Edgar Lungu raked up during his six years in office.

He claims the debt was grossly underestimated, particularly regarding money owed to China. Analysts see the latest development as a watershed moment for the new government with ripple effect on the ailing economy.

"This is really important news, that will have a substantial effect on the Zambian economy," said South Africa-based political analyst Nicole Beardsworth, attributing it to a "sea-change" approach by the new government. — AFP

Stocks sag as weak US jobs data adds to Omicron worries

NEW YORK: Global stocks finished a volatile week on a downcast note Friday, sunk by festering worries over the Omicron variant and disappointment at the most recent US job growth figures.

The latest COVID-19 variant has been detected in 38 countries but no deaths have yet been reported, the WHO said, as authorities worldwide rushed to stem the spread of the heavily mutated COVID-19 strain. "Investors are clearly still anxious about the Omicron variant, despite anecdotal evidence suggesting symptoms are less severe" than first thought, said Craig Erlam, analyst at Oanda trading group.

"Heading into the weekend, when we could get more information on the new strain, it's natural that we're seeing more caution," IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva warned the latest virus strain could slow the global recovery, noting that "a new variant that may spread very rapidly can dent confidence."

Bourses in Paris, Frankfurt and London all declined. Wall Street stocks also had a difficult day, with the tech-rich Nasdaq leading major indices lower. All three US indices finished with weekly losses in a period that also saw the Federal Reserve signal a plan to accelerate the withdrawal of its monetary stimulus and potentially hike rates sooner.



TOKYO: A pedestrian walks past an electronic quotation board displaying the closing share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on Friday. — AFP

Wall Street investors shunned highly valued tech shares after DocuSign offered a disappointing outlook and signaled that demand for its e-signature business was ebbing after a strong run during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shares of the company plunged more than 40 percent, while other tech names like Adobe and several chipmakers were also hammered. "The growth stocks are driving the declines," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, who also cited lingering unease over the Omicron variant of COVID-19 and disappointment that Thursday's rally in equities was not extended. —AFP

Business

Gulf Bank's 'Let's Talk Business' podcast interviews COFE App

Podcast highlights little-known origin stories behind some of Kuwait's favorite brands

KUWAIT: In the third episode of Gulf Bank's new podcast, "Let's Talk Business," Gulf Bank interviewed Ali Al-Ebrahim, the founder of COFE app. The program, hosted by Tareq Al-Saleh, Deputy General Manager of the Economic Research Unit at Gulf Bank, presents entrepreneurial stories within a simplified economic framework, targeting budding entrepreneurs who are considering starting businesses of their own. The bank's new podcast is part of its overarching strategy of fostering economic and community sustainability in Kuwait.

Realizing and seizing opportunities

At the beginning of their discussion, Al-Ebrahim discussed the COFE app's pre-launch stage, which included testing and doing away with various business ideas before deciding to start their coffee application. He said: "At a time when most sectors had unique digital applications supporting them, we noticed a gap in the coffee sector, which prompted us to study this sector and its opportunity for growth not only in Kuwait, but also the world. Throughout our research, we found some major international companies heading towards the Kuwaiti market, which confirmed our theory about the expected market size, and indicated to us that there were significant opportunities for growth."

Innovation and value proposition

The COFE app is characterized by its innovation, diversity of services and unique features, working dynamically to provide the best possible value to customers and cafe owners alike. Al-Ebrahim touched on these special value propositions, saying: "Our business model and the services we provide

extend way beyond delivery. The pick-up service, which allows customers to pick up their coffees from the coffee shop, is one of the app's most important features because it enables the customer to order their coffee and pick it up from the cafe without the hassle of having to wait in line, especially in the morning. The COFE app also offers customers a loyalty program and rewards on every order, which is hugely beneficial for customers - especially those who consume coffee on a frequent basis. In addition, we also offer a drive-thru service."

Al-Ebrahim added, "Cafe owners also benefit from being on the COFE application through exposure, reaching new customers everywhere. Our application, which combines many features, meets the needs of cafe owners, and saves them the hassle and cost of signing up with multiple delivery applications. It's also worth noting that we charge the lowest commission per order in the industry, which is up to half of what other companies are charging. Thanks to the way our app and loyalty program operate, coffee shop owners also can get access to indispensable data that extend way beyond their best-selling products and the average transaction value. In addition to that information, we also provide coffee shop owners the opportunity to target their customers directly via the app, a feature which has been immensely helpful for cafes during the pandemic."

Working during the pandemic

Although both larger and smaller coffee companies alike suffered from the effects of the pandemic, the situation was arguably worse for smaller cafes. Fortunately for the COFE app team, the company began its expansion in the Gulf



KUWAIT: Tareq Al-Saleh interviews Ali Al-Ebrahim in the third episode of Gulf Bank's new podcast "Let's Talk Business."

region only a few months before the pandemic hit. Al-Ebrahim commented: "We had launched in the UAE and Saudi markets only a few months before the outbreak of the pandemic. We benefited a lot from the size of these two larger markets compared to the Kuwait market, in addition to the different lockdown periods that these markets implemented. During this time, we also benefited from our flexible business model, as we added several features that supported our cafe partners that were struggling during this period. Thankfully, and despite the pandemic, we were able to grow more than five times our previous growth rate, in terms of the number of cafe partners and sales."

Growth first

While discussing the business model behind the COFE application, Al-Ebrahim advised entrepreneurs who are about to launch new projects, especially in the technical sector, to clearly define their

visions and goals, noting that there are many factors that are equal to, or may even outweigh, the importance of making a cash profit during the business's early stages. Al-Ebrahim stressed the importance of continuous growth during the early stages, and that entrepreneurs should not expect to achieve high revenues, especially in periods that require high investment costs needed to build the business's technological foundation, hire a team of experts, and market and improve the business's services.

Financing

On financing, Al-Ebrahim said: "We are always keen to build partnerships that add value to our business, which is why we started with a select group of partners and a simple self-financing model. Next, we moved to the pre-Series A financing stage, and less than a year later, we completed our Series A financing round, which was intended for expansion in the

Saudi and Emirati markets. Thankfully, we also recently completed a Series B financing round, which is dedicated to our expansion in the Turkish, Egyptian and English markets, and we are currently aiming to establish our presence in those markets during the next 18 months. I would also like to offer some advice to all young entrepreneurs who are approaching critical stages of financing: when choosing the right business partners, consider factors other than monetary investment. Expansion is essential, and building the strategic relationships that ensure growth is very important."

"Let's Talk Business" is Gulf Bank's newest podcast, created in collaboration with Belmokhba, a local creative content creation and production house. Episodes air on Gulf Bank's digital and social media channels.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with the different relevant parties to achieve it.



Jill McDonald with Kutayba Yusuf Alghanim



A group photo

Alghanim Industries welcomes Costa Coffee CEO in visit to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest privately owned businesses and the largest Costa Coffee franchisee in the region, hosted Costa Coffee CEO Jill McDonald at its head office in Kuwait City. During her visit, McDonald met with Alghanim Industries Executive Chairman Sir Kutayba Yusuf Alghanim; CEO Samir Kasem; President of Retail, F&B, Distribution, and Customer Engagement Samer Sayegh, and Vice President of F&B Phil Broad. McDonald was accompanied by Gordon Mowat, Managing Director of Europe and Middle East North Africa, and Tom Edgar, General Manager of MENA & Turkey at Costa Coffee.

The visit to Kuwait underscores the steady growth and success of Costa Coffee's strategic partnership with Alghanim Industries in the Gulf. Since partnering with Costa Coffee in 2013, the brand developed significantly, expanding to over 100 branches in Kuwait alone. In 2019, Alghanim Industries also gained development rights for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Sultanate of Oman, making

it the largest franchisee across Europe Middle East and North Africa by territory.

During her visit, McDonald toured the Costa Coffee retail estate across Kuwait. Starting with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for two brand-new Costa Coffee stores located in the Assima Mall, Kuwait City's newest mega-shopping center, she continued to explore how Alghanim has brought the beloved coffee brand to life in a range of channels around Kuwait City before visiting a flagship store in Sabah Al-Salem, Costa's first drive-thru location in Kuwait.

"In one way or another, coffee has always been a deeply ingrained part of our culture, and our successful partnership with Costa keeps that love for coffee alive," said Executive Chairman Alghanim. "Our customers are at the heart of our business, a value we share with Costa Coffee, a world-class brand that we are proud to represent in the region. We are also proud to know that our commitment to Costa Coffee's expansion is similarly pursued by Coca-Cola since it acquired the fran-

chise in 2019. Together, we continuously strive to find new and exciting ways to delight Costa Coffee fans, whether through partnering with local concepts, or introducing innovative ideas like our cold store in Khairan, or on the digital front where we are working closely with Costa International to enhance the customer experience. With this shared commitment, we look forward to achieving more milestones in the years to come."

Commenting on the visit, Costa Coffee CEO Jill McDonald said: "I was delighted to visit Kuwait and meet our partners, Alghanim. As a long-standing partner, Alghanim are going from strength-to-strength, supporting Costa's ambitious growth plans in the region and inspiring consumers to love great coffee. It was a pleasure to meet some of the teams and see first-hand the passion and commitment they have for the brand, innovating their retail stores and menus and putting the customers at the forefront of their decisions. I look forward to visiting again soon."

In the year in which the brand celebrated its 50th Birthday, the Alghanim team in collaboration with Costa Coffee opened its first-ever 'Cold Store' concept in August, an innovative Kuwaiti-grown idea with a bespoke ice inspired interior design located in Al Khairan, a

chalet area famous for its seasonal activities. With the opening of the new unique store, Alghanim revamped both food and beverage menus, adding 50 new iced coffees and cold beverages. This was in addition to an already extensive menu as Costa Coffee meets varying customers tastes and dietary needs with a constantly updated array of fresh food and several recently introduced plant-based options.

Together, the two companies have also launched sustainability initiatives such as switching from plastic to paper straws, offering discounts to customers who bring their reusable cups into the store, as well as beach cleanups. In a push to further enhance customer experience, they jointly established a barista training center, collaborated with local celebrity chefs such as Ahmed Al-Zamel to create seasonal items, and upgraded store design and interiors. They also introduced the cardamom-infused Turkish latte to the menu, adding a Middle Eastern twist to the classic latte. Put together, these forward-looking innovations continue to power Costa-Alghanim's expansion efforts in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, with plans to open the first Costa Coffee under Alghanim Industries' management in Oman in the first quarter of 2022.

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 1 December 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with instant deposit option.

The bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Fahad Naser Al-Buloushi, Khaled Ghazy Al-Otaibi, Hamad Ali Al-Zaabi, Bachar Mohamad Harhach, Amal Haidar Al-Shihabi, Ahmed Abdelkader Ramadan, Sultan Asad Sultan, Luwa Jaber, Khaleel Ali Abdullah, Waddah Adee Al-Amoudi, Mubarak Obaid Al-Rufaidi, Ziad Malek Azzam, Hanan Othman Al-Haishi, Eid Farhan Al-Enezi, Naser Dh Al-Otaibi, Tareq Bader Ibrahim, Zariyah Abdulla Al-Awadhi, Khadeejah Jazzaa Al-Enezi, Emad Mohammad Al-Rabiah and Mohammad Kameel Al-Fadhli.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers also 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years. For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account.

In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account unique and attractive to all society segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

Jazeera Airways launches flight to Kazakhstan

KUWAIT: Continuing its expansion with travel returning to normal, Jazeera Airways took off with its first flight to the largest city in Kazakhstan, Almaty on the evening of December 1. This marks the first ever route to be operated between Kuwait and Kazakhstan, supporting high demand for new tourist destinations as well as trade opportunities between the two countries.

Commenting on the new route, Rohit Ramachandran, CEO Jazeera Airways, said: "Jazeera continues to expand to unique destinations that are rarely served by other airlines in our region. We're giving travelers more choice and value offerings for them to enjoy the many activities that Kazakhstan has to offer with its vast landscape, rich culture, and advanced economy."

The Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the

State of Kuwait, Azamat Berdibay: "We welcome the launch of this direct service as it will without a doubt contribute to strengthening economic, trade and political relations between both countries." Jazeera Airways flies to Almaty twice a week, leaving Kuwait on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Covering an area of 2.7 million square kilometers, Kazakhstan is the ninth largest territory in the world and a unique destination for a wide range of tourist activities such as sports, wellness, adventure, gastronomic, extreme sports, ecological and cultural tourism. The country is also a family-friendly destination with themed activities and entertainment specifically targeting children. Kazakhstan also offers promising opportunities in the trade and industrial sectors with a strong oil-based economy. Passengers should review COVID-19 regulations before booking to ensure compliance with local regulations on vaccination and PCR test certificates.

New fleet order

Jazeera recently completed an order with Airbus at the Dubai Airshow for 28 new aircraft: twenty A320neos and eight A321neos. The order is valued in excess of \$3.3 billion at list prices.



Business

Turkey's annual inflation rate surges as currency crisis bites

Prices of bread and some meat products rose nearly 50% over a year

ANKARA: Turkey's annual inflation rate surged Friday above 20 percent—its highest in three years—although the main opposition leader accused officials of hiding the true scale of the country's currency crisis. The nation of 84 million has seen the lira plunge in value and consumer prices soar as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sets off on a risky strategy to revive his sagging approval numbers ahead of an election due by 2023.

The powerful Turkish leader—a lifelong opponent of high interest rates—has installed loyalists at the central bank who share his unorthodox vision that high borrowing costs cause inflation instead of slowing it down.

The bank has lowered its benchmark interest rate by four percentage points since September in a bid to stimulate lending and exports-driven growth. Most central banks around the world are raising or considering raising rates to ward off a worrying wave of inflation caused by factors related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The price of Erdogan's gamble became more apparent when Turkey's state statistics agency released monthly data showing the annual inflation rate reaching 21.31 percent—more than four times the government target. An official breakdown showed the price of bread and some meat products rising by between 30 and 50 percent in the past year.

The figures and an accompanying downgrade of Turkey's outlook by the ratings agency Fitch pushed the lira back toward historic lows. The Turkish currency has lost more than 45 percent of its value against the dollar since the start of the year.

But opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu accused the state statistics agency of "fabricating" the numbers to hide the true impact of the government's policies on daily lives.

"We came here today to obtain healthy data," he told a swarm of reporters while trying to enter the statistics agency's main office in the capital Ankara for a meeting with its managers.

He was turned away by security guards. "This is no longer a state institution but a palace institution," he said in reference to Erdogan's presidential complex.

Worse than 2018

Some economists are also starting to question the reliability of Turkey's official data. The figures released Friday showed consumer prices last month rising by 3.5 percent from those recorded in October. The lira lost about 30 percent against the dollar over the same stretch. "That makes no sense in my mind," emerging market economist Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management remarked in a note.

"I have serious doubts about the accuracy of the inflation series now. I have trusted (the statistics agency) up until now. Sad if that no longer is the case." Turkey's currency crisis is now more acute than one it experienced during a diplomatic standoff with then US president Donald Trump in 2018.

The central bank responded that time around by sharply raising borrowing costs. But analysts believe that Erdogan is more determined this time around to keep rates down to push the annual growth rate to more than 10 percent—a target he



ANKARA: Turkey's annual inflation rate surged Friday above 20 percent.

regularly mentions at various political rallies.

Outlook 'negative'

Most economists believe this policy is unsustainable and warn of the dangers of a run on the banks should Turks' confidence in the government erode any further. Fitch Ratings cited a "deterioration in domestic confidence, reflected in a sharp depreciation of the Turkish lira" as it lowered the outlook for Turkey's sovereign rating to "negative". The Capital Economics consultancy said it expected the annual inflation rate to peak at around 25-30 percent in the next few months. Turkey had been a foreign

investors' darling throughout the first decade of Erdogan's 19-year rule.

The economy steamed ahead at historic rates and Erdogan enjoyed a broad wave of support. But investors began losing confidence after Erdogan's policies became more erratic and his crackdown on political opponents in the wake of a failed coup attempt in 2016 became more severe.

The Council of Europe—the continent's top human rights body—said Friday it will launch infringement proceedings against Turkey for refusing to free a prominent activist who has been in jail without a conviction for four years. — AFP

Q'go launches flights for flyadeal from Kuwait to Riyadh

KUWAIT: Q'go Group for Tourism and Travel Agencies announced, in a special ceremony organized at Symphony Style Hotel, the inauguration of operational flights for Flyadeal Airlines, the economic arm of Saudi Airlines in Kuwait, by operating a flight from Riyadh to Kuwait in the initial stage. The announcement was made by General Manager of Q'go Group for Travel and Tourism Agencies Robert Hayek and Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Customer Service at flyadeal Airlines Ahmed Abdulkarim in the presence of a large number of representatives of travel agencies and travel and tourism officials.

On this occasion, Hayek, said: "We are very pleased to cooperate with flyadeal, the most powerful company in the air transport industry in the Middle East. The exchange between the two parties enhances the position of 'Q'go' as one of the leading local companies with more than 35 years of experience in managing operations of local, regional and international airlines. He pointed out that "QGo" is the exclusive representation and the eighth representation of international airlines in Kuwait within the company's strategy to collaborate and associate only with the best.

He added, "Our celebration today coincides with the second anniversary of changing the name of our company from the Body Aviation Group to the Q'go Group in November 2019. The Gulf Street was adorned with our posters and slogans —Body Aviation Group Goes Global, We Became the Q'go Group —, announcing the resumption of the company's journey towards achieving global leadership," he said. Strong and solid after the pandemic, flyadeal will be the ideal and preferred Saudi carrier for travelers wishing to attend activities, events, entertainment, cultural and artistic programs in Riyadh. Q'go's focus on



KUWAIT: Robert Hayek (second right) and Ahmed Abdulkarim (second left) during the announcement.

providing tickets and offers for flyadeal will be characterized by its attractive prices. Suitable for all and different levels of travelers between the two countries, it starts from 259 Saudi riyals from Riyadh to Kuwait and KD 21,900 for trips from Kuwait to Riyadh. This will be followed by the inauguration of new destinations from Kuwait to the rest of the cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia according to promising future expansion plans," he added. He pointed to a number of factors that would contribute to increasing the demand for flyadeal for travelers from Kuwait, the most important of which is the announcement of a return to normal life in the country and easing of coronavirus restrictions.

He concluded by revealing the launch of a comprehensive development plan for Q'go Online Group website in line with the latest digital technologies, providing integrated services that help the Kuwaiti and resident traveler choose the most suitable for planning their trips and enjoying competitive prices.

Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Customer Service at flyadeal Ahmed Abdulkarim said that the opening of the new Kuwait destination and its addition to the company's network of flights and destinations, which after the new addition amounted to 15 domestic and international destinations, is a milestone event. It comes as an extension of the continuous successes of flyadeal and its endeavor to achieve the

goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 that supports the national civil aviation strategy through the expansion of its local and regional flights network in order to keep pace with the rapid growth in the air transport industry market in the Kingdom and the region. Its efforts to connect the Kingdom with the outside world with economic flights offer various travel options at competitive prices.

He added that the launch of the new destination to Kuwait will contribute to strengthening the bonds of relations between the people of the two brotherly countries. He noted that the Kuwait destination is the company's second international destination as the Dubai station was inaugurated in July.

At the conclusion of his speech, Abdul Karim highlighted the company's achievements, explaining that it had successfully transported nearly 13 million passengers on 86,000 flights since the beginning of its operations about four years ago until today. These numbers and statistics are unprecedented at the level of emerging airlines globally confirming the merit of the company and its employees in obtaining the title of the strongest emerging airline in the region and the Middle East. Revealing the company's ambitious future expansion plan in the Asia Pacific region and the Americas, he said the company expects to transport around 85 million passengers a year from 200 different destinations in the world by 2030.

Ooredoo Kuwait rewards customers with end of year offers, benefits

KUWAIT: In continuation of its successful journey in its efforts to enrich its customers' digital experiences and in celebration of the end of the year, Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, launched an exclusive offer on its Shamel Pro 45 postpaid plan.

The exclusive Shamel Pro 45 postpaid plan offer enables Ooredoo Kuwait customers to walk away with two devices from the iPhone13 family by choosing two of the same model or two different iPhone13 models which are: iPhone13, iPhone13 Mini, iPhone13 Pro, and iPhone13 Pro Max. Furthermore, subscribers will also enjoy other benefits such as non-stop calls, non-stop 5G internet, non-stop roaming internet, unlimited YouTube and Social Media, gift vouchers as well as a 50 percent discount on a second voice line and 50 percent discount on a data line.

Ooredoo Kuwait affirmed its keenness to continue developing offers that aim to extend customers with qualitative, unparalleled experiences in line with its vision of driving digital transformation and enriching people's digital lives. The company is also keen to provide its customers with the best, most advanced, and efficient digital solutions and products.

Kuwait's Optimize App acquires Panda Media

KUWAIT: Kuwait-based OptimizeApp, a platform that helps marketers intuitively launch, manage and track all their social media campaigns in one app, yesterday announced it has fully acquired Panda Media, a Kuwait-based online education company focused on entrepreneurs. The company's new offering will provide local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs with exclusive educational marketing courses and materials that focus on e-commerce growth and digital advertising. The courses and materials will be available on multiple platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and podcasts, in addition to its native platform, 'OptimizeApp', available on the App Store and Google Play Store.

CEO and Founder of OptimizeApp, Bader Alkazemi, said: "It's challenging for local businesses, especially those in the MENA region, to find locally relevant and accessible expertise to leverage the power of digital and social media marketing. We believe adding Panda Media's unique and locally-relevant content-creation model and capabilities to our existing offering creates a solution that overcomes this challenge and enables businesses to grow faster and retain that knowledge within their markets. We welcome Panda Media to our family and look forward to our people working together as one team to help local entrepreneurs realize their dreams."

As a result of the acquisition, Panda Media will now operate entirely under the OptimizeApp name. OptimizeApp has retained Panda Media's



existing team and services, while its founder, Eid Almujaibel, will now serve as OptimizeApp's new Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer.

Newly-appointed CMO and Co-Founder of OptimizeApp, Eid Almujaibel, said: "We're very excited about the potential growth of digital marketing in the region and we found the right partner in OptimizeApp. Making our courses accessible to everyone has been the cornerstone of Panda Media's growth strategy since inception, and our acquisition by OptimizeApp accomplishes just that. With a similar target audience and an overlapping user base, joining forces seemed like a natural fit. We are confident that our move under the OptimizeApp umbrella will add value to our users and strengthen the digital landscape in the Gulf and the wider region."

Optimize Advertising & Marketing Company WLL (OptimizeApp) is a platform that enables brands and entrepreneurs to intuitively launch, manage and track all their social media campaigns in one place without requiring technical know-how. The company is headquartered in Kuwait and currently serves customers across six markets: Kuwait, UAE, KSA, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman.

A close look at new Huawei nova 9 exquisite design

KUWAIT: Smartphones are a part of our daily lives. We use them for everything from basic things like making calls and sending text messages to shooting pictures and other even more complex tasks. In short, people's lives revolve around these tiny gadgets. It is no wonder that smartphone users are becoming more conscious about the designs of their phones. So, people want what they hold and use in their hands in front of everyone to have an eye-catching design.

It seems like Huawei has answered their wish with the new Huawei nova 9, the Trendy Flagship and Camera King. Now let's talk about the design of the phone.

Huawei nova 9 - Colour No 9

First of all, there is an all-new colourway called Colour No 9. Huawei uses the proprietary Starry Flash AG Glass process to achieve the bluish-purple finish. The texture of the glass reacts differently depending on the angle and type of light. While under normal lighting, the texture appears as a gentle gradient: the whole back of the phone shines with vivid and colourful sparkles under a spotlight. Besides the look, it also makes the phone comfortable to hold and fingerprint resistant.

The phone features an expansive 6.57-inch display. It has a fast refresh rate of 120Hz, which makes everything on the screen smooth and fluid. The top and bottom bezels on the phone are thin and inconspicuous. The sides of the screen are curved and flow over like a waterfall. The only thing you will notice on the front of the screen is a little cut-out

for the front camera. But even that blends in as part of the design.

Huawei nova 9 is not a phone that skimps on features. It even comes with a massive battery. Regardless, the phone is quite slim, measuring only 7.77mm thick. The approximate weight of the device is 175g, which is way less than most other phones on the market today. The edges of the phone are curved, making the phone easy to hold and use with one hand.

But there are more than enough things that put it in a league of its own. The camera module has a little more emphasis this time. The design of the camera system has the Star Orbit Ring design. The nova ring emblem on it helps highlight it even more. The camera module's design follows the nova series' design legacy without sticking too much to the past.

Huawei nova 9 is one of the best phones you can find at the price point. It is a device that gives equal importance to performance and style. The phone manages to look good while packing in all the cool and solid features, like the 50MP Ultra Vision AI Quad camera, a 4300mAh battery that supports 66W Huawei SuperCharge, in addition to the visionary Super Device and EMUI 12 features. Now that you know this, you already know which phone you should get this year.



Lifestyle | Features

FILM SHARAF COMPETES AT THE RED SEA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Director Samir Nasr's feature film SHARAF competes at the first edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival that will be held from December 6 to 15, 2021 in KSA. The film will be part of the Red Sea Competition for feature films, competing for the Golden Yusr Award, as well as other awards for directing, screenwriting and acting.

SHARAF's Pan-Arab cast includes seven Arab nationalities, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Libya. In this film, Samir Nasr presents the microcosm of a prison which mirrors the complex situation of Arab societies living under dictatorship and poverty, through a class system that distinguishes between the wealthy "Royal prisoners" and the poor "Governmental prisoners".

Commenting on the project, director Samir Nasr said, "Through my friendship with writer Sonallah Ibrahim, we took the time to develop the screenplay for SHARAF together for several years and we teamed his sense for details and his vast knowledge of the life inside the prison with my ideas of condensing this huge novel into an appealing and powerful filmic structure."

Producer Silvana Santamaria comments: "Samir Nasr has created a beautiful and impor-

tant piece of Arab Cinema and we are proud to present with our film new Arab talents to the world, who have proven their skills alongside well-known professionals from the region - in front and behind the camera." Co-producer Adolf El-Assal also comments, "I am very happy and proud to be part of SHARAF's journey and how Samir Nasr was able to direct such an incredible and sensitive film."

Shot in Tunisia in co-production with the production company Zone Art Films, owned by Bilal Athimni, SHARAF stars Ahmed Al-Munirawi, Fadi Abi Samra, Khaled Houissa, Ridha Boukadida and Tawfik Bahri. The film is based on Sonallah Ibrahim's novel of the same title, the screenplay is written by Samir Nasr and Sonallah Ibrahim.

The film is produced by Soilfilms Media (Germany) and co-produced by ARTE, ZDF, Zone Art Films (Tunisia), Teamwerk.Die Filmproduktion (Germany), Les contes Modernes (France), Wady films (Luxembourg), and Neue Mediopolis (Germany), in addition to the MFG Film Fund Baden-Württemberg, Francophonie Film Fund and Sanad film fund. SHARAF was presented during the Venice Film Festival in 2019 as part of the Gap Financing Market of the Venice Production Bridge.



The first edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival will be held in Jeddah, the city which is classified as a world heritage according to UNESCO. The festival will screen a number of the most important and latest Arab and international cinema productions, including prominent titles as Jon Wright's Cyrano and Maggie Gyllenhaal's The Lost Daughter.

In addition to classic selections from salient directors, the festival includes other programs to introduce the audience to new voices from the region and abroad. The festival is a platform for Arab filmmakers and those working in the film industry from all over the world by building bridges of communication, organizing a competition for feature films and another for short films, as well as hosting a range of activities, seminars, and workshops.



This picture shows the GES-2 contemporary arts center on the banks of the Moskva River in Moscow. —AFP photos

In Moscow, a new arts centre to brush up Russia's image



Russian artist Olga Chernysheva (center) talks to press during the opening of GES-2 contemporary arts centre on the banks of the Moskva River in Moscow.



Visitors attend to the opening of GES-2 contemporary arts centre on the banks of the Moskva River in Moscow.

Across from the Kremlin, the century-old plant that used to supply the seat of Russian power with electricity has been transformed by a billionaire gas tycoon into a temple of contemporary art. Set to open Saturday, the GES-2 venue on the banks of the Moskva River winding through the Russian capital was designed by leading Italian architect Renzo Piano and promises to house the biggest international names and Russian stars.

Beyond pleasing art lovers, the venue also aims to brush up Russia's image, observers say. The opening comes at the end of a year that saw President Vladimir Putin's government wage an increasingly repressive campaign against the opposition, starting with the jailing of his best-known domestic critic, Alexei Navalny. Authorities have also targeted independent media and rights organisations and cracked down on social media networks, squeezing the space for criticism and bringing a chill on free expression.

As Russia hurtles down parallel paths of autocratic rule and modernisation, the GES-2 opening highlights these contradictions. "Putin and his administration have this dream that they can freeze politics while still having business or art develop," said art collector and government critic Marat Gelman. "It looks like schizophrenia."

'Soft power'

GES-2 is financed by one of Russia's wealthiest people, Leonid Mikhelson, the founder and chief of Novatek, Russia's largest private gas group. With towering electric blue chimneys, the sprawling complex features solar panels on its roof and a birch grove, and will house galleries, cafes and art residences. "Everything was done fantastically," said Gelman. In addition to the architect, the project has two other Italians on board: Teresa Mavica, who oversees Mikhelson's VAC foundation which umbrellas GES-2, and artistic director Francesco Manacorda, formerly of Tate Liverpool.

The cost of the centre has not been disclosed but is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars. According to the 2021 Forbes ranking, Mikhelson's fortune is valued at \$24.9 billion (22 billion euros).

"I told Leonid (Mikhelson) to buy the nearby buildings to demolish them—and he did. To make a good building you need a good client," Piano told reporters.

Nathalie Obadia, a gallery owner who also teaches the politics of art at Sciences Po university in Paris, said contemporary art allows "individuals and countries to correct a negative image abroad and at home." "That's the strength of contemporary art's soft power," she explained, citing the examples of China and Saudi Arabia. For the megarich, contemporary art is also a way of giving back to the community, she added, as art is typically supported by little public funding. Mikhelson is not the first billionaire to build Moscow an arts venue. In 2008, billionaire Roman Abramovich gifted the city the contemporary art museum Garage.

'Dangerous opening'

In recent years, Russia has made waves in the art world mostly for the radical and political performances of artists like the feminist group Pussy Riot or Pyotr Pavlensky, who has sewn his lips shut and nailed his testicles to Red Square as gestures of protest. Their notoriety has also been due in part to the reaction of the Russian authorities, who have fined and jailed the artists. While GES-2 promises cutting-edge art, it also vows to be accessible to all, especially families. In a show of support, Putin himself came to visit the center this week ahead of its official opening.

The centre will open with a show by Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson, whose exhibit will recreate every episode of the 1980s US soap opera "Santa Barbara", which was a hit in Russia. The artist told AFP that in Russia he has to work within "limits". But that "is-in a way-inspiring," he said. "The great Russian culture of the past has been always created in this kind of situation," Obadia pointed to the cross-cultural communication possible via contemporary art as a potent force between young Russians and visiting foreign artists. "Thanks to art, there is an opening that can be made," Obadia said. "It is an opening that can sometimes be dangerous." —AFP

CINESCAPE LAUNCHES LATEST HIGH TECHNOLOGY CINEMA IN NEW ASSIMA MALL

Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) has enhanced its reputation as a progressive leader in the region's entertainment industry with the official opening of Cinescape in Assima Mall. Kuwait's newest retail and lifestyle destination mall features a state-of-the-art 13-screen cinema with more than 1,300 seats across two floors offering upscale auditoriums and two world exclusive cinematic experiences.



Naser B Al-Rowdan, KNCC CEO

Underlining the brand's mission to provide consumers with an unrivalled movie-going experience following the success of Cinescape 360, Cinescape Al-Assima Mall features a 290-premium seat Dolby Cinema. Powered by Dolby Vision technology, this cinema experience delivers high dynamic range with enhanced color technology and a superior contrast ratio, resulting in a dramatically different viewing experience that presents strikingly vivid and realistic images, making viewers feel like they are inside the movie's world.

In addition, Cinescape introduces for the first time in the Middle East 4DX Screen where both 4DX and Screen X meet in one auditorium. The new venue has an 84-seat 4DX theatre, featuring the world's first multi-projection system that provides a 270-degree panoramic film viewing experience within a theatre setting, expanding the reach of the 4DX experience to four screens in Kuwait. Complementing the renowned experiences, the new cinema's mezzanine floor is dedicated to four VIP screens offering a total of 185 seats, a VIP lounge and balcony overlooking Assima Mall. One of the VIP screens has its own exclusive lobby area and stage for events, allowing for private or large-scale corporate events to take place in such an auditorium.

Furthermore, the Barco laser projection, incorporated in the venue's seven standard screens is environmentally friendly with industry-leading efficiency and flawless imagery, complemented by Dolby 7.1 surround sound to deliver the most advanced cinema experience in Kuwait. Celebrating the opening, Naser B Al-Rowdan, KNCC CEO, said: "Our newest venue in Al-Assima Mall reinforces our commitment to provide our customers with the very best cinema entertainment. We pride ourselves in listening to our audiences and this new offering caters to all preferences of cinema goers in Kuwait." "Going to the cinema is a hugely popular



past-time. Cinescape has been at the heart of that for almost 70 years and our offering is a natural evolution of the brand, taking the cinematic experience to the next level," added Al-Rowdan.

Designed to enhance streamline the customer journey Cinescape, Assima Mall includes in-seat call buttons and in-seat ordering via a

butler in the VIP screens. The concession kiosk incorporates a special pick-up area for pre-ordered F&B and the latest equipment to uplift speed of service. Cinescape Al-Assima Mall elevates the sector offering within Kuwait City and takes Cinescape's offering in Kuwait to 69 screens across 10 locations.

Victims to heroes: India's lower castes take cinematic center stage

Facing systemic exploitation and discrimination, India's lowest castes have barely been acknowledged on the big screen. Now independent, mostly non-Hindi language filmmakers are challenging attitudes with powerful stories of injustice to give them a voice. Many of the directors are from the Tamil film industry "Kollywood" - nicknamed after Chennai's Kodambakkam district where many studios are based-with some from the oppressed communities at the bottom of the country's rigid caste system. In a vast nation of 22 official tongues, Kollywood and other minority-language producers are often overshadowed by the glitzy, Hindi Bollywood.

But Tamil legal drama "Jai Bhim", released on Amazon's streaming platform instead of cinemas, has attracted rave reviews and currently stands as the highest-rated film by all voters globally on movie database IMDb, with a score of 9.5. Based on the true story of a lawyer battling for justice for a tribal woman whose husband was accused of the theft and tortured and killed in police custody, "Jai Bhim" has been praised for its unflinching portrayal of judicial violence. It has also been hailed as the latest movie to defy film stereotypes of lower castes as voiceless victims by dignifying their lives and portraying them as people with agency.

"The reason these injustices happen to people who are vulnerable is because we don't raise our

voices," said director TJ Gnanavel, 42. "We wanted it to be that voice. I wanted to say that the silence of the society is more brutal than police brutality," he told AFP. K Chandru, the lawyer who inspired the role played by Tamil superstar Suriya, went on to become a judge and says



This undated handout photo shows Tamil film star Saravanan Sivakumar, also known as Suriya, during a scene in the Tamil-language legal drama 'Jai Bhim', at the Gokulam Film Studios in Chennai. —AFP

young Indians tell him they were ignorant of such tribal groups and the abuse they face. "Everybody wants to know what we can do for them... That's the greatest victory of this film," said the now-retired 70-year-old.

Tamil Nadu state's Chief Minister MK Stalin

said the movie made his heart heavy and announced measures to support tribespeople with access to welfare, drinking water and electricity. But after an association representing the Vanniyar caste complained the film portrayed them in a bad light, a local politician offered 100,000 rupees (\$1,300) to anyone who physically attacked Suriya. Armed police were deployed to protect the star's home, amid an outpouring of support for him on social media. The success of "Jai Bhim" highlights the rise of such films in Kollywood. "Koozhangal", a Tamil film internationally known as "Pebbles" about an alcoholic father and his son, tackles issues of poverty and patriarchy. It has been selected as India's entry for best international feature at next year's Oscars.

India has about 200 million Dalits—once known as the "untouchables" and the lowest group in the caste system—and more than 100 million also marginalized tribespeople. But their life stories are rarely told and India's prolific film industry generally favors bankable action-packed song-and-dance extravaganzas. When lower castes are depicted in Bollywood, they fall into familiar roles of oppressed characters in need of upper-caste saviors, said filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan, whose directorial debut "Masaan" won two awards at the 2015 Cannes film festival. —AFP

PAKISTAN STUDENTS WORK MAGIC TO TRANSFORM CAMPUS INTO HARRY POTTER'S HOGWARTS



This picture shows visitors arriving to attend a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU) campus in Lahore.



Asghar Zaidi, the vice chancellor of the Government College University (GCU), speaking during a Harry Potter festival.



Visitors enjoying a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU) campus in Lahore. —AFP photos



A visitor enjoying a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU).



Visitors attending a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU) campus in Lahore.



Visitors arriving to attend a Harry Potter festival.



Visitors arriving to attend a Harry Potter festival.



Visitors taking selfie pictures as they attend a Harry Potter festival.



Visitors enjoying a Harry Potter festival.

It took more than a wave of a wand, but Pakistani university students transformed their 150-year-old campus into Hogwarts this week as they kicked off a festival celebrating the fictional young wizard Harry Potter. With its vast halls and soaring archways, Government College University in the eastern megacity of Lahore has long reminded students of the magical school created by British author JK Rowling, several students told AFP. "I can't believe I'm in Hogwarts, while being in Lahore of all places," said an excited Raziah Alam, taking part in the festival. "This has been such a fun experience."

Dressed in costumes from the "Potterverse" including wands and pointed wizard hats, students welcomed visitors to their version of the Hogwarts "Great Hall", decorated with broomsticks, bats, and even an area to brew potions. The theme music from the Harry Potter films played in the background as students tried out spells, took photos wearing the famous "Sorting Hat", and dressed up in Hogwarts uniforms. "Most of these youngsters grew up at the time when JK Rowling's work was being presented in the novels and then later on in the films," Dr Asghar Zaidi, the university's vice chancellor and a "Potterhead" himself told AFP. He added that when students come to the campus "they see the architecture, it reminds them of Hogwarts." "I think the magic is coming through the inspiration it is bringing about to our other students," he added proudly.



A visitor posing for pictures during a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU).

The festival is also screening what is believed to be Pakistan's first fan-made Harry Potter film. Titled "The Last Follower and the Resurrection of Voldemort," the film was made and acted by students and comes with special effects, spells and a gripping storyline. "We really thought it would be a crazy idea to change the building, put some mountains around it, create some characters that can go



A visitor enjoying a Harry Potter festival.

with it," the film's director and cinematographer Waleed Akram told AFP. He said he was pleased with the film's reception among students. Since the release of the first Harry Potter novel in 1997, the books have found immense popularity, including in Pakistan. They have sold over 500 million copies worldwide, in addition to the famous film franchise. —AFP



Visitors attending a Harry Potter festival at the Government College University (GCU).

Carey says daughter is too pampered to play her in biopic

Mariah Carey says her daughter is too pampered to play her in a biopic. Monroe Cannon, 10, wants to play her mother in an upcoming project but Mariah thinks the youngster would not be able to relate to her tough childhood. According to The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column, Mariah - who shares Monroe and twin brother Moroccan with former husband Nick Cannon - said: "Monroe wants to do it but honestly, it's going to come down to the director. To do a role of that magnitude, I don't know where she'd draw on to find the sadness because they've got a pretty good life, my kids." Mariah recently revealed that she was working with Lee Daniels to turn her 2020 memoir 'The Meaning of Mariah Carey' into a series. She said: "First things first I wrote my memoir last year. 'The Meaning of Mariah Carey', [and] it's only relevant to this conversation because the paperback is now out.

"There was a discussion whether my little-girl picture could be on the cover and nobody wanted it, they wanted the modern day thing. 'Now the paperback is finally the representation of myself that I wanted... the little girl that nobody knew or understood because [I'm] Black and biracial. I would rather do [an adaptation]; that's why we wrote the book first.' She joked that Daniels is "probably going to hear this and kill me," before confirming they were working on an eight-part series. She said, "I need it to be gritty, grimy and beautiful, spectacular and real!" —Bang Showbiz



BELGIAN ZOO HIPPOS TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID

Two hippos in a Belgian zoo have tested positive for COVID-19, their keepers announced Friday, stressing that the giant animals do not appear to be in danger. The infections at Antwerp Zoo are not the first time that zoo animals have tested positive during the pandemic, but most cases are thought to have been in cats and monkeys. The building housing Hermien and Imani, a mother and daughter aged 41 and 14, has been closed to the public and their keepers have formed an isolated social bubble.

Antwerp Zoo tested its animals last year and found no cases of coronavirus, but veterinarian Francis Vercaemmen checked the hippos as cases rose again this winter. "This time they were expelling snot, which I had tested as a precaution to check for bacteria," he said, explaining how he came to send samples to Belgium's national veterinary lab. "In view of current events, I took the additional decision to test the samples for COVID-19, which gave this surprising result," he said.

"As far as I know, this is the

first known infection in this species. Worldwide, this virus has mainly been reported in great apes and felines." It is not known how the hippos were exposed to the virus. Their keepers have had no symptoms but are taking additional precautions and will be quarantined if they test positive. Belgium, in common with much of Europe, is facing a growing wave of COVID-19 infections as winter grips the country, including a so far small number of cases of the new Omicron variant. On Friday, Prime Minister Alexander de Croo announced a series of measures to tighten sanitary rules, bringing school Christmas holidays forward and asking children aged six and over to wear masks.

Belgium, with a population of 11 million, has recorded an average of more than 17,800 daily infections with COVID-19 over the past seven days, as well as 44 deaths. Around 800 people with severe forms of the disease are in intensive care in hospitals across the country, leading to overcrowding and the postponement of treatment for many other conditions. —AFP

Pinto 'living in the moment' thanks to motherhood

Freida Pinto has learned to "live in the moment" thanks to parenthood. The 37-year-old actress and her husband Cory Tran welcomed son Rumi-Ray into the world in November, and the 'Slumdog Millionaire' star is "excited" about the new phase in her life. She told HELLO! magazine: "I'm excited to start this new phase in my life. It's already teaching me so much and is really going to alter my world. It's taught me to live in the moment." Freida has "always" wanted to have children and she's looking forward to building a strong bond with her little boy. She said: "I've always wanted to be a mum and my family are thrilled. 'What's most important is the bond you share with your child, like the one my family has with me.'" Freida - who announced the happy news she was expecting in June - previously admitted she'd already experienced a series of "surprises" during her pregnancy. She said: "Lots of losing-my-mind kind of moments, and then lots of beautiful moments, as well. 'It's been a roller-coaster, but a good one. If I've learned something through pregnancy, it is that it's a fantastic preparation for learning to let go of a little bit of control entering into motherhood. You can't control everything. You



can make all the plans in the world and you just have to be open and ready for what has to happen." Freida and Cory married secretly during the coronavirus pandemic last year. She recently revealed: "We're already married! It's a very romantic story if you must know. 'When we got engaged we thought we'd have this most magical wedding, but then COVID happened and it's still happening and we just realized we'd be planning this for the rest of our lives and never doing it. 'So we decided one day to go to the Honda Center in Anaheim. —Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features

JORDANIAN FLIES THE WORLD FROM HOMEMADE BASEMENT COCKPIT



Muhammad Malhas, 76, sits at his flight simulator cockpit at his home in Jordan's capital Amman.



Muhammad Malhas, 76, operates his flight simulator cockpit. —AFP photos



Muhammad Malhas, 76, operates his flight simulator cockpit.



Muhammad Malhas (left), 76, sits at his flight simulator cockpit.



Muhammad Malhas, 76, sits at his flight simulator cockpit.



Muhammad Malhas, 76, speaks during an interview with AFP.

Jordanian Muhammad Malhas has long harbored dreams of being a pilot. Now at 76 years old, he's soaring above the clouds in a cockpit he built in his basement. "Since the beginning of time, man has been watching the birds in the sky, and dreaming of flying freely," Malhas told AFP. As a boy, he enjoyed flying his kite and wondering how something so flimsy made of paper could soar so high. "It was then the desire and love of flying began to obsess me," he added, sitting in the flight simulator, a replica of the cockpit of a Boeing 737-800, which he has spent three years building from scrap and secondhand items.

"My heart was always hanging in the sky, and my dream was to become a pilot, but circumstances did not allow it," he said. He graduated in hospital management from a London university in 1969, and went to work with his father at the Amman hospital the family had founded. But Malhas kept his dreams alive, devouring books on aviation, aircraft engineering and guides to learning how to fly. He even joined the Royal Jordanian Air Academy in 1976, rising before dawn to take flying lessons in a small Piper aircraft, before heading to work. He obtained his license two years later. For almost a decade he was a member of the Jordanian Gliding Club, taking to the skies every weekend.

And by 2006, he was flying virtually thanks to flight software he downloaded on his computer. He

joined a global network of flight simulator fans, where they could fly in almost real conditions directed by an air traffic controller. "We were a group of about 30 to 40 friends, aviation enthusiasts from different countries chatting about flying virtually in our spare time. "We used to fly to Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad... even Britain and the US. Sometimes we sat for six hours on computers as if we were flying real flights," he told AFP.

The joy of flying
Now retired, his life-long passion has taken a new spin. Sat in front of three large screens, equipped with switches and indicators, in his homemade cockpit, Malhas has the world at his fingertips. All the parts were bought at local markets. The chairs were originally part of a bus. The screens show pictures of clouds and sky above, rivers, forests and deserts below. He can even choose what the weather outside is like. The work took three years, with the help of friends who are electronic engineers. And it cost around six thousand dinars (\$8,400). His friend Ahmed Fares, 25, helped installing switches and indicators which "respond to the conditions of the plane, so that it looks like a real plane flying". Sometimes his wife joins Malhas in the cockpit. "I think it is amazing to fly while sitting at home and to feel the joy of flying around the world," he said. —AFP

Italian tries to dodge COVID job using fake arm

An Italian man who wanted a coronavirus vaccine certificate without actually having the job tried to play the system by presenting health workers with a fake arm, an official said Friday. Despite the realistic skin color, nobody was fooled by the silicone limb, and the man in his 50s was reported to local police following the incident on Thursday night in Biella, northwest Italy. "The case borders on the ridiculous, if it were not for the fact we are talking about a gesture of

enormous gravity," the head of the Piedmont regional government, Albert Cirio, said in a statement on Facebook.

He said such an act was "unacceptable faced with the sacrifice that our entire community has paid during the pandemic, in terms of human lives, the social and economic cost." The fake arm incident comes ahead of a tightening of the rules Monday in Italy for people who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19. Since August, a "Green Pass" showing proof of vaccination, recent recovery from coronavirus or a negative test has been required for indoor dining in restaurants, to visit museums, cinemas, theatres and attend sporting events.

But from December 6, these activities will be restricted to holders of a "Super Green Pass", which is only available to those who have been

vaccinated or recently had COVID-19. The old Green Pass was extended in October to cover all workplaces, and remains valid for this purpose, meaning the unvaccinated can still go to work by showing a recent negative test.

The new restrictions—the subject of small protests in city centers across Italy on most weekends—were introduced following an increase in COVID-19 cases, exacerbated in recent days by fears over the new variant Omicron. Italy was the first European country to be hit by the pandemic in early 2020, but is currently faring better than many of its neighbors. On Thursday, 16,800 new cases were reported in the previous 24 hours, with 72 deaths. Almost 85 percent of the eligible population (aged over 12) are already fully vaccinated, and this week the option of a booster dose was extended to all adults. —AFP



Baldwin says does not feel guilt over 'Rust' shooting death

Alec Baldwin said he does not feel guilty for the death of Halyna Hutchins on the set of "Rust," as he explained that he started cocking the gun that killed the cinematographer but did not pull the trigger. "I feel that someone is responsible for what happened and I can't say who that is. But I know it's not me," the US actor told ABC in his first major interview since the on-set tragedy in New Mexico in October. "I mean, I honest to God, if I felt that I was responsible, I might have killed myself," he said in the interview broadcast Thursday. Baldwin was rehearsing a scene on the low-budget Western when the Colt .45 was brandishing discharged a live round that struck Hutchins and director Joel Souza, who survived.

The former "30 Rock" star said the criminal investigation should focus on discovering who had brought live rounds onto the set of "Rust." "I don't have anything to hide," he said. Describing the incident in detail, Baldwin said he had been told the gun was "cold"—industry lingo for a firearm containing no live ammunition—and had been instructed by Hutchins to point the gun in her direction as she prepared to film the scene. "I let go of the hammer. Bang. The gun goes off,"



he said. "Everyone is horrified. They're shocked. It's loud. They don't have their earplugs in... the gun was supposed to be empty. I was told I was handed an empty gun." Baldwin said he initially thought Hutchins may have fainted or had a heart attack, and was only told she had been killed with a live round hours later following a lengthy police interview.

He dismissed suggestions that live rounds may have been introduced on set as an act of sabotage, saying it was "overwhelmingly likely that it was an accident." Baldwin, along with other people working on "Rust," is facing two civil lawsuits, while prosecutors have refused to rule out criminal charges. He said he would be "stunned" if Hutchins' husband did not also file a lawsuit against producers, including

himself. The tragedy has sent shockwaves through Hollywood, and led to calls for guns to be permanently banned from sets. Baldwin said he had been called a "murderer" since the incident, but disputed claims from some critics that it was an actor's responsibility to check weapons. But, he said, the tragedy had changed things for him. "I can't imagine I'd ever do a movie that had a gun in it again," said Baldwin. —AFP



Wikipedia creator's computer and NFT of first edit up for auction

The personal computer that Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales used when programming the online reference resource 20 years ago is going under the hammer, along with an NFT memorializing his first edit on the platform, auctioneers said Friday. The Strawberry iMac was the machine Wales "used for development and research at the time of the website's launch on January 15, 2001," said auction house Christie's, which is overseeing the sale that began Friday in New York.

The second lot is for an NFT-Non-Fungible Tokens are unique digital objects that confer owner-

ship through blockchain technology—created by Wales of Wikipedia's debut onscreen image when he posted the first words, "Hello world," Christie's specialist Peter Klarnet told AFP. The NFT, presented in JPEG format, will be interactive, with the buyer able to edit the page, "which can be reset with a timer to revert to its original state," according to Christie's.

Part of the proceeds from the sales will help fund Wales's WT.Social project, a "nontoxic alternative" social media network that uses an advertising-free model. The two lots are for sale online through December 15, with

Christie's hoping they will sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars, Klarnet said. The new darling art form for some collectors and investors, NFTs have become staples of auction houses and the art market. An NFT of the World Wide Web's source code sold in July for \$5.4 million at Sotheby's, while the all-digital work of American artist Beeple drew \$69.3 million in March at Christie's, an NFT record. Also on Friday Christie's announced the auction of a bulletproof vest worn by rap megastar Kanye West during a party marking the release of his 2021 album "Donda." —AFP

Sports

Afghan boxing team on the ropes after fleeing Taleban

'If the Taleban find us... they will kill us'

BELGRADE: Boxing is risky at the best of times, but Hasib Malikzada now faces one of his most unpredictable opponents yet - the uncertainties of life as an Afghan refugee far from home. Just 19 years old, the lightweight amateur champ of Afghanistan is stuck in Serbia following his team's decision to not return home after competing at the International Boxing Association (AIBA)'s world championships in Belgrade last month.

In the weeks since the tournament, Malikzada and the members of the Afghan national boxing team have been bouncing between hotels, while finding the occasional gym for training. Even amid the relentless bustle, their new life in Serbia is an island of stability compared to the chaos back home. "After the Taleban came... we couldn't continue boxing," Malikzada tells AFP, saying his gym in Kabul closed shortly after the jihadist insurgents overthrew the US-backed government in August.

Life after Kabul's fall to the Taleban has been mired with worries ever since, says Malikzada, who fears his family will be targeted for their links with the past government. His brothers, he admits, had also joined the fledgling resistance in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul - where former government soldiers and militia fighters briefly made a last stand against the Taleban.

"If the Taleban find us... they will kill us," says Malikzada. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are believed to have fled the country in recent months, hoping to escape persecution and a collapsing economy in the face of international sanctions and a banking crisis that has mired much of the population in deepening poverty.

Fighting on

Like most of the Afghan national boxing team - 11 of whom are now in Serbia along with two officials - Malikzada's life has been overshadowed by the conflict that followed the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Boxing offered a rare refuge during the dark days of the war - when waves of

suicide bombers ravaged Kabul and rampant crime and the threat of being kidnapped kept the population on edge.

The boxing gym provided an environment where violence could be managed - with rounds, weight classes, and rules. Training partners became close friends, helping release stress through sparring sessions. "Boxing refreshed our minds, our bodies and also our health," explains Tawfiqullah Sulaimani, a 20-year-old heavyweight on the national squad. After the Taleban took power, Sulaimani and other boxers kept training in secret, hiding gear in bags as they moved in between discrete locations to practice.

To reach Belgrade, the team kept a low profile as they passed through checkpoints en route to the

“

I have received many warnings

”

Iranian border and later secured last-minute Serbian visas in Tehran. Running on little sleep after days of travel, the team arrived in Serbia in time to cut weight and compete, achieving "good" results despite the stressful sojourn. "We didn't sleep, but we did a good performance every day," says Waheedullah Hameedi, the secretary general of the Afghan Boxing Federation.

'A painful story'

Much of the responsibility for the team's future now falls on Hameedi's shoulders. Glued to his phone in between practice sessions, the 24-year-old fires off messages to a range of contacts across



BELGRADE: Afghan boxers train in a gym in the outskirts of Belgrade. — AFP

the globe, with the hope that someone can find a way to help his athletes. Hameedi is all too familiar with the Taleban's brutality. In 2019, the insurgents assassinated his father - who was also a boxing official - for recruiting women to box, according to Hameedi. "I have received too many warnings," Hameedi tells AFP, saying he was advised by family and friends not to return to Afghanistan.

During their iron-fisted rule of Afghanistan in the 1990s, the Taleban declared boxing to be "against human dignity" and banned the sport along with most other forms of entertainment. The Taleban have yet to make a formal ruling on boxing's future but have sought to promote a number of sports since taking power, especially the country's national

cricket team. Even still, scores of Afghan athletes have fled abroad - including female footballers and basketball players - following the Taleban takeover, stirring resentment from the country's new rulers.

"I expect the heads of all federations who are still abroad as a result of propaganda and rumors that they return to their country and live together with us," said Nazar Mohammad Motmaeen, the Taleban-appointed director for physical education and sports during a speech in Kabul last month. "The honor of every athlete is in his own country," he added. But for the boxers mired in limbo in Serbia, life outside of Afghanistan is far from ideal. "This is a painful story," says Hameedi. "Nobody wants to leave their motherland." — AFP

DeChambeau fires 64 to seize World Challenge lead

MIAMI: Bryson DeChambeau fired an eight-under par 64 to seize a one-stroke lead over a trio of US compatriots after Friday's second round of the 22nd Hero World Challenge. DeChambeau, last year's US Open champion, made 10 birdies and a double bogey to stand on 11-under 133 after 36 holes in the 20-man invitational hosted by Tiger Woods at the Albany resort in the Bahamas.

Second-ranked Collin Morikawa, 13th-ranked Tony Finau and world number 16 Brooks Koepka shared second on 134 with American Daniel Berger another stroke adrift. World number seven DeChambeau opened with a birdie, added back-to-back birdies at the par-5 sixth and par-4 seventh, then reeled off runs of three birdies in a row starting at the par-5 ninth and again at the par-4 13th.

DeChambeau, however, found waste area bushes left of the fairway at the par-4 16th and took a double bogey. "Just keep playing golf. Nothing more," DeChambeau said of his thoughts after the setback. "Frustrated obviously but nothing I could do. I pulled the drive. It went into a bush. Had to move on." The 28-year-old American, whose only 2021 title came at Bay Hill in March, birdied the par-3 17th and closed with a par.

Told he might be paired with rival Brooks Koepka, DeChambeau only replied, "Sweet." Four-time major winner Koepka beat DeChambeau 4&3 in a 12-hole match-play event last week in Las Vegas. But it was not to be as Koepka couldn't match him for the lead. Koepka birdied the par-5 third and par-4 fourth and added another at the seventh before taking a bogey at the par-3 eighth. He began the back nine with a birdie and added birdies at 14 and the par-5 15th on his way to a 67. "Very pleased with how I'm playing," Koepka said. "I just need to keep doing that."

Asked about a possible Sunday pairing with DeChambeau, Koepka said, "I've already proved everything last week so I'm good." Morikawa, who will play alongside DeChambeau in the final duo, would overtake Spain's Jon Rahm for world number one with a victory. "It's a huge bonus but I've got to focus on the win," Morikawa said. "I've put myself in a good position after the first two days but I've got to keep the focus up and make a couple more birdies."

Morikawa, who got engaged earlier in the week, opened and closed the front nine with birdies with another at the fourth in between. He followed a birdie at the par-5 11th with a bogey at 12 but then birdied 13 and 14 and eagled the par-5 15th to reach 11-under. But at 18, Morikawa's tee shot landed behind a small bush right of the fairway and he closed with a bogey to shoot 66 and fall from a share of the lead. "When I put myself in the fairway, I was making the birdies," Morikawa said. "It was kind of an up-and-down day."

Finau birdied the par-5 third and sixth as well as seven but began the back nine with a bogey. He answered with birdies at the par-3 12th plus 14 and 15 and closed with the first birdie of the week at the 18th. Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy, a co-leader after shooting 66 on Thursday, fired a 71 on Friday to stand four off the pace. He opened and closed the front nine with bogeys, added another at 18 and made double bogey at 14 after rolling a putt off the green. —AFP



Al-Qurain Women Junior Handball Team shine

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Qurain Sports Club Women Junior Handball Team took first place during the first handball festival organized by the women's committee at the Handball Association, while Salwa Al-Sabah B won second place. The third place went to Fatayat

Al-Oyuoun B. Three clubs participated - with a total of 75 young players. The event was attended by Kuwait Olympic Committee member Fatima Hayat, KHA board member Abdallah Thiyab and Chairwoman of Women Committee at KHA Dr Al-Jazi Al-Mo'nes and committee members.

Fatima Hayat lauded the efforts of the women committee adding that "the women handball community is keen on the development of the sport. There is an ambitious strategy to achieve sustainability for women's handball". Dr Al-Jazi with her part said she was satisfied with the event - adding that it was successful beyond expectations.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Equestrian Club Horse jump rider Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi won the first place during the first day of the second round competitions that are being held at Kuwait Equestrian Center for the heights of 125 cm and 135 cm. In the 115cm, Faisal Al-Shatti won the first place, followed by Mohammad Al-Amarshood while third place was shared by Ali Al-Sayegh and Armando, Faisal Al-Shatti won the first place in the 105cm event followed by Hussein Al-Kharafi, Jassem Al-Khaffan, Yaqoub Al-Nasrallah and Rawan Al-Durais respectively.

Curry on fire; Warriors cool red-hot Suns

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry scored 23 points as the Golden State Warriors snapped the Phoenix Suns' record 18-game winning streak with a dominating 118-96 win on Friday night in San Francisco. The Warriors (19-3) avenged a loss to the Suns three nights earlier as the two NBA juggernauts played musical chairs with the top spot in the Western Conference standings this week. The Warriors improve to a league-leading

12-1 at home and now lead the conference, moving a half game ahead of the Suns who dropped to 19-4.

"I thought we were much more patient, especially in the second half," said Warriors head coach Steve Kerr. "Once we settled down, I thought we were really poised and competed and earned a really good win." Curry busted loose on Friday after the Suns bottled him up in a 104-96 Suns win in Phoenix. Curry, who shot four of 21 on Tuesday, was better prepared for the rematch, shooting eight-of-20 from the floor and making a half dozen three pointers in 33 minutes of playing time in front of a crowd of 18,060 at Chase Center arena.

He got plenty of help from his supporting cast, including Draymond Green who delivered nine points, dished out nine assists and grabbed nine rebounds in

the win. Andrew Wiggins and Gary Payton II had 19 points each and Juan Toscano-Anderson scored 17 for the Warriors, who won their 11th straight game at home by double digits. "That's the culture here," said Toscano-Anderson. "It all starts with the leaders. Everybody can't be the main character in the movie, but you've got to play your role to make the movie work." Phoenix had been hoping to win their 19th straight which would have put them in elite company as just 10 teams in the league have done it. The Suns stretched their winning streak to 17 with Tuesday's win and to a franchise-record 18 in a row by beating the Detroit Pistons 114-103 on Thursday. Phoenix played without their top scorer Devin Booker who is out with a strained hamstring. Booker also sat out the Detroit contest. — AFP

Kuwait's Malak wins gold medal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Table Tennis Paralympic player Malak Al-Enezi won the gold medal at the Asian Youth Paralympic Games currently held in Bahrain after defeating her Thai opponent 3-1. Kuwait's National Team is participating in the Athletics and table tennis. There are 1500 ath-

letes participating in the games from 30 Asian countries.

Chairman of Kuwait Paralympic Committee Nasser Al-Ajmi lauded Malak's achievement - adding that she is ready to become the next Kuwait champion. He said this gold medal comes in her first international participation. Meanwhile Secretary General of Kuwait Paralympic Committee Shareefa Al-Ghanim said he was very happy with this major Asian achievement.



Sports

Palestinians launch national football team for amputees

'From the moment of injury, my life has not changed'

GAZA: Players in the Gaza Strip used crutches and prosthetic legs Thursday to stretch, run and dribble as part of the first-ever Palestinian national team that hopes to qualify for the Amputee Football World Cup. The team trained at the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The 20 players on the team were selected from among five Gaza clubs for players who lost limbs. Player Hassan Abu Kareem, 38, said his leg was amputated after he was injured in a Zionist raid on Al-Maghazi refugee camp in 2006.

"From the moment of injury, my life has not changed," he told AFP. "I continued with my ambi-



GAZA: Palestinian players with disabilities, part of a football team organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), take part in match in Gaza City on December 2, 2021. — AFP

ing matches to be held in March 2022 in Iran. If the team succeeds, they will go on to the Amputee Football World Cup, slated to be held in Turkey in late 2022. Fuad Abu Ghaliun, chairman of the Palestine Amputee Football Association, said his group applied to join the World Amputee Football Federation in 2019. Their candidacy was accepted earlier this year.

Friday is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Coach Simon Baker, himself an amputee, said he was working with players "in a way where people see the football being played, and not the person with a disability." "We want people to respect the players and see them for Ahmed or whoever it is and not see them as some-

body broken. We want to make heroes of these players," said Baker, who founded the Irish Amputee Football Association.

The Palestinian team is in the isolated Gaza Strip, whose two million residents have been locked under a Zionist blockade since the Islamist movement Hamas took control in 2007. Ahmed Abu Nar, 34, used crutches and said he was injured in 2018 by Zionist forces who suppressed Gaza protests known as the "Great March of Return". "Before the injury I was one person, and after the injury I became someone else," he told AFP. "A new life began, new goals began and new ambitions and new challenges, and now I am achieving my goals." — AFP



Team hope to qualify for WCup

tion and great goal in life, and my goal is to represent Palestine and to make an achievement for myself in the field of sports." Red Cross spokeswoman Suhair Zakkout said the players were setting a new Palestinian standard after the first local team began in 2019 with several players. "Today, these players make history by forming the first national football team for amputees," she said.

Zakkout said the players were training for qualify-

Morocco hammer Jordan 4-0 in FIFA Arab Cup

DOHA: Morocco beat Jordan by 4-0 yesterday in the second round of group C of the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 held in Doha, Qatar. In the match, held at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Yahya Jabran scored the first goal in four minutes; Bader Benoun in 24 minutes, Mohammad Al-Shaibi in 45 minutes and Soufiane Rahimi scored a penalty in the 88th minute. Morocco is on top of group C with six points, followed by Jordan (three points); Saudi Arabia in third place, and Mauritania in the last spot with no points. Saudi Arabia played against Palestine later at Education City Stadium.

Bayt Stadium in Al-Khor City, saw the midfielder Oliver Kass Kawo scoring the opener at minute four. Mohammad Anz added the second goal at the 47th minute.

UAE 1 Mauritania 0

UAE defeated Mauritania 1-0 on Friday in group B and the second stage of competition in Doha. UAE only goal was scored at the third minute of stoppage time in the second half. The match was held at (974) Stadium. UAE is on top of group B with six points, followed by Tunisia with three points, Syria in third place, and Mauritania in the last spot.

Qatar 2 Oman 1

Qatar beat Oman by 2-1 goals in Group A, advancing to the quarterfinals of the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 held in Doha.



AL-RAYYAN, Qatar: Jordan's midfielder Bahaa Abdelrahman (2nd left) shoots a free kick during the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 group C football match between Jordan and Morocco at the Ahmed bin Ali Stadium yesterday. — AFP

The Qatari goals were scored in the 32 and 97 minutes of the match, while Oman scored its sole goal in the 74th minute. Qatar tops Group A and advances to the

quarterfinal of the tournament. Iraq holds second position in the group with two points followed by Oman and Bahrain with one each. — KUNA

Man Utd's job too good for Rangnick to turn down

MANCHESTER: Manchester United interim boss Ralf Rangnick said he could not turn down the opportunity to manage one of the "world's biggest clubs" as the German set his sights on potentially extending his stay in charge beyond this season. Rangnick has agreed to manage United until the end of the current campaign and is expected to remain at Old Trafford in a consultancy role after that. The 63-year-old held his first press conference on Friday

after watching United's 3-2 win against Arsenal from the Old Trafford stands the previous evening.

Michael Carrick had led United on a caretaker basis for the three games since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was sacked. But, after legal red tape delayed his arrival, Rangnick, who had been working as Lokomotiv Moscow's head of sport, has finally been cleared to start a job that was too good to refuse. "We are talking about six-and-a-half months, one third of the games, and we have agreed on a two-year advisory deal. If Manchester United contacts you for such a role you cannot turn it down," Rangnick told reporters.

"This is one of the biggest clubs, if not the biggest club, in the world. I am excited to work with the players we have here. "I am well acquainted. It's pretty obvious the team has an abundance of young, talent-

ed players and experienced players." Rangnick was offered a similar opportunity to manage Chelsea on an interim basis after Frank Lampard's dismissal in January. But he rejected that move because, unlike with United, there was no option for a longer stay, with his old protege Thomas Tuchel taking over at Chelsea instead. "At the time, when Chelsea contacted me, they only spoke about the option to become interim manager for four months, without any prospective for the long-term," he said. "Here, we are talking about six and a half months. We only have one third of all the games played in the Premier League." Asked about the possibility he might replace Solskjaer on a permanent basis if he does well at United, Rangnick did not rule it out. "If we do well and we stabilize, I might even recommend that we keep working with me," he said. — AFP

News in brief

Coach Marsch under fire

BERLIN: American coach Jesse Marsch was under fire after RB Leipzig slipped to a third straight Bundesliga defeat with a 2-1 loss at Union Berlin on Friday with club chief executive Oliver Mintzloff saying "all options are on the table" to halt the slide. After 14 games, ambitious Leipzig have just 18 points and trail leaders Bayern Munich by 13 points. They have yet to win away in the league. "We need to take a long hard look at what needs to be done, including the coach," Mintzloff said after the game. "We are like any other team, all the options are on the table." Marsch oversaw the last two defeats but was at home recovering from Covid-19 as his charges ran aground again on Friday. He took over as coach from Julian Nagelsmann as coach for the 2021-22 season. "The team has a responsibility to him, and they didn't show that," Mintzloff said. — AFP

Goggia wins downhill title

LAKE LOUISE: Sofia Goggia made a statement Friday, launching defense of her alpine World Cup downhill title with an emphatic victory in the first women's downhill of the season at Lake Louise. Goggia, who is aiming to defend her Olympic downhill gold at Beijing in February, clocked 1min 46.95sec to beat American Breezy Johnson by a whopping 1.47sec. Mirjam Puchner of Austria was third, 1:54sec behind the winner, while US star Mikaela Shiffrin made a lackluster return to speed events with the 26th-fastest time - 3:60sec adrift. "I knew I could win, but at the same time I didn't think it would be by one second and a half," said Goggia, who notched the ninth downhill victory of her career and her 12th World Cup win overall. — AFP

Gloucester finally end run

LONDON: Gloucester finally ended a run of five straight English Premiership defeats by arch-rivals Bristol with a 27-10 derby victory at Kingsholm on Friday. The bonus-point success saw Gloucester climb into the Premiership play-off zone as they went three points clear of Northampton, who are in fourth place. Bristol, however, remain in the bottom three - although it has already been agreed there will be no relegation from English club rugby union's top flight this season. "When I came in, everyone was talking about Gloucester's inconsistency, and we showed a bit of that last season," said Cherry and Whites coach George Skivington. "I think we have just started to kick forward a bit in our game and build that consistency. You have to be consistent in this league. "That is credit to the players. They solve problems together, they stay very tight and there is no one screaming and shouting at each other when things go wrong." — AFP

Kilde edges Odermatt

LOS ANGELES: Aleksander Aamodt Kilde won the men's World Cup super-G at Beaver Creek on Friday, cementing his return from injury as he denied Marco Odermatt a second win in as many days in Colorado. Kilde, who captured the overall World Cup crown in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, clocked 1min 10.26sec, bouncing back from a failure to finish in Thursday's super-G. "It's incredible! It's also incredible to be here in Beaver Creek with the fans back, crossing the finish line and actually hearing the fans rooting, it's amazing," Kilde said. Odermatt, who was going for a third super-G win in Colorado and also a third straight race win in the discipline, challenged his time but settled for second, three-hundredths of a second back. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

For Filipino Bachelor ONLY Farwaniya block 1, near Oncost and India gate. Available from November 26, 2021. Contact 94418396 or 97345734. **(C0981)**

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ABDUL RAHMAN ANSARI, FATHER OF SANA, HOLDER OF INDIAN PASSPORT NO. R5458965, CIVIL ID NO. 313020800715, CHANGED MY NAME SANA ANSARI S/O ABDUL RAHMAN ANSARI, INDIAN ADDRESS - SAHIB GANJ CHIKTOLI NEAR MASJID CHAPRA SARAN, TOWEN TAHNA CHAPRA BIHAR. PIN COD-841301. **(C0985)**

I, RIXON MAXIM DSOUZA, S/o. Vindo Lawrence Dsouza, R/at Door No. 7-63/44, Saripalla Cross Road, Near 4B Bus Stop, Padil, Mangalore-575007, D.K. District, Karnataka State have changed by name as RICKSON MAXIM DSOUZA for all purpose, Vide affidavit dated 06.11.2021 sworn before notary Abbas N, Mangaluru. **(C0984)**

I, Javed Ahmed Abdul Hamid, holder of Indian Passport No: M4640773, Civil ID No: 270020704398, changed my name from Javed Ahmed Abdul Hamid to Shaik Javed Ahmed S/o Shaik Abdul Hamid. Permanent Address: House No. 76-106-A11-A5, Guru-Raghavandra Nagar Ballary Chowrasta Kallur Kurnool 518003. **(C0986)**

JOHNNY LONIS S/o LONAPPAN MAZUVANCHERY ATHAPPAN do hereby solemnly affirm and declares that
1. I am known in two names such as JOHNNY LONIS and ANTONY.M.L.
2. As per my Passport my name is JOHNNY LONIS
3. As per my educational certificates my name is ANTONY.M.L.
The aforesaid two different names are the names of one and the same person. **(C0983)**

DOMINGOS ANTONIO MASCARENAS, ASSOLNA SALCETTE - GOA TO DOMINGOS MASCARENHAS, C/o ANTONIO PIEDADE MASCARENHAS, H.NO: 62/3, BAN-DA, TOTMADEM, ASSOLNA, ASSOLNA, SOUTH GOA - GOA - 403701. **(C0981) 2-12-2021**



WOLVERHAMPTON: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (left) heads the ball during the English Premier League football match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool at the Molineux stadium yesterday. — AFP

Liverpool top Premier League

Bizarre West Ham goal sinks Chelsea

LONDON: West Ham beat leaders Chelsea 3-2 courtesy of Arthur Masuaku's bizarre late goal yesterday as Liverpool climbed to the top of the Premier League with a last-gasp winner against Wolves. On a day when all the contenders in the top flight are in action, champions Manchester City can claim top spot they win the late match against struggling Watford.

Elsewhere, Newcastle won for the first time this season to clamber off the bottom of the table and give new manager Eddie Howe hope they can survive. Thomas Tuchel's Chelsea had lost just once in the Premier League before yesterday's match at the London Stadium and had conceded only six goals in 14 matches. But Masuaku's fortuitous late winner ended the European champions' eight-match unbeaten run in the league.

Chelsea led twice, through a Thiago Silva header and Mason Mount's spectacular volley, but they were pegged back both times by a penalty from Manuel

Lanzini and Jarrod Bowen's strike. And with three minutes remaining substitute defender Masuaku, lurking out on the left wing, swung a speculative effort towards the Chelsea goal, deceiving Edouard Mendy as it arched past the stunned goalkeeper. "So, was it a cross or was it shot," Masuaku asked on Twitter. "(Hint: I was as surprised as you)."

Tuchel bemoaned Chelsea's individual errors and the "freak goal" that led to their defeat. "The schedule we play and effort we play, sometimes you feel tired, but you just need to accept it and control our risk management," he told the BBC. "We hate to lose, we have to digest it now. It is not a performance to be mad about, but in detail we need to be

better again. "If we won the game nobody would have given us the title and if we lose it I don't think anybody else gets it this weekend."



Newcastle win for the first time this season

us to play these teams and give them a game-this week alone we have had the Champions League finalists (Manchester City, against whom West Ham lost 2-1) and Champions League winners. It is a good return from the two games."

Last-gasp Liverpool

Liverpool left it until the dying seconds to see off tenacious Wolves 1-0, with substitute Divock Origi firing home Mohamed Salah's pass in the 94th minute to take the visitors one point clear of Chelsea at the top of the table. The visitors dominated possession at Molineux and had 17 shots on goal but Wolves battled hard to keep them at bay before Origi's late intervention. Newcastle scrambled a vital 1-0 win against fellow strugglers Burnley to move within three points of safety.

The decisive moment came late in the first half when goalkeeper Nick Pope spilled Joe Willock's cross as he came through a crowd of players. Callum Wilson steadied himself before firing into the roof of the unguarded net and his strike survived a VAR check. Brighton's Neal Maupay scored in the 98th minute to earn his side a 1-1 draw against Southampton, who had taken the lead through Armando Broja in the first half. — AFP

Leverkusen thrash Fuerth 7-1: Schick scores four goals

BERLIN: Czech Republic striker Patrik Schick grabbed four second-half goals as third-placed Bayer Leverkusen thrashed the Bundesliga's bottom club Greuther Fuerth 7-1 yesterday. With leaders Bayern Munich at second-placed Borussia Dortmund in evening's top-of-the-table clash, Leverkusen took the chance to trim the gap above them in the table to three points.

Schick became the first Leverkusen player in the club's history to score four goals in a single Bundesliga match. Hosts Leverkusen gave a masterclass in finishing by scoring seven goals from their first ten chances. They converted their first chance when French striker Amine Adli hit the bottom corner with just 12 minutes gone. Teenage midfielder Florian Wirtz then floated in a free-

kick which was headed home by Edmond Tapsoba with the centre-back completely unmarked in the area.

Fuerth extended their German league record run to 12 straight defeats but pulled a goal back Jeremy Dudziak profited from a mistake in the Leverkusen defense. Schick was then involved in the next five Leverkusen goals as the hosts ran riot. He set up Ecuador's Piero Hincapie just before the break, then fired in four goals in just 37 minutes, with two off his left foot, one off his right and a header. Schick's four goals means he has now scored 12 times in 11 games, two more goals than Dortmund star striker Erling Haaland.

Only Bayern goal-ace Robert Lewandowski, who has 14 goals in his 13 games, has scored more this season in Germany's top flight. Wolfsburg crashed to a 3-0 defeat at Mainz ahead of Wednesday's all-or-nothing Champions League clash at home to Lille. Wolfsburg never recovered from conceding a goal by striker midfielder Jonathan Burkardt after just 68 seconds. They were 2-0 down after only four minutes when midfielder Anton Stach scored from outside the box. To compound Wolfsburg's misery, French defender Maxence Lacroix scored a late own goal. — AFP



Leverkusen's Czech forward Patrik Schick

Barcelona slump to 3rd home loss of the season

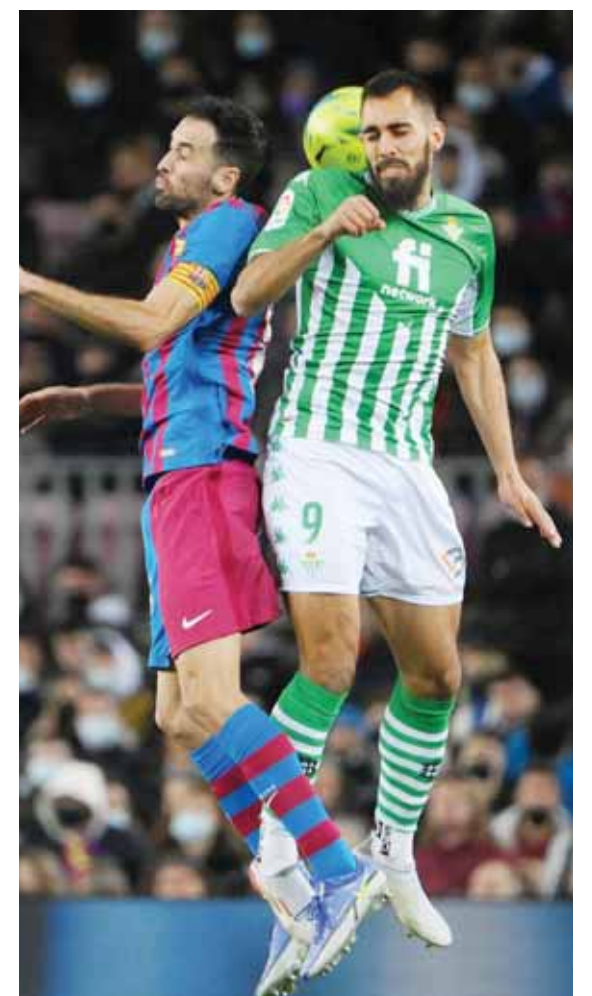
MADRID: Barcelona suffered their third home defeat of the season at Camp Nou yesterday with a 1-0 loss to Real Betis coming just four days before their crucial Champions League clash against Bayern Munich. The Catalans dominated the game but it was Juanmi Jimenez who scored the only goal of the game in the 79th minute as Betis moved into third place in the table.

Sevilla move second

Sevilla reduced the gap to Real Madrid to five points yesterday by beating Villarreal 1-0 in La Liga, with Lucas Ocampos scoring the winner in the first half. Victory lifts Sevilla into second place, above Atletico Madrid, who played at home to Mallorca later, before leaders Real Madrid face Real Sociedad in San Sebastian.

Villarreal have ambitions to challenge for the top four this season but they stay 12th after continuing a miserable run of form away from home. They are yet to win an away game in the league this season. Ocampos gave Sevilla the lead in the 16th minute after Juan Foyth was dispossessed down the right, allowing Marcos Acuna to swing a cross to the back post, where Ocampos' header trickled in.

Rafa Mir thought he had added a second goal but was offside and then Sevilla spurned an excellent chance when they had a six against two on the counter-attack but failed to convert. Villarreal should have made them pay in the second half only for Moreno to miss a sitter. Dani Parejo's chipped ball was played across the box by Pervis Estupinan to the back post where Moreno, three yards out with the net gaping, somehow wafted wide. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets (left) vies for a header with Real Betis' Spanish forward Borja Iglesias during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and Real Betis yesterday. — AFP