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OPEC+ maintains oil output amid climate of uncertainty

Global market needs dictate OPEC+ decisions: Kuwaiti oil minister

VIENNA: Major oil-producing countries led by Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed Sunday to maintain their current output levels in a climate of uncertainty and ahead of fresh sanctions against Moscow coming into force next week. The representatives of the thirteen members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) led by Riyadh, and their 10 allies headed by Moscow, decided to stick to their course agreed in October of a production cut of two million barrels per day until the end of 2023.

All decisions taken by OPEC+ are based on the needs of the global oil market in a bid to ensure stability, Kuwait's Oil Minister Bader Al-Mulla said on Sunday, underlining his country's support for these measures. The group will continue to "monitor"

global market developments in order to determine appropriate measures, he told the 34th OPEC+ ministerial meeting via video link.

Sunday's widely anticipated move was no "big surprise" given that the economy has been "slowing somewhat, pushing oil prices below \$90, despite the lower production levels," analyst Hans van Cleef with ABN AMRO said. Collectively known as OPEC+, the alliance said Sunday that its October



Bader Al-Mulla

decision to cut output was "purely driven by market considerations", adding that it had been the "necessary and right course of action towards stabilizing global oil markets".

The OPEC+ output reduction in October represented the biggest cut since the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, a move denounced by the United States as a concession to Moscow. The next OPEC+ ministerial meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2023. But the alliance said it was ready to "meet at any time and take immediate additional measures" to address market developments and support the oil market if necessary.

On Friday, the EU, G7 and Australia agreed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, which will come into effect on Monday or soon after, along-

side an EU embargo on maritime deliveries of Russian crude oil. It will prevent seaborne shipments of Russian crude to the European Union, which account for two thirds of the bloc's oil imports from Russia, an attempt to deprive Moscow's war chest of billions of euros.

"We will sell oil and oil products to countries that will work with us on market terms, even if we have to reduce production somewhat," Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said after Sunday's quick meeting via videoconference. Even though "inflation, the tightening of monetary policies and China's COVID-19 epidemic" were posing risks to the market, it was still "in a better state than two months ago", Novak said, according to Russian

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News in brief

Biosignature for umrah visa

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's ministry of hajj and umrah on Sunday announced allowing registration of vital features of biosignature for those coming from five countries to complete the procedures for issuing umrah visas electronically prior to their arrival in the cities of Makkah and Madinah. The five countries are Kuwait, UK, Tunisia, Bangladesh and Malaysia, the ministry said. The registration is completed through the Saudi Visa Bio smartphone app by self-registering the face, eyes and fingers and self-photocopying the passport. — KUNA

Zionist president visits Bahrain

MANAMA: Zionist President Isaac Herzog visited Bahrain on Sunday on the first trip by a Zionist head of state to the Gulf kingdom, following the normalization of relations in 2020. Herzog, whose role is largely ceremonial, met King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa. They discussed issues including regional security and "ways to encourage communication between the representatives of the private sector in the two countries", the official Bahrain News Agency said. Herzog said Sunday he would follow his stop in Bahrain with a visit to the UAE capital Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Iran executes 4 over Zionist links

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday put to death four people accused of working with the Zionist entity's intelligence service, the judiciary said. "This morning, the sentences of four main members of the gang of mobsters related to the Zionist intelligence service were executed," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. Mizan identified the men as Hossein Ordoukhanzadeh, Shahin Imani Mahmoudabad, Milad Ashrafi Atbatan and Manouchehr Shahbandi Bojandi. Three other defendants were sentenced to between five and 10 years in prison for crimes against the country's security, complicity in kidnapping and possession of weapons. — AFP

Kuwait Times campaign lights up media, streets

KUWAIT: A promotional campaign in print, social media and billboards by Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf, is ongoing across Kuwait. Kuwait Times provides a forum for everything - from in-depth reports and labor laws to business and investment to arts and entertainment. It embodies the ideals of innovation and creativity, encouraging and inspiring an evolution that keeps the news platform connected to and loved by Kuwaitis and expatriates alike.

The campaign shines a spotlight on Kuwait Times' presence on social media. It highlights images taken by Kuwait Times' photographer Yasser Al-Zayyat and headlines of major events from Kuwait and around the world, with a message indicating that our posts can be reliably shared, retweeted or reposted. (See Page 3)

Protest-hit Iran abolishes morality police

TEHRAN: Iran has scrapped its morality police after more than two months of protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini following her arrest for

Qatar seeks to change minds on Islam

DOHA: Proudly Muslim Qatar has taken advantage of the World Cup to reach out to the hundreds of thousands of visiting fans to change minds about Islam or even make conversions. The Gulf state is the first Muslim nation to stage a football World Cup and its gas riches have endowed it with an array of grand mosques to pique the curiosity of visitors.

Canadian couple Dorinel and Clara Popa listened to the call to prayer at an Ottoman-style mosque in Doha's Katara cultural district. It is known as Doha's



KUWAIT: A billboard, part of a brand awareness campaign by Kuwait Times, is seen in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

allegedly violating the country's strict female dress code, an official said Sunday. Women-led protests, labelled "riots" by the authorities, have swept Iran since the 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin died on September 16, three days after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran.

Demonstrators have burned their mandatory hijab head coverings and shouted anti-government slogans, and a growing number of women have refrained from wearing the hijab, particularly in parts of Tehran.

Continued on Page 6

MoI withdraws driving licenses of 10,000 expats

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has informed more than 10,000 expatriates about the cancellation of driving licenses they had obtained earlier, after a traffic department review concluded they do not meet the requirements for obtaining a driving license at the present time due to changing jobs or not meeting the minimum salary condition, which is a prerequisite for applying for a driving license.

"The notifications came as part of a continuous review of expatriates who hold driving licenses, a process that is still ongoing as ordered by the interior ministry, with the aim of verifying the validity of conditions as well as deal with traffic jams, as expatriates constitute the largest proportion of motorists," sources revealed to Kuwait Times. "Expatriates whose driving licenses were canceled have been notified via phone messages and told to hand over their driving licenses. Traffic patrols will issue citations to anyone whose license has been canceled but continues to drive with the canceled license," sources added.

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DOHA: A football fan chats with Gulf citizens inside Doha's Blue Mosque during the Qatar 2022 World Cup on Nov 29, 2022. — AFP

Blue Mosque because of the sumptuous mosaics of blue and purple tiles on the walls.

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Local

Mixed opinions greet billboard campaign against homosexuality

Many support campaign but rights activists see it offensive

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A street billboard campaign launched recently in Kuwait has created a huge controversy among citizens and experts, especially those supporting individual rights. The campaign against homosexuality has resulted in a variety of opinions from supporters and opponents on social media due to Kuwait's Islamic and Arab traditions, which rejects homosexuality.

Human rights activists in Kuwait have expressed their disapproval against the billboard campaign, considering it offensive due to its interference in people's freedoms. Moreover, they think the way it discusses homosexuality is aggressive. On the other hand, many citizens and residents expressed their approval of this campaign due its important role in rejecting homosexuality, especially with an international campaign that is trying to force homosexuality on people, especially children.

Kuwait Times explored reactions on social media. Shaikha, a Kuwaiti who is against the campaign, said: "There is no doubt that freedom of expression, openness to the world and the mixing of cultures led to the emergence of practices that existed in secret in the past and were kept silent. However, the way to address societal problems requires wisdom and experience of specialists in psychiatry, psychology and sociology. Publishing what stimulates discrimination and hatred will inevitably harm society."

Another citizen, Mohammad, said: "Homosexuality is unquestionably rejected - by religion, by tradition, by society and by law; but people must be treated

with respect and as human beings, as long as they do not promote this and are discreet, as is the case in our Arab and Islamic societies."

Ebtihal, a Kuwaiti, also rejected such campaigns. "Why do they open our children's eyes on things to ask about it? And what does this ad mean? An advertisement like this is not supposed to be shown in public streets!" she exclaimed. Hanof believes otherwise. "Our children need to be aware of such things before they get involved in them. Currently, most children know everything as YouTube and social media platforms have lots of social and cultural invasions," she argued.

Ali, a Kuwaiti, questioned the people who are saying this campaign is aggressive. "The situation in European and American series is miserable! By force they want to make homosexuality a normal relationship! And by time, when people see these things in series, it will become normal for us to see and accept it, especially after Obama's declaration to allow same-sex marriage. All series were ruined after this unfortunate decision," he said.

Jalil disagreed, saying such campaigns need to rely on psychological methods, also stressing freedom of speech. "Foreign series, social media, individuals and international institutions call all day and night to promote homosexuality in crude and continuous ways with pornographic images, porn clips and porn plots, while all these toxins reach our underage children," he said, adding, "all these things they call normal. But this campaign requires psychiatric input, study, experience, wisdom and specialization."



KUWAIT: Billboards read 'She is not a homosexual; I am a woman, and she has strayed from the path' (left) and 'He is not a homosexual; I am a man, and he has strayed from the path' (right).



EPA: Sustainability contributes to economic growth

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority stressed on Sunday the importance of applying sustainability in society, as it contributes to improving indicators of economic growth as well as attracting domestic and foreign investment towards new economic activities. "Environmental sustainability is a goal and a necessary requirement, as the 'Sustainable Kuwait' conference will be launched on the 12th of December under the

slogan 'Biodiversity to build a sustainable future' under the sponsorship of the EPA, the United Nations, the National Assembly, the General Secretariat for Planning, Kuwait University and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research," Director of Public Relations and Media at EPA Sheikha Al-Ibrahim said in a press statement.

"The application of sustainability in society has many benefits, including improving indicators of the country's economic growth and attracting investments towards new economic activities such as renewable energy and the recycling of household and industrial waste," she explained. "Sustainability means the continuation of the diversity of vital systems and the sustainability of their productivity so that future generations can benefit from resources while meeting current

needs without compromising the wealth and capabilities of future generations," she added.

"Kuwait has made great strides in achieving environmental security," Ibrahim said, noting the environmental law in the country is one of the best environmental laws worldwide. Forecasting and risk analysis observer at the General Secretariat for Planning Fudha Al-Muaili confirmed in a similar statement the importance of conferences that discuss the future of the country and the best strategies for preserving it. "Future generations require us to plan for a sustainable life on the planet. It is useful that world leaders meet every year to discuss climate change and the need to invest in nature," she added.

"The Arab region is considered one of the most diverse regions in terms of biological diversity due

to its geographical location, as it contributes to supporting economic diversification plans and leads to preserving the ability to adapt to environmental challenges," Muaili explained. Head of the Public Relations Association Jamal Al-Nasrallah said: "The association organized this conference due to its importance, which lies in discussing the issue of climate change and collapse of the environment, and how to maintain a sustainable environment."



Sheikha Al-Ibrahim



> Students at Kuwait University in Shadadiya during a sandstorm (2022).

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Local



KUWAIT: Billboards as part of a brand awareness campaign by Kuwait Times adorn Kuwait's squares and streets. As the first English language daily in the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait Times stands for innovation and creativity in journalism as it strictly adheres to objectivity, truthfulness and agility in disseminating information to its readers. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti boy recovers from harrowing accident after crucial pancreatectomy

Al-Hamlan endures an ordeal after a beach buggy accident

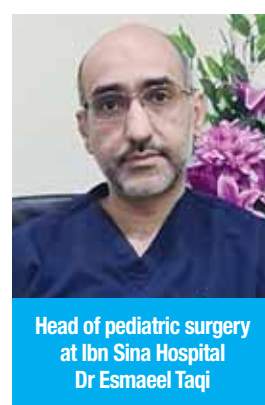
KUWAIT: After a year from surviving a harrowing accident, Dhari Al-Hamlan, 11, went through a successful pancreatectomy under the supervision of competent Kuwaiti medical staff at Ibn Sina hospital. Al-Hamlan had been involved in a "beach buggy" accident, which in turn had affected the pancreas, requiring the removal of parts of the organ.

Speaking of his ordeal to KUNA, Dhari Al-Hamlan said that at first, he did not understand the situation until a squadron of medical staff rushed to his aid upon arriving at the hospital. "It felt as if I was in a deep well," recounted Al-Hamlan who commended

the staff post-accident for their efforts to calm him down so that they could attend to his treatment.

On his operation, Al-Hamlan said that he was anxious at first, but gradually he was put to ease due to the care provided by Ibn Sina professionals and the medical team tasked with his operation. Khaled Al-Hamlan, Dhari's father, recounted the incident that almost took the life of his son, saying that his son had suffered immensely since the incident occurred. The nine-hour operation felt like years, he indicated, adding that he was relieved to know that

the operation was a success. Head of pediatric surgery at Ibn Sina Hospital Dr Esmaeel Taqi affirmed that Dhari's case was a tricky one due to several problems including acute inflammation in the abdominal cavity and small intestine. A delicate operation was carried out in the pancreas region to extract 50 percent of the damaged organ, added Dr. Taqi. He went on saying that the operation was a success and noted that Dhari had made a full recovery and now would need to carry out routine checkups every now and then to make sure that his health was in check. —KUNA



Head of pediatric surgery at Ibn Sina Hospital Dr Esmaeel Taqi



Dhari Al-Hamlan

GCC chief stresses role of Gulf universities

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf stressed Sunday the role of Gulf universities in promoting knowledge and scientific research in line with the Saudi King's vision approved in 2015.

Al-Hajraf and Rector of Sultan Qaboos University Dr Fahad Said, signed a memorandum of understanding between the University and the Riyadh-based GCC, according to a statement by

the GCC Secretariat. Al-Hajraf stated that Gulf universities and research centers have to establish academic programs in order to study the complementary experience for Gulf countries. The memorandum focuses on enhancing exchange expertise and scientific knowledge that GCC usually holds, besides holding seminars and training programs in Gulf countries. Al-Hajraf added that the memorandum comes within the efforts of the General Secretariat to encourage and support partnerships and scientific research between Gulf educational institutions and bodies, based on the basic objectives of the Cooperation Council and in implementation of the decisions of the leaders of the GCC countries. The memorandum of understanding aims to enhance the exchange of experiences, studies and scientific research that will contribute to the work of the



KUWAIT: Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf and Rector of Sultan Qaboos University Dr Fahad Said sign a memorandum of understanding. —KUNA

joint Gulf committees held by the General Secretariat and holding seminars, conferences and joint training programs to develop scientific cadres in educational institutions and agencies in the GCC countries. —KUNA

Kuwait expects heavy rains, gusty winds this week

KUWAIT: Climate expert Bader Al-Amira stated that the country will witness moderate to heavy thunderstorms in some areas accompanied by gusty winds starting from Monday and lasting until Wednesday.

"The country witnessed sporadic light rains in some areas on Sunday morning and wet spell will reach its peak on Tuesday and Wednesday resulting from the formation of clouds and precipitation caused by Sudanese seasonal depression," Al-Amira explained.

"After the rainy wave, a significant drop in temperature will be witnessed across the country," he added.

Climate expert Abdulaziz Al-Qurawy told Kuna that moderate rainfall will continue until Thursday and will be intertwined with accumulated fog. "Maximum temperature will be ranging from 22-24 degree Celsius while low temperatures are expected to range from 16-18 degree Celsius as strong winds might reach a speed of 50 km/h accompa-



KUWAIT: Kuwait is expected to witness moderate to heavy thunderstorms in some areas accompanied by gusty winds starting from Monday and lasting until Wednesday.

nied by gusty storms in some areas leading to an increase in wave heights in the sea to more than six feet," Al-Qurawy clarified. This period comes as a significant change in weather as the heatwave has

begun to decline after an unexpected extension of higher temperatures in the past week in comparison with previous years where the country experienced lower temperatures.

Officials visit East Sabah Al-Ahmad housing project site

KUWAIT: The head of the government performance review authority Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishal Al-Sabah emphasized the importance of efforts made to complete housing projects within the specified

timeframes, as the authority is prepared to reduce any difficulties or obstacles the projects may face.

Sheikh Ahmad, along with a panel, paid a field visit to the East Sabah Al-Ahmad housing project, where they were received by the acting general manager of the housing affairs authority Ahmad Al-Hadab and a group of project engineers. During the visit, they discussed the latest developments in the project's timeline, as a visual presentation was given by project developers. The project includes more than 1,000 housing units and an infrastructure network for them.



Govt to speed up leave allowances for employees

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid urged the state departments to speed up paying the holiday allowances to entitled civil servants. The Ministry of Finance is fully committed to providing the state departments with the necessary finances in this regard, the minister reaffirmed in a press release on Sunday.

He noted that the ministry's decision to deposit just 40 percent of the necessary funds was based on organizational grounds but the whole funds have already been available with the ministry. The ministry is working with the competent government bodies to finalize the disbursement of the funds within one week, Al-Rushaid revealed. Last Thursday, the Ministry said it made available KD 300 million (nearly \$975 million) to cover the costs of allowances and asked the state bodies that finished the related procedures to start disbursing the cash to employees. —KUNA



Convicted murderers sentenced to death

KUWAIT: The criminal court sentenced an Egyptian and a Sudanese in separate cases of killing of their wives due to family disputes. The Egyptian convict fled with his two children and left a third one in a nursery in Kuwait. The Sudanese convict, who is in prison, explained his motive for the murder, saying his wife's demands were too much and impossible to meet.

In other news, an Indian resident attempted to commit suicide by stabbing himself with a knife in a mosque in Qurtuba. An ambulance arrived as soon as one of the worshippers notified authorities about the incident. After performing first aid procedures, they said his condition is stable. A police patrol also arrived at the scene and the knife was confiscated. The man was taken to a police station in the area.

Local

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News in brief

UNESCO session concludes

RABAT: The 17th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concluded Saturday in Rabat, Morocco. Representatives of member states, including Kuwait, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders from 180 countries participated in the meeting. The session witnessed the inclusion of 47 new items in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list submitted by 60 countries divided into four categories, including 39 items in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, in addition to four items in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The committee on Thursday approved the inclusion of the file of Good Safeguarding Practices submitted by Kuwait represented by Al-Sadu Society. —KUNA

Kuwait's gold price rises

KUWAIT: Gold hit its highest level in four months, reaching \$1,800 per ounce at the end of last week's trading. The rise in gold prices came after the Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System Jerome Powell's decision of raising interest rates in December. In a report, Kuwait Sabayik Company stated Sunday that gold prices rebounded again, saying that gold rose in conjunction with the decline in the value of the dollar, the decline in US Treasury bond yields, and the Federal Reserve's intention to reduce the pace of raising interest rates this month by about 50 basis points. The report quoted head of strategic planning at Sabayik Company Adel Al-Fadhli as saying that gold price reached its highest level in four months above \$1800, before retreating to close at \$1799 an ounce after the US jobs report. —KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Vehicles move bumper-to-bumper on a busy morning in Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Decree has helped streamline works of governorates: Al-Asfar

Stats show municipality removed over 471 awnings erected in public squares

KUWAIT: Hawally Governor and acting Capital governor Ali Al-Asfar affirmed that organizing the work of governorates is clear through a decree which organizes following up activities and public facilities in the governorate, as well as coordinating between government agencies and communicating notes to officials, each within the scope of their specialization.

"The governorate follows up the performance of services provided by the authorities and is interested in noting observations, as well as following up citizens' complaints in order to improve the provision of appropriate services for the convenience of citizens," Asfar said. He also revealed a number of statistics and figures by concerned authorities from the beginning of this year until the end of October.

"The municipality removed more than 471 awnings erected in public squares or on state property, removed 40 barriers on paths and roads, monitored 93 violating properties, 116 building violations were monitored, over 107 building citations were issued, and more than 1,483 citations were issued over hygiene and road works," he explained.

"The statistics also showed that 1,397 warnings were issued, 493 pledges were made, the number of warning stickers exceeded 14,412, and the total number of violating vehicles exceeded 2,321, while 59 complaints by neighbors were addressed," he added. As for the statistics for violations issued by the prevention sector at the Kuwait Fire Force, 327 facilities were cited for not meeting safety and prevention requirements, and 81 facilities were admin-

istratively closed.

"For the Hawally health zone, outpatient clinics received 25,172 cases in internal medicine, 3,353 cases for children and 13,057 cases in surgery clinics. Dermatology clinics also received approximately 39,382 cases during the year," Asfar said. The governor expressed his appreciation for all the efforts made, hoping to do more to serve the people of the governorate and facilitate their affairs.



Ali Al-Asfar

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Kuwait's Foreign Minister alongside UAE embassy staff during UAE National Day celebration. —KUNA

UAE envoy hails 'exemplary' ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT: The United Arab Emirates' (UAE)

ambassador to Kuwait Matar Al-Neyadi heaped praise on the Gulf Arab state's relations with Kuwait, describing bilateral ties as "exemplary" across all fronts. The respective leaders of the two Gulf neighbors are mutually eager for even more progress in relations, which will be instrumental in preserving their prosperity and development, the diplomat told an embassy gathering to mark his country's National Day. —KUNA

ICSK Senior students visit Dasman Diabetic Institute

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) was established under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the late Amir of Kuwait, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in 2006 to combat the prevalence of diabetes in Kuwait. It was a visionary project undertaken by the late Amir seeing the prevalence of diabetes and its associated problems in the State of Kuwait. They aim to translate research findings into clinical practices for positive health outcomes. They conduct research in several departments namely: Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Genetics and Bioinformatics, Microbiology and Immunology, Population Health and Bioenergetics.

On the 20th and 22nd of November, the young biologists of grade 12 of ICSK Senior got the golden opportunity to visit this prestigious institute and learn about its working and how it aims at controlling the diabetes epidemic. Upon arriving they were greeted by Dr Veeramani who gave the students an insight about the institution and its working. This was followed by Sriraman Devarajan who familiarized them with the management and gave them the safety briefing. They were also enlightened about the scope for biotechnology and were given advice for their entrance examinations.

The students of ICSK clad in their lab coats were soon exploring the halls of DDI. They were intrigued by



the huge facility and the innumerable labs it housed. They were awestruck by the different labs and the number of samples it held. They saw the various cold storage rooms, freezers, and liquid nitrogen tanks holding different body samples. They also witnessed the process of western blotting and the embryonic kidney cells in a culture. They saw the multiple PCR machines and were explained about its working and practical applications. They then had a short break for refreshments and soon embarked on their next adventure.

They were shown around the clinic and the fitness centre which housed the swimming pool and gym specially made for the diabetic patients. The tour soon came to an end after a short photo session.

This visit was indeed very educational and showed students that biotechnology wasn't limited to their textbooks. It helped them understand their concepts better and gave them a good insight into careers in biotechnology. The students are indebted to management of the Dasman Diabetic Institute and the school for this golden opportunity.



Love behind bars:
Russia imprisoned
poet and fiancée

Displaced Syrians fear Turkish threats spell new exodus



LUMAJANG, Indonesia: Villagers watch hot smoke from the ground following Mount Semeru's volcanic eruption in Lumajang, East Java on December 4, 2022. — AFP

Indonesia’s Mount Semeru volcano erupts

No casualties or injuries reported after eruption

LUMAJANG, Indonesia: Indonesia’s Mount Semeru erupted Sunday spewing hot ash clouds a mile into the sky and sending rivers of lava down its side, sparking the evacuation of nearly 2,000 people exactly one year after its last major eruption killed dozens.

The eruption of the highest mountain on Indonesia’s main island of Java, around 800 kilometres (500 miles) southeast of capital Jakarta, prompted authorities to raise the alert status to the highest level. “Hot avalanches” caused by piles of lava at the tip of the 3,676-metre (12,000 feet) volcano slid down after the eruption, National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) spokesperson Abdul Muhari said in a statement. The increased threat level “means the danger has threatened the people’s settlement and the volcano’s activity has escalated”, Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation Center (PVMBG) spokesperson Hendra Gunawan told broadcaster Kompas TV.

No casualties or injuries were reported immediately after the eruption but Gunawan warned nearby residents not to travel within eight kilometres (five miles) of the crater after the threat level was raised to four.

The BNPB said 1,979 people were taken to 11 shelters, with at least 6 villages affected by the eruption.

Images on local TV showed evacuees, mostly women and children, taking shelter in a school. Videos shared with AFP by local rescue group Irranala Rescue showed a huge black cloud rising from the volcano’s crater, engulfing the sky and blocking the sun in nearby villages. The villages were being battered by monsoon rains by the afternoon and the rainfall was mixing with volcanic ash, according to Kompas TV. Residents were also told to avoid a southeastern area 13 kilometres (8 miles) along a river in the direction where the ash was travelling.

“A lot of people have started to go down,” Thoriqul Haq, the local administration chief for Lumajang, where the volcano is located, told Kompas TV. Most residents in the two most-threatened villages have evacuated themselves, said Patria Dwi Hastiadi, spokesperson of the Lumajang Disaster Mitigation Agency. Japan’s weather agency had earlier warned that a tsunami was possible in the southern islands of Miyako and Yaeyama in Okinawa prefecture, Kyodo news agency reported, but the country’s meteorological agency said no significant tidal changes were observed.

‘It’s getting dark’

The internet in the area around Semeru was cut and phone signals were patchy after the eruption, according to an AFP journalist. The local rescue agency distributed free masks to the public because of the threat of polluted air to vulnerable residents.

As rescuer Gunawan, who has the same name as the PVMBG spokesperson, filmed clouds above him in East Java after the eruption, a video showed the sky quickly turning to black as a colossal plume of ash engulfed any light. “I’ve promised you, we won’t miss it again,” he told residents in a local Javanese dialect, appearing to refer to last year’s eruption before flicking a peace sign to the camera. Another rescuer filmed an ominously dark scene outdoors at midday, which could have been midnight.

“It’s getting dark, bro,” he said to the camera, as a seismograph whistled in the background. Mount Semeru last erupted exactly one year ago, killing at least 51 people and damaging more than 5,000 homes.

The disaster left entire streets filled with mud and ash that swallowed houses and vehicles, with nearly 10,000 people seeking refuge.

A bridge that connects two districts in the area that was being rebuilt after last year’s eruption was heavily damaged again on Sunday, according to a PVMBG media officer. Semeru’s alert status had remained at its second-highest level since its previous major eruption in December 2020, which also forced thousands to flee and left villages covered.

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

*** Sept. 20: first deaths**

Three people are reported killed during protests in Kurdistan province.

Videos posted on social media show women removing their veils and chanting “Woman, life, freedom” or “Death to the dictator”, a slogan directed at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader.

*** Sept. 22: social media muzzled**

Iran blocks access to Instagram and WhatsApp, the two platforms most widely used in Iran. It imposes drastic restrictions on internet access.

The US places the morality police on its sanctions blacklist.

*** Sept. 23: counter-demonstrations**

Thousands take part in pro-hijab counter-demon-

Iran: Almost three months of hijab protests

PARIS: The death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following her arrest and alleged assault by Iran’s notorious morality police almost three months ago sparked the biggest protests in the Islamic republic in years.

Women and girls have led the charge against compulsory headscarves. A general in Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has said more than 300 people, including security force members, lost their lives in the protests.

The Oslo-based Iran Human Rights group gives a toll of at least 448 people “killed by security forces”. Here is a timeline of the events:

- * Sept. 13: Amini’s arrest**
Amini is visiting Tehran with her family when she is detained by the Gasht-e Ershad (Guidance Patrol), the police unit that enforces strict dress rules for women, including the mandatory hijab or headscarf.
She is rushed to hospital later that day. Police claim she “suddenly suffered a heart problem”. CCTV footage from the police station appears to show her collapsing.
- * Sept. 16: death**
After three days in a coma, Amini is declared dead.
Rights activists say she suffered a fatal blow to the head while in custody, a claim echoed by a relative of Amini living in Iraq, but denied by officials.
President Ebrahim Raisi orders an inquiry.
- * Sept. 17: first protests**
Amini is buried in her hometown of Saqez in Kurdistan province of northwest Iran. Police use tear gas after some residents demonstrate.
In the following days, the hashtag #Masha_Amini clocks up more than one million tweets, including many videos of Iranian women cutting their hair to protest her death. Demonstrations break out at several universities in Tehran.



TOULOUSE, France: A protestor waves the Iranian flag during a rally in support of the demonstrations in Iran, in Toulouse, south-western France. Iran has scrapped its morality police after more than two months of protests triggered by the arrest of Mahsa Amini for allegedly violating the country’s strict female dress code, local media said on December 4. — AFP

Police violence soars in Venezuela

CARACAS: For Maria Eugenia Segovia, reports of rising deaths at police hands in Venezuela carry a painfully personal face. Pointing to a bullet hole in a window of her house in a Caracas neighborhood, she blames a policeman for the death of her 11-year-old granddaughter, Yadimar Sierra.

While the policeman said he was firing at a suspicious “shadow,” 54-year-old Segovia said he fired “directly at the girl” as she slept on November 13. A bullet pierced a window grill, shattered the glass, then struck Yadimar in the back of the head.

The case is one of a growing number being blamed on the authorities in crisis-ridden Venezuela. Official numbers are hard to come by, but the Venezuelan Violence Observatory, an non-governmental group, says it has documented more than 700 deaths at police hands just in the first half of the year. Segovia said she furiously confronted the police officer and his companion, shouting, “You shot the girl, you shot my granddaughter!” “They turned and ran away,” she added. Five people were arrested in connection with the shooting, according to police, but a spokesman for the prosecutor’s office said there was “no confirmation that they are police officers.”

Shifting violence

Human rights groups say there were as many as 4,000 extrajudicial executions carried out in 2020 and 2021 during anti-crime operations, which they say amounts to state-sanctioned murder. In a broader climate of impunity, cases like Yadimar’s—blamed on individuals or small groups of police not necessarily operating under orders—can also occur, said Roberto Briceno Leon, director of the Venezuelan Violence Observatory.

Increasingly, he added, the prime source of violence is shifting from criminals to the police, so that in many parts of the country, “the police are the cause of more victims and deaths than the criminals themselves.”

Neighbors and relatives of Yadimar, who was in the sixth grade, say police had been aggressively searching for a young man in the area, and that residents came out to complain. At that point, the officers, who Segovia says were agents of the Directorate of Military Counterintelligence, called for reinforcements and then entered her street with guns blazing.

Other witnesses said the police had been drinking before the incident. Yadimar’s relatives have filed a complaint with the prosecutor’s office, demanding justice and calling for “more control” over the forces of order.

“We cannot be more afraid of them than we are of the street itself,” said Yuleimy Valencia, 34, one of Yadimar’s cousins. The United Nations has expressed concern about the police operations, while the prosecutor’s office has rejected claims of impunity, saying that 358 security officials have been convicted of human rights violations. But the NGO Cofavic estimates that “98 percent of human rights violations are not investigated.”

“Why did you leave us, Yadimar? Why, friend, did you leave? Fly high!” reads a poster pasted on the wall of the girl’s house. Well-wishers have left flowers and white balloons. Yadimar was charismatic and full of joy, her grandmother and cousin said.—AFP

- strations in Tehran and other cities, in response to a call from the authorities. On September 25, Raisi vows “decisive action” to end the anti-hijab protests. A day later, more than 1,200 protesters are arrested.
- * Oct. 3: Khamenei accuses US**
- Khamenei accuses arch-foes the United States and Zionist entity of fomenting the unrest.
- * Oct. 8: death by illness**
- An official medical report concludes Amini’s death was caused by illness, due to “surgery for a brain tumour at the age of eight”, and not police brutality.
- Activists hack a state television live news broadcast, superimposing crosshairs and flames over an image of Khamenei.
- * Oct. 15: prison blaze**
- A fire erupts during clashes at Tehran’s notorious Evin prison, where hundreds of those detained during the demonstrations are being held. The blaze kills eight inmates, according to authorities.
- * Oct. 26: mass rally in Amini’s hometown**
- Crowds pour into Amini’s hometown to pay tribute at her grave to mark the end of the traditional 40-day period of mourning. As protests break out, Iranian security forces open fire on the crowd.
- * Nov. 13: first death sentence**
- A Tehran court hands down the first death sentence over the protests to a demonstrator accused of “corruption on earth”, one of the most serious categories of crimes in Iranian law.
- * Nov. 15: strike**
- Protesters hold strikes and demonstrations to mark three years since a deadly crackdown on unrest sparked by a fuel price hike in 2019 — the last time Iranians took to the streets in large numbers.
- * Dec. 4: morality police scrapped**
- “Morality police have nothing to do with the judiciary and have been abolished,” Attorney General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri is quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency. — AFP

International

German Chancellor Scholz weathers shocks in turbulent first year

Scholz is 'struggling to make his mark at the European level'

FRANKFURT, Germany: A war in his backyard, galloping economic crisis, and unhappy partners at home and abroad – German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has weathered unprecedented shocks in his first year, while struggling to make a mark on the global stage.

The ex-finance minister took office promising continuity with the era of Angela Merkel, who ended her 16 years as chancellor a widely respected figure. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced him to rip up Germany's post-war axioms and chart out new economic, defence and geopolitical directions for the country that prizes-and is valued for-its stability and predictability.

"We never before had a government faced with such a dramatically worsening situation, when it came to foreign and security policy, but also of course energy policy," political scientist Ursula Muench told AFP.

Scholz's coalition of his Social Democrats and partners Greens and liberals FDP had taken office planning ambitious climate policies and budget restraint. But as Moscow dwindled its energy supplies in the wake of the war, Germany has had to halt its planned nuclear exit, restart mothballed coal power stations while burning through a budgetary hole in a scrum for oil and gas to replace Russian supplies.

And in a turning point for a country whose role on the world stage was still affected by memories of World War II, Scholz announced a historic shift on defence, vowing to re-arm Germany with a massive boost in military spending.

"Going by the dramatic events this year, he did pretty well," said Nils Diederich, a political scientist at Berlin's Free University.

Turning point

But Rachel Rizzo, a senior fellow at US think tank the Atlantic Council's Europe Center, warned that losing momentum was a danger, even if the initial response was "impressive". "I think not being able to follow through with defence and security commitments is a concern," she told AFP.

Not only is Germany trying to replenish its own military stocks, it is facing intense pressure from Ukraine to deliver what it has to help in the fightback against Russia. The defence spending is high at a time when the treasury is also being pressed to help cushion a price shock fuelled by the energy crisis.

Huge investments are also required for the export giant to manage an economic transformation of reliance on cheap Russian energy or Chinese components to a diversified approach. And governing in a three-way coalition means resolving each challenge

inevitably involves squabbles that could unravel the fragile partnership. Scholz's government has managed to implement part of its programme, including raising the minimum wage and reforming unemployment benefits. But with myriad crises not going away, the chancellor's popularity ratings have suffered.

A survey by the Insa institute published Sunday in tabloid Bild showed 58 percent of Germans are dissatisfied with Scholz-compared with just 22 percent a year ago-and 64 percent are dissatisfied with his government, up from 36 percent.

'Going it alone'

As well as disagreements at home, there have been tensions with partners abroad. European Union allies were upset that Scholz announced a massive 200-billion-euro (\$207-billion) energy fund without first consulting them, complaining he should have focused on coming up with EU-wide measures.

Tensions have also arisen in the key relationship between Berlin and Paris over issues ranging from the energy fund to German plans for defence procurement. Unlike Merkel, who, in her time, was widely respected as the voice to reckon with in Europe, Scholz has so far failed to step into the role on the international stage.

Merkel's departure "has left a void", said Eric Maurice, from the Brussels office of the Robert Schuman Foundation. Scholz is "struggling to make his mark at the European level... He is still trying to find his bearings, he does not have Merkel's experience."

The view Scholz was seeking to "go it alone" was reinforced when he made the first visit to China by a G7 leader since the start of the pandemic in November, accompanied by a delegation of German business leaders. The chancellor faced accusations he was pursuing the same mercantilist, trade-focused foreign policy of previous German governments, which led to economic ties flourishing with authoritarian Russia, but ultimately left Berlin vulnerable.

As Scholz heads into his second year in the job, many of the open challenges will continue to entangle him. High energy prices will remain a major problem, particularly for electricity-hungry German manufacturers, said Sudha David-Wilp, Berlin office director of US think tank the German Marshall Fund.

"Ensuring German competitiveness because of the increase in energy costs, particularly for industries like chemicals and steel manufacturing, is the big challenge for Scholz," she said. The energy fund "is just a short-term fix. No one knows when energy prices are going to come down to pre-war levels". — AFP



AL-KRAYDIYEH: Internally displaced Syrians sit by a road at a camp near a position held by Turkey-backed Syrian fighters in al-Kraydiyeh area, on the frontline with Kurdish-held areas near Syria's northern city of Manbij, close to the border with Turkey. — AFP

Displaced Syrians fear Turkey threats spell new exodus

SANDAF: Syria's grinding conflict has already uprooted Ahmed Yassin and his family several times, but now they fear a threatened Turkish offensive will force them to flee the muddy camp they call home. The 34-year-old, his wife and two children live in Sandaf in Syria's Aleppo province-just south of the border with Turkey, and under the control of Turkish-backed rebels. "Making a living is hard," the labourer told AFP in the impoverished camp, as sheep grazed on the roadside nearby. "On top of everything we've gone through-the misery, the lack of job opportunities and poverty... we are now threatened with displacement yet again."

On November 20, Turkey began air strikes on Kurdish-held areas of Syria and Iraq in response to a deadly bombing in Istanbul the previous week. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened a new ground incursion into northern Syria to take control of three Kurdish-held areas. One of them, Tal Rifaat, is less than 10 kilometres (six miles) from Sandaf. Yassin recalled fleeing his hometown in neighbouring Idlib province after fighting flared there earlier in the civil war. "We pray for God's help, and for us to return to our towns, our lands, our homes," he said.

'Last straw'

Since 2016, Turkey has carried out successive ground operations to expel Kurdish forces from border areas of northern Syria. Its troops and their Syrian proxies hold swathes of the border, and Erdogan has long sought to establish a "safe zone" 30 kilometres (20 miles) deep the whole length of the frontier.

Turkey said its recent Syria air strikes have targeted the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara sees as an offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey said the groups were behind the Istanbul bombing, an accusation both organisations have denied.

At the Sandaf camp, children, some barefoot, played on the ground between tents. Camp resident Mohammed Abu Ali said there was sporadic shelling between the opposing sides even before Turkey launched its air assault last month.

The 45-year-old, who lives with his five children, one of whom uses a wheelchair, said the fighting left camp residents in "a state of panic and fear". "We hope that either a military operation will allow us to return home, or that they will reach an agreement so we can stay in the camp," said Abu Ali, also originally from Idlib. "All we want is... to live the remaining days of our lives in our homes," he said, standing by a washing line strung from his tent. Human rights groups have warned that civilians on both sides of the front line will bear the brunt of any new flareup.

Renewed conflict in northern Syria would be "the last straw for millions of people grappling with the dire humanitarian conditions", Save the Children and other groups warned this week.

Another surge in hostilities will potentially result "in a new wave of displacement", they said, urging all parties to protect civilians. Any advance by Turkish-backed forces is likely to spark a mass exodus of Kurdish civilians on the other side of the front line, but any new flareup holds fears for civilians in Turkish-held areas too, with heavy exchanges likely across the front line.

Waiting

On the front line in Tal Rifaat, Turkish-backed Syrian fighters peered out from behind sandbags as a thick fog enveloped the area. At positions further east near Manbij-another target of the threatened Turkish ground offensive-a fighter smoked a cigarette by the roadside as others made tea inside a cramped breeze-block bunker.

Turkish-backed fighters were scattered along the front line without any heavy equipment, an AFP correspondent reported. In some areas, there were no fighters at all, while in others, a few rested inside their bases, some scrolling through their phones.

Government ally Russia deployed troop reinforcements to the Kurdish-held Tal Rifaat area this week, while the United States warned Turkey not to disrupt operations against the Islamic State group in Syria in which Kurdish fighters of the YPG have played a central role. —AFP



BERLIN: File photo shows the designated German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (C), co-leader of the Greens and then designated German Minister for Economy and Climate Robert Habeck (L) and the leader of the Free Democratic FDP party and then designated German Finance Minister Christian Lindner (R) leave the Futurium venue after a signing ceremony in Berlin. — AFP

OPEC+ maintains oil output...

Continued from Page 1

news agencies. "We are currently working on mechanisms to prohibit the use of the price cap tool at any level", Novak added, stating that "such interference" could only cause "further market destabilization and scarcity of energy resources".

Moscow had repeatedly denounced the incoming oil price cap, threatening to suspend deliveries to any country that adopted the measure. But Ukraine suggested on Saturday that the cap should have been set even lower. For OPEC+, the big unknown in the oil equation is how heavily sanctions will hit Russian supply. "Uncertainty on the impact on Russian oil production coming from the EU ban... and the G7 price cap and some easing of mobility restrictions in China likely supported the decision for a rollover," UBS analyst

Giovanni Staunovo said. "The upside risks for oil prices from this point on will increase" due to the announced EU and G7 measures in combination with supply and demand expected to remain unchanged, Van Cleef said.

Moscow's threat to suspend deliveries to countries abiding by the price cap will put "some in a very uncomfortable position", said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam, "choosing between losing access to cheap Russian crude or facing G7 sanctions". Amid economic gloom fuelled by soaring inflation and fears of China's weaker energy demand due to its COVID-related restrictions, the two global crude benchmarks remained close to their lowest level of the year, far from their March peaks.

Since the group's last meeting in early October, Brent North Sea oil and its US equivalent WTI have lost more than six percent of their value. Moving forward, OPEC+ might still feel compelled to adopt "a more aggressive stance" by cutting or threatening to cut production, UniCredit analyst Edoardo Campanella said. "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," he added. — Agencies

people more about ethics, the importance of family bonding, and respect for neighbors and non-Muslims," he added. Near the mosque, volunteers managed a table aimed at visiting women with a sign saying: "Ask me about Qatar." Those who stop are also offered Arabic coffee. A Palestinian volunteer, Somaya, said most of the questions concerned "the veil, polygamy and whether women are oppressed in Islam".

Nearby, visitors can watch a five minute virtual reality tour of Islam. The campaign is being pursued across Qatar. In the Pearl district, where many expatriates live and frequent its expensive cafes and restaurants, murals have been painted with quotes from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) urging good morality. Upscale shopping malls carry advertisements promoting Islam. In the Souq Waqif market, where thousands of fans gather every day, free books and pamphlets are left in one alley with a sign saying: "If you're looking for happiness... you will find it in Islam". Near the Souq, the Sheikh Abdulla bin Zaid Islamic Cultural Center is open 12 hours a day for tours.

Some Muslim leaders in Qatar have called for efforts to convert visiting football fans to Islam. Sultan bin Ibrahim Al Hashemi, a professor of sharia law at Qatar University who heads the Voice of Islam radio station, said the World Cup should be used to find new

MoI withdraws driving licenses...

Continued from Page 1

The traffic department plans to issue new decisions at the beginning of next year related to vehicle ownership controls for expatriates, the first of which is to prevent any expatriate from owning more than one vehicle, a decision that was previously discussed by the supreme traffic council, and

Protest-hit Iran abolishes...

Continued from Page 1

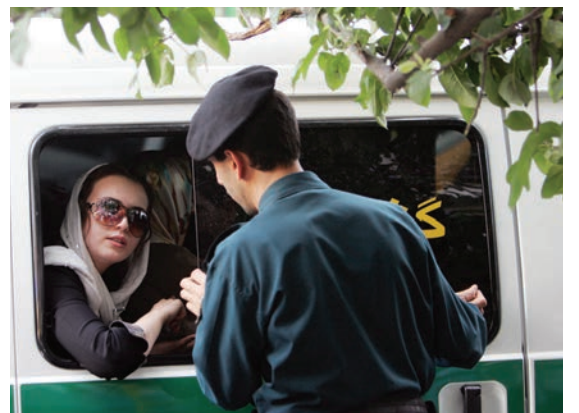
"Morality police have nothing to do with the judiciary and have been abolished," Attorney General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency. His comment came at a religious conference where he responded to a question on "why the morality police were being shut down", the report said.

The move represents a rare concession to the protest movement, and authorities have also acknowledged the demoralizing effect of an economic crisis spurred by US sanctions. "The best way to confront the riots is to... pay attention to people's real demands," said the parliament praesidium council spokesman Seyyed Nezamoddin Mousavi, referencing "livelihoods and the economy".

The news was treated with skepticism by some Iranians on social media, including those who expressed fears its role would be taken over by another unit, as well as others pointing out that intense social pressure remained at home. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that overthrew Iran's US-backed monarchy, authorities have monitored adherence to the strict dress code

its approval was postponed due to technical circumstances.

"The decision will be applied retroactively, as every expatriate who has more than one vehicle will have their registration canceled. This procedure is a correction of a decision that was found to have many loopholes, which made expatriates own a large number of cars with the aim of illegal trading, which created chaos and circumvention of the law when transferring ownership or illegal car deals," sources explained. These decisions are in line with the government's attempts to rebalance the demographic structure and reduce traffic in the streets of Kuwait.



TEHRAN: In this file photo taken on July 23, 2007, an Iranian policeman speaks with a woman sitting in a police car after she was arrested because of her "inappropriate" clothes. - AFP

for women and men.

But under headline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the morality police – known formally as the Gasht-e Ershad or "Guidance Patrol" – was established to "spread the culture of modesty and hijab". The units were set up by Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, which is today headed by President Ebrahim Raisi. They began their patrols in 2006 to enforce the dress code which also requires women to wear long clothes and forbids shorts, ripped jeans and other clothes deemed immodest. — AFP

International

65 % of fighters have ‘disengaged’ from Tigray frontlines: Commander

Conflict force millions from their homes, drives hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine

NAIROBI, Kenya: The commander-in-chief of the Tigray rebel forces has said that 65 percent of his forces have “disengaged”, a month after a ceasefire agreement over Ethiopia’s war-torn northern region. “We have started disengagement and relocation of our forces from battlelines... out of our forces, 65 percent of them have passed through this process, disengaging from battlelines and moved to designated places,” General Tadesse Worede, chief of staff of Tigray’s fighters, told reporters on Saturday.

Tigray’s authorities had been resisting central rule for months when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accused their leadership of attacking federal army camps and sent troops into the region in 2020.

The conflict between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and pro-Abiy forces—which include regional militias and the Eritrean army—has caused an untold number of deaths, forced more than two million people from their homes and driven hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine. The two parties signed a peace deal in South Africa in November that agreed to a cessation of hostilities and unfettered aid into Tigray, as well as the disarming of TPLF fighters and re-establishment of federal authority over Tigray.

But Tadesse said there were still “forces in the areas that don’t want peace”, apparently referring to Eritrean soldiers and other regional Ethiopian militia. “The problems they are creating and the abuses they’re committing on the population isn’t secret, so we’ve paused to some extent (our disengagement) in some places (to prevent) them from entering into new areas and continuing their atrocities on the population.”

His troops would not “100 percent” disengage until the threat was reduced, he added. The ceasefire makes no

mention of the presence on Ethiopian soil or any possible withdrawal of Eritrean troops, who have backed Abiy’s forces and been accused of atrocities.

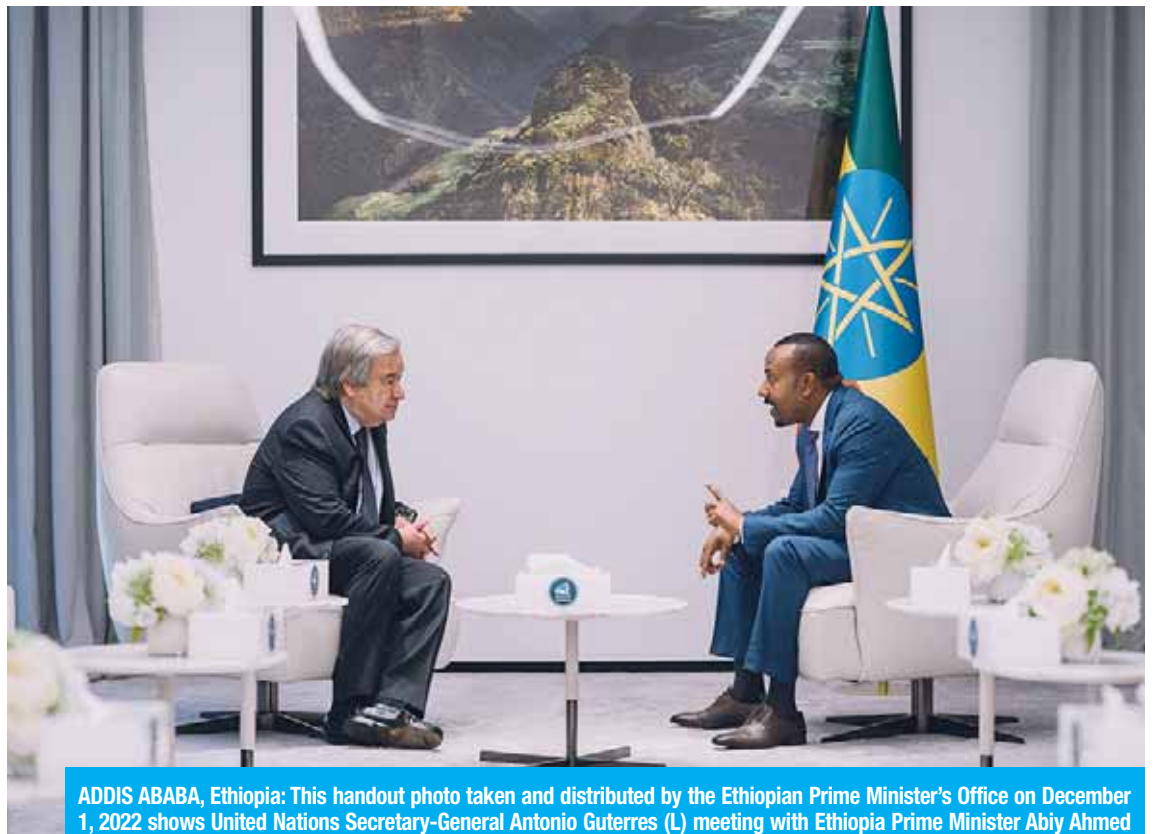
Aid access

Rebel fighters had “started collecting our heavy weaponry and putting it in one area”, he said, adding there were currently no international monitors or observers present on the ground. “But we’re implementing the agreement as we should, and the (monitors) can observe at whichever stage they arrive,” he added.

The UN’s health agency said Friday that it still cannot get unfettered access to bring humanitarian aid into the war-torn region, and that just a trickle of aid had managed to get into Tigray so far. World Health Organization officials also raised concerns for areas that are still under the control of troops from neighbouring Eritrea.

“That peace process has not yet resulted in the kinds of full access, unfettered access and the massive scale-up of medical and health assistance that the people of Tigray need,” WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told a press conference. “We’ve been a long time waiting to get access to these desperate people.” Restoring aid deliveries to Tigray was a key part of the agreement to end the two-year war that has killed untold numbers of people and unleashed a humanitarian crisis.

The region was isolated from the world for over a year, and faced severe shortages of medicines and limited access to electricity, banking and communications. The UN’s World Food Programme said this week that an estimated 13.6 million people across Tigray and its neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar were dependent on humanitarian aid as a result of the war. —AFP



ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia: This handout photo taken and distributed by the Ethiopian Prime Minister’s Office on December 1, 2022 shows United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (L) meeting with Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed at Prime Minister’s office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. —AFP

Love behind bars: Russia imprisoned poet and fiancée

MOSCOW: In a Moscow prison where he is held for reciting an anti-war poem in public, Artyom Kamardin scribbled some hearts in a letter to his girlfriend Alexandra Popova. Showing AFP a scan of the letter on her computer, Popova bursts into laughter, pointing at what looks like a potato with legs. “This is a cat,” her prisoner boyfriend had written next to his drawing. Popova, 28, giggles looking at it. She even got the clumsy drawing tattooed on her arm to “keep a bit of Artyom forever” on her body, she said. Unless, she jokes, someone was to “cut her skin off.”

Her boyfriend Kamardin, 32, says police officers raped him when they arrested him for reading out the poem against President Vladimir Putin’s military attack on Ukraine. Her tattoo and dark humour helps Popova shield herself from the horror unleashed on the couple.

Many families have been torn apart and separated by Putin’s decision to send troops to Ukraine on February 24. Thousands are grieving loved ones, others are painfully separated by military mobilisation or forced exile. As for Kamardin and Popova, it’s the repressive machine that has turned their lives into hell.

Sexual assault and forced apologies

On September 26, masked officers barged into the young couple’s flat. They grabbed the poet and took him to

a separate room. There, as he told his lawyer, he was beaten and raped with a barbell. Popova, meanwhile, said officers had threatened her with “gang rape”, hit her and sprayed superglue on her cheeks and mouth.

Immediately after the detention, Kamardin was forced to film an apology video—a common punishment in authoritarian regimes, but still rare in Moscow. Popova says her boyfriend has been receiving threats of sexual assault in prison. The couple has pressed charges and in November Russia’s Investigative Committee said it was checking possible “abuse of power”, according to a document seen by AFP. Popova remains traumatised by the ordeal.

“I keep thinking that someone is going to kick the door down when I’m at home, that I am being followed or tapped,” she says. “I know it’s paranoia, that it’s not real, but I have lost any sense of security.”

On the eve of his arrest, Kamardin went to the statue of poet Vladimir Mayakovsky in central Moscow, where dissidents have been gathering since the Soviet era. There, he recited his poem entitled “Kill me, militia man!”—an insult to pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

During his performance, Kamardin also shouted offensive slogans against the imperial “New Russia” project aiming to annex the south of Ukraine. “His poetry is quite brutal, but he is a very sweet guy,” Popova says.

She has learned the legal article with which Kamardin was charged with by heart, reciting it like a poem: “article 282, part 2, point A.” It corresponds to “inciting hatred with violence of the threat of its use” and carries a maximum sentence of six years.

Prison wedding

The two met at a protest in 2019. They were initially friends but “love is unescapable,” she smiled. Back then, she



MOSCOW, Russia: Alexandra Popova, 28, shows a photograph of her jailed friend Artyom Kamardin, 32, during an interview with AFP journalists in Moscow. —AFP

worked for the opposition party Yabloko. He was an engineer with a passion for poetry. They both lived within the Moscow liberal bubble, where politicised artists, journalists and activists mingled.

“It’s a way of life, not simply a hobby,” Popova said. But their bubble burst when the Ukraine offensive was launched and repression intensified. Many fled, and thousands of fines and hundreds of prison sentences were handed out to those who denounced the military operation.

Kamardin and Popova were detained at an anti-war protest in spring. He got fined and she spent 25 days in detention. Both now want to get married in prison. This would make it easier for Popova to visit Kamardin, who she has not seen since his arrest. She was hoping to see him on November 24 at pre-trial detention hearing, where AFP saw her again. —AFP

Ex-hostages of DR Congo reunited with families

BENI, DR Congo: Fifty-seven former hostages of a rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, some young women used as sex slaves, were reunited with their families Saturday, AFP correspondents saw.

They were freed last weekend after a large-scale Congolese-Ugandan military operation allowed them to escape the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), one of dozens of armed groups in the volatile region. The Ugandan and Congolese armies have led an offensive against the ADF in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri for more than a year.

The former hostages, mostly women, were reunited with their families during a ceremony in Beni territory in North Kivu. “Kavira”—not her real name—just 15, said the ADF kidnapped 25 people in her village of Kikingi, around 70 kilometres (43 miles) from Beni, in August last year.

“Some were killed, others are still there,” she told AFP. “I was raped every day by a man they chose for me as a husband. It was that or death.” Euphrasie, 15, whose real identity is also being protected, was kidnapped in a hospital in nearby Lume. The rebels tied her up and carried her off.

“After three weeks, they gave me the commander as a husband, a Tanzanian called Tsalamana,” she said as she saw her family again. A grateful and emotional Jeff Manyama, whose 22-year-old daughter was also seized in the hospital raid, told AFP he was “living in despair, the mother killed, the child taken away”.

Another father, Fredy Kuko, also expressed his thank-



BENI, DR Congo: Soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) are seen on a patrol vehicle in Beni on December 3, 2022. Fifty-seven ex-hostages of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels, mostly women, some of whom, very young, were returned to their families. —AFP

fulness after his daughter was seized in a field in June 2020 aged 12. “We had no hope of seeing her again,” he said. The ADF, presented by the Islamic State group as its Central African affiliate, have been accused of massacring civilians in eastern Congo and carrying out attacks in

neighbouring Uganda.

Mineral-rich eastern DR Congo has been the scene of fighting between government troops, a host of militia groups and even soldiers from neighbouring countries for three decades. —AFP

Australia charges extradited Islamic State suspect

MELBOURNE, Australia: Australian police charged a high-profile Islamic State suspect with six terrorism-related offences Sunday, two days after he was extradited from Turkey, officials said. Neil Christopher Prakash, 31, was accused of offences including engaging in hostile activity overseas, supporting a terrorist organisation, and advocating terrorism, police said.

before the courts, said Australian Federal Police Assistant Commissioner Sandra Booth.

Authorities estimate about 230 Australians have travelled to Iraq and Syria to take up arms since 2012 — Prakash being one of the most prominent examples. He featured in IS recruiting videos in which he urged Australians to “wake up” and join the group.

Prakash was described by former conservative prime minister Malcolm Turnbull as one of the “key financiers or organisers” for IS in the Middle East. Former Australian attorney-general George Brandis in 2016 said Prakash had been killed in Iraq following a targeted US air strike. It was later determined that he was wounded but survived the blast. —AFP

Burkina Faso suspends French broadcaster RFI

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso on Saturday ordered the immediate suspension of Radio France Internationale (RFI) broadcasts, accusing it of putting out a “message of intimidation” attributed to a “terrorist chief”.

It is the second West African country under military rule, after Mali, to take the French broadcaster off the airwaves this year. RFI had contributed to “a desperate manoeuvre of terrorist groups” to dissuade thousands of Burkinabe citizens mobilised for the defence of the country, said Burkinabe government spokesman Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo.

At the beginning of the week, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Support Group for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) threatened in a video to attack villages defended by the pro-government VDP militia in Burkina Faso.

The VDP are civilian volunteers given two weeks’ military training to work alongside the army carrying out surveillance, information-gathering or escort duties. The government had already, on November 3, protested the contents of the French broadcaster’s reports, said the government statement.

“Considering everything that has happened before, the government has decided on the immediate suspension, until further notice, of the broadcasting of Radio France Internationale’s programmes.”

The government also accused RFI of having relayed “misleading information” suggesting the leader of the Burkinabe junta, Captain Ibrahim Traore, had said there had been an attempted coup against him.

‘Unfounded accusations’

RFI’s management, in a statement late Saturday, said it “deeply deplores this decision and protests against the totally unfounded accusations calling into question the professionalism of its stations”. The decision to cut off RFI’s broadcasting service “was taken without prior notice and without implementing the procedures... drawn up by Burkina Faso’s Higher Council for Communication,” it added.

The France Medias Monde group, to which RFI belongs, “will explore all avenues to restore RFI’s broadcasting, and reiterates its unwavering commitment to the freedom to inform and the professional work of its journalists,” the statement added.

According to RFI, the radio station is heard every week in Burkina Faso by more than 40 percent of the population and “more than 70 percent of opinion leaders”. An AFP journalist in Ouagadougou confirmed that the French radio station could no longer be heard by late afternoon.

The Burkinabe government nevertheless said it wanted to “reaffirm to national and international opinion its attachment to freedom of the press and opinion” and “the public’s right to information”, while exhorting media to “respect the rules and principles laid down in this area in our country”.

Burkina Faso has experienced two military coups this year, driven by army officers angered at the failure to tackle the threat from jihadist groups. It becomes the second west African nation to ban RFI this year after Mali, another country under the rule of a military junta and fighting jihadist forces.

In March, the ruling junta in Mali announced the suspension of the broadcasting authorisation granted to RFI and France 24, after they published accounts implicating Mali’s army in abuses against civilians. —AFP

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2022

Business



LAAYOUNE, Undefined: This file photo shows untreated phosphate being dropped off on a mountain at the end of a conveyor belt at the Marca factory of the National Moroccan phosphates company (OCP/public), near Laayoune, the main city of Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara. —AFP



LAAYOUNE: This file photo shows facilities of the factory of the National Moroccan phosphates company (OCP/public) in Marca. — AFP

Morocco reaps cash, clout from fertilizer supply shock

Global fertilizer supply crisis deepened by Russia's Ukraine invasion

RABAT: A global fertilizer supply shock deepened by Russia's Ukraine invasion has brought boom times for the North African phosphate superpower Morocco and earned the kingdom new diplomatic capital.

Rabat is using the leverage especially in the decades-old fight over the disputed desert territory of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony also claimed by Algeria-backed rebels, analysts say.

Morocco is set to chalk up record revenues for a second year running as farmers worldwide scramble for phosphate, made scarce by sanctions against top world producer Russia and a Chinese ban on exports. Phosphate is a key ingredient of artificial fertilizers, which are vital for industrial agriculture and global grain supplies despite the long-term damage they inflict on soil and groundwater.

"It's a strategic mineral for the future because it's crucial for global food security," said Abderrahim Handouf, an agricultural policy expert. "As populations grow, fertilizers are the most effective way to increase farm productivity." According to Morocco's state-owned phosphates firm OCP, the kingdom controls around 31 percent of the international trade in the substance.

The OCP, which holds a national monopoly in the

trade, is on track to record more than 131 billion dirhams (\$12.4 billion) in revenue this year, up 56 percent on 2021 — already a bumper year.

'Geopolitical tensions'

Even before the start of the year, prices had been edging higher as the world emerged from the COVID pandemic and market leaders like China imposed export restrictions, said sector expert Mounir Halim. There was also "strong demand from India, one of the world's biggest importers, which had exhausted its stocks," Halim told AFP. Then as Western powers imposed sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine, prices of fertilizer shot up. That made Morocco a vital alternative supplier. The kingdom's exports of phosphates and their derivatives jumped by two thirds year-on-year in the first nine months of 2022, according to the latest official figures.

Morocco has around 70 percent of the world's phosphate reserves, and has been mining four sites since 1921, including in the disputed Western Sahara. Morocco's OCP has ramped up its production capacity by a factor of four since 2008, hitting 12 million tons last year, on target to reach 15 million by the end of 2023. That makes it a major player in a global mar-

ket fearful of further supply shocks. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization warned in a report this year that "fertilizer supplies remain restricted, stocks are depleted and geopolitical tensions could spark additional supply restrictions at short notice."

Phosphate diplomacy

The result is that Morocco is enjoying not only an influx of cash, but also growing diplomatic muscle, particularly on Western Sahara. The kingdom sees the vast stretch of desert as an integral part of its territory, but the Polisario movement backed by Morocco's arch-rival Algeria seeks independence there. Rabat has placed the question at the heart of its diplomacy.

King Mohammed VI in August demanded that Morocco's allies "clarify" their stances on the issue, calling it "the prism through which Morocco views its international environment".

According to L'Economiste, a Moroccan French-language newspaper, OCP has become "the economic arm of Moroccan diplomacy". In September, Rabat recalled a shipment of 50,000 tons of fertilizer destined for Peru after Lima restored diplomatic relations with the Polisario's self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

Sticks and carrots

But as well as sticks, OCP offers carrots. The firm has been expanding its presence across Africa, with branches in 16 countries, a fertilizer factory in Nigeria and a deal signed in September to open another one in Ethiopia. It has also put aside four million tons of fertilizer "to support food security in Africa" next year, it said.

This year Morocco exported half a billion tons of fertilizer to various African countries, either for free, as aid or at preferential prices. Morocco is even looking across the Atlantic for new markets.

In September it signed a deal with Guatemala focusing on "fertilizers and farming", according to the two countries' foreign ministers. In the same statement, Guatemala gave its backing to Morocco's autonomy plan for the Western Sahara. But while OCP is a potential source of international leverage on the issue, Morocco does not demand public support for its position with every contract signed.

"Morocco is using its economic arms in a pragmatic way, not in a transactional way," said international relations expert Tajeddine El Hussein. But, he added, economic ties can have "a political impact". — AFP



BRUSSELS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday the bloc must act to address "distortions" created by Washington's \$430-billion plan to spur climate-friendly technologies in the United States.

EU chief: Bloc must act over US climate plan 'distortions'

BRUSSELS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday the bloc must act to address "distortions" created by Washington's \$430-billion plan to spur climate-friendly technologies in the United States. 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 bloc must "take action to rebalance the playing field where the IRA or other measures create distortions", von der Leyen said in a speech at the College of Europe in the Belgian city of Bruges. 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. Von der Leyen said the EU had to work with the US "to address some of the most concerning aspects of the law".

But she said that Brussels must also "adjust" its own rules to facilitate public investment in the environmental transition and "re-assess the need for further European funding of the transition". French President Emmanuel Macron seized an opportunity on a state visit to Washington for talks with US President Joe Biden last week to air deep grievances over US-EU trade.

The White House touts the IRA as a groundbreaking effort to reignite US manufacturing and promote renewable technologies. Commenting on the issue Sunday, French minister delegate for industry, Roland Lescure noted in a broadcast interview that "competition must be strong and fair—we must coordinate to ensure we are on a level playing field. Lescure added that US subsidies were distributed "a little more swiftly and effectively than ours." —AFP

Concerns mount about Germany's F-35 jet plan

BERLIN: Germany's defense ministry has raised serious concerns about the planned purchase of US-made F-35 fighter jets, part of the country's military modernization drive, according to documents seen by AFP.

Berlin announced in March it would buy 35 of the warplanes made by Lockheed Martin to replace its ageing Tornado fleet, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But the defense ministry has raised concerns about "delays and additional costs" in the nearly 10 billion euro (\$10.5 billion) purchase, according to a classified letter to parliament's budget committee. Risk factors range from upgrading work needed at air fields that will host the F-35s, to security requirements, and potential problems with approval for flight operations in Germany, it said.

A defense ministry spokesman said there would "close cooperation" and "clarification" of issues with parliament. There will be an emergency meeting Monday at the defense ministry, which will be attended by budget committee members from the three parties

in Germany's ruling coalition, parliamentary sources told AFP. The committee is supposed to release the first tranche of funds for the project on December 14. The document seen by AFP was prepared by the finance ministry for the committee, and was based on assessments from the defense ministry.

According to the document, it is doubtful whether the necessary upgrades to Buechel air base, which will host the jets, can be completed by 2026, when delivery is set to begin. The current timeframe is "highly ambitious", it said. In addition, the security requirements from the US side are complex, which could lead to further delays and cost increases, it said. There is also a danger that approvals for flight operations for the F-35s in Germany cannot be secured on time as necessary documents are not available, it said. This would mean that flights could only be operated with restrictions, said the document. It pointed to other factors that could lead to cost increases, including inflation, fluctuations in the exchange rate between the dollar and the euro, and rising production costs. The cost of the jets is to come from a planned 100 billion euro investment in the armed forces, unveiled following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a bid to overhaul Germany's underfunded military. Chancellor Olaf Scholz said last week that he wants the contract for the F-35s, considered the world's most modern combat aircraft, finalized by the end of this year. — AFP



Luberef IPO: Saudi Aramco's unit may raise \$1.32bn

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco Base Oil Company (Luberef), the refining unit of oil major Saudi Aramco, may raise as much as 4.95 billion riyals (\$1.32 billion) from its initial public offering, as the world's biggest crude producer seeks to list some of its subsidiaries. Luberef will sell more than 50 million shares, or about 29.7 per cent of the company's issued share capital, and set the offering share price between 91 and 99 riyals per share, it said in a statement on Sunday.

The final offer price will be determined through a book-building process and is expected to be announced on December 11, it said. The subscription period for individual investors will begin after the determination of the final price and the offering period will be for five days, starting on December 14 until December 18. A maximum of 12.5 million shares, or 25 per cent of the total share offering, will be allocated to individual investors. Luberef is selling existing shares owned by private equity company Jadwa Investment. It will list on the main market of Saudi Arabia's Tadawul stock exchange.

Saudi Aramco owns 70 per cent of Luberef and Jadwa owns the remaining 30 per cent, which it acquired in 2007 from Exxon Mobil. Aramco will not sell any of its shares in the offering and will continue to own 70 per cent of Luberef's share capital after the offering. No date has been set yet for shares to begin trading on the Tadawul exchange.

Luberef's IPO plans come amid a bumper year for company listings in the Gulf and Mena, despite declines in global markets, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE making up the majority of new listings amid high oil prices. Middle East IPOs have raised more than \$19 billion this year, the highest share for the Gulf region after 2019, when Saudi Aramco went public in a \$29 billion offering, the world's largest.

Last month, Americana, the largest quick-service restaurant operator in the Mena region, raised \$1.8 billion from its IPO, paving the way for its listing on Saudi Arabia's Tadawul and the UAE's Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, the Arab world's two largest stock markets. Americana is Saudi Arabia's largest IPO this year and the first company to be dually listed in the kingdom and the UAE. — Agencies

Business

As chatbot sophistication grows, AI debate intensifies

Level of sophistication both fascinates and worries observers

SAN FRANCISCO: California start-up OpenAI has released a chatbot capable of answering a variety of questions, but its impressive performance has reopened the debate on the risks linked to artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The conversations with ChatGPT, posted on Twitter by fascinated users, show a kind of omniscient machine, capable of explaining scientific concepts and writing scenes for a play, university dissertations or even functional lines of computer code.

"Its answer to the question 'what to do if someone has a heart attack' was incredibly clear and relevant," Claude de Loupy, head of Syllabs, a French company specialized in automatic text generation, told AFP. "When you start asking very specific questions, ChatGPT's response can be off the mark," but its overall performance remains "really impressive," with a "high linguistic level," he said. OpenAI, cofounded in 2015 in San Francisco by billionaire tech mogul Elon Musk, who left the business in 2018, received \$1 billion from Microsoft in 2019.

The start-up is best known for its automated creation software: GPT-3 for text generation and DALL-E for image generation. ChatGPT is able to ask its interlocutor for details, and has fewer strange responses than GPT-3, which, in spite of its prowess, sometimes spits out absurd results, said De Loupy.

Cicero

"A few years ago chatbots had the vocabulary of a dictionary and the memory of a goldfish," said Sean McGregor, a researcher who runs a database of AI-related incidents.

"Chatbots are getting much better at the 'history problem' where they act in a manner consistent with the history of queries and responses. The chatbots have graduated from goldfish status." Like other programs relying on deep learning, mimicking neural activity, ChatGPT has one major weakness: "it does not have access to meaning," says De Loupy. The software cannot justify its choices, such as explain why its picked the words that make up its responses. AI technologies able to communicate are, nevertheless, increasingly able to give an impression of thought.

Researchers at Facebook-parent Meta recently developed a computer program dubbed Cicero, after the Roman statesman. The software has proven proficient at the board game Diplomacy, which requires negotiation skills. "If it doesn't talk like a real person—showing empathy, building relationships, and speaking

knowledgeably about the game—it won't find other players willing to work with it," Meta said in research findings.

In October, Character.ai, a start-up founded by former Google engineers, put an experimental chatbot online that can adopt any personality. Users create characters based on a brief description and can then "chat" with a fake Sherlock Holmes, Socrates or Donald Trump.



OpenAI has released a chatbot capable of answering a variety of questions, but its impressive performance has reopened the debate on the risks linked to AI technologies. — AFP

'Just a machine'

This level of sophistication both fascinates and worries some observers, who voice concern these technologies could be misused to trick people, by spreading false information or by creating increasingly credible scams. What does ChatGPT think of these hazards?

"There are potential dangers in building highly sophisticated chatbots, particularly if they are designed to be indistinguishable from humans in their language and behavior," the chatbot told AFP.

Some businesses are putting safeguards in place to avoid abuse of their technologies.

On its welcome page, OpenAI lays out disclaimers, saying the chatbot "may occasionally generate incorrect information" or "produce harmful instructions or biased content."—AFP

Russia denounces oil price cap agreed by EU, G7

MOSCOW: Russia denounced a \$60 price cap on its oil agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia, even as Ukraine suggested it was not tough enough and might have to be revisited. "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 \$60 oil price cap will come into effect on Monday or soon after, alongside an EU embargo on maritime deliveries of Russian crude oil. The embargo will prevent seaborne shipments of Russian crude to the European Union, which account for two thirds of the bloc's oil imports from Russia, potentially depriving Russia's war chest of billions of euros.

But while Kyiv welcomed the price cap earlier Saturday, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his evening address that the level set was not "serious" as it would not do enough damage to the Russian economy. "Russia has already caused huge losses to all countries of the world by deliberately destabilizing the energy market," he argued in his nightly address, describing the decision on the price cap as "a weak position".

It is "only a matter of time when stronger tools will have to be used", Zelensky added.

The G7 nations—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States—along with Australia have already said they are prepared to adjust the price ceiling if necessary. The cap stops countries paying more than \$60 a barrel for Russian oil deliveries by tanker vessel and is designed to make it harder for Russia to bypass EU sanctions by selling beyond the European Union at market prices.

Limit funds for the 'war machine'

Zelensky, in his speech, appeared to be backing the position that Poland had tried to hold out for before agreeing to the \$60 ceiling late Friday. Warsaw and the Baltic states had argued for a \$30 cap. The market price of a barrel of Russian Urals crude is currently

around \$65 dollars, just slightly higher than the \$60 cap agreed, suggesting the measure may have only a limited impact in the short term.

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 Russian President Vladimir Putin's ability to fund the Kremlin's "war machine".

Russia has threatened to stop deliveries to countries adopting the measure. Russia has earned 67 billion euros (\$71 billion) from the sale of oil to the European Union since the start of the war in February. Its annual military budget amounts to around 60 billion, said 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 hit, according to the bloc.

'Endure' power cuts

On the ground, Russian forces carried out strikes in the east of Ukraine on Saturday, hitting a "civilian infrastructure facility" in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, the Ukrainian army said. 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. In eastern Ukraine, where the fighting is still raging, the governor of Lugansk region, Sergei Gaidai, said the conflict was heavy, "because the Russians had time to prepare". Ukraine's forces were nevertheless slowly moving forward, he added.

Ukraine's presidency said the situation was also difficult in Bakhmut, in the neighboring Donetsk region, which Russian forces have been trying to capture since summer.—AFP

AL SAFAT

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AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 1 DECEMBER 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	39,422	8,461.37	-0.3%	-0.4%	10.8%	480,811,317	196,351,375	25,818	25.5	2.6	79.3%
Main Market	10,292	5,696.17	-0.1%	0.3%	-3.2%	468,082,306	55,758,003	18,853	43.7	1.4	20.7%
All Share	49,714	7,566.53	-0.3%	-0.2%	7.4%	948,893,623	252,109,378	44,671	29.3	2.4	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	31,284	1,857.57	-0.4%	-0.4%	14.5%	179,244,750	117,801,712	9,996	27.0	2.6	62.93%
BASIC MATERIALS	777	887.35	0.3%	0.6%	-13.4%	2,165,526	1,749,438	529	5.5	-	1.56%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	985	1,469.82	-0.9%	-0.6%	10.0%	34,306,270	6,274,540	2,598	28.5	11.1	1.98%
CONSUMER STAPLES	148	484.48	1.7%	-0.8%	-33.7%	4,773,945	1,814,465	294	0.0	1.2	0.30%
ENERGY	231	1,109.98	0.7%	1.7%	-22.3%	3,657,242	238,233	246	9.6	1.1	0.47%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,718	1,337.68	-0.4%	0.4%	-6.0%	436,759,550	49,197,159	14,667	67.8	1.9	9.49%
HEALTH CARE	225	454.28	0.0%	0.0%	-43.0%	2,000	818	2	14.2	5.9	0.45%
INDUSTRIALS	3,995	1,128.72	0.8%	-0.7%	-1.1%	145,155,824	38,615,555	7,477	39.1	1.5	8.04%
INSURANCE	647	1,563.33	0.5%	1.3%	2.0%	2,951,179	382,771	359	9.6	1.0	1.30%
REAL ESTATE	2,730	1,274.88	-0.1%	-0.5%	-3.9%	108,468,254	19,324,885	4,530	19.1	1.3	5.49%
TECHNOLOGY	11	763.87	12.9%	-0.9%	11.7%	698,130	69,950	89	0.0	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,747	1,221.52	-0.2%	0.6%	12.1%	26,758,894	15,865,369	3,587	13.7	2.0	7.54%
UTILITIES	217	518.42	1.0%	0.0%	-13.6%	3,952,059	774,483	297	16.2	1.8	0.44%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
THURAYA	225	32.35%	20,030	4,506,170	4
ALAFCO	205.0	19.88%	113,227,994	21,858,362.211	2,932
ASC	105	12.90%	698,130	69,949,862	89
FTI	46	9.38%	15,124	675,479	19
UNICAP	67	8.06%	7,515,485	455,857,439	323

Top Losers

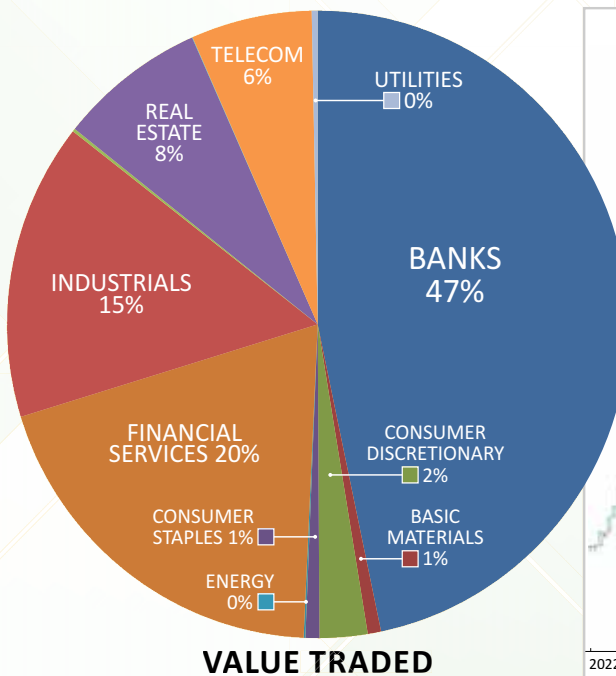
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
EQUIPMENT	47	-9.62%	68,000	3,218	5
WETHAQ	25	-9.12%	2,303,173	58,857	207
MADAR	100	-8.26%	55,681	5,573	12
MRC	75.1	-7.28%	132,554	10,120	37
TAAMEER	22.1	-6.75%	562,482	12,806	45

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALAFCO	205	19.88%	113,227,994	21,858,362	2,932
IFA	105	7.14%	73,947,532	7,519,507	1,465
GFH	82	-1.91%	72,257,270	5,927,587	1,965
KFH	861	-0.35%	68,009,281	58,763,674	3,820
KPROJ	123	-0.81%	55,998,752	6,917,605	1,584

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	861	-0.35%	68,009,281	58,763,674	3,820
NBK	1,121	0.09%	29,576,488	33,092,607	2,280
ALAFCO	205	19.88%	113,227,994	21,858,362	2,932
ZAIN	587	-1.01%	24,218,596	14,255,118	2,612
AGLTY	777	0.26%	13,897,862	10,855,730	2,102



Market Summary:

- Premier Market's weekly volume and value increased by 37% and 39%, and Main Market's by 6% and 17%, respectively.

- Premier Index moves above solid support to overcome a critical resistance level, while Main Index continues showing strength.

- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7566, with support levels at 7556, 7503, and 7461, and resistance at 7677. The Premier index closed at 8461, with support levels at 8427, 8335, and 8273, while resistance at 8527. The Main index closed at 5696, with support levels at 5696, 5675, 5641, and 5601, while resistance was at 5723.

Business

CBK launches online portal to receive complaints from local bank customers

Central Bank convenes a regulatory sandbox workshop

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to protect individual customers' rights and enhance the services provided to them, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the launch of an online portal within its Customer Protection Unit for customers to file their complaints and appeals against local banks instead of in person at CBK headquarters.

In a statement, CBK announced that the new portal is designed for banks' individual customers only to file a complaint or appeal to the Central Bank. This is done by filling out the designated form available on the Central Bank's website if the individual's bank had refused to provide one, or had not responded in writing to a customer's complaint within 15 business days of receiving the complaint. On the other hand, an appeal e-form is used if the customer is not satisfied with the bank's response, provided that the customer uploads the relevant documents to verify whether the bank has followed the proper procedures.

The CBK added that the complaint process starts with filing a complaint against a bank on the designated form available in all banks' branches or websites. Once a complaint is received, the bank must provide the customer with a dated copy of the complaint and an acknowledgment of receipt, and must provide a written response to the complaint within 15 business days of its submission. If the complaint is received via registered mail or electronic mail, the bank must inform the customer in writing through the same channel, or a text mes-

sage to the customer's phone number registered with the bank.

The CBK statement indicated that the launch of the Customer Protection Unit's online portal for receiving complaints and appeals from individual customers against banks aims to improve the process for handling complaints and appeals from banks' customers.

The statement also confirmed that all CBK instructions and guidelines relating to filing complaints or appeals are published on its website and social media accounts. For any inquiry, contact the CBK Customer Protection Unit through 1864444.

Within the course of the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) continuous initiatives to encourage and develop FinTech in the State of Kuwait and to adopt emerging FinTech startups, the CBK held a workshop on the Regulatory Sandbox for digital transformation and innovation specialists in local banks. The Sandbox is a safe environment for testing FinTech without exposing the financial and banking system to risks. This is part of the CBK's commitment to provide a supportive and stimulating environment for the development of such technologies due to their significance in the development of financial services. The CBK indicated that such workshops aim to encourage experience exchange and knowledge transfer to local banks. In addition, having these workshops emphasizes the essential role of local banks in developing FinTech, as banks collaborate with FinTech to



bring their innovations to the local market, through partnerships, providing electronic payment services, or joining in testing the Regulatory Sandbox applicants.

The CBK concluded by reiterating its commitment to supporting FinTech and enabling innovation to develop the Kuwaiti banking and financial sector, and serve the national economy.

NBK money markets report

Dollar drops on expectations of slower rate rises

KUWAIT: Key inflation gauges released in the US, euro area, and Australia all weakened last week, providing the latest signs that global inflation may have peaked. Supply chains complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine have now eased, with food and fuel costs retreating as well. Also effecting global economies although on a lagged basis are the historic hikes by central banks globally in response to inflation lasting stronger and longer than anticipated.

Bloomberg Economics estimates worldwide inflation topped out at 9.8 percent y/y during Q3, and will ease down to 9.5 percent in the final quarter until finally reaching 5.3 percent at the end of 2023. Nevertheless, crucial risks remain with supply chains not fully healed, commodity prices at risk of spiking once China fully reopens, and the high cost of living may continue to force up wages.

Employment report

Job growth was far better than expected in November as nonfarm payrolls increased 263,000 for the month while the unemployment rate sat at 3.7 percent. The data was far better than the expected increase of 200,000 on the payrolls number, and was a slight decrease from October's 284,000. The numbers will do little to slow down rate rises by a Federal Reserve that has been focusing on bringing down 40-year high inflation.

In a hit to the Fed's fight against inflation, average hourly earnings jumped double the estimated at 0.6 percent for the month. After raising interest rates by 75 bps at each of its last four meetings, Fed officials indicated the pace could slow down soon. Markets are now expecting the bank to implement a 50 bps hike at its December meeting.

Inflation gauge slowed

Inflation remains rapid in the US however is starting to show signs of slowing, providing good news for policymakers attempting to ease historically fast price increases. Prices as measured by the Personal Consumption Expenditures index climbed 6 percent y/y in October, in line with expectations and down from the 6.3 percent seen in September. The core figure, which Fed Chair Jerome Powell stressed would be an important measure as to where inflation is heading, rose less than expected at 0.2 percent m/m in October. Although the report shows inflation is beginning to ease, it remains far above the Fed's 2 percent goal.

Global stocks mixed after strong US jobs data

LONDON: Stock markets were mixed Friday after strong US jobs data raised concerns that the US Federal Reserve may continue to aggressively hike interest rates to tame inflation. US government data showed that the world's biggest economy added 263,000 jobs in November, with the unemployment rate remaining at 3.7 percent.

Government figures also indicated a bigger jump in hourly wages than analysts had benchmarked.

Indices in New York initially tumbled on the release as markets feared it would extend the period of ultra-aggressive Federal Reserve interest rate hikes to counter inflation. But markets recovered throughout the day, with the S&P 500 ending down 0.1 percent.

Investors were unnerved by the

jump in wages "because that tends to feed inflation," said Quincy Krosby of LPL Financial. But traders also realize that "there's a positive side to this," she said. "The Fed has the luxury if you will to continue to raise rates, with smaller rate hikes. And the labor market remains resilient." The jobs data comes two days after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell signaled the central bank could moderate its aggressive posture on interest rates as soon as this month.

Earlier, London finished flat, while Frankfurt gained modestly and Paris dipped.

Investors were also focused on the oil market, where prices finished lower amid focus on talks on a price cap to limit Russia's oil revenues. The G7 and EU agreed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil late Friday. Analysts were still assessing the effect of the price ceiling, but have said the impact on supply could be limited because Russia currently sells some oil below this price level.

Traders are also focused on OPEC+, which may decide Sunday to

Consumer confidence

As inflation and economic uncertainty continue to loom over US consumers, confidence declined in November as widely expected. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index measured 100.2 for last month, down from the 102.2 in October. The index is at its lowest level since July when it fell to 95.7 amid historically high gas prices and November marks the second month in a row that the headline number has fallen. Both gas and food prices serve as the main culprits to the decline in confidence and continue to dominate assessments of short-term economic conditions. The Present Situation index decreased to 137.4 from 138.7 and the Expectations index fell to 75.4 from 77.9.

Still, the above-100 level indicates optimism toward the economy and higher tendency to spend. Despite stubbornly high inflation, the strong labor market left shoppers at relatively stable financial conditions supported by savings and job security. Serving as the major driver of the US economy, consumer spending maintains its resilience, evident by the last two months of the year accounting for approximately 20 percent of total retail sales, according to the National Retail Federation. The NRF projects holiday sales could grow to as high as \$960.4 billion versus last years \$889.3 billion.

Manufacturing sector

For the first time since the early days of the 2020 pandemic, US manufacturing activity contracted as steeper borrowing costs weighed on demand for goods. The Institute for Supply Management said last week that its gauge measuring factory activity fell to 49 from 50.2 in October. It marks the first contraction and the weakest reading since May 2020. A reading above 50 represents an expansion in the sector, which accounts for about 11.3 percent of the US economy. Out of the six biggest manufacturing industries, only two registered growth last month. In total, only six industries reported growth, while 12 shrank in November. Meanwhile, the survey's forward-looking new orders sub-index fell further to 47.2, marking the third straight month of contraction.

Market movements

The US dollar index lost nearly 1.4 percent of its value last week before recovering, sending both the euro and pound to 6-month highs of 1.0544 and 1.2309. Treasury yields jumped following the stronger-than-expected jobs report, while stocks on Wall Street fell over fears of a more aggressive Fed.

Lower inflation

According to an initial "flash" estimate from the EU, the rate of annual inflation across the euro area eased back to 10 percent in November compared to 10.6 percent in October. The drop marks the first fall



in the rate of inflation in 17 consecutive months. Continuing to contribute majorly is the cost of energy, though price increases slowed last month to 34.9 percent down from 41.5 percent annually. However, food inflation accelerated slightly to 13.6 percent from 13.1 percent while the rate for industrial goods and services remained steady. Core inflation, which strips out energy and food prices, remained steady at an annual rate of 5 percent.

The European Central Bank will meet later this month and is expected to raise interest rates again. With inflation running at more than five times the ECB's 2 percent target, the bank raised rates at its fastest pace on record this year with back-to-back 75 bps hikes. At their next meeting, markets are widely expecting a 50 bps hike after some policymakers argued inflation is finally peaking and that the ECB has made enough progress to justify smaller steps. A string of hikes moving forward is still likely, as price growth will take years to ease. The peak in the deposit rate is still seen at around 3 percent, suggesting another 150 bps of hikes.

Aided by smaller increases for food prices, Australia's annual inflation rate fell to 6.9 percent from September's 7.3 percent pace. Fruit and vegetable prices fell sharply and holiday costs took a surprising dip, marking an unexpected turn that could mean interest rates will not have to rise as far as many expected. The core rate also fell slightly to 5.3 percent y/y from 5.4 percent y/y.

The drop helps to defend the Reserve Bank of Australia's dovish pivot seen a few months ago when it decided to increase rates at just 25 bps per meeting. Both the RBA and Treasury expect inflation will peak in December at about 8 percent before declining through 2023 as the effect of higher borrowing costs sap demand and supply constraints ease as COVID disruptions end. The Aussie gained 0.95 percent last week after closing November 6 percent higher, and was last seen trading at 0.6789.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30710



HONG KONG: Pedestrians pass a sign showing the numbers for the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong. —AFP

slash oil production further to boost prices for its members, which include Saudi Arabia and Russia.

"There remains considerable uncertainty around the action OPEC+ will take when it meets," noted OANDA trading platform ana-

lyst Craig Erlam. Among individual companies, Boeing jumped 4.0 percent following a Wall Street Journal report that United Airlines is close to agreeing to order dozens of Boeing 787 Dreamliners. United shares were flat. —AFP



UK groups hope creative biodiversity message takes flight

LONDON: A human "murmuration" using dance techniques previously showcased by French choreographer Sadeck Waff at the Tokyo Paralympics will deliver a powerful message of "hope" to next week's United Nations biodiversity talks. The COP15 talks organizers are preparing for multiple protests, with security measures including a three-meter (nine-foot) high fence around the venue in Montreal, Canada. But a coalition of Britain's leading conservation charities has chosen a more creative approach to highlight its call for urgent targets to end biodiversity loss.

Spearheaded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), they have joined forces with Waff and 80 young British dancers to create a video of one of his trademark "murmuration" dances that mimics the motion of a flock of birds. Paris-based Waff says the latest in his dance series, which draws its name from the collective noun for a flock of starlings, is about "recovery and hope".

"I hope that the dance inspires everyone to appreciate the power and beauty of cooperation as well as the urgency of the conversation that needs to take place, in order to save and protect the nature that we all rely on," he told AFP. It is hoped a new global biodiversity framework will be agreed at the Montreal talks, which run from December 7 to 19.

The UN has said world leaders will not attend the gathering but the RSPB is asking British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to be present.

Synchronicity

The conservation charity wants Sunak to push for a global deal that gives biodiversity its "Paris moment" like the agreement reached at the 2015 climate conference in the French capital. Naturalist and BBC nature series presenter Chris Packham told AFP it was a "once in a decade opportunity" for world leaders to set targets that ensure "biodiversity is restored for generations to come".

He said the dance was a vital means of communicating the need to reverse biodiversity loss to everyone—not just those already signed up to the message. "The RSPB has an audience. I have an audience. But it's not big enough. We need to spread it by using other aspects of our culture," Packham said. "The idea that it is mimicking a murmuration—which is a flock of birds working in synchronicity together to achieve a purpose—sends the kind of message that we all need to be working with that synchronicity."

Waff's hand ballets have been variously described as mesmerizing, hypnotic and beautifully expressive.

His previous video to round off the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics—held in 2021 due to the pandemic—and hand over to the 2024 games in Paris featured over 120 amateur and professional wheelchair-using performers. To a stirring composition by French singer-songwriter and music video producer Woodkid, the troupe drawn from people of all ethnicities, genders and physical abilities moved as one in time to the music. A clip of the video immediately went viral and has since generated millions of views. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Art of noise: UK project aims to save lost sounds

The mostly defunct red phone boxes no longer attract much attention in London except from tourists. But Stuart Fowkes is thrilled to stumble upon one still in working order. Its ring is one of the world's disappearing noises that his pioneering "obsolete sounds" project is dedicated to preserving. He whips out a hand-held recording device and swings into action, explaining, "I've always had sonic curiosity. 'New sounds are appearing faster than at any time in history but they are also changing and disappearing faster than ever before.'" Over the past five years Fowkes' Cities and Memories website has collected and remixed more than 5,000 sounds from 100 countries which are being archived by the British Library. Now, his latest project aims to preserve sounds that are "just on the edge of memory".

These sounds that we are "just about forgetting" are the ones that have the "greatest emotional resonance", he told AFP. "What I have been struck by is how people have responded emotionally to some of the recordings. 'You've got people who heard the sound of a Super 8 film camera and this reminded them of being in their living room in 1978 with their dad showing them home movies for the first time.'" The "obsolete sounds"



Musician and sound artist Stuart Fowkes records the sound of a passing London Underground train at Blackfriars tube station in London. — AFP photos

project features more than 150 recordings collected from around the world, and also includes remixes of those sounds by musicians and sound artists.

Billed as the biggest collection of its kind, it includes everything from Walkman personal stereo cassette players and old video game consoles, to steam trains and vintage racing cars, as well as sounds that evoke the rapidly changing natural environment, such as crumbling glaciers.

"Before the industrial revolution, our sound environment-bells and horses' hooves and manual industry-would not have changed much for hundreds of years," says Fowkes. "Today, the pace of change is ridiculous. Things that are only a few years old, like ring tones on mobile phones, already sound dated."

Sound of the Underground
Moving below street level down into

London's Underground train network, Fowkes gets to work again. A bit like the "trainspotters" who were once a familiar sight on the platforms of UK railway stations, Fowkes is a dedicated "soundspotter". But to him, there is nothing dull or uninteresting about the screeching of the train's wheels scraping against the curves in the metal tracks or the clunk of the doors opening and closing.

"I've always been someone who listens to the world. As soon as I have a recording device in my hand I start to listen to the world kind of differently and hear things that other people wouldn't necessarily notice or listen to," he says. The digital consultant launched Cities and Memories in 2015 and has drawn in some 1,000 collaborators across the globe. "Every morning I wake up to emails with recordings from somewhere completely unexpected, like a beach in Bali or even the metro in Pyongyang," he says. Field recordings are "having a moment", he adds, with artists such as ethereal Icelandic singer Bjork using them in their music.

"It used to be seen as very niche, even trainspotter-like behavior, but now anyone can make a decent recording on their phone and it's becoming increasingly mainstream." Fowkes has been thrilled



Musician and sound artist Stuart Fowkes records the sound of a passing London Underground train at Blackfriars tube station in London.

by the response to his project-but is keen to receive more, especially from African cities.

Anyone can contribute, he says, just by "sticking their mobile phone out of the window" and then visiting citiesandmemories.com. In the meantime, he'll keep on adding his own recordings, while admitting his dedication can sometimes be a source of mild irritation for his wife. "Whenever we go to a new holiday destination... I am going 'have you heard that pedestrian crossing? I have to go and record it!'" —AFP

Palestinian Santa brings festive cheer to Jerusalem

In Jerusalem's Old City there are dozens of churches, but as Christmas beckons there is just one Santa Claus—a towering Palestinian former basketball player. Each December, the streets sparkle green and red as Christian pilgrims and others arrive to celebrate Christmas in Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem. Seven years ago one resident, Issa Kassissieh, transformed the ground floor of his 700-year-old home into a grotto, complete with candy, mulled wine and a chance to sit on Santa's lap.

Welcoming the season's first visitors to Santa House, the red-suited and bearded Kassissieh belted out a "Ho, ho, ho!" at families queuing to see him. "We are dealing with many religions here in Jerusalem. We have Muslims, Christians and Jews. I have all religions come to my house. I open my hands to everybody," said Kassissieh, himself a Christian.

At 1.9 meters (six feet three inches) tall, Kassissieh's height served him well as captain of the Palestinian basketball squad, and doesn't seem to intimidate the children he towers over. "I'm not a Christian, but I still love Santa Claus... We have a (Christmas) tree at home too," eight-year-old Marwa, a Palestinian Muslim, told AFP, grinning. Visitors from around the world also lined



Palestinian Issa Kassissieh, dressed as Santa Claus, poses for a picture with a visitor at a floor of his home which he turned into Santa's House, in Jerusalem's Old City, a few weeks before the upcoming holiday of Christmas. — AFP photos

up to sit on Santa's lap, and to find out if they were on his naughty or nice list. Alison Pargiter, from the United States, waited with her children.

"It is important that our kids have fun, but we also want them to know the true story behind Christmas," the 52-year-old said. While Jerusalem is home to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which Christians believe contains Jesus's

tomb, the Nativity story of his birth happened in nearby Bethlehem, according to the faithful. But at Santa House, Kassissieh said his young visitors have more modern concerns. "Every child asks me for an iPhone," he chuckled. "I never promise anything, but I say: 'Let's pray, and if you're on my good list, you will get it.'"

Santa studies

As a child, Kassissieh's father would dress up as Santa for him and his two sisters. Fifteen years ago, he found his father's suit and decided to slip into the red velvet role. But it has involved more than just putting on a suit. Since then, he has attended the World Santa Claus Congress in Denmark and studied at a Santa school—yes, there is such a thing in the US state of Colorado. Kassissieh displayed a certificate from another centre of Santa learning, the Charles W Howard Santa Claus School, and said his training makes him Jerusalem's only accredited Santa.

Based in Michigan, the Howard school traces its establishment to 1937, making it the world's longest-running. In his role, he is all too aware of the sensitivities in Jerusalem. As well as its importance to Christians, the Old City is home to sites revered by Jews and Muslims. For decades it has been a



Palestinian Issa Kassissieh, dressed as Santa Claus, poses for a picture at a floor of his home which he turned into Santa's House.

focal point of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. "It's special to give the message of love and peace from Jerusalem—it's the heart of the world," he told AFP at his grotto.

"When we have peace in Jerusalem, we will have peace in the world," added Kassissieh, who consciously avoids politics. For the Jerusalem native, the secret to being a good Santa is simple. It is "always, to have an answer to the children's questions," he said. — AFP



An undated handout photo shows the St Edward's Crown, that is set to be worn by King Charles III during his Coronation on May 6, 2023.



An undated handout photo shows the Imperial State Crown, that is set to be worn by King Charles III during his Coronation on May 6, 2023. — AFP photos

Historic crown to be modified for Charles III coronation

Britain's 17th-century St Edward's Crown, the centrepiece of the Crown Jewels, has been removed from display to be altered for the coronation of King Charles III, Buckingham Palace said on Saturday. The solid gold crown, encrusted with rubies, amethysts, sapphires, garnet, topazes and tourmalines, will undergo "modification work" for Charles III's coronation at Westminster Abbey on May 6 next year, the palace said. The crown is the centrepiece of the Crown Jewels, a large collection of royal regalia housed in the Tower of London that attracts more than a million visitors per year.

It has a purple velvet cap with an ermine band, is just over 30 cm (one foot) tall and very heavy. It was last worn by Queen Elizabeth II, at her coronation in 1953. Charles III, 74, will be crowned along with his wife, Queen Consort Camilla. The ceremony will be followed by a national holiday on May 8. The crown was made for King Charles II in 1661 to replace a mediaeval crown though to date back to Edward the Confessor.

2,000 diamonds

The original had been melted down by parliamentarians after the execution of Charles I. For hundreds of years afterwards, the crown was only carried in coronation processions because it was too heavy to wear. It was altered to make it lighter for the coronation of King George V in 1911 but still weighs 2.23 kilograms (nearly five pounds). Charles III will only wear it at the moment he is crowned. When he leaves Westminster Abbey, Charles will wear the more modern Imperial State Crown, also used for occasions such as the opening of parliament. —AFP



Palestinian Issa Kassissieh, dressed as Santa Claus, poses for pictures with tourists and pilgrims at Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.



Palestinian Issa Kassissieh, dressed as Santa Claus, rides a camel at Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem's Old City.



Visitors enter Santa's House on the ground floor of the home of Palestinian Issa Kassissieh (unseen) who welcomes them as Santa Claus, in Jerusalem's Old City.



Mitra Hajjar

Iran film star Mitra Hajjar arrested

Iranian film star Mitra Hajjar was arrested at her home Saturday, the reformist newspaper Shargh reported. "Mitra Hajjar, a film and television actor, was arrested today after a search of her apart-

ment," said Mehdi Koohian, a part of group monitoring arrested artists, Shargh reported. Protests have swept Iran since the September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin arrested by the morality police for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's dress code for women.

Thousands of people have been arrested in connection with the protests, including leading figures from the arts,

politics and sports. Last month, Iran arrested actor Hengameh Ghaziani, who expressed solidarity with the protest movement and removed her headscarf in public in an apparent act of defiance, which she filmed and posted on Instagram. Ghaziani has since been released on bail, according to the Tasnim agency. — AFP



Dior showcases fashion in shadow of Egypt's pyramids



French fashion house Dior on Saturday held its first show at Egypt's ancient Giza pyramids, presenting its 2023 fall men's collection in the shadow of the millennia-old tombs. Dwarfed by the vast Giza necropolis—their imposing ridges illuminated by white light for the show—models showcased the collection titled “Celestial”. Saturday's show was the second by a European fashion house to use Ancient Egyptian heritage sites as a backdrop this year.

In October, Italian designer Stefano Ricci showcased his most recent collec-

tion at the Temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor. Egypt's Giza necropolis, just west of the capital Cairo, has in recent years played host to ever-grander events, including pop concerts and contemporary art exhibitions, as the North African country seeks to project a revitalized image to draw in new tourism and business. Media entrepreneur Amy Mowafi said events like Dior's “put Egypt on the map as a new hub for creativity and design” where creators can draw on “seven thousand years of inspiration.” — AFP



Models present a creation at the Christian Dior fashion show at the Giza Pyramids Necropolis on the outskirts of the twin city of Egypt's capital. — AFP photos

Ukraine detains 8 over Banksy mural theft

Ukraine has detained eight people over the theft from a wall in the Kyiv suburbs of a mural painted by elusive British street artist Banksy, the authorities said. The stencil image of a person in a nightgown and gas mask

holding a fire extinguisher next to the charred remains of a window in the town of Gostomel went missing on Friday, they said. “A group of people tried to steal a Banksy mural. They cut out the work from the wall of a house destroyed by the Russians,” Kyiv governor Oleksiy Kuleba said in a post on Telegram late Friday.

He attached the image of a gaping hole in the wall where the image once stood. “Several people were detained on the spot,” he said. “The image is in good condition and in the hands of the authorities.” Other works in the area thought also

to be the work of Banksy are under police protection, he said. Kyiv police chief Andriy Nebitov said “eight people had been identified” as possibly involved, and a preliminary inquiry had been opened into the matter.

“All were aged between 27 and 60 years old. They are residents of Kyiv and Cherkasy” some 200 km (120 miles) southeast of the capital, he said. Last month, Banksy posted an image of the stencil of a gymnast performing a handstand on the wall of a wrecked building in Borodyanka, another suburb of the capi-

tal. He then posted a video of several more of his artworks, including the person in a gas mask holding the fire extinguisher.

Others included the portraits of a bearded man scrubbing up in a bathtub, and a young boy in a karate outfit slamming his adult opponent to the ground. Together with towns such as Bucha and Irpin, Borodyanka and Gostomel were severely hit by Russian bombardment after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. — AFP



In this file photo Cuban singer Silvio Rodriguez performs in the Zocalo square in Mexico City. — AFP

Cuba's ‘Nueva Trova’ music movement named as part of cultural heritage

Cuban cultural authorities have declared the musical movement known as Nueva Trova, a folk-music genre melding poetry and progressive politics, to be part of the nation's cultural heritage, the official newspaper Granma reported Saturday. The decision was announced Friday at the park in the city of Manzanillo where 50 years earlier, at a gathering of “young troubadours,” the movement was sparked by singer-songwriter Silvio Rodriguez and guitarist and singer Pablo Milanes, who died recently.

Deputy culture minister Fernando Leon said Nueva Trova is being recognized “in order to contribute to the sustainability, viability and visibility of this important cultural expression.” — AFP



This combination of pictures shows a graffiti made by famous British artist Banksy on the wall of a destroyed building in the town of Gostomel, near Kyiv, on November 16, 2022 (left) and a cut off of the wall of a damaged building from where a group people tried to steal Banksy's work in the town of Gostomel, near Kyiv, on December 3, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Sports

Fury overpowers Chisora, retains heavyweight title

Fury targets blockbuster unification bout against Usyk



LONDON: Britain's Tyson Fury fights against Britain's Derek Chisora during their WBC heavyweight title boxing match, at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium in east London, on December 3, 2022. — AFP

LONDON: Tyson Fury retained his World Boxing Council heavyweight title with a decisive stoppage win over British rival Derek Chisora on Saturday before setting his sights on a blockbuster unification bout against Oleksandr Usyk. The result was rarely in doubt with Fury, still unbeaten as a professional, in control from the opening bell. And with Chisora's eyes starting to close, referee Victor Loughlin stopped the fight nine seconds before the end of the 10th round at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. The 34-year-old now boasts a record of 33 wins from 34 fights with one draw. Fury's latest win also paved the way for a unification bout with Usyk, the IBF, WBA and WBO heavyweight champion.

Usyk was at ringside on Saturday as he returned to the venue where he deprived Britain's Anthony Joshua of all those titles in September last year before defeating him again in Jeddah this July. And soon after a comprehensive win, Fury was involved in a face-off with Usyk as the Ukrainian entered the ring. Fury, after thanking a crowd of some 60,000 and paying tribute to his beaten opponent by leading spectators in a chant of "One Derek Chisora", turned his attention to Usyk with British heavyweight Joe Joyce also coming onto the ring apron.

'Let's get it on'

"Usyk, you're next, you 15-stone little bodybuilding midget. I've done one Ukrainian, (Wladimir) Klitschko, let's get it on," Fury told BT Sport. Usyk remained silent, with Chisora adding: "Thank you Tyson, I really appreciate that. We are friends. "There's a big fight coming, everyone wants to see one champion in the heavyweight division." Fury, meanwhile, then turned his attention to Joyce. "I'm saying Joe Joyce, a brilliant fighter, he deserves a title fight," Fury said. "If the rabbit (Usyk) doesn't fight, we'll fight at Wembley." Joyce added: "I'll take either. Like Fury was saying, if not Usyk then me."

Fury's only previous fight this year was a sixth-round stoppage of Dillian Whyte at Wembley in April. "I felt good, I needed some rounds. I haven't boxed since April," said Fury. "I was landing good punches. But take nothing from Del Boy (Chisora), it was a pleasure to fight tonight, he is a British folk hero." After the Whyte fight, Fury announced his retirement only for the lure of the ring to prove too strong. A bout with Usyk is the fight fans want to see, while a long anticipated "Battle of Britain" between Fury and Joshua fell through after talks between the two camps collapsed.

That led Fury to fight Chisora instead. Fury was an overwhelming favorite to beat Chisora given he'd defeated him convincingly in their two previous bouts, including a 10th-round stoppage when they last met eight years ago. Nevertheless the 38-year-old Chisora has won respect throughout a now 46-fight career for his ability to take a punch. This week marked the seven-year anniversary of Fury's stunning success over Klitschko that saw him first become world champion but also sparked a major mental health crisis before a triumphant return to the ring.

On a bitterly cold night at the home of Premier League football club Tottenham, Fury jogged rather than walked into the ring. Fury, the heavier man at 19 stone 2lbs (121.8 kg) to Chisora's 18 stone 6lbs (118.2 kg). The champion, at 6ft 9in (2.06 meters) was also significantly taller and kept Chisora at bay while repeatedly landing punches, including several shots to the head, with little of consequence coming back at him from the challenger. It seemed just a matter of time before Fury won, with Loughlin speaking to Chisora's corner at the end of the ninth before calling a halt soon afterwards. — AFP

Hovland stretches Hero World Challenge lead

MIAMI: Viktor Hovland closed in on a second straight Hero World Challenge title on Saturday, firing a sizzling eight-under par 64 to push his lead to three strokes in the unofficial US PGA Tour event. Norway's Hovland, trying to join tournament host Tiger Woods as the only back-to-back winners of the 20-player invitational, had 54-hole total of 13-under par at the Albany course in the Bahamas.

World number two Scottie Scheffler, who could overtake Rory McIlroy atop the rankings with a victory, carded a six-under par 66 to stand alone in second on 206. It was a further two strokes back to Americans Justin Thomas and Cameron Young, Thomas posting a 66 and Young a 68 as the winds that pushed up scores all week relented just a little. "It was a lot easier today when it wasn't as windy," said Hovland, although players still had to deal with some erratic "mud balls" on the rain-softened course.

That didn't hinder Hovland, who birdied three of his first five holes followed a bogey at the sixth with another birdie at the seventh. He scorched the back nine, grabbing six birdies in seven holes from the 11th through the 17th before a closing bogey that was barely a blip. "It was great-just kept making birdies," Hovland said. "It was weird. Midway through the round I'd made a lot and it didn't really feel like I made that many. "I just kind of kept playing golf and kept making putts and, yea, I stood on 18th hole with nine-under par. "It was pretty sweet."

Hovland's highlights included a birdie bomb from the fringe at the fifth. He two-putted for birdie from off the green at the 11th, landed his tee shot within 10 feet of the pin for birdie at 12 and stuck his approach within five feet for birdie at 13. After a par at 14 he two-putted for birdie at 15 to launch another three-birdie burst. "I missed probably like a 10-footer on the first hole and lipped out and I kind of thought 'here we go again,'" Hovland said. "But after that it was a lot of putts that went in. You need that on a day like today when the winds are down and you can be a little bit more aggressive."

Scheffler's round was highlighted by a long eagle putt at the 15th. He also had five birdies. "I played good today," Scheffler said. "I played really solid, kept the ball in front of me, hit a lot of fairways." Scheffler admitted it was sometimes "infuriating" to be in the fairway but have little control over a shot because of mud affecting the ball. "It's frustrating you spend so much time trying to learn how to control your golf ball and then you're in the middle of the fairway and you have no idea where the ball's going to go," he said. Hovland, who came from six strokes back to win the event last year, said he'll have to keep the accelerator down on Sunday. "You get one bad mud ball, lost ball and then the other guy shoots six-, eight-under, you can play a pretty reasonable round of golf, shoot a couple under and still get beat," he said. — AFP

South Africa extend dominance at '70% of potential'

DUBAI: South Africa head coach Sandile Ngcobo said on Saturday his side are at "70% of their potential" after they beat Ireland 21-5 to win the second leg of the World Rugby Sevens Series in Dubai while Australia claimed the women's title. With qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games resting on this season's standings, stakes are high and so it showed on the second day in the UAE with some more high-quality sevens.

South Africa are winners of five of the last six tournaments in Dubai, including twice last season when events were played on back-to-back weekends as organizers juggled with the post-pandemic travel issues. "I think we are 70% on potential at this stage, so there is still room for improvement and that will keep us honest," Ngcobo said. "This win will mean so much for our system and justified the fight the guys showed for each

other," he added. The Blitzboks saw off Samoa 24-19 in the quarters before running out 26-19 victors over New Zealand in the semis.

Ireland beat Argentina 19-14 before edging the United States - who beat Hong Kong winners Australia in their quarter - 12-7 for their place in the final. Two tries from Shilton Van Wyk and another by Siviwe Soyizwapi, all converted by Ricardo James Duartee, handed the Boks a healthy 21-0 half-time lead over the Irish. Jack Kelly pulled a try back for Ireland early in the second period, but they couldn't get any closer to South Africa. The women's competition was won by Australia, who saw off New Zealand 26-19 in the final.

Sharni Williams, Faith Nathan, Maddison Levi and Demi Hayes all crossed for tries with Madison Ashby running the show. The Kiwis hit back with a Michaela Blyde hat-trick but it proved to be too little, too late under floodlights at The Sevens Stadium. "I think the most pleasing thing is the consistency," Ashby said. "As our coaches say, we're the queens of the desert, we thrive off the heat so for us it's just a golden win," she added. The top four teams in each competition at the end of the World Series will be guaranteed a spot at Paris 2024. — AFP

Goggia grabs second Lake Louise downhill victory

LAKE LOUISE: Italian speed queen Sofia Goggia made it two wins in as many days Saturday with victory over Nina Ortlieb in the second World Cup downhill at Lake Louise. Italy's Goggia, who swept the three Lake Louise races last season, clocked 1min 28.96sec to finish .34sec ahead of Austria's Ortlieb-who started 26th and knocked Olympic downhill gold medalist Corinne Suter into third.

Suter, second to Goggia on Friday by just four-hundredths of a second, set an early target with a time of 1:29.33, but was surpassed by both Goggia and Ortlieb-who squeezed into second by just three-hundredths of a second. It was a dream podium finish for Ortlieb in her first weekend of racing since she suffered severe knee injuries in January of 2021.

She notched her third career World Cup podium finish after a super-G win and downhill third place back in 2020. Goggia, who was dissatisfied with her winning performance on Friday, said she achieved the improvements she was aiming for. "Today was a quite perfect run," she said. "There was a lot of wind at the start. We had to be focused and committed today. "I skied the perfect run I wanted to in my head."

Goggia's success at Lake Louise means she'll be sorry to see the venue dropped from the World Cup calendar next season. "The last two years were unbelievable for me here," she said, although her memories of Lake Louise stretch back further. "Here I broke my knee in 2013 and in 2016 got my first podium in the speed circuit here. "And now winning five in a row is incredible. It is sad we won't race here again but I think FIS will find a good replacement."

For 26-year-old Ortlieb, second place was the culmination of a long rehabilitation road. "It was a huge



LAKE LOUISE: Italy's Sofia Goggia races during the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup Women's Downhill at Lake Louise, Canada on December 3, 2022. — AFP

relief," she said. "The last months were really hard so I felt so good and was super-thankful for everyone who helped me come back." Austrian Cornelia Huetter, who finished third on Friday didn't start Saturday's race, the second of three scheduled in the Canadian Rockies where a super-G will cap the action on Sunday.

Ski Austria said in a tweet that Huetter was sidelined by a headache and mild trouble with her vision. Goggia is out to repeat the Lake Louise sweep she produced last year as she made a storming start to the season. Her campaign was disrupted by a super-G crash at Cortina, but the Italian came back to take downhill silver behind Suter at the Beijing Winter Olympics and garner enough points to claim a third downhill crystal globe. — AFP



GLENDALE: Juan Francisco Estrada (left) of Mexico lands a right on Roman Gonzalez of Nicaragua during their WBC super flyweight title bout at Desert Diamond Arena on December 03, 2022. — AFP

Estrada outpunches Gonzalez in super flyweight title fight

LOS ANGELES: Juan Francisco Estrada won a majority decision over Roman Gonzalez Saturday to claim the vacant WBC super flyweight world title in an action-packed third installment of their rivalry. Mexico's Estrada notched his second straight victory in the trilogy that began 10 years ago, taking advantage of Gonzalez's measured start before the Nicaraguan, nicknamed "Chocolatito," stepped up the pace at the Desert Diamond Arena in Glendale, Arizona. Estrada got the nod by the barest margin, two judges scoring it in his favor 116-112 and 115-113 while the third saw it a 114-114 draw.

He improved to 44-3 with 28 wins inside the distance, looking much the sharper as he tagged Gonzalez with well-timed punches as the 35-year-old former four-division champion got off to a sluggish start. In the middle rounds, however, Gonzalez, who fell to 51-4 with 41 knockouts, began to turn up the pressure-moving forward aggressively and pushing Estrada back. The ninth saw a string of momentum swings, Gonzalez doing damage to Estrada's body and Estrada firing combinations and landing a left hook that seemed to shake Gonzalez.

Gonzalez went down in the 10th but it was ruled a slip, and he had closed the gap by the start of the 12th. However, Estrada came through in the final round, shaking off a left hook-right hand combination and landing a combination of his own as he gained the edge. "I always go from less to more," Estrada said. "Chocolatito can't really do that because he's always going at 100 miles per hour throughout the fight. "I made sure that I was counter-punching and threw a lot of punches."

Although it was close, it was a more clear-cut victory than Estrada's split-decision triumph in March of 2021. "It was a nice fight for the public," Gonzalez said. "I did what I could, and that was the result." With the 2021 win Estrada retained his WBC title and snatched Gonzalez's World Boxing Association belt. He won on two of the judges' scorecards with one judge giving the fight to Gonzalez after a slugfest that some thought should have gone the Nicaraguan's way. — AFP

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PARLAPALLI SHIVA KUMAR REDDY holder of Indian Passport No. U0748409 having permanent address pin code 524101, residing in Kuwait at present,

hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name SIVA KUMAR REDDY and Surname YARAMAPU. (C#2811)

KNOW FROM THIS NAME HAKIMUDDIN JAWDDIYA s/o SHABBIR HUSAIN JAWDDIYA V/P MOHAM-MDIPURA TEMBA SAG-WARA. (C# 2813) - 05-12-2022

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

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| (1) • Laundry room + storage | • Shatter |
| (2) • Living room | • Lift |
| (4) • Master bedroom | • Deposit 500 KD |
| (1) • Maid room + toilet | • Rent (1250 KD) |
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Sports

Warriors shoot down Rockets; Mavs beat Knicks in New York

Doncic, Hardaway lift Mavericks over Knicks

LOS ANGELES: Andrew Wiggins scored a season-high 36 points on Saturday as the NBA champion Golden State Warriors got off to a hot start and made it hold up Saturday in a 120-101 victory over the Houston Rockets. Wiggins drained a career-high eight three-pointers, five of them in the third quarter when he scored 17 points.

Warriors superstar Stephen Curry also had eight treys on the way to 30 points and Jordan Poole added 21 points as the Warriors notched a 10th straight home win. But Warriors coach Steve Kerr said the defending champions still have room for improvement after letting a 25-point lead midway through the second quarter slip. The Rockets, led by 20 points from Kevin Porter Jr., had sliced the deficit to four points with 6:59 left in the game.

The Warriors pulled away again, but Kerr said they need to find a way to keep teams from making a run. "It was a phenomenal first 18 minutes," Kerr said. "I thought that was maybe the best stretch we've had all year to start the game. "We

were defending, rebounding, doing everything right, and then we just lost our focus. "That's our biggest challenge right now, trying to maintain our focus long enough not to give up leads and allow teams back in," Kerr added.

Elsewhere, Dallas star Luka Doncic and Tim Hardaway Jr took it to the New York Knicks in the third quarter on the way to a 121-100 NBA victory at Madison Square Garden. Doncic scored 30 points and Hardaway added 28 against his former team, the two combining for 36 points in the third quarter alone when the Mavs outscored the Knicks 41-15 to take control of the contest.

Doncic, the league's leading scorer, had a lackluster 11 points in the first quarter but turned up the heat after the interval. "It was a challenge to come out of the locker room (in the second half) with more energy and better everything," Doncic said. "The way we played the third quarter, you saw that we can really play basketball." Jalen Brunson, who departed Dallas for the Knicks in free agency after last season, finished with just 13 points.

Bucks bounce back

The Milwaukee Bucks earned a bounce-back win despite the absence of two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo, beating the Hornets 105-96 in Charlotte. A day after a hard-fought 133-129 home loss to the Los Angeles Lakers, Antetokounmpo and Jrue Holiday were inactive, as was Khris Middleton—whose return from off-season wrist surgery is still being carefully managed.

Antetokounmpo, who scored 40 points against the Lakers, sat out with a sore left knee. Holiday was listed as out with a left knee contusion. Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said he held them out considering "the quick turnaround and with the back-to-back, a little bit of an early game, and just taking into account the big picture."

Bobby Portis stepped up to lead the Bucks with 20 points. Jordan Nwora added 17 points and Brook Lopez and Jevon Carter scored 14 apiece. Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-

Alexander scored 33 points to lead seven Thunder players in double figures in a 135-128 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves in Minneapolis. Josh Giddey added 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Thunder, who trailed by four going into the fourth quarter after the Timberwolves erupted for 44 points in the third period.

D'Angelo Russell led Minnesota with 27 points and Anthony Edwards added 26. Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert was ejected in the second quarter for a flagrant foul after he tripped Oklahoma City's Kenrich Williams. The two had tangled under the basket, Gobert tripping over the fallen Williams. Gobert fell himself and when Williams extricated himself and rose Gobert stuck his legs out and tripped him. Williams' angry reaction drew a technical foul. In Los Angeles, Sacramento center Domantas Sabonis connected on 10 of his 11 shots from the field on the way to a game-high 24 points, as the Kings whipped the Clippers 123-96. —AFP

Tadhamon Women Futsal team end Fatat winning run

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Tadhamon Women Futsal team put an end to the series of wins by Fatat Club team in the URC Futsal League by beating them 4-2 during their fourth round match. Tadhamon now have 9 points (in second place on goal difference) as Fatat top the standings. In the second match, Kuwait defeated Fatayat Al-Oyoun 4-2 - raising their point total to 6 (in third place). Fatyat Al-Oyoun remain pointless. The match between Tadhamon and Fatat was competitive and the two teams performed very well. Tadhamon were able to avenge their previous loss to Fatat in the second round - winning 1-5. The Kuwait players controlled most of the second match which ended in their favor.



Zain is proud of Team Kuwait's second-place win.



Event featured top regional and international pro racers.

Zain sponsors HANKOOK 12H KUWAIT 2022

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, sponsored the HANKOOK 12H KUWAIT 2022, which marked the first time a venue in Kuwait has hosted a round of CREVENTIC's endurance racing program. The thrilling event featured top regional and international pro racers at Kuwait Motor Town (KMT). Zain always strives to contribute to developing the local youth and sports sectors by supporting the best sporting events in Kuwait, including motorsports competitions. The company is keen on encouraging initiatives that offer the nation's youth a safe and professional setting to unleash their talents and pursue

their passions.

Kuwait Motor Town hosted the HANKOOK 12H KUWAIT 2022 endurance race, which marked the first time a venue in Kuwait has hosted a round of CREVENTIC's endurance racing program. The race continued for 12 hours straight, featuring top pro racers from the region and the world. Zain is proud of Team Kuwait's Ahmad Al Ghanim, Mohammed Al Kazemi, and Zaid Ashkanani, who secured the race's second-place title after an outstanding performance among 20 participating teams.

In addition to the main attraction, many social and entertainment programs were available for fans and visitors, including cafes, restaurants, special social activities, children zones, and more. Zain was present in the event via its dedicated booth, where it offered visitors a chance to compete in a thrilling virtual race. The Kuwait Motor Town hosted the final round of the 2022 24H SERIES powered by Hankook, marking the first time a venue in Kuwait has hosted a round of CREVENTIC's

endurance racing program. The Hankook 12H KUWAIT replaces the Hankook 24H SEBRING as the final round of this year's 24H SERIES and thus decided the winners of the 2022 Championship of the Continents.

Located less than 60 kilometers from Kuwait City, the Kuwait Motor Town was opened in December 2018. Covering 2.5 million square meters, KMT is one of the largest motorsport-dedicated facilities in the world, one that boasts seven different facilities catering to nine different motor racing disciplines, both on-road and off, including circuit, drag and dune racing, go-karts, and rally and motocross.

Ahead of its maiden season of competition in 2019, Kuwait Motor Town was granted FIA Grade 1, which recognizes the highest safety standards. In a nod to the venue's high-profile aspirations, more than 7,300 race day fans can be accommodated in the main grandstand alone, with a further 750 VIP box seats also available overlooking the 426-meter pitlane, down which lie 32 state-of-the-art pit boxes.



Hawally Club rider Al-Fuzaie shines

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Hawally Club rider Abdulrahman Al-Fuzaie won the first edition of the AlGhanim Show Jumping Competition held at Kuwait Riding Club with the participation of more than 300 riders representing all local clubs. Fuzaie succeeded in achieving the fastest time



during the differentiation round of the grand prize at a height of 140-145 cm in 40.81 seconds without faults. Abdullah Al-Awadhi ended in second place in 43.54 seconds without faults, and they were followed by riders Shaker Al-Kazmi, Ghazi Al-Jraiwi and Ali Al-Kharafi.

The winners were awarded by Saudi Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khalid and tournament patron Jassem Abdelaziz Al-Ghanem, along with Talal Abdelaziz Al-Ghanem. The tournament was also attended by Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij. Fuzaie was pleased by winning the title of the competition, which is one of the most important successful tournaments during the current 2022-2023 sports season. He thanked the Al-Ghanem family headed by Jassem Al-Ghanem and rider Badriya Jassem

Al-Ghanem for supporting the competition, which proved successful as far as organization and fan attendance are concerned.

Asian Champion Rider Ali Jassem Al-Kharafi won the minor's prize at 130-135 cm in 37.19 seconds without faults, beating Nick Channing, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Anaz Al-Anaz, Ghazi Al-Jraiwi and Fawaz Al-Subaie. Member of the Higher Organizing Committee, rider Jassem Al-Khalaf, thanked the competition's patron, adding there was a round for the disabled with the help of senior riders to honor them, which is the first time for local competitions. Khalafan lauded the fans' presence, adding this is a qualitative move since the declaration of the game's federation.

World Esports Championships

KUWAIT: Kuwait Esports National Team are participating the World Esports Championships being held in Bali Island, Indonesia with the participation of 105 countries across the globe. This championship is one of the largest world championships in which Kuwait team are participating in the Tekken7 and Football 2023 games. Fahad Al-Mutairi is playing the first and Mushari Al-Enezi is playing the second. Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Esports Club and head of the delegation Abdullah Al-Ali thanked the Public Authority for Sport for supporting the club. He said this is the first time Kuwait participates in such a major tournament.



Holders France ease into World Cup quarter-finals

Mbappe sets up a history-making goal

DOHA: Kylian Mbappe set up a history-making goal for Olivier Giroud and then scored two himself as holders France eased into the quarter-finals of the World Cup with a 3-1 win over Poland on Sunday. Giroud's opening goal a minute before half-time was his 52nd for his country, allowing him to pass Thierry Henry and become France's all-time record marksman. Mbappe's lethal strike in the 74th minute killed off any prospect of a Poland comeback and he netted again at the death to move to nine goals in just 11 World Cup appearances, the second-most for a French player at the tournament.

At the other end the threat of Robert Lewandowski was snuffed out by the French defence although the 34-year-old Poland captain did get the consolation of scoring a stoppage-time penalty. France, though, march on to the quarter-finals and remain on course to become the first team to successfully defend the World Cup since Brazil 60 years ago.

France were overwhelming favourites against a Poland side who had limped through the group stage, but the memory of their exit from Euro 2020 served as a warning. France had been 3-1 up and cruising in that last-16 tie against Switzerland only to concede two late goals and end up losing on penalties, with Mbappe missing the crucial spot-

kick. Mbappe returned on Sunday as one of nine changes following their inconsequential defeat by Tunisia, with goalkeeper and captain Hugo Lloris also returning to win his 142nd cap.

That saw him equal the record for most France appearances held by Lilian Thuram, whose son Marcus came off the bench here. It was a history-making occasion for France



Dembele crossing to the back post for Giroud to somehow put the ball wide. Poland, who have not won a World Cup knockout match since 1982, recovered from a tentative start to almost go ahead in the 38th minute as Lloris blocked a shot by Piotr Zielinski and Jakub Kaminski's follow-up was stopped on the line by Raphael Varane.

Those misses proved crucial as France seized the lead a minute before half-time. Patient build-up play ended with Mbappe having a glance as he received the ball just outside the box before playing in Giroud who took a touch and finished into the far corner. Poland were left to chase the game in the second half and they sent on Juventus striker Arkadiusz Milik to support Lewandowski for the final half hour.

However, their attack was simply no match for France, who picked off Poland to make it 2-0. A Griezmann clearance was brought down by Giroud and he released Dembele whose ball into the middle was controlled before being blasted home by Mbappe. It was an emphatic finish and was followed by another of a similar calibre from a Thuram assist in stoppage time. Only Just Fontaine, who scored 13 in 1958, has scored more World Cup goals for France. Lewandowski then pulled one back right at the end, converting a retaken penalty that was awarded for a handball by Dayot Upamecano. — AFP

DOHA: France's forward #09 Olivier Giroud kicks the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Poland at the Al-Thumama Stadium in Doha on December 4, 2022. — AFP



France's defender #18 Dayot Upamecano (front) fails to score past Poland's goalkeeper #01 Wojciech Szczesny during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football on December 4, 2022. — AFP photos



France's forward #09 Olivier Giroud (center) kicks the ball next to Poland's midfielder #24 Przemyslaw Frankowski (left) and Poland's midfielder #13 Jakub Kaminski during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match.



France's forward #09 Olivier Giroud (left) and France's forward #07 Antoine Griezmann (right) fight for the ball with Poland's defender #14 Jakub Kiwior on December 4, 2022.



A Poland supporter waits for the start of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Poland on December 4, 2022.



Poland supporters cheer ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Poland on December 4, 2022.



A bird is seen on the pitch during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Poland at the Al-Thumama Stadium in Doha on December 4, 2022.

Soccer or football? US, Dutch leaders banter on Twitter

WASHINGTON: The perennial question of whether it's "soccer" (as Americans call it) or "football" prompted Twitter wisecracks

between President Joe Biden and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte this weekend, as the Netherlands sent the United States crashing out of the World Cup. "It's called soccer," Biden said in a video posted on Twitter wishing the US team luck ahead of their last-16 clash against the Dutch side Saturday at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha. But the clinical Netherlands soon ended the United States' World Cup dream, sweeping into the quarter-finals with a ruthless 3-1 victory - and Rutte

was quick to respond to Biden's tweet. "Sorry Joe, football won," he wrote, adding a wink emoji. Biden's response came Sunday morning. "Strictly speaking, shouldn't it be 'voetbal'?" he replied, using the Dutch word for football. "Kidding aside: congrats to your team and country, Mark. Rematch in New Zealand," the US president added. The 2019 World Cup-winning US women's team could come up against the Netherlands at the tournament in New Zealand next year. — AFP

Pele feeling 'strong, with a lot of hope'

SAO PAULO: Brazilian football legend Pele said on Saturday that he feels "strong, with a lot of hope" despite medical problems that have kept the 82-year-old sports icon in the hospital with a respiratory infection. Pele, widely regarded as the greatest footballer of all time, was hospitalized earlier this week amid ongoing colon cancer treatments. "My friends, I want to keep everyone calm and positive," Pele said in an Instagram post. "I'm strong, with a lot of hope and I follow my treatment as usual."

Doctors treating Pele said earlier Saturday that the Brazilian legend remained "stable," with his condition not having deteriorated with the last day. Pele "has had a good response to care without any worsening in the clinical picture in the last 24 hours," doctors at Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Hospital said in a statement. Doctors made no reference to media reports earlier on Saturday that the three-time World Cup winner was receiving end-of-life care.



Brazilian retired footballer Edson Arantes do Nascimento, know as Pele

Pele was admitted to hospital earlier this week for what doctors said was a "re-evaluation" of the chemotherapy he has been undergoing since surgery to remove a colon tumor in September last year. At the ongoing World Cup in Qatar, players expressed their support for Pele. France striker Kylian Mbappe on Saturday tweeted: "Pray for the

South American side did not go quietly or with dignity.

Their players surrounded and harangued German referee Daniel Siebert after the final whistle, with the official dishing out two yellow cards, including to Cavani. There had been similar scenes during an incident-packed match in which Siebert awarded a penalty to Ghana but waved away two Uruguayan appeals. Having hit the woodwork three times in their two previous games and conceded another controversial penalty in their 2-0 defeat to Portugal, Uruguay leave Doha with a lot of regrets and a feeling of what might have been.

Suarez and his teammates believe they were the victims of injustice, penalized by refereeing decisions that went against them, even after VAR reviews. "Leaving a World Cup hurts but we have the tranquility that we GAVE EVERYTHING for our country," Suarez wrote on Twitter. "PROUD to be URUGUAYAN even though THEY DON'T RESPECT

US" he added in a barb presumably directed at world football's governing body FIFA.

The sense of injustice was a common theme in the emotionally charged aftermath of Friday's match-a member of the Uruguayan delegation berated a journalist in the post-match press conference about the penalty given against the South American side in the Portugal game. In truth, Uruguay's demise was not a surprise since Suarez and Cavani have had better days.

They occupy the top two spots on Uruguay's all-time record scorers' list, with Suarez as number one, and were part of the teams that reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2010 before winning the Copa America the following year. Injuries have limited Cavani's game time in recent years and while he has made an impressive start with his new club Valencia-four goals in seven games-it is more than four years since he played 30 or more league games in a single season. — AFP

Suarez and Cavani make undignified World Cup exits

DOHA: The sight of a tearful Luis Suarez hiding his face in his shirt and an enraged Edinson Cavani knocking over a VAR monitor encapsulated Uruguay's sadness and frustration at their World Cup exit. For the two striking greats, both 35, it was a deeply underwhelming and undignified way to leave the biggest stage for the final time. Uruguay beat Ghana 2-0 on Friday but crashed out of the Qatar tournament on goals scored because of South Korea's last-gasp 2-1 win over Portugal. But the