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JAMADA ALAWWAL 10, 1444 AH
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Kuwait keen to contribute to energy security, growth

Kuwait believes fossil fuel will remain important for meeting global energy needs



Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah

ROME: The state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah affirmed on Friday KPC's keenness to develop the Kuwaiti oil sector to effectively contribute to maintaining global energy security and achieving economic and industrial growth. "The KPC, as a leading energy institution, is interested in retaining global energy security and supporting national and global economic growth," Sheikh Nawaf Saud told KUNA on the sidelines of his participation in the Rome-hosted Mediterranean Dialogues (MED 2022).

He asserted that KPC is also keen on meeting the needs of energy markets and its customers around the world from crude oil and petroleum derivatives. He highlighted the corporation's investment plans to increase production capacity and introduce new

products through its three refineries: Al-Zour refinery, Mina Al-Abdulla and Mina Al-Ahmadi. He pointed to the ambitious clean fuel project that was launched in March 2020 and is scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2023 to produce environmentally friendly petroleum derivatives, exporting low-sulfur diesel to European markets and increasing production to one million tons this year, with plans to double it next year.

These projects are meant to help keep petroleum products within the components of the energy mix amid the ongoing global transformation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud clarified. He reiterated that Kuwait believes fossil fuel will remain important for meeting the global energy needs, even in the future after the current transition. The petroleum products are an indispensable component of the energy mix, he

affirmed. He stated that the Kuwaiti oil sector is trying to strike a balance between the demand for maintaining security and energy supplies and responding to the challenges of climate change through increasing production capacity of crude oil to cover the increase in Kuwait's export quota according to OPEC+ agreement and at the same time working to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from crude oil and petroleum derivatives.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud said that KPC attaches great importance to preserving the share of Kuwaiti crude oil and petroleum derivatives in the global energy mix. He indicated that KPC's invitation to participate in the MED 2022 dialogues on energy security and the role of major institutions in achieving this goal shows the important role played by the

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News in brief



A handout photo released on Dec 3, 2022 shows a fishing trawler intercepted by the US Navy in the Gulf of Oman. — AFP

US navy seizes ammunition

MANAMA: The US Navy said Saturday it had seized one million rounds of ammunition along with rocket fuses and propellant being smuggled on a fishing trawler from Iran to war-torn Yemen. The cargo was discovered on Thursday "during a flag verification boarding", the Bahrain-based United States Fifth Fleet said in a statement, noting it was the "second major illegal weapons seizure within a month" along the maritime route. The fishing trawler intercepted on Thursday was carrying nearly 7,000 rocket fuses and "over 2,100 kilograms of propellant used to launch rocket propelled grenades", the statement said. — AFP

90% have resistance to COVID

GENEVA: The WHO estimated Friday that 90 percent of the world population now had some resistance to COVID-19, but warned that a troubling new variant could still emerge. Gaps in vigilance were leaving the door open for a new virus variant to appear and overtake the globally dominant Omicron, said World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "WHO estimates that at least 90 percent of the world's population now has some level of immunity to SARS-CoV-2, due to prior infection or vaccination," said Tedros, referring to the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease. — AFP

OPEC set to stick or cut more amid Russian price cap

LONDON: Major oil producers are expected to stick to their current output strategy or even slash production further when they meet on Sunday in the face of falling prices, a Russian oil price cap and an embargo

on Russian crude shipments. At their last ministerial session in October the 13-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries headed by Riyadh and its 10 allies led by Moscow, collectively known as OPEC+, agreed to reduce output by two million barrels per day (bpd) from November.

The OPEC+ reduction amounted to the biggest cut since the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020. Amid fears of economic slowdown, Sunday's cartel meeting via videoconference convenes ahead of the EU enforcing an embargo on Russian crude shipments from Monday. G7 countries, the EU and

Australia had also appeared close to agreeing a \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian oil Thursday.

The alliance should vote for a "rollover of the previous decision" to cut two million bpd, an Iranian source told AFP Thursday, arguing that the market was "very uncertain" in light of imminent European sanctions. "Odds are that the group will reassert its commitment to its latest output cuts," said PVM Energy analyst Stephen Brennock, adding he would not rule out that they "may even potentially announce fresh cuts" to bolster prices.

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Iran hijab law under review

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament and the judiciary are reviewing a law which requires women to cover their heads, and which triggered more than two months of deadly protests, the attorney general said. The demonstrations began after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin, died in custody on September 16 after her arrest by Iran's morality police for an alleged breach of the dress code.

Protesters have burned their head coverings and shouted anti-government slogans. Since Amini's death a growing number of women are not observing hijab, particularly in Tehran's fashionable north. The hijab headscarf

became obligatory for all women in Iran in April 1983, four years after the 1979 revolution that overthrew the US-backed monarchy. "Both parliament and the judiciary are working (on the issue)", of whether the law needs any changes, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri said in the holy city of Qom.

Quoted on Friday by the ISNA news agency, he did not specify what could be modified in the law. The review team met on Wednesday with parliament's cultural commission "and will see the results in a week or two", the attorney general said. President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday said Iran's republican and Islamic foundations were constitutionally entrenched. "But there are methods of implementing the constitution that can be flexible," he said in televised comments.

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TEHRAN: In this photo taken on Oct 11, 2022, a woman walks past a mural in the Iranian capital. — AFP

US unveils high-tech B-21 stealth bomber

PALMDALE, California: The United States on Friday unveiled the B-21 Raider, a high-tech stealth bomber that can carry nuclear and conventional weapons and is designed to be able to fly without a crew on board. The slickly choreographed ceremony at B-21 manufacturer Northrop Grumman's facility in Palmdale, California opened with the US national anthem as older bombers roared over a crowd that included top US officials.

Dramatic music played and lights flashed as the doors of a hanger holding the new aircraft slowly opened, and the crowd applauded as the cloth covering it was pulled away to reveal a sleek grey

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PALMDALE, California: The B-21 Raider is unveiled during a ceremony at Northrop Grumman's Air Force Plant 42 on Dec 2, 2022. — AFP



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In my view

Women & climate justice

By Atyab Al-Shatti



local@kuwaittimes.com

It is acknowledged and understood that there is a strong connection between gender equality and the environment. While evidence varies from one country to another, it collectively proves that gender equality has a positive impact on social and environmental development. If not tackled properly, environment initiatives, endeavors and protection practices reveal gender inequality. Anyone who is active in the legal, justice, humanitarian, environment and sustainable development arenas is aware of this connection between gender equality and climate justice.

In some Asian countries, women were excluded from decision making positions and environmental policy structuring processes, and only a few specialized female-focused groups were included. As a result, such countries failed to include a framework that secures environment protection where women are in the decision-making process and overlooked the different needs of men and women in forestry management due to the fact that they did not tackle women's needs or furnished the suitable platform to address the geographic connection between women and the environment.

In some African countries, women already lack secure access to forests and informal norms and biases often result in women not getting invited to forest governance meetings. In these countries, and in almost three-quarters of households without drinkable water, women are primarily responsible for collecting it. While they have sufficient knowledge to address risks, threats and main challenges to obtain water for the nation and therefore without an intentional focus on and inclusion of gender concerns, these strategies shall fail to meet environmental sustainability.

In Kuwait, the lack of women's representation in the parliament and decision-making positions, and with the government not adopting a quota system for women in the parliament of any form for women's political empowerment and assigning certain chairs for them, is an obvious bias against their gender, in spite of the fact that there are many Kuwaiti women who have sufficient qualifications and credentials to tackle climate risks and help achieve climate justice.

On the other hand, with men the same credentials taking over these positions, such discrimination will hinder environment protection, as women are not involved the strategies that will come out, which will suffer from serious legal vacuums. If an individual obtains the required credentials, such a person should be in the right position regardless of their gender. In fact, including women in such positions shall enhance the legislative process and help achieve successful environmental sustainability strategies.

Although many nongovernmental efforts focused on different entry points into the nexus of gender, education, leadership, and climate change, there is much more room for aligning gender equality and climate justice, and the solution should start on a government level where there must be an adoption of national mechanisms that empower women politically and help them reach decision-making positions, considering the fact that Kuwait still suffers from the pollution that took place post the invasion back in 1990, and today the new generations deserve to live in a better environment.

Developing skills of medics provides better services for patients: Minister



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi visits the Annual Conference for Dermatology, Laser and Aesthetic Medicine. —KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi affirmed the ministry's efforts to develop the skills of employees through hosting applied medical conferences. Sharing experience with international experts can boost medical services provided for patients, said Dr Awadhi in his speech at the opening of the Annual Conference

for Dermatology, Laser and Aesthetic Medicine on Saturday. Dermatology conferences are very important to people as it is related to their outer look, he said, adding that these events can help come up with new medicines, including biological and immunity-related drugs.

Head of the Conference Dr Mohammad Al-

Otaibi said the conference includes several seminars on recent scientific methods in dermatological diagnosis and treatment of diseases. It also includes workshops for Kuwaiti and GCC doctors in the field, run by international experts, he said. The conference is held until Dec 4 at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. —KUNA

Sadu program included on Register of Good Safeguarding Practices

RABAT: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Thursday included Kuwait's educational program for training students on the traditional art of Al-Sadu weaving on its Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, which aims to preserve the world's intangible cultural heritage. This came during the 17th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held in the Moroccan capital from Nov 23 to Dec 3.

This is a new Kuwaiti achievement that serves the international efforts to preserve the intangible cultural heritage and helps strengthen the country's cultural identity, Chairperson of Al-Sadu Handicraft Cooperative Society, which developed the program, Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al-Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah told KUNA, expressing happiness and pride on the UNESCO decision. She dedicated this important cultural achievement to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all the Kuwaiti people.

Al-Sadu is a conventional textile hand woven by Bedouin women, using natural fibers found in their environment and characterized by embroidery in geometrical shapes. The Al-Sadu Society developed the Educational Program: Train the Trainers in The Art of Weaving in collaboration with the Arts Department in the Ministry of Education, in order to raise awareness about traditional Al-Sadu weaving among younger generations in Kuwait.

A national curriculum was developed, along with training workshops to help teachers learn contemporary weaving techniques and how to transmit this traditional craft to students. End-of-year school textile artwork exhibitions are also hosted at Sadu House to showcase the program outcomes. Since the program's inception in 2018, 30,959 students have completed the course, and sixty male and female art teachers from the six school districts have successfully completed the initial training at Sadu House, going on to train an additional 220 teachers.

The program has had a significant impact on students and art teachers, many of whom have



RABAT: Chairperson of Al-Sadu Society Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al-Sabah and Ambassador Adam Al-Mulla. —KUNA

demonstrated a high level of manual ability and creativity in traditional weaving. The positive effects of the program are evident in the students' artwork and in the teachers' enthusiasm to instruct and arrange end-of-year exhibitions revolving around Al-Sadu weaving. —KUNA



> A worker rests near shopping trolleys (2006).

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Local

Zain joins '16 Orange Days' campaign to end violence against women and girls

Company lights up HQ in orange for 3rd consecutive year along with nation's institutions

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, supported the '16 Orange Days' campaign for the third consecutive year. The initiative aims at raising social awareness of ending violence and discrimination against women and girls in Kuwait by lighting up the company's HQ buildings in orange along with the nation's public and private sector organizations to demonstrate Kuwait's role and efforts in advocating this cause.

Zain's annual contribution to this global initiative comes as a continuation of the company's collaboration with local and international organizations, including the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Kuwait University's Women Studies and Research Center, the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States, and others.

Zain is proud to be one of the Kuwaiti private sector's top members to represent the nation in this global campaign. The company's joint effort along with these institutions reflects its commitment to support social initiatives and programs that shed light on the importance of protecting and empowering women and girls, as well as those that enrich gender equality and inclusion within communities and workplaces.

The annual international campaign, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, kicks off on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and runs until 10 December (Human Rights Day). The

UNiTE campaign, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, aims at ending violence against women by 2030, and calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations to address violence against women and girls around the world.

Zain prides itself on being a part of Kuwait's participation to support this global initiative by the United Nations, a contribution that seeks to find viable solutions to end violence against women, as this issue continues to have a worrying impact on many women and girls in Arab communities and around the entire world.

The goals of this campaign are well consistent with those of Zain's group-wide sustainability strategy. The company's efforts also come in line with its commitment to take part in social campaigns that aim at protecting and enhancing the overall social welfare of Arab communities in particular, and the world as a whole. This is especially true when it comes to issues related to protecting women and their rights.

Zain is keen on actively participating in the various local and regional projects that aim at contributing to the achievement of the country's various developmental goals. The company will spare no efforts to support any group that serves the global sustainable goals and contributes to the progress and prosperity of the region.



KUWAIT: Zain's HQ lit up in orange to support the campaign.

Kuwaiti citizen turns disability into purpose

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti citizen with special challenges has successfully coped with his physical disability, playing a fruitful role in the society and partaking in diverse relief and humanitarian activities. "I was born with disability, but with a sound brain and spirit," said Salem Amer Al-Dhafiri, who has succeeded in rising up to the challenges, setting an example to follow, particularly for people of such cases. Dhafiri said in his interview with KUNA, marking the International Day of Persons with Disability, that the impairment, instead of being a hurdle, stimulated him and nudged him to "attain my aspirations".

The citizen became handicapped after the death of his twin brother in infancy due to some health complications. "At six years of age, I started coping with the disability and realized that only perseverance will make me progress, because I believe that the impairment is in the mind, not the body or the limbs." Additionally, his

family have been quite supportive and have made no bids to isolate him from the society.

Now, he advocates the initiative, "the week of solidarity with the handicapped", aimed at altering misconceptions and promoting creative works by the special challenges' segment. Dhafiri, who has learnt French, German, Czech and English, plans to be registered at the information faculty; aspiring to follow in the footsteps of the late Kuwaiti media icon Mohammad Al-Sanousi. The special needs national, who was engaged in voluntary work at Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Civil Defense, had also taken part in combating the coronavirus outbreak and distributing relief supplies to the needy.

Provision 11 of the Kuwait constitution stipulates that the state devote care for the elderly, the sick and the disabled. It secures teaching for the disabled, appoints them to ranking posts in the private and public sectors, grants them housing and financial allotments. Kuwait has particular concern for citizens of special challenges, mirrored in the establishment of the Public Authority for the Disabled. There are various associations in the country that look after these cases - including sports bodies that have made champions. —KUNA



Salem Amer Al-Dhafiri

Disabled people play big role in Kuwait: Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Affairs and head of the supreme council for disability affairs Mai Al-Baghli affirmed that disabled people play an important role in society, underlining the need to activate articles of law 10/2010 on the rights of people with disability. Her remarks came in a press statement on the sidelines of the (I'm Gifted) event, as part of the International Day of Disabled Persons, organized in the presence of acting director general of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs Hanadi Al-Mubailish, in cooperation with The Avenues mall on Saturday.

Kuwait is continuously developing programs to provide special needs people with a better life and protect their rights, said the minister. On her part, Mubailish told KUNA that the authority believes that such events and conferences play an important role in resolving the issues facing disabled people. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Mai Al-Baghli, Public Authority for Disability Director Hanadi Al-Mubailish and Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah with a participant.

Special dentistry treatment for the disabled

KUWAIT: Kuwait, since onset of legislations and development, has sought to furnish special needs citizens with all requirements for good living and attaining their aspirations. Specialized medicine for these cases at Jahra dentistry center is a tangible example how Kuwait has been seeking to attain this objective, actively.

Speaking on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the head of the ward, Dr Dalal Al-Kharraz, said in an interview with KUNA that the doctors and staff in the section have been providing treatment and extraordinary care for such cases since 12 years. The center receives autis-

tic cases, Down's syndrome cases, cardiac and Alzheimer cases, and provides transplants and chemotherapy, she said, noting that in 2021, up to 1,100 cases had been treated - a high number reached despite difficulties resulting from the coronavirus outbreak. Dr Kharraz said the ward receives 6 to 10 cases a day including those that need surgeries.

Dr Manal Al-Ajmi, who works in the same section, indicated to KUNA that difficulties double in the cases that suffer from other illnesses, noting that some cases under surgery need to be totally anesthetized, adding that collaborative action is required to treat some patients of this category.



Dr Turki Al-Mjaweb



Dr Dalal Al-Kharraz

The center also receives patients who need teeth treatment for problems that appeared since child-birth, said Dr Turki Al-Mjaweb, noting flexibility in appointments and devoting the required care depending on the status of each case. —KUNA

Doctor warns against harmful effects of e-cigs

By Majd Othman



Dr Nouh Baqer

KUWAIT: A study conducted by Ronald Reagan Medical Center at the University of California revealed using electronic cigarettes or vapes just once or for the first time can affect the health greatly. Researchers have monitored a significant increase in the levels of what is known as "oxidative stress" in people after they underwent a first smoking session. The study also showed that vaping in general can cause brain damage, increase risk of heart disease, leaky gut and even brain fog.

Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Nouh Baqer, Senior Specialist, Respiratory and Internal Medicine, and discussed with him the effects of vaping on the respiratory system, especially since it has become very popular among individuals and teenagers, and the reasons that attracts people to vape, unlike regular cigarettes.

"Despite some international medical centers recommending vapes and e-cigarettes for those trying to quit smoking, over the last decade or two, the use of electronic cigarettes has increased quite significantly among the public, especially among the youth and younger generations," Dr Baqer said. "Meanwhile, the most important disadvantage with these devices is how it got picked up among other people, as these devices don't have many disadvantages of traditional cigarettes such as foul smell and bad breath, and how it is very bothering to those surrounding smokers in public spaces," he pointed out.

"E-cigarettes have the opposite effects, which attracts younger people and teenagers to use them. Above all, it is one of the most addictive substances known, and these teenagers or individuals can easily pick up a bad and very dangerous habit, which is not stigmatized against when it comes to smell or the previously mentioned disadvantages," he added.

Regarding the dangers of e-cigarettes, he explained these devices contain three main components -nicotine, liquids, mainly glycerol, and flavors. "The huge problem is that the manufacturing is not always the same, as we are not really sure what is added or taken out when it when it comes to substances. Probably up to 700 substances can be added for flavor," Dr Baqer said.

"The degree of inflammation that can associated with the use of electronic cigarettes and vaping can vary between different companies. When it comes to vapes sold on the streets, it becomes even more dangerous, because people can easily manipulate and add addictive substances that can cause lung injury. In medical terms, it is called EVALI - electronic cigarette or vaping associated lung injury - and can cause very significant lung tissue inflammation, leaving the patient very vulnerable to hypoxic respiratory failure," Dr Baqer said.

"In addition, some of the oils that are used in these devices depends on how sensitive each individual is, which also can result in recurrent infections. If I will put in order main side effects caused by smoking electronic cigarettes, the number one is addition to nicotine, then EVALI, then recurrent infections in individuals who are predisposed," he said, adding these effects can't be generalized as they vary between one individual and another. "Therefore, I would never really advocate e-cigarettes to those who are trying to stop smoking."

On other hand, Dr Baqer mentioned the differences between regular and electronic cigarettes. "What is still to be studied is the risk of cancer that is associated with e-cigarettes, even though they should be less carcinogenic. Meanwhile, traditional cigarettes have very carcinogenic and harmful substances, in addition to the effect of nicotine," he stressed. "What is in common between regular smoking and e-cigarettes is that they increase the work of the heart muscle, or what is called cardiac work."

Local

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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com



Mubarak Saleh Abdullah

Sports necessary to build healthy communities

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed at an international forum the necessity of sports to build sound communities. The Kuwaiti view was expressed by the diplomatic attache of the Kuwaiti mission Mubarak Saleh Abdullah during a session of the UN General Assembly discussing "sports for peace and development". Kuwait's participation in this discussion emanates from its strong conviction in sports' role for evolving societies, cementing bonds among nations and raising good youth, he said, affirming Kuwait's support for the UNGA call on nations of the globe to observe the "world day for sports for sake of peace and development."

The best investment is investment in human resources, Abdullah said, noting that sports help immune the youth against extremism, adding that Kuwait, years back, formed the ministry of youth and the public authority for youth and sports. He also singled the great role played by the Kuwaiti Club for Disabilities "that has incubated special challenges' athletes' steel will". Kuwait through its 2025 vision affirms women's pioneering role in sports, he said, noting national efforts for establishing clubs for female athletes. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Aerial view shows private boats sailing at night in Gulf waters, off the shore of Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

UAE Embassy celebrates National Day



KUWAIT: UAE Ambassador Matar Al-Neyadi and embassy staff attend the celebration. —KUNA

KUWAIT: The UAE Embassy in Kuwait marked Friday the country's 51st National Day with a festival under the auspices of and in the presence of Ambassador Matar Al-Neyadi and the embassy staff. Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the festival, Neyadi said the UAE celebrates on Dec 2 its National Day, adding "our country's journey has moved towards progress and development through bright years full of achievements, with a clear vision towards the future, and drawing its first features and laying its foundations".

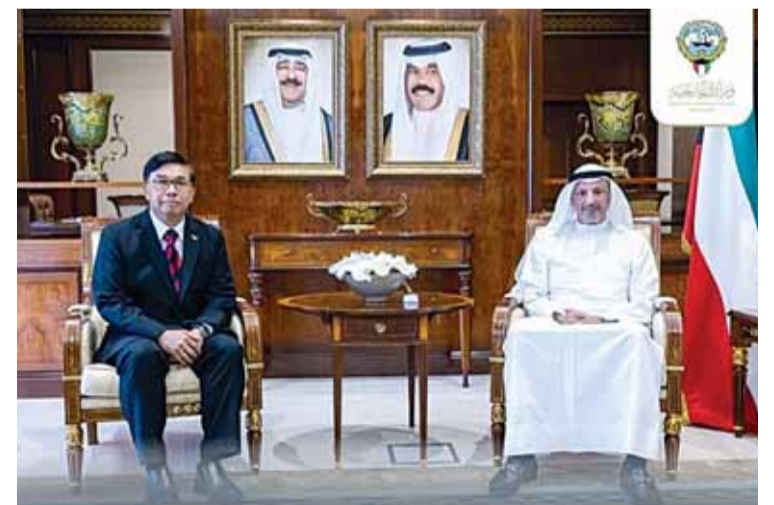
This was done by the late founder of the State Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, and the state continued this approach during the reign of the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, he added. Neyadi stated that the country is moving ahead with steady steps towards a future full of renaissance and leadership, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the State, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and the rulers of other emirates.

Meanwhile, Omar Abu Hamad, head of the Kuwaiti team participating in the festival, told KUNA that 150 kites decorated with the UAE's flags took part in the event. He said all participating kites were designed by the team and each one reflects the Kuwaiti identity, and that the used kites range in size from three meters to 50 meters decorated with Gulf national flags. He pointed out the design of the kite is carried out through stages by making an experimental model to ensure its safety, followed by the stage of production and implementation of the final kite through a special electronic program that takes into account the quality and durability of the kite and its tolerance to weather changes and wind direction.

Head of Mopar international team for classic cars, Adel Al-Ansari said that they participated in the event by displaying a special show of classic cars, totaling 100. The show included some types of old cars like US, European and Germany ones, he said. —KUNA

Thai envoy meets FM

KUWAIT: On November 30, 2022, Ambassador of Thailand Rooge Thammongkol, paid a farewell call to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the completion of his tour of duty. Rooge Thammongkol will assume the new position of Director-General of the Department of Consular Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.



KIU marathon links industries with sports

KUWAIT: Kuwait Industries Union (KIU) held on Saturday a marathon, "Jusour Run", with a different concept that links the industrial sector with sports, in the industrial zone. It attracted more than 500 participants of different ages, racing across a distance of five kilometers. In a challenging atmosphere, besides pleasant weather, KIU promoted exercise as a break from hard work and stress. —KUNA



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Hair transplant fad turns deadly in India

US-led forces resume regular patrols in Syria

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Hawaii volcano sprays fountains of lava

Mauna Loa's spectacular eruption occurs first time in four decades

LOS ANGELES: Fountains of lava and rivers of molten rock were spewing from the world's biggest volcano Friday, as the first eruption there in almost four decades showed no signs of abating.

Two fissures on Mauna Loa were venting huge volumes of viscous rock and gases from deep within the Earth, in a thunderous display of the power of nature. Vulcanologists said they were watching lava flows heading towards a highway on Hawaii's largest island, though they still believe the eruption, which began Sunday, posed no immediate threat to humans. "The Northeast Rift Zone eruption of Mauna Loa continues, with two active fissures feeding lava flows downslope," the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said on Thursday.

"Fissure 3 remains the dominant source of the largest lava flow. The fissure 3 lava flows are traveling to the north toward the Daniel K Inouye Highway (Saddle Road) but have reached relatively flatter ground and have slowed down significantly as expected." The molten rock was travelling at around 130 feet (40 meters) per hour and was still a few miles (kilometers) from the road.

"Advance rates may be highly variable over the coming days and weeks due to the way lava is emplaced on flat ground," the USGS said. "At the rate observed over the past 24 hours, the earliest the lava flow might be expected to reach the Daniel K Inouye Highway (Saddle Road) is one week."

But, the agency warned, volcanoes can be unpredictable and these calculations could change.

The other fissure still producing lava is sending it northeast, while plumes of volcanic gas were lofting high into the air and Pele's Hair was falling to earth. Pele's Hair is fine strands of volcanic glass formed when lava skeins cool quickly in the air.



This image released by the US Geological Survey (USGS) on November 29, 2022, shows an aerial photograph of the dominant fissure 3 erupting on the Northeast Rift Zone of Mauna Loa in Hawaii. —AFP

'Long Mountain'

Named after Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes, the strands can be very sharp and pose potential danger to skin and eyes. Scientists say their seismic monitoring equipment was detecting a large number of earthquakes around the two active fissures. "This indicates that magma is still being

supplied, and activity is likely to continue as long as we see this signal," the USGS said. Pressure has been building at Mauna Loa for years, but it has not erupted since 1984. Fountains of lava as high as 200 feet have been observed this week, lighting up the night sky in a spectacle that could be seen from Kona, a town 45 miles away.

The largest volcano on Earth by volume, Mauna Loa, whose name means "Long Mountain," is larger than the rest of the Hawaiian islands combined. The volcano's submarine flanks stretch for miles to an ocean floor that is in turn depressed by Mauna Loa's great mass-making its summit some 11 miles above its base, according to the USGS. One of six

active volcanoes on the Hawaiian islands, Mauna Loa has erupted 33 times since 1843.

Its most recent eruption, in 1984, lasted 22 days. Kilauea, a volcano on the southeastern flank of Mauna Loa, erupted almost continuously between 1983 and 2019, and a minor eruption there has been ongoing for months. —AFP

Democrats shake up 2024 presidential primary calendar

BOSTON: Democrats voted on Friday to shake up their presidential primaries calendar in 2024 to give greater sway to African Americans in choosing the party's White House candidate. The surprise move came one day after President Joe Biden, who has said he plans another White House run in 2024, suggested changes to the Democratic Party's presidential nominating calendar.

The eyes of the world have traditionally been focused every four years on rural, overwhelmingly white Iowa and tiny New Hampshire as the kickoff states for the months-long process of selecting presidential candidates. Biden, in a letter on Thursday to the Democratic National Committee's rules and bylaws committee, proposed that the first Democratic primary of 2024 be held in South Carolina, which has a large Black population.

The committee, in a voice vote, approved the move on Friday with only the members from Iowa and New Hampshire opposing the change. The new calendar will be put to a vote of the full DNC in February 2023. Biden's victory in the Democratic presidential primary in South Carolina in 2020 helped revive his flagging candidacy and propelled the former vice president to the nomination and eventually the White House.

In his letter, Biden said, "You cannot be the Democratic nominee and win a general election unless you have overwhelming support from voters of color-and that includes Black, Brown and Asian American & Pacific Islander voters. "For decades, Black voters in particular have been the backbone of the Democratic Party but have been pushed to



BOSTON: US President Joe Biden participates in an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers phone bank in Boston, Massachusetts, on December 2, 2022. —AFP

the back of the early primary process," he said.

"It is time to stop taking these voters for granted, and time to give them a louder and earlier vote in the process." The new primary calendar calls for the first contest to be held in South Carolina on February 3, followed by Nevada and New Hampshire on February 6, Georgia on February 13 and Michigan on February 27.

Biden's proposed changes received a chilly reception from Democratic leadership in Iowa and New Hampshire. "Small rural states like Iowa must have a voice in our presidential nominating process," Iowa Democratic Party chair Ross Wilburn said. "Democrats cannot forget about entire groups of voters in the heart of the Midwest without doing significant damage to the party for a generation." In New Hampshire, Democratic Party chair Ray Buckley insisted the northeastern state "will be holding our primary first." —AFP

Afghanistan's foreign ministry said they strongly condemned the "failed attack".

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will not allow any malicious actors to pose a threat to the security of diplomatic missions in Kabul," it said in a statement. "Security agencies will investigate this incident seriously. After identifying the perpetrators, they will be punished according to law."

The attack comes just days after Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's minister of state for foreign affairs, visited Kabul for talks with the Taliban government.

Pakistan has complicated relations with the Taliban, with Islamabad long accused of supporting the Islamists even while backing the US-led invasion of Afghanistan that toppled them following the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan is home to more than a million Afghan refugees, and the porous border they share is frequently the scene of clashes. Last month a gunman shot dead a Pakistan security guard at the Chaman border crossing, leading to its closure for a week.

On Monday, Pakistan's separate but home-grown Taliban — whose leaders and fighters have long operated from Afghanistan — said they were ending a shaky ceasefire with Islamabad. Since returning to power in August last year, the Afghan Taliban have insisted they would not allow foreign militant groups to operate from home soil. —AFP

Guard shot at Pakistan's Kabul embassy

KABUL: A security guard was wounded Friday by shots fired at Pakistan's embassy in the Afghan capital, in what Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called "an assassination attempt" on the head of the mission. "I demand immediate investigation & action against perpetrators of this heinous act," Sharif tweeted.

A Kabul police spokesman said one suspect had been arrested and two light weapons seized after security forces swept a nearby building "and prevented the continuation of gunfire". Although Pakistan does not officially recognize Afghanistan's Taliban government, it kept its embassy open even as the hardline Islamists took over in August last year, and maintains a full diplomatic mission.

An embassy official told AFP a lone attacker "came behind the cover of houses and started firing". "The ambassador and all the other staff are safe, but we are not going outside of the embassy building as a precaution," he said. A spokesman for




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International

US-led coalition forces resume regular patrols in northeast Syria

Hundreds of American troops still fighting remnants of IS in Syria

RMEILAN, Syria: A US-led coalition fighting jihadists resumed regular patrols in Kurdish-held areas of northeast Syria on Friday after earlier Turkish air strikes, an AFP correspondent and a Kurdish military source said. Patrols were reduced following the Turkish strikes that began on November 20 in Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq, in response to a deadly Istanbul bombing that Ankara blamed on Kurdish groups.

The Kurds denied responsibility. Hundreds of American troops are in Syria as part of the fight against remnants of the Islamic State group. Two four-vehicle patrols bearing US flags set off separately from a base in Rmeilan in Hasakeh province, the AFP correspondent said.

A vehicle belonging to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) accompanied each convoy, which travelled in different directions towards Syria's borders. "The international coalition in cooperation with the Syrian Democratic Forces resumed its usual patrols in northeast Syria following a reduction due to Turkish strikes in the area," a Kurdish military source told AFP.

The source requested anonymity as he was not authorized to speak on the matter. The usual 20 weekly patrols had dropped to around five or six following the Turkish strikes, which Ankara said it carried out with aircraft and drones.

The US supports the SDF, which is the Kurds' de facto army in the area and led the battle that dislodged IS from the last scraps of their Syrian territory in 2019.

Mahmud Bardakhan, a member of the SDF general command, meanwhile said the group "was forced to stop operations against IS cells for several days" due to the Turkish strikes. But operations tar-



RUMAYLAN, Syria: US forces patrol near the countryside of Rumaylan (Rmeilan) in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province near the Turkish border, on December 2, 2022. —AFP

geting the jihadists will resume on Saturday "in coordination with the coalition", he added.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Friday warned Turkey not to disrupt operations by US and Kurdish forces in Syria, while acknowledging Ankara's security concerns in the volatile region. Turkey said it struck targets of the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which dominate the SDF but which Ankara sees as an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey and its Western allies designate the PKK as a terrorist group. The SDF "needs to focus

on repelling the Turkish threats and protecting its areas", the Kurdish military source said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor with a vast network of sources on the ground, said patrols were also seen Friday in Deir Ezzor province further south.

Turkey has threatened a ground operation in the semi-autonomous Syrian Kurdish south, something which US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Wednesday expressed "strong opposition" to.

The SDF has warned that a Turkish incursion would jeopardize the fight against IS. —AFP

Biden, Prince William meet in chilly Boston

BOSTON: US President Joe Biden met briefly Friday with Britain's Prince William in Boston where the two quickly hit on the most British of conversation topics—the bad weather. As the heir to Britain's throne strode up outside the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum without an overcoat, Biden remarked that it was "freezing."

Prince William chuckled and later could be heard informing the president that "when we got in Wednesday, it was pouring with rain." The less than hour-long meeting took place while Prince William was in Boston with his wife Kate for their Earthshot Prize Awards ceremony, which promotes solutions to envi-



BOSTON: Prince William, Prince of Wales meets with US President Joe Biden at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum on December 02, 2022 in Boston, Massachusetts. —AFP

ronmental challenges. Biden, coincidentally, was in the city to attend a Democratic Party fundraiser. Strolling a short distance together along the edge of Boston harbor outside the library, Biden jokingly asked if they "were going to jump in" and Prince William suggested a "quick swim."

They then entered the JFK library complex to finish off the encounter in presumably more comfort. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden, who was up late Thursday hosting a dinner for French President Emmanuel Macron at the White House, "looks forward to spending time with Prince William." Biden knows the JFK Library well, having gone there in September to launch his "cancer moonshot" strategy to bring the disease under control in the United States.

"We expect that they will discuss their shared climate goals, prioritization of mental health issues and decreasing the burden of the disease," Jean-Pierre told reporters. —AFP

Australian MPs delegation to visit Taiwan

SYDNEY: A group of Australian MPs will leave Sunday for a five-day visit to Taiwan, a spokesman for one of the politicians said Saturday, risking China's ire just as Beijing-Canberra relations appeared to be thawing. The bipartisan trip will be the first such Taiwan visit in more than three years, a period marked by a long disruption to air travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Details of the visit were confirmed to AFP by a spokesman for Scott Buchholz, a conservative MP who is in the delegation. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese sought to play down the mission's significance after it was first reported by the Weekend Australian newspaper. "There have been backbench visits to Taiwan for a long time. This is another one. This isn't a government visit," he told reporters.

Albanese said both major Australian political parties supported the "One China" policy, which recognises Beijing, not Taipei, while backing the status quo on the self-ruled island. Asked about the aims of the trip, he said: "I have no idea. I'm not going. You should ask them." —AFP

Ecuador seeks to protect Galapagos birds from flu

QUITO: Ecuador has put in place a plan to try and protect its unique wild bird species on the Galapagos islands from the H5N1 virus also rampaging through Europe and North America.

The bird flu virus reached South America via migratory wild birds in recent weeks, impacting mainly Peru, where thousands of pelicans and other seabirds have died, and Ecuador, which has ordered the culling of 180,000 farm birds. The director of the Galapagos National Park, Danny Rueda, said in a statement that "permanent monitoring has been arranged in areas with the most seabirds," including all tourism hotspots. The Galapagos is a bird-watcher's paradise for the scores of unique and colorful birds found on the archipelago, such as the blue-footed booby with its quirky mating rituals, and endemic penguin, cormorant and albatross species.

English naturalist Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution after studying finches and mockingbirds on the Galapagos islands in 1835. On Wednesday, Ecuador declared a 90-day animal health emergency after detecting the highly contagious bird flu on some farms, and ordered the slaughter of about 180,000 poultry at affected sites.

In Peru, authorities have culled at least 37,000 chickens to try and control an outbreak, which has killed more than 14,000 seabirds, mostly pelicans.

Venezuela declared on Friday a 90-day health alert in five coastal states after bird flu was detected. The movement of live birds in the quarantine zones was prohibited. The current bird flu outbreak began in Canada and spread to the United States, which has seen a record 50 million avian deaths, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Europe is also experiencing its worst-ever outbreak of the virus, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. There is no treatment for bird flu, which spreads naturally between wild birds and can also infect domestic poultry. Avian influenza viruses do not typically infect humans, although there have been rare cases. —AFP



FLOREANA ISLAND, Ecuador: In this file photo taken on April 14, 2021, a blue-footed booby sits on a rock in Floreana Island, in the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean, 900 km off the Ecuadorean coast. —AFP

Kuwait keen to contribute...

Continued from Page 1

KPC and its subsidiary the Kuwait Petroleum International which owns 2,800 gas stations in Italy and about 5,000 gas stations across Europe.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud explained that this presence and huge investments demonstrate Kuwait's role in cooperating with friendly European countries through supplying them with oil products needed for the development of their economies and in return finding safe outlets for Kuwaiti petroleum products in Europe.

Earlier in the day, the KPC chief partook in a session entitled "Towards a Broader Approach for Energy Security" which was also attended by Bahraini and Algerian oil and energy ministers and the CEO of the Italian group Eni. In his speech at the session, Sheikh Nawaf Saud pointed out that despite the global approach towards achieving carbon neutrality and its impact on the demand for oil and gas, "we see oil and gas will retain their significant role in meeting the global demand for energy until 2040". He said that Kuwait, given the great

Iran hijab law under...

Continued from Page 1

After the hijab law became mandatory, with changing clothing norms it became commonplace to see women in tight jeans and loose, colorful headscarves. But in July this year Raisi, an ultra-conservative, called for mobilization of "all state institutions to enforce the headscarf law". Many women continued to bend the rules, however.

Iran accuses its sworn enemy the United States and its allies, including Britain, the Zionist entity and

role played by its national oil companies such as the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation in preserving energy supplies and achieving balance in the oil markets, aims to invest more in onshore exploration and offshore exploration to raise the proportion of production from offshore drilling to about 25 percent of Kuwait's total production by 2040.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud referred to the corporation's interest in clean fuel products as one of the most important initiatives of its transformation and sustainability policy which aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 through reducing direct greenhouse gas emissions resulting from operations and indirect ones from energy generation sources. He explained that this is done through investing in clean and renewable energy sources such as green hydrogen and circular carbon economy projects in order to achieve the optimal economic return for the institution and serve its operations.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud spoke about the KPC role in supplying several Italian cities with low-sulfur diesel via a network of Q8 fuel stations. The corporation is proud that its subsidiary (the Kuwait Petroleum International) in Italy succeeded in reducing emissions category 1 and 2 category 58 percent over previous years. He affirmed the corporation's commitment to remain the reliable and stable supplier of crude oil and various petroleum products to its customers. — KUNA

Kurdish groups based outside the country, of fomenting the street violence which the government calls "riots". A general in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps this week, for the first time, said more than 300 people have lost their lives in the unrest since Amini's death.

Iran's top security body, the Supreme National Security Council, on Saturday said the number of people killed during the protests "exceeds 200". Cited by state news agency IRNA, it said the figure included security officers, civilians, armed separatists and "rioters". Oslo-based non-governmental organization Iran Human Rights on Tuesday said at least 448 people had been "killed by security forces in the ongoing nationwide protests". UN rights chief Volker Turk said last week that 14,000 people, including children, had been arrested in the protest crackdown. — AFP

OPEC set to stick or cut more amid...

Continued from Page 1

Since the October meeting, oil prices have been plummeting to their level of early 2022, far from the peaks above \$130 a barrel in March after the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Two global crude benchmarks were hovering around \$85 a barrel on Thursday. COVID-related restrictions in China have raised fears about energy demand from the world's largest importer of crude oil. Beijing defused concerns, however, by signaling a possible easing of its strict zero-COVID policy, after nationwide protests against health restrictions broke out. Soaring inflation in Europe and across the Atlantic have also fueled fears of a recession.

Beyond the economic gloom, the big unknown in the oil equation currently is Russian oil, as Western nations seek to decouple themselves from

US unveils high-tech B-21...

Continued from Page 1

bomber that is on track to cost nearly \$700 million per plane. "The B-21 Raider is the first strategic bomber in more than three decades. It is a testament to America's enduring advantages in ingenuity and innovation," US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in remarks at the ceremony.

Many specifics of the aircraft are being kept under wraps, but the plane will offer significant advances over existing bombers in the US fleet, which Austin highlighted in his remarks. He hailed its range - "no other long-range bomber can match its efficiency" - and its durability, saying it is "designed to be the most maintainable bomber ever built."

Like the F-22 and F-35 warplanes, the B-21 features stealth technology, which minimizes an aircraft's signature through both its shape and the materials it is con-

Moscow's energy supplies as fast as possible. The EU has decided to ban member states from buying Russian oil exported by sea from December 5, "putting at risk over two million barrels per day," according to estimates by ANZ analysts.

The EU will also join the G7 powers in imposing a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, the Polish ambassador to the bloc said Friday. Poland had delayed approving the adoption of the plan while it pushed for a lower price ceiling and tough new sanctions to punish Russia for its war against Ukraine. Last week, President Vladimir Putin had warned that any attempt by the West to cap the price of Russian oil would have "grave consequences" for world markets.

Russia "has several options to circumvent such a cap," said UniCredit economist Edoardo Campanella, adding that "OPEC+ might feel compelled to adopt a more aggressive stance" by cutting or threatening to cut production even further. "Russia might also retaliate by leveraging its influence within OPEC+ to push for more production cuts down the road, thus exacerbating the global energy crisis," Campanella said. — AFP

structed from, making it harder for adversaries to detect. "Fifty years of advances in low-observable technology have gone into this aircraft," Austin said. "Even the most sophisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect the B-21 in the sky."

The plane is also built with an "open system architecture," which allows for the incorporation of "new weapons that haven't even been invented yet," he said. Amy Nelson, a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, told AFP ahead of the unveiling that the B-21 is "designed to evolve". "The 'open architecture' allows for the future integration of improved software (including for autonomy) so the aircraft doesn't become obsolete as quickly," she said.

"The B-21 is much fancier than its predecessors - truly modern. Not only is it dual-capable (unlike the B-2), which means it can launch nuclear or conventionally armed missiles, it can launch long- and short-range missiles," Nelson said. Not mentioned during the ceremony was the plane's potential for uncrewed flight. US Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek told AFP the aircraft is "provisioned for the possibility, but there has been no decision to fly without a crew". — AFP

International

Hair transplant fad turns deadly in India

Surgeries by amateurs self-trained on YouTube lead to deadly results

NEW DELHI: All that balding Indian television executive Athar Rasheed wanted was to look handsome and get married. But the 30-year-old's seemingly harmless hair transplant went fatally wrong. Women have been judged on their appearance for millennia, but in an increasingly materialistic Indian society, men are also feeling pressure to look young and presentable for fear of losing their social standing.

More and more prematurely balding men are opting for hair transplants as disposable incomes rise and an emphasis on personal appearance becomes stronger. But in a weakly regulated sector, the procedure-sometimes performed by amateurs self-trained on YouTube-can have deadly results.



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on November 5, 2022, Dr Mayank Singh performs a hair transplant surgery at Crown hair transplant clinic in New Delhi. All that balding Indian television executive Athar Rasheed wanted was to look handsome and get married. But the 30-year-old's seemingly harmless hair transplant went fatally wrong.

face and black rashes that broke out all over his body in his final hours, the family lodged a police complaint. Four people, including the two men who performed the surgery, have been arrested and are awaiting trial.

"I remember my son every day and die a slow death," she said, sitting in her modest one-room rented flat in a rundown neighborhood of the capital. "I lost my son but I don't want any other mother to lose their child because of fraudulent practices of a few people," she said.

Confidence booster

When performed by a skilled surgeon, a hair transplant can be a life-changing and confidence-boosting experience, especially for young Indian men looking for personal and professional growth. Harish Iyer, a social commentator and equal rights activist, said men have started focusing more on their grooming as lifestyles change. "The need to exhibit youth and vitality is echoed by all genders," Iyer told AFP.

"The pressure was always on women to look a certain way and find acceptance, but the needle is now changing." But at the same time, specialists say increasingly sedentary lifestyles, smoking, improper diet and stress can result in early hair loss.

A hair transplantation procedure involves removing follicles from a dense area of hair, such as the back of the head, and then implanting them on the affected area of the scalp.

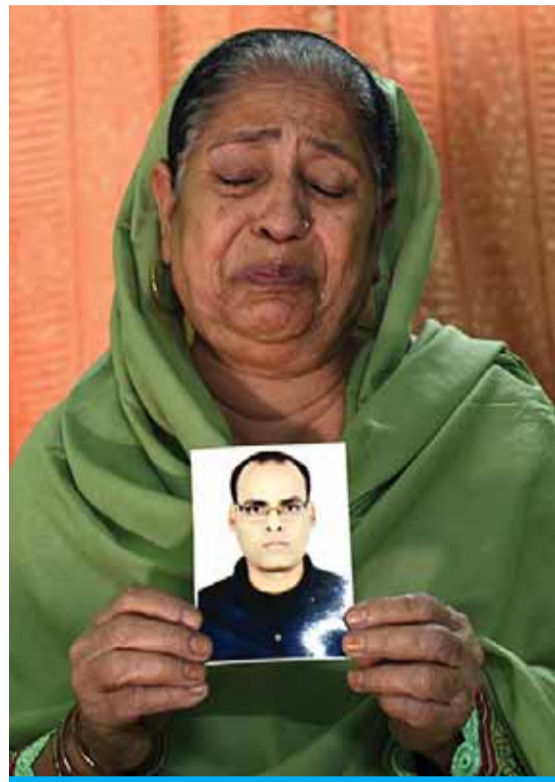
Doctor Mayank Singh performs up to 15 surgeries a month at his upscale clinic in a posh New Delhi neighborhood. Most of his patients are aged 25 to 35 and looking to either get married or climb the professional ladder, especially in jobs where appearances matter.

The procedure costs some 350,000 rupees (\$4,300), a considerable sum in a country where millions live on less than two dollars a day. Seedy clinics manned by untrained personnel perform the surgery at a fraction of the cost.

YouTube workshops

Singh, who is also the secretary of the Association of Hair Restoration Surgeons of India, said quacks were bringing the industry a bad name. "People have this myth that this is a minor procedure, whereas the duration of the surgery is pretty long, running into some six to eight hours," said Singh.

"It involves a lot of local anesthesia that has to be administered over time. If someone does not have the knowledge about what we need to do, then it can become an unsafe procedure." Alarmed by the mushrooming number of clinics offering often subpar service at discounted prices, India's National Medical Commission issued a warning in September.



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on November 7, 2022, Asiya Begum, mother of the late Athar Rasheed who died after undergoing a hair transplant at a clinic, speaks with an AFP at her rented residence in New Delhi. —AFP photos

"Watching in workshops or on YouTube or similar platforms is not adequate training to start aesthetic procedures including hair transplantation," it said. Only properly trained doctors should perform such procedures, it added. Singh, a plastic surgeon, said it was imperative that the guidelines were strictly adhered to.

He has a long list of happy customers, including doctor Lakshmi Narayanan, who for years avoided going to social gatherings because of his baldness. "My hair loss started when I was just 18. I used to avoid taking pictures of myself or even looking in the mirror," Narayanan, now 29, told AFP. "But not anymore. I can interact confidently with people now and I am looking for a life partner." — AFP

Rasheed was the sole breadwinner for his family and aspired to a better life—owning a house and getting his two sisters married. But he developed sepsis after undergoing a hair transplant at a clinic in Delhi last year, his distraught mother Asiya Begum, 62, told AFP.

The swelling spread from his head and he suffered terrible agonies. "My son died a very painful death. His kidneys stopped functioning and then all his other organs collapsed," she said, breaking down.

Aimed with photographs showing Rasheed's bloated

DR Congo says 'massacre' left over 100 dead

KINSHASA: Three days of national mourning began in the DR Congo on Saturday after the alleged massacre of civilians in the country's east, with the government now giving a death toll of "more than 100". On Thursday, the government accused the M23 militia—with whom it is locked in a months-long conflict—of slaughtering 50 people at Kishishe, a village around 70 kilometers (40 miles) north of the city of Goma.

The M23 hit back, saying the allegations were "baseless" and denying that it targeted civilians.

At a council of ministers meeting on Friday, the DRC's president Felix Tshisekedi "condemned in the strongest terms the massacre of more than 100 compatriots in Kishishe", government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said. He said Tshisekedi had "instructed the government to declare three days of national mourning," adding that flags would be flown at half-mast throughout the country.

The period of mourning will end on Monday with a televised fundraising event to support victims, Muyaya said. Since reports of the massacre emerged, calls for an independent investigation have been mounting. The president "asked the minister of justice to open an internal investigation without delay and at the same time to work for an international investigation to shed light on this war crime", Muyaya said.—AFP



Kinshasa accuses its smaller neighbor Rwanda of providing M23 with support, something that UN experts and US officials have also pointed to in recent months.

Strong quake hits Indonesia's Java island, injures one

JAKARTA: A strong earthquake hit Indonesia's main island of Java on Saturday, injuring at least one person and shaking the same town devastated by a tremor last month that left more than 330 people dead. The 5.7-magnitude quake struck on land at a depth of 112 kilometers (70 miles), with the epicenter located 18 kilometers southeast of the West Java city of Banjar, according to the United States Geological Survey.

Indonesia's meteorological agency, known as BMKG,

gave a higher magnitude of 6.4 for the quake, which shook buildings in the capital Jakarta, according to an AFP journalist. At least one person was injured and was taken to hospital, the country's national disaster mitigation chief Suharyanto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told broadcaster Metro TV.

There were no reports of other casualties or major damage. The BMKG said the quake caused buildings to shake in the West Java town of Garut and it warned residents near the epicenter to beware of potential aftershocks. But there was no threat of a tsunami, it said.

'Everything is safe'

Budi Satria, the local rescue chief in Garut, said there appeared to be no significant damage. "Some people ran outside when the earthquake happened but when it calmed down, they went back to their activities. Thank



YANGON, MYANMAR: In this file photo taken on July 07, 2021, protesters hold a banner that reads "Fight by keeping spirits of 7 July up, destroy the dictatorship from the root by all means" while another holds the Myanmar Student Union flag during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon.

UN says Myanmar sentences seven students to death

BANGKOK: The Myanmar junta handed out at least seven more death sentences this week, taking the tally of those on death row to 139, according to the United Nations. A junta spokesperson did not respond to calls from outside Myanmar seeking confirmation of the latest death sentences. The United Nations accused it of using capital punishment as a "tool to crush opposition".

Myanmar has been in chaos since Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government was toppled in a military coup in February 2021, ending the southeast Asian nation's brief period of democracy. At least seven male university students were sentenced to death by a military court behind closed doors on Wednesday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement.

"By resorting to use death sentences as a political tool to crush opposition, the military confirms its disdain for the efforts by ASEAN and the international community at large to end violence and create the conditions for a political dialogue to lead Myanmar out of a human rights crisis created by the military," Turk said. Local media reports said the Yangon-based university stu-

dents were arrested in April and accused of involvement in a bank shooting.

"Imposing the death penalty on students is an act of vengeance by the military," Dagon University's student union said in a statement.

The United Nations is also investigating reports another four youth activists were also sentenced to death on Thursday. "The military continues to hold proceedings in secretive courts in violation of basic principles of fair trial and contrary to core judicial guarantees of independence and impartiality," Turk said. He said the secret tribunal hearings sometimes last just minutes and those detained often don't have access to lawyers or their families.

Scores of Myanmar social media users took to Facebook and Twitter to protest against the death penalties under hashtags such as "StopExecuteOurStudents". The latest death sentences follow July's executions of four prisoners that included former lawmaker Phyo Zeya Thaw and democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu—better known as "Jimmy".

It was the first use of the death penalty by the Myanmar state in around 30 years and sparked worldwide condemnation. The Association of South East Asian Nations, which has spearheaded so far fruitless efforts to restore peace to Myanmar, warned the junta in August against carrying out further executions. Close to 2,280 civilians have been killed and 11,637 are still detained as part of the military junta's campaign to stamp out dissent, according to a local monitoring group. — AFP

God, so far everything is safe," he told local broadcaster Kompas. Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide. Last month a shallow 5.6-magnitude quake hit the town of Cianjur in West Java, killing 331 people, injuring thousands and leaving tens of thousands homeless after it collapsed buildings and triggered landslides.

Many were found buried under rubble in the days following the quake with few successful rescues reported. One operation to free a six-year-old boy was described as a "miracle" by emergency workers. Residents of Cianjur were shaken again by Saturday's quake and some roofs were lightly damaged, local military official Haryanto told Kompas. "It made us feel like we were swaying. We could see hanging lamps swaying," he said.—AFP

News in brief

US, Brazil plan Biden-Lula meeting

BRASILIA: Brazilian president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and US officials said Friday he is planning to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House, likely before taking office on January 1. "I can confirm that we are planning for a visit," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters. "We look forward to welcoming president Lula here at the appropriate time." Another NSC spokeswoman, Adrienne Watson, said that Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, would travel to Brazil Monday to meet with Lula, as well as with members of outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro's administration. — AFP

Sweden extradites PKK member to Turkey

ISTANBUL: Sweden has extradited a convicted member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to Turkey as Ankara presses Stockholm for further steps in return for its membership in NATO, state media reported on Saturday. Mahmut Tat, who was sentenced to six years and 10 months in jail for PKK membership in Turkey, fled to Sweden in 2015 but his asylum request was rejected. Tat arrived in Istanbul on Friday night having been detained by Swedish police, the Anadolu news agency reported. He was taken by Turkish police soon after arriving at Istanbul airport and referred to court on Saturday, the private NTV broadcaster reported. — AFP

Bolivia sets date for census

LA PAZ: Bolivia's leftist President Luis Arce said Friday a bill had been approved to hold a national census in March 2024 after weeks of deadly protests over the count. "We passed this Census Law so people's blood will not be spilled. The census will take place on March 23, 2024," the president said in a televised message. For almost five weeks, the economic hub of Santa Cruz was rocked by unrest over fears a new census to update spending allocation and the number of seats the region would be entitled to in parliament, would not take place before 2025 elections. The protests, which began on October 22, were called off last Saturday after the bill was approved by the country's Chamber of Deputies. It has now passed the Senate and been promulgated into law.—AFP

US senators warn China

WASHINGTON: US senators have warned China against cracking down on rare widespread protests, saying that any use of force would impact relations with Washington. In a letter made public Friday, 42 members of the 100-strong Senate recalled the Chinese Communist Party's violent suppression of a student-led democracy uprising centered in Tiananmen Square in 1989. "We caution the CCP in the strongest possible terms not to once again undertake a violent crackdown on peaceful Chinese protesters who simply want more freedom," said the letter sent Thursday to the Chinese ambassador in Washington, Qin Gang. — AFP

South Korea's ex-security chief arrested

SEOUL: South Korea on Saturday arrested a former national security chief on suspicion of covering up events surrounding the 2020 murder of a fisheries official by Pyongyang. President Yoon Suk-yeol is expanding an inquiry into the highly politicized case following accusations that his predecessor mishandled the probe to curry favor with North Korea.

Suh Hoon is the first top official from the presidential office of former leader Moon Jae-in to be arrested over the case. He is accused of ordering that intelligence reports be destroyed to conceal the killing of fisheries official Lee Dae-jun, who died near the sea border separating North and South Korea.

The former top security official also faces allegations that he manipulated evidence to support the Moon government's controversial claim that the late fisheries official had sought to defect to the North. Judge Kim Jeong-min of the Seoul Central District Court issued an arrest warrant for Suh on Saturday, citing "the seriousness of the crime, the status of the suspect, and a risk of destroying evidence".

In October ex-defense minister Suh Wook and former coast guard chief Kim Hong-hee were also arrested over the same case. President Yoon has been sharply critical of his predecessor's dovish approach towards North Korea, accusing Moon of appeasing Pyongyang.

Yoon's People Power Party on Saturday accused Suh of "failing to protect" and "neglecting" the late fisheries official while security chief. But the country's opposition has long claimed the investigation is "political revenge" against Moon's administration.

On Saturday they said Suh's arrest was "hard to understand" and they would "defend the truth and justice" against Yoon's "political retaliation". Fisheries official Lee was shot dead and set on fire by North Korean soldiers near the rivals' sea border. Moon's government at the time said an initial probe by the coast guard suggested Lee had tried to defect to the North, citing family problems and debts from gambling. But Lee's brother has repeatedly slammed that idea, saying Lee would never have chosen a life in North Korea.—AFP

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022

Business

G7, EU agree oil price cap to reduce Russia war funding

Ukraine welcomes price cap while Russia rejects it

BRUSSELS: The G7 and EU on Friday agreed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil in an attempt to deny the Kremlin of war resources, as President Vladimir Putin said more strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure were "inevitable". The price cap, previously negotiated on a political level between the G7 group of wealthy democracies and the European Union, will come into effect with an EU embargo on Russian crude oil from Monday.

The embargo will prevent shipments of Russian crude by tanker vessel to the EU, which account for two thirds of imports, potentially depriving Russia's war chest of billions of euros. "The G7 and Australia... reached consensus on a maximum price of \$60 per barrel for seaborne Russian origin crude oil in line with" the European Union, the G7 said in a statement. The G7 said it was delivering on its vow "to prevent Russia from profiting from its war of aggression against Ukraine, to support stability in global energy markets and to minimize negative economic spillovers of Russia's war of aggression".

Poland had refused to back the price cap plan over concerns the ceiling was too high, before its ambassador to the bloc confirmed Warsaw's agreement on Friday evening. The price cap is designed to make it harder to bypass the sanctions by selling beyond the EU. Poland's ambassador Andrzej Sados also said Brussels would take into account Polish and Baltic state suggestions for a "painful and expensive" ninth round of sanctions against Moscow. The White House described the deal as "welcome news", saying a price cap will help limit Putin's ability to fund the Kremlin's "war machine".

Infrastructure strikes 'inevitable'

After suffering humiliating defeats during what has become the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, Russia began targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure in October, causing sweeping blackouts. Putin said Russian strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure were "inevitable", in his first conversation with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz since mid-September.

Meanwhile, Russia on Saturday rejected a \$60

price cap on its oil agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia, which Ukraine said would contribute to the destruction of Russia's economy. "We will not accept this price cap," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told domestic news agencies, adding that Russia, the world's second largest crude exporter, was "analyzing" the move. The embargo will prevent seaborne shipments of Russian crude to the European Union, which account for two thirds of the bloc's oil imports, potentially depriving Russia's war chest of billions of euros.

Ukraine on Saturday welcomed a \$60 price cap on Russian oil agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia, saying it would "destroy" Russia's economy. The price cap, previously negotiated on a political level between the G7 group of wealthy democracies and the European Union, will come into effect with an EU embargo on Russian crude oil from Monday.

"We always achieve our goal and Russia's economy will be destroyed, and it will pay and be responsible for all its crimes," Ukraine's presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak said on Saturday on Telegram. But a cap of "\$30 would have destroyed it more quickly", he added.

The G7 said it was delivering on its vow "to prevent Russia from profiting from its war of aggression against Ukraine, to support stability in global energy markets and to minimize negative economic spillovers of Russia's war of aggression".

Limit funds for the 'war machine'

The G7 said it was delivering on its vow "to prevent Russia from profiting from its war of aggression against Ukraine, to support stability in global energy markets and to minimize negative economic spillovers of Russia's war of aggression". The White House described the cap as "welcome news" that would help limit Putin's ability to fund the Kremlin's "war machine". Russia has threatened not to deliver to countries that adopted the measure.

The G7 and Australia said they were prepared to adjust the price ceiling if necessary. Russia has earned 67 billion euros (\$71 billion) from the sale of oil to the European Union since the start of the war



KLUHYNO-BASHKYRIVKA, Ukraine: Local residents look at a residential building damaged by a missile attack in the village of Kluhyno-Bashkyrivka, Kharkiv region, on December 2, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

in February. Its annual military budget amounts to around 60 billion, noted Phuc-Vinh Nguyen, an energy expert at the Institut Jacques-Delors in Paris. The EU embargo on seaborne deliveries follows a decision by Germany and Poland to stop taking Russian oil via pipeline by the end of 2022. In all, more than 90 percent of Russian deliveries to the European Union will be affected, according to the bloc.

'Endure' power cuts

After suffering humiliating defeats during what has become the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, Russia began targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure in October. The strikes have caused sweeping blackouts, and cut off water supplies and heating to civilians at a time when the temperature in some regions has dropped to minus five degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit).

The authorities have introduced scheduled power cuts several times a day to keep essential infrastructure working.

Talks off the table

The Kremlin also indicated Moscow was in no mood for talks, after US President Joe Biden said he would be willing to sit down with Putin if the latter truly wanted to end the fighting. "What did President Biden say in fact? He said that negotiations are possible only after Putin leaves Ukraine," Peskov told reporters, adding Moscow was "certainly" not ready to accept those conditions. The White House on Friday downplayed the idea too, saying Biden currently has "no intention" of holding talks with Putin. Top US general Mark Milley last month said more than 100,000 Russian military personnel have been killed or wounded in Ukraine, with Kyiv's forces likely suffering similar casualties. —AFP

Energy crisis driving climate-friendly power savings: IEA

PARIS: Russia's invasion of Ukraine has driven countries across the world to boost energy efficiency, creating "huge potential" to tackle high prices, security and climate change, the IEA said on Friday. Governments have scaled up fossil fuel subsidies to cushion the impact of rising energy costs on households in the wake of the Ukraine conflict, which has disrupted gas supplies and stoked prices.

But a new report from the International Energy Agency found that it had also prompted policymakers and consumers to shrink their power use, causing record investment in energy efficiency measures, like building renovations, and infrastructure for public transport and electric cars. IEA executive director Fatih Birol said after the oil shocks of the 1970s, governments pushed "substantial improvements" in energy efficiency, particularly in cars, appliances and buildings.

"Amid today's energy crisis, we are seeing signs that energy efficiency is once again being prioritized," he said. "Energy efficiency is essential for dealing with today's crisis, with its huge potential to



help tackle the challenges of energy affordability, energy security and climate change."

According to the IEA research, governments, industry and households invested a record \$560 billion this year in energy efficiency measures. Preliminary IEA data for 2022 also suggests that the global economy used energy two percent more efficiently than it did in 2021, almost double the rate of the past five years. Annual improvements would need to rise to four percent to meet decarboniza-

tion goals by mid-century, the IEA said.

But it said if current trends continue to improve, 2022 "could mark a vital turning point" for efficiency, adding that developments this year have "changed the dynamics of energy markets for decades to come". Recent government initiatives to boost efficiency in buildings, cars and industry have included legislation in Europe, Japan and the United States that add up to hundreds of billions of dollars in spending. —AFP

Misinformation profiteer in focus in US hoax trials

WASHINGTON: American radio host Alex Jones reaped millions spouting conspiracy-laden falsehoods that helped drive up sales of products like libido boosters, exploiting an internet ecosystem that experts say makes misinformation a lucrative business. Jones, a serial provocateur who founded the far-right website InfoWars, has been ordered to pay nearly \$1.5 billion in damages for calling a 2012 mass shooting in an elementary school—which left 20 first graders and six adults dead—a "hoax."

Defamation cases in Texas and Connecticut against Jones have spotlighted the challenge of curbing misinformation on the internet, where false and inflammatory content often spreads faster, generates more engagement—and more revenue—than the truth. "The modern internet business model consists of building an audience and then monetizing that audience, either through ads, merchandise sales, or direct donation," Danny Rogers, cofounder of the nonprofit Global Disinformation Index, told AFP. "Alex Jones perfected that model by peddling the most adversarial narratives in the form of viru-

lent conspiracy theories and unbridled anger, building a receptive audience, and then soaking that audience for profit."

Jones, who was back in the spotlight this week when rapper Kanye West declared his admiration for Adolf Hitler on his show, has amassed what experts call a fortune by successfully merging the conspiracy theories with merchandise and dietary supplements from his InfoWars store.

Jones has hawked male vitality supplements and testosterone boosters, while claiming the government was feminizing men or turning them gay by using chemical pollutants. He accused the government of deliberately putting fluoride in drinking water, while his store peddled fluoride-free toothpaste. His audience, he claimed, can survive various doomsday scenarios with other products that his store can supply—storable food, body armor and even components for homemade guns.

Bankruptcy

The extent of his wealth is opaque but a forensic economist testified during the Texas trial that the combined net worth of Jones and Free Speech Systems—the parent company of Infowars—likely fell between \$135 million and \$270 million. But while bashing the trials as an assault on free speech, Jones has said he has little money to pay the damages and has repeatedly implored his audience for donations. As he battled the defamation cases, an anonymous



WATERBURY: In this file photo taken on September 21, 2022, InfoWars founder Alex Jones speaks to the media outside Waterbury Superior Court during his trial, in Waterbury, Connecticut. — AFP

bitcoin donor sent Jones cryptocurrency worth \$8 million, the nonprofit Southern Poverty Law Center reported in May. This week, Jones declared personal bankruptcy in his home state of Texas, saying his liabilities far exceeded his assets that were worth between \$1 million and \$10 million. InfoWars declared bankruptcy in April and Free Speech Systems filed for bankruptcy in July. Last month, the Washington Post reported that Jones had transferred millions of dollars out of Free Speech Systems to firms that he or his family members controlled, citing financial records. —AFP

OMV CEO: Austria must continue to cut Russia reliance

VIENNA: Austria has cut its dependence on Russian gas but it must keep up efforts to diversify its supplies for the next cold season, the head of Austrian energy group OMV told AFP. Europe has sought to reduce its reliance on Russian oil and gas since Moscow invaded Ukraine. Russia in turn has slashed gas deliveries, causing energy prices to spike across Europe.

Austria imported 80 percent of its gas from Russia before the war broke out in late February. By October, Russia accounted for just 23 percent of Austria's gas imports, according to the government, as the country has filled up storage tanks and sought to buy the fossil fuel elsewhere.

Experts, however, say the Alpine nation of nine million is still dependent on it in the long run. "I think we can be more confident for this winter, for this season, than we were maybe six months ago," OMV CEO Alfred Stern told AFP on Friday in his modern office with a view over Vienna. "But the work must go on now, also with a view to the next season," he added.

He said the energy and chemicals group, which employs more than 22,000 people worldwide, had just signed an agreement in Abu Dhabi to try to secure gas deliveries for next winter.

Russian exit

Following European sanctions on Moscow, OMV froze its investments in Russia and has withdrawn from the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. "Because of the changed situation, we have decided Russia will no longer be a core region for us. This means we will not invest further there and we will consider all options including sale and exit," said Stern, the firm's 57-year-old CEO since September 2021.

An EU embargo on Russian crude goes into effect on Monday, while the bloc also agreed on a \$60-a-barrel ceiling on Russian oil exports on Friday. The embargo will prevent shipments of Russian crude by tanker vessel to the EU, which accounts for two thirds of imports, the rest arriving by pipeline.

OMV—known for its ties with the former Soviet Union from 1968 and for working closely with Russian giant Gazprom until the invasion of Ukraine—operates 1,800 petrol pumps in 10 European countries. —AFP

Business

Biden signs emergency law forcing US rail unions to accept wages deal

Deal averts a strike, but puts Democrats in awkward position

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden signed into law Friday a rare intervention by Congress forcing freight rail unions to accept a salary deal, avoiding a possibly devastating strike-but putting the pro-union Democrat in an awkward political position. Biden signed the law in a brief White House ceremony only a week before unions who had rejected the deal were expected to have gone on strike, threatening crucial supply chains across the world's biggest economy.

The deal delivers a hefty wage increase but four of the 12 unions involved refused to accept it because there was no agreement on giving workers paid sick leave. Congress acted under a little used power to resolve disputes involving railroads. As he signed the bill, Biden said Congress had "avoided what, without a doubt, would have been an economic catastrophe."

"Without freight rail, many of the US industries would literally have shut down," Biden said, adding that his advisors feared the loss of three quarters of a million jobs within two weeks if the strike had gone ahead. The episode was awkward politically for Biden.

Trade unions constitute a major element in his electoral coalition and he frequently describes himself as a lifelong union supporter and the "most pro-union president" in history. That brand has taken a hit from the emergency bill signing, with some on the left accusing Biden of having sold out. After the Senate came down decisively in favor of the rail management, one union leader called the situation "horrific." The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen alleged that senators had "demonstrated they are for the corporate class."



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden signs a resolution to avert a nationwide rail shutdown, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on December 2, 2022. — AFP

Biden bypassed the issue later Friday when he visited the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) union in Boston to join a phone bank drumming up Democratic voter enthusiasm for the attempt to win a crucial extra Senate seat in Georgia's runoff election next Tuesday. The president told the audience he wouldn't have won his own 2020 election without IBEW's support and said his policies since then had

helped the less well off. "I'm tired of trickle-down economics," he said to applause.

No choice

Judging by the overwhelmingly bipartisan support in Congress for forcing through the deal, the political hit for overriding the union holdouts will be contained for Biden. The House easily passed the bill and on Thursday the Senate, where usually Biden's bills are lucky to scrape through with the one-vote Democratic majority, passed it 80-15. Biden said he had no choice but to act quickly in the face of what the White House warns would have been a crippling strike right when the US economy is showing signs of stabilizing in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

In his comments at the signing ceremony, Biden said the wages deal-which his administration was heavily involved in crafting-was "a good product." He acknowledged the lack of sick leave but said "I'm coming back at it" with "more work to do." Above all, Biden said, the forceful intervention by Congress and the White House would benefit the country as a whole.

"They did one heck of a job in averting what could have been a real disaster," he said.

Biden said "765,000 Americans, many of them union members themselves, would have been put out of work within the first two weeks of this strike alone."

In addition, the breaking of supply chains for basic materials like chemicals and farm supplies would put clean drinking water and food at risk. "We've spared the country that catastrophe," Biden said. — AFP

ABB to pay \$315m to settle US charges over S Africa bribes

STOCKHOLM: Swedish-Swiss industrial company ABB agreed to pay \$315 million to settle US criminal charges that it bribed state-owned Eskom of South Africa over government contracts, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced Friday. Two affiliates of ABB each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to violate the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act as part of a three-year deferred prosecution agreement, the US agency said of a settlement that was coordinated with government authorities in Switzerland, Germany and South Africa.

The issue concerns a troubled project near Johannesburg with the Kusile power station, the fourth largest coal-fired generator in the world, which has been fraught with allegations of graft. South Africa's struggling power utility Eskom commissioned the plant in 2007. In October eight people, including former Eskom CEO Matshele Koko, were arrested on corruption charges linked to the ABB work.

Between 2014 and 2017, ABB through its subsidiaries secured "multiple" government contracts, syphoning illicit payments through subcontractors associated with an official at Eskom. South Africa's state-owned power company, the DOJ said. "ABB worked with these subcontractors despite their poor qualifications and lack of experience," the DOJ said in a news release. "In return, ABB received improper advantages in its efforts to obtain work with Eskom, including, among other benefits, confidential and internal Eskom information."

ABB engaged in "sham" negotiations with the Eskom official and falsely reported the payments as legitimate business expenses, according to the press release. ABB chief executive Bjorn Rosengren said the company has acted in the wake of the case by "launching a new code of conduct, educating employees and implementing an enhanced control system to prevent something similar from happening again."

In a statement, he said that ABB has "a clear zero tolerance approach to non-ethical behavior within our company." The US agency said the penalty was reduced 25 percent from the high end of the sentencing range in light of ABB's "extraordinary" cooperation and "extensive" remediation efforts.

But the department noted that ABB had two earlier criminal FCPA resolutions in 2004 and 2010, as well as a guilty plea by an ABB entity for bid rigging in 2001.

The US law on foreign corrupt practices applies to foreign companies with US-issued stock, as is the case with ABB. The company also settled a parallel civil case with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Earlier Friday, the Swiss attorney general's office said ABB was fined four million Swiss francs (\$4.3 million) in the case. ABB said it hoped to reach a resolution with German authorities in the near term. In total, ABB said the settlements totaled \$327 million, and have been accounted for in the company's third quarter financial results. — AFP

US: Solar firms evading tariffs on China-made goods

WASHINGTON: The US Commerce Department on Friday accused several solar companies of evading American tariffs on imports of China-made components, findings that could add to tensions between Beijing and Washington.

The department has been investigating claims that certain manufacturers of solar cells and modules went around antidumping and countervailing duties on China. Investigators found that four of the companies being looked into, including two Chinese, a Canadian and a Vietnam-based firm "are attempting to bypass" US duties by doing minor processing of Chinese-made components in several Southeast Asian countries before shipping them to the United States.

The four firms named were BYD Hong Kong, Trina, Canadian Solar, and Vina Solar, which were said to have sent goods through Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. "Such actions amount to an effort to evade the existing antidumping duty and countervailing duty orders on solar cells and modules from the (People's Republic of China)," the Commerce Department statement added.

It said the preliminary determination "underscores Commerce's commitment to holding the PRC accountable for its trade distorting actions, which undermine American industries."

As a next step, the department will conduct audits, and involved parties will be able to comment on the findings. The final determination is currently scheduled for May 2023. The Alliance for American Manufacturing noted that duties cannot be applied on these imports until June 2024 due to a separate two-year halt on solar import tariffs. The alliance's president Scott Paul added: "The United States shouldn't depend on dumped, subsidized, circumvented, or forced labor-made imports to build our solar energy future." — AFP



The signing of the pact: John Hess is seated at right and Abena Moore, Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President is seated at left.

Guyana sells \$750m of carbon credit to US oil firm Hess

GEORGETOWN, Guyana: Guyana has sold \$750 million worth of carbon credits to the US oil group Hess, which drills off the coast of the small South American country that is 89 percent virgin forest. President Irfaan Ali said the deal was "historic for corporations, voluntary markets, industries, countries and for forested countries," as he signed the agreement with Hess at the presidential residence in Georgetown.

Hess CEO John Hess said the accord "would serve to protect the country's vast forests, one of the largest carbon sinks in the world, and provide capital to improve the lives of Guyana's citizens through investments made by the government as part of its low carbon development strategy."

Hess is one of three partners, along with the China

National Offshore Oil Corporation and ExxonMobil, operating in the huge Stabroek oil field off the coast of Guyana. Guyana, with 800,000 inhabitants, is already the country with the most reserves per capita in the world-over 10 billion barrels of oil equivalent-ahead even of Brunei, Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates.

Under the deal, Hess is to pay the \$750 million within the next 18 months. Ali pointed out that Guyana has 18 million hectares-or 89 percent of the country's forest-still intact and that it is storing 19.5 gigatonnes of carbon, worth an estimated \$40-50 billion a year. Guyana also boasts the second highest percentage of forest cover on earth.

Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo predicted that with the sale of carbon credits, "the market will move." "We are hoping for prices to rise in the voluntary market, as prices were at abysmal lows, and this major deal will resonate globally and cause major change," he said. He added that \$112 million of the money from the Hess Corporation purchase of carbon credits would go to indigenous communities. We made a commitment that 15 percent of all of the proceeds from any sale of forest carbon will go to Amerindian communities," he said. — AFP

Illegal construction blamed for Ischia landslide tragedy

ROME: Ischia, the little Italian island hit by a deadly landslide last weekend, is a victim of geography and weather but also of illegal construction, experts and politicians agree. Eleven people died and one woman remains missing after a wave of mud and debris swept through the small town of Casamicciola Terme, following heavy rains across the lush island off the coast of Naples. But WWF Italia, the environmental organization, said it was a "predictable tragedy, with specific causes and responsibilities". It blamed the "repeated and irresponsible management of the island's territory which, with the acceleration of the effects of climate change under way, has now become a bomb primed and ready to explode".

"It sounds like hypocrisy to mourn the victims of recent days, when we continue to build where we should not." Experts say that both illegal and legal construction, combined with deforestation, reduces the ability of the soil to absorb large quantities of water.

Buildings erected without permission is a widespread problem across Italy. The minister for civil protection, Nello Musumeci, acknowledged this week that "the sad and widespread problem of illegal construction" is a subject that "can no longer be avoided". But Ischia, an island of volcanic origin which suffered a deadly earthquake in 2017, is particularly vulnerable.

Some "49 percent of the territory of Ischia is classified as at a high or very high risk of landslide... with more than 13,000 people living in these areas", Environment Minister Gilberto Pichetto said.

According to the latest report from the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), 93.9 percent of Italian communes are at risk of landslides, flooding or coastal erosion. "You don't



ROME: Eleven people died and one woman remains missing after a wave of mud and debris swept through the small town of Casamicciola Terme, following heavy rains across the lush island off the coast of Naples.

need to be a specialist to understand that illegal buildings cannot be tolerated, because they constitute a risk multiplier that goes far beyond the people that live there," said WWF.

'Swiss clinic'

Faced with unauthorized construction, successive Italian governments have often responded with amnesties, although the bureaucratic process is often so long and complicated that it can take years for a decision. In Ischia alone, some 27,000 requests for amnesties have been filed in recent years, according to Italian media reports.

And when the order finally comes to knock down an illegal building, its residents often find ways to avoid it. In one case, the occupants of a condemned house brought children from across their family into the building, because the presence of minors nullifies the order, retired Naples prosecutor Aldo De Chiara told La Stampa newspaper.

The prosecutor, who specialized in the fight against illegal construction, said that in other cases, "when the police arrive, they find in the illegal rooms, whether the veranda or the living room, patients on IV drips like in a Swiss clinic". However, others see illegal construction as a scapegoat.

"When there is a landslide in the north of Italy we talk about climate change, when it is in the south, we talk about illegal construction," said Sergio Piro, who runs three hotels on Ischia, including one in Casamicciola Terme. "It's true there is illegal construction, but in this case it was a section of the mountain that came off because there had been no preventative work, in particular of drainage canals," the 47-year-old told AFP.

He noted other parts of the island were not as affected after last weekend's bad weather. The torrent of mud passed a few hundred meters (yards) from Piro's own house: "I heard a huge noise when this torrent of rocks and soil hit the first houses." — AFP

Top French central banker in corruption probe

PARIS: French prosecutors said Friday that they had opened a corruption investigation into top central banker Sylvie Goulard, who simultaneously stepped down from the Bank of France. The probe covers suspicions of accepting bribes, influence peddling, illegal conflicts of interest and breach of trust, the national financial prosecutor's office said, confirming a report from daily Liberation. Graft-fighting group Anticor triggered the probe by filing a criminal report in June, with the investigation launched in September.

In a statement, the Bank of France said Goulard-a former MEP and briefly defense minister under President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 — would be leaving her post as one of the institution's deputy governors on December 5. She wished to "return to the foreign ministry" where she started her civil service career, the bank said. A source close to Goulard told AFP that her departure had "nothing to do with the investigation".

"Neither Sylvie Goulard nor her lawyer were informed that the investigation had been reopened," the source said. A previous probe in 2019 was closed the following year after no crime was found, case files seen by AFP showed. Anticor questioned in its complaint the work Goulard performed for the California-based Berggruen Institute think-tank. She has acknowledged accepting €10,000 (\$10,530 at current rates) per month working as a "special adviser" to the Council for the Future of Europe, an offshoot of Berggruen, between 2013 and 2016.

Goulard, who was also an MEP at the time, said her work had "no relation of any kind with the business activities" of the group's founder, German-American billionaire Nicolas Berggruen.

She said her role included "reflection, moderating groups, organizing meetings". Her lawyer declined to respond Friday when contacted by AFP. The Berggruen Institute denied in 2019 that Goulard had been given a fake job, highlighting that she organized meetings in Brussels, Paris and Madrid. — AFP

Business

US hiring tops expectations in November as wages pick up

World's biggest economy adds 263,000 jobs in November

WASHINGTON: US job gains were unexpectedly robust in November despite efforts to cool the economy, while unemployment held steady and wages ticked up, the government reported Friday. The figures provide little relief to officials who have been fighting to tamp down decades-high inflation amid concerns that elevated costs could become entrenched.

The world's biggest economy added 263,000 jobs in November, Labor Department data showed, down from a revised 284,000 figure in October. The unemployment rate remained low at 3.7 percent.

The US central bank has raised its benchmark interest rate multiple times this year to ease demand, with higher lending costs making it more pricey to borrow funds to buy cars and homes, or expand businesses. While such policy tightening may ordinarily lead to job losses, economists have noted that firms are reluctant to shed workers they may have struggled to find since the Covid-19 outbreak.

Demand remains resilient as well, with recent data showing that household spending picked up in October, another reason for firms to avoid job cuts. Average hourly earnings for private sector workers rose 18 cents to \$32.82 last month and over the last 12 months, wages have grown 5.1 percent, according to Friday's data. The report also said there were notable job gains in leisure and hospitality, health care as well as in government.

But employment dipped in retail trade, and in transportation and warehousing.

Noting the uptick in wages, President Joe Biden told reporters Friday that things are "moving in the right direction."

'Far too hot'

Although the interest-sensitive housing sector has slowed on the Federal Reserve's rate hikes and there have been job cuts in tech, economic activity has generally remained resilient. The labor market "remains far too hot for the Fed," said ING economist James Knightley in an analysis. Tightness in the jobs market, as firms compete to find and retain workers, has implications on rising wages—and these add to the costs of delivering services.

Meanwhile the jobless rate was steady as labor participation, which is still below pre-pandemic levels, fell once more, Knightley said. "Overall, the data are signaling ongoing positive momentum in job growth and still-elevated wages," said Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in a note.

Richmond Fed President Thomas Barkin cautioned in a separate speech Friday that the US may be moving into an environment where labor supply is constrained for a longer time, adding to price pressures. Analysts believe the latest data supports further tightening of monetary policy by the US central bank, sending US stocks lower.

Steep rate hikes

While the Fed has signaled this week it might be time to moderate its aggressive campaign to cool the economy, there remain questions over how much higher rates have to go to bring inflation under control, said Fed Chair Jerome Powell. The central bank has raised borrowing rates six times this year in hopes of easing demand, including four steep rate hikes, while walking a fine line to avoid tipping the economy into a recession. A tight labor market has limited hiring ahead of the holiday season, but "employers are also hiring more cautiously" given



GARDEN GROVE: In this file photo taken on July 08, 2022, a family walks past a "Hiring" sign at a McDonald's restaurant in Garden Grove, California. US job gains were unexpectedly robust in November despite efforts to cool the economy, while unemployment held steady and wages ticked up, the government reported on December 2, 2022. —AFP

uncertainty over the strength of consumer spending, said Sophia Koropecyk of Moody's Analytics.

Some industries have been pulling back, though not necessarily letting go of workers, in part explaining the low jobless rate, she added. The trend of wage increases appears stable, but analysts have been "hoping to see a clear softening,"

said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

"Even if inflation drops faster than expected over the next few months," he said, policymakers "will be worried about a rebound in the second half of 2023 and beyond if wage growth does not slow." —AFP

CBK: Growing banking services offered to special needs people

KUWAIT: To enhance financial inclusion and care to offer customers with special needs access to banking and financial services, Central Bank of Kuwait marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities observed annually on December 3.

A statement by the CBK noted that the number of bank branches equipped to serve people with special needs reached 62 branches during the 9-month period of 2022. Meanwhile, the number of employees, who interpret sign language in those branches increased by 28 percent to reach 359 employees, and the number of ATMs installed accessible to people with special needs increased to 66. The CBK issued in mid-2015 its instructions regarding banking services provided by Kuwaiti banks to people with special needs to provide them with clear and easy access to banking and financial services.

The said instructions require banks to select at least one branch in each governorate in the State of Kuwait to provide banking services for people with special needs beside its normal activities, and allocate at least one ATM equipped with voice guidance and a Braille keyboard. A bank is also required to train some of its employees in sign language, or appoint specialists in this language in the branch. The instructions also require banks to provide easy access for the customers using wheelchairs to ATMs. In addition, account statements and notifications for visually impaired customers should be printed in Braille. Modern and secure technological programs such as screen readers, electronic fingerprints, and mobile phone programs should be available to help them perform banking transactions, considering the security requirements in managing the account, and informing customers with special needs, through the appropriate means of communication, of all rights, obligations, risks and the other requirements before providing them with any banking services.

The CBK concluded its statement by affirming its care and keenness to ensure that customers with special needs access all financial and banking services that suit their needs and protect their rights, stressing on its vigorous monitoring of the Kuwaiti banks' compliance with instructions issued in this regard.

US green plan should be 'wake-up call' for Europe: France

PARIS: French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire on Friday said Washington's \$430 billion plan to spur climate-friendly technologies in the United States must be seen as a wake-up call for Europe. The EU "must be able to sweep in front of our own door" before worrying about the effects of the US climate plan on European industry, Le Maire told AFP in Washington, where he was part of French President Emmanuel Macron's US state visit. Even

Musk's free speech absolutism 'a fantasy'

SAN FRANCISCO: The limits of Elon Musk's self-professed "free speech absolutism" were laid bare, critics said, by his decision to ban rapper Kanye West from Twitter over his latest anti-Semitic outburst.

Musk claims to be engaged in "a battle for the future of civilization." "If free speech is lost even in America, tyranny is all that lies ahead," he tweeted last week. In practice, this has meant gutting his team of moderators and reinstating controversial figures such as Donald Trump, who was banned for inciting violence with his false claims about election fraud.

Nevertheless, Musk's claim to be a free-speech absolutist—including a mooted "general amnesty" for suspended accounts—was always going to struggle to survive the clash with reality, and particularly the clash with West (officially known as Ye), who has mounted an increasingly vociferous campaign of anti-Semitic outbursts in recent weeks. The final straw for Musk was West's tweet showing a Nazi swastika interlaced with a Star of David. It followed an interview with conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, in which he declared his "love" of the Nazis and admiration for Adolf Hitler.

'Half-baked' philosophy

"The problem is that Elon Musk has a half-baked free speech philosophy," said Jacob

year as the country grapples with its worst cost-of-living crisis in generations and demands for inflation-matching pay rises.

Now the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union-representing various civil servants and other government agency staff—has said national highways employees will stage a series of staggered strikes from December 16 to January 7. It risks bringing the country to a standstill as the walkout will coincide with planned strikes by railway workers.

The action follows 124 government departments and other public bodies voting last month for strike action over demands for a 10-percent pay rise and other issues.

The PCS said on Tuesday the resulting "first wave" of walkouts would see driving examiners and rural payment officers at more than 250 venues across the UK participate in a month-long series of rolling strikes from mid-December. Meanwhile, the Unite union on Friday announced around 350 of its members working as ground handlers for private contractor Menzies at Heathrow will walk out for 72 hours starting early December 16. Unite said they had been offered what amounted to a "real-terms pay cut" in salary negotiations. —AFP

though the EU has already "changed its approach" on promoting green industry, the US climate plan must be seen as a "wake-up call" in the European Union, he added.

Le Maire's comments came as EU countries have poured criticism on Washington's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), seeing it as anti-competitive and a threat to European jobs, especially in the energy and auto sectors. The act, designed to accelerate the US transition to a low-carbon economy, contains around \$370 billion in subsidies for green energy as well as tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries. Macron on Wednesday slammed the plan's "Made in USA" provisions as "super aggressive" for European businesses. But at a joint press conference with Macron, Biden said that he and the French leader had agreed to "discuss practical steps

to coordinate and align our approaches", though he said he would not apologize for the US plan.

Biden added the IRA was never intended to disadvantage any US allies. Last month, EU Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton threatened to appeal to the World Trade Organization and consider "retaliatory measures" if the United States did not reverse its subsidies. Le Maire also criticized the EU's own climate spending plans, arguing that they were too cumbersome and loaded with red tape.

"If the ambition is the same" as the Europeans, the United States relies on methods that "are simpler and faster", he said. "They put immediate and massive tax credits where we provide state aid (to specific projects) which sometimes take two years to be adopted and are too complex to implement," said Le Maire. —AFP

Mchangama, author of "Free Speech: A History From Socrates to Social Media". "Sometimes he talks about total freedom of speech, sometimes about respecting the law. But of course laws are very different around the world where Twitter is present.

"Some of the things (West) has said would arguably be punishable in court in Europe, especially in France." Musk's takeover led to an immediate spike in hate content-up 25 to 30 percent, according to Bodyguard, which works to protect individuals from online attacks. The numbers have fallen since, but remain 10-15 percent above long-run levels, founder Charles Cohen told AFP. Musk's vision of free speech was "not technically, economically or ethically viable", he added.

And while West's tweets might have been policed by the boss himself, Asma Mhalla, of Sciences Po university in Paris, argued: "The industrial-level moderation needed for the network is now completely lacking." Few believe total freedom of speech is possible for a private platform that relies on advertising.

Absolutism 'fantasy'

"So-called free-speech absolutism is just a fantasy," said influential podcaster Sam Harris earlier this week on his "Making Sense" show. "Almost no one really holds that position even when they espouse it." Some level of content moderation was needed to stop platforms turning into "a digital sewer", he said. "Contrary to what most people think, it's legal to shout 'fire' in a crowded theatre—but wouldn't we want the owner of that theatre to remove someone who was shouting that over



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on October 4, 2022, a phone screen displays a photo of Elon Musk with the Twitter logo shown in the background, in Washington, DC. —AFP

and over again?" Harris said.

Mchangama said he did not believe West's comments actually amounted to inciting violence, not least because the rapper has a well-documented history of mental illness that appears to be fuelling his erratic behavior. "He seems profoundly disturbed rather than trying to organise violence against Jews," Mchangama said. He would also like to see more creative solutions.

"The best way forward is to empower users to filter more of what they don't like rather than have governments or big tech make these decisions at a centralized level," he said.

"You can't have free speech absolutism... but you should err on the side of free speech and there are ways that Musk could have done it. "But he's been chaotic and has not made a persuasive case for the skeptics." —AFP

Highway workers join latest UK staff set to strike

LONDON: The UK was braced for further disruptive strikes after unions representing more public and private sector staff, including highway workers, on Friday announced new planned action or ballots over walkouts. The announcements, which will see the highway employees and hundreds of Heathrow Airport ground personnel join the growing list of staff forming picket lines, come amid a grim winter of discontent in Britain.

Strikes are multiplying across the economy and the public sector over pay, as incomes are eroded by decades-high inflation and surging consumer prices. On Wednesday, ambulance workers joined nurses in voting to go on strike ahead of Christmas, while security staff for high-speed continental train operator Eurostar are also set to walk out this month. Numerous other employees, from national rail workers to lawyers, have also held strikes this

Social app Parler says sale to Kanye West called off

NEW YORK: Social network Parler announced Thursday that its planned sale to Kanye West has been called off, as the rapper-businessman now known as Ye continues to alienate fans and commercial partners with anti-Semitic comments. "Parlement Technologies would like to confirm that the company has mutually agreed with Ye to terminate the intent of sale of Parler," the network — seen as a home for online extremist rhetoric — said in a tweet. It said the decision was made "in the interest of both parties in mid-November."

Parler had announced a deal for West to buy the platform popular with conservatives in mid-October — just over a week after the rapper's Twitter and Instagram accounts were restricted over anti-Semitic posts he made. But the rapper, who has spoken openly about his struggles with mental illness, has seen his business relationships crumble in recent weeks as his erratic behavior and extreme speech



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on October 11, 2018, Kanye West meets with US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC. —AFP

continue to raise concerns.

In perhaps his most provocative outburst to date, West on Thursday declared his "love" of Nazis and admiration for Adolf Hitler during a rambling livestream with conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. The 45-year-old's restrictions on Twitter and Instagram last month were not the first time his posts prompted punitive action from major social media platforms. —AFP



Italian Embassy hosts fundraising fashion show 'Défilé della Rinascita'

Thirty-five women paraded in Kuwait at the residence of the Italian Ambassador for a fundraising event entirely donated to the Hayatt-Ruqayah Abdul Whahab Al-Qatami Breast Cancer Foundation. The Defilé della Rinascita (Rebirth Fashion Show) a project conceived by Raptus&Rose and the San Bassiano ODV Oncological Association, was hosted for the first time outside Italy, in the gardens of Villa Nassima, the residence of the Italian Ambassador in Kuwait.

The Defilé della Rinascita was born from a question: "Could your Moda Liberata ever parade for our project?" It was in 2016 and who asked that question was Dr Elena Pasquin, psychotherapist of the San Bassiano ODV Oncological Association, of Bassano del Grappa. Who answered with a "Yes" was Silvia Bisconti, creative director and Head of the Defilé della Rinascita, who in 2013 founded Raptus&Rose, a company whose beating heart is an experimental project called Moda Liberata, based on a new and radical idea of fashion: Every woman, every shape, every uniqueness can be explored through the clothes worn to give a new self-awareness.

After the editions in Veneto and Milan,



the Defilé della Rinascita fashion show was made for this edition in collaboration with the Italian Embassy in Kuwait and Haytt-Ruqayah Abdul Whahab Al-Qatami Breast Cancer Foundation, which finances and follows, through fundraising activities, the therapeutic path of expat patients (non-Kuwaiti citizen) living and working in Kuwait. It was the Italian Ambassador in Kuwait Carlo Baldozzi and his wife Cristiana who first desired and then proposed to Raptus&Rose and the San Bassiano Association, to make the Defilé della Rinascita fashion show in Kuwait, after their fashion show, last May, at Castello Sforzesco of Milan, intuiting that this project could be exported to Kuwait to strengthen dialogue and collaboration at all levels between the two Countries.

The Defilé della Rinascita, in fact, also

for what it represents from a therapeutic and cultural point of view, is a project that is fully part of the process carried out by the Embassy to bring Italy and Kuwait even closer through people to people initiatives. The Defilé della Rinascita is not just a fashion show, but a care project crossed by beauty, and as Dr Pasquin says, "it aims to make women undergoing oncological treatment experience a strong biographical shock, which puts them in confront with the idea of beauty that they believed have lost, with the experience that taking care of their femininity is still possible. Living extraordinary experiences can lead the person to a turnaround, with respect to some ways of dealing with life that are toxic and far from the concept of quality and well-being. The Defilé della Rinascita fashion show becomes a therapeutic experience that starts a path of resilience, of awareness of what one can be and can do".

The fashion show lasted just over half an hour: 30 minutes inhabited by a much longer time and which tell many stories, in the shared time of an entire day, up to the crucial moment of getting on the catwalk for the show. From that moment, the models, protagonists of Beauty and Rebirth, go, step by step,



along those meters that symbolize the time of the present life, with their heads held high covered with flowers, wrapped in tulle and fabrics of unique pieces created by Raptus&Rose for each of them. Among the 35 women there were also oncologists, nurses and women belonging to civil society, women with different roles who paraded in Kuwait to unite in their common essence: Beauty and love for life.

At the opening of the fashion show, the Ambassador Carlo Baldozzi underlined how much this initiative is part of the strong growth dynamics of the relationships between Italy and Kuwait, with reference to the concept of the Defilé della Rinascita fashion show, quoting the poet Pablo Neruda's verse: "Being born is not enough. It is to be reborn that we are born every day."



Weinstein jury mulls verdict in Hollywood rapes case

Jurors in Los Angeles began deciding the fate of Harvey Weinstein on Friday, weighing rape and sex abuse charges that could see the former Hollywood titan jailed for the rest of his life. A weeks-long trial has heard graphic descriptions of encounters in California



Harvey Weinstein

hotel rooms between the once-powerful producer and women who were trying to make their way in the world of movies. Prosecutors have painted a picture of a predatory ogre, who used his physical and professional prowess to rape and abuse women for years with impunity.

His victims were left terrorized and afraid for their careers if they spoke out against a man who dominated Tinseltown for decades, the lawyers said. Weinstein, the "Pulp Fiction" producer who is already serving a 23-year sentence in New York for a series of attacks, denies the raft of Los Angeles charges.

His attorney has sought to portray accusers either as liars who never had sex with his client, or as women who willingly lay on the casting couch, swapping

sex for a leg up in the notoriously competitive world of filmmaking. Weinstein, now 70, is charged with seven sex-related counts involving four women, one of whom has been identified by her lawyer as Jennifer Siebel Newsom, wife of California Governor Gavin Newsom. "It is time for the defendant's reign of terror to end," prosecutor Marlene Martinez told the jury in her closing argument on Thursday. "It is time for the kingmaker to be brought to justice."

'Despicable behavior'

Weinstein, who was credited with making the careers of household names like Matt Damon, Ben Affleck and Gwyneth Paltrow, used his power to prey on and silence women, Martinez said. The jury heard testimony from women who said they had been tricked into being alone with the "Shakespeare in Love" producer in his hotel room. Several described how they had begged him to stop as he forced himself on them, made them perform oral sex on him, or watch him masturbate, sometimes as he groped them.

"We know the despicable behavior the defendant engaged in," Martinez told the jury. "He thought he was so powerful that people would... excuse his behavior. "That's just Harvey being Harvey. That's just Hollywood." And for so long that's what everyone did. Everyone just turned their heads." Defending Weinstein, Alan Jackson told the jury the prosecution had failed to provide evidence that any of the sexual encounters were anything but consensual.

The entirety of the prosecution's case could be summed up with five words: "Take my word for it," he said. Two of the four women at the center of the charges described encounters that never happened, he said. The two others were women who knowingly engaged in transactional sex and now regretted it, Jackson said, part of what he called a "dogpile" on Weinstein in the wake of the explosion of the #MeToo movement. —AFP

Guns N' Roses sues online gun shop for appropriating name

US rock band Guns N' Roses has sued a company that runs an online gun store named Texas Guns and Roses, charging in federal court that the business appropriated its name unjustly. In a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles, attorneys for the band said a corporation that runs the online shop was conning consumers into believing the business had something to do with the rock band. Guns N' Roses "quite reasonably does not want to be associated with Defendant, a firearms and weapons retailer," the lawsuit, filed Thursday, says.

Additionally, the band claimed, the gun dealer "espouses political views related to the regulation and control of firearms and weapons on the Website that may be polarizing to many US consumers." Guns N' Roses, formed in 1984, is one of the most successful bands of all time and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2012. Its members are Axl Rose, Saul "Slash" Hudson and Michael "Duff" McKagan.

The lawsuit identified Jersey Village Florist LLC as the owner and operator of Texas Guns and Roses, which it said sells firearms and ammunition, scopes,

body armor and metal safes, among other items. The online business is registered at a Houston address and obtained its Texas registry listing in 2016 without Guns N' Roses' "approval, license, or consent," according to the suit. Lawyers for the rock group are seeking a jury trial and a court order barring the use of the website name as well as unspecified punitive damages. The online shop did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Musk kicks Kanye West off Twitter after swastika post

Elon Musk kicked Kanye West off Twitter on Friday "for incitement to violence," after the rapper posted a picture that appeared to show a swastika interlaced with a Star of David. The post came hours after an interview with conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, in which West sparked outrage by declaring his "love" of Nazis and admiration for Adolf Hitler. West had also shared a picture of a shirtless Musk getting sprayed with water, captioned: "Let's always remember this as my final tweet."

In response, Musk said: "Just clarifying that his account is being suspended for incitement to violence, not an unflattering pic of me." Musk, who previously called himself a "free speech absolutist," has repeatedly said he believes all content permitted by law should be allowed on Twitter, and sought to remake the social media organization after he took control in October. In an hours-long appearance on Infowars, the show fronted by Jones, West-now known as Ye-wore a black mask completely covering his face, as he ranted about sin, pornography and the



In this file photo illustration, the Twitter logo is displayed on a mobile phone with a photo of Kanye West shown in the background. — AFP

devil. "I like Hitler," West said several times.

West hid his face completely under a mask that had neither eye nor mouth slits. However, Jones addressed him as West as they spoke, Infowars billed the interview as being with West, and at one point Jones took West's cellphone and posted a tweet on his account that appeared in real-time.

West, who has hinted he is running for

US president in 2024, has spoken openly about his struggles with mental illness, but his erratic behavior has continued to raise concerns. The businessman has seen his commercial relationships crumble after a series of anti-Semitic comments, as the one-time titan of fashion and music appears to have entered a disturbing spiral.

'I love Nazis'

On Infowars, West drew shocked laughter and even disagreement from far-right host Jones. "I see good things about Hitler also," he told Jones. "This guy... invented highways, invented the very microphone that I used as a musician, you can't say out loud that this person ever did anything good, and I'm done with that." Hitler did not invent either of those things.

"I'm done with the classification, every human being has something of value that they brought to the table, especially Hitler. 'I like Hitler.' Jones, a serial provocateur who was ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for claiming

one of America's deadliest school shootings was a "hoax," interjected that "the Nazis were thugs and did really bad things."

West did not back down. "But they did good things too. We gotta stop dissing the Nazis all the time... I love Nazis," West said. Hours after the interview, social media platform Parler, a favorite of conservatives for its hands-off approach to moderation, said a deal for West to buy the outfit was off. "Parlament Technologies would like to confirm that the company has mutually agreed with Ye to terminate the intent of sale of Parler," the network said on Twitter.

"This decision was made in the interest of both parties in mid-November." In October, German sportswear giant Adidas severed its lucrative tie-up with West after the star made anti-Semitic statements, including threatening to "go death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE," using a misspelled reference to US military readiness. Paris fashion house Balenciaga and US clothing retailer Gap also ended ties with West, who appeared at a Paris fashion show

wearing a shirt with the slogan "White Lives Matter," a rebuke to the Black Lives Matter racial equality movement.

Fuentes

West appeared on Infowars alongside Nick Fuentes, the same white supremacist with whom West had dinner last week at former president Donald Trump's Florida estate, in a meeting that provoked outrage. Thursday's livestream sparked immediate condemnation from the Republican Jewish Coalition, which dubbed the three men "a disgusting triumvirate of conspiracy theorists, Holocaust deniers, and anti-Semites."

"Given his praise of Hitler, it can't be overstated that Kanye West is a vile, repellent bigot who has targeted the Jewish community with threats and Nazi-style defamation," a statement from the group said. "Conservatives who have mistakenly indulged Kanye West must make it clear that he is a pariah. Enough is enough." — AFP



Morocco's supporters celebrate their team's qualification for the next round of the Qatar 2022 World Cup after their victory in the Group F football match against Canada in the Souq Waqif marketplace in Doha. — AFP photos



A Brazil's supporter wearing a bird costume celebrates at the Souq Waqif marketplace.



A Brazil's supporter wearing a bird costume celebrates at the Souq Waqif marketplace.

Doha Souq abandons tradition to become World Cup party base

Thousands of Moroccan fans poured into Doha's oldest market on Thursday to celebrate their country's success in becoming the only Arab nation to reach the World Cup second round. Crowds gathered around a giant golden thumb sculpture in Souq Waqif market that has become a magnet for fans of winning teams to show national pride. Argentinian, Tunisian and Saudi fans have also jammed the narrow alleys around the sculpture by French artist Cesar Baldaccini on earlier nights to blow horns, bang drums and make noise.

"I saw Morocco reach the second round in 1986 and now they have done it again," said Yousef Ben Younes, as he danced around the thumb waving the national flag with its green star. Morocco's 2-1 win over Canada saw them top their group and reach the round of 16 for the first time since 1986. The feat became a cause for pan-Arab celebration.

Egyptian, Iraqi, Saudi and Lebanese flags were brandished at the celebrations. Qatar is hosting the first World Cup in an Arab nation, but the hosts along with fellow Arab states Tunisia and Saudi Arabia failed to get past the first round-even though Tunisia beat France and the Saudis upset Argentina.

"Be happy Morocco!" the crowds chanted as police watched from nearby terraces. The market, where locals drink coffee, buy spices, Arab robes, gold jewelry and carpets late into night, has become popular despite organizers setting up giant fan zones elsewhere.

Supporters pour in from all over the city. Some of the stadiums are more than 25 kilometers (15 miles) away. The football cacophony often goes on beyond midnight. Abdel Wahed El-Lahry, a Moroccan living in Doha, said the noisy celebrations in the Souq atmosphere "make me feel like I am at home".

'Like at home'

When Argentinian fans took over the square around the 3.5 metre high thumb, they climbed on the walls of the market buildings and covered them with national flags showing late icon Diego Maradona. "In a small city like Doha, you have to find a place that is good for gatherings and celebrations," said Farhad, who waved an

oversized Iranian flag.

"It should be a place full of life and there is no better place than this souq," added the man, who gave only one name. Traders reported a roaring trade in World Cup souvenirs and the national flags of the 32 competing nations which can be bought for two dollars. Shady, who runs a Lebanese restaurant near the sculpture, said "the fan celebrations increase our sales for sure."

"People come and celebrate and get tired and then have to eat," added the man, who also gave one name. Jannatul Shah, who makes Arab robes in the Souq, said the noise "disturbs" his customers. "This is a busy night for us and I think the supporters have put off some people." But he said he understood the celebrations. "This is the World Cup and people need a place to go. We will live with it and Doha will benefit." — AFP

'I like Hitler': Kanye doubles down in wild Infowars stream

Kanye West sparked outrage on Thursday by declaring his "love" of Nazis and admiration for Adolf Hitler himself during a rambling, hours-long livestream with conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. In the extraordinary appearance on Jones' Infowars, West-now known as Ye-wore a black mask completely covering his face, as he ranted about sin, pornography and the devil. "I like Hitler," West said at one point.

Even though West hid his face-the mask had neither eye nor mouth slits-there seemed no doubt it was him. Jones addressed him as West as they spoke, Infowars billed the interview as being with West, and at one point Jones took West's cellphone and posted a tweet on his account that appeared in real time. West, who has said he is running for US president in 2024, has spoken openly about his struggles with mental illness, but his erratic behavior has continued to raise concerns.

The rapper-businessman has seen his commercial relationships crumble after a series of anti-Semitic comments. But in his lengthy appearance on the Infowars livestream, West was unrepentant, drawing shocked laughter and even disagreement from far-right host Jones. "I see good things about Hitler also," he told Jones. "This guy... invented highways, invented the very microphone that I used as a musician, you can't say out loud that this person ever did anything good, and I'm done with that. 'I'm done with the classification, every human being has something of value that they brought to the table, especially Hitler. 'I like Hitler.'"

Jones, a serial provocateur who has been ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for claiming one of America's deadliest school shootings was a "hoax," interjected that "the Nazis were thugs and did really bad things." West did not back down. "But they did good things

too. We gotta stop dissing the Nazis all the time... I love Nazis."

In October German sportswear giant Adidas severed its lucrative tie-up with West after the star made anti-Semitic statements, including threatening to "go death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE," using a misspelled reference to US military readiness. Paris fashion house Balenciaga and US clothing retailer Gap



In this file photo Kanye West meets with US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

have also ended ties with West, who appeared at a Paris fashion show wearing a shirt with the slogan "White Lives Matter," a rebuke to the Black Lives Matter racial equality movement.

West appeared on the Jones program with Nick Fuentes, the same white supremacist with whom West had dinner last week with Donald Trump at the former president's Florida estate, in a meeting that provoked outrage. Thursday's livestream sparked immediate condemnation from the Republican Jewish Coalition, which dubbed the three men "a disgusting triumvirate of conspiracy theorists, Holocaust deniers, and anti-Semites."

"Given his praise of Hitler, it can't be overstated that Kanye West is a vile, repellent bigot who has targeted the Jewish community with threats and Nazi-style defamation," a statement from the coalition said. "Conservatives who have mistakenly indulged Kanye West must make it clear that he is a pariah. Enough is enough." — AFP



Shell-ebriety: World's oldest tortoise turns 190 (ish)

He was born not long after Napoleon died, and is now officially the planet's oldest known living land animal. Jonathan the Seychelles Giant Tortoise is celebrating his 190th birthday-more or less-on St Helena in the remote South Atlantic, where the defeated French emperor died in exile in 1821. Jonathan, it is believed based on shell measurements, was hatched around 1832, and he was brought to the UK overseas territory from the Seychelles 50 years later.

He lives out a comfortable retirement in Plantation House, the official residence of the St Helena governor, where his birthday is being marked with events all weekend including the issuance of a special stamp. The celebration climaxes Sunday with a "birthday cake" made out of Jonathan's favorite foods. He is particularly partial to carrots, lettuce, cucumber, apples and pears, according to his handlers interviewed by AFP in 2017.

Despite his advanced years, he is also partial to a female tortoise called Emma, who is merely in her 50s. "He still enjoys the ladies and I have heard him quite regularly in the paddock with Emma and he grunts," then-governor Lisa Phillips said at the time. "I have to keep an eye on him when he is doing that-it was not in the job description when I became governor."

At the start of this year, Jonathan was given the Guinness World Records title as the world's oldest living land animal, and this month was also named as the oldest tortoise ever. "When you think, if he was hatched in 1832 — the Georgian era-my goodness, the changes in the world," said Joe Hollins, a retired veterinarian who is Jonathan's main carer today.

"The world wars, the rise and fall of the British Empire, the many governors, kings and queens that have passed, it's quite extraordinary," he said. "And he's just been here, enjoying himself." While they hope for many more years, St Helena authorities have already made plans for the venerable chelonian's eventual demise: his shell will be preserved for posterity. — AFP



Brazil's supporters celebrate and wave Brazilian flags at the Souq Waqif marketplace.



An ironmonger vendor sit inside his shop in Souq Waqif marketplace in Doha.



Morocco's supporters celebrate their team's qualification for the next round.

Sports

James, Davis propel Lakers past Bucks, Heat cool off Celtics

Miami star Jimmy Butler returned from a seven-game injury absence

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James hit another NBA milestone Friday as he and Anthony Davis fueled the Los Angeles Lakers' hard-fought 133-129 win over the Milwaukee Bucks. James scored 28 points and handed out 11 assists-passing former Lakers great Magic Johnson for sixth on the NBA's all-time assists list.

Los Angeles weathered a late Bucks surge to emerge with the victory in coach Darvin Ham's return to the city where he won a title in 2021 as an assistant to coach Mike Budenholzer. It was also close in Boston, where Miami star Jimmy Butler returned from a seven-game injury absence and helped the Heat grab a 120-116 overtime victory that snapped the Eastern Conference-leading Celtics' 10-game home winning streak.

In Milwaukee, the Lakers delivered arguably their best victory of the season. Davis scored 44 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and Russell Westbrook added 15 points, seven rebounds and 11 assists. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 40 points and Jrue Holiday added 28 points for the Bucks, who had All-Star forward Kris Middleton for the first time this season after his recovery from off-season wrist surgery.

The Lakers led by 14 in the first half and by 10 in the third quarter, but the fourth quarter was a back-and-forth battle featuring half a dozen lead changes. A Davis dunk after a James steal put the Lakers up 132-127 with just over a minute remaining.

Brook Lopez pulled the Bucks within three but Grayson Allen and Holiday both missed three-pointers in the waning seconds. "It was awesome to see everybody coming together and competing against that team," Ham said. "The focus, the attention to detail ... everybody being engaged. This just can't be a one-game thing."

"This is something we have to do every time we step on the floor." James took his career assists tally to 10,144, moving past Johnson (10,141) on the assists list, which is headed by John Stockton's 15,806. He also shook off an injury scare, grabbing his left ankle in pain after tangling with Middleton and limping to the bench, but soon returned to the game.

There was drama in Boston, where Celtics star Jalen Brown scored 37 points and banked in a stunning three-pointer to force overtime against Miami. Two days after dropping a 134-121 decision to the Celtics, the Heat rallied from a 13-point third-quarter deficit, mounting a 26-8 scoring run that put them up by five with 7:16 to play.

Butler's jump shot put Miami up 108-105 in the final minute of regulation. Jayson Tatum then answered with a



MILWAUKEE: Grayson Allen #12 of the Milwaukee Bucks drives to the basket during the game against the Los Angeles Lakers on December 2, 2022 at the Fiserv Forum Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

dunk before Butler struck again—only for Brown to put the Celtics level at the buzzer.

It was tied with 1:02 left in overtime, but Bam Adebayo made two free throws for Miami and, after Tatum missed a three-point attempt, Butler drained a step-back jump shot that proved the game-winner.

Rockets stun Suns

Houston's Jalen Green scored 20 of his 30 points in the third quarter as the Rockets overcame a 16-point deficit to bring down the Western Conference-leading Phoenix Suns 122-121. The Suns erased a six-point deficit with less than two minutes to play as Devin Booker and Cameron Payne made back-to-back three-pointers.

Green made a free throw with 28.8 seconds left to put the Rockets ahead and the Suns missed four attempts in the final 19 seconds. Booker led the Suns with 41 points,

but missed at the final buzzer. In Atlanta, Dejounte Murray scored 34 points and rookie A.J. Griffin—playing in place of late injury scratch Trae Young—tied his career high with 24 as the depleted Hawks beat the Denver Nuggets 117-109.

Denver's two-time defending Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic scored just four points in the first half before finishing with 24 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists. The Brooklyn Nets notched a fourth straight victory in dominant style, leading by as many as 36 points on the way to a 114-105 wire-to-wire home win over the Toronto Raptors.

Kyrie Irving scored 27 points and Kevin Durant and Joe Harris chipped in 17 apiece for Brooklyn. In San Francisco, NBA champions Golden State held on for a 119-111 victory over Chicago, Jordan Poole scoring 30 points off the bench to lead the Warriors. — AFP

Brathwaite hits ton after Labuschagne history in first Test

PERTH: Dogged skipper Kraigg Brathwaite scored an unbeaten 101 Saturday to lead West Indies resistance as they chase 498 to win the first Test against Australia after Marnus Labuschagne joined rare company in making a double and single century.

The home side declared at lunch on day four in Perth after reaching 182-2 to go with their first innings 598-4, having bowled out the Caribbean nation for 283. The in-form Labuschagne belted 104 not out to go with his first innings 204 — only the eighth player to achieve the 200-100 feat in the same Test, joining the likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Brian Lara and Kumar Sangakkara.

In reply, the West Indies battled to 192-3 at stumps, still 306 runs behind, with Kyle Mayers yet to score alongside Brathwaite. Tagerarine Chandernaul (45), Shamarh Brooks (11) and Jermaine Blackwood (24) were the wickets to fall. Brathwaite said the team believed they could hang on for a draw or even a win. "It all starts from the first over (on Sunday). We don't want to think too far ahead, just take it over by over, session by session," he said.

"We've got to believe. It was good to get through today obviously and that first over tomorrow is very, very crucial. Australia are going to come hard and it's important that we start extremely well." In a blow for Australia, skipper and pace spearhead Pat Cummins did not bowl after experiencing thigh soreness.



PERTH: West Indies' Kraigg Brathwaite celebrates getting his century on the 4th day of the first Test cricket match between Australia and the West Indies at Perth Stadium on December 3, 2022. — AFP

The experienced Brathwaite brought up his 5,000th Test run with a boundary off Cameron Green before completing a second successive 50 after his first innings 64. Chandernaul was dropped on 42 with the ball slipping out of Mitchell Starc's fingers at full stretch in the deep after he hooked Green. But the speedster quickly made amends when he bowled the son of West Indies great Shivnarine Chandernaul to snap a dangerous 116-run stand. Nathan Lyon's spin accounted for Brooks, a concussion substitute for Nkrumah Bonner, with Steve Smith taking the catch at slip after an edge, and then Blackwood for 24 with Labuschagne the safe pair of hands. But Brathwaite was unmovable and brought up his 11th Test century off 157 balls. "For me it means everything ... you know Australia is going to be a tough place for batting and to do it really meant a lot," he said of getting to three figures.

Australia resumed at 29-1 with David Warner, who began on 17, the only wicket to fall, out for 48. Labuschagne confidently built on his overnight three to reach a ninth Test century and a slice of history with Smith, who hit an unbeaten 200 in the first innings, not out 20.

"It's always nice, it's something I've never done in Test cricket (double century and century in the same match), very proud," said Labuschagne. In a setback for the West Indies, Mayers was unable to bowl with a right shoulder strain and Kemar Roach went off with a hamstring injury.

But the pace of Alzarri Joseph and Jason Holder proved intimidating. Labuschagne edged a six off Joseph before a huge let-off next delivery when a brutal short ball flew off his bat onto the side of his helmet and he was caught.—AFP



Kuwait's 20th Rapid Chess Championship

KUWAIT: 62 players competed in Kuwait's 20th Rapid Chess Championship which was organized by Kuwait Union of Chess on Friday under the patronage and presence of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Syrian player Rami Talab won the first place, Egyptian Amer Saad second, Yousuf Ahmad third, Ahmad Abdullatif fourth, Ahmad Noureddein fifth, Dennis from Philippines sixth, Rosebird Avera from Philippines seventh, Rabei Mohammad from Egypt eighth, Medleesh from India ninth, Ahmad Mustafa from Egypt tenth. Best female player award went to Mariam Nashat, and the best Junior player went to Kuwait's Mishal Al-Hijab.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah lauded the players level and appreciated the efforts of officials of Kuwait

Mind Sports Association and all those involved in the competitions. He said that he played chess in his childhood adding the game is very important and beneficial in general life as far as planning and having strategies for the future. He said chess is distinguished by being the mind and cleverness language as it is an individual game built on total skill and does have the element of luck.

Head of the referees committee Khalaf Al-Azmi



Journalists bowling tournament

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah was pleased with the brotherly spirit that was seen during the first Journalists Bowling Tournament, though competition was hard and participants had outstanding technical levels. Al-Mohammad said the tournament will be held annually in recognition by the Board of the Directors of the Journalists efforts in covering sports events, and he wished all success in future events.

Al-Mohammad spoke during the awarding of the four top winners as Al-Qabas won first place, Aljarida second, Al-Anbaa third and Al-Rai fourth. All teams prepared for the tournament at the club for two weeks to ensure physical and technical readiness.

He lauded the patronage of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah for the championship and his interest in encouraging the players. He said the tournament was highly competitive and the game is practiced by all ages and nationalities particularly juniors and youth.

He said there will be the Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah youth championship under 16 in March 2023 due to his interest in the game and his keenness on improving the youth mental abilities.

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

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

CHANGE OF NAME

My son, Tanav Damodar, S/o. D. Kamalesh Kumar, Date of birth: 02.08.2011, residing at 18/20, Ramanathan Street, F2 Shyam Sundaram, Kilpauk, Chennai-600 010, shall henceforth be known as Kamalesh Kumar Tanav Damodar. D. Kamalesh Kumar (Father) (C#2807) — 02-12-2022

will henceforth be known in the name Ajab Gadiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2809) — 01-12-2022.

I, Ajab, holder of Passport No. V6129352, do hereby change my name to Ajab (as Given name) Gadiwala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Faimida Hakimuddin Gadiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2809) — 01-12-2022.

I, Faimida, holder of Passport No. M0492156 do hereby change my name to Faimida Hakimuddin (as Given name) Gadiwala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Faimida Hakimuddin Gadiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2809) — 01-12-2022.

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Suarez heroics not enough as Uruguay, Ghana both exit WCup

Ghana struggled to create anything in response

DOHA: Uruguay crashed out of the World Cup on Friday despite beating Ghana 2-0 after South Korea scored a late winner in the other Group H match to leapfrog the South American side. Giorgian De Arrascaeta netted twice in quick succession in the first half, with 35-year-old Luis Suarez having a hand in both goals.

However, Suarez finished the match on the bench in tears as the news came in of South Korea's last-gasp victory over Portugal, which meant the Asian side had moved above the Uruguayans into second place in Group H on goals scored.

"We had several chances to score the third goal (which would have put Uruguay through)," said Uruguay coach Diego Alonso. "For 80 minutes we were qualified and we had lots of chances, but in the end it wasn't possible."

Veteran striker Suarez had been the focus of the pre-match build-up because of his infamous handball in the 2010 quarter-finals, which helped eliminate Ghana. And after the game Ghana defender Daniel Amartey said that he wanted to make sure Uruguay also went out, but coach Otto Addo insisted he wasn't looking for revenge on Suarez for the events of 2010.

"What hurts most as that we're out, it doesn't matter who it was," said Addo, who confirmed he was leaving his post as planned to focus on his main job as a coach at Borussia Dortmund. "I know the public was seeking revenge but I don't think this way and I told the players they shouldn't think this way. We were not looking for that, we were trying to win this game."

Suarez's name was booed loudly by the Ghana fans when it was read out by the stadium

announcers and he got the same treatment every time he touched the ball. He was also leading the protests when Ghana were awarded a penalty in the 19th minute.

Mohammed Kudus had initially been ruled off-side when he was brought down by Uruguay goalkeeper Sergio Rochet, but after that decision was overturned referee Daniel Siebert gave the spot-kick after checking the pitchside monitor.

Suarez cheers to tears

But Andre Ayew's tame effort was easily saved by Rochet and with Ghana's fans falling silent in disbelief, Uruguay made them pay. Darwin Nunez was denied by Mohammed Salisu's brilliant goalline clearance but in the 26th minute De Arrascaeta nodded in from close range after brilliant work from Suarez.

Collecting a poor cross from the right which evaded two Ghana defenders, Suarez cut inside Alidu Seidu and hit a powerful low shot that squirmed through Lawrence Aki Zigi's hands. It was edging towards the goal when De Arrascaeta pounced.

Six minutes later Uruguay gave Ghana a mountain to climb when Arrascaeta hit a sublime volley at the end of superb team move, Suarez providing a first-time assist from Nunez's knockdown. Ghana were let off the hook by Siebert just before the hour mark when he ruled that Amartey had touched the ball while tackling Nunez in the penalty area.

That decision would turn out to be crucial as another goal would have put Uruguay through. Suarez was booed and cheered in equal measure by the crowd when he was substituted for Edinson



DOHA: Uruguay's forward #09 Luis Suarez reacts at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between Ghana and Uruguay at the Al-Janoub Stadium in Al-Wakrah, south of Doha. —AFP

Cavani in the 66th minute.

Ghana struggled to create anything in response. The closest they came to pulling a goal back came with nine minutes remaining, when Rochet brilliantly tipped away Kudus's powerful low drive. Uruguay

then realised they needed another goal and poured forward but were unable to find make the breakthrough. The match ended with Uruguay's players screaming in the faces of the match officials and Suarez sobbing at his team's fate. —AFP

Stones warns England to treat Senegal with respect

DOHA: John Stones has warned England to treat Senegal with respect in Sunday's World Cup last-16 clash as Gareth Southgate's side aim to avoid becoming the latest title contender to suffer a shock defeat.

Four-time winners Germany and second-ranked Belgium were dumped out at the group stage in Qatar while Argentina, France and Spain all suffered defeats in the first round. With England tipped to beat Senegal at the Al Bayt Stadium this weekend, Manchester City centre-back Stones urged his team-mates not to underestimate the Africa Cup of Nations holders.

"We've already seen big upsets. That's why it's the best tournament in the world," Stones said on Friday. "It's always difficult when you see big teams or big players in teams that don't have the success that you want or don't live up to the expectation of the nation."

"We don't ever want to fall into that category. You never want to take anything for granted. All we can affect is what we're doing, what games we're playing and giving it our all." Stones is confident that England will not rest on their laurels after topping Group B with an unbeaten record.

Pointing to the way they recovered from a six-game winless run heading into the tournament, Stones said: "After losing form as a team, as a unit in defence and how we've come through, I'm extremely proud of the group. "I spoke before coming into the tournament about why our form was getting brought up, and rightly so, because of the summer we had. Now we've come through these three games in a difficult group."

Maguire back on track

After reaching the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and finishing as Euro 2020 runners-up, Stones believes England have the quality to lift the trophy in Doha — provided they stay positive when the pressure mounts. "That is not being over-confident, that is being humble enough to see what goes on in our training and how the staff prepare, and believing in ourselves too," he said. "We can be too negative but we should be more positive and think about all the things we've done and how it has got us here and be realistic about our expectations."

The foundations of England's bid for a first major trophy since 1966 have been laid by Stones and Harry Maguire at the heart of the defence. Southgate's team have kept two clean sheets in their first three games and Stones is delighted to see his long-time friend Maguire back on track after a long dip in form for Manchester United and England.

"From the first game he has given the best response. It's great credit to him," Stones said. "Playing with someone for so many games with England, knowing what he's been going through at his club as well — to come through that, it speaks volumes about him. "Harry is one of the leaders. He's a huge character within the group. We see it around the hotel with how many people he mingles with." — AFP

S Korea reach WCup last 16

DOHA: Hwang Hee-chan scored in injury time to rescue South Korea from the brink of World Cup elimination and propel them into the last 16 with a dramatic 2-1 win over already qualified Portugal on Friday.

The substitute forward slipped in the winner in the 91st minute at Education City Stadium in Qatar to spark delirium and tears among the Korean players and fans. Skipper Son Heung-min, who set up the winner with a fine run and pass, collapsed to the turf at the final whistle with tears in his eyes having played a decisive part in Korea's fightback from 1-0 down.

The Korean players then stood in a huddle watching the Ghana versus Uruguay match on a mobile phone as they waited for their place in the last 16 to be confirmed. When it was, they celebrated wildly before sprinting towards a group of Korean fans behind one goal and diving to the turf.

Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal still topped Group H and will hope that means they avoid Brazil, currently leading Group G heading into Friday's last two group phase matches, in the knockout phase. "As a Korean I am extremely proud and want to thank all the Korean fans in Korea," said 26-year-old Hwang, who plays for Premier League side Wolves. "This is a present for them. More than anything I want to say I am very, very proud," added Hwang, who missed the first two games in Qatar because of injury.

Ronaldo 'assist'

A much-changed Portugal took a fifth-minute lead through Ricardo Horta but the Koreans, who had to win to stand any chance of staying alive, hit back in the 27th minute through defender Kim Young-gwon.

Portugal skipper Ronaldo played a part in the Korean equaliser, turning his back on a corner and the ball hitting him on the shoulder to set up Kim. South Korea and their skipper Son, in a mask after recent surgery, needed to score again but they failed

Lloris and equal Thuram as France's most-capped player

DOHA: Hugo Lloris said Saturday he was "honoured and very proud" at the prospect of equalling Lilian Thuram as France's most-capped player in the World Cup last-16 clash with Poland in Doha. "It is no small achievement. I am really honoured at the figures and very proud, even if it is very much secondary to the fact that we are on the eve of the last 16 of the World Cup," the France captain told reporters.

Lloris is set to win his 142nd cap for his country and will therefore match the record held by former right-back Thuram whose own international career spanned 14 years and who was part of the France team that won the 1998 World Cup.

The Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper, who turns 36 later this month, made his France debut in November 2008, just a few months after Thuram went into international retirement. "In my eyes this competition comes before anything else," Lloris insisted as the French team prepare to face Poland at Al Thumama Stadium.



DOHA: South Korea's players celebrate qualifying for the World Cup last 16 at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between South Korea and Portugal at the Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan. — AFP

to really trouble Portugal until Son teed up Hwang in injury time after a searing run and threaded a pass through the legs of a Portuguese defender.

"Before the match Son said I would do something today — 'we trust you'," said Hwang, who had come on in the 66th minute as Korea chased the goal they so badly needed. "It was an excellent pass and made my job much easier," he added.

South Korea coach Paulo Bento, the former Portuguese international, had to watch from the stands after he was sent off following the final whistle of the Koreans' 3-2 defeat to Ghana.

Son, the Spurs forward, was yet to get going at this World Cup after surgery for a fracture around his left eye at the start of November. Wearing a black

mask, the 30-year-old showed glimpses of his brilliant best as South Korea chased the three points, his classy assist at the death in front of a 44,000 crowd coming when his country needed him most.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos had brought Ronaldo off on 65 minutes to rest him. Ronaldo did not look overly pleased but Santos said that was because of "insults" from a Korean player.

"We lost our organisation and Korea controlled the game, we lost focus," said Santos. "Our players were motivated but we were opened up on the counter-attack, that can happen. "We are somewhat upset. We are first (in the group) but wanted to win to increase the morale of the players. "This served as a warning to our team." — AFP

"I want to conserve all my energy for tomorrow (Sunday) because it's going to be another battle. "The record is something I will appreciate more once the competition is finished, and I hope it finishes in the best way possible."

Lloris, who skipped France to victory at the 2018 World Cup, will return to the starting line-up against Poland after being rested for Wednesday's 1-0 defeat by Tunisia in their final group game. He was praised by coach Didier Deschamps, who himself won 103 caps and is the only other French player to captain Les Bleus to victory in a World Cup final.

"Records are there to be beaten. Obviously some records mean more than others and this one speaks for itself, having all these caps and playing for so many years at the very highest level," he said. France are strong favourites to beat Poland and advance to the quarter-finals but Lloris will have to come up against Robert Lewandowski, arguably the most lethal striker in the modern game.

"He has been one of the best number nines in the world for years now but they are a good side collectively and they take a lot of pleasure in defending and suffering," Lloris said. Meanwhile Deschamps said he saw no point in going back over with his players what happened in France's last knockout tie at a major tournament, when they lost on penalties to Switzerland in the last 16 of last year's European Championship.



DOHA: France's goalkeeper #01 Hugo Lloris attends a press conference at the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC) in Doha on December 3, 2022. —AFP

"I don't see the interest in talking about that. The players who were there will not want to relive it," he said. "The only thing in common is that it was also a last-16 tie." — AFP

Cameroon stun favourites Brazil but go out of World Cup

‘Despite the fact we won we are disappointed because we realise we could have done better’

DOHA: Vincent Aboubakar headed in a stoppage-time winner and was then sent off as Cameroon claimed a memorable 1-0 victory over favourites Brazil at the World Cup on Friday, but still failed to go through to the last 16.

Aboubakar, who had come in to captain Rigobert Song's team, connected with a cross from substitute Jerome Ngom Mbekeli to break the deadlock in the 92nd minute at Doha's Lusail Stadium. He was booked for removing his shirt in the wild celebrations that followed and, having already been cautioned, had to leave his teammates to see out the remainder of the game.

They did so to record a famous win, the first for an African side against Brazil at the World Cup, but Switzerland's 3-2 defeat of Serbia at the same time meant the Swiss advanced from Group G along with the already-qualified Brazilians. "Despite the fact we won we are disappointed because we realise we could have done better," admitted Song. "It is a shame to stop here but we just need to see the positives and we will keep working."

Having won their first two matches in Qatar, Brazil topped the group and advance to a last-16 tie against South Korea when their many key players who were rested for this game will return. Coach Tite sent out a second-string side and the result was Brazil's first defeat in the group stage of a World Cup since 1998, when they were beaten by Norway.

Tite made nine changes, including handing a start to 39-year-old Dani Alves, making him Brazil's oldest ever men's international player. "Tonight we all lost, it is a collective defeat," Tite said. "Nobody has won all three group games at this World Cup and the three teams who won their first two matches lost the next one. It just shows how difficult these matches are." The spine of Brazil's second-string side still featured Manchester City's Ederson in goal, Real Madrid's Eder Militao in central defence, Fabinho of Liverpool in midfield, and Gabriel Jesus of Arsenal supported by Rodrygo up front.

Martinelli impresses

They also had the 21-year-old Gabriel Martinelli



DOHA: Brazil's forward #18 Gabriel Jesus (L) fights for the ball with Cameroon's midfielder #08 Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (R) during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match between Cameroon and Brazil at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, north of Doha. — AFP

on the left and the Arsenal prospect was their standout performer. He almost scored the opening goal in the 14th minute when he leapt unmarked but saw his header tipped over by Cameroon keeper Devis Epassy. Martinelli also threatened in first-half stoppage time with a dribble across the edge of the area and a shot that Epassy turned behind.

It was a piece of play reminiscent of Neymar, who is still recovering from a sprained ankle and

watched the action here from just behind the Brazilian bench. The Brazil fans, who unfurled a banner with a "Get Well Soon" message for Pele, cheered loudly when Neymar appeared on screens inside the stadium.

Needing a win, Cameroon almost went in front just before the interval when a Bryan Mbeumo header forced a flying save from Ederson. Brazil had won all seven previous meetings with African oppo-

nents at the World Cup, including beating Cameroon in 1994 and in 2014, and Martinelli was their most likely source of a goal.

He forced Epassy to tip over another strike that was arcing towards the top corner early in the second half, and the Cameroon shot-stopper-continuing in place of Andre Onana who was dropped for unspecified disciplinary reasons-turned a Militao shot around the post moments later. — AFP

Mbappe, Lewandowski face off

DOHA: There is arguably no more thrilling player at this World Cup than Kylian Mbappe, who leads France into their last-16 clash on Sunday with a Poland side whose own hopes of pulling off a famous upset will depend to a large extent on Robert Lewandowski.

It is a sobering thought that Mbappe, not 24 until later this month, may not yet be at the peak of his powers but he has already scored seven goals in 10 appearances at the World Cup. That tally includes one in the 2018 final when he was still a teenager as France beat Croatia in Moscow.

His mission now is to help his country become the first to retain the World Cup since Brazil, with an even younger Pele, did so in 1962. Mbappe has already scored three times in Qatar, including a brace in a 2-1 victory against Denmark

that secured qualification for the last 16, and there is a belief he is thriving as the undisputed star of Didier Deschamps' side. The situation is different to that of Paris Saint-Germain, where he shares the limelight with Lionel Messi and Neymar, and in that sense it may be that Karim Benzema's withdrawal due to injury on the eve of the tournament does no harm to French hopes.

"Kylian has no ego," insisted Deschamps a few days ago, going against the perception of Mbappe in the context of PSG. "He is a decisive player for us and his performances put him in the spotlight. He is not 18 anymore. He has experience now."

It wasn't just Mbappe—who now has as many international goals as Zinedine Zidane—that France missed as a second-string team lost 1-0 to Tunisia on Wednesday, a result that did not stop them topping their group.

He will be back along with the likes of Hugo Lloris, Antoine Griezmann and Olivier Giroud as France and Poland meet at a major tournament for the first time since the 1982 World Cup.

"Kylian is not the same player or



DOHA: This combination of pictures created on December 03, 2022 shows France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe (L) applauding before the start of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match and Poland's forward #09 Robert Lewandowski (R) applauding after Poland won the Group C football match. — AFP

person as in 2018," said Griezmann on Friday when asked about Mbappe's role in a squad hit by injuries to several key players before the tournament.

"He is much more a part of the squad now. He speaks a lot and has fun. He knows that the media, fans and even his teammates will be watching everything that he does but he is beyond reproach." France are clear favourites for Sunday's game but there is the memory of what happened in the last 16

at last year's European Championship, when Mbappe missed the crucial penalty in a shoot-out defeat to Switzerland.

Poland only just scraped through their group ahead of Mexico on goal difference and Lewandowski's strike—his first World Cup goal—in the win over Saudi Arabia was therefore crucial. "I'm aware it might be my last World Cup and I wanted to be able to say that I've played and scored at World Cups," he said after that game. — AFP

Germany's once fearsome reputation in tatters at WCup

DOHA: Perhaps the most damning indictment in the inquest into Germany's second consecutive exit from a World Cup at the group stage came from 23-year-old forward Kai Havertz, who said simply, "I don't think we're a tournament team anymore".

With four World Cups and three European championship wins, Germany's reputation for turning up when it truly matters was once so well-earned, there is a word for it in German: Turniersmannschaft, or "tournament team".

After Hansi Flick's team crashed out in Qatar, having never really recovered from a stunning opening 2-1 defeat to Japan, that reputation is in tatters. Germany crashed out four years in Russia and also went out in the last 16 in last year's European Championship.

So just 18 months away from hosting the next Euros in 2024, they are in the unfamiliar position of being outsiders for a tournament held on home soil. The 4-2 win against Costa Rica on Thursday was too little, too late. Germany needed Spain to at least draw with Japan but the Spanish went down 2-1 and Germany lost out on goal difference.

As the dejected squad boarded a plane from Doha back to Frankfurt on Friday, German Football Association (DFB) President Bernd Neundorff refused to guarantee that Flick's job was secure, while hinting that the root cause of the problems ran



DOHA: Germany's players applaud the fans at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group E football match between Costa Rica and Germany at the Al-Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, north of Doha. — AFP

much deeper.

Neundorff announced a series of inquiries into "the development of the national team and our football since 2018". The DFB would "look ahead" with a focus on "developing perspectives (for) the Euros in our own country." Flick, who said on Thursday he wanted to stay in his job but knew "it isn't up to me", called for an overhaul of the junior development system. Starkly, he recognised that Jamal Musiala, one of the few bright sparks in Qatar, "was not trained in Germany, he was trained in England". The Bayern Munich teenager represented England at youth level before switching to Germany.

Germany's newspapers roundly criticised the

team's performance with tabloid Bild lamenting that: "On this December 1st, 2022, we witnessed the end of a once great and proud football nation." The lukewarm reaction to the tournament from German fans should also concern German football administrators.

The team's backtracking on the planned "OneLove" rainbow armband, designed as a protest at Qatar's laws on homosexuality, went down badly at home. An average of 14.7 million tuned in to watch the three games—well down on the 25 million four years ago. The German public has not fallen out of love with football completely — 17.9 million tuned in to see Germany's 2-1 loss to England in the women's Euros in July. — AFP

Today's matches on TV

FIFA World Cup 2022

France v Poland 18:00

beIN Sports HD 3 Max

beIN Sports HD 1 Max

England v Senegal 22:00

beIN Sports HD 3 Max

beIN Sports HD 1 Max

Record-breaking African teams bounce back

DOHA: Four years ago Africa was left without a representative in the World Cup last 16 for the first time since the round was introduced in 1986, but the response has been emphatic in Qatar. The 2022 tournament has seen two teams from the continent reach the knockout phase for only the second time—after Algeria and Nigeria in 2014.

African nations have also taken a record-breaking 24 points in the group stage, smashing the previous best of 15 points in 1998. Morocco beat the world's second-ranked side Belgium and Canada en route to the top of Group F, while Senegal bounced back from an opening defeat by the Netherlands to record wins over Qatar and Ecuador.

Brazil were beaten by an African team for the first time with a 1-0 defeat by Cameroon, who exited the tournament in glory. For Morocco, their clash with Spain next Tuesday will be a first appearance in the knockout stage for 36 years. Their fans will turn up in their thousands again to cheer on the only remaining Arab country in the World Cup. "We hope to fly the flag of African football high," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui. "Often we've been described as being sub-par, not as good as elsewhere."

"But I think at this World Cup we are showing we can give any other team a run for their money, whether they be European teams or South American teams. "I hope in the future this means we'll be seeing more African teams do well at the World Cup and why not an African champion?"

The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico will involve more African countries than ever before, with the tournament set to expand from 32 to 48 teams. If it does not happen this year, Africa will be expecting its first World Cup semi-finalists sooner rather than later. Senegal were the closest to getting past the group stage in Russia in 2018, missing out by virtue of having more yellow cards than Japan. But they banished those memories when Kalidou Koulibaly volleyed them to victory against Ecuador, after saying they were inspired by Morocco's win over Belgium. — AFP

Dutch masters teach USA: It's football...not soccer!



DOHA: USA's defender #13 Tim Ream (C) attempts to score during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between the Netherlands and USA at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on December 3, 2022. — AFP

DOHA: A clinical Netherlands ended the United States' World Cup dream on Saturday, sweeping into the quarterfinals with a ruthless 3-1 victory. First-half goals from Memphis Depay and Daley Blind and a late strike from Denzel Dumfries sealed a deserved victory as the Dutch handed out a painful lesson in finishing to their American opponents. The Netherlands, bidding to win their first World Cup after losing in three previous finals, will face Argentina or Australia in the last eight.

Veteran coach Louis van Gaal's men were worthy victors in Saturday's last-16 clash at the Khalifa International Stadium. Although the USA enjoyed long periods of possession in a bright first-half display, all too often a lack of composure in the final third let them down. Instead it was the Dutch who calmly bided their time before carving open the Americans with forensic precision. USA forward Christian Pulisic squandered a golden chance to put his team 1-0 up after only three minutes, when he found himself in space only to see a scuffed shot saved by Andries Noppert.

Buoyed by that early chance, the US remained on the front foot, attacking high up the field. But on 10 minutes the Netherlands took the lead. Superb interplay in midfield saw the ball worked to Inter Milan's Dumfries down the right. Dumfries picked out Depay, who swept home the finish to cap a majestic 20-pass move that was in the best traditions of the Netherlands' total footballing heritage.

Again the Americans advanced purposefully into Dutch territory through Pulisic, only for the Chelsea player to deliver a cross that fell behind his US teammates. Tim Weah had the best American chance of the remainder of the half on 43 minutes, letting fly with a rasping shot that Noppert parried away.



DOHA: Netherlands' midfielder #25 Xavi Simons fights for the ball with USA's defender #13 Tim Ream during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between the Netherlands and USA at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on December 3, 2022. — AFP

But in first half stoppage time, the Netherlands delivered the hammer blow. Dumfries again found space down the right and drilled a cross to Blind, who had ghosted clear of Sergino Dest, for an emphatic low finish. The Netherlands nearly extended their lead early in the second half when Dumfries' low cross was prodded towards the US goal by defender Walker Zimmerman, forcing a smart save from Matt Turner.

USA coach Gregg Berhalter introduced Gio Reyna for the ineffective Jesus Ferreira in attack at half-time in an effort to provide a sharper cutting edge. The Borussia Dortmund player made an instant impression after setting up a shot for Weston McKennie that sailed over the bar. Berhalter brought on Haji Wright for McKennie midway through the second half and the move sparked a fleeting revival.

After seeing a goal-bound chance cleared at the near post on 75 minutes, Wright scored a minute later when his flick from Pulisic's cross looped over Noppert into the Dutch net for 2-1. Yet the American fightback was short-lived. In the 81st minute another Dutch attack pulled the USA defense out of position, and Blind calmly crossed to an unmarked Dumfries at the far post, who made it 3-1. — AFP

Best still to come from World Cup faves after shocks

DOHA: The World Cup in Qatar has already delivered plenty of major shocks but as it moves into the knockout phase the top contenders including Brazil and France have plenty to prove. This is the first World Cup since the South Africa tournament in 2010 in which teams from Asia, Africa and North America have all been represented in the last 16. Brazil remain the favorites to claim a sixth World Cup and end Europe's recent dominance on the global stage.

Tite's side surely need Neymar back from the ankle injury he suffered in the opening win over Serbia but they have a dazzling array of attacking talent beyond the world's most expensive footballer. They are usually rock-solid defensively, even though a side with nine changes to the starting line-up lost their final group game against Cameroon.

Brazil have not yet faced top opposition and will expect to cruise past South Korea on Monday, with Croatia or Japan then awaiting them in the quarter-finals. A mouthwatering showdown with Argentina in the semifinals remains a possibility, with Lionel Messi and his

teammates recovering from their shock loss to Saudi Arabia to beat Mexico and Poland. If Messi's team get past Australia, they could find themselves up against the Netherlands in the last eight.

Argentina came into the World Cup unbeaten in 36 games and with expectations high that they could win the trophy for a third time but coach Lionel Scaloni has played down their chances. The other side of the draw is weighted towards Europe, despite elimination for Germany and Belgium. Holders France are the team to beat and in Kylian Mbappe they have the most exciting player in the competition.

Didier Deschamps' side eased through their group, even fielding an unrecognizable line-up in their final defeat by Tunisia as regulars were rested. History is not on the side of a France team looking to become the first since 1962 to successfully defend the World Cup, and they are on a possible collision course in the last eight with England. Spain, the joint-top scorers in the group stage with England on nine goals, are also on their side of the draw. Semi-finalists in 2018 and Euro 2020 runners-up, England are quietly growing in confidence. It was German great Jurgen Klinsmann, part of FIFA's technical study group analyzing the tournament, who predicted that Qatar would produce shocks. The last-16 line-up does at least reflect the global nature of football. — AFP



Netherlands' defender #17 Daley Blind (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's second goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between the Netherlands and USA. — AFP Photos



Netherlands' supporters cheer before the start of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match.



Netherlands' defender #22 Denzel Dumfries kicks the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup. — AFP



A Netherlands' supporter wearing giant glasses looks on before the start of the match.



USA's supporters wave a giant flag before the start of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match.



A supporter wearing a Captain America's costume poses for pictures before the start of the match.



USA's coach #00 Gregg Berhalter (L) and USA's forward #10 Christian Pulisic react at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between the Netherlands and USA on December 3, 2022.

World Cup 2022: last 16

LAST 16	QUARTER-FINALS	SEMI-FINALS	FINAL	MATCH 3 RD PLACE
Sat, Dec 3 - Khalifa Stadium Netherlands United States	Friday, Dec 9 Lusail Stadium Argentina Australia	Tuesday, Dec 13 Lusail Stadium	Sunday, Dec 18 Lusail Stadium	Saturday, Dec 17 Khalifa Stadium
Sat, Dec 3 - Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium Japan Croatia	Friday, Dec 9 Education City Stadium Brazil South Korea	Wednesday, Dec 14 Al Bayt Stadium		
Sun, Dec 4 - Al Thumama Stadium France Poland	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Bayt Stadium England Senegal	Saturday, Dec 10 Al Thumama Stadium Morocco Spain		
Tues, Dec 6 - Education City Stadium Portugal Switzerland				

Source: FIFA

