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Moon mission launched carrying UAE-built rover

Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre says signal successfully received by ground control

WASHINGTON: A Japanese startup's spacecraft was launched to the Moon on Sunday in the country's first-ever lunar mission and the first of its kind by a private company. The launch was carried out by Elon Musk's SpaceX at Cape Canaveral in the US state of Florida after two postponements for additional pre-flight checks.

The spacecraft, produced by Tokyo-based startup ispace and carrying a UAE-built rover, blasted off aboard a Falcon 9 rocket at 2:38 am (0738 GMT), live footage of the launch showed. "Our first mission will lay the groundwork for unleashing the Moon's potential and transforming it into a robust and vibrant economic system," the startup's CEO,

Takeshi Hakamada, said in a statement.

So far only the United States, Russia and China have managed to put a robot on the lunar surface. The ispace mission is the first of a program called Hakuto-R, which means "white rabbit" in Japanese. The company said its lunar lander was expected to touch down on the visible side of the Moon in April 2023 - the Year of the Rabbit in the Japanese zodiac.

Measuring just over two by 2.5 meters, the spacecraft has a payload that includes a 10-kg rover built by the United Arab Emirates. The Gulf country is a newcomer to the space race but sent a probe into Mars' orbit last year. If the rover, named

Rashid, successfully lands, it will be the Arab world's first Moon mission.

UAE Vice-President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum celebrated the launch as "part of the UAE's ambitious space program" in a tweet on Sunday. "Our goal is to transfer knowledge, develop our capabilities, and leave a scientific footprint in human history," he said. The UAE's Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre said a signal from the spacecraft had successfully been received by ground control.

Hakuto was one of five finalists in Google's Lunar XPrize competition to land a rover on the Moon before a 2018 deadline, which passed without a

winner. The ispace lunar lander is also carrying two robots produced by Japan's space agency and a disc with the song "SORATO" by Japanese rock band Sakanaction, which was originally written in support of the Google competition.

Zionist organization SpaceIL, another finalist in the contest, failed in April 2019 to become the first privately-funded mission to land on the Moon, after its lander crashed into the surface while attempting to land. ispace, which has just 200 employees, has said it "aims to extend the sphere of human life into space and create a sustainable world by providing high-frequency, low-cost transportation services to the Moon". — AFP

News in brief

Jan 1 official holiday

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission announced Sunday that Sunday, January 1, 2023 will be an official holiday at all ministries and government bodies on the occasion of the New Year. The commission added in a statement that work will resume on Monday, January 2, adding that government bodies with special working circumstances should make their own holiday arrangement. — KUNA

Work permit ban temporary

KUWAIT: Government sources said the halt of work permits for Egyptians is temporary, in anticipation of a new policy Kuwait will adopt, with the Public Authority for Manpower bringing labor into the country. The sources said Kuwait informed Cairo the ban is not related to Egypt; rather it is a reorganization of the Kuwait market to remedy the inflated situation it is now experiencing. The sources said the government's decision will be followed by reviewing files of companies that do not have any obvious activities but have thousands of workers under their sponsorship, noting they will be asked to transfer their residency permits to actual companies that need them or leave the country.

Lockerbie suspect in US custody

WASHINGTON: A Libyan man accused of making the bomb that destroyed a Pan Am flight over Scotland in 1988, killing 270 people, has been taken into US custody, the Justice Department confirmed Sunday. Abu Agila Mohammad Masud was charged by the US two years ago for the Lockerbie bombing. He had previously been held in Libya for his alleged involvement in a 1986 attack on a Berlin nightclub. The Justice Department confirmed in a statement that Masud was in US custody, following an announcement by Scottish prosecutors, without saying how the suspect ended up in US hands. — AFP

Winter Wonderland opens in Kuwait to sellout crowds

KUWAIT: Kuwait opened its first Winter Wonderland on Sunday, with all tickets for the first seven days selling out only a few hours after they became available on the theme park's website. People also went to the venue in large numbers on Saturday to buy tickets to attend the opening of the park. An entrance ticket costs KD 5, while children aged 4 or younger can enter for free.

Touristic Enterprises Company had earlier announced the park has 28 rides for visitors of all ages, in addition to various activities and a theater with a capacity for 1,200 people. Shaab Park, which is currently not in use, was selected as the location for Winter Wonderland Kuwait because it has the infrastructure needed for such an event.



KUWAIT: People visit the Winter Wonderland after the theme park opened on Dec 11, 2022. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Rapid COVID spread in China as rules eased

BEIJING: One of China's top health experts has warned of a surge in COVID-19 cases, state media said Sunday, in the wake of the government's decision to abandon its hard-line coronavirus strategy. Shops and restaurants in Beijing are deserted as the country awaits a spike in infections following the decision to reduce the scope of mandatory testing, allow some positive cases to quarantine at home and end large-scale lockdowns.

Top epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan

told state media in an interview published Sunday that the Omicron strain of the virus prevalent in China was highly transmissible and could lead to a surge in cases. "The (current) Omicron mutation... is very contagious... one person can transmit to 22 people," said Zhong - a leading advisor to the government throughout the pandemic. "Currently, the epidemic in China is... spreading rapidly, and under such circumstances, no matter how strong the prevention and control is, it will be difficult to completely cut off the transmission chain."

The easing of China's so-called "zero-COVID" policy followed nationwide protests against harsh virus rules that had battered the economy and confined millions to

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BEIJING: A health worker takes a swab sample from a woman to be tested for COVID-19 at a collection site on Dec 11, 2022. — AFP

British medics laud new treatment for resistant leukemia

LONDON: Doctors in Britain have hailed a pioneering treatment for an aggressive form of leukemia, after a teenager became the first patient

to be given a new therapy and went into remission. The 13-year-old girl, identified only as Alyssa, was diagnosed with T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2021. But her blood cancer did not respond to conventional treatment, including chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant.

She was enrolled on a clinical trial of a new treatment at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH) using genetically engineered immune cells from a healthy volunteer. In 28 days her cancer was in remission, allowing her

to receive a second bone marrow transplant to restore her immune system. Six months on, she is "doing well" back home in Leicester, central England, and receiving follow-up care.

"Without this experimental treatment, Alyssa's only option was palliative care," the hospital said in a statement on Sunday. Robert Chiesa, a GOSH consultant, said her turnaround had been "quite remarkable", although the results still needed to be monitored and confirmed in the next few months.

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Local



KUWAIT: (From left) Tariq Eid Al-Obeid, Saud Al-Khalidi and Muhammad Lafi Al-Mutairi. The Kuwaiti Association for Festivals held a celebration on the occasion of the launch of the "Discover Kuwait" online tourism platform, with the aim of stimulating domestic tourism by introducing the most important entertainment and heritage places in Kuwait.



Kuwait Festival Association launches 'Discover Kuwait' online platform

Stimulating domestic tourism in Kuwait

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Festival Association, headed by Tariq Eid Al-Obeid, held a celebration on the occasion of the launch of the "Discover Kuwait" online tourism platform, with the aim of stimulating domestic tourism by introducing the most important entertainment and heritage places in Kuwait. The ceremony was attended by Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for the Kuwaiti Tourism Sector Saud Hamad Al-Khalidi, Chairman of the Union of Kuwaiti Travel and Tourism Offices Muhammad Lafi Al-Mutairi and a large crowd of those interested in the development of the tourism sector.

The celebration included signing a joint cooperation agreement between the Kuwait Festival Association and the Federation of Kuwaiti Travel and Tourism Offices related to "Discover Kuwait", the online tourism platform project, in order to showcase various events, festivals and activities that stimulate tourism within the country.

Khalidi said the tourism sector at the Ministry of Information is a great supporter and an active partner in the "Discover Kuwait" platform, "which is one of the promising stages to activate tourism in Kuwait, which is considered one of the attractive countries for family

tourism due to its distinguished tourism areas and services that need to be highlighted in the media".

"We are all aware of the importance that the country attaches to revitalizing tourism through a series of regional, international and local agreements, in addition to projects and activities that would contribute to this by supporting the organization of events capable of being attractive in various artistic, cultural, commercial, shopping and other fields, as well as for the revitalization of tourism projects and other projects related to entertainment, which all fall within the framework of striving to diversify sources of national income, as tourism activities constitute a promising non-oil resource in the foreseeable future, which will be achieved through the concerted efforts of various concerned parties, given the importance of tourism in promoting economic and social gains," Khalidi pointed out.

Obaid affirmed this ceremony inaugurates a new era of hard work and constructive cooperation to market Kuwait and make it one of the distinguished tourist destinations in the region by launching tourism initiatives, entertainment events and cultural and heritage activities to restore the leadership of Kuwait among neighboring sister countries, as it was before.

"Kuwait Festival Association is one of



the civil organizations specialized in the field of festivals, tourism and entertainment, and seeks to be one of the most important specialized associations at the level of the GCC countries and the Arab region," Obaid said, indicating that although the association is newly established, it has large initiatives with a global vision that aspires to be one of the active contributors with state institutions and the private sector to market Kuwait as a global gateway to international festivals in the region.

"It is a translation of the wise government's work program (2022-2026) related to the social, tourism, entertainment and community partnership axis, as the program stipulated help from Kuwaiti civil organizations in presenting studies,

research and initiatives, each in its field. Accordingly, the Kuwait Festival Association intends today to launch the tourism electronic text project 'Discover Kuwait' to display various events, festivals and activities, and stimulate domestic tourism and entertainment and heritage places in Kuwait, in which it aims to attract tourists and visitors to Kuwait from various regions and countries of the world in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and all concerned state institutions," Obaid said.

He stressed the Kuwait Festival Association hopes for sustainable cooperation with the Ministry of Information and civil society institutions, as it is keen, according to its national mission aimed at reflecting the direction of the supreme

political leadership and the decisions of the Cabinet, in activating the economic cycle, which includes reviving the tourism and entertainment field and developing it to be a support for the national economy and non-oil revenues, crystallizing a new culture related to tourism, entertainment and heritage based on a modern perspective that stimulates the needs and desires of visitors to Kuwait and the aspirations of the country's citizens and residents.

"The will of all parties came out of the sense of patriotism to work to find a formula of understanding through the joint work agreement to achieve this great and lofty goal, which is under the slogan The world visits Kuwait. These matters will not succeed except by unifying the efforts of all and harnessing collective action in order to achieve them," Mutairi said. "It also comes with the importance of developing human capital, building capabilities and enhancing it, as it will have a willingness to unite efforts and work together in order to develop a new professional staff that will be trained and qualified with high-level qualifications," he added.

"In the event of success in making Kuwait a leading tourist country, it will undoubtedly contribute in creating tens of thousands of job opportunities for the citizens of the country, who will be honored to work under the umbrella of this great national work and make Kuwait as it was in the past," he concluded.

News in brief

Ministry closes 3 stores

KUWAIT: The Commerce and Industry Ministry has shut down three stores for violating rules and regulations made by the Ministry. The violations include selling products that violate public morals in Fintas, selling counterfeit products belonging to copyrighted brands in Uqaila and commercial manipulation in Mahboula area. The emergency team has continued its legal procedures against the violators.

Minister, Dashti discuss

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Women and Children Affairs Mai Al-Baghlhi discussed with Undersecretary General at the United Nations Rola Dashti on Sunday at the ministry's diwan many subjects, including violence against women and its consequences in the Kuwaiti community as well as how to deal with these issues and limit their spread. The two sides discussed social allowances, as it is considered an active subject that directly connects with the Social Affairs Ministry as the body responsible for providing financial aid for those who deserve it in Kuwait. The two sides also discussed organizing a combined workshop to clarify the plans and procedures necessary to boost Kuwait's global ratings. The meeting was attended by acting undersecretary of the ministry Musallam Al-Subaei and assistant undersecretary for social development Salem Al-Rashidi, as well as a number of authorities in the ministry and the supreme council for family affairs.

Arab-Chinese summit

BEIRUT: The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union on Saturday welcomed the Arab-Chinese summit for cooperation and development held in Riyadh on Friday. In a press statement, the union underlined the significant and pivotal role of the Arab-Chinese summit in establishing the mechanisms of cooperation and exchange of expertise between both sides. It also stressed the paramount importance of development initiatives, chiefly the Belt and Road Initiative which is a model of cooperation, coordination and understanding among peoples, according to the statement. The union voiced backing for dialogue and rapprochement among world peoples, while speaking highly of the great value of this historic summit. —From Agencies



KUWAIT: Mirzaam Kuwait Exhibition honors the main sponsors of the exhibition in the platinum, gold, silver, and bronze categories.



Mirzaam Kuwait Expo honors main sponsors

KUWAIT: Mirzaam Kuwait Expo concluded its third edition by honoring the main sponsors of the exhibition in the platinum, gold, silver, and bronze categories. Also, media and bank sponsors, partners and supporters were appreciated for their efforts. The special honor was given to Lolwa Al-Qena'ei, in addition to distributing prizes to the participating students from Kuwait University.

The founder and organizer of the Mirzaam Expo, Farah Al-Humaidhi, said "the turnout for the third edition of Mirzaam 2022 exceeded expectations, noting that the total number of visitors to the exhibition during five days exceeded 400,000 visitors. As for the number of visitors on the first day of the exhibition, it amounted to 60,000 visitors, which

was higher than the last day of the second edition of Mirzaam 2020, and a sign that this year was distinguished by entering visitors into a raffle for grand prizes, with purchases worth more than KD 700,000."

"Mirzaam, the third largest and most comprehensive in Kuwait, establishes its inclusion, formally and implicitly, in the list of exhibitions specialized in decoration as well as interior and exterior design in the region. Our aim for the future is to place it on the global map of forums and exhibitions that bring together decoration, architectural design companies, experts and specialists," she added.

Mirzaam's aim is to expand the local level through organizing the event in larger areas in addition to attracting international suppliers to it, and to improve public taste and build quality culture with a Kuwaiti taste. "We will be organizing smaller branches of Mirzaam that are more themed to support the main exhibition called 'Mirzaamiyat' which will be launched in its Ramadan theme from the first till the fourth of march of next year in Arena in 360 Mall," Al-Humaidhi added.



Farah Al-Humaidhi

Al-Humaidhi concluded by announcing that registration for the fourth edition of the main Mirzaam exhibition in 2023 will be during the month of January, as preparations usually take 8-10 months in compensation of last year's delay due to the COVID pandemic.



KUWAIT: With the winter arriving in Kuwait, people began to enjoy outdoor sports and activities of various kinds. Whether one was into jogging, basketball, cycling, or other leisure activities, winter in Kuwait provides the perfect weather condition for all. —KUNA photos



Local

Kuwait pledges \$1 million to UN Emergency Response Fund

Food Bank offers winter clothes to 600 orphans



Acting Charge d'affaires of the Kuwait Permanent Mission to UN Counselor Faisal Al-Enezi



Purchase coupons given to orphans' families



Needy families receive gift cards

KUWAIT: Kuwait has pledged one million US dollars to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for 2023 to support the agency's respond to disasters and emergencies worldwide. Acting Charge d'affaires of the Kuwait Permanent Mission to the United Nations Counselor Faisal Al-Enezi announced at the CERF annual high-level pledging event in New York.

He affirmed that Kuwait is committed to working with CERF to support rapid multilateral humanitarian response efforts to ensure that aid

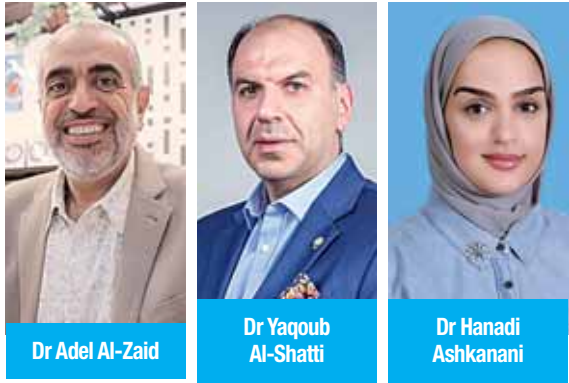
reaches people in need. Al-Enezi pointed out that Kuwait is one of the top 25 donors to the CERF, noting that Kuwait contributes to the fund since 2008. Kuwait believes in the crucial role played by the fund to respond to emergencies across the world and alleviate sufferings of people in distress, he stressed. He stated that the CERF offered humanitarian and relief assistance to people affected by manmade or natural disasters in 100 countries since its inception in 2006.

Kuwait Food Bank

In another development, Kuwait Food Bank announced the completion of the winter clothes project, benefiting nearly 600 orphans inside the country for the year 2022. Speaking to KUNA Sunday, Kuwait Food Bank's Deputy Chairman Mishal Al-Ansari said that the project reflects solidarity and compassion for all segments of Kuwaiti society, especially as it draws a smile on the faces of orphans and eases the burdens of life on their families.

The distribution consisted of purchase coupons given to the orphans' parents to buy winter clothes and monthly material aid, Al-Ansari explained, indicating that this project helped 150 orphans in 2020. The bank will continue to seek charitable work with the aim of alleviating the suffering of deprived groups in society, demonstrating that the bank has a team to manage charitable work to receive disadvantaged families and identify their needs through its electronic systems, he pointed out. —KUNA

Addiction Treatment Center helps addicts, fights narcotics



Dr Adel Al-Zaid, Dr Yaqoub Al-Shatti, Dr Hanadi Ashkanani

KUWAIT: The highest concerned authorities in Kuwait began to rally their cadres and use capabilities to hit back at narcotics via providing treatment for addicts and preventing such menace from sinking its claws further into society. In 2004, the Health Ministry's Addiction Treatment Center kick started its operations, offering the best solutions for those struggling with different kinds of drug addiction. From the initial phase of treatment provided by expert medical staff, providing support through withdrawal symptoms and continuous post-treatment care, the center is the best bet for those facing the woes of drugs.

Speaking to KUNA, Dr Adel Al-Zaid-the center's head-affirmed that the journey into recovery was not an easy one, it takes years or even decades. He noted that the center collaborates with other entities such as the Awqaf (endowment) and Islamic Affairs Ministry and Basha'er Al-Khair (Good Tidings) society to provide the much-needed spiritual treatment for addicts to keep them on the straight path.

Dr Al-Zaid noted social and psychological follow-up was part of the treatment offered by the center, but revealed that not all cases recover fully, there were some five percent possibility of relapse. On their programs, the head of the center said that there was a six-month program-in cooperation with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs-was the go-to program for most cases because it provided a balance between regular social aspects of the addict's need and treatment required. He noted that the program was launched in 2010.

The continuous care program was also an option for patients willing to make daily trips to the center to take the necessary treatments and conduct tests, he added. Dr Al-Zaid revealed that the center ran statistics with other state entities to better address the needs of their patients, saying that the flow of those in need of treatment to the center was an indication that society was aware of the evils of narcotics and illicit drugs.

Regarding the psychological needs of patients, head of the psychiatric unit at the center Dr Yaqoub Al-Shatti stressed the importance addressing the psyche of an addict, noting that this was part of the wholesome experience of treatment. Emotional and psychological support is much needed for those struggling with addiction, saying that relapse most of the time was due to weak mental fortitude.

The initial treatment program of "why are you in the center?" is suited for those who might suffer from outside interference that hindered treatment, he revealed. He added that the center focused at the moment on providing treatment to men over 18 years of age, affirming that the 155-center would be opened soon to treatment women and even sometimes children. Dr Hanadi Ashkanani-head of the social affairs unit at the center-said that her department would investigate the social aspects of why an addict began pursuing drugs.

She revealed that the social component of the treatment journey usually began after withdrawal symptoms to provide utmost social care for a patient. Those who lost so much within the social sphere could depend on the center for support and would be socially connected with those going through similar treatment journeys via the "addicts anonymous" group, Dr Ashkanani said. —KUNA

GCC calls on Iraq to commit to Kuwait's sovereignty

RIYADH: The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stressed on Friday that Iraq should commit to respecting Kuwait's sovereignty, along with international resolutions

and agreements, specifically UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution no. 833 regarding border demarcation. In a final communique adopted at the end of its 43rd session held in Riyadh on Friday, the council also emphasized that Iraq should abide by the UN-deposited Khor Abdullah agreement, which regulates maritime navigation in the bay between Kuwait and Iraq.

It also called on Iraq to complete the demarcation of maritime borders with Kuwait beyond the mark no. 162, while categorically rejecting any encroachment upon Kuwait's sovereignty

and supporting Kuwait's right to respond in line with legal channels, according to the statement. The council further reaffirmed support for UNSC resolution no. 2107 (2013) as for sending the file of prisoners of war, missing persons and properties as well as national archives to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). It hoped that Iraq will maintain cooperation in order to attain progress in all files, while urging Iraq and the UN to exert maximum efforts to resolve these dossiers, according to the statement. —KUNA

Ukraine's reconstruction requires sustained effort

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The French Embassy in Kuwait held a press conference on Sunday to announce a reconstruction conference that will be held in Paris to support Ukraine. French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher said Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction will require a massive and sustained effort, adding Ukraine's energy infrastructure and civilian population bring with them a serious risk of a new humanitarian crisis as winter approaches.

"Russia's strikes on the civilian infrastructure of Ukraine damaged more than 40 percent of infrastructure. This will lead to increased Ukraine's reliance on international support," she said. "A high-level conference in support of Ukraine will be held in Paris on December 13. The conference aims to identify practical responses to address the winter emergency. It will also seek to establish a working

method to bring together Ukraine and the donors to ensure consistency between Ukraine's needs and the international community's support capabilities."

The French ambassador revealed that nearly 70 high-level participants representing Ukraine, main partners and international organizations will attend the first period of the conference, while later almost 500 companies will be present to share the vision of Ukraine's infrastructure reconstruction. Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait Oleksandr Balanutsa praised the efforts of France. "We are grateful for France for having such an initiative to support us. France has been always supporting and standing with Ukraine from the first day. France has already donated humanitarian aid such as generators, power supplies, food, shelter and more, and is still delivering to Ukraine. Such conferences highlight and emphasize that France is with Ukraine today and will be tomorrow too. We are happy to have such a partner and friend," he said. The Ukrainian ambassador affirmed that his country needs the support of the international community to find a mechanism on how they can meet the needs of the people of Ukraine.



KUWAIT: French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher and Ukraine Ambassador Oleksandr Balanutsa are pictured during a press conference on Sunday to announce a reconstruction conference that will be held in Paris to support Ukraine.



Nepal marks 'versary of establishment of ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Kuwait, Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait organized a program on 7 December 2022 amidst the presence of the members of Diplomatic Corps, members of business community, friends of Nepal, media fraternity and members of Nepali community in Kuwait.

In this important milestone year, the embassy in cooperation and coordination with Kuwait government as well as in partnership with private sector and local Nepali community had been organizing a number of programs and activities throughout the year 2022. The two countries established diplomatic relations as early as 25 February 1972.

Sami Abdulaziz Al Hamad, Assistant Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Government of Kuwait was the Guest of Honor of the event. The program was jointly inaugurated by Ambassador Sami Abdulaziz Al-Hamad, Ambassador of Nepal Durga Prasad Bhandari and his Spouse Bhandari and Dean of Diplomatic Corps His Excellency



Zubaydullo Zubaydov in Kuwait by lighting the lamp.

Addressing the gathering Durga Prasad Bhandari, Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait, recalled the growing bilateral relations in the last 50 years between Nepal and Kuwait. He mentioned about some major projects in Nepal financed by Kuwait Fund under soft loan arrangement ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations and said that these projects were mainly focused on energy and agriculture.

He said that Kuwait has remained an important destination for Nepali migrant workers and added that Nepali nationals who have been working in Kuwait have been contributing to the economy of Kuwait as well as helping significantly in bolstering the ties of friendship between the two countries at peoples' level. He underlined that the relationship between Nepal and Kuwait has been growing from strength to strength in the last 50 years.

According to him, the exchange of visits between the two countries, regular interactions at higher political level, cooperation on matters of mutual interest and of international importance as well as solidarity and support at difficult hours have helped to promote friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation between Nepal and Kuwait both at Government and peoples' level.

Ambassador Bhandari mentioned about the new development in the area of air connectivity between Nepal and Kuwait in the year 2022. He said that Nepal's two important cities are connected with Kuwait City with direct flights being operated by three

different airlines companies. Jazeera Airways has started direct flights from Kuwait International Airport to Gautam Buddha International Airport, Bhairahawa of Nepal in May 2022 whereas a Nepali airlines company Himalaya Airlines has started direct flight between Kathmandu and Kuwait City since July this year.

Highlighting the recent development in this field, he further added that Kuwait Airways, the National Flag Carrier of Kuwait, has also started its direct flight operation between Kuwait City and Kathmandu since last month. Ambassador Bhandari expressed the belief that these new developments in the area of civil aviation sector would contribute further to the enhancement of ties in the realm of trade, travel and tourism between Nepal and Kuwait.

To mark this Golden Jubilee year, the embassy of Nepal in Kuwait in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Central Blood Bank of Kuwait organized a blood donation campaign at Central Blood Bank Jabriya in March in which there was an encouraging participation of Nepali nationals to donate blood.

He underlined that as part of their initiative to celebrate the important milestone year of the 50th anniversary, the Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait in partnership with City Group Company of Kuwait organized a program in which the pictures of two major heritages of Nepal and Kuwait were depicted to the information of general public through the double decker buses of the company plying in different routes in Kuwait City for about two months in April- May this year.

OPEC chief lauds Declaration of Cooperation

VIENNA: OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais said that the historic Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) between OPEC and non-OPEC oil-producing countries is an unprecedented collaborative framework. "The Declaration of Cooperation is an unprecedented collaborative framework of 23 oil producing countries that is based on trust, mutual respect and dialogue," he said in a statement marking six years since the DoC was signed.

"Six years later, the framework continues to play an instrumental role in supporting market stability, which is essential for growth and development, as well as attracting the necessary investment to ensure energy security," he added. The DoC aims to secure sustainable oil market stability through cooperation and dialogue, including at the research and technical levels, for the benefit of all producers, consumers and investors, as well as the global economy at large, the OPEC's chief remarked.

The commitment of the DoC participants to a stable oil market has once again been evident following the severe oil market contraction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, adding that these efforts have supported the global pandemic recovery process, and have been recognized at the highest levels of government and by other international organizations and academia.

The Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) between OPEC Member Countries and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing countries turned six today (10 December 2022). On this day in 2016, OPEC Member Countries and Azerbaijan; the Kingdom of Bahrain; Brunei Darussalam; Equatorial Guinea, which later joined OPEC; Kazakhstan; Malaysia; Mexico; the Sultanate of Oman; the Russian Federation; the Republic of Sudan; and the Republic of South Sudan, met at the OPEC Headquarters in Vienna, Austria, and decided to establish the DoC as a platform for cooperation and dialogue in the interest of oil market stability.

Other producers attended the meeting in support of these extraordinary efforts. The pivotal decisions taken at the inaugural OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting built on the successful "Algiers Accord" signed in Algiers, Algeria, on 28 September 2016 at the 170th (Extraordinary) Meeting of the OPEC Conference and the subsequent "Vienna Agreement" decided on 30 November of the same year in Vienna, Austria, at the 171st Meeting of the OPEC conference. —KUNA



Palestinian ambassador, KUNA chief discuss media role in promoting ties

KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem discussed Sunday with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub the role of media in promoting Kuwaiti-Palestinian ties and highlighting diplomatic efforts in support of the Palestinian cause. Dr Al-Salem, during the meeting in her office, stressed the significance of cooperation and exchange of expertise in the media domain, and voiced readiness to provide all potential and facilities for developing media work.

The Palestinian Ambassador, on his part, appreciated Kuwait's support for the Palestinian issue and KUNA's media role. Ambassador Tahboub congratulated Dr Al-Salem on assuming her position as Director General of KUNA, wishing her further progress and success. KUNA's Deputy Director General for Editorial Sector Esam Al-Ghanim, Deputy Director-General for the Administrative, Financial and Communications Sector Mohammad Al-Mannai, Director of Marketing and Public Relations Department Esam Al-Ruwaihi, and Senior Researcher of International Relations, Noura Al-Nafisi, attended the meeting.

UAE Ambassador

In another development, KUNA's Director-General Dr Fatima Al-Salem met with UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Matar Al-Neyadi on Sunday to discuss media joint action. During the meeting, Dr Al-Salem affirmed the importance of broadening cooperation between KUNA and UAE's WAM, through continuous training programs on befalling matters and field works. She greatly valued the development of the UAE media networks, which have seen drastic involvements of women playing major roles amongst the networks cherishing their achievements.

On his behalf, Ambassador Al-Neyadi hailed the

continued cooperation and relationship status, indicating the importance of continuing such works and paving way for more opportunities in all related field. He also congratulated Dr Fatima on her upholding the position of General Manager at KUNA, a "senior position" particularly since she specializes in this field of work.

Attending the meet were Essam Al-Ghanim KUNA's Deputy Director General, as well as Deputy Director General for Administrative, Financial and Communications Sector Mohammad Al-Mannai, Director of Marketing and Public Relations Esam Al-Ruwaihi, as well as senior researcher in international relations Noura Al-Nafisi. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem meets Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub. —KUNA

MILSET Asia announces winners

KUWAIT: The office of the International Organization for Science and Technology (MILSET Asia) announced the names of six middle schools that won the scientific and research competition of the 16th Kuwaiti-French Science Exhibition - organized by the office entitled 'Artificial Intelligence' in cooperation with the French Embassy in Kuwait and the Education Ministry's information technology department.

Dawood Al-Ahmad, Regional Director of the MILSET Asia office, said "The 16th Kuwaiti-French Science Exhibition, which opened on December 5, witnessed the participation of 20 middle schools and 40 students, who presented 21 scientific and research projects on the theme of the exhibition. The exhibition included 31 sections for student teams representing participating schools, in addition to 4 projects for the French school, 5 projects for the MILSET Asia office, and a special exhibition for the Science and Natural History Museum of the education ministry."

"The middle school schools for boys won the first three places, which are 'Al-Harith Al-Saadi School', represented by its students Nayef Al-Shammari and Muhammad Saad, 'Abu Ayoub Al-Ansari School', represented by its students Ali Akbar and Abdulaziz Taqi, as well as 'Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah school' which was represented by students Muhammad Qubilan Turki and Ali Suhail," Al-Ahmad clarified.

He explained that the three winning schools in the intermediate schools category for girls are: "Sarah Rashid Al-Tawhid School, represented by Al-Nour Shaher and Shuaa Al-Ajmi, 'Ramlat Umm Al-Mu'mineen School', represented by Mona Al-Otaibi, and Mays Al-Otaibi, as well as the school of 'Ruqayyah Bini Muhammad' represented by Hessa Al-Furaj, and Bedoor Al-Loughani."

"The exhibition program included, over three days, 11 workshops and training courses in artificial intelligence, where 220 male and female students were enrolled, and administered by French engineer, Kevin Foveau, who specializes in the field of artificial intelligence," he added. The director of MILSET Asia Office emphasized the importance of what the office presented through these exhibitions, which has been active since 2005 with various scientific topics.



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SAINT HELIER, Jersey: Fire crews mobilised work in the rubble of a low-rise apartment block after an explosion on December 10, 2022 in Saint-Helier, Jersey Island. —AFP

No survivors in Jersey building blast

Firefighters called out to investigate the smell of gas

SAINT HELIER, Jersey: Rescuers in Jersey on Sunday abandoned hope of finding survivors from an explosion that flattened a three-storey apartment block, with more than a dozen people feared dead. At least three people were confirmed killed in the blast early Saturday in the Channel island's port capital St Helier, following a suspected gas leak.

"We have three confirmed fatalities and it's fair to say we expect to find more," police chief Robin Smith told a news conference, saying that around 12 residents remained unaccounted for. "It is with sadness that I am confirming that the search-and-rescue operation has been moved to a recovery operation," he said.

The next phase will involve a "meticulous and painstaking search of the debris" which could take weeks, Smith said. A gas leak was the "likely" cause, he added. "But as you often hear the police service say, we keep all our options open."

Aided by sniffer dogs and urban rescue experts from southern England, Jersey emergency workers had picked through the rubble overnight. Fire chief Paul Brown confirmed that firefighters were called out to investigate the smell of gas on Friday evening, more than seven hours before the explosion.

He conceded that something had gone "horribly wrong" given the subsequent disaster, but insisted Jersey islanders could still have confidence in his

service. "We have been searching and we will not stop searching for people's loved ones," Brown said.

Jersey's gas supplier, Island Energy, said it was working with the fire service to understand what happened. Like many others in St Helier, Jersey's Chief Minister Kristina Moore said she was woken by the blast.

"Across the island you could hear this extraordinary sound," she told the BBC. "It's unthinkable news, we're all absolutely devastated and really concerned for the people who are involved, for those whose lives have been lost."

Officials said around 40 residents near the destroyed flats had to be relocated on Saturday,

and Moore praised the community for rallying round. The incident caps a tragic week for Jersey, a British Crown dependency not part of the United Kingdom, whose economy relies on banking, tourism and fishing.

The coastguard Friday gave up a search for three Jersey fishermen missing for nearly 36 hours after their wooden boat hit a cargo ship and sank.

The freighter is owned by Condor Ferries, whose Jersey offices lie near the destroyed apartment block.

"We must call on the collective strength of the island community," Moore said after the twin disasters. — AFP



LIMA, Peru: People protect from tear gas thrown by the police during clashes with supporters of Peruvian former President Pedro Castillo on the outskirts of the Lima Prefecture, where Castillo was under detention, in Lima. — AFP

Peru's new leader swears in cabinet as unrest intensifies

LIMA: Peru's new leader Dina Boluarte unveiled her cabinet Saturday as protesters blocked highways and pelted police with rocks in the wake of Pedro Castillo's ouster as president. Boluarte, Peru's first woman president, oversaw a ceremony in which 19 ministers—eight of whom are women—took the oath of office at the presidential palace.

Boluarte was hastily sworn in on Wednesday hours after Castillo, who faced a series of corruption probes, tried and failed to dissolve Congress, which then impeached him. Castillo is now under arrest. Boluarte's new chief of staff is a former prosecutor who specialized in corruption cases and her new cabinet comprises members seen as technocrats who are politically independent.

"Consolidation of democracy, rule of law, balance of powers, governability—this is the essential line of my government," Boluarte, who was vice president under leftist Castillo, said in her first speech. The 60-year-old lawyer has said she will serve out Castillo's term through July 2026, but on Friday she did not rule out holding an early presidential vote.

Elections are a key demand of protesters who have been blocking roads and burning tires across the country, which has a record of political upheaval and instability. Protests took a violent turn Saturday in the southern Andean city of Andahuaylas, where police used tear gas to quell thousands of marchers, some of whom used slingshots to repel police.

Twenty people—including four police—were injured in the clashes, the national human rights ombudsman's office said in a tweet. Two police officers who were taken hostage by protesters were later freed, the office said.

"We call for calm given the events taking place in Andahuaylas," the National Police tweeted. Students, workers and left-wing political parties held new rallies on Saturday evening in the capital Lima to demand the closure of Congress and to protest the ouster of Castillo. Many roads remained blocked in the south of the country, where Castillo enjoys wide support, including the Pan-American Highway, leaving dozens of buses and cargo trucks stranded near the agricultural hubs of Ica and Arequipa.

'A usurper'

Castillo had tried to head off Wednesday's impeachment vote—the third against him since he took office 18 months ago—by dissolving the legislature and announcing he would rule by decree. But lawmakers voted to fire him anyway.

The prosecution accuses the left-wing rural teacher of rebellion and conspiracy, and a high court ordered him held for seven days in preliminary detention. Castillo was taken into custody by his own security personnel Wednesday after his failed decree, as he headed to the embassy of Mexico to seek political asylum. On Thursday, he was placed in preventive detention. The charges against Castillo carry a jail term of between 10 and 20 years. Boluarte had been negotiating for three days over the formation of her government with conservative parties that dominate congress. Her leftist allies refused to take part after the ouster and arrest of Castillo.

Her intention to serve out his term has run into headwinds. Protesters have expressed fierce rejection of congress and view Boluarte's leadership as illegitimate. A poll released in November said 86 percent of those questioned disapprove of the legislature. "Dina Boluarte does not represent us because she is a usurper. We did not elect her," said Maria Tolentino, a homemaker who took part in protests Friday in Lima. Hundreds of people marched through the streets of Lima on Friday for the second day, demanding Castillo's release. On Thursday, police fired tear gas and clashed with demonstrators. — AFP

Kherson hunts for traitors

KHERSON, Ukraine: "Hands in the air! Documents out!" shouted Ukrainian policemen as they levelled their guns at two suspected collaborators moments after they docked their boat near the city of Kherson.

The euphoria of Kherson's liberation in November has proven to be short-lived. Just weeks after Russians retreated from the southern Ukrainian city, authorities are working to hunt down collaborators who aided Moscow during the occupation of Kherson.

The two men held at gunpoint came from an island on the Dnipro River in the proverbial grey zone separating the Ukrainian-controlled western bank from the Russian-occupied east. "Evacuations are only authorised at the port. It's illegal here," one of the police officers tells AFP.

At the port, "officials in charge of 'stabilisation measures' check if people were involved" with the Russian occupiers, he adds. Since pushing out the Russians, the river is now the new, major frontline of the war in southern Ukraine.

A barrage of missiles halts the impromptu interrogation as the police and suspected collaborators duck for cover.

Smoke out collaborators

The liberation of Kherson marked a major victory for Ukraine and an embarrassing failure for the Kremlin—in what was the latest in a string of setbacks that have seen Kyiv seize the initiative in the war.

Even so, Kherson is far from tranquil as police keep tight control, with checkpoints surrounding the city and patrols roaming its streets. Throughout

Kherson, officers inspect identification papers, question residents and search cars hoping to smoke out collaborators—some of whom they fear are still providing information to their old masters.

"Some people lived here for more than eight months, working for the Russian regime. But now we have information and documents about each of them," regional governor Yaroslav Yanushevych tells AFP.

"Our police know all about them. Each and every one of them will be punished," he adds. At a roundabout near a bridge leading to the waterfront's industrial area, an old man approaches police officers screening drivers, hoping to find a place to fill two jugs with water.

"So, you say you've been living here, but you don't know where the water points are?" a policeman fires back at the man. To prove his identity, the man pulls a well-worn photocopy of his ID from his pocket.

The questioning does not end there. At the city's train station, AFP journalists saw policemen take the few civilians hoping to board a train into a separate room where they were quizzed by five officers.

130 arrested

Following the city's liberation, residents were quick to tear down billboards glorifying Russia and replace them with banners hailing the Ukrainian victory in Kherson. Other signs calling for locals to help in the hunt for collaborators also began to pop up.

"Send us information about the traitors here," one of them reads, with a QR code linking potential informants to an app and a phone number. For the regional governor, the campaign "helps us identify them, know if they are on the territory we control".

"We get most of our information from informal conversations with locals... We also analyse social media and monitor the internet," Andriy Kovanyi, the head of public relations for Kherson regional police, tells AFP. — AFP



DONETSK: Ukrainian soldiers from the 68th brigade prepare a 120mm round to fire from a mortar launcher at a position along the front line in Donetsk. — AFP

International

Tensions soar after attacks on police in north Kosovo

'This attack, as well as the attacks on Kosovo Police officers, are unacceptable'

MITROVICA: Tensions were high in northern Kosovo on Sunday after unknown attackers exchanged gunfire with the police and threw a stun grenade at EU law enforcers during the night. Hundreds of Serbs, outraged over the arrest of a former police officer, gathered again early in the morning at the roadblocks erected Saturday and which paralyse traffic on two border crossings from Kosovo towards Serbia.

Although Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, Belgrade does not recognise it and encourages the Serb-majority in northern Kosovo to defy Pristina's authority. Hours after the barricades went up, police said they suffered three successive firearm attacks on Saturday night on one of the roads leading to the border.

"The police units, in self-defence, were forced to respond with firearms to the criminal persons and groups, who were repelled and left in an unknown direction," police said in a statement. European Union police deployed in the region as part of the rule of law mission (EULEX) said they were also targeted with a stun grenade, but no officers were injured.

"This attack, as well as the attacks on Kosovo Police officers, are unacceptable," EULEX said in a press release. Tensions mounted after Kosovo scheduled local elections in the Serb-majority municipali-

ties for December 18, with the main Serb political party saying it would stage a boycott.

Explosions and shootings were heard earlier this week as election authorities tried to prepare the ground for the vote, while an ethnic Albanian policeman was wounded after law enforcers were deployed in the fragile region. Shortly after the roadblocks appeared, Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani decided to postpone the elections for April 23. The embassies of France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US — along with the local EU office — welcomed the postponement, branding it a "constructive decision" which "advances efforts to promote a more secure situation in the north".

Pristina and Belgrade exchanged accusations over the latest round of incidents. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said he will ask NATO peacekeepers to allow the deployment of Serbian military and police in Kosovo, although he said he believes there is "no chance of the request being approved". Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti blamed Serbia for "threatening Kosovo with aggression". "We do not want conflict, we want peace and progress, but we will respond to aggression with all the power we have," Kurti warned on Facebook. Serbs make up around 120,000 of Kosovo's roughly 1.8 million population, which is overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian. — AFP



ZUBIN POTOK: NATO soldiers serving in the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (KFOR) inspect a road barricade set up by ethnic Serbs near the town of Zubin Potok on December 11, 2022. Hundreds of ethnic Serbs erected barricades on a road in northern Kosovo on Saturday, blocking the traffic over the two main border crossings towards Serbia, police said. — AFP

More Iranians at imminent risk of execution

PARIS: Several Iranians were on Sunday at risk of imminent execution over protests that have rocked the country's clerical regime, rights groups warned, after an international backlash over Iran's first hanging linked to the movement.

The almost three-month protest movement was sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested by the Islamic republic's morality police. It is posing the biggest challenge to the regime since the shah's ousting in 1979.

Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes. Authorities are responding with a crackdown activists say aims to instill fear in the public. Iran on Thursday executed Mohsen Shekari, 23, who had been convicted of attacking a member of the security forces. Rights groups said his legal process, which they described as a show trial, was marked by undue haste.

Iran's judiciary has reported that 11 people received death sentences so far in connection with the protests, but campaigners say around a dozen others are facing charges that could see them also receive the death penalty.

Unless foreign governments "significantly increase" the diplomatic and economic costs to Iran, the world "is sending a green light to this carnage", said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI). Amnesty International said Iran was now "preparing to execute" Mahan Sadrat, 22, just a month after his "grossly unfair" trial. He was convicted of drawing a knife in the protests, accusations he strongly denied in court. — AFP

Gaza firemen ill-equipped to contain blazes

GAZA: Standing on his street in Gaza, Alaa Habboub looked on in horror as flames engulfed his neighbors' home and screams rang out from the inferno that would claim 21 lives. The disaster last month, in a three-storey residence packed with containers of petrol, may have been less deadly if the Gaza Strip had a better equipped fire service, said the 21-year-old.

The densely crowded Palestinian enclave blockaded by the Zionist entity has a shortage of fire and rescue gear, and most of its trucks are decades old, its emergency services say. "If we had equipment and cranes, the fire would have been brought under control," said Habboub, recalling the fire that raged in Jabaliya, northern Gaza on Nov 17.

Since the Zionist entity imposed its Gaza blockade in 2007, when Islamist armed group Hamas took power there, it has heavily restricted the import of "dual-use" goods - anything with a potential military purpose. While cars can enter Gaza from the Zionist entity, fire trucks and cranes cannot, according to Gisha, a Zionist human rights group that examines the issue of dual-use materials.

Zionist officials confirmed to AFP that fire trucks are considered "dual-use" items, adding that one truck donated by Qatar entered Gaza in 2019 through Egypt. The Palestinian enclave currently has around 20 trucks in working order, according to its civil defense unit. "We have a shortage of all equipment," said the head of Gaza's civil defense unit, Zuhair Shaheen. "Our best model of vehicle was made in 1994. Everything is old and worn out."

The lack of equipment "increases the number of casualties and damage to citizens' property", he told AFP. Apart from Qatar's donation, all the vehi-



GAZA: Palestinian firefighters stand in front of a firetruck at the headquarters of the civil defense unit in Gaza City on Nov 23, 2022. — AFP

cles were imported before the Zionist blockade began. But just one of those is equipped with a working crane capable of reaching the rooftops in Gaza, which now has more tall buildings for a growing population estimated at 2.3 million people.

Shaheen argued it is unjust for the Zionist entity to categorize essential firefighting material as dual-use. "I can assure you, there is no military purpose," he said. "We are a humanitarian organization that protects and saves lives." The Zionist entity has fought four wars with Hamas since 2007 and, with a lack of specialist equipment, rescuers have struggled to save people from bombed-out buildings.

Mahmoud Basal, from the civil defense unit, said during the May 2021 war the rescuers lost vital time after multiple airstrikes in downtown Gaza City. "Unfortunately, we pulled martyrs out from under the rubble who were supposed to have been pulled out wounded," he said. He added this was "due to the lack of equipment to detect (people) under the

rubble and no capacity".

The push for more rescue tools has been supported by Haaretz, the Zionist entity's leftwing daily newspaper. In an editorial days after the Jabaliya fire, the paper said officials in Gaza had "warned in the past about the poor condition of their vehicles and equipment". "These services urgently need oxygen, ladders, lock breakers and firefighter suits," Haaretz said. "The Zionist entity should send this equipment," it added, insisting the government "can't ignore its own responsibility for the lives of Gaza's residents".

There is no official contact between the Zionist entity and Hamas, meaning all coordination on humanitarian issues is done through intermediaries. The Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank, as well as Egypt and the United Nations, serve as key players. Shaheen said Gaza's rescue teams work "miracles through their own efforts and with meagre resources". — AFP

Rapid COVID spread in China...

Continued from Page 1

their homes. But the country is now facing a surge of cases it is ill-prepared to handle, with millions of elderly still not fully vaccinated and underfunded hospitals lacking the capacity to take on huge numbers of patients.

The country has one intensive care unit bed for 10,000 people, Jiao Yahui, director of the Department of Medical Affairs at the National Health Commission, warned Friday. She said 106,000 doctors and 177,700 nurses will be redirected to intensive care units to cope with the spike in coronavirus patients, but did not offer details on how this would affect the health system's ability to treat other diseases.

Long lines sprung up outside pharmacies in Beijing on Sunday as residents rushed to stockpile

cold and fever medicines and antigen test kits. Some told AFP they were ordering drugs from pharmacies in nearby cities. "I've asked my family in Shijiazhuang to courier fever medicine because nearby pharmacies don't have stocks," said Julie Jiang, a Beijing resident.

Dozens of restaurants and small businesses in Beijing put up signs saying they were "temporarily closed", without offering details. Several major online grocery and food delivery platforms including Meituan, Fresh Hippo and Ding Dong were struggling to operate in Beijing without enough delivery drivers.

"I'm afraid to step out," said Liu Cheng, a mother of two young children living in central Beijing's Jianguomen area. "Many of my friends with COVID symptoms have tested positive when self testing, but they haven't reported this to the authorities or gone to the hospital." Official case-loads in China have dropped sharply in the wake of the government's decision to scrap routine mass testing, with only special groups including healthcare workers and delivery drivers exempt from the rules. — AFP

designed to recognize and attack cancerous cells had ended up killing each other during the manufacturing process. Multiple additional DNA changes were needed to the base-edited cells to allow them to target cancerous cells without damaging each other.

"This is a great demonstration of how, with expert teams and infrastructure, we can link cutting edge technologies in the lab with real results in the hospital for patients," said GOSH consultant immunologist and professor Waseem Qasim. "It's our most sophisticated cell engineering so far and paves the way for other new treatments and ultimately better futures for sick children."

Alyssa said in the statement she was spurred to take part in the trial not just for herself but for other children. Her mother, Kiona, added: "Hopefully this can prove the research works and they can offer it to more children." The researchers were presenting their findings this weekend at the annual meeting of the American Society of Hematology. — AFP

British medics laud new treatment for...

Continued from Page 1

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is the most common kind of cancer in children and affects cells in the immune system, known as B cells and T cells, which fight and protect against viruses.

GOSH said Alyssa was the first patient known to have been given base-edited T cells, which involves chemically converting single nucleotide bases - letters of the DNA code - which carry instructions for a specific protein. Researchers at GOSH and University College London helped develop the use of genome-edited T cells to treat B-cell leukemia in 2015.

But to treat some other types of leukemia the team had to overcome the challenge that T cells

Iran reinforces hold over Iraq

BAGHDAD: Sanctions-hit Iran is consolidating its hold over neighboring Iraq, an economic lifeline where pro-Tehran parties dominate politics, all to the chagrin of the United States, experts say. For years, Iraq has been caught in a delicate balancing act between its two main allies Tehran and Washington, themselves arch foes. After a 2003 US-led invasion toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, Iran's influence has grown through political links among both countries' Shiite majorities.

Pro-Iran parties now dominate Iraq's parliament, and in October they named a new prime minister following a year-long tussle with their Shiite rivals. Iraq has become an "economic lifeline" for Iran, said Ihsan Al-Shammari, a political scientist at the University of Baghdad. This is "even more so with sharpening Western economic sanctions and nuclear negotiations that do not seem to be leading to a favorable deal for Iran", Shammari said. "Iran's role will be even more important than during previous (Iraqi) governments"

During a visit to Tehran late last month, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani and Iranian officials urged greater bilateral cooperation in all fields. He thanked Iran which provides gas and electricity - around one-third of Iraq's needs - and added this would continue until Iraq was self-sufficient. His country is already the number one importer of Iranian goods. In Shammari's view, Tehran has an "urgent need" to keep Iraq close.

Under a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Iran agreed to curbs on its atomic program in exchange for relief from economically crippling sanctions. The deal began unravelling in 2018 when then-president Donald Trump withdrew the United States, and reimposed financial penalties including a ban on Iran's oil exports. Efforts to revive the nuclear deal since then have largely stalled. Western countries have imposed additional sanctions following Iran's crackdown on protests that have rocked the country since September.

Iran accuses exiled Kurdish opposition groups of fomenting the unrest, and has carried out cross-border strikes in Iraq against them. "Iraq is contested by the United States and Iran, with Turkey in third place in

the north," said Fabrice Balanche, from France's Lumiere Lyon 2 university. "With a pro-Iranian figure at the head of the government, Iran will be able to further take advantage of the Iraqi economy," he added, referring to Sudani, who is close to pro-Iran former prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki.

Iran's influence can also be seen through its links with Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi, a former paramilitary force made up mainly of pro-Iran militias that have since been integrated into the regular forces. The Hashed played a major role in defeating the Islamic State group in Iraq and now has a significant presence in the country's politics. Its representatives are part of the Coordination Framework parliamentary bloc, which controls 138 of the legislature's 329 seats and is made up of pro-Iran factions, including that of Maliki.

Last month, Iraq's government handed the Hashed control of a new public company, endowed with around \$68 million in capital. The Al-Muhandis firm's mission in oil-rich but war-ravaged Iraq is "provincial rehabilitation and development: Infrastructure, housing, hospitals, factories", said a Hashed communications official on condition of anonymity, in keeping with the low profile officials have adopted over the project.

The company's name is in homage to Hashed deputy commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. He was killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad in 2020 along with Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, who headed that country's Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In November, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said it was "not fair" to consider his coalition government "an attachment" to Iran. The Iraqi Kurdish diplomat pointed to its multi-party and multi-confessional make-up as showing "balance" between the different forces.

But pro-Iran parties appear to now have free rein, after rival Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr tried for months to name a prime minister and prevent Sudani's appointment. The standoff led to deadly clashes in late August that pitted Sadr supporters against Hashed members and the army. As Iran's influence grows, ally the United States still remains present, with around 2,500 US troops stationed in Iraq as part of ongoing efforts to combat the Islamic State group.

Sudani has held several meetings with the US ambassador Alina Romanowski since her appointment. Balanche noted that Washington monitors Iraq's banking system to ensure Iran is not using it to evade existing restrictions, and US influence is present via "the threat of financial sanctions". — AFP

International

Activists warn a toothless UN nature pact will fail as protesters take to the streets

COP15 brings together 5,000 delegates from 193 countries

MONTREAL, Canada: The world's next global pact for nature is doomed without clear mechanisms for implementing targets, conservation groups said Saturday on the sidelines of UN talks, as hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Montreal demanding greater action.

Similar factors were widely blamed for the failure of the last 10-year biodiversity deal, adopted in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, which was unable to achieve nearly any of its objectives. "Strong text that commits countries to review progress against global targets and ratchet up action over time is essential to hold governments accountable," said Guido Broekhoven of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), adding he was "very worried" about the current state of negotiations on this point.



What we have on the table is barely an encouragement

Implementation mechanisms are at the heart of the Paris agreement on the fight against global warming, in the form of "nationally determined contributions." However, the current text on biodiversity only "urges" countries to take into account the conclusions of a global review in four years' time—without committing them to enhance action if the review finds targets aren't on track.

"So what we have on the table is barely an encouragement to maybe do better," Aleksandar Rankovic, of the US nonprofit Avaaz, told AFP. "And there is no compliance mechanism being discussed that could help organize this necessary conversation between governments, on how they could cooperate better."

The UN meeting, called COP15, running from



MONTREAL, Canada: Activists protest the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) during the March for Biodiversity for Human Rights in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on December 10, 2022. — AFP

December 7 - 19, bringing together nearly 5,000 delegates from 193 countries to try to finalize "a pact of peace with nature," with key goals to preserve Earth's forests, oceans and species.

On a freezing Saturday, people young and old, including a large contingent of Indigenous Canadians, braved the biting cold to make their voices heard in Canada's second city. Some wore costumes, dressed as birds, trees, and even caribou—an emblem of Canada's boreal forests that are now threatened. "The people are trying to speak, trying to say you can't just talk, you have got to act," said Sheila Laursen, part of the group Raging Grannies.

"Let's not forget that... to protect biodiversity we need to protect Indigenous people first. Indigenous people are protecting biodiversity," Helena Gualinga, who belongs to a tribe in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

'Missing critical elements'

Saturday was supposed to be the last day for delegates to work on the implementation text, before their environment ministers arrive on December 15 for the home stretch of the negotiations. Under pressure, an additional meeting day next week was approved.

"If biodiversity targets are the compass, implementation is the actual vessel to take us there," Li Shuo of Greenpeace told AFP. "The implementation negotiations are missing critical elements that will ensure countries to ramp up their action over time: this is like a bicycle without gears."

"There has been some progress," Juliette Landry, a researcher at French think tank IDDRI added, pointing out that the countries have for the first time adopted common planning and reporting templates, making cross-comparison possible. — AFP

free", with the "repressive climate" of previous coups easing. However, the group has also noted "the ruling party frequently interferes with opposition activities, the judiciary is subject to political influence, and military and police brutality is a significant problem".

'A curse and a blessing'

Bainimarama has painted the election as the "most important election ever" after a tumultuous few years of pandemic-induced pain. Covid-19 travel restrictions put thousands reliant on the tourism industry out of work and sent the national debt skyrocketing.

"We know the stakes: our recovery, our jobs, family support, strong leadership that serves everyone equally," said Bainimarama in a campaign stop ahead of a pre-election media blackout. Previous Fiji elections had been largely split down ethnic lines between Indo-Fijians—descended from indentured labourers brought from India—and the Indigenous Fijians, or iTaukei.

Bainimarama was one of the first politicians to grasp the importance of building a coalition of the two. Yet holding power since 2006 could be both a "curse and a blessing" for him at the polls, according to Suva-based political commentator Shailendra Singh from the University of the South Pacific.

"A curse in that people might feel that this government has been in power too long," Singh told AFP. "There might be voter fatigue—the same government and the same faces, the same messages." Singh believes the high cost of living, with inflation around five percent, will weigh on voters' minds.

"Rightly or wrongly, the government will get most of the blame for it, so I believe it will be a major determining factor in how people vote," he added. In a final campaign rally, Rabuka—a former Fiji international rugby player—said Fijians were ready for change and predicted victory was at hand.

"After 16 years of disastrous dictatorial rule, we're coming very close to the end of it," he told supporters. "We will be consigning them to the dustbin of history where they rightly belong." — AFP



BANGKOK: File photo shows Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout as he stands behind bars ahead of a court hearing at the Criminal Court in Bangkok. — AFP

prison "because he is Russian". Bout, who crossed paths with Griner during their exchange on the tarmac in Abu Dhabi, said he had wished her luck. "You have to wish everyone luck," he added.

'Lost interest in food'

Bout, who was accused of arming rebels in some of the world's bloodiest conflicts, was arrested in Thailand in a US sting operation in 2008, extradited to the United States and sentenced in 2012 to 25 years in prison. His notoriety inspired the Hollywood film "Lord of War", starring Nicolas Cage, in which the anti-hero escaped justice. He said in the interview that he read a lot of books in prison and forced himself to laugh at the beginning of the day to keep his spirits up.

He complained about the quality of food in US prisons, saying he missed the taste of garlic and wood strawberries. "At some point I've lost interest in food," he said. "I have lost a lot of weight." — AFP



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

UK defends China actions after calls to get tough

LONDON: Britain Sunday defended its measured response to an incident in Manchester when Chinese diplomats were accused of beating up a Hong Kong protester. Anti-China hardliners in the ruling Conservative party have demanded expulsions of the diplomats involved, accusing the UK government of appeasing Beijing. But Foreign Secretary James Cleverly insisted that it was right to await a police investigation into the Manchester incident from October, rather than acting on the basis of widely shared video. "Our diplomatic decisions will always be based on rule of law and due process," he told BBC television, drawing a contrast to other countries that might act without evidence.

"We will make sure our response is robust but is demonstrably based on rules," he said, after the diplomats were accused of dragging the protester into the consulate grounds to beat him up.

Cleverly said that similarly, the government needed more evidence on reported "secret" Chinese police stations operating on UK soil. Ireland, the Netherlands and the United States have already clamped down after reports said that China was using such outposts to spy on and intimidate its nationals overseas.

Citing Xinjiang, Hong Kong and development loans to poorer countries, Cleverly said that "we have seen some really, really inappropriate behaviour, unacceptable behaviour" from China.

But he also stressed the scope for partnership with Beijing on issues such as climate change, as the UK tries to find a more nuanced approach to the world's second-largest economy. A fortnight ago, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the "golden era" of relations with China was over, but that his government would pursue "robust pragmatism" in dealing with global competitors.

"China is an incredibly challenging country on the international stage," Cleverly said, ahead of giving a speech Monday touting the need for post-Brexit Britain to look beyond its traditional allies. When he led the country out of the European Union, then prime minister Boris Johnson touted a "Global Britain" seeking new partnerships further afield.

But the concept remains a work in progress, in trade as well as security, and Britain is meanwhile getting hammered economically with inflation running at double digits. The UK is ready to make "investments of faith" with Latin American, Asian and African countries that were not "traditional partners" in the past, Cleverly will say, according to his office. "The UK offer will be tailored to their needs and UK strengths, spanning trade, investment, development, defence, technology and climate change," Cleverly is to say. "This will be backed up with a reliable source of infrastructure investment," he will add, as the G7 club of rich nations tries to counter China's own debt-fuelled development aid. "We will show strategic endurance, willing to commit for the long term." — AFP

Ex-coup leaders face off in tight Fiji election

SUVA, Fiji: Fijians go to the polls on Wednesday after a bitter and close election race between two ex-coup leaders that could test the Pacific nation's fledgling democracy. Prime minister and former military commander Frank Bainimarama came to power almost 16 years ago in a bloodless coup, but is looking for a third elected term via the ballot box.

To win, his FijiFirst party will have to best that of long-time rival Sitiveni Rabuka—an ex-prime minister and military commander who himself led two coups in 1987. In recent years, Bainimarama has switched his fatigues for suits and colourful bula shirts and focused heavily on Fiji's fight against climate change—an existential issue for the low-lying nation.

But the run-up to the vote has been marred by allegations of corruption, prosecutions of rival politicians and threats against journalists. Many local commentators are fearful of speaking publicly about a vote that is expected to be a close-run affair.

"Some are concerned another coup is on the cards," said analysts Lucy Albiston and Blake Johnson, writing for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. "Although there are no reliable pre-election polls, it's looking like Rabuka might win," they said, noting Bainimarama had not pledged to respect the result while his rival had.

But after democratic votes in 2014 and 2018, there are hopes Fiji can again avoid a return to instability that saw four coups in the last 35 years. The military's role will be key, and commanding officer Major General Jone Kalouniwei has insisted his forces will "honour the democratic process by respecting the outcome".

Lobby group Freedom House rates Fiji as "partially

Arms dealer Bout praises Putin, backs Ukraine assault

MOSCOW: Viktor Bout, a notorious arms dealer dubbed the "Merchant of Death", praised Russian President Vladimir Putin and backed Moscow's assault on Ukraine. On Thursday, Bout, who was serving a 25-year sentence in a US prison, was exchanged in Abu Dhabi for American basketball star Brittney Griner.

Speaking to the Kremlin-backed RT channel in an interview released on Saturday, Bout said he kept a portrait of Putin in his prison cell in the United States. "I am proud that I am a Russian person, and our president is Putin," the former Soviet air force pilot said in the 40-minute interview. "I know that we will win," he added, saying he was enjoying snow and "the air of freedom" upon his return to Russia. Bout was interviewed by Maria Butina, who herself served a short prison stint in the United States for illegally acting as a foreign agent for Russia.

Bout, 55, said he "fully" supported Russia's military offensive in Ukraine and would have volunteered to go to the front if he had the "opportunity and necessary skills". "Why did we not do it earlier?" he said, referring to Putin's decision to launch an offensive against Ukraine in February. Bout said he had become one of the first victims of the West, noting he had been under sanctions for more than 20 years. "Everything that happened to me is happening to our country now," he said. Butina, who now serves as a member of the Russian parliament's lower house, said during the interview that US authorities had thrown Bout in

News in brief

US envoys to visit China

WASHINGTON: The US government is sending its first high-level delegation to China since a pledge made last month by Chinese leader Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden to repair frayed relations. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink will join National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Laura Rosenberger on the December 11-14 trip. The two will visit China, South Korea and Japan. In China, Kritenbrink will follow up on Biden's meeting in Bali last month with Xi in which the pair pledged "to continue responsibly managing the competition between our two countries and to explore potential areas of cooperation", the State Department said. Kritenbrink will also prepare for Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China in early 2023, the first visit by the top US diplomat in four years, it added.

UK defends royals after race row

LONDON: Britain's government Sunday rallied to the defence of the beleaguered royal family after a new racism row and explosive Netflix documentary. Following recent trips overseas, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said he would catch up first on Netflix hit "Stranger Things" in preference to the tell-all programme of Prince Harry and wife Meghan. But he stressed there was no stronger supporter of a multicultural Britain than King Charles III, Harry's father. "And I think the royal family's attitude to this country reflects the modern country that we see," Cleverly told Sky News. "That's my personal experience. But I also think that that is something that the whole world sees when they look at us." However, a UK charity at the centre of the latest royal racism controversy says it has suspended work supporting black survivors of domestic abuse, after a torrent of toxic hate.

Over 1.5m without power in Odessa

ODESSA: Over 1.5 million people were without power in the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa on Saturday after a night attack by Russian "kamikaze drones", President Volodymyr Zelensky said. The region's energy authority warned that repairs after the Friday strikes would take weeks, perhaps up to three months. "After the night strike by Iranian drones, Odessa and other cities and villages of the region are in darkness," Zelensky said. "As of now, more than one and a half million people in Odessa region are without electricity," Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the presidential administration, said only critical infrastructure including hospitals and maternity wards had access to electricity. "The situation remains difficult, but is under control," Tymoshenko said. The Black Sea port was a favourite holiday destination for many Ukrainians and Russians before President Vladimir Putin sent troops to pro-Western Ukraine on February 24. Maksym Marchenko, the governor of the region, said Russia had attacked the city with "kamikaze drones" overnight. "As a result of the strike, there is no electricity in almost all districts and communities of our region," he said. — AFP

Iran again summons UK, German envoys

TEHRAN: Iran on Saturday again called in the British ambassador, marking the 15th time in less than three months a foreign envoy has been summoned, as protests shake the country. The foreign ministry called in British ambassador Simon Shercliff, a day after his German counterpart, Hans-Udo Muzel, had to appear, state news agency IRNA said. This brings to at least 15 times in about 10 weeks that Iran has summoned foreign envoys, almost all of them from Western countries. "This is a reaction of Iranian diplomacy to unprecedented pressure against Iran," IRNA said.

Shercliff has now been summoned five times since the start of demonstrations sparked by the death of Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, 22. Amini died in custody on September 16 after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women. Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes. IRNA said the foreign ministry protested the United Kingdom's support for "terror and unrest", and sanctions it has imposed.

'Anti-Iranian action'

Iran on Saturday also condemned Australia for imposing new sanctions against individuals and institutions allegedly involved in Tehran's response to the protests. Foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani accused Canberra of "interfering in Iran's internal affairs and inciting and promoting violence and hatred," according to a statement.

Australia earlier Saturday announced sanctions on several individuals and two entities, including Iran's morality police and the Basij, a paramilitary force linked to the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The "new anti-Iranian action" comes while the Australian government "has systematically violated the basic rights of Aboriginal Australians, prisoners and asylum seekers, and has also sheltered elements of anti-Iranian terrorist and separatist groups", Kanani said. Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong had accused Tehran of "flagrant and widespread disregard for the human rights of its own people" in an opinion piece published earlier Saturday. Meanwhile on Friday, Iran's foreign ministry summoned German ambassador Muzel for the fourth time since September, IRNA said. — AFP

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2022

Business

Biden tries to reboot US brand in Africa amid China, Russia inroads

US-Africa summit will feature announcements of new investment

WASHINGTON: When Barack Obama welcomed African leaders to Washington in 2014, many viewed the summit as historic, not just due to the US president's background but for the pledges to make the partnership deeper and such events routine. The sequel took eight years—the equivalent of two presidential terms—but on Tuesday, Joe Biden will host a second US-Africa summit.

Since 2014, China—viewed by Washington as its main long-term challenger—has consistently outpaced the United States as the largest investor in Africa and Russia has increasingly flexed its muscle, sending mercenaries to hotspots and trying to rally opinion to blunt Western pressure over Ukraine. Biden's three-day summit will feature announcements of new US investment and highlight food security—worsened by the invasion of Ukraine—but, unlike China, also focus on values such as democracy and good governance, as well as fighting climate change.

But the biggest message from Biden, a lover of backslapping face-to-face diplomacy, will be that the United States cares. Since defeating Donald Trump, who made no secret of his lack of interest in Africa, Biden has thrown his support behind an African seat on the Security Council and at the Washington summit will call for the African Union to formally join the Group of 20 major economies, an aide said.

"We believe that this is a decisive decade. The way in which the world will be ordered will be determined in the coming years," said Biden's top Africa advisor, Judd Devermont.

Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken "believe strongly that African voices are going to be critical in this conversation," he said. African leaders have already been holding summits every three years with China and also have regular meetings with several US allies—France, Britain, Japan and the European Union.

Saudi economy records 8.8% growth in Q3

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's economy grew by 8.8 per cent in the third quarter of 2022 from the same period a year ago, exceeding initial estimates, driven by a sharp rise in both oil activities and non-oil activities, according to government statistics.

Growth in the Arab world's biggest economy during the three months to the end of September was higher than the 8.6 per cent third-quarter flash estimate released at the end of October, the latest data by General Authority for Statistics (Gastat) on Sunday showed. Quarter on quarter, the kingdom's gross domestic product expanded 2.1 per cent.

Oil-related activities in the kingdom, OPEC's biggest crude producer, grew by 14.2 per cent year-on-year in the three-month period. It grew 4.5 per cent on the second quarter of this year. Oil activities in the kingdom include the production of crude oil, natural gas and refining activities. Non-oil activities boosted GDP by 6 per cent, an upwards revision from the 5.6 per cent flash estimate in October, Gastat data showed. However, on a quarterly basis, the non-oil sector recorded a 0.5 per cent decrease.

Government services activities grew by 2.5 per

US Fed poised for smaller rate hike with eye on wage

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is poised to slow its interest rate hikes next week, economists say, as central bankers' most forceful moves in decades to fight inflation ripple through the economy.

But the half-point jump analysts expect to see in the Fed's benchmark lending rate will still be a steep rise, as it struggles to cool demand in the United States to bring consumer costs down. Households in the world's biggest economy have been contending with red-hot prices, with conditions worsened by surging food and energy costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To make borrowing more expensive, the Fed has raised interest rates six times this year, including four bumper 0.75-point increases, bringing the rate to between 3.75 per cent and four per cent.

"We think the stage is set for a (half-point) hike this month," said Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics, as sectors sensitive to interest rates like housing reel and inflation shows signs of easing.

The decision will be announced after a two-day meeting of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) starting Tuesday. Policy makers are keeping a close eye on wage growth, given concerns that higher salaries will add to inflation pressures. "The primary concern for the Fed here is really

All, almost, welcome

After a row over invitations distracted attention from his Western Hemisphere summit in Los Angeles in June, Biden has been open with the guest list from Africa. The United States is inviting all African Union members in good standing—meaning not Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali or Sudan—and with which Washington has full relations, which excludes authoritarian Eritrea.

One of the most closely watched leaders expected in Washington will be Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a onetime US ally whom the Biden administration has accused of backing widespread abuses in the Tigray conflict, which has subsided with a breakthrough November 2 agreement signed in South Africa. Also in Washington will be the presidents of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo as Blinken leads international pressure on Rwanda over alleged support to rebels advancing in its giant neighbor. Other presidents due at the summit include Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Tunisia's Kais Saied, who have both faced criticism on democratic rights, and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, days after the United States called his latest election a sham. The foreign minister of Zimbabwe, which is under US sanctions, is also expected to attend.

"We've taken some criticism. I think it's fair to say, from some who wonder why we invited this government or that government about which there are some concerns," said Molly Phee, the top State Department official for Africa. "But that reflects the commitment of President Biden and Secretary Blinken to having respectful conversations even where there are areas of difference."

'Robust' debate on trade

One key topic will be the fate of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the 2000 deal that

granted duty-free access to the US market for most products from sub-Saharan nations that meet standards on rights and democracy. The pact expires in 2025, leading African leaders to seek clarity at a time that the United States has soured on trade deals.

"We regret that AGOA trade preferences have not been utilized to the maximum," Phee said. She expected a "robust discussion" and said the United States may look after 2025 to engage instead with a nascent continental free trade area. Mvemba

in a separate report on Sunday. Since mid-2021, the IPI showed a positive growth trend, accelerating at the end of 2021 and continuing to grow in double-digits in 2022, the authority said. Mining and quarrying grew by 12 per cent compared to October 2021 as Saudi Arabia increased its oil production to more than 10 million barrels per day in October 2022. Manufacturing activity increased by 23.2 per cent compared to the same month of last year. Electricity and gas supplies decreased by 1.8 per cent annually.

In September, the value of the country's oil exports rose 43.4 per cent to 100 billion riyals, compared to 70 billion riyals in September 2021, according to Gastat. The value of non-oil exports (including re-exports) during September 2022 reached 24 billion riyals, compared to 25 billion riyals during September 2021, a 3.4 per cent decline. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, made a strong rebound from the coronavirus-induced slowdown, with economic momentum picking up pace this year amid a sharp rise in oil prices.

The kingdom raised its fiscal surplus estimates for this year and next year, reflecting its confidence in its economic reform program that has been strengthened by higher oil prices. Saudi Arabia approved a 1.114 trillion-riyal budget for 2023 last week and forecasts a surplus of 16 billion riyals, equal to 0.4 per cent of GDP. This compares with a previous surplus estimate of 9 billion riyals announced in a pre-budget statement three months ago. —Agencies



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell arrives for the 45th Kennedy Center Honors at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. —AFP

wage growth," said Martin Wurm of Moody's Analytics, adding that the Fed is unlikely to ease policy until there is consistent development on this front. "That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to keep hiking forever, but it does mean that the rate will increase for a little bit and... stay elevated throughout the next year," Wurm told AFP.

With a higher benchmark rate, it becomes more expensive to borrow funds for big-ticket purchases such as cars and property, or to expand businesses.

'Signs of stress'

Despite the Fed's forceful moves, consumer infla-



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden, speaking about strengthening the economy for union workers and retirees, will welcome leaders from across Africa. —AFP

tion stood at 7.7 percent in October while job gains remained robust, sending jitters through markets on worries that the central bank would prolong its aggressive campaign. "The strong jobs market, rising wages and the strong household balance sheet... are key areas of support" for demand, said economist James Knightley of ING.

Household wealth has increased by \$30 trillion since the start of the pandemic, he noted, allowing consumers to dip into their savings as the cost of living spiked. "However, we are also seeing greater use of consumer credit and credit cards to fund spending, which could hint at some signs of stress and that household efforts to maintain their standard of living are starting to be exhausted," Knightley told AFP.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has warned that monetary policy will likely have to remain tight "for some time," even if the time to ease the pace of rate hikes may come as soon as in December. The timing of this moderation is less significant than questions of how much more officials need to raise rates, and how long they should keep policy restrictive, he added in a speech. While many economists believe there is about a 50-50 chance of recession, Wurm said, this will likely mean a small contraction in GDP.

"What we wouldn't expect necessarily is a big financial crisis like 2008... the big sectors of the economy are still in pretty good shape," he said. The US economy rebounded strongly after COVID-19, boosting incomes, while the lockdown period raked in profits for American businesses as well-accounting for resilience seen despite the Fed's sharp tightening. —AFP

Phezo Dizolele, director of the Africa program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the United States was entering the summit with a "trust deficit" from Africans due to the long wait since 2014. "The summit presents great opportunities but it also poses some risks," he said. "This is an opportunity to show Africa that the US really wants to listen to them," he added. "But now that we have high expectations, the question will be, what will be different now?" —AFP



On-again, off-again, Twitter to relaunch subscription service

SAN FRANCISCO: After several false starts, Twitter announced on Saturday it would relaunch its subscription service next week, including a system for authenticating accounts on the platform.

"We're relaunching @TwitterBlue on Monday—subscribe on web for \$8/month or on (Apple's) iOS for \$11/month to get access to subscriber-only features, including the blue checkmark," the company tweeted. A blue checkmark on an account, which indicates it has been verified by Twitter, was previously free but reserved for organizations and public figures in an attempt to avoid impersonation and misinformation. After buying Twitter in October, billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk announced his intention to diversify the company's revenue stream beyond advertising, turning to new paying formulas for premium features.

A first version was launched 10 days after Musk took control in early November, but it caused an uproar when many fake accounts popped up pretending to be celebrities or companies. The version was quickly suspended. Under the new offer, accounts seeking blue checkmarks will again be reviewed by Twitter, the company said.

The checkmark will become gold for businesses and, later in the week, gray for government organizations, it added. Subscribers will also be able to access functions such as one to edit tweets after they are published and another to download higher quality videos.

"Thanks for your patience as we've worked to make Blue better," the company tweet said. Musk had promised the return of Twitter Blue by the end of November before indicating a few days later that the project had been postponed indefinitely, as experts sought to develop a system to prevent impersonation. —AFP

Business

'Everything is increasing except wages': Inflation batters Ethiopia

Horn of Africa nation reels from skyrocketing inflation, economic slowdown

ADDIS ABABA: "Everything is increasing except our wages," Ethiopian porter Zerihun told AFP, summing up the financial crisis facing the Horn of Africa nation as it reels from skyrocketing inflation and an economic slowdown. After a decade of dynamic growth during the 2010s, Africa's second most populous country has suffered multiple shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a record drought, a two-year war in its north-eastern region of Tigray and the global impact of the invasion of Ukraine.

Annual average inflation is expected to hit 30 percent in 2022 (compared to 26 percent last year), driven by an increase in food costs. "Groceries, food, rent, all prices have gone up," said Zerihun, a 30-year-old father of two working at the sprawling Merkato market in the capital Addis Ababa.

"Because of the cost of living, life is very difficult... life has become expensive," said his colleague Sintayeh Tadelle, who has two sons aged 12 and six and "no savings". Were it not for handouts from the Addis Ababa municipal government including uniforms, books and school meals, his family would struggle to survive, the 29-year-old porter told AFP.

The porters at Merkato, considered Africa's largest open-air market, earn five birr (nine US cents) for

loading or unloading a crate. On average, a good day brings in than five dollars in wages. "The economy is slow, so there's less work and my pay is less," said Zerihun.

'Very difficult'

Packed with thousands of stalls stocking everything from clothing to industrial machinery, the busy lanes of Merkato teem with buyers, sellers, touts and day laborers. But regulars say business has taken a sharp hit this year as inflation dampens customer appetite for spending.

"Business is very cold, not only here but in all sectors," said Hamat Redi, manager of a shop selling televisions and washing machines. A few doors down, shopkeeper Sisai Desalegn complained about a nationwide shortage of foreign currency, making it difficult for him to import the sound equipment and solar panels sold in his store. "Because of the shortage, we are not getting enough foreign exchange from the bank to import goods," he told AFP.

"We estimate that our business has lost 40 percent in two years," Desalegn said, adding that the downturn has forced him to sell everything at the purchase price, putting profits out of reach.

As a result, he has reduced his daily expenses. "It's very difficult to make do with what you have," he said, underlining that the war in Tigray meant his former customers-traders and farmers from the north-were no longer coming to the market. The slowdown in trade with the north has also seen fewer trucks turning up at Merkato, meaning less work for porters like Zerihun and Sintayeh.

Multiple causes

The conflict put pressure on government finances and hit key sectors such as agriculture and industry. It also scared away investors and foreign partners, contributing to a shortage of foreign currency in an importing nation. A peace deal signed last month between the federal government and Tigrayan rebels has raised hopes of an economic recovery.

"I hope the peace agreement will make the situation better in the future," said Zerihun. But Ethiopia's economy hit roadblocks before the war began in November 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic triggering a sharp slowdown. Growth, which averaged 9.7 percent between 2010 and 2018, fell to 6.1 percent in 2020 and is forecast to drop below four percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.—AFP

Post-Brexit UK looks to Africa, Latin America

LONDON: Post-Brexit Britain must look beyond its traditional allies to emerging powers in Latin America, Asia and Africa, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly is set to say. In a speech Monday at the Foreign Office, Cleverly will stress the need for long-term partnerships from trade to climate change, his office said.

The speech comes a fortnight after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the "golden era" of relations with China was over, but that his government would pursue "robust pragmatism" in dealing with global competitors. When he led the country out of the European Union, then prime minister Boris Johnson touted a "Global Britain" seeking new partnerships further afield.

But the concept remains a work in progress, in trade as well as security, and Britain is meanwhile getting hammered economically with inflation running at double digits. Cleverly's speech will emphasize "scanning the horizon" to longer-term goals 10-20 years ahead, even as opinion polls predict his Conservatives will be booted out of power in the next two years.

The UK is ready to make "investments of faith" with Latin American, Asian and African countries that were not "traditional partners" in the past, he will say. These efforts will be backed up by British development finance and G7 funding—although the government has been slammed by campaigners for slashing its aid budget. "The UK offer will be tailored to their needs and UK strengths, spanning trade, investment, development, defense, technology and climate change," Cleverly will say.

"This will be backed up with a reliable source of infrastructure investment," he will add, as the G7 club of rich nations tries to counter China's own debt-fueled development aid. "We will show strategic endurance, willing to commit for the long term." — AFP



ADDIS ABABA: Annual average inflation in Ethiopia is expected to hit 30 percent in 2022 (compared to 26 percent last year), driven by an increase in food costs.



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 8 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	38,775	8,320.41	-1.7%	-2.0%	8.9%	381,042,409	153,602,354	25,446	23.1	2.4	79.1%
Main Market	10,223	5,637.41	-1.0%	-0.8%	-4.2%	524,368,882	58,195,299	1,843	48.8	1.4	20.9%
All Share	48,997	7,449.88	-1.5%	-1.8%	5.8%	905,411,291	211,797,653	43,589	28.4	2.2	100%

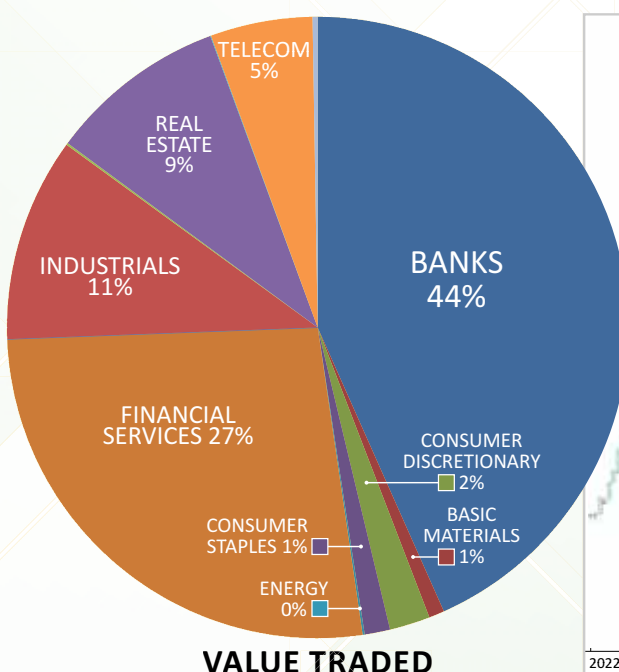
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	30,769	1,826.96	-1.6%	-2.0%	12.6%	140,627,693	91,797,954	10,268	24.0	2.4	62.80%
BASIC MATERIALS	772	870.35	-1.9%	-1.3%	-15.1%	2,089,819	1,701,763	408	5.3	1.5	1.58%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	977	1,457.13	-0.9%	-1.5%	9.0%	25,762,706	4,468,993	1,630	26.7	10.4	1.99%
CONSUMER STAPLES	156	511.91	5.7%	4.8%	-30.0%	6,649,546	2,802,824	505	0.0	1.2	0.32%
ENERGY	238	1,141.93	2.9%	4.6%	-20.0%	7,010,604	230,698	244	10.1	1.2	0.49%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,670	1,311.62	-1.9%	-1.6%	-7.8%	428,457,740	56,572,167	10,871	79.9	1.9	9.53%
HEALTH CARE	225	454.28	0.0%	0.0%	-43.0%	0	0	0	14.2	5.9	0.46%
INDUSTRIALS	3,940	1,113.63	-1.3%	-2.0%	-2.4%	76,643,748	22,472,259	5,744	37.8	1.5	8.04%
INSURANCE	637	1,547.28	-1.0%	0.2%	0.9%	2,074,763	215,758	160	9.5	0.9	1.30%
REAL ESTATE	2,694	1,257.75	-1.3%	-1.9%	-5.2%	193,233,971	19,632,673	4,885	18.9	1.3	5.50%
TECHNOLOGY	11	771.15	1.0%	0.0%	12.8%	852,081	87,650	91	0.0	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,698	1,205.69	-1.3%	-0.7%	10.7%	19,142,238	11,257,513	2,542	13.5	2.0	7.55%
UTILITIES	209	500.00	-3.6%	-3.6%	-16.7%	2,866,382	557,400	329	15.6	1.8	0.43%

Top Gainers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GIH	440	10.00%	3,179,466	1,325,618,227	489
GFC	99.7	9.56%	18,051	1,776,524	15
MARAKEZ	64	9.56%	148,915	9,082,127	29
NAPESCO	825	8.55%	75,461	58,418,988	47
KCIN	1,069	7.01%	66,769	70,547,128	47

Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MRC	63	-16.11%	700,394	48,950	115
TAHSSILAT	19	-10.80%	116,451	2,230	11
ARABREC	29	-9.75%	20,247,352	649,141	655
KINS	538.0	-8.03%	237,416	128,064	58
MASHAER	56.6	-7.21%	3,084,345	167,992	284

Top Volume				
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value
AAYAN	141	-2.08%	116,061,819	16,293,992
IFA	108	2.86%	66,075,440	7,149,980
KRE	110	0.00%	63,154,341	7,034,941
KFH	850	-1.28%	61,784,489	52,402,752
ALAFCO	212	3.41%	49,181,644	10,267,512

Top Value				
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value
KFH	850	-1.28%	61,784,489	52,402,752
NBK	1,094	-2.41%	19,858,712	21,819,718
AAYAN	141	-2.08%	116,061,819	16,293,992
ZAIN	582	-0.85%	18,087,766	10,554,902
ALAFCO	212	3.41%	49,181,644	10,267,512



Market Summary:

- Premier Market's weekly volume and value dropped by 21% and 22%, while Main Market increased by 12% and 4%, respectively.
- The Premier index retreated to 3rd support level after the oil price fell below \$80 USD, while the Main index slightly retreated.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7449, with support levels at 7417, 7379, and 7318, while resistance at 7461. The Premier index closed at 8320, with support levels at 8273, 8184, and 8116, while resistance at 8335. The Main index closed at 5637, with support levels at 5601, 5575, and 5550, while resistance at 5696.

Business

Oil embargo on Russia and price cap disrupt maritime transport

Turkey wants proof of insurance from tankers loaded with Russian crude

BRUSSELS: The European Union embargo on Russia's oil and an international cap on the price of the country's crude are disrupting the maritime transport sector. The EU on Monday enforced an embargo on Russian crude shipments, the bloc's latest sanction in retaliation for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

This week also saw the start of a \$60 cap on a barrel of Russian crude, agreed by Western nations.

Tanker traffic jam

Aimed at depriving Russia of key income, the measures have also slowed transportation of its oil by sea. This is because Turkey has started to request proof of insurance from tankers loaded with Russian crude, slowing their passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits and onto international markets. The Financial Times has reported that Russia has assembled a "shadow fleet" of more than 100 vessels seeking to circumnavigate the Western sanctions regime.

These ships are reportedly using non-Western insurers and selling oil at higher prices to countries that have not subscribed to the new sanctions.

A 1936 treaty guarantees the freedom of navigation to merchant vessels passing through Turkey's two straits. But it also gives Turkey the right to regulate security—a provision it is now using to make sure the oil ships are insured against spillage and other accidents.

The London P&I Club, a leading provider of maritime protection and indemnity insurance,

claims "the Turkish government's requirements go well beyond the general information that is contained in a confirmation of entry letter. "It requires... (confirmation) that cover will not be prejudiced under any circumstances, including where there is a sanctions breach on the part of the assured."

Marcus Baker, global head of Marine & Cargo at insurance broker Marsh, said the price cap "adds another layer of complexity to an already pretty complex situation".

He also told AFP: "The slowdown that might happen because of this added administrative burden may have the desired effect that the G7 wanted anyway." The price ceiling was agreed by the Group of Seven rich countries, which includes Britain, Japan and the United States, as well as the EU and Australia. Meanwhile as much as 95 percent of the P&I insurance market is run by insurers in the EU and Britain, who suddenly can no longer insure cargoes of Russia oil sold for more than \$60 per barrel.

The market price of a barrel of Russian Urals crude is around \$65, suggesting the cap may have only a limited impact in the short term. President Vladimir Putin on Friday warned that Russia could reduce crude production in response to the price limit.

Avoiding ban

"Moscow is already working on circumventing the ban on insurance by providing its own insurance to potential clients through its state-con-



The EU enforced an embargo on Russian crude shipments, the bloc's latest sanction in retaliation for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

trolled Russian National Reinsurance Company," noted Edoardo Campanella, analyst at UniCredit Bank. An executive at an oil shipping company, who wished to remain anonymous, said "it will take a week or two, I think at a minimum, to see how the market will function in light of the price cap". They added: "There's a general view that there is enough

shipping capacity in what can be called a 'Dark Fleet' or a sanctions-indifferent fleet so that Russia can sell its oil without regard to the price cap. "This means to China, to India, potentially some to Brazil or other parts of the world. So it doesn't have to comply with the price cap. So there's enough capacity," the executive said. —AFP

Taiwan premier slams China over fresh import bans

TAIPEI: Taiwan's premier on Sunday accused China of violating international trade rules and "discriminating" against the island after it halted more Taiwanese imports. According to Taiwan's finance ministry, Chinese customs authorities "suddenly suspended" imports of certain alcoholic beverages from the island on Friday.

It said the move was related to a regulation Beijing imposed on January 1 that requires all food and alcoholic beverage exporters to the mainland to be registered with Chinese customs. Some Taiwanese companies had still been under review. Premier Su Tseng-chang accused Beijing of violating World Trade Organization (WTO) norms by "making its own rules" and "meddling in trade through administrative means".

China "is especially tough on Taiwan and especially discriminates against Taiwan... They've asked Taiwan to do this and do that," he told reporters on Sunday. Taiwan plans to appeal to the WTO and will assist the affected businesses, he added. Beijing claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as part of its territory to be taken one day, by force if necessary.

It has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on the island since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, and has previously banned imports of other products from the island as relations deteriorated. "Heard that the #PRC is banning some products from #Taiwan again, including our beer," Taiwanese foreign minister Joseph Wu tweeted on Sunday, using the hashtag "FreedomBeer".

"Economic coercion of course. But they don't know what they're missing: the great taste of freedom." China slapped fresh bans on certain fruit and fish imports in retaliation for US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei in August, which prompted a furious response from Beijing and a flurry of military drills. A year earlier, pineapple imports were halted after Chinese authorities claimed to have discovered pests in shipments, just as the annual harvest was under way. Taiwanese officials said some 2,400 registration applications from food, food processing, fishery and alcohol companies could not be completed. Around 600 applications will be resubmitted, while the rest are expected to be dropped. Taiwan's semi-official Central News Agency reported 11 out of 28 beer and distillery products registered by Taiwanese exporters had been suspended from Friday, citing Chinese customs. —AFP

Foxconn ends 'closed loop' at iPhone megafactory in China

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn has ended a months-long "closed loop" system at the world's biggest iPhone factory in central China, citing Beijing's nationwide loosening of zero-Covid regulations.

Earlier this week, the Chinese government rolled back most mass testing and lockdown requirements to hasten a return to normal life, significantly relaxing three years of restrictions that have tanked its economy and wearied its population. The Foxconn facility in central Zhengzhou was in effective lockdown for 56 days, with workers only allowed to travel between their dormitories and the factory floor on shuttle buses after cases were discovered in October.

In mid-November, violent protests by new recruits erupted over salaries and conditions, with hundreds marching and some clashing with riot police and health workers. On Thursday the company said it was ending the closed loop system. "Given the... further lifting of China's epidemic control measures, the company requires employees to present a 48-hour negative test result in order to return to work," said a notice posted Thursday on the official WeChat account of Foxconn's main campus in Zhengzhou, Henan province. The company added that its shuttle buses had resumed service and urged employees who had not been taking part in the closed loop to return to work "as soon as possible".

Other official WeChat accounts of agencies hiring for Foxconn also announced that the



"closed loop is lifted".

Foxconn, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles gadgets for many international brands. Most of its factories are in China, with its biggest in Zhengzhou—which has been dubbed "iPhone city".

Lockdowns were imposed on the city last month as part of Beijing's zero-COVID policy after a spike in infections. The prolonged factory disruption and protests heavily impacted Foxconn's hiring practices and rocked supply chain stability, to which Beijing

attaches high importance.

A letter sent by Foxconn founder Terry Gou warning the Chinese leadership about the damage to supply chains from zero-Covid helped government advisers argue for an end to the policy, the Wall Street Journal reported Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter. Foxconn's reported revenue last month fell 11.4 percent year on year and 29 percent from October.

It earlier said it was revising down its outlook for the last quarter. Some analysts have predicted sales could drop as much as 20 percent. —AFP

Thailand hits 10m visitors in 2022 as tourism recovers

BANGKOK: Thailand celebrated the arrival of its 10 millionth international visitor of 2022 on Saturday, according to the tourism authority, as the kingdom consolidated the recovery of its COVID-battered travel sector. Thailand welcomed some 40 million people in 2019, but then the pandemic hit and travel was decimated as nations tightened border controls to contain the coronavirus.

With those restrictions easing worldwide Thailand's travel numbers have begun a slow recovery and the government expects to generate nearly \$16 billion in tourism revenue this year. Traditional dancers and drummers at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport on Saturday welcomed passengers arriving on a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight that authorities believe clocked the 10-million milestone.

"The sky is open," Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said in a speech at the airport. "We would like to build confidence that Thailand is still one of the (top) tourist destinations of people around the world." Finance minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith said this week that visitor numbers were expected to grow next year too.

Government figures suggest Thailand would welcome roughly 23 million tourists in 2023, while some analysts believe a full recovery in tourist numbers could happen in 2024. Thai hotel owners and restaurateurs have breathed a sigh of relief as business has slowly picked up. Marisa Sukosol, president of the Thai Hotels Association, welcomed the 10 million travelers milestone "after two years and a half of pain".

"I think next year we will see continuous momentum of growth," she said, pointing to the return of tourists from Russia and across the Asia-Pacific region. But she cautioned against over-optimism-economic stagnation as well as lingering pandemic threats continue to impact the tourism sector.

While Thailand has benefited from the loosening of travel restrictions by other nations, its tourism industry has also been affected by the global eco-



BANGKOK: Tourists disembark from a commuter ferry on the Chao Praya River in Bangkok. —AFP

nomical slowdown and persistent inflation.

Recovery in the tourism sector is also heavily dependent on China relaxing international travel rules, Thai officials have said. China was previously the biggest source of foreign tourists for Thailand. —AFP

Syrian pound hits new low amid growing fuel crisis

DAMASCUS: Syria's nose-diving pound hit a new record low Saturday against the dollar on the black market, according to websites monitoring the exchange rate, as the country faces severe fuel shortages. The Syrian economy has been battered by more than 11 years of war and crippling Western sanctions, pushing 90 percent of the population into poverty, according to the United Nations.

The exchange rate reached more than 6,000 Syrian pounds to the US dollar for the first time, the websites said, driving up the price of goods. Syria's official exchange rate has stood at around 3,015 pounds to the greenback since September—compared to 47 pounds to the dollar in 2011.

The unofficial rate means the currency is now worth almost 99 percent less on the black market than the offi-



DAMASCUS: Syria's nose-diving pound hit a new record low Saturday against the dollar on the black market.

cial rate before the start of the conflict.

An average monthly salary of 130,000 Syrian pounds, according to figures reported in Syrian media, is now worth about \$21. Chronic fuel shortages in the war-torn country have intensified in recent weeks, prompting the government to adopt austerity measures including temporarily instating a reduced working week in the public sector. Syria's sporting federation on Wednesday announced the suspension of "all sports activities... until the end of the year" due to the acute shortages. —AFP

US could 'tweak' green subsidies after EU anger

LONDON: The United States is open to amending lucrative green subsidies that have drawn transatlantic anger for allegedly encouraging job losses in Europe, US climate envoy John Kerry said. In a BBC interview from London, broadcast on Saturday, Kerry also signaled unease over the UK government's decision to permit the opening of a coal mine despite ambitions to slash carbon emissions.

Several EU leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, during a state visit to Washington, have said the US subsidies are enticing European companies to relocate to the United States. Washington's landmark Inflation Reduction Act contains around \$370 billion in subsidies for green energy, as well as tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries.

"I don't think you're going to see it watered down," Kerry said, insisting the measures were needed to kick-start the climate transition. "But will you see, where it might be appropri-

ate, if there were some tweak or adjustment that is fair, and not going to prejudice our own efforts?" "I'm confident President (Joe) Biden would consider that," he said. Biden defended the act to Macron, but said it was never intended to disadvantage US allies, and has committed to understanding EU concerns.

Kerry also spoke out after Britain this week granted planning permission for a controversial new coal mine in northern England, the first in decades. The go-ahead for the project in Cumbria was slammed by Greenpeace as "climate hypocrisy", and Kerry said it risked antagonizing other countries.

Richer countries had to abide by their own climate rhetoric or be portrayed as "do as we say, not as we do", the US envoy said. Kerry said he needed more information about the rationale for the mine, which is intended to supply coal for steel plants, including how its emissions might be offset. "But obviously, we will hear people raise criticisms about it because in general, the idea of mining coal in any form whatsoever is the opposite direction from that which most people are advocating and most people are moving in," he said. Kerry conceded that the recent COP27 climate summit in Egypt lacked "collective ambition" to avert the worst-case models for rising temperatures. But he defended the UN process overall. —AFP

BLACK CHEFS CARVE OUT A PLACE IN BRAZILIAN CUISINE

From a tiny restaurant on a dead-end street come the enticing aromas of chicken, meat and shrimp as an award-winning chef slowly steams dim sum - the finger food typical of Cantonese cuisine. This is not Hong Kong but rather Rio de Janeiro. And the cook is a black Brazilian. "Many people ask me, 'Where is the Chinese chef?'"

ular and he has been named a winner in a new competition called the Black Gastronomy Prize.

This contest, whose first edition was held in November, honors the best black restaurant industry people in Rio in an array of categories such as waiter, sommelier, sous chef and pastry chef, all in a country where racism is deeply

hauca rice - originally from Nigeria and featuring shrimp, dried meat and a golden sauce that is a blend of coconut milk and palm oil.

The menu also boasts a dish from Senegal called mafe and a South African one called chakalaka. Batista highlights where her creations come from by adorning them with little flags

was always linked to a white universe, so I did not see myself there," said Batista. She switched jobs four years ago after taking a class in gastronomy. She lamented the fact that there were no courses on African cuisine, so she learned how to make dishes from countries far from Brazil such as Angola, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe.

'No reference point'

Like Batista, Reis's life was also influenced by things not Brazilian, in his case a trip to Singapore. "When I saw dim sum the first time I thought it was marvelous, so delicate. Right away I said to myself, 'we don't have this in Rio.'" Reis, born and raised in Rio, gives a personal touch to his dishes, using cassava and palm oil, which are basic ingredients in Brazilian and African cooking. At Dim Sum Rio, he decorates his dishes with edible flowers and green leaves of cabbage to cover them, like little roofs. Reis had worked in several restaurants but never made it all the way to chef. Although he has a strong resume, he says that in job interviews white colleagues with less experience would always beat him out. "They always wanted me to be a sous chef, or a basic cook," said Reis, who grew up in a favela, or slum, in central Rio called Santa Teresa.

In Brazil black or mixed-race people account for 54 percent of the population but only 30 percent of leadership positions in companies. Reis says he would have started his own business earlier if he had seen more black chefs in the news media. "I only saw black chefs on reality shows from other countries. Here in Brazil I had no reference point. The job market has opened up in the last few years but racism is still very much a part of society." — AFP



Afro-Brazilian chef Vladimir Reis, 38, poses for a picture while showing some dishes at his restaurant Dim Sum Rio in Laranjeiras, Rio de Janeiro, on Nov 29, 2022.



Batista cooks in the kitchen of her restaurant.

Vladimir Reis, 38, says with a chuckle. He opened Dim Sum Rio almost two years ago in Laranjeiras, a wealthy neighborhood of the city.

"They ask me why I make Asian food and not African or Brazilian food," said Reis. "But I am free to do what I like, without being restricted by what people think I should do because of the color of my skin or the country I come from." Things are going very well for this burly man with thin dreadlocks down to his shoulders. His dim sums are wildly pop-



Reis cooks in the kitchen of his restaurant.

ingrained. "There are many nice stories, and the time has come to acknowledge all of this talent," said Breno Cruz, a university professor who created the prizes.

'White universe'

Best restaurant honors went to Afro Gourmet, run by Dandara Batista, 37, who serves up African dishes in Grajau, a working-class neighborhood of Rio. In the small kitchen of the eatery she opened in 2018, she fixes a dish called

corresponding to the country. Batista said she always felt a strong connection to the food of the northeastern city of Bahia, where her father's family comes from.

"But when I did some research I realized there is a strong African influence on Brazilian cuisine in general," said Batista, who wears her thick hair in braids. Batista has been cooking since she was a girl but thought of it as a career option only after working for many years as a journalist. "Gastronomy



Brazilian chef Dandara Batista, 37, poses for a picture while showing a dish called 'Arroz de Hauca' at her restaurant Afro Gourmet located in the Grajau neighborhood, north zone of Rio de Janeiro, on Dec 1, 2022.— AFP photos



This photograph taken on Dec 7, 2022 shows the bitcoin logo on a smartphone in the greenhouse.

Cash crops: Dutch use bitcoin mining to grow tulips

Tulips and bitcoin have both been associated with financial bubbles in their time, but in a giant greenhouse near Amsterdam the Dutch are trying to make them work together. Engineer Bert de Groot inspects the six bitcoin miners as they perform complex sums to earn cryptocurrency, filling the air with a noisy whine along with a blast of warmth. That warmth is now heating the hothouse where rows of tulips grow, cutting the farmers' reliance on gas whose price has soared since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The servers in turn are powered by solar energy from the roof, reducing the normally huge electricity costs for mining, and cutting the impact on the environment. Meanwhile both the farmers and de Groot's company, Bitcoin Brabant, are earning crypto, which is still attracting investors despite a recent crash in the market. "We think with this way of heating our greenhouse but also earning some bitcoin we have a win-win situation," flower farmer Daniëlle Koning, 37, told AFP.



The Netherlands' love of tulips caused the first stock market crash in the 17th century when speculation bulb prices caused prices to soar, only to later collapse. Now the Netherlands is the world's biggest tulip producer and also the second biggest agricultural exporter overall after the United States, with much grown in greenhouses.

'Improving the environment'

But the low-lying country is keenly aware of the effect of the agricultural industry on climate change, while farmers are struggling with high energy prices. Mining for cryptocurrency meanwhile requires huge amounts of electricity to power computers, leading to an environmental impact amid global efforts to tackle climate change. De Groot, 35, who

only started his business earlier this year and now has 17 clients including restaurants and warehouses, says this makes bitcoin and tulips a perfect fit.

"This operation is actually carbon negative, as are all the operations I basically build," says the long-haired de Groot, sporting an orange polo shirt with his firm's logo. "We're actually improving the environment." He is also selling tulips online for bitcoin via a business called Bitcoinbloem. The collaboration started when Koning saw a Twitter video de Groot had made about bitcoin mining, and called him up.

Now there are six servers at their hothouse, whose exact location Koning asked to keep secret to avoid thieves targeting the 15,000-euro machines. Koning's company owns half of them and

keeps the bitcoin they produce, while de Groot is allowed to keep his three servers there in exchange for monthly visits to clean dust and insects out of the servers' fans. With a 20-degree Celsius difference between the air entering the machine and leaving them, this provides the heat needed to grow the tulips, and to dry the bulbs that produce them.

'No worries'

"The most important thing we get out of it is, we save on natural gas," says Koning. "Secondly, well, we earn Bitcoin by running them in the greenhouse." Huge energy costs have driven some Dutch agricultural firms that often rely on greenhouses to stop growing this year, while others have even gone bankrupt, says Koning. Meanwhile, the philosopher Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who developed the idea of the unpredictable but historic "black swan" event, has compared Bitcoin to the "Tulipmania" that engulfed the Netherlands nearly 400 years ago.

This saw prices for a single bulb rise to more than 100 times the average annual income at the time before the bubble burst in 1637, causing banks to fail and people to lose their life savings. The cryptocurrency sector is currently reeling from the collapse of a major exchange - with Bitcoin currently worth around \$16,300 per unit, down from a high of \$68,000 in Nov 2021 - but De Groot isn't worried. "I have absolutely no worries about the long-term value proposition of an immutable monetary system," he says. "Bitcoin will last forever." — AFP



Bert De Groot, 35, bitcoin engineer and owner of Bitcoin Brabant, wears a t-shirt with the bitcoin logo among tulips in the greenhouse.



Daniëlle Koning, 37, a greenhouse worker, poses for a photo among aloe vera plants.



This photograph taken on Dec 7, 2022 shows tulips and aloe vera plants growing in a greenhouse heated with bitcoin miners near Amsterdam. — AFP photos

Kenya's Maasai swap lion hunts for sports to display their prowess

In a Kenyan reserve near Africa's highest mountain, Maasai youths on Saturday swapped traditional lion hunts for a series of sporting events to test and display their prowess and strength. For generations, Maasai warriors had to kill a

lion as part of the "Olamayio" rite to prove their skills, identify their leaders, and attract girlfriends.

But as the numbers of lions in Kenya plummeted from about 30,000 in the 1970s to just over 2,000 today, community leaders and conservation group Big Life Foundation created the "Maasai Olympics" a decade ago to replace hunt-

ing with sport. Draped in colorful costumes and sporting beads, dozens of athletes took part in the fifth edition of the biannual event. The competition in Kimana reserve, near Mount Kilimanjaro, drew some 160 participants, including 40 women and is credited with playing a stellar role in lion conservation. "It has dropped lion killing to near zero," in the region, Tom Hill, co-founder of the Big Life Foundation, told AFP. "There are only 23,000 lions left in Africa and the figure is declining," he warned. The sanctuary where the games are

held is part of the famed Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem and near the Tanzanian border. The games are a "good way to preserve our lands," said 30-year-old Joseph Lekatoo, who has been competing since 2012. Esther Sereya, 20,

customs: Wooden clubs known as 'run-gus' and used to ward off hyenas are used instead of discs in throwing events. In a revisited high jump event, the goal is to leap into the air to touch a rope with the top of one's head, like the traditional Adumu dance performed at ceremonies.

'Now I hunt medals'

Since its inception, the event has been sponsored by David Rudisha, a two-time Olympic champion and world record holding sprinter who is also Maasai. "We are doing this event for conservation," he said. Elder Maasai men were all praise for the games. "I killed two lions when I was young," 66-year-old herder Lenkai ole Ngola told AFP. "But today, it is important to protect them, because their numbers are declining and also because they provide jobs for young people, he said, referring to tourism.

Lions are threatened by poaching as well as an unprecedented drought affecting Kenya. Following several failed rainy seasons, the land on the Kimana reserve is scorched due to the worst drought in the area in 40 years. The winners of the various events do not receive medals but are rewarded with cattle, scholarships or money. Lekatoo, who won the javelin throw, said: "Now, I am hunting the medals, I am not hunting lions." — AFP



A participant from Kuku village throws a spear during the Maasai Olympics. — AFP photos

agreed, adding: "We are learning a lot about the animals." Lions are sometimes hunted for attacking livestock, Hill said, adding that the foundation has a fund to compensate herders. The games saw participants sprint on a hard dirt track for distances ranging from 100 m to 5,000 m. Other competitions have been adapted to local

participants, including 40 women and is credited with playing a stellar role in lion conservation. "It has dropped lion killing to near zero," in the region, Tom Hill, co-founder of the Big Life Foundation, told AFP. "There are only 23,000 lions left in Africa and the figure is declining," he warned. The sanctuary where the games are



Participants dance and take photos during the Maasai Olympics in Kimana district on Dec 10, 2022, a sports event first held in 2012, in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem.



Three Maasai girls watch the Maasai Olympics.



A group of people dance during the Maasai Olympics.



Participants from Rombo village paint their faces ahead of the Maasai Olympics.



Annie Ernaux is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature 2022 by King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden during the Nobel Prize award ceremony. — AFP photos

Nobel laureate Annie Ernaux hails Camus

French writer Annie Ernaux hailed Albert Camus as she received her Nobel Prize for literature on Saturday, 65 years after the author of existentialist classic "The Stranger" won the same award. "Finding myself here, 65 years later, leaves me with a deep sense of astonishment and gratitude," Ernaux told 2,000 guests gathered for the ceremony at Stockholm City Hall.

She said she felt "astonishment at the mystery represented by the path of life and hazardous, solitary pursuit of writing. Gratitude for allowing me to join Camus, and these late or contemporary writers that I admire. By rewarding my work, you force me to be even more demanding in the search for a reality."



French writer Annie Ernaux is applauded after having been awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature 2022.

Camus, then 44, won the prize in 1957 for his body of work which included novels such as "The Stranger", "The Plague" and several plays and essays. Like Camus, who was born to a poor family in French Algeria, Ernaux's writing explores her own journey from a working class background to France's literary elite.

Honored by the Swedish Academy for "the courage and clinical acuity" of her work, Ernaux is just the 17th woman to win the prize since it was first handed out in 1901, and the first French woman. Outside France, recognition for her work has only come in recent years, notably after the English translation of her key 2008 work, "The Years", which was nominated for the prestigious Man Booker International Prize in 2019. — AFP

LuLu Hypermarket hosts Paws & Tails Carnival

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and the destination of choice for discerning shoppers, launched the 'LuLu Paws & Tails Carnival' that runs from Dec 7 to 13 across all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait. The weeklong event was inau-

gured on Dec 10 in the parking lot in front of Al-Qurain branch, in the presence of the top management of LuLu Hypermarket, along with a large gathering of customers and well-wishers of the brand.

The 'Paws & Tails Carnival' featured various engaging shows that gave the viewers an extraordinary experience, with the vibrant 'flying parrots' show that displayed an exotic species of parrots, which was followed by an informative yet exciting 'science' show which explored the concepts of science in a thrilling way.

Among other salient features of this carnival was the display of various ani-

mal and bird species that included munchkin goats, owls and a variety of reptiles. The promotion also featured a pet parade with the best costumed pets winning amazing prizes.

The first prize winner was awarded a KD 100 gift voucher, while the second and third prize winners walked away with gift vouchers worth KD 75 and KD 50 respectively. The 'Paws and Tails Carnival' reiterates LuLu Hypermarket's continued commitment to provide shoppers with an unrivaled shopping experience.



Crawford knocks out Avanesyan to retain WBO welterweight title

Unbeaten Crawford sends Avanesyan sprawling with a right hook

LOS ANGELES: Unbeaten American Terence Crawford knocked out David Avanesyan in the sixth round on Saturday to retain his World Boxing Association welterweight world title. Crawford, fighting in front of home fans at the CHI Health Center arena in Omaha, Nebraska, sent Avanesyan sprawling with a right hook at 2:14 of the sixth, improving to 39-0 with 30 knockouts.

A former undisputed light welterweight world champion, Crawford made his sixth defense of the title he claimed when he stopped Australian Jeff Horn in the ninth round in June of 2018. No opponent has taken Crawford the distance in more than six years. He punished Avanesyan in the sixth with repeated left uppercuts, finally following one short left with the right hook that knocked the challenger out cold.

Crawford's 10th straight knockout ended the six-fight winning streak of London-based Russian Avanesyan, the reigning European Champion in the 147-pound division who fell to 29-3 with one draw and 17 knockouts. Crawford's latest victory could at last

pave the way for a long-awaited matchup with fellow American Errol Spence Jr., unbeaten holder of the World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation titles.

The two had been in talks for a meeting this year and when that failed to materialize Crawford opted for the title defense against Avanesyan that was his lone bout in 2022. Spence, who owns a record of 28-0 with 22 knockouts, returned from surgery to repair a detached retina to score a 10th-round technical knockout of Yordenis Ugas in April to add the WBA belt to his WBC and IBF titles. Spence had been set to fight Manny Pacquiao in August 2021 but withdrew from the matchup because of the eye injury. It was the second major setback of Spence's career after an October 2019 car crash led to him being hospitalized. On Saturday, Spence posted a video on Instagram saying he'd been in another car accident, showing damage to his vehicle and saying he was hit by a 14-year-old driver who had run a red light after taking his parents' car. "It always happens to me," Spence says in the video.—AFP



OMAHA: WBO champion Terence Crawford (right) and David Avanesyan trade punches during their welterweight title fight at CHI Health Center on December 10, 2022.—AFP



Tadhamon Women Futsal continue their outstanding run

KUWAIT: Tadhamon Women Futsal team continued their outstanding run as they defeated Kuwait 2-1 during their Saturday match in the fifth round of the League. Tadhamon now have 12 points (in second

place in goal difference). Fatat maintained their lead with a win against Fatayat Al-Oyoun 3-1 in the same round. Kuwait remained third with six points; Fatayat Al-Oyoun remain fourth - without a point.

The match between Kuwait and Tadhamon was marked with cautious and defensive approach. Kuwait seemed to have the upper hand, but their attacks were thwarted as Tadhamon girls were able to score and ensured their win. This is the second win of Tadhamon over Kuwait as they beat them in the first round 6-3. Meanwhile in the second match, title holders Fatat beat Fatayat Al-Oyoun 3-1 to keep their lead on the standings.



Kuwaiti secures 3rd in Esports Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Fahad Al-Mutairi won third place at the "Tekken 7" game during the World Esports Championship 2022 being held in Bali, Indonesia. Al-Mutairi had a highly distinguished performance as he overcame players from South Korea, Poland and Dominican in the preliminaries, but lost to the Italians in the semi-finals 2-3 to settle in the third place following fierce competition. Al-Mutairi won \$5000, besides the bronze medal. Chairman of Kuwait Esports Club Abdullah Al-Ali was happy with the victory. Al-Mutairi thanked Kuwait, Gulf and Arab youths for their support and lauded the role of Kuwait Esports Club in providing all that is necessary for the success of Kuwaiti players.



Annual Shooting Tournament ends

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Annual Shooting Tournament concluded with a closing ceremony at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex Saturday. Participants from Kuwait Shooting Sport Club, Kuwait National Guard, Bahrain Shooting Federation and Kazakhstan Shooting Sport Federation competed for the coveted prize.

Sheikh Abdullah Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem and Sheikha Mariam Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation Duaj Al-Otaibi, Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi, board members and guests were present at the ceremony. Otaibi in a press statement thanked Sheikh Abdullah and Sheikha Mariam for being present at the closing ceremony. He also thanked the Bahrain and

Kazakhstan shooting federations, organization committee and referees for their efforts.

He also congratulated the winners, adding that Kuwait shooting is continuing to progress and recently Kuwait was able to win third place in world rankings in the trap event, and is aiming for an Olympic medal at

the Paris 2024 Olympics. Otaibi thanked HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister for caring for the sport of shooting. He said the annual HH the Amir Grand Prix will be held in February.

Results of the tournament are as follows: 10m Air Pistol - Men: Valeriy Rakhimzhan, Kazakhstan; Maxim

Mazepa, Kazakhstan; Hamad Al-Namshan, National Guard. 10m Air Rifle - Men: Konstantin Malinovsky, Kazakhstan; Ilya Fedin, Kazakhstan; Khalid Salman, Bahrain. 10m Air Pistol - Women: Valeriya Popelova, Kazakhstan; Lrina Yunusmetova, Kazakhstan; Israa Bahman, Club.

10m Air Rifle - Women: Anastasiya Grigoryeva, Kazakhstan; Yelizaveta Bezrukova, Kazakhstan; Mariam Erzouqi, Club. Recurve Archery - Men: Abdullah Mohammad Taha, Club; Abdullah Al-Harby, National Guard; Essa Saqer, Bahrain. Compound Archery - Men: Ahmad Al-Shatti, Club; Abdullah Malallah, Club; Bader Al-Shilahi, National Guard.

Recurve Archery - Women: Suha Sheikh, Bahrain; Reem Al-Naqeeb, Club; Nour-Al-Huda Al-Shaibani, Club. 30m Recurve Archery - Juniors Men: Ali Al-Zaid, Club; Saad Al-Baloud, Club; Abdelwahab Al-Enezi, Club. 18m Recurve Archery - Juniors Men: Anas Al-Shatti, Club; Waleed Mohammad, Club; Qaed Al-Dhafiri, Club. 10m Recurve Archery-Junior Women: Mashaal Al-Barazi, Club; Lujain Al-Shammari, Club; Amenah Al-Foudari, Club.



Bahrain Team



Kazakh Team



National Guard Team



Shooter Mariam Erzouqi with Sheikha Mariam Al-Sabah



Sports

Warriors send a signal, cool off red-hot Celtics

Bulls rout Dallas Mavericks 144-115

LOS ANGELES: The Golden State Warriors sent a strong signal Saturday that they won't give up their NBA crown without a fight, thumping the Boston Celtics 123-107 in an NBA Finals rematch. While the Warriors have struggled to build momentum in their title defense this season, the Celtics have streaked to the best record in the league.

But Golden State, with 34 points from Klay Thompson and 32 from Stephen Curry, were more than a match for a Celtics team that came into San Francisco riding a three-game winning streak. "We just played these guys in the NBA Finals - you want to send a message," said Golden State forward Draymond Green, who acknowledged the Warriors were also eager to end a two-game slide.

Thompson got going early, scoring 24 points in the first half. Curry, who connected on 12 of 21 shots from the field and had six of the Warriors' 13 three-pointers, said defense keyed the win. "From the start we tried to defend without fouling, just make it tough for them," Curry said. Jaylen Brown scored 31 points and pulled down nine rebounds for Boston. Jayson Tatum added 18 points and Malcolm Brogdon chipped in 16 off the bench.

"They have so many great guys that can put the ball in the basket," Curry said. "Tatum and Brown have played amazingly high-level basketball all year. You've got to live with certain shots they take, but you try to make them work for it all night. Offensively we moved the ball. Klay got going early, but our defense connected with our offense, which is great." Curry downplayed the idea that the victory carried special significance. "It got us above .500," he said of a win that pushed the Warriors' record to 14-13.

Boston star Tatum also said the early season con-

test - some six months after the Warriors rallied to win last season's championship series - carried no special significance. "It was one game," Tatum said. "It's not going to dictate our season. It's all about how we respond." Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said the setback could prove beneficial in the long run. "They tested us," Mazzulla said. "That's good for us to go through." Elsewhere, the short-handed Brooklyn Nets - led by a career-high 33 points from Cam Thomas - edged the Indiana Pacers 136-133 in Indianapolis.

The star duo of Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving were just two of seven Nets absentees, but after trailing by nine with 7:14 to play Brooklyn's backups came through. Veteran guard Patty Mills added 24 points, Edmond Sumner scored 21 and Day'Ron Sharpe chipped in 20 as the Nets won their third straight. With their stars sidelined - Durant for knee injury management and Irving with a tight adductor - the Nets withstood 21 three-pointers from the Pacers. Tyrese Haliburton scored 35 points to lead seven Indiana players in double figures.

The Nets trailed 120-113 with 5:04 remaining, but escaped when Andrew Nembhard couldn't get his three-pointer to fall in the final second. Los Angeles Clippers guard John Wall felt the love and - thanks to a strong performance from Paul George and last-minute heroics from Nicolas Batum - got the win in his return to Washington. George scored 36 points and Batum drilled a go-ahead three-pointer with 23.8 seconds remaining as the Clippers beat the Wizards 114-107.

Jokic triple-double

It was a homecoming for Wall, who went to Washington as the top draft pick in 2010 and



SAN FRANCISCO: Donte DiVincenzo #0 of the Golden State Warriors steals the ball from Malcolm Brogdon #13 of the Boston Celtics during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game at Chase Center on December 10, 2022. — AFP

played nine seasons with the Wizards. He received a standing ovation when he was introduced before the game and was honored with a video tribute during an early timeout. He'd been back once before while with Houston, but the Covid pandemic meant no fans were at the game. In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points and grabbed nine rebounds to lead the Bulls to a 144-115 rout of

the Dallas Mavericks, who were without NBA scoring leader Luka Doncic.

Denver's NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic had a triple-double of 31 points, 12 rebounds and 14 assists in the Nuggets' 115-110 victory over the Utah Jazz. San Antonio celebrated the 26th anniversary of Gregg Popovich's first game as coach of the Spurs with a 115-111 victory over the Heat in Miami. — AFP

Axelsen, Yamaguchi win badminton Finals

BANGKOK: Men's badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen regained his mojo to claim his eighth title for 2022, steamrolling Indonesian ace Anthony Ginting at the season-ending World Tour Finals in Bangkok on Sunday. Reigning world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan defeated Taiwanese powerhouse Tai Tzu Ying to claim the women's singles crown. The Badminton World Federation had moved its \$1.5 million flagship event to the Thai capital's Nimibutr Arena after original host China dropped the tournament due to its tough COVID restrictions. Axelsen, the defending champion, appeared fresh, relaxed, energetic and in control as he cruised to a 21-13 victory in game one.

His confidence had been shaky following a surprise loss to India's HS Prannoy on Friday - only his third defeat this year - but he appeared to be a different player on Sunday. Ginting struggled in the second game too, and was down eight points at the interval. The world number seven put up a fight in the final few rallies but lacked stamina and patience as Axelsen galloped to a 10-point advantage, ultimately triumphing 21-14.

"It feels absolutely amazing," Axelsen said post-match, after dancing across the court and thanking his wife and two young daughters in the crowd. "I couldn't have wished for a better ending (to the year)." He attributed his solid recovery after two gruelling matches before the final to good rest and eating well. A disappointed Ginting said he was looking forward to a big 2023 and hoped to grow in confidence. "I cannot get any easy points from him," Ginting said.

Yamaguchi dominates

In the women's final, Yamaguchi was victorious in closely fought straight games - 21-18, 22-20. Tai - the Tokyo Olympic silver medalist - made a number of unforced errors and struggled to match Yamaguchi's pace while maintaining shot quality. Yamaguchi had a four-point advantage at the tail end of the first game and although Tai saved a couple of game points, the Japanese star was unstoppable. The second game was filled with impressive net exchanges and electric rallies, with Yamaguchi again dominating.

Tai showed moments of brilliance but grew visibly frustrated as Yamaguchi inched closer to the trophy and her second end-of-year championship title. "My opponent was skilled and quite strong, on the second game I was trying to do my best - use all my skills and power," Yamaguchi said post-match. Tai praised her opponent's net play and said her own defense had been lacking. "Her speed was faster than mine which resulted in her having (an) advantage in attack," Tai said.

In the men's doubles, Chinese pair Liu Yuchen and Ou Xuanyi were too good for Indonesia's Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan, winning 21-17, 19-21, 21-12. In the women's doubles, Thai sisters Benyapa and Nuntakarn Aimsaard lost to Chinese duo Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan 13-21, 14-21. And in the mixed doubles, China's Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong upstaged Thai stars Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai 21-19, 18-21, 21-13. — AFP

Saints deny faking injury for delay in loss to Buccaneers

NEW YORK: The New Orleans Saints denied that defensive end Cameron Jordan faked an injury for a deliberate delay after the NFL imposed multiple fines on the club on Saturday. The NFL Network and ESPN reported that the league fined the Saints \$350,000, coach Dennis Allen \$100,000, defensive line coach Ryan Nielsen \$50,000 and Jordan \$50,000 for actions in Monday's 17-16 loss at Tampa Bay.

The move came midway into the fourth quarter when Jordan kneeled and pointed to his lower left leg, forcing officials to halt the contest as Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady was moving to run a fourth-down play. After the delay, the Bucs punted but would later score two touchdowns for the triumph. Jordan returned to the game four plays into the Bucs' first possession after the punt. "The New Orleans Saints deny any allegations of purposefully delaying the game on Monday evening," the team said in a statement posted on its website.

"Defensive end Cameron Jordan felt foot pain



TAMPA: Rachaad White #29 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers fumbles the ball against Cameron Jordan #94 of the New Orleans Saints during the third quarter in the game at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

following a third-down play and sought medical attention. He entered the blue medical tent and was examined by the medical staff and following the examination he was taped and able to finish the

game." An MRI on Tuesday confirmed Jordan suffered an acute mid-foot sprain in his left foot, the Saints said, adding that he has been treated each day since for the injury at the team's facility. — AFP

Leinster hammer Racing as Sharks edge Quins

PARIS: Four-time European champions Leinster began their Champions Cup campaign with a bang, running in six tries in a 42-10 hammering of French side Racing 92 in Le Havre on Saturday. There was also a historic first in Durban where Sharks became the first South African franchise to take part in the new-format Champions Cup, edging English side Harlequins 39-31 in a pulsating match. Racing, laced with international stars such as Scotland fly-half Finn Russell and France centre Gael Fickou, went into the tournament with high hopes of improving on last season when they lost to eventual champions La Rochelle in the semi-finals.

But, transported from their usual home arena in Paris because of a clash of dates, they were helpless as the Irish marauders, who lost to La Rochelle in the final last May, overpowered them from the start. Prop Andrew Porter crashed over in the fourth minute and further tries from Dan Sheehan and Garry Ringrose, while Racing were down to 14 men after hooker Camille Chat was shown a yellow card, gave Leinster a 21-3 lead at the break.

Another yellow card saw the back of Racing scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec in the 62nd minute



LE HAVRE: Leinster's Irish lock James Ryan (center) is tackled by Racing92's French lock Cameron Woki (#4) during the European Rugby Champions Cup Pool A rugby union match between Racing92 and Leinster at the Stade Oceane on December 10, 2022. — AFP

which opened the door for Josh van der Flier and Ed Byrne to add further tries. Former England wing Christian Wade pulled a try back for Racing but World Player of the Year van der Flier sealed the thrashing with a sixth try in the final minute. "I don't

know if it was a show of force," said Leinster coach Leo Cullen. "We wanted to get this competition off to a good start. With this format, you don't have too much room for error, you have to maximise each of our points. — AFP

Thomas and Spieth beat Tiger, McIlroy 3&2 in The Match

MIAMI: Americans Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth dominated Tiger Woods and top-ranked Rory McIlroy on Saturday for a 3&2 victory in The Match, a made-for-television night event. World number eight Thomas and 14th-ranked Spieth won three of the first four holes and combined for seven birdies in 10 holes to capture the 12-hole match-play exhibition at Pelican Golf Club in Belleair, Florida.

"It was awesome," Spieth said. "What a cool experience. We got comfortable out there and made

some birdies." Stars joked with each other in a relaxed atmosphere during the unique four-ball (best-ball) matchup. "The joy of getting this does not match the joy of standing here with Tiger just being so upset," Spieth said as all four players laughed. The Match raised \$2.6 million to benefit relief charities for Hurricane Ian, which struck the region earlier this year.

"We were able to do something under the lights that hadn't happened before in our sport, to grow it in a different way," Woods said. "And people who got devastated by Hurricane Ian, we were able to create a lot more funds to help them regrow back here." Woods, a 15-time major winner who shares the record of 82 PGA Tour titles with Sam Snead, had played only nine rounds this year while recovering from severe leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash.

The casual setting marked the first competitive

golf for Woods since he missed the cut at the British Open in July at St. Andrews. "I haven't hit a golf ball in about 2 1/2 weeks so this should be interesting," Woods said before the start. Woods, who turns 47 later this month, skipped last week's Hero World Challenge invitational that he hosts in the Bahamas due to plantar fasciitis in his right foot. All four used golf carts and no caddies in The Match, which offered such challenges as hitting tee shots out of their own shadows. Woods said his son Charlie, whom he will play alongside in a father-son event next week, has outdriven him. "He finally did it a few weeks ago," Woods said. "I spun one, he tomahawked one and got me." McIlroy, a four-time major winner from Northern Ireland, captured the Tour Championship and his third FedEx Cup playoff crown in August and defended his CJ Cup title in October for his 23rd PGA victory. — AFP

Southgate future in focus; England digest WCup exit

Too familiar backdrop of heroic failure

DOHA: England crashed out of the World Cup against an all too familiar backdrop of heroic failure and agonizing over yet another crucial missed penalty in a major championship. But as the Three Lions packed their bags on Sunday there was much about the circumstances of their exit that felt like a break from the past. No anguished wailing about tactical failings or technical ineptitude. No demands for a root-and-branch review of English football, and no calls for a change of manager.

Instead, a growing consensus that Gareth Southgate should - if he wants to - be allowed to continue for at least one more tournament. The 52-year-old manager was roundly lambasted after his team's two previous tournaments, blamed for an inability to tweak his gameplan mid-course during the 2018 World Cup semi-final loss to Croatia and last year's European Championship final defeat to Italy at Wembley.

Yet as the desert dust settled on Saturday's 2-1 loss to France, few were accusing Southgate of tactical incompetence. Southgate's decision to go on the front foot against the world champions, opting for a 4-3-3 formation, came within a whisker of paying off. "We wanted to go toe to toe, we felt that was the way we wanted to approach the tournament," Southgate said afterwards. "We've done that."

"We've had consistent performances across three tournaments but tonight is probably the best we've played against a major nation across the period that I've been in charge. "But we have fallen short and the scoreline is all that matters and that's hard to take." Southgate's current contract runs through to the end of 2024, meaning he will have the chance to lead England at the next European Championship. The England manager, however, said that he plans to take time to reflect on his future before deciding whether to stay or go.



AL KHOR: England's midfielder #22 Jude Bellingham reacts to his team's loss in the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between England and France on December 10, 2022. —AFP

'I hope he stays'

"I've got to be sure that whatever decision I make is the right one," Southgate said. "I think it's right to take a bit of time to do that because I know in the past how my feelings have fluctuated in the immediate aftermath of tournaments." Southgate may perhaps be persuaded to stay by the array of talent that should remain at his disposal through the next tournament cycle.

The average of Saturday's England starting lineup was 26. The core of the team should still be available for years to come. Players such as Jude Bellingham (19), Phil Foden (22), Bukayo Saka (21)

and Declan Rice (23) are still maturing. Southgate hinted that the age profile of his squad may persuade him to see out his contract. "There is so much to be excited about when you see the age of a lot of the players," he said, before adding, ruefully: "But you still have to win games that are winnable to reach semi-finals and finals."

Southgate may also be tempted to bear in mind the example of his continental counterparts. Former Germany coach Joachim Loew only tasted tournament success at the fourth attempt while France manager Didier Deschamps has been in charge of Les Bleus since 2012. Southgate's players are

adamant their manager should remain in charge. "I hope he stays," said Rice. "There's a lot of talk around that. He's been brilliant for us. There's a lot of criticism that's not deserved." Harry Kane, who missed a late penalty against France that would have levelled the scores at 2-2, also hopes Southgate stays. "We love having Gareth as a manager and we want him to stay for sure but that's his decision," Kane said. "We've got a great team, great young players kind of coming into their prime, and we've got the Euros not too far away. So as much as this hurts we have to move on and look forward to that." —AFP



RABAT: Morocco's supporters celebrate after their country's win of the Qatar 2022 World Cup football match between Morocco and Portugal, in the capital Rabat, on December 10, 2022. — AFP

Morocco make it 4th time lucky for Africa

DOHA: Morocco's 1-0 victory over Portugal on Saturday made them the first African team to reach the last four of a World Cup. Three African teams had fallen in the quarter-final stage before Walid Regragui's side finally ended the continent's long wait for a semi-final spot. Cameroon in 1990, Senegal in 2002 and Ghana in 2010 had all made strong runs in the tournament but were unable to go beyond the last eight.

Cameroon's pioneers

The first African team to reach the quarters were Cameroon in Italia '90 where the 'Indomitable Lions', having beaten Colombia in the last 16, came up against Bobby Robson's England. David Platt put England ahead in the 25th minute but the introduction of the 38-year-old Roger Milla at the break

sparked a turnaround. Milla won a penalty which Emmanuel Kunde converted in the 61st minute and then four minutes later set Eugene Ekeke to put the African side ahead. But Gary Lineker's 83rd minute penalty took the game into extra-time and the England poacher struck again in the 105th minute to end Cameroon's dream. Despite the defeat Cameroon took a deserved lap of honor at the San Paolo stadium in Naples having won many hearts and much respect with their performances which began with a 1-0 win over Argentina in their opening group game.

Senegal's run to the last eight in South Korea and Japan was all the more impressive given it was their first appearance in a World Cup tournament. The Lions made a grand entry beating the defending champion and favourite France 1-0 in the opening match. That shock victory was followed up draws with Denmark (1-1) and Uruguay (3-3) to set up a round of 16 clash with Sweden which was won 2-1 thanks to two goals from Henri Camara, the second the match-winning 'golden goal' in extra-time. —AFP

France fans savor 'brilliant' victory

PARIS: Elated French fans on both sides of the Channel roared with delight and threw dance moves after their team's dramatic World Cup quarter-final victory over old rivals England in Qatar on Saturday. At The Frog and Rosbif, a packed English-themed pub in Paris whose windows were decked with St George's flags and tricolors, the predominantly French audience exploded with joy and belted out "La Marseillaise" at the final whistle.

"It's brilliant! With the win everything is fine," a relieved Jean-Pierre Agbo, 50, told AFP, after Olivier Giroud's second-half header and Harry Kane's late penalty miss gave the defending champions a 2-1 win and a place in the semi-finals. Another France fan patted a nearby England supporter - slumped on the shoulder of his friend in despair - in mock consolation as hit pop songs and exultant dancers transformed the pub into a disco.

In London's Zoo Bar, hundreds of French fans danced, screamed with joy and chanted "Bring the cup home" as France edged out their country of residence. The pub had been booked out by France fans using a lifestyle app for French people living in the capital, with celebrating French supporters later descending on London's Piccadilly Circus roaring La Marseillaise.

"It was a superb match. Now we'll have to go out and give it to the English," said 28-year-old Olivier Airault, who lives with two English flatmates. Despondent England fans in Paris regretted what might have been after the Three Lions' dreams of winning a first major title since 1966 were dashed - again. "Our leadership was better. Any fan will tell you the referee was biased. A lot of decisions did not go our way," Sam, 26, said after the final whistle.

"They (England) played very well. I would be very happy if it wasn't against the French, because I'm English!" said Tim La Fontaine, a 32-year-old IT worker who has lived in France for eight years. "The French are lovely... but I have to go to the office on Monday!" "It was a brilliant game." —AFP



AL KHOR: France's goalkeeper #01 Hugo Lloris saves a shot during the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between England and France on December 10, 2022. — 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, JAVEED CHPPALI, holder of Passport No. V9396560, do hereby change my name to SAJI (as Given name) JAVEED (as Given name) CHAPPALLI (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name JAVEED CHAPPALLI and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2812)

I, SAJIMON PAPPALIL VARGHESE, holder of Passport No: U 0469142, do hereby change my name to SAJI (as Given name) VARGHESE (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SAJI VARGHESE and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2814) - 12-12-2022

France edge past England in a thrilling quarter-final

Morocco loom as France eye World Cup glory



AL KHOR: France's forward #09 Olivier Giroud celebrates after scoring past England's goalkeeper #01 Jordan Pickford during the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between England and France on December 10, 2022. — AFP

DOHA: Defending champions France on Sunday trained their sights on a World Cup semi-final against surprise package Morocco as Argentina and Lionel Messi prepare to take on Croatia. Didier Deschamps' men edged past England in a thrilling quarter-final in the Qatar desert to move one step closer to becoming the first team to retain the trophy in 60 years. They will meet Morocco at the Al Bayt Stadium on Wednesday after the African team sent Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal packing to become the first African team in history to reach the last four.

France were second best for long spells against Gareth Southgate's England on Saturday and were grateful for a late Harry Kane penalty miss as they won 2-1. England captain Kane had earlier cancelled out Aurelien Tchouameni's opener, firing past his Tottenham teammate Hugo Lloris from the penalty spot. That goal put him level with Wayne Rooney as England's all-time leading scorer.

Olivier Giroud headed France back into the lead

in the 78th minute before England were handed a lifeline but this time Kane blasted over and England's chance was gone. Deschamps, who led France to triumph in Russia in 2018, said his side showed "hearts and guts" to defeat a youthful England team. "There is quality in this team, but there is also a good mentality and a state of mind," he said. "We gave them a little ammunition with two penalties, but it is with hearts and guts that we held onto this result."

Deschamps, who also won the World Cup as a player, said France's semi-final opponents Morocco, ranked 22nd in the world, "deserve all our respect and recognition". "They weren't among the teams we were expecting there, but it's anything but a surprise." Southgate said he would take his time before he makes a decision over his future as England coach as the nation's long and painful wait for a major trophy goes on. The 1966 World Cup winners reached the semi-finals in 2018 and the final at last year's European Championship but have again

come up short against top-class opposition.

Only the most fervent Morocco fan would have bet on their side reaching the World Cup semi-finals before the tournament kicked off. On Saturday, they beat Ronaldo and Portugal 1-0 thanks to Youssef En-Nesyri's first-half header, to go further than any African team ever has at a World Cup. "We're drawing on all we have, we still have guys injured," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui. "I told the guys before the match we had to write history for Africa. I'm very, very happy." As their national team made history, crowds gathered in Casablanca and chanted "Qualified! Qualified!"

There were also celebrations across the Arab world and in Europe as Morocco are also the first Arab team to reach a World Cup semi-final. Ronaldo headed down the tunnel with tears streaming down his face after the bitter defeat, ignoring the Morocco players rushing to their fans to celebrate. At 37, his final chance of adding the World Cup to his Euro 2016 triumph has almost certainly gone as the end of

an era of global superstars looms.

Brazil's Neymar, who has already indicated he may never pull on the Brazil shirt again, said Saturday he was "psychologically destroyed" by his side's elimination at the hands of Croatia on penalties on Friday. "It is definitely the defeat which has hurt me the most, which left me paralyzed for ten minutes after the match, after which I burst into tears without being able to stop," the 30-year-old said in an Instagram message.

Messi is also likely playing on the biggest stage for the final time at the age of 35 but he has a golden chance to match the achievement of Diego Maradona, who lifted the trophy for Argentina in 1986. The South American giants will meet the beaten 2018 finalists at Lusail Stadium on Tuesday after squeezing past the Netherlands on penalties. They will meet a Croatia team led and inspired by veteran Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric, who will be aiming to go one better than they did four years ago.—AFP

West Indies out for 77; Australia win second Test

ADELAIDE: Top-ranked Australia dismissed an out-classed West Indies for just 77 Sunday to win the day-night second Test in Adelaide by 419 runs and seal the series 2-0. The visitors resumed day four on 38-4 and were all out in the first session with Mitchell Starc and Michael Neser doing the damage to end a lopsided campaign. Australia won the first Test at Perth by 164 runs. "Nice toss to win, the boys batted particularly well the first day. The partnership between Marnus (Labuschagne) and Travis (Head) set the game up for us," said Australian skipper Steve Smith. "It's been a good week. Everyone is contributing when they need to and we got a lot of trust in each other and sets us up really nicely." The defeat ended the reign of West Indies head coach Phil Simmons, who announced his intention to quit after their disastrous recent Twenty20 World Cup campaign, when they exited in the first round.

Australia took a stranglehold on day one when Head smacked 175 and Labuschagne hit 163 and they never let up. It propelled them to 511-7 declared with the visitors then dismissed for 214 before Australia posted a quick-fire 199-6 to set the West Indies 497 to win. The Caribbean side were never in the hunt after Scott Boland sent down a sensational three-wicket maiden under the lights on Friday evening to leave them decimated.

"Disappointing for sure. The first game we showed some fight, obviously lost guys due to injury," West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite said. "Good test for us and hopefully we will continue to work. Very unfortu-

nate about the experience we lost due to injuries, but we can learn a lot from Australia about how to go about things." Devon Thomas and Jason Holder, both on eight, trudged out on an overcast Sunday still 459 runs adrift, with defeat just a matter of time.

Thomas only survived 11 balls, adding four runs before attempting to drive a wide Starc delivery only to edge to wicketkeeper Alex Carey. Starc was a constant threat and he knocked Holder's stump out of the ground on 11 with a cracking ball to leave the West Indies reeling on 49-6. Carey held a juggling catch from Neser to remove Roston Chase for 13 with the same pair combining again to halt Joshua Da Silva on 15 in the same over. Lyon bowled Alzarri Joseph before Carey and Neser again worked their magic to snare Marquino Mindley and end the game.

It culminated in a dominant win for Australia notable for several landmarks, with Labuschagne becoming the second-fastest man to 3,000 Test runs behind only the great Donald Bradman. The number three slammed 204, 104, 163, and 31 in his four series innings to cap a sensational run which elevated him above England's Joe Root as the number one Test batsman in the world.

Veteran spinner Nathan Lyon also set a record as the most successful bowler at the Adelaide Oval since the revered ground opened its doors in 1873, surpassing Shane Warne's 56 wickets. There were few bright lights for the West Indies, although the emergence of impressive opener Tagenarine Chanderpaul, who made his debut in Perth, was a plus point.

They were otherwise lacklustre, hampered by a slew of injuries that depleted their bowling, again failing to snap a 25-year winless Test streak on Australian soil. While they head home, Australia move to Brisbane to face South Africa from Friday in the first of three Tests which should provide stiffer competition. Skipper Pat Cummins, who missed Adelaide with a thigh niggle, is expected to be fit, but there are lingering concerns over fellow injured paceman Josh Hazlewood.—AFP

Kane 'gutted' after WCup penalty pain

AL KHOR: Harry Kane was left "gutted" on Saturday after missing a crucial penalty in England's 2-1 World Cup quarter-final defeat to France. England skipper Kane blazed an 84th minute spot-kick over the bar that would have leveled the score at 2-2 at the Al Bayt Stadium. It was another cruel chapter in England's decades-long psychodrama revolving around major tournaments and penalty heartaches. Kane had earlier made no mistake with another penalty on 54 minutes that saw him equal Wayne Rooney's England goalscoring tally of 53 goals. "As the captain, I'll take that on the chin and that responsibility, missing the penalty, so it's hard," Kane said afterwards.

"Really tough night to take. I'm gutted, the team are gutted. We had the belief that we could achieve something special at this World Cup, but it came down to small details." On the night we had the better chances, the better spells in the game, but it comes down

to the execution." Kane, 29, is one of the most reliable penalty-takers in world football, converting 58 spot-kicks throughout his career with only 11 misses. The England captain said he had felt confident as he lined up his second penalty of the night against France goalkeeper and Tottenham team-mate Hugo Lloris.

"I'm someone who, whenever I prepare, prepare for one penalty in the game, two penalties, so I can't fault my preparation or detail," Kane said. "In the lead-up I felt as confident as I did on the first as I did on the second. It purely comes down to execution. I'll take that on the chin."

"Of course it hurts now and it'll hurt for probably a long time, but that's part of being captain and a leader in the team, you have to take responsibility." Kane had looked inconsolable at the final whistle, hunched on the turf as team-mates rallied to his support.

England manager Gareth Southgate sprang to Kane's defense. "There's nobody I would have rather had in that situation and if we had one tomorrow I'd feel exactly the same way," Southgate said. "For me he's been a fantastic leader of this group. He's the best but the best are still 85 percent (success rate) so even the best are going to miss at times so that's football. It's cruel for him because he will feel disappointed in himself but he shouldn't because it's 100 minutes of football and there's a lot of things that can happen in terms of winning a game." —AFP

