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The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

JAMADA ALAWWAL 19, 1444 AH TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022

Environmental awareness vital for achieving sustainability: EPA



Three boys die after falling into frozen lake in Britain



Japan picks 'war' as kanji character of the year



Modric and Croatia stand between Messi and final





OAPEC coordinates stances of members on climate talks

Kuwait, Saudi sign MoU on Durra gas field • Private oil sector employees protest

Amir heads to Italy on private visit



Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior officials as he leaves on Monday for Italy on a private visit. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Council of Ministers of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) convened its 109th meeting in Kuwait on Monday under the chairmanship of Syrian Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources Bassam Tohme. The ministerial meeting discussed the relationship between the OAPEC's Secretariat and Arab companies affiliated to the organization, as well as the budget of FY 2023, OAPEC Secretary General Ali Sabt ben Sabt said.

The ministers mulled ways to enhance the organization's role in training and coordinate the stances of member countries on climate talks as well as ensuing commitments, ben Sabt, of Kuwait, noted in a press release.

"They reviewed OAPEC's ministerial resolution 107/4 mandating the executive bureau to coordinate with Saudi Arabia regarding the Middle East Green Initiative and the concept of carbon recycling-based economy. They also discussed the preparations for the 12th Arab Energy Conference, due in Qatar late next year, and progress in the development of the databank," ben Sabt revealed. He thanked OAPEC member countries for the limitless support they offer to the secretariat of the organization, expressing hope for more prosperity to the oil industry.

Late Sunday, Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC), a subsidiary of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Aramco Gulf Operations Company to develop the joint Durra gas field. Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Bader Al-Mulla and Saudi Minister of Energy

woman Farah Akbar to death by hanging. The body of Akbar, a 32-year-old mother of two, was left out-

side a hospital on April 20, 2021 after she was

snatched in broad daylight by the convict, a Kuwaiti

On June 3, 2022, the court of appeal, headed by

Nasr Al-Haid, overturned the criminal court's death

penalty verdict against the defendant, and sen-

tenced him to life imprisonment, after he was con-

victed of kidnapping and murder. The court justified

reducing the sentence after one of the conditions



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Bader Al-Mulla attends the 109th meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) on Dec 12, 2022. — Photo

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman attended the signing

In a press statement, Acting CEO of KGOC Khaled Al-Otaibi said the memo includes procedures to develop the field that are based on implementing the provisions mentioned in the minutes of the ministerial meeting. The MoU aims to reassess and complete engineering studies of the field project as well as form a technical team to carry out the scheme, he added. He indicated that the joint Durra field development program aims to produce one billion cubic feet of natural gas per day and 84,000 barrels of liquefied gas per day.

The signing comes to implement a memo signed on Dec 24, 2019 between the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments, Otaibi said. It is also a culmination of the talks held between the two countries'

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News in brief

Cabinet appoints senior officials

KUWAIT: The Cabinet approved on Monday decrees naming Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi as Deputy Foreign Minister and Brig Staff (Rtd) Mohammad Abdulaziz Buerki as Chairman of the National Cybersecurity Center with a rank of undersecretary. — KUNA

New medicine shipments arrive

KUWAIT: The health ministry announced Monday it is in the process of receiving new medicine shipments that have arrived in Kuwait amid reports of shortages. The ministry added it is working with relevant authorities to speed up the process of finalizing medicine import contracts. Meanwhile, Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid denied the ministry has rejected requests by the health ministry to provide financial allocations for the purchase of drugs.

New seal must for gold jewelry

KUWAIT: Gold shops in Kuwait will not be allowed to sell or display gold jewelry with old hallmark seals from Jan 1, 2023. The ministry of commerce and industry said traders should submit gold jewelry with old hallmark stamps to the ministry within three days to get a new stamp. The ministry said all items carrying the old stamp will be considered as used and must be sold as such. This decision does not apply to gold held by consumers.



Top court hands death sentence to Farah's killer

KUWAIT: The court of cassation, headed by Abdullah Al-Jassem, canceled a ruling by the court of appeal and sentenced the killer of Kuwaiti

Iran defies outcry

protest execution

PARIS: Iran on Monday executed a second man in

connection with protests that have shaken the

regime for almost three months, defying an interna-

with second

against those involved in the movement. Majidreza Rahnavard, 23, had been sentenced to death by a court in the city of Mashhad for killing two members of the security forces with a knife, and wounding four other people, the judiciary's Mizan Online news agency reported. It said he was hanged in public in the city, rather than inside prison.

defense ministry soldier.

Europe and the United States reacted with outrage after Iran on Thursday carried out the first execution linked to the protests. Mohsen Shekari, also 23, was hanged after his conviction for

Continued on Page 6

for premeditated murder was not met, despite the prosecution's request for the maximum penalty and upholding the death sentence issued by the criminal court. The public prosecution then appealed the verdict and demanded the death sentence, while the defendant's defense also appealed the verdict and demanded it be reduced even further.

The killing of Farah Akbar had caused public outrage, as the convict kidnapped the victim in front of passersby and despite the presence of the

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NICOSIA: A person checks a mobile phone on Dec 12 2022, displaying a tweet about the execution of Majidreza Rahnavard in Iran. — AFP

tional outcry over its use of capital punishment **Zionist forces** kill teenage

Palestinian girl

JENIN: The Zionist entity admitted Monday its forces shot dead a Palestinian girl during a raid in Jenin, a flashpoint city in the occupied West Bank where dozens of Palestinians have been killed in recent months. Sixteen-vear-old Jana Zakarna was alone on the roof of her home late Sunday when she was targeted by a

Zionist sniper positioned in an empty building, her relatives told AFP.

"She went up (to the roof) to fetch her cat and never came back, so her brother went up to look for her; he opened the door and found Jana lying here on her back," said Yasser Mahmoud Zakarna, 28, the teenager's uncle. Describing his niece's wounds, he said she was "shot with four bullets in deadly spots: In the head, the face, and twice in the chest. They have truly killed childhood."

A white cat walked around the rooftop, where there was a pool of blood and yellow tape marking what

Continued on Page 6



IENIN: Palestinian mourners attend the funeral of 16-year-old Jana Zakarnaa, killed during a Zionist raid, on Dec 12, 2022. — AFP

Tuesday, December 13, 2022





Kuwait Crown Prince receives Saudi energy minister, OAPEC delegation

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Monday visiting Saudi Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Head of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al- Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud, were present at the Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Bader Al-Mulla, senior state officials, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh of delegations of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, and Saudi Ambassador to

meeting.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received visiting heads Countries (OAPEC). — KUNA

Environmental awareness vital for achieving sustainability: EPA

Kuwait is fully committed to Middle East Green Initiative: Sheikh Abdullah

The bird's language



By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

anguages get sick and die like people. March 1 every year celebrates the Arabic, the language Almighty Allah honored and made it the language of worship for Muslims. The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization issued a statement on this occasion, in which it warned against the dangers threatening the Arabic language, calling on Arab countries to enhance the status of this language in daily life. The organization warned against the harms that affect the Arabic language by continuing reliance on foreign languages for teaching in some Arab countries.

The warning and caution are repeated every year, and of course there will not be any change and the suffering of the Arabic language will continue, until one day we will be reading the Holy Quran without understanding its meaning. Then another day will come when we will not know how to read the Holy Quran, rather we will repeat it for worship only. Arabs will then be forced to read the translated Holy Quran, like other Muslims

who ignored the language of Islam today. What do you expect? This must be the end in one or two thousand years, as languages get sick and die like people get sick and die, but with a longer age. The Arabic language is sick today, did not get admitted to the ICU, and will not be soon, as there are still men and women in this nation who defend and enjoy it. But they are suffering from a decrease of supporters and increase of enemies - yes, there are enemies of the Arabic language, and the majority of them

But why do Arabs hate their language? Is it because some of them lived in the West and want to be one of them in everything? Is it because some language scientists here do not want to develop the Arabic language to make it easier to speak? Is it because of those who went against Islam, so against the language of the Holy Quran? Is there anyone who does not believe in the abilities of the Arabic language to deal with sciences? Is it because there are Arabs who are tied to their tribes' language and Arabic became too heavy for them?

The reasons are many and the aim is one it is the Arabic language, the language of Islam, that is being attacked from all directions, and first attackers today are among the Arabs. So beautiful it is to read the Holy Quran in the language it was revealed in. It is a real bounty - and not any bounty. Descriptions like jewels are not realized by any language other than Arabic, and no heart will shiver or body will shake unless you hear the words of Allah being read with these alphabets of light.

It is the language of hearts and imagination, the language of fears and senses, that you will not get bored from listening to descriptions in it, as it is able to break down light to spectrums touching the hearts of lovers and poets. Beautiful is the Arabic language, and all of us as Muslims should defend it and expand its use.

By Majd Al-Othman

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Environment Public Authority's Board Chairman and Director General Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Hmood Al-Sabah said on Monday that environmental awareness is vital for achieving sustainability concepts.

Speaking at the Kuwait Sustainability Conference, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad said that such conferences help significantly in increasing community awareness, and reaching a sustainable environment in the country. He stated that the Authority is seeking to increase the natural reserves in the country as part of its commitment to implementing international agreements, while affirming Kuwait's full support and commitment to the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI).

With the increase in environmental pollution, countries began to draw up plans aimed at sustainable development and stop the depletion of nature, said Kuwait Public Relations Association's Chairman Jamal Al-Nasrallah, stressing that coming generations' future is at stake. Al-Nasrallah pointed out that environmental degradation and climate ch require joint efforts, indicating that in this conference experts and specialists gather to discuss this important issue to come up with implementable recommendations. He stated that partnership with the private sector is one of the basics of sustainable development, stressing the keenness of private companies to participate in achieving developmental goals, which makes the association seek more endeavors to best serve the country.

Amira Al-Hassan, Head of the Office of the United Nations Human Settlements Program, stressed the importance of updating the laws related to the environment and construction in order to become sustainable, pointing out that the commitment to preserving the environment is everyone's

She added that Kuwait needs to filter and activate laws, saying that the violations often start from the citizen, pointing out the importance of adhering to the "building codes" in urban planning and the transition to renewable energy. The citizens must contribute to achieving a sustainable development in the country, she added.

Kuwait is seeking to increase the natural reserves in the country within its commitment to implementing international agreements and the area of Kuwait reserves ranges between 13 to 15 percent of the total area of the country. This enables the country to launch environmental tourism projects which the authorities have in the Jahra Reserve. The government is keen on stimulating environmental tourism and Al-Jahra Reserve is open to the public.



KUWAIT: Inauguration of the Kuwait Sustainability Conference on Monday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Hmood Al-Sabah



Chairman Jamal Al-Nasrallah



Retired officers hold first coordination meeting

KUWAIT: The Retired Officers Association held its first coordination meeting of retired officers of the ministry of defense, ministry of interior, National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force at the Kuwait Lawyers Association. Chairman of the Board of Directors of the association, Faisal Al-Jazzaf, said at the outset of the meeting that the retired officers in their various

positions served the country with pride and honor.

This conference came to discuss participation in voluntary programs as well as to showcase security and social awareness through experienced specialists who have gained experience in their field for many years," Jazzaf explained. "A number of retired officers discussed the work and achievements of the association as well as raised the possibility of benefiting from their technical expertise to continue serving the country," he added, looking forward to achieving this through the Retired Officers Association. Vice Chairman of the association Nader Shaaban expressed his thanks and appreciation to the attendees, and confirmed that work is underway to develop everything related to the association.

E-reports for Al-Bahar Eye Center activated

KUWAIT: The head of the council of eye departments at the health ministry Dr Ahmad Al-Fawdari at the Al-Bahar Eye Center said that in line with the ministry's efforts to facilitate patient reviews and transfer to cyber technology, electronic reports of medical reviews at the center can now be received through an application.

"The activation of the center comes within the framework to facilitate matters for citizens and elevate the level of medical service, as well as reduce the number of patients at the center. The steps to register for report requests at the center needs one physical visit at the center with the identification card by the patient or a close relative as well as some personal information," Dr Fawdari explained.

"Requested reports will be sent through the application 'Q8 Seha' to the doctor and after electronically writing the report. It will be transferred to the head of the department and then to the manager of the hospital for final approval," he added. Patients will receive an SMS on their smart device after registering, so that the report can be reviewed without having to revisit the center or hospital.



Local

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Zain strategic partner of Winter Wonderland Kuwait

Company has prepared special activities and surprises for four months



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashti with Zain's team during the event's opening day.

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced its strategic partnership with Winter Wonderland Kuwait, the biggest and first winter-themed carnival of its kind in the nation. The company supports the event in collaboration with the Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC).

Zain was keen on being one of the first strategic supporters of this world-class event, which comes to Kuwait for the very first time all the way from London, as part of its belief in the vital role played by the Kuwaiti private sector in supporting entertainment and recreational venues in the nation. Winter Wonderland offers a fun, immersive, and safe setting that meets the best standards, and contributes to progressing the local economic and touristic scenes.

Every year, the Kuwaiti community anticipates Zain's participation in the biggest social and entertainment events, where the company adds its own flavor and reflects its brand values and identity (Zain A Wonderful World). The company is set to share the joys of Winter Wonderland with the community and has prepared a plethora of special activities and surprises for visitors throughout the event's four-month period.

Zain found immense interest from the public sector to achieve this huge project within a short peri-

od of time, and so it was keen on being a part of its success story to reaffirm the Kuwaiti private sector's unwavering support to the nation's various developmental plans.

Winter Wonderland is located at the site previously held by Al-Shaab Leisure Park, the iconic theme park that has always brought joy and happiness to children, families, and young people in Kuwait. The location is dear to Kuwaitis' hearts, having contributed to making the most wonderful memories across generations. Zain is proud of the local talents that have worked tirelessly to bring this event to Kuwait, including the operator, participating companies, restaurants, and cafes, volunteers, logistics support providers, and others.

Winter Wonderland Kuwait is an immersive entertainment extravaganza that lasts throughout the winter season and is packed with fun and joy. The event features over 50 rides, skill games, attractions, live performances, and booths, along with the best restaurants and cafes serving delicious food and drinks. Zain is keen on supporting initiatives and programs that add to the local touristic scene and will spare no efforts in shouldering any group with a creative vision that serves the local community and contributes to enriching national economy.



Zain prepared special activities and surprises for visitors.



Winter Wonderland Kuwait offers the best and safest attractions.



Conference sheds light on Kuwait's

cultural heritage

KUWAIT: Co-organized by Kuwait University and UNESCO, a conference on the preservation of Kuwait's cultural heritage opened in Kuwait on Monday. Addressing the conference, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University, Dr Mohammad Al-Sahli said that the college organized this conference to shed light on social and cultural topics internationally and locally.

He added that Kuwait is keen on keeping their national cultural identity through books, voice records, pictures and various tools as well as personal efforts from institutions in charge of preserving heritage items. Professor of Archeology and Anthropology at Kuwait University, Dr Hassan Ashkanani, said that the conference aims to highlight the various aspects of cultural heritage and the state of its preservation in Kuwait.

He also noted that the conference will discuss several ways of preserving heritage especially in



Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University, Dr. Mohammad Al-Sahli

Kuwait, adding that panels will explore opportunities and challenges related to cultural heritage and its role in promoting innovation and creative industries.

In her speech on behalf of the Director of UNESCO Office in GCC and Yemen Anisa Harfoush said, "We aim to engage more with Kuwait, especially in the field of cultural heritage, as it is the basic essence of the global humanitarian role." Harfoush expressed her happiness in cooperating with Kuwait University to learn about the Kuwaiti cultural heritage and ways to protect it. —KUNA



Professor of Archeology and Anthropology at Kuwait University, Dr. Hassan Ashkanani.



On behalf of the Director of UNESCO Office in GCC and Yemen Anisa Harfoush.

Narcotics serious threat to youth: Psychologists

KUWAIT: Narcotics are a clear-cut threat towards the youth and are destroyer of societies, Dr. Hassan Al-Musawi, a social consultant and psychologist, warned on Monday. Speaking to KUNA in an interview, Dr Al-Musawi said one of the ill effects of drugs is addiction, which keeps any person a prisoner to illegal substances. He noted that the main reasons behind addiction amongst the youth were having bad company of friends and col-



Dr Hassan Al-Musawi

leagues and lack of supervision by families.

Addiction causes financial problems, which causes one to steal and find any means to secure money for drugs, he added. Along with financial losses, one loses meaning to his or her life, spiraling one down into a pit of misery, life in prison, and even death.

Dr Al-Musawi stressed the importance of confidence in battling addiction, saying that physical and psychological treatments were only parts of the road towards full recovery.

He revealed that the number of those falling in the traps of addiction was on the rise, adding that those managing to beat their addiction were stigmatized by the fact that they were addicts. A comprehensive treatment is the way forward when it comes to battling addiction for the long term, he affirmed, saying that such plan must involve families, competent authorities, and society as a whole to prevent the problem from exacerbating.

Narcotics and illicit drugs are known for being a threat to the youth globally, and no one could deny that such substances were able to destroy societies no matter when or where. Governments around the globe had made it their mission to counter the health, social, economic, and security challenges posed by narcotics, setting laws and regulations to prevent the selling and proliferation of drugs. —KUNA

Panel discusses govt purchase of consumer loans

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly financial and economic affairs committee discussed on Tuesday a draft law requiring that the government purchase consumer loans of Kuwaiti citizens against a symbolic repayment scheme. The government informed the panel that the total value of consumer and personal debts owed by Kuwaiti citizens is KD 14 billion and the total cost of the entire process could go as high as KD 23 billion.

MP Saleh Ashour submitted a proposal stipulating that the government should purchase the loans against deducting the cost-of-living allowance monthly to reduce the huge financial debt on Kuwaitis. Ashour said after the meeting that the panel will continue discussing the subject on Thursday, when the government is expected to provide its opinion on the issue.

The committee also discussed another bill proposing to raise the minimum retirement monthly pay to KD 1,000. The government had informed the Assembly that as many as 37,300 retired Kuwaitis receive a pension of under KD 1,000. Ashour said the Public Institution for Social Security showed a positive response to the proposal but demanded one month to provide full details about the issue. The committee insisted that the social security agency should provide the required details and figures before Thursday's session.

Head of the committee MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said the panel is expected to vote on a number of issues on Thursday and send their reports to the Assembly for debate. The Assembly will hold its regular session on Tuesday to debate a number of issues and draft laws, including a draft law on conflict of interests.

News in brief

Free Art Atelier exhibition

KUWAIT: The Free Art Atelier is hosting an exhibition dubbed: "The Free Art Atelier in the Eyes of its Artists". The exhibition, opened by National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Assistant Undersecretary Musaed Al-Zamel, includes 33 paintings by 26 artists telling the story of the Atelier, and depicting its various aspects. —KUNA

More Winter Wonderland tickets

KUWAIT: Winter Wonderland project said there will be a gradual increase in the number of tickets in the coming days, under the theme "because we cannot reject any of your request." Winter Wonderland had a large turnout on the opening day resulting in the sale of all available entry tickets.

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Social Affairs sponsors 'safe childhood' meet

KUWAIT: Head of the International Women's Empowerment and Capability Building Organization Ebtisam Al-Quood announced the organization of the 40th edition of an international conference titled 'The rights of children between protection and care (safe childhood)' under the sponsorship of Social Affairs Minister Mai Al-Baghli from Dec 12 to 14.

"This conference comes within exceptional circumstances after the COVID pandemic, which presented a number of challenges and obstacles in empowering childhood. This necessitates that we shed light on the most important of these obstacles from social, legal, medical, psychological and family perspectives," said Quood, pointing that the early years of children's lives are central to their growth to discover their potentials, as they need special care and attention during this period.

'We must rate programs in the public and private sectors to how much child protection is applied. Therefore, the conference kicks off in cooperation with the Kuwaiti society for social services and the supreme council for family affairs, regional network for social responsibility under the GCC, the national child protection society, and family development administration, among others," she added.

Member of the organization and head of the scientific committee Salwa Al-Jassar said: "This important conference gives the opportunity for Arab countries to start initiatives towards caring about childhood, as the first years of a child's life are considered a thriving opportunity for human investment by providing all the possibilities to ensure the rights and protection of children are present."

"The most recent calamities caused children to go through humanitarian, social, medical and psychological problems. Therefore, we must cooperate to instill children's rights and protect them from some policies, while focusing on ensuring that all children can obtain basic rights and services," she added.

"The conference hosts many experts and specialists to discuss the subjects included and present the best expertise in the field of child protection and rights," Jassar said, adding the conference includes four main meetings and 18 workshops. She invited everyone to attend on weekdays from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm at the National Library.

Photo of the Day



shot in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyal

Alghanim Industries sponsors 38th annual NUKS-USA conference

Sessions on sports development, entrepreneurial skills and women's empowerment held

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries (Kutayba Alghanim Group), one of the largest private companies in the region, recently concluded its sponsorship of the 38th annual National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) conference as the US division of the organization held its yearly session in Los Angeles, California, from 24 to 27 November. The conference was additionally sponsored by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in the presence of Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Jasem Al-Budaiwi, both uniting under the conference's slogan "a nation rises through its vouth."

The conference's program included an esteemed ollection of speakers and celebrated members from all fields political, media related and sports. Workshops and lectures were also in play as the conference provided a variety of informative sessions on topics such as sports development, entrepreneurial skills, and women's empowerment. The conference additionally supplied educational segments on health and nutrition as well as entertaining competitions for students abroad to enjoy.

Commenting on Alghanim Industries' dedication to empowering the nation's promising youth, Chief Human Resources Officer Anas Yousef Al-Ateegi said: "we are immensely proud to be a continuous source of support to the NUKS-USA conference, which we consider to be in complete alignment with our aspirations to directly invest in our youth and reap the rewards of their promising talents. We've been looking forward to this event in hopes of informing hundreds of students abroad that we are eager to welcome vou back after a successful educational experience to enter the workforce, as we are excited to further celebrate the many successes our youth will accomplish alongside Alghanim Industries.

CHRO Al-Ateegi also added: "Alghanim Industries has long been a proud supporter of Kuwaiti youth with various pathways along the years created for young nationals to explore within our company. Our dedication to our vounger generations comes out of our genuine conviction that the

future of Kuwait, whether it's private sector or the nation at large, is a national duty we take to heart. Kuwait's Vision 2035 goes beyond the economic success of our country, and for that journey we invest and believe in the youth of our country as the guiding light for our collective future."

Alghanim Industries holds a century worth of professional knowledge which has grown into dedicated routes for youth empowerment such as the Alghanim Industries Academy. The company's flagship program welcomes a large cohort of promising fresh graduates from various academic backgrounds, introduces them to a multitude of professional development through departmental rotations and finally allocates them to the appropriate sector at the program's conclusion, all of which comes with full employment for the academy members.

The company's longstanding dedication to nurturing Kuwait's youth and the country's overall success will continue toward greater initiatives, honoring Alghanim Industries' commitment in enabling the promising youth of today to become the professional leaders of tomorrow.



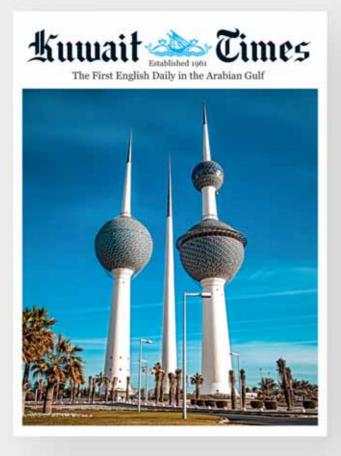
KUWAIT: Representatives of Alghanim Industries with Jasem Al-Budaiwi, Ambassador of Kuwait to the United States.

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CBK chief honors graduates of risk management program

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor and Chairman of the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS), Basel A Al-Haroon, honored the graduates of the Risk Management Leaders Program (Group II) at the CBK on Monday. The program was held between May 16, 2022 to October 28, 2022. This is one of the "Kafa'a" initiative programs launched by the CBK in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks and Institute of Banking Studies with the aim to develop national competencies and encourage them to work in the risk management departments in banks and financial institutions.

The program was completed in four consecutive phases. The first phase included providing training programs and practical lectures in the field of risk management. The second phase aimed to qualify the participants to pass a professional certification exam in cooperation with the "Professional Risk Managers International Association" in the United States. The third phase included submission of case studies and graduation projects according to program committee's specific criteria. The fourth phase covered international training in the United Kingdom in cooperation with the Center of Governance, Risk and Regulations at the London Institute of Banking and Finance for the 15 participants of the program.

The Kafa'a initiative is a comprehensive strategic initiative that aims to build highly qualified national cadres and provide them with the necessary knowledge to progress in their careers and ready them with the necessary skills for the labor market in line with the ever-changing needs of the financial and banking industry. The initiative also aims to create a pipeline of qualified nationals able to fill leadership positions in major economic, financial and banking institutions.



International internations

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022



Three killed in attack on China hotel in Kabul

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Turmoil-hit Peru seeks early election



Russians helping Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria

LIMA: New Peruvian President Dina Boluarte announced Sunday that she would seek to hold elections two years early, while also declaring a state of emergency in certain areas after protests following the arrest of her predecessor left two dead.

Demonstrators across the country-notably in northern and Andean towns-had been calling for fresh elections, along with a national strike and the release of leftist former president Pedro Castillo, who was removed from office on Wednesday for attempting to dissolve Congress and rule by decree.

"Interpreting the will of the citizens... I have decided to take the initiative to reach an agreement with the Congress of the Republic to advance general elections to the month of April of 2024," Boluarte said in a televised address, noting that a bill on moving the poll forward from 2026 would be submitted in the coming days.

She added that, "with the same patriotic sentiment," she was declaring a "state of emergency in areas of high social conflict in order to peacefully" restore order. Boluarte, a former prosecutor who had served as Castillo's vice president, was quickly sworn in to replace him following his impeachment and subsequent arrest last week. On Saturday, she introduced her new cabinet, a group with an independent and technocratic profile and including eight women. She named former prosecutor Pedro Angulo as prime minister. On Sunday demonstrators in cities across the country's interior-including Cajamarca, Arequipa, Huancayo, Cusco and Punodemanded Castillo's release.

New clashes broke out between protesters and police in the southern city of Andahuaylas, leaving two dead and at least five injured-including a police officer-as demonstrators attempted to storm the city's airport, authorities said. In her address, Boluarte expressed regret for the protesters' deaths.

'Remain calm'

Riot police were deployed to the airport to contain the thousands of demonstrators in Andahuaylas, which lies in Boluarte's home region of Apurimac. Protesters fired slingshots and hurled stones, while police responded with tear gas, images from the scene broadcast by local TV showed. A police station in the Apurimac town of Huancabamba was set on fire, RPP radio reported.

"I urge people to remain calm," Interior Minister Cesar Cervantes told the station, as he announced the second death shortly after police confirmed the first-a teenager. Clashes in Andahuaylas on Saturday saw 16 civilians and four police officers injured.

"No Peruvian's life should be sacrificed for political interests," Boluarte tweeted on Sunday evening before her speech, reiterating a call for "dialogue and the rejection of violence." The country's right-leaning Congress convened an emergency session Sunday afternoon to discuss the crisis, but had to be suspended after physical altercations broke out. In images posted on social media, a man can be seen punching another man from behind and then members shoving each other in the center of the chamber.

Some 1,000 to 2,000 people rallied in Lima on Sunday shouting, "Castillo you are not alone, the people support you" and brandishing signs accusing "Dina and Congress" of being "corrupt rats," before police dispersed the crowd with tear gas.

'Indefinite strike'

Meanwhile, rural unions and organizations representing Indigenous peoples called for an "indefinite strike" beginning Tuesday in support of Castillo, himself the son of a peasant family. They demanded the suspension of Congress, early elections and a new constitution, as well as Castillo's immediate release, according to a statement from the Agrarian and Rural Front of Peru, which groups about a dozen organizations.

The Rural Front contends that Castillo "did not perpetrate a coup d'etat" on Wednesday when he announced the suspension of Congress and said he would be ruling by decree. With his background as a rural teacher and union leader, and with little contact with the nation's elites, Castillo has always drawn his strongest support from Andean regions, while struggling to find backing in coastal Lima.

The ousted president was arrested Wednesday while on his way to the Mexican embassy to seek asylum, and prosecutors have charged him with rebellion and conspiracy. The pledge to hold new elections came as recent polls showed nearly nine in 10 Peruvians disapproved of the nation's legislature.

Prior to Boluarte's announcement, political analyst Giovanna Penaflor had told AFP that the president needed to make clear "that her role is to facilitate new general elections," and that doing so would provide needed stability.

Peru is now on its sixth president since 2016. Castillo's 17-month rule was overshadowed by six investigations against him and his family, mass protests demanding his removal, and a power struggle with the opposition-backed Congress.—AFP

LONDON: Pedestrians walk along the snow-covered banks of a canal in Wapping, east London on December 12, 2022. —AFP

Three boys die after falling into frozen lake in UK

LONDON: Three boys aged eight, 10 and 11 have died and another boy remains in critical condition after they fell into an icy lake near Birmingham, central England, police said Monday. "Three boys have tragically died after falling into the lake at Babbs Mill Park in Solihull yesterday afternoon," West Midlands Police said in a statement.

The boys suffered a cardiac arrest and were rushed to hospital after being pulled from the water. "Sadly, they could not be revived and our thoughts are with their family and friends at this deeply devastating time," said police.

"A fourth boy, aged six, remains in a critical condition in hospital." Witnesses reported seeing other children on the lake, which froze during a cold snap that has hit swathes of Britain, but police have not reported anyone else missing.

Emergency services were quickly on the scene, with fire and police officers wading into the frozen water in their uniforms, Solihull Superintendent Richard Harris said in a news conference. One officer attempted to punch through the ice to get to the boys, he added.

Harris said the families were "absolutely devastated" and the fact it occurred during the Christmas period "adds to the tragedy". Identities of the victims will not be released until the families agree to do so, he

Arctic blast

The tragedy came as the UK was hit by heavy snow and freezing conditions, causing major travel disruption, on the eve of a national rail strike Tuesday that was already expected to bring the country to a grinding halt.

The UK has been experiencing a cold snap for several days, with temperatures dropping to -10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit) in some areas, although the Met Office said the temperatures

were "not unusual for this time of year".

The service has issued yellow alerts

The service has issued yellow alerts for snow, fog and frost in several areas, including southeast and southwest England, and the north of Scotland. London Stansted airport warned of disruption.

"Our runway is temporarily closed whilst we undertake snow clearing," it said late Sunday, with many flights cancelled early Monday. The airport later said that the runway was open and fully operational, but that travellers should still brace for delays.

The airport is a main hub of budget airline Ryanair, which also cautioned about disruption to its flights at Gatwick, south of London. "Due to ongoing severe snowy weather across the UK, runways at both Stansted and Gatwick have been temporarily closed tonight (11 December), disrupting all flights scheduled to depart Stansted/Gatwick during this temporary closure period," it said.

Dozens of stranded passengers posted videos on social media showing snow-covered runways and planes stuck on the ground. More than 50 flights were also cancelled on Sunday at Heathrow, the UK's largest airport, due to freezing fog.

Train and bus services in London were also severely affected after the dump of around four inches (10 centimetres) of snow overnight, which also forced the closure of parts of the M25 orbital road around the capital, the country's busiest motorway. Some schools were also shut.—AFP

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South Africa's embattled Ramaphosa faces decisive week

Impeachment vote need support of a two-thirds majority of MPs to succeed

JOHANNESBURG: Embattled South African President Cyril Ramaphosa faces a decisive week as a scandal hangs over his future, with an impeachment vote on Tuesday preceding a key ruling party conference. Ramaphosa, who was championed as a graft-busting saviour after the corruption-tainted tenure of predecessor Jacob Zuma, has been marred by accusations that he attempted to cover up a huge cash theft at his luxury farm.

Parliament is due to decide on Tuesday whether to greenlight proceedings to remove him from office, after a report by an independent panel found that he "may" be guilty of serious violations and misconduct.

The vote comes just three days before Ramaphosa's party, the African National Congress (ANC), meets for its five-yearly conference to elect a new leader. The president is the front-runner of the two candidates for the top ANC post-which is also the key to him possibly staying on as head of state for a second term.

He was rumoured to be on the verge of resigning earlier this month. But in a show of confidence, he campaigned on the streets of Cape Town over the weekend. "There's no issue. There's no crisis. Just relax," he told reporters as, greeted like a star by cheers and camera flashes, he shook hands with supporters and patted children's heads.

Renowned for his patience and strategic thinking, Ramaphosa remains popular despite the scandal, attracting a support base crossing South Africa's racial and class divisions.

Counter-attack

A simple majority in the National Assembly,

where the ANC has 230 of the 400 seats, would be sufficient on Tuesday to initiate the impeachment process. An impeachment vote itself would need the support of a two-thirds majority of MPs to succeed. Last week, the 70-year-old president went on the counter-attack, asking the country's top court to annul the investigative report.

The ANC's national executive vowed last week to close ranks around Ramaphosa and vote down any attempt to force him from office.

That decision upset some within the party who said the executive had forced their hand.

Dissenting voices included former health minister Zweli Mkhize, 66, who is challenging Ramaphosa for the ANC leadership.

But party officials seem confident there will be insufficient votes in parliament to start impeachment proceedings.

"(Lawmakers) normally tow the party line. The ANC is on top of it," a senior party official told AFP on condition of anonymity. The vote might even not happen at all, analysts say. That would ease pressure on Ramaphosa ahead of the ANC leadership election.

"There is a possibility that the speaker of National Assembly, who is a political ally of Ramaphosa, decides to postpone the whole process and says, 'Let's have it next year'," said political scientist William Gumede.

Cash in sofa

The president, who was a wealthy businessman before entering politics, found himself in hot water in June when South Africa's former spy boss filed a complaint against him to the police.

Arthur Fraser alleged Ramaphosa had concealed



the theft of several million dollars from his game and rare cattle farm in 2020.

He accused the president of having the burglars

kidnapped and bribed into silence.

A police inquiry is ongoing but Ramaphosa has not so far been charged with any crime and has denied wrongdoing.

He has acknowledged the theft of \$580,000, which was stashed under sofa cushions at his farm,

but said the money was payment for buffalo bought by a Sudanese businessman.

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

The latter, Hazim Mustafa, recently confirmed

the transaction in interviews with British media.

Mustafa said he did not know the 20 buffalo belonged to Ramaphosa when he bought them in late 2019 and was waiting for a refund since the animals had not yet been delivered to him in

Russians helping Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria

VARNA, Bulgaria: When Ukrainian Elena Bondarenko fled to Bulgaria after Russia invaded, she never imagined she would be taken in by a Russian there. But that is exactly what happened to the bank clerk from Zaporizhzhia, one of many refugees fleeing the war who have been quietly sheltered by members of the country's 17,500-strong Russian community.

Bondarenko and her mother and two small children were welcomed by a Russian who runs a children's holiday camp near the Black Sea city of Burgas. At first "it was a shock", Bondarenko, 36, admitted. But "I am happy that not all Russians are aggressors."

"When you are without a roof, and you need to save your children, it does not matter who helps you," said another refugee, 34-year-old Anaida Petrushenko, who fled from Pavlohrad in eastern Ukraine with her three

"I never hid the fact that I am Russian because people saw that I wanted to help," said the camp's co-owner, who did not want to be named. He has taken in about 160 Ukrainian refugees, some of whom were shown the door at

nearby hotels when the tourist season started.

While a number of Russians in Bulgaria are helping refugees, a large swathe of the Balkan nation remains resolutely pro-Russian. And the Bulgarian government has

often been less than welcoming when it comes to providing accommodation and support, forcing many Ukrainians to

Of the some 932,000, who fled to Bulgaria since the invasion, only some 51,000 remain with less than 10,000 put up by the state, according to official data. Indeed, the Russian who runs the holiday camp only gets a daily allowance of 7.50 euros (\$7.90) per refugee from the Bulgarian government, and even these meagre payments are often delayed. With some 60 children and 50 elderly people to look after, the Russian and his Bulgarian partner are having to cover the extra costs themselves. While they lambast the Bulgarian government for failing to provide language courses or help the refugees find work, with winter closing in they say they cannot close the camp.

'Ashamed'

Volunteers have been the main driving force behind relief efforts for refugees, with Bulgaria woefully unprepared for the influx of Ukrainians following the Russian invasion in late February.

Despite their efforts, some of the Russians helping Ukrainians are uncomfortable about admitting who they are. "I came up with this phrase, 'I was born in Russia," a 47-year-old Russian translator, who lives in nearby Varna, told AFP. "It was less painful for me to put it this way. I can't describe this feeling of being ashamed of your own motherland," she told AFP, fearing giving her name in case it got her mother back home into trouble.

Having driven hundreds of kilometres to fetch people from the border with Romania, she is still putting up several families in her and her sister's Airbnb apartments in Varna.

Another Russian in Varna, Viktor Bakurevich, told AFP that he had "decided to take some responsibility for these



VARNA, Bulgaria: Ukrainian refugees serve food to themselves in a dining room of a children's holiday camp, run by a Russian investor and where they found refuge, on the Black sea coast near the city of Burgas. —AFP

people who have suffered from the war." "I do not believe in collective guilt but I do believe in collective responsibility," said the father-of-three, who moved to Bulgaria 14 years ago and founded his Russian grocery chain Berezka.

Feeling "immense shame", he publicly declared his opposition to the war from the outset and has hired about 50 Ukrainian refugees in addition to dozens of Ukrainians who already worked in his stores across Bulgaria.

Bakurevich is still providing daily food supplies and hot meals to support 100 refugees sheltered in a government recreation centre near Varna. One of his Ukrainian refugee employees, Oksana Shurdova, 48, said the salary that provided for her family mattered more than the "Russian grocery" sign at the door.—AFP

Yemen war has killed or maimed over 11,000 children: UN

DUBAI: More than 11,000 children are known to have been killed or maimed in Yemen's civil war since it escalated nearly eight years ago, the United Nations said Monday. "The true toll of this conflict is likely to be far higher," said the children's agency UNICEF about the casualties of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"Thousands of children have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands more remain at risk of death from preventable disease or starvation," said UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell. About 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, one quarter of them aged under five, and most are at extreme risk from cholera, measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, UNICEF said. Yemen's war broke out in 2014 and quickly saw Iran-backed Huthi rebels seize the capital Sanaa, prompting Saudi-led forces to intervene to prop up the government the following year. Hundreds of thousands have died since, either as a result of fighting or indirectly through unsafe drinking water, disease outbreaks, hunger and other impacts.

The agency's latest numbers confirm 3,774 child deaths between March 2015 and September 2022. A UN-brokered truce lasted for six months until October 2, but warring parties then failed to agree on an extension.—AFP

New Zealand offers nurses residency

WELLINGTON: New Zealand on Monday offered overseas nurses and midwives an immediate pathway to residency, as the country tries to address an acute shortfall of medical staff. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said changes to the immigration system meant those eligible can get fast-tracked residency from Thursday. Specialist doctors have also been added to New Zealand's "Green List", which allows skilled workers in hard-to-fill roles to get residency.

The New Zealand Nurses Organization estimates the country needs around 4,000 more nurses. Earlier this year, health minister Andrew Little said New Zealand

Top court hands death sentence...

Continued from Page 1

victim's children at the scene. The man, who had persisted in stalking Akbar despite several complaints to authorities, dragged her from a car during the holy month of Ramadan, according to investiga-

Zionist forces kill teenage...

Continued from Page 1

the Zakarna family said were bullet holes. Two Palestinians were wounded in the Zionist raid, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society whose medics operate in the area. The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War

Zionist forces have launched near-daily raids in the northern West Bank. At least 150 Palestinians needed hundreds of mental health nurses alone. The country only fully opened its borders in August, after more than two years of travel restrictions to combat COVID-19.

Anders teld reporters on Monday that the message to

Ardern told reporters on Monday that the message to nurses everywhere now is that New Zealand is the "best place to live, work and play". "We need to be as competitive as we can be," she said, defending against allegations that her government had been slow to address shortfalls.

The change to the immigration settings drew criticism from the opposition, who said the move should have come sooner. "The government's major backdown on giving migrant nurses a direct pathway to residence should have happened a year ago," said National Party's immigration spokeswoman Erica Stanford. "Leaving migrant nurses off the fast track to residence pathway was nothing short of madness while New Zealand faced critical staff shortages." — AFP

tions in the case

Akbar had previously filed two harassment complaints against the man who had proposed to her although she was already married. He had been arrested but was released on bail. The interior ministry said at the time of the murder that Akbar was stabbed in the chest. The attacker was arrested shortly afterwards and confessed to the crime, sparking calls for his execution. After the killing, some 200 people, including men, rallied to mourn the victim and demand tougher penalties for violence against women.

and 26 Zionists have been killed this year across the Zionist entity, the contested city of Jerusalem, and the West Bank. A further 49 Palestinians were killed during three days of fighting between Gaza militants and the Zionist entity in August.

Militants, children as young as 12 and veteran Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh are among more than 40 Palestinians killed in the Jenin area during Zionist operations this year. After his niece's death, Zakarna said "there's no way to be safe" during the frequent raids. A general strike was called in Jenin following the girl's killing, prompting shopkeepers to pull down their shutters. Mourners gathered for the funeral, with olive branches placed on her body which was wrapped in a Palestinian flag. —AFP

Iran defies outcry with second...

Continued from Page 1

wounding a member of the security forces. Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes. Mizan published images of Rahnavard's execution, showing a man with his hands tied behind his back hanging from a rope attached to a crane. The execution took place before dawn and there was no sign of any significant number of people witnessing it.

The director of Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights, Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, said Rahnavard "was sentenced to death based on coerced confessions after a grossly unfair process and a show trial". "The public execution of a young protester, 23 days after his arrest, is another serious crime committed by the Islamic Republic's leaders and a significant escalation of the level of violence against protesters," he told AFP.

The weeks of protest were sparked by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, a Kurdish-Iranian arrested by the morality police for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women. The protests represent the biggest challenge to the regime since the shah's ouster in 1979 and have been met with a crackdown that activists say aims to instill public fear.

EU ministers meeting in Brussels were Monday expected to impose fresh sanctions on Iran over the

OAPEC coordinates stances of...

Continued from Page 1

officials on reaching a deal on a direct mechanism and carrying out and developing the Durra field located in the divided area between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, he added.

Meanwhile, after private oil sector workers

crackdown on the protesters and its supply of drones to Russia used in the war on Ukraine. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc was going to "approve a very, very tough package of sanctions". "These executions are a blatant attempt to intimidate people, not for committing crimes but just for taking their opinions to the streets, just for wanting to live in freedom," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said.

US-based dissident Masih Alinejad charged that "Majidreza Rahnavard's crime was protesting the murder of Mahsa Amini. "The regime's method of dealing with protests is execution," said Alinejad, adding: "EU, recall your ambassadors." Prior to the two executions, Iran's judiciary said it had issued death sentences to 11 people in connection with the protests, but campaigners say around a dozen others face charges that could see them also receive the death penalty.

Reports ahead of the execution had described Rahnavard as a young fitness fanatic who was a keen amateur wrestler and had won competitions. Rights groups including IHR have said images have shown he was beaten in custody and forced into a purported confession broadcast on state media. The protest monitor social media channel 1500tasvir said his family had been informed of the execution only after it was carried out. It published pictures of a last meeting between the condemned man and his mother, saying she had left with no idea he was about to die.

Iran's use of the death penalty is part of a crack-down that IHR says has seen the security forces kill at least 458 people.—AFP

announced last week they will hold a peaceful sit-in and called on the prime minister to address their problems, they began their demonstrations on Monday in front of the Kuwait Petroleum Company's headquarters in Shuwaikh. A number of protestors urged HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to resolve their problems in the private oil sector, as they do not have clear rights. "The activation of the labor law in the oil sector that equates between oil sector employees in both the government and private sectors is among their demands," sources told Kuwait Times. — Agencies

International

Three killed in attack on China hotel in Kabul

Kabul police: Three attackers killed and one suspect arrested

KABUL: At least three people were killed when gunmen attacked a hotel popular with Chinese business people in the Afghan capital Monday, with witnesses reporting multiple blasts and several bursts of gunfire. Smoke could be seen pouring from the multi-storey Kabul Longan Hotel as Taleban security forces rushed to the site and sealed off the neighbourhood. The Taleban claim to have improved security since storming back to power in August last year but there have been scores of bomb blasts and attacks, many claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State group.



"All guests of the hotel have been rescued"

Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency NGO, which operates a hospital just one kilometre from the blast site, said it had received 21 casualties, including three people dead on arrival. It did not say if those dead were civilians or involved in the attack.

A Kabul police spokesman said three attackers were killed and one suspect arrested, blaming the assault on "mischievous elements". "All the guests of the hotel have been rescued and no foreigner was killed. Only two foreign guests were injured when they threw themselves from an upper storey," chief Taleban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid added on Twitter.

Video circulating on social media showed people clamouring out of windows on the lower floors of the building, with the hotel sign-in English and Chineseclearly visible. Other video showed huge flames licking out of another section, with thick plumes of smoke.

A helicopter also made several passes of the area. The hotel is popular with Chinese business visitors, who have flocked to Afghanistan since the Taleban's return in pursuit of high-risk but potentially lucrative



KABUL: Taleban security forces arrive at the site of an attack at Shahr-e-naw which is the city's one of the main commercial areas in Kabul on December 12, 2022. — AFP

business deals. China, which shares a rugged 76-kilometre (47-mile) border with Afghanistan, has not officially recognised the Taleban government but is one of the few countries to maintain a full diplomatic presence there.

Sensitive border

Beijing has long feared Afghanistan could become a staging point for minority Uyghur separatists in China's sensitive border region of Xinjiang. The Taleban have promised that Afghanistan would not be used as a base for militants and, in exchange, China has offered economic support and investment for Afghanistan's reconstruction. Maintaining stability after decades of war in Afghanistan is Beijing's main consideration as it seeks to secure its borders and strategic infrastructure investments in neighbouring

Pakistan, home to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The Taleban are at pains to portray Afghanistan as safe for diplomats and business people but two Russian embassy staff members were killed in a suicide bombing outside the mission in September in an attack claimed by IS. The group also claimed responsibility for an attack on Pakistan's embassy in Kabul this month that Islamabad decried as an "assassination attempt" against the ambassador.

A security guard was wounded in that attack. Despite owning the rights to major projects in Afghanistan, notably the Mes Aynak copper mine, China has not pushed any of these projects forward. The Taleban are reliant on China to turn one of the world's largest copper deposits into a working mine that would help the cash-strapped and sanctions-hit nation recover. — AFP

was taken away to a camp the same year, he said. "I don't know why he's being held. But I believe he's there because he's Uyghur and he's Muslim," he said.

'Too scared'

The deaths ignited fury in Urumqi and inspired action in other cities. Notably, protesters in Shanghai gathered at Wulumuqi Road-named after Urumqi in Mandarin-as the wave of rallies peaked on the weekend of November 26 and 27.

Silent vigils, calls for solidarity and anti-lockdown slogans expanded into demands for freedom of speech and even President Xi Jinping's resignation. "We are all Xinjiang people!" chanted demonstrators in Beijing.

But awareness of the victims' ethnic background remained limited in a country where the government strictly controls the press and censors social media. The protests were fuelled largely by frustration over zero-COVID, experts said, rather than solidarity with the Uyghurs as such.

'It's an attempt to avoid (a disaster) happening to them next, rather than an attempt to show... empathy or understanding with Uyghurs," said David Tobin, a Xinjiang scholar at Britain's University of Sheffield.

The demonstrations did not appear to address the 'racialised dimension" of health restrictions in Xinjiang, he added. He cited an enhanced security presence, heavier-handed measures, and a lack of essential supplies in Uyghur areas under zero-COVID as examples of the even heavier tactics deployed there. Meanwhile, years of persecution deterred ethnic minority citizens from joining the protests themselves, Turkey-based Uyghur activist Jevlan Shirmemmet said. "Why do you think no Uyghurs took part in the Urumqi demonstrations?" he asked. "Because they can't go out. They're either too scared or... they'll be branded as terrorists if they do."

'Helpless'

Overseas protests have created some space for Uyghurs to inform Chinese nationals about the crackdown. One participant at a New York vigil said he initially did not know the victims' ethnicity at all, as he blamed the Chinese government's limits on freedom of speech for his lack of information.

"I've heard their stories and tend to believe them. But I cannot verify them," he said. "And I feel super helpless, because I don't feel we can possibly find any way to help them." When hundreds gathered in London last month, activist Rahima Mahmut unfurled a flag associated with Xinjiang independence.

While some attendees from China's majority Han ethnicity-many of them students at British universitiesbristled, many seemed receptive to hearing more, she said. Many protesters "really didn't know that these victims were Uyghurs... or what is happening to Uyghur people", she told AFP. "Nevertheless, this kind of unity and bravery is a baby step to learning more and demanding more." But a Uyghur attendee at another rally, who said some of her family were detained, was sceptical. She said the protests were "too little too late" and might even provoke a backlash against her community.—AFP

News in brief

Three killed in election office

LAGOS: Three gunmen were killed early Monday

when police repelled an assault on an election office

in Nigeria's southeast, police said, in the latest vio-

lence in the restive region. The attack on the main

office of the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) in Owerri, capital of Imo state, followed similar assaults less than three months to next year's presidential vote. Nigerians will go to the

ballot box in February to elect a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari, a former army com-

mander who is stepping down after two terms in office. Recent attacks on INEC offices, particularly

in the southeast where separatist groups are active, and violence by armed criminal gangs are raising concerns over electoral violence. "The INEC headquarters in Owerri was attacked early this morning

by some gunmen who destroyed part of the building,

some furniture and materials," state police

spokesman Michael Abattam told AFP. He said the

assault was repelled by the police who engaged the

gunmen in a shootout. "Three of the attackers were

killed while two were arrested," he said.

Man shoots dead 3 women

ROME: A man shot dead three women and wounded four other people in Rome Sunday, said police, in what may have been a dispute over housing. Italy's far-right premier Giorgia Meloni revealed in a Facebook post later Sunday that one of the victims was a friend. The suspect shooter, 57-year-old Claudio Campi, allegedly opened fire on a meeting of his apartment building's residents in a northern district of Rome, using a Glock pistol stolen from a shooting stand. In a post on his blog in November, he wrote of his conflictual relationship with the people managing the building, who he accused of trying to force him out of his lodgings. Of the three women who died of their wounds, one was Nicoletta Golisano, 50, mother of a 10-year-old boy, who was attending the meeting as treasurer. Meloni revealed on Facebook they were friends and paid tribute to "a protective mother, a sincere and discreet friend, who was also a strong and fragile woman". The killer had been arrested, she said, adding she hoped that "justice will quickly follow its course".

Two police officers killed

SYDNEY: Two police officers were among three people killed in a shooting in the Australian state of Queensland, authorities said on Monday, and a hunt for the offenders was underway. Queensland Police ordered residents of the remote rural community of Wieambilla, about 270 kilometres (170 miles) west of the state capital Brisbane, to remain indoors until further notice while they hunted the killer or killers. Australia has some of the toughest gun laws in the world, imposed after a mass shooting at Port Arthur in the southern state of Tasmania in 1996 in which a lone gunman killed 35 people. "Terrible scenes in Wieambilla and a heartbreaking day for the families and friends of the Queensland Police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Twitter. — AFP

US delegates in China talk to improve ties

BEIJING: A senior US delegation in China discussed ways to improve ties and the issue of Taiwan with their local counterparts, Beijing said Monday, as they laid the groundwork for a planned visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The talks-involving top US diplomat for East Asia Daniel Kritenbrink, National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Laura Rosenberger, and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng-took place on Sunday and Monday in the northern province of Hebei, Beijing said.

The visit comes after Chinese leader Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden pledged to repair frayed relations at a summit in Bali, Indonesia last month. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Monday that the two sides in Hebei "had indepth discussions on implementing the consensus reached at the Bali Summit between the two presidents". Wang said the meeting also touched on Taiwan, the self-ruled democratic island that China claims as its territory and an increasing source of friction between Beijing and Washington. Xie, Kritenbrink and Rosenberger spoke on "strengthening exchanges at all levels" and "agreed to maintain communication", Wang said.—AFP

their escape?" Last January, a 10-year-old student died from his injuries in the central city of Touba's Lansar district after his teacher beat him for not having studied the

While there are no official statistics, estimates suggest there are more than 2,000 daaras with almost 200,000 talibes. "Some 25 percent of these are thought to be forced to beg," Amnesty said, quoting a so-called mapping exercise in 2018 by the NGO Global Solidarity Initiative (GSI). Amnesty said forced begging amounted to trafficking involving teachers and students not just from inside Senegal but also from neighbouring countries such as Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.—AFP



BEIJING: People queue at a fever clinic to be tested for the COVID-19 in Beijing. — AFP

China faces soaring **COVID** cases

BEIJING: COVID cases are surging in the Chinese capital, officials said Monday, as the country navigates a rapid turn away from its zero-tolerance coronavirus strategy. Just a few days after China began loosening restrictions, Beijing authorities said more than 22,000 patients had visited hospitals across the city in the previous day — 16 times the number a week ago.

"The current trend of the rapid spread of the epidemic in Beijing still exists," said city health commission spokesman Li Ang at a briefing Monday.

"The number of fever clinic visits and flu-like cases increased significantly, and the number of... emergency calls increased sharply." China reported 8,626 domestic infections Monday but with testing no longer mandatory for much of the population the number is believed to be a lot higher. As the country steers a tricky path out of its zero-COVID policy towards living with the virus, many with symptoms have opted to self-medicate at home. Cold and fever medicines have sold out in virtually all pharmacies across Beijing, and rapid antigen tests are dwindling as people stock up in anticipation of a virus surge that threatens the lives of millions of unvac-

Social media users reported a surge of infections in smaller cities including Baoding in Hebei province and Dazhou in Sichuan, with hospitals inundated and residents unable to buy medicines. AFP was not immediately able to verify the claims. "It's really serious, the supply of medicine is not enough and it's being managed badly," wrote one person on the Twitter-like platform Weibo. Lacking adequate medical infrastructure and primary care triage, China's rural interior is particularly vulnerable to health crises such as COVID.

'End of an era'

In a major move towards unwinding years of hardline restrictions, China said Monday it would retire an app used to track travel to areas with infections. The staterun "Communications Itinerary Card" was a central part of zero-COVID, keeping tabs on the movements of millions through their phone signal data.

It was one of a panoply of tracking apps that have governed everyday life through the pandemic. Most people still use local "health codes" run by their city or province to enter shops and offices. Social media users hailed the retirement of the software, noting the symbolism of the government shutting down its main tracking app. "Bye bye, this announces the end of an era, and also welcomes a brand new one," one person wrote on Weibo. Others asked what would become of the mountains of data collected and hoped it would be deleted.—AFP

China protests shine light on limits of **Uyghur** solidarity

SHANGHAI: Their deaths in a fire triggered China's biggest protests in generations, but few people seemed to know the victims were Uyghur families torn apart by Beijing's crackdown in Xinjiang. On November 24, 10 people died in the apartment block blaze in Urumqi, the northwestern region's capital, with many around China blaming a grinding COVID lockdown for scuppering rescue efforts.

The news unleashed long-simmering resentment over Beijing's health curbs, setting off widespread demonstrations that helped tip the government into reversing its strict coronavirus measures. For the protesters, those who died in the fire were martyrs of zero-COVID. But AFP interviews with relatives of the victims show they felt the fire was only the latest tragedy to strike their community.

Abdulhafiz Maimaitimin, a Uyghur who left China in 2016 and now lives in Switzerland, lost his aunt Oemernisahan Abdurahman and four of her young children in the fire. Her husband and son, along with Maimaitimin's father, were arrested by Chinese authorities in 2016 and 2017. Maimaitimin and his family believe they were spirited into a sprawling network of detention centres where China has been accused of detaining more than one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities.

"My aunt waited several years for (her loved ones) to be released but died without seeing them again,' 27-year-old Maimaitimin said. After allegations by Washington and others of genocide, a United Nations report said in August that torture claims were credible and that the detentions may constitute crimes against humanity. Beijing says the facilities are voluntary vocational schools designed to eliminate extremist

'Doors locked from outside'

The mainly Uyghur area of Urumqi where the deadly fire erupted appeared to have been under strict COVID curbs since August. "Perhaps if my aunt's husband and son had been there, they could have used their strength to save them," Maimaitimin said. "But maybe not, since the door was locked from the outside." Other residents and relatives of the deceased have made similar claims and alleged that lockdown barricades slowed the emergency response. Authorities have denied the accusations

Memmetli Abbas, a Uyghur living in Turkey, said his daughter and granddaughter only escaped by alerting a local official who let them out. But the pair were later 'questioned with regard to the fire", he told AFP. "I don't know where they are."

Abbas said his family's grievances also predate the blaze. His oldest son has been in prison since 2017 after returning from a trip overseas, and his nephew

AI urges Senegal to tackle abuse in **Quranic schools**

DAKAR: Many children in Senegal's Quranic schools face multiple abuses as well as financial exploitation through forced begging, Amnesty International charged Monday, as it urged Dakar to act forcefully to protect students. In the Muslim-majority nation where religious leaders wield wide social and political influence, poor children have long been entrusted to Quranic schools, called daaras, for their education. Amnesty said in a report that tens of thousands of students-known as "talibes"-"are forced to beg" as part of a system to bring

They also suffer health problems such as malnutrition, skin diseases and often have "huge abscesses in their mouths" from unsanitary conditions and lack of care. The students also "face abuses from some Quranic teachers and their assistants," the rights group said in the report.

Teachers told Amnesty that "shackling is a common practice, particularly for runaways, in order to prevent

teachers income.

Business

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OAPEC mulls setting up data bank,

discusses bloc's climate obligations

Kuwait hosts OAPEC's 109th meeting of the Council of Ministers

KUWAIT: The Secretary-General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Ali Bin Sabt, stated that the Organization's Council of Ministers held its 109th meeting in Kuwait on Monday, headed by Bassam Tuama, the Syrian Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources.

"The meeting discussed a set of issues related to the work of the organization, including the estimated budget for the year 2023, and to develop the progress made in terms of implementing the plan to activate and develop the organization's activity approved by the organization's cabinet.

Especially in the field of activating the relation-

ship between the General Secretariat of the organization and the Arab countries, as well as activating the role of the organization in training, coordinating the positions of member states and the rest of the countries regarding obligations in climate change negotiations, and the field of developing the data bank and activating its role," Bin Sabt said.

"The meeting also reviewed the report prepared on the preparations for the Twelfth Arab Energy Conference to be held in Qatar during the last quarter of 2023, and the events organized by or participated in by the General Secretariat during the year 2022. Moreover, the meeting also discussed assigning the executive office of the organization, in coordination with Saudi Arabia, to activate the Green Middle East initiative and to adopt the application of the concept of the circular carbon economy," he added.

"The council had also reviewed the economic and technical studies carried out by the General Secretariat, in addition to the reports prepared by the General Secretariat of OAPEC, including the quarterly report on the global petroleum situation, the quarterly report on "developments in liquefied natural gas and hydrogen" among oth-

The Secretary-General stated that the 109th meeting of the OAPEC Council of Ministers was preceded by the 164th meeting of the Executive Office, which was held on Sunday, chaired by Khaled Al-Ulaij, which is a meeting dedicated to preparing today's meeting.

The Secretary-General concluded his statement by expressing his sincere thanks for the continuous support and unlimited support that the OAPEC General Secretariat receives from its member states, which enabled it to continue to perform its work as required, wishing further progress and prosperity for the petroleum industry for member states in light of the exceptional circumstances that the global energy markets are going through. —KUNA

Britain stuck on recession path despite rebound

LONDON: Britain's economy remains on course for a long-lasting recession on fallout from the highest inflation in decades, analysts said on Monday, even if official data showed growth in

Gross domestic product rebounded 0.5 percent in the month, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said. GDP had dropped 0.6 percent in September, in part owing to businesses closing for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. ONS director of economic statistics, Darren Morgan, said the economy was helped in October especially by car sales which "rebounded after a very poor September, while the health sector also saw a strong month". Despite the rebound, Britain's finance minister Jeremy Hunt spoke of "a tough road ahead". "High inflation, exacerbated by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's illegal war, is slowing growth across the world, with the IMF predicting a third of the world economy will be in recession this year or next," he said in a statement.

The UK government and Bank of England have each said they believe Britain is already in a reces-

sion that the BoE expects to last all next year. The main reason for the bleak outlook is fallout from British inflation, which at above 11 percent is the country's highest level in more than 40 years.

Britons are seeing their wages squeezed, triggering mass strike action by public and private sector workers across the UK. Energy bills and food prices have rocketed this year on supply constraints caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the reopening of economies from pandemic lockdowns.

Britain's economy has further been hit by recent political turmoil and surging interest rates to try and

Rate hikes

The Bank of England is on Thursday expected to raise its main interest rate for a ninth meeting in a row. "The surprisingly strong rise (in October GDP) could tilt the Bank of England towards another bumper 75 basis-points interest rate hike... depending on the labor market and inflation data on Tuesday and Wednesday," noted Ruth Gregory, senior economist at Capital Economics.

Analysts are forecasting the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank to announce smaller rate hikes at their meetings this week compared with recent decisions. "Monetary policy conditions are set to tighten further, with the Bank of England likely to raise its policy rate by 50 basis points to 3.5 percent this week and then to a peak of 4.0 percent in February 2023," forecast Raj Badiani, principal



LONDON: Britons are seeing their wages squeezed triggering mass strike action by public and private sector workers across the UK.

economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"The return to growth in October was expected and supports our assessment that the anticipated recession is likely to be shallow at first before deepening in early 2023." He added, however, that data showing "the economy faltering in the three months to October suggests the recession appeared to start in the third quarter of 2022, (and)... is expected to last for four quarters".

The BoE has also said Brexit is hurting the UK economy, with the country's departure from the European Union hitting trade. —AFP

because the individual to whom alleged assistance was supplied was not designated in the UK at the time". Those arguments will be heard at a two-day extradition hearing on May 22 and 23 next year. Washington accuses Bonham-Carter of conspiracy to violate sanctions imposed on Deripaska.

He also faces a wire fraud charge and a third count in connection with the tycoon's American property purchases and efforts to expatriate his artwork there.

"Bonham-Carter engaged in over \$1 million of illicit transactions to fund real estate properties in the United States for Deripaska's benefit," the US Justice Department said. "Bonham-Carter also attempted to unlawfully transfer artwork purchased by Deripaska from an auction house in New York City to London through misrepresentations concealing Deripaska's ownership of the artwork."

The United States in September indicted Deripaska, his Russian partner and two others over a scheme to obtain US citizenship for his two children in violation of sanctions. The aluminum billionaire has been sanctioned by the UK over links to President Vladimir Putin, and for controlling a business in the Russian extractives and energy sector. This resulted in



a full UK asset freeze and travel ban.

Bonham-Carter is believed to be linked to Deripaska through a number of high-value properties in the United States and the UK all believed to be "ultimately held for the oligarch's benefit", the NCA said. "It is suspected that the true ownership of these properties is concealed through the use of complicated ownership structures and firms registered in the British Virgin Islands and other overseas jurisdictions," it added. —AFP

Saudi sees sharp jump in tourism numbers in H1

RIYADH: Spending by international tourists in Saudi Arabia soared to \$7.2 billion in the first six months of 2022 as visitor numbers surged to 46 million, Ministry of Investment figures show.

The number of inbound tourists to Saudi Arabia in the second quarter of 2022 increased annually by 575.4 per cent to 3.6 million, while domestic tourists rose by 42.3 per cent to 21.4 million, the ministry said in latest monthly bulletin. Inbound tourist spending soared by 570 per cent in the second quarter to 15.7 billion riyals and domestic tourist spending rose by 31.5 per cent in the same period to 22.7 billion riyals, the report said.

"Tourism is one of the most promising sectors in Saudi Arabia, which will contribute to achieving economic diversification," the ministry said. "The tourism sector's targets according to Vision 2030 include attracting 100 million tourists a year, creating 1.6 million jobs and increasing the industry's contribution to gross domestic product to more than 10 per cent."

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, is rapidly transforming its economy as it aims to reduce its dependence on oil, nurture domestic industries, boost jobs and diversify revenue. The kingdom is developing a number of tourism projects, including Neom, a \$500 billion futuristic city featuring a nature reserve, coral reefs and heritage sites on several islands along the Red Sea, and Qiddiya, a huge entertainment and sports project in Riyadh. Tourism is a central plank of the country's diversification drive. It will be a main nonoil growth driver, providing investment opportunities for private local and international investors as Saudi Arabia aims to attract 100 million visitors per year by 2030, S&P Global Ratings said in a recent report. —Agencies

UK businessman tied to Russian tycoon in court

LONDON: A British businessman wanted in the United States for allegedly helping Oleg Deripaska evade sanctions will claim the Russian oligarch was not subject to UK measures at the time, a London court heard Monday. The National Crime Agency (NCA) arrested Graham Bonham-Carter in October after the US Justice Department indicted him for allegedly assisting Deripaska evade sanctions.

Bonham-Carter, 62, is currently on bail and appeared at Westminster Magistrates Court in central London on Monday for a preliminary hearing, speaking to confirm his name, date of birth and give a west

His lawyer Gavin Irwin told the court that one of the issues up for debate will be "whether the breaches of sanctions properly constitute extradition offences

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Business

IMF calls for 'prudent' fiscal strategies amid slow growth

Total public and private debts dropped in 2021



One in five cars on the Norway roads 'electric'

OSLO: One in five cars on Norway's roads are electric, a share that has doubled in less than three years, the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association said Monday. "The snowball is rolling faster and faster and a growing number of good electric car models are on Norway's roads", the head of the association, Christina Bu, said on its website. While it took almost 10 years for the country's electric car fleet to go from zero to 10 percent of the market - a level reached in March 2020 - it took less than three years for the share to then double to 20 percent, the body said.



OSLO, Norway: This file photo taken on April 30, 2019 shows electric cars that are being charged in a street in Oslo, Norway.—AFP

A market share of 30 percent could be reached within two years, it said. By comparison, 0.64 percent of cars on France's roads were electric, according to French government figures from January 2021. Norway, which is paradoxically Western Europe's biggest oil and gas producer, aims for all its new cars to be "zero emission" - in other words, electric and hydrogen - by 2025. Clean cars benefit from several advantages in the Scandinavian country. Among other

Lawyer for ex-Wirecard CEO slams case probe

MUNICH: The defense team for ex-Wirecard CEO Markus Braun went on the attack Monday, calling the fraud case against their client prejudiced and urging the court in Munich to suspend proceedings. Braun, 53, faces charges including commercial gang fraud and market manipulation over his alleged involvement in the massive accounting scandal that brought down payments company Wirecard.

The once-celebrated company collapsed dramatically in June 2020 after it was forced to admit that 1.9 billion euros (\$2.0 billion) in cash, meant to be sitting in trustee accounts in Asia, didn't actually exist.

Braun is in the dock alongside Wirecard's exaccounting boss Stephan von Erffa and Oliver Bellenhaus, the former head of Wirecard's Dubai subsidiary. Their high-profile trial opened last week, with prosecutors accusing the trio of inventing revenue streams with third-partner companies to inflate Wirecard's accounts and make the loss-making com-

Microsoft to buy stake in London Stock Exchange

LONDON: US software giant Microsoft will buy a four-percent stake in the London Stock Exchange Group under a new IT services tie-up, the pair announced Monday. The long-term partnership focuses "next-generation data and analytics and cloud infrastructure solutions" including artificial intelligence (AI), a statement said.

Microsoft will acquire a holding worth £1.5 billion (\$1.8 billion) at current prices, while London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) committed to spending a

WASHINGTON: Managing current high levels of debt will become increasingly difficult if the economic outlook continues to deteriorate and borrowing costs rise further, the Washington-based lender warned in a blog post. "Governments should adopt fiscal strategies that help reduce inflationary pressures now and debt vulnerabilities over the medium term, including by containing expenditure growth - while protecting priority areas, including support to those hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis," the IMF said.

"This would also facilitate the work of central banks and allow for smaller increases in interest rates than would otherwise be the case. In times of turbulence and turmoil, confidence in long-run stability is a precious asset." Global debt remained at nearly 19 per cent of GDP above pre-pandemic levels at the end of last year, even after posting the steepest decline in 70 years, posing a challenge for policymakers.

Total public and private debt decreased last year to the equivalent of 247 per cent of global GDP, falling by 10 percentage points from its peak level in 2020, the latest update of the IMF's Global Debt Database indicated. However, in dollar terms, global debt continued

things, they are largely tax-free, enjoy lower fares for road tolls and public parking, and can in some cases use public transport lanes.

Electric cars now represent about 80 percent of Norway's new car registrations, as an increasing number of models become available. With the growing popularity of these cars, and the loss of income for the state, Norwegian authorities have started to roll back some of the benefits. As of January 1, the 25 percent VAT exemption on the purchase of new electric vehicles will only apply to the first 500,000 kroner (\$50,000) of the car's price. The change is expected to affect high-end electric car makes, such as Tesla, Mercedes and Audi.

Electric van plant

In another development, German automaker Mercedes-Benz said Monday it planned to inject more than one billion euros into a new plant in Poland dedicated to building fully electric vans. The site will be located in Jawor, southwestern Poland, where the group has already been manufacturing combustion engines since 2019 and battery systems since 2021. "We will build our first pure electric plant in Jawor," Mathias Geisen, head of Mercedes-Benz Vans, said in a statement. The move would "ensure our leading position in the field of all-electric light commercial vehicles" while at the same time "preserving the long-term prospects of the existing plants in Europe", he added.

At a press conference in Warsaw, Geisen said the group planned to spend more than a billion euros on setting up the new site. "The investment announced by Mercedes today is for Poland a very, very important investment," Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters. It comes as Mercedes-Benz and rival automakers around the globe are spending vast sums as part of a major industry-wide shift towards electrification.

Mercedes had initially planned to partner with US start-up Rivian and build all-electric vans in Europe together. But Mercedes on Monday said plans to establish a joint venture were "on hold due to Rivian's ongoing reprioritisation of projects". Rivian, which has been grappling with supply chain woes that have forced it to curb production this year, said it had decided "to pause discussions" with Mercedes. "At this point in time, we believe focusing on our consumer business, as well as our existing commercial business, represent the most attractive near-term opportunities to maximize value for Rivian," CEO RJ Scaringe said in a statement.— AFP

pany appear profitable. Austrian-born Braun denies the allegations and claims to be a victim of the fraud, which his defence team says was masterminded by fugitive COO Jan Marsalek. Braun's lawyer, Alfred Dierlamm, told judges that the case against his client was "unprecedented" in its prejudice, with the media already painting Braun as guilty. Dierlamm also accused prosecutors of not properly investigating Wirecard's money flows. The partner businesses were real, Dierlamm insisted, but the funds were re-directed to secret accounts without Braun's knowledge.

"The entire basic hypothesis, that the third-partner business was non-existent" is "wrong", Dierlamm told the court. Dierlamm also lashed out at the prosecution for relying heavily on evidence supplied by co-defendant Bellenhaus, who has admitted wrongdoing and turned chief witness for the prosecution.

Bellenhaus was not a witness but "a main perpetrator in a gang whose sole aim was to embezzle large sums of money", Braun's defense lawyer argued.

Dierlamm asked the court to suspend the trial to allow more time for a thorough investigation and for the defense to properly review the mountain of documents in evidence, some of which he said the defense had only received days ahead of the trial. The court is expected to take several days to respond to the motion to stay the proceedings.—AFP

minimum of \$2.8 billion on cloud-related services. The tie-up will help LSEG further integrate Refinitiv, the US financial data provider it purchased last year, and boost revenue growth. "This... is a significant milestone on LSEG's journey towards becoming the leading global financial markets infrastructure and data business," said its chief executive David Schwimmer.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in the statement that advances in cloud and AI technology would "fundamentally transform how financial institutions research, interact, and transact". LSEG shares jumped 2.7 percent to £76 on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was down slightly overall. That gave it a stock market capitalisation of about £37.3 billion.

US sues

Meanwhile, the US Federal Trade Commission has sued to block Microsoft's \$69 billion buyout of gam-

to rise, although at a much slower rate, reaching a record \$235 trillion last year, IMF data showed.

Private debt, which includes non-financial corporate and household obligations, drove the overall reduction, decreasing by 6 percentage points to 153 per cent of GDP, the IMF data showed. The decline of 4 percentage points in public debt, to 96 per cent of GDP, was the largest such drop in decades, the database indicated. "The unusually large swings in debt ratios are caused by the economic rebound from COVID-19 and the swift rise in inflation that has followed," the IMF said. Debt levels varied across economic groupings. The fall in debt was largest in advanced economies, where both private and public debt fell by 5 per cent of GDP last year, reversing almost one third of the surge recorded in 2020. In emerging markets (excluding China), the fall in debt ratios last year was equivalent to almost 60 per cent of the 2020 increase, with private debt falling more than public debt.

In low-income developing countries, total debt ratios continued to increase last year, driven by higher private debt. The IMF attributed the unusually large movements in private and public debt around the world to three main factors. First, the recession at the onset of the pandemic contributed to a major drop in GDP, which was reflected in the sharp rise in debt-to-GDP ratios in 2020, but as economies recovered from the crisis, the strong rebound in GDP helped the fall in debt ratios last year.

Second, inflation rates fell significantly in the first year of the pandemic, a trend that reversed last year as prices rose sharply in many countries. During 2020 and last year, economic activity and inflation moved together: inflation fell and then rose with output. These factors induced large swings in nominal GDP that contributed to the changes in debt ratios, the IMF said. Third, the effects of economic shocks on the budgets of governments, companies and households had an impact on debt levels. Debt and deficits increased significantly in 2020 because of the economic recession and the sizeable support extended to individuals and businesses. Last vear, fiscal deficits declined but remained above their pre-pandemic levels. "The weaker growth outlook and tighter monetary policy call for prudence in managing debt and conducting fiscal policy," the IMF concluded. — Agencies



Sunlit Greece seeks to lure Europeans amid energy crisis

ATHENS: With most of Europe struggling with soaring energy costs, Greece has launched an initiative to put its mild winters to good use and attract sun-seeking travellers all year round.

The Mediterranean nation recorded November temperatures comfortably exceeding 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) — quite a draw for Europeans eager to save on heating bills that have rocketed in the wake of the war in Ukraine. The Greek government has earmarked 20 million euros (\$21 million) for a poster campaign targeting mainly European pensioners that could boost an economy where the

travel sector represents 25 percent of annual output.

"Wanna feel 20 again?" says the poster featuring an elderly pair nibbling watermelon and sipping drinks on a yacht. "With warm winter temperatures up to 20 degrees Celsius, Greece is the place to be," it adds.

Tourism Minister Vassilis Kikilias, fresh from a tour of several European capitals including Paris and Berlin to promote the initiative, told AFP the government was working "on a plan to campaign for Greece 12 months per year". With northern European countries facing much longer and bitterly cold winters, "energy-wise there are many more needs than here in the south where the winter is mild" and shorter, he added. "You

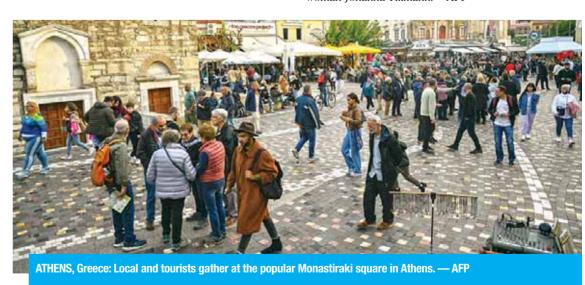
live a great one or two months here enjoying your vacation and spending less than you would have spent staying at home," Kikilias said.

The Florida of Europe?

"In Greece, no German has to freeze," top-selling German daily Bild wrote in September, while business daily Handelsblatt suggested the country could become "the Florida of Europe". Kikilias said there was a "tradition" among northern European travellers to winter in Spain and Portugal, but he urged holiday-makers eager for sun, sea and sand to "take a look at the eastern Mediterranean (too)".

After two years of economically painful travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, arrivals in 2022 could finish near the all-time high of 33 million tourists recorded in 2019. By the end of September, 23.7 million people had holidayed in Greece, and the number of French, German and British visitors even topped 2019 levels.

TUI, the world's largest tourism operator, earlier this year brought forward the launch of the tourist season because of high demand. But tour operators have yet to take the plunge in the winter months. For the time being, TUI does not offer organised trips to Greece from December to February, said Evangelos Georgiou, one of the company's communications managers. And German charter airline Condor only offers flights to Kalamata airport in the Peloponnese peninsula until the end of November. Condor flights to Heraklion on the island of Crete and Rhodes will only resume at the beginning of April, according to spokeswoman Johanna Tillmann.—AFP



ing giant Activision Blizzard, maker of the blockbuster "Call of Duty" title, over concerns that it would stifle competition. The lawsuit marks one of the biggest ever interventions by the US government to stop consolidation in the tech industry and raises significant doubts on the future of the transaction.

"Today we seek to stop Microsoft from gaining control over a leading independent game studio and using it to harm competition in multiple dynamic and fast-growing gaming markets," said Holly Vedova, director of the FTC's Bureau of Competition. The move by Washington follows an intervention by the European Union, which opened an in-depth probe into the transaction over its concerns that the deal would see Activision Blizzard's popular games become exclusive to Microsoft, the maker of the

Xbox console.

Britain has also announced an "in-depth investi-

gation" into Microsoft's planned takeover of Activision, which also produces mobile game "Candy Crush." In January, Microsoft - which also makes its own games to be played on PCs and mobile devices - announced the takeover that would create the world's third-biggest gaming company by revenue. The FTC said Microsoft had a proven history of buying up smaller gaming companies only to make the games exclusive to Microsoft - and thus inaccessible to rivals such as Nintendo or Sony. This would be a significant change for Activision that currently has a strategy of offering their games on a variety of platforms. Microsoft had earlier this week made moves to satisfy concerns by announcing that it would bring the "Call of Duty" franchise to Nintendo Switch, a rival of Xbox. This followed an earlier decision to make "Call of Duty" available on Sony's PlayStation.— AFP

Business
Tuesday, December 13, 2022

ECB considers smaller rate hike on 'peak inflation' expectation

ECB governors weigh in November eurozone inflation data

BRUSSELS: Growing hopes that the eurozone's red-hot inflation is nearing its peak could prompt European Central Bank policymakers to opt for a smaller rate hike on Thursday, observers said. Following two consecutive interest rate hikes of 75 basis points, markets are on tenterhooks to see whether the ECB will keep up the aggressive pace or downshift to 50 basis points as the region braces for a winter recession.

This week's meeting of the ECB's 25-member governing council in Frankfurt will be the final one of 2022, a year that will be remembered for unprecedented consumer price shocks as Russia's war in Ukraine sent food and energy costs soaring. Like other central banks, the ECB has fought back with a series of interest rate rises-walking a tightrope between raising borrowing costs enough to tame inflation, without dampening demand so much it triggers a deep economic downturn.

ECB governors may take heart from November's eurozone inflation data, which showed prices slowing for the first time in 17 months on the back of cooling energy costs. Inflation remains eye-wateringly high, however, at 10 percent-five times the ECB's target-and president Christine Lagarde has repeatedly said further rate hikes are needed. But

the rare bit of good news has bolstered hopes that price pressures are finally easing in the 19-nation in currency club.

"I would be reasonably confident in saying that it is likely we are close to peak inflation," the ECB's chief economist Philip Lane said last week. The early Christmas present could "take away some of the urgency to continue with jumbo rate hikes," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski, even if a 75-basis-point hike is "still on the table".

Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said he expected the ECB "to slow the pace to 50 basis points". Observers may look across the Atlantic for clues on Wednesday, when the US Federal Reserve is set to announce its latest monetary policy decisions.

The Fed, which began hiking earlier and faster than the ECB, has signaled it could scale back the pace of its rate increases.

Recession fears

The ECB's rate decision will be guided by the latest economic forecasts due to be unveiled on Thursday. Analysts expect them to show that inflation will remain well above the two-percent target in 2023 before falling back in 2024 and 2025. The

eurozone economy is seen shrinking in the final quarter of 2022 and the first months of 2023, meeting the technical definition of a recession.

Berenberg Bank economist Holger Schmieding said he expected "a significant winter recession for the eurozone as consumers and businesses hold back". But with governments rolling out massive support packages and gas storage levels above average for this time of the year, "the region is better prepared for the cold season than expected", he

Schmieding urged the ECB not to "overdo its response to inflation", warning that aggressive rate hikes would make the recession "even more painful".

Bloated balance sheet

As part of its monetary policy tightening, the ECB will on Thursday outline the next steps in its efforts to slim down the bank's massive balance sheet. It has already made changes to the terms of an ultra-cheap bank loan scheme, aimed at keeping credit flowing during the pandemic, in a bid to incentivize early repayment of the so-called TLTRO loans. The move appears to be paying off, with eurozone lenders handing back nearly 750



billion euros (\$790 billion) in TLTRO cash since October

Analysts are also eager to hear how and when the ECB plans to start shrinking its five-trillioneuro bond portfolio, after years of hoovering up government and corporate debt.

The issue will be discussed at this week's meeting, Lagarde has said. The ECB has already indicated that the process of "quantitative tightening"-letting the bonds mature or actively selling themwould be gradual and predictable to avoid spooking financial markets.—AFP

Stock markets begin week lower ahead of rate decisions

LONDON: European stock markets dropped Monday following losses in Asia, as investors looked ahead to interest rate decisions this week from major central banks including the Federal Reserve.

The dollar traded mixed against its main rivals, while oil prices retreated further following sharp falls last week. Analysts are forecasting the Fed and the European Central Bank to announce smaller rate hikes at their meetings this week compared with recent decisions.

The Bank of England is meanwhile on course for a ninth increase in a row as policymakers try to bring down inflation from the highest levels in decades. "Following a softer session in Asia, European markets are on edge, opening the week lower ahead of a critical few days for central bank action," noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

"The ECB, the Fed and the Bank of England are expected to raise rates by 50 basis points each as the pace of tightening looks set to slow." The halfpoint jumps will still be steep rises, however, as central banks struggle to cool the pace of price increases, particularly regarding energy and food.

Ahead of the Fed's policy meeting, investors were set to digest US inflation data due Monday. Traders were keeping an eye also on developments in China as it moves away from the zero-Covid policy that has hammered its economy, the world's second largest after the United States.

The shift comes after widespread protests against the near three-year strategy, though there is concern about the expected spike in infections. Uncertainty surrounding the strength of China's demand recovery has hit oil prices hard, with crude futures shedding more than 10 percent last week. "The gradual easing of Chinese COVID restrictions is... expected to lead to a further upswing in demand," said Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.—AFP

US biopharma firm

Amgen to acquire

Horizon for \$28bn

NEW YORK: The US biopharmaceutical firm

Amgen said Monday it has reached agreement to

acquire Horizon Therapeutics, which specializes in

medicine for rare and auto-immune diseases, for

\$27.8 billion. This is the biggest acquisition of the

the tune of \$116.50 a share in Horizon Therapeutics,

a 20 percent premium over its closing price Friday

on Wall Street. Amgen said it will finance the deal

and if all goes well it should be concluded in the

first half of 2023, Amgen said. Founded in 2005,

Horizon Therapeutics develops and markets drugs

for rare, auto-immune and inflammatory illnesses. It

is best known for making Tepezza, which is used to

treat thyroid eye disease. Shares in Horizon

Therapeutics, which has its head office in Ireland

but is listed on the Nasdaq index, shot up 15 per-

cent in electronic trading prior to the opening bell

The deal is subject to approval by US regulators

with a \$28.5 billion loan from a bank.

California-based Amgen said it will pay cash to

year in the health sector.

Grand Hyper opens its 31st outlet in Kuwait at Hawally

KUWAIT: Leading retailer Grand Hyper further strengthened its presence in Kuwait with the grand opening of its 5th outlet in Hawally and 31st in Kuwait. The new store at Al-Othman Street, Hawally Block-3, has been inaugurated on 8th December at 4.30 pm by Jassim Mohammed Khamees Al-Sharrah, Saad Hamdad, Amanullah, Ayyoob Kachery - Regional Director- Grand Hyper Kuwait, Mohamed Suneer - CEO, Thahseer Ali - DRO, Rahil Bassim - COO along with other regional heads, management team and other well-wishers.

The store is located inside an expat dominant residential area and would cater to the local residents as well as expatriates. The new outlet offers an enriching shopping experience to the citizens and residents in and around Hawally. It boasts more than 6,500 sq feet and offers grocery, fresh food, meat and fish, bakery, dairy, hot food, roastery, and a delicatessen, health and beauty variety, household needs, mobiles, garments, and much more.

On the occasion, Ayyoob Kachery expressed his happiness at the opening of the Hypermarket, saying the occasion was a testimony to the group's milestone of 50 outlets in 2025. "We are proud to see another great retail addition to our growing circle of iconic stores which is a testimony to the fact that Grand Hyper has continued to expansion plan. The store houses a range of selected assortments keeping in mind the daily needs of family oriented customers. The new store opening is in line with Grand's expansion plan with a vision to have the store presence at every nook and corner of the country enabling customers to reach the Grand store at their convenience.

Grand Hypermarket has a strong reputation and trust in Kuwait market as a brand, and has been working towards extending a strong presence across the GCC and continues striving towards being the most preferred retailer among customers.

Can be a second as a second



Huawei Mate 50 Pro: The futuristic tech flagship smartphone

KUWAIT: Huawei announced the launch of the latest member of its flagship Mate series, the Huawei Mate50 Pro, and celebrated the fourth anniversary of the Huawei AppGallery in the MEA region. The Huawei Mate50 Pro comes equipped with a range of cutting-edge technologies, breaking new ground and expanding the scope of what users can expect from a smart device.

The Huawei Mate50 Pro represents a major step forward in smartphone aesthetics, thanks to the symmetrical Space Ring Design. The Huawei Mate50 Pro also packs an Ultra Aperture XMAGE Camera, which boasts the first-ever 10-scale adjustable physical aperture and the most versatile photography capabilities ever seen on a Huawei Mate smartphone. In terms of performance, the Huawei Mate50 Pro is armored by the ultra-reliable "Kunlun Glass", which boosts drop resistance by 10 times. These robust features are enhanced by futuristic Super Device and EMUI 13, which debuts on the Huawei Mate50 Pro and offers a broad array of seamless smart services.

The Huawei Mate50 Pro comes in two types of rear covers, glass and vegan leather. The glass cover is available in two colors, Silver and Black, while the vegan leather version comes in Orange, and it will be available in Kuwait for pre-orders starting on 15th of December, 2022.

Crafted quality and classic design

In addition to the signature Mate Series design language of iconic symmetry and Space Ring Design, the Huawei Mate50 Pro also makes use of the elegant Clous de Paris step-patterned embossing design for the first time ever, showcasing a new kind of ordered beauty that is crafted down to the last detail.

Huawei Mate50 Pro

The Huawei Mate50 Pro comes with two different types of rear cover, glass and vegan leather. The glass cover is available in two colors, silver and black, which give the phone a distinct, elegant finish. The vegan leather version comes in Orange, inspired by the radiant orange rays of the sun.



Ground-breaking ultra aperture XMAGE camera

Huawei launched its very own mobile imaging brand "XMAGE" in July 2022, with the goal of offering consumers a new shooting paradigm that fuses science with culture and aesthetics with technology in terms of technologies, imaging style, and shooting experience. The Huawei Mate50 Pro features a cutting-edge Ultra Aperture XMAGE Camera with a 10-size adjustable physical aperture, which incorporates key advances to the optical system, mechanical structure, imaging technology, and image processing. The smart aperture adjusts to match the aperture size with the scene and shooting scenario identified in Auto mode. Switching to Professional mode allows you to manually adjust the depth of field and degree of blur.

Advanced hardware and algorithms are deeply embedded to enhance static image shooting. The Ultra Aperture Camera comes equipped with an F1.4 large aperture, working with the XD Fusion Pro image engine and high light intake, to set the image brightness, light and shadow details, as well as cold and warm comparisons to perfection. Portrait mode applies natural background blurring to make the subject stand out from their surroundings. Night mode captures photos with highly distinct bright and dark regions, even in dimly lit environments. The periscope telephoto camera supports a zoom range of up to 200x, bringing scenes from the great beyond right in front of your eyes.

The wide-angle macro camera magnifies details from tiny worlds, presenting millimeter-level strands and dew droplets with outstanding clarity. The Huawei Mate50 Pro also supports macro video shooting and macro picture-in-picture (PiP) to accurately convey scenes in motion.

Mighty performance

The Huawei "Kunlun Glass" consists of 10



quadrillion-level nanocrystals, the result of composite ion strengthening, which make it more resilient and drop resistant, as verified by the first-ever five-star glass drop resistance certification from Switzerland's SGS. This makes the Huawei Mate50 Pro modules the first phones to ever achieve this certification. The Huawei Mate50 Pro also supports IP68-rated water resistance of up to six meters underwater, allowing it to easily handle wet and dusty environments.

Additionally, the Huawei Mate50 Pro display provides a window into a crystal-clear world. Combined with the P3 wide color gamut, fine-tuned colors are calibrated to ensure absolute authenticity. The smartphone comes with a 6.74-inch Huawei FullView Display with a screen resolution of 2616 x 1212 pixels and a high refresh rate of 120Hz and 1440Hz PWM dimming to reduce flickering and relieve eye fatigue. The Huawei Mate50 Pro packs a 4700 mAh battery within its slim body. It offers 66W Huawei SuperCharge wired and 50W Huawei SuperCharge wireless fast-charging solutions to strike an optimal balance between battery life, fast charging, and portability.

on Monday.

Shares in Amgen were down 2.6 percent. Responding to an article in The Wall Street Journal, Horizon Therapeutics said last month it was in preliminary talks with Amgen but also with Johnson & Johnson and the French company Sanofi. "The acquisition of Horizon is a compelling opportunity for Amgen and one that is consistent with our strategy of delivering long-term growth by providing innovative medicines that address the needs of patients who suffer from serious diseases," Amgen CEO Robert Bradway said. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

DESIGNER JACQUEMUS - FROM MICRO-BAG TO MASSIVE SUCCESS



French actress Sophie Marceau arrives for the Jacquemus fashion show in the Paris suburb of Le Bourget on December 12, 2022. Entitled Le Raphia, the collection for men and women, scheduled off-calendar, is dedicated to spring-summer 2023. — AFP photos

is micro-bag is on the fingers of the biggest celebrities, and he operates by his own timetable -Simon Porte Jacquemus has forged a singular and hugely successful path in the fashion game at the age of just 32. The French designer holds his latest show just outside Paris on Monday again choosing to ignore the usual calendar of fashion events. He last showed at Paris Fashion Week in 2020. He has often preferred other locations, such as the dunes of Camargue this summer that drew the likes of Victoria Beckham. "I dream of one day reaching Jacquemus' level of creativity and organising similar shows," Beckham told Le Monde.

The strategy is working. "Jacquemus is a phenomenon. His recent collaboration with Nike was one of the biggest successes of the year, as was the opening of his boutique. The rhythm of his collections mirrors his direct relationship with consumers," said Serge Carreira, luxury specialist at Sciences Po Paris. The brand has grown 10-fold since before the pandemic, now worth some 200 million euros, according to figures seen by specialist news site Business of Fashion, with a goal of hitting 500 million euros by 2025.



French actor Vincent Cassel and his wife French model Tina Kunakey arrive for the Jacquemus fashion show in the Paris suburb of Le Bourget on December 12, 2022.

With several vacancies at the big houses, Jacquemus is highly courted. But he so far turned down all offers, arguing that he "already has a big house: Jacquemus". The item that has put him on the map is undoubtedly the

BIVE FULL

NASA capsule Orion splashes

down after record-setting voyage

Chiquito micro-bag - an increasingly common sight on the fingers of the fashion-conscious, right up to the likes of Rihanna and Kim Kardashian. "It's a rather exceptional tour de force," said Carreira.

He is also a savvy user of social media, sharing his life with his 5 million Instagram followers, including his celeb-packed wedding to PR consultant Marco Maestri this summer. "He's a celeb designer, we always know what he's doing, he's constantly documenting his daily life," added Benjamin Simmenauer, a professor at the French Fashion Institute. "Brands like to recruit people like that. It creates a connection with the public."

Originally from Provence, Jacquemus came to Paris in 2009 and held his first fashion week show three years later. This September, he opened his first boutique in the French capital. He describes his first showsnotable for girls in tuxedos and flipflops - as "French and naive... made with nothing but very brutal energy". "He brought a smile to fashion, which is rarely seen," said LoÔc Prigent, a fashion filmmaker.— AFP



US actress Pamela Anderson arrives for the Jacquemus fashion show in the Paris suburb of Le Bourget on December 12, 2022.

ASA's Orion space capsule splashed down safely in the Pacific on Sunday, completing the Artemis 1 mission - a more than 25-day journey around the Moon with an eye to returning humans there in just a few years. After racing through the Earth's atmosphere at a speed of 25,000 miles per hour, the uncrewed capsule floated down to the sea with the help of three large orange and white parachutes, as seen on NASATV. "I don't think any one of us could have imagined the mission this successful," said Artemis Mission Manager Mike Sarafin in a press conference. "We now have a foundational deep space transportation system."

During the trip around Earth's orbiting satellite and back, Orion logged well over a million miles and went farther from Earth than any previous habitable spacecraft. "For years, thousands of individuals have poured themselves into this mission, which is inspiring the world to work together to reach untouched cosmic shores," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. "Today is a huge win for NASA, the United States, our international partners, and all of humanity," he added.



In this still image, NASA's unmanned Orion spaceship approaches Earth as it returns from its Moon mission, on December 11, 2022.

After touchdown, helicopters flew over the floating spacecraft, which showed no evidence of damage. Orion was recovered by a prepositioned US Navy ship off the coast of Mexico's Baja California after some initial tests were run. As it reentered the Earth's atmosphere, the gumdrop-shaped capsule had to withstand a temperature of 2,800 degrees Centigrade (5,000 Fahrenheit) - about half that of the surface of the Sun.

The main goal of this mission was to test Orion's heat shield - for the day when it carries astronauts. Achieving success in this mission was key for NASA, which has invested tens of billions of dollars in the

Artemis program due to take people back to the Moon and prepare for an onward trip, someday, to Mars. A first test of the capsule was in 2014, but that time it stayed in Earth's orbit, coming back into the atmosphere at a slower speed of around 20,000 miles per hour.

Choppers, divers, boats

The USS Portland was positioned to recover the Orion capsule in an exercise NASA has been rehearsing for years. Helicopters and inflatable boats were also deployed. The falling spacecraft eased to a speed of 20 miles per hour as it finally hit the Pacific. NASA let Orion float for several hours - a lot longer than if astronauts were inside - to collect data on temperatures inside the crew module. Divers then attached cables to hoist Orion onto the

USS Portland, an amphibious transport dock vessel whose stern was partly submerged. The water was then pumped out slowly so the spacecraft came to rest on a

platform designed to hold it.

The Navy ship was then set to head for San Diego, California, where the spacecraft will be unloaded in the coming days. Orion has now traveled 1.4 million miles since it took off from Florida on November 16, aided by the huge SLS rocket. At its nearest point to the Moon, it flew less than 80 miles from the surface. And it broke the distance record for a habitable capsule from our planet, venturing 268,000 miles away at its farthest point.

Artemis 2 and 3

Recovering the spacecraft will allow NASA to gather data that is crucial for future missions. This includes information on the condition of the vessel after its flight, data from monitors that measure acceleration and vibration, and the performance of a special vest put on a mannequin in the capsule to test how to protect people from radiation while flying through space. Some capsule components should be good for reuse in the Artemis 2 mission, already in advanced stages of planning.

That mission, planned for 2024, will take a crew toward the Moon but still without landing on it. Artemis 3, scheduled for 2025, will see a spacecraft land for the first time on the south pole of the Moon, where they hope to find water in the form of ice. The space agency thereafter aims to launch one mission per year. "We have hardware today in work around the world through Artemis 5, this isn't just a one flight and we're done," said NASA Associate Administrator Jim Free.

As part of the Artemis missions, NASA is planning to send a woman and a person of color to the Moon for the first time. Only

12 people - all of them white men - have set foot on the Moon. That was during NASA's historic Apollo missions, which ended in 1972. NASA hopes to establish a lasting human presence on the Moon, through a base on the surface as well as an orbiting space station. Having people

learn to live on the Moon should help engineers develop technologies for a yearslong trip to Mars, possibly in the late 2030s.— AFP

NASA's unmanned Orion spaceship comes in for a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean off Baja California, Mexico, on December 11, 2022.



NASA's Orion Capsule is drawn into the well deck of the USS Portland during recovery operations after it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Baja California, Mexico, on December 11, 2022. Orion was launched November 16 on the Artemis rocket for a 25-day mission to the Moon. The main goal of this mission was to test Orion's heat shield-for the day when it is humans and not test mannequins riding inside. — AFP photos



Members of the joint NASA and DOD recovery teams watch as NASA's Orion capsule makes its way towards the USS Portland (LPD 27) after splashing down off the coast of Baja California, Mexico, on December 11, 2022.

Lifestyle | Features



A box of caviar is pictured at the Sturia sturgeon farm in Saint Genis-de-Saintonge. Fished to the brink of extinction, sturgeon now exist almost exclusively in caviar farms, and France wants to become the gold standard. But it faces challenges from climate change and Chinese competition. — AFP photos



Fish eggs just removed from sturgeons are ready for sifting at the Sturia sturgeon farm in Saint Genis-de-Saintonge.

FRANCE BETS ON TRANSPARENCY, TECH TO BEAT CHINESE CAVIAR

t the fish farm near Bordeaux. Christophe Baudoin is running an ultrasound device over the belly of a large sturgeon to check its eggs. "Caviar!" he shouts as the monitor shows the right sparkle around each little round ball. "Over-mature!" comes the next shout, indicating the fish's pregnancy cycle has gone too far and the eggs have softened - losing the crucial crunch.

It will go back in the lake to await another cycle in two years. For the company, Sturia, it's an incredibly laborious process - they ultrasound some 20,000 fish a year for a total of 300 tonnes of caviar - but climate change has made it vital. Many fish are coming out "overmature", in part because warmer waters have accelerated the pregnancy cycle.

For the guys standing in the water, scooping up the huge fish for inspection, the winter days when 10 centimeters of ice coated the lakes are not entirely

But the change is still shocking. "It's been 10 years since we've seen any ice on these lakes," said Baudoin. One in five of the fish died in 2021 when water temperatures hit 30 degrees, five degrees above a sturgeon's comfort zone. "You might not know each one by name, but it's never nice to pull out a dead fish - and of course the cost for the group is enormous," said Sturia boss

Extinction threat

'Wakanda'

on dismal

stays on top

film weekend

isney and Marvel's "Black

Panther: Wakanda Forever" has

again led the North American box

office, industry watcher Exhibitor

Relations reported Sunday, but the

film's estimated weekend take of just

\$11.1 million reflected a deep slump in

moviegoing. Hollywood has suffered

from a dearth of big new films and the

growing popularity of home streaming

services. This weekend's top 12 films

grossed under \$35 million, one of the

Wakanda Forever" has now taken in a

domestic total of \$409.8 million. But

that is far from the \$700.4 million

grossed by the original 2018 film, and

"Wakanda" is expected to be knocked

off its reigning perch next weekend. The

release December 16 of 20th Century's

much anticipated "Avatar: The Way of

In its five weeks out, "Black Panther:

year's worst totals, analysts said.

Fished to the brink of extinction in the wild - including the once-rich Russian

Saintonge. Farming only started in France in

A technician removes fish eggs from a sturgeon at the Sturia sturgeon farm in Saint Genis-de-

and Iranian waters of the Caspian Sea sturgeon now exist almost exclusively in farms, most of them in China. Sturgeon were fished in France's Gironde river for centuries, but their eggs were given to children, old people and pigs until Russian nobles fleeing the Communist revolution a century ago showed locals their potential. It became a delicacy in Paris after Armenian emigrants Melkoum and Mouchegh Petrossian convinced the Ritz Hotel in Paris to serve caviar in the

BoxOfficeMojo.com. "Until then, the box office is slowing to a crawl."

In second place this weekend was Universal's action comedy "Violent Night," at \$8.7 million for the Fridaythrough-Saturday period. David Harbour stars as a sledgehammerwielding Santa who takes on some bad guys trying to ruin one family's Christmas. Disney's computer-animated sci-fi film "Strange World" again placed third, with ticket sales of \$3.6 million. Searchlight's horror-comedy "The Menu," starring Ralph Fiennes, held at fourth place, taking in \$2.7 million.

And in fifth was Sony's "Devotion," about the friendship of two US fighter pilots during the Korean War, at \$2 million. One weekend bright spot, said Variety.com, was A24's "The Whale," which in limited release took in \$360,000 from just six theaters, the best per-screen average this year. Brendan Fraser, in a prosthetic suit, stars as a 600-pound (270-kilogram) man who tries to reconnect with his daughter. Rounding out the top 10 were: "Black Adam" (\$1.3 million); "The Fabelmans" (\$1.2 million); "Met Opera: The Hours" (\$791,000); "I Heard the Bells" (\$751,000); "Spoiler Alert" (\$700,000). — AFP

the 1990s, and since it takes up to a decade to raise a sturgeon, progress is painstaking. Unable to compete with China on quantity, French producers focus on sustainable and healthy farming. The ultrasound avoids unnecessary killing and Sturia sends the meat to be used for rillettes pate, the collagen-rich gonads for cosmetics, and the skin for leather and a specialist glue favored by violin-



In this file photo, fish eggs just removed from sturgeons are sifted at the Sturia sturgeon farm in Saint Genis-de-Saintonge.

'Produce better'

Dulau said the focus on traceability and quality is rebuilding caviar's image after the over-fishing crisis. "The idea is to produce less, but produce better," he said. "People will eat less because it's a lot more expensive, but it will be so good that they'll be satisfied." But Michel Berthommier, of nearby Caviar Perlita, is frustrated that "nine out of 10, maybe 10 out of 10" French restaurants still source from China. He blamed middle-men for preferring the mark-up on foreign eggs.

"It's bizarre at a time when restaurants are always saying they source their products locally. We sell more to Singapore than restaurants 10 kilometers down the road," he said. But he said the transparency of French production will win over buyers. "There used to be a mystery around how these fish were raised and harvested. We have opened our books on how our fish live, how they are fed and selected. "We can't be number one in production, but we can lead the way in creativity and science."— AFP

Blind surfer: Conquering the world's biggest waves

att Formston proudly shows off a photo of him surfing a liquid mountain off the Portuguese coast, where some of the biggest waves on the planet crash to shore. No matter that he can't see it because he is blind. Despite having lost his sight when he was very young, Formston has spent his life taming the ocean. Last month, at the age of 44, he added surf's Holy Grail to his list of accomplishments, riding waves his team estimates were up to 12 meters tall off Nazare, Portugal. "Most sighted surfers don't want to have anything to do with that wave," the Australian told AFP in California. "But I love it. I love big waves."

Formston's blue eyes shift rapidly as he talks, the result of the macular dystrophy that struck when he was just five years old. The condition, which affects the retina, left him with no sight at all in the center of his eye, and only a tiny amount of peripheral vision. What little he can see around the edges is blurred like "you're rubbing your windscreen with sandpaper and you scratch it up." Reliant on his other senses, he learned to ride the waves at Narabeen, a small resort outside of Sydney that has produced some of Australia's best surfers.

'Feeling the wave'

Formston is now among the best disabled surfers in the world, and competed at Pismo Beach last week in the World Para Surfing Championship. With the help of a guide who tells him when the waves are about to hit, Formston glides effortlessly on the crest, drawing curves that naturally follow the break of the rollers.

His forefoot acts like a cane, he says, giving him tactile feedback that allows him to adjust his body in fluid, graceful moves. "I'm just feeling the wave and doing what the wave wants me to do," he says. His suit marked "Blind Surfer" is the only way



Australian surfer Matt Formston, who is blind, talks with members of the Australian team after his heat on the second day of competition at the World Para Surfing Championship in Pismo Beach, California.— AFP photos

a casual observer would know about his disability. Formston and other disabled surfers who descended on California last week are hoping that para surfing will make its Paralympic debut in 2028, when the Games come to Los Angeles.

But if it does, and if he makes it to the Australian team, it won't be his first time -Formston was a cycling Paralympian in Rio in 2016. Despite his status as a world class athlete in two entirely separate disciplines, Formston does not consider himself exceptional. "When conditions are really good, many surfers stay out well after the sun goes down," he said. "So they surf like me in the dark. I just do it

Able-bodied surfers disagree with the idea that he is just a regular guy. "Matt is better than a lot of sighted surfers that I see when I get out there in the water," says Dylan Longbottom, the big-wave specialist who helped Formston in his preparation for Nazare. "He's a hard worker, he's a very strong willed person. "For a blind surfer to go to the biggest waves on the planet at Nazare, and then to surf waves from 10 to 12 meters... I just think it's history in the making," says Longbottom, who had a brush with death at Nazare in 2018 when he fell from a monster wave.

'Ocean is the safest place for me'

To train for the challenge, Formston worked extensively on his breathing, and was ultimately able to hold his breath for up to five minutes. Jet skis towed him out to the spot where the waves break, and

he had to listen for a whistle from his team to know when to let go of the rope and then when to turn at the bottom of the wave to escape the avalanche of foam.

After the success of Portugal, he now has his sights on legendary mega-surf spots like Jaws in Hawaii, and Shipstern Bluff in Australia. "People think 'blind' and 'surfing' are like two things that shouldn't come together," says the father-of-three. "But the ocean is the safest place for me. "When I walk through a car park, there are gutters, and holes, and cars... everything is dangerous when you're blind. "In the ocean, if you fall off your surfboard, you're in water and as long as you can swim, you're safe."— AFP



Australian surfer Matt Formston, who is blind, competes in his heat on the second day of competition at the World Para Surfing Championship in Pismo Beach, California.



Lifestyle | Features



(Left to right) Guest, Oscar Isaac, guest and Colin Farrell attend the after party of Searchlight Pictures' 'The Banshees Of Inisherin' at DGA Theater in New York City. — AFP photos



US actress Selenis Leyva (left) and US actress Mayan Lopez speak during the unveiling of the nominations for the 80th Golden Globe awards, in Berverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022.

'BANSHEES OF INISHERIN' TOPS NOMINATIONS AS GOLDEN GLOBES ATTEMPT COMEBACK

rish black comedy "The Banshees of Inisherin" topped the Golden Globes nominations Monday, as the scandalstruck Hollywood award show attempts to rebuild its reputation following last year's boycott by A-listers and studios. The movie from Disney-owned Searchlight Pictures picked up a whopping eight nods, including nominations for its star Colin Farrell, director Martin McDonagh, and for best comedy or musical - the most achieved by any film since "Cold Mountain" back in 2003. Surreal sci-fi "Everything Everywhere All at Once" earned six nominations, while raucous Hollywood Golden Age drama "Babylon" and Steven Spielberg's deeply personal "The Fabelmans" took five each.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which organizes the film and television awards, has scrambled to reform itself since long-harbored criticisms of the group's practices went public in early 2021. Tinseltown completely distanced itself from the Globes last January over members' lack of diversity, alleged corruption and lack of professionalism, and the show took place behind closed doors.



Golden Globe Awards on display during the unveiling of the nominations for the 80th Golden Globe awards, in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022.

But broadcaster NBC has gambled that it is time to bring back the glitzy gala, which will take place in Beverly Hills on January 10. Tinseltown is waiting to see which stars will show up. Brendan Fraser, who was nominated Monday for his starring role in "The Whale," a drama about a morbidly obese man, has already said he will not attend the awards. "It's because of the history that I have with them. And my mother

didn't raise a hypocrite," Fraser told GQ biopic "Elvis," and James Cameron's last month

Fraser has alleged that a former HFPA president, Philip Berk, sexually assaulted him at an industry event in 2003. Berk denies the incident, and has since been expelled from the group for calling Black Lives Matter a "racist hate movement." Tom Cruise, who was widely seen as a strong contender in the acting categories this awards season for his lead role in "Top Gun: Maverick," was overlooked by Globes voters Monday. Cruise last year returned his three Golden Globes to the HFPA in protest at its behavior.

Star power

Nominations for the 80th Golden Globes were unveiled on NBC's "Today" program Monday. The Globes honor both film and television. Unlike the Oscars, the show divides its movies into "drama" and "comedy or musical" categories - hence boosting the star power by increasing the number of nominees. Along with Spielberg's "The Fabelmans" and "Top Gun: Maverick," other films nominated for best drama included Baz Luhrmann's rock-and-roll

biopic "Elvis," and James Cameron's eagerly awaited "Avatar" sci-fi sequel. "Tar," which stars Cate Blanchett as a ruthless classical conductor, took the final drama spot.

In comedy or musical "Banshees," "Everything Everywhere" and "Babylon" were joined by whodunnit sequel "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" and Cannes festival Palme d'Or-winner "Triangle of Sadness." No female movie directors were nominated this year. Spielberg, Cameron, Luhrmann and McDonagh will vie with "Everything Everywhere" directors Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert.

A-listers among the acting nominees included Daniel Craig ("Glass Onion") Hugh Jackman ("The Son") Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") and Olivia Colman ("Empire of Light.") Danielle Deadwyler's powerful performance as the mother of 14-year-old lynching victim Emmett Till in "Till" was among the morning's most surprising omissions. On the television side, comedy "Abbott Elementary" led with five nominations, while Netflix's British royals drama "The Crown" was among several shows earning four nods.

'Not the old HFPA'

In response to last year's controversy, the HFPA has expanded its voting body to include people with more diverse backgrounds, banned members from accepting gifts, and halted its in-person press conferences with stars, which were often derided for the improper behavior of some members. "This is really not the old HFPA anymore," president Helen Hoehne recently told The Hollywood Reporter.

"I respect Brendan Fraser's decision... And I personally, sincerely hope there's a way for us to move forward and we are able to regain Mr Fraser's trust, along with the trust of the entire entertainment community," she added. Still, powerful Hollywood publicists remain divided over the Globes, with some expressing skepticism about the reforms - and a reluctance to return to the event with their stars. A plan by US billionaire Todd Boehly to spin off the awards show into a for-profit entity and pay salaries to members has raised eyebrows.— AFP



Seihan Mori, master of the ancient Kiyomizu temple, writes the Chinese character, known in Japan as 'kanji', for 'war', which was selected as the single best kanji to symbolize the year of 2022 at a temple in Kyoto on December 12, 2022. — AFP

Japan picks 'war' as kanji character of the year

apan chose the kanji character for war on Monday as the symbol for 2022 after a year marked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the assassination of former leader Shinzo Abe. The public votes in the annual event for the written character they think best represents the past year. Olympic-themed choices dominated 2021. The mood was darker this year, however, according to the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation, which organizes the vote.

"The invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, and the rapid yen depreciation and inflation faced in daily life have caused anxiety for many people," the group said in a news release. Japanese TV stations broadcast the announcement live, with Seihan Mori, master of the ancient Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto, writing the character on a large white panel with an ink-soaked calligraphy brush.

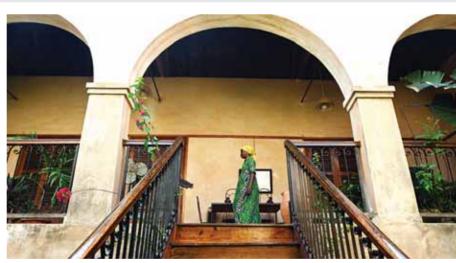
"I was surprised, frustrated, angry and sad by the war in Ukraine. I am also angry at myself for not being able to do anything about it," said one voter who picked the character. Abe was shot in July by a man who reportedly resented the Unification Church over massive donations his mother made to the sect. War - also picked to represent sporting battles in baseball and at the World Cupwas followed in the rankings by a character meaning both cheap and safe, with the weak yen and inflation adding to feelings of insecurity.—AFP



n intricately detailed balcony, a coat of fresh paint and large bay windows opening onto the street: this house, in Saint-Louis, northern Senegal, has regained its former glory. Next to it, one building has been gutted and another is about to collapse. The house is one of several that have recently been refurbished, part of a movement to renew the face of Saint-Louis, the former colonial capital of French West Africa, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000.

It follows a long period of political and economic decline that has left the historic architecture and other cultural heritage in a state of disrepair. Amadou Diaw, a local business magnate, is trying to help "revitalise the city while preserving its identity". He buys up old, dilapidated houses to restore and transforms them into museums.

He has opened seven so far, including one on photography, and says he plans to continue. "We have to put this city on the cultural map of the continent," said Diaw, adding that he has already invested two million euros into the initiative. With its grid street plan, large, airy houses and metal bridge linking it to the mainland, the island of Saint-Louis - which sits in the Senegal River delta - still offers glimpses of a former era, when it was enriched by the trade of slaves, gum arabic and animal skins. In 1957, the capital of Senegal was moved to Dakar. Soon neglected, Saint-Louis became a lethar-



A woman walks through a renovated guesthouse, in Saint-Louis.

gic symbol of the past.

Hopes and threats

Now, Saint-Louis is facing a new threat: rising sea levels. But a large gas deposit discovered off its coast - slated for exploitation by the end of 2023 - has given residents hope of a renaissance. The conservation movement, which has been driven by private individuals and funded by public donors, is gaining momentum.

The city's cathedral was refurbished in 2020. Then the French Development Agency (AFD) began renovating 16 privately-owned houses - a 2.2-million-euro endeavor, to which the homeowners are contributing about 15 percent. Following

those initiatives, the World Heritage Committee opted not to include the island of Saint-Louis on its list of endangered heritage sites. That's despite UNESCO having long highlighted the "extremely poor" state of many buildings in Saint-Louis, "endangering their occupants" and "affecting the integrity and authenticity" of

Alpha Ndiaye, 69, a now-retired pharmacist's assistant, says his house fell to ruin after years of neglect. "It was very nice - you would enter through the big door and then go up the stairs opposite", he said, tracing a floor plan with a finger in the sand. "When everything collapsed, I was very sad - I would have liked it to be

rebuilt as it was before," he said, standing in front of the ruined building, with large, rounded doors and vast rooms hinting at ancient splendor.

Succession problems

One major problem when it comes to restoring the houses is the question of succession. "Sometimes we don't know who the heirs are and therefore who the owners are," Deputy Mayor Aida Mbaye Dieng told AFP. Fatima Fall, director of the Centre for Research and Documentation of Senegal, campaigns to raise awareness among Senegalese people about the wealth of their cultural heritage. "There are also those who prefer modern comforts to the charm of old houses, those who do not respect standards because it is cheaper, and owners who have left the city and no longer want to invest," she noted.

On a recent visit to the Bou El Mogdad, a restored former cargo ship that is now used for tourist cruises, AFP met students from Dakar's Cheikh Anta Diop University learning about the city's treasures. "I've always heard about Saint-Louis without really knowing it", said El Hadji Yadaly Ba, a student journalist, adding that the city could serve as a bridge between cultures and boost tourism. "For me, this city was associated with France - it suffers from this image even though its history is very rich and complex," he said.— AFP



A man rides his bike across a street with dilapidated buildings, in Saint-Louis.



People walk on a street past dilapidated buildings, in Saint-Louis.— AFP photos

Tuesday, December 13, 2022 Sports

Toulouse outmuscle Munster in fog-bound Champions Cup clash

Saracens hold off a fierce Edinburgh onslaught to win 30-26

PARIS: Five-time European champions Toulouse made the best possible start in the new-format Champions Cup with a gutsy 18-13 Pool A win over Munster at a freezing, foggy Thomond Park on Sunday. Three English teams also got off to winning starts with leaders Saracens holding off a fierce Edinburgh onslaught to win 30-26, second-placed Sale thrashing Ulster 39-0 and Leicester edging

French side Toulouse arrived in Limerick for the first time since their hammering in 2017 and faced conditions that were almost as daunting as the opposition. Fierce cold and a heavy fog draped Thomond Park as the game got underway. "It was bitterly cold out there but we warmed up," said Toulouse flanker Anthony Jelonch.

Munster fly-half Joey Carbery missed an early penalty but he was on hand after 10 minutes to dart down the blindside after Munster had won a line-out close to the Toulouse line. His conversion made it 7-0 but midway through the first half Toulouse were level, a sweeping switch of attack creating an overlap for wing Matthis Lebel who did well to squeeze in at the corner. Thomas Ramos converted and added a penalty to put Toulouse ahead, although Carbery levelled it up just before the break.

Three minutes into the second half, the visitors silenced the home crowd as Julian Marchand popped the ball for Antoine Dupont who offloaded in turn to replacement wing Lucas Tauzin who went over. Ramos missed the conversion but eight minutes from time nailed another penalty to open up an eight-point lead. Carbery pulled back a penalty to secure the defensive bonus point but even with Dupont off the field with a yellow card, the home side were unable to

steal it at the death. "That was a real battle," said Jelonch. "We won this showdown and I think that's our reference point away from home."

Scottish fire

Saracens, who won the last of their three European titles in 2019, had an early shock as South African prop Luan de Bruin barged through Owen Farrell to open the scoring in their Pool B game. Argentina flyhalf Emiliano Boffelli converted and was to prove a thorn in Saracens' side with 16 points in total. Saracens hit back with tries through Elliot Daly and Ben Earl but still trailed 16-12 at half-time.

Six minutes into the second half, Daly put a grubber kick in behind the Scottish defense, giving Alex Lewington a straightforward collect and score to put Sarries ahead. Farrell and Boffelli traded kicks before replacement hooker Tom Woolstencroft crashed over from close range to put Saracens 30-19 up. Edinburgh kept going, in spite of two late yellows, and Wes Goosen's late try meant they returned to Scotland with at least a defensive bonus point.

"Credit to Edinburgh," said player of the match Daly. "We can be very happy with today, four tries and a win - that's all you can ask. "Everyone put an absolute shift in, we go forward to next week looking for another win." First-half tries from Tom Curry and Dan Du Preez took Sale into a 15-0 lead over Ülster in Pool B. But the home side really turned it on in the second half as fly-half Rob du Preez, replacements Tom Curtis and Byron McGuigan, and wing Arron Reed all skated through. Sale's six tries ensured they also took a bonus point from the game.

Welsh side Ospreys led Leicester 10-6 at halftime but the English side turned it round in the sec-



LIMERICK: Toulouse's French wing Matthis Lebel (left) scores a try as he is tackled by Munster's Irish wing Shane Daly during the European Rugby Champions Cup pool B rugby union match between Munster and Toulouse at the Thomond Park Stadium, in Limerick, western Ireland. —AFP

ond half to take the points. Morgan Morris and Nicky Smith scored Ospreys' two tries, Leicester replying through Harry Potter and a brilliant solo effort from Anthony Watson. The 24 teams are divided into two pools of 12 but each team only plays two

others, home and away, with the top eight in each pool progressing to the last 16. The format of the competition has changed this year with the inclusion for the first time of South African franchises alongside Europe's finest.—AFP

Serial runner-up Strydom wins at **European Tour**

MALELANE: South African Ockie Strydom put 19 second-place finishes in his career behind him on Sunday as he triumphed on the DP World Tour for the first time. The 37year-old carded a final round three-under 69 at Leopard Creek Country Club to win the Alfred Dunhill Championship with a total of 270. Spaniard Adrian Otaegui birdied the final hole to come second after a closing 68 - for a four round total of 272 - on a course that borders the world renowned Kruger National Park game reserve.

Laurie Canter from England fired an eightunder 64, including an eagle and seven birdies, to come third, one stroke behind Otaegui. In a break with the tradition of wearing long pants in European Tour events, competitors were permitted to don shorts to be more comfortable in the 33 degree Celsius (91 Fahrenheit) heat.

Strydom was one of many golfers who took advantage of the relaxation of the dress code, with shorts first permitted at the same tournament three years ago. Strydom was overcome by his first major title, simply calling his success "nice. I am sure my wife and parents are at home crying. Special thanks to my caddie. "I love Leopard Creek because I feel so calm in the bush. Congratulations to those who prepared this course, which was in magnificent condition

Level with Scott Jamieson from Scotland beginning the final round, Strydom had a difficult front nine that ended with a doublebogey six that left him one over for the round. But the South African then reeled off four birdies in five holes to take a threestroke advantage before parring the remaining four holes. Sensing he was about to end a run of second places, Strydom took no chances on the final hole and its island green. He took an iron off the tee, laid his second shot short of the water, found the green in three and two putted for a victory, and a drenching as champagne was sprayed

Fearless Butler confident of slaying 'Monster' Inoue

YOKOHAMA: Paul Butler said he "fears no one" as the underdog prepares to face Japan's unbeaten Naoya Inoue in Tokyo on Tuesday to become undisputed bantamweight world champion. WBO champion Butler will attempt to do what no other boxer who has faced Inoue has managed so far beat one of the sport's best pound-for-pound fighters and take his WBC, WBA and IBF belts.

"Monster" Inoue has won all his 23 fights, 20 by knockout, and became the first Japanese boxer to top The Ring magazine's pound-for-pound rankings as the best fighter across all weight divisions earlier this year. Butler (34-2 with 15 KOs) said he was not daunted by the prospect of facing Inoue on home turf and was happy with his preparations after making the weight on Monday. "He's a man - he's a man with two arms and legs," the 34-year-old Englishman told AFP.

'What he does in the ring is what he does, but I fear no one. It's a thing I'm looking forward to, getting in there and challenging myself." The winner of Tuesday's bout will become the first undisputed bantamweight world champion since the four-belt era began in 2004. "Ît's a massive achievement so it would mean a lot," said Butler. "It would mean a lot to do it in front of my fans who have all travelled to Japan. It would be a great

YOKOHAMA: Naoya Inoue from Japan (left) and England's Paul Butler pose for photographs following a weigh-in ahead of their December 13 bantamweight fight in Yokohama on December 12, 2022. —AFP

Inoue failed to make weight on his first attempt, before returning minutes later and squeezing in under the 118-pound limit. The 29-year-old shrugged off the misstep and said he remained laser-focused on completing his bantamweight title

collection with Butler's WBO belt. "I have lots of different strategies and I'll get into the ring and then I'll decide how to play it on instinct," Inoue said. "Butler's tactics are by and large quite fixed, but nothing is pre-decided with my boxing. I'll decide how to attack after I face up to him."—AFP

Hoge and hurting Theegala rally for **Shootout crown**

MIAMI: Americans Sahith Theegala and Tom Hoge won the QBE Shootout, combining for a 10under par 62 in Sunday's four-ball format to become the first rookie champions in 11 years. Theegala, who pulled a muscle on the opening hole of the final round, sank a 20-foot birdie putt on the last hole for the victory in the 54-hole exhibition event at Tiburon in Naples, Florida. Hoge and Theegala were deadlocked for the lead with countrymen Ryan Palmer and Charley Hoffman on the final green. After Theegala, a son of Indian immigrants, made his dramatic putt, Palmer missed a 15-foot birdie putt and Hoffman missed from 12 feet to give Hoge and Theegala the

"It's nice to get a little taste of competition and

taste of victory because it's so hard out here, so many great players," Theegala said. "Feels really, really good." Hoge and Theegala finished on 34under 182 with Palmer and Hoffman on 183 and US three-time Shootout winners Matt Kuchar and Harris English third on 184. Theegala, 25, matched his best US PGA Tour finish with a share of second at last month's RSM Classic. Hoge, 33, won his only PGA title last February at Pebble Beach.

Theegala and Hoge, who began the day two back of Palmer and Hoffman combined to birdie eight of the last 11 holes after a slow start. "I made a bad swing on the first hole and I kind of saved it and I pulled my oblique," Theegala said, pointing to his left side. "It got better as the round progressed. I knew it wasn't too big of a deal so I was just trying to keep my partner in it. Tom played so well. It started freeing up at the end so I was able to make a couple better swings.'

Hoge hung tough as they managed only two birdies and five pars in the first seven holes. "With Sahith on the first hole getting a little banged up, I knew I was going to have to carry him a little bit off the start," Hoge said. "I knew he was going to



NAPLES: Tom Hoge and Sahith Theegala of the United States pose with the trophy on the eighteenth green after winning the QBE Shootout at Tiburon Golf Club on December 11, 2022. —AFF

hit some good shots for me down the stretch like he did and what a great putt at the last." Hoffman and Palmer led after shooting 56 in Friday's opening scramble format and shot 62 Saturday in modified alternate shot. —AFP

Holdener edges Shiffrin, Vlhova to win slalom

SESTRIERE: Petra Vlhova's bid for a first World Cup win of the season continues after Wendy Holdener and Mikaela Shiffrin nudged her into third place in Sunday's slalom in Sestriere. The Olympic champion in the discipline topped the leader board after the first run but it was the Swiss skier Holdener who came through strongest in the second run to take the win, her second in the discipline this season. Following her victory in Killington two weeks ago and second place in one of the Levi slaloms at the start of the season, Holdener posted a combined time of 1 minute 56.29 seconds to finish 0.47 seconds ahead of Shiffrin.

"I knew that Mikaela was in the lead, that I had to give everything," said Holdener. "I was happy to finish so strong and to see such a gap. It's really great to win here in Sestriere." Shiffrin-four time world champion in the discipline and Olympic champion in 2014 - moved up from third after the first run and now sits level with Holdener at the top of the discipline standings. "I'm happy to be on the podium," said the American. "Maybe not totally satisfied but Wendy skied so well, she really deserves it." Shiffrin is 19 points clear of Holdener in the overall standings.

'Consistent'

Sitting third in both discipline and overall standings is Vlhova who must be wondering what she needs to do to taste victory this season. Having led at halfway in Saturday's giant slalom only to finish third, the Slovakian repeated the trick again on Sunday. She led Holdener by 0.24sec after the first run but ended 0.70sec behind the Swiss.

Vlhova has endured a frustrating campaign so far-she has finished third on three occasions including the two slaloms in Levi which were both won by Shiffrin. "I'm happy because I'm consistent and it's not at all easy to get on the podium," said a stoic Vlhova. The most impressive run of the day came from Swedish teenager Hanna Aronsson Elfman. After posting the 16th quickest time on the first run, the 19-vearold put in a blistering second run, posting the fastest time of the day of 56.69sec — 0.85sec ahead of Holdener who was next quickest on her second run. —AFP



SESTRIERE: Switzerland's Wendy Holdener celebrates on he podium after winning the Women's Slalom event during the FIS Alpine ski World Cup in Sestriere, Piedmont, on December 11, 2022. —AFF

Argentina hunting for a third World Cup crown

Messi, Argentina revel in 'home' support at World Cup

DOHA: Lionel Messi and Argentina's bid for a third World Cup crown is being boosted by hordes of travelling fans that have transformed each of their matches in Qatar into virtual home games. Argentine football venues are renowned for their seething intensity-iconic Buenos Aires cauldrons such as the Bombonera or Monumental tremble with passionate

Those kinds of scenes have been recreated regularly at Doha's Lusail Stadium, where tens of thousands of Argentine fans have created a raucous wall of blue-and-white-shirted sound. Argentina have already played three games at the glittering 88,966seat arena, where Messi and his team-mates will battle Croatia on Tuesday, aiming to book a place in the World Cup final. After most Argentina games, the "Albiceleste" have lingered on the pitch long after the final whistle, sharing a moment of emotionally charged communion with their supporters.

"We like to take advantage of these moments with the people who are here and in Argentina, where everyone is euphoric," Messi said following Friday's quarter-final win over the Netherlands. According to the Argentine embassy in Qatar, between 35,000 and 40,000 fans have travelled to the World Cup to support the team, one of the largest contingents of overseas supporters at the tournament.

That sizeable support has been augmented by thousands of Qatar-based migrant workers from India and Bangladesh, where Messi and Argentina enjoy widespread support. "Compared to France, Argentina aren't quite at the same level as a teambut they are a team who are benefiting from the support they have here," the Argentina-born former France striker David Trezeguet told AFP.

At the end of each of their victories at the World Cup, after joining supporters in post-match singing, Argentina's players will repeat the line that they are playing for "45 million" of their compatriots. "What I do, I do for the 45 million, They are going through a bad economic period. Giving people joy is the best

thing that I can do at the moment," said Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, the hero of Friday's penalty shootout win over the Netherlands.

Economic hardships

Trezeguet believes the bond between Argentina's players and their supporters has been forged by the economic crisis battering the country, where inflation has skyrocketed. "My first memories of the Argentina team were in Mexico in 1986. It was crazy back then, but nothing like as crazy as it is now, Trezeguet said. "The socio-economic situation in Argentina at the moment has made the support for the team more passionate than ever." According to reports in the media, many of the fans who have travelled to Qatar have spent years saving up to make the trip, diligently converting their Argentine pesos into US dollars in order to avoid the ravages of inflation.

Others such as Beto, a fan in his 60s interviewed by AFP as he walked through Doha's Souq Waqif, have travelled to Oatar from the United States or elsewhere after emigrating overseas. The passion, however, remains as intense as ever. "Even though I've lived in the United States for a long time, if you cut my wrist, I will bleed blue and white," Beto told AFP. "We have an immense passion for football. We suffer a lot on a daily basis because there are problems in our country, the economy is not doing well. But football gives us this energy which allows us to go from nothing to everything.'

That passion is evoked in two songs that have regularly reverberated around Qatar's stadiums when Argentina are playing-"Vamos Argentina" and "Muchachos", a de facto national anthem of the national team which name-checks Messi, Diego Maradona and the 1982 Falklands War between Argentina and Britain. "Argentina is a complex, politically fractured country. There are few subjects that unite the country-but the Falklands and the football team do," said Edgardo Esteban, director of the Falklands Museum in Buenos Aires. —AFP

Croatia v Argentina: Keys to WCup semis

DOHA: Croatia and Argentina face each other on Tuesday at the Lusail Stadium with a place in the World Cup final at stake. AFP Sport looks at some of the keys to the game.

Messi or Modric magic?

The late-career evolution of Lionel Messi into a clever creator operating behind the front line has intensified at this World Cup. He illustrated just how effective he can be with his superb defense-splitting pass to set up the opening goal in the quarter-final against the Netherlands. Croatia are unlikely to put a specific manmarker on Messi, relying on what has been a solid defense and one of the best midfields in the tournament to gain the upper hand.

Marcelo Brozovic occupies the deepest defensive role in the Croatia's midfield trio and is likely to have the most work to do in nullifying Messi, 35, but Mateo Kovacic put in a strong defensive shift against Brazil and is likely to be asked for a repeat performance. With the ball, Croatia have their own diminutive veteran maestro in 37-year-old

Luka Modric, whose ability to dictate the tempo, maintain possession and take his team forward into dangerous areas is fundamental for his country's hopes of reaching successive World Cup finals.

Croat resilience or tiredness?

Just as four years ago in Russia, where Croatia won every knockout round game after extra-time-twice on penalties-before the final, Zlatko Dalic's team have shown a remarkable ability to grind out results beyond the 90 minutes. Croatia conceded the first goal against both Japan and Brazil but came back to force the game into penalties and win. Will that impressive mental strength prove to be decisive again or will those extended battles take a toll physically? It will help Croatia that Argentina also had to go to penalties in their emotionally draining quarter-final win over the Netherlands and a crucial factor on Tuesday will be which team finds themselves fresher for the task.

Argentina's 12th man

If there is one area in which Argentina can count on a clear advantage it is in the stands, where more than 40,000 Argentine supporters vocally backed their team at the Lusail Stadium against the Dutch. The atmosphere was such that the last-eight clash was turned into a de facto



home game for Argentina, with only a smattering of fans in orange in the stadium, which has a capacity of nearly 89,000. It will almost certainly be the same story, at the same stadium, on Tuesday, with Croatia's much smaller group of followers drowned out by the songs and chants of the Argentine faithful. Will that impact the game? Almost certainly. Plenty of studies have shown that playing in front of a supportive crowd does impact performance in a positive way. —AFP

Bounou takes long and winding road to Morocco stardom

DOHA: Yassine Bounou has learned to be patient in his career, but the Morocco goalkeeper with a show-stopping nickname is proving he more than belongs on the big stage at this World Cup. An unused squad member at the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations and the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Bounou-or "Bono" as the name on his shirt reads-has played a fundamental part in helping Morocco set a new benchmark for African football in Qatar.

With 14 foreign-born players in the squad, it has been a case of unity in diversity for Morocco-there is no better example of that solidarity than a defence which has conceded just once in five matches here. Bounou kept 2018 runners-up Croatia at bay in their tournament opener. He suddenly disappeared just before kick-off in a 2-0 win over Belgium, having lined up with the team for the national anthems.

Replaced by Munir El Kajoui, coach Walid Regragui later cleared up the mystery by explaining Bounou had felt unwell after sustaining a knock against Croatia. The 31-year-old Bounou hasn't put a foot wrong since his return against Canada, the country of his birth. Despite Nayef Aguerd's own goal, a 2-1 victory sent Morocco through as the surprising Group F winners. —AFP

Croatia, Modric stand between Messi and final

DOHA: Lionel Messi and Argentina's World Cup dream remains alive but an indefatigable Croatia side inspired by the enduring brilliance of Luka Modric stands in their way in Tuesday's semi-final in Doha. Argentina have recovered from the shock of losing their opening game in Qatar to Saudi Arabia and made the last four with an exhausting win on penalties against the Netherlands at the end of a fractious quarter-final on Friday.

Having been 2-0 up and cruising after 83 minutes, with Messi setting up one goal in sublime fashion and netting a penalty, they conceded twice late on and had to survive extra time before triumphing 4-3 in a shootout. Backed by an enormous contingent of travelling supporters who have brought the passion, noise and color of Argentina's own stadiums to this World Cup, Messi and his teammates are starting to believe this really could be their year.

"We have balls, passion, heart and we are doing this for 45 million people," said goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, and Argentina's optimism now has only increased after seeing great rivals Brazil go out in the last round. Now aged 35, this has been billed as Messi's



DOHA: Croatia's players take part in a training session in Doha on December 11, 2022, ahead of their Qatar 2022 World Cup football semi-final match against Argentina. —AFP

last chance to win a World Cup, eight years on from Argentina's defeat in the final to Germany in Rio de Janeiro. He is determined to seize the chance and has already scored his first two goals in the knockout rounds of any World Cup, netting against Australia in the last 16 before his penalty against the Dutch.

World Cup glory would complete a wonderful career for the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, who is possibly the greatest club player ever. After years of being unfulfilled at international level he inspired Argentina to victory at last year's Copa America, but he knows there are no more dogged or durable opponents than Croatia.

After all, any sense of relief at avoiding having to play Brazil in the last four will be tempered by the prospect of facing a Croatian side who knocked out the favorites on penalties and never know when they are beaten. "They are a great team who matched up to Brazil and at times were much better," admitted Messi. "They have good players across the whole midfield and they have been working with the same coach since the last World Cup, so they all know each other very well." —AFP

Today's matches FIFA World Cup 2022 Argentina v Croatia 22:00 **BBC One Alkass One HD** belN Sports HD belN Sports HD 3 Max belN Sports HD 1 Max **Alkass EXTRA One HD Alkass EXTRA TWO HD** beIN 4K HDR **belN Sports Connect** belN Sports HD 5 Max

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.......

I, JAVEED CHPPALI, holder of Passport No. V9396560, do hereby

change my name to JAVEED (as Given name) CHAPPALLI 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 documents. all my (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

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Sport Cimes

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022



MULTAN: Pakistan's Mohammad Nawaz (2nd right) plays a shot as England's Harry Brook (2nd left) jumps during the fourth day of the second cricket Test match between Pakistan and England at the Multan Cricket

Wood grabs 4 Pakistan wickets, fires England to series victory

Rampant Wood turns the match in England's favor

MULTAN: Mark Wood grabbed four Pakistan without scoring and Ollie Robinson ended the ries 1961 and 2000 - although they haven't toured his next over Wood forced Shakeel to play a pull wickets to give England a hard-fought 26-run win Monday in the second Test in Multan and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. The fast bowler finished with 4-65 as Pakistan were dismissed for 328 about 50 minutes after lunch on day four, having been set a challenging 355-run target. Wood, who missed England's 74run win in the first Test in Rawalpindi with a hip injury, turned the match in England's favour with the wickets of Mohammad Nawaz (45) and Saud Shakeel (94) in the space of 12 balls and one run.

Pakistan slumped to 291-7 at lunch, and after the break Agha Salman (20 not out) and Abrar Ahmed (17) tried to hit out for an unlikely win to keep the series alive. But James Anderson had Ahmed caught, Wood dismissed Zahid Mahmood match with the wicket of number eleven Mohammad Ali for zero, sparking celebrations in the England camp.

Anderson and Robinson took two wickets apiece. The win gives England their eighth win in the nine Tests since Brendon McCullum took over as head coach and Ben Stokes as captain in May this year. Those victories have been built around "Bazball", a term coined from McCullum's nickname, and describing the aggressive free-wheeling approach the New Zealander has instilled in the side since taking over.

England are now world champions in the 50over and T20 versions of the game and rapidly ascending the Test rankings ladder. This becomes England's third series win in Pakistan after victoin 17 years because of security issues. "It was pleasing the way we stuck at the task of going out and putting them under pressure even if conditions aren't in our favour," said Stokes afterwards. "Jimmy, Robbo and Woody put in a seriously good effort, so hats off to the lads. The way they bowled throughout the game, they looked a huge threat."

'We made mistakes'

Shakeel, who hit eight boundaries in his 314minute vigil, added 80 runs with Nawaz as England found wickets hard to come by on a Multan pitch that slowed considerably as the game progressed. In a last-ditch effort, Stokes brought in Wood before lunch and was instantly rewarded with Nawaz caught by wicketkeeper Ollie Pope. In shot off a short ball that caught his glove, with Pope taking a diving catch to his left. Replays were inconclusive as to whether the ball scraped the ground before Pope caught it, but, controversially, the third umpire deemed there was not enough evidence to overturn the decision.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam accepted it as part of the game. "As professionals we need to respect and follow the umpire's decision," he said. "We made mistakes as a team," said Azam after Pakistan lost their last six wickets for 37 in the first innings and last five for 38 in the second. Resuming on 198-4, Pakistan had lost Faheem Ashraf in the sixth over of the day for 10, caught at slip for spinner Joe Root's 50th wicket. The third and final Test starts in Karachi from Saturday. — AFP



76ers' NBA romp as **Pelicans dim Suns**

NEW YORK: Joel Embiid unleashed a spectacular 53-point performance Sunday to power the Philadelphia 76ers over Charlotte 131-113, becoming the first NBA player with multiple 50-point games this season. The 28-year-old Cameroonian 7-footer (2.13 meters) made 20-of-32 shots from the floor, including 2-of-3 from 3-point range, and 11-of-11 from the free throw line and grabbed 12 rebounds. "He made scoring look easy tonight," said threetime NBA scoring champion James Harden, who had 19 points, 16 assists and nine rebounds.

"He was in attack mode the entire game... His jump shot was falling. He had an aggressive night." Embiid, who scored a career-high 59 points last month in a victory over Utah, became only the third 76ers player to achieve multiple 50-point games in a season, joining Allen Iverson and Wilt Chamberlain. "I'm just happy I'm contributing when we're winning," Embiid said. It was left for teammates to put his feats in perspective for the 76ers (14-12).

"It has been amazing to watch," said Montrezl Harrell. "He's a skilled player. He does so many things for our team on the offensive end of the floor and defensively as well," he added. "For him to come out and have a dominant game on both ends of the floor just shows you how great a player he is." Zion Williamson scored 35 points to lead the New Orleans Pelicans to their seventh consecutive triumph, defeating Phoenix 129-124 in overtime to stay atop the Western Conference. CJ McCollum added 29 points for New Orleans (18-8), while Deandre Ayton led the Suns (16-11) with 28 points and 12 rebounds.

Phoenix's Chris Paul made a jumper with four seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to pull the Suns level at 117-117 and force extra time. But McCollum had four points in a 10-2 Pelicans' overtime run to grab the victory. LeBron James had 35 points, five rebounds and five assists, while Anthony Davis contributed 34 points 15 rebounds and seven assists to power the Los Angeles Lakers over host Detroit 124-117. "It was a must win for us. We knew that," Davis said. "We stayed resilient and kept fighting." Bojan Bogdanovic had a game-high 38 points for the NBA-worst Pistons (7-22). — AFP

NFL-best Eagles grab playoff spot; Lions stun Vikings

WASHINGTON: Jalen Hurts threw for two touchdowns and ran for another on Sunday as the Philadelphia Eagles beat the New York Giants 48-22 and became the NFL's first playoff qualifier. Miles Sanders ran 17 times for 144 yards and two touchdowns while Hurts completed 21 of 31 passes for 217 yards and ran seven times for 77 yards. The Eagles improved to an NFL-best 12-1 to secure their fifth playoff bid in six seasons but their goal is a championship, not just the post-season.

"We've got way bigger goals," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "And it's on to the next one." The bar is high for a team that started 8-0 for the first time in club history. "We're trying to stay focused," Hurts said. "The reality is we're never satisfied so I think there is more out there for us to do." Hurts, who threw touchdown tosses of 41 yards to DeVonta Smith and 33 yards to A.J. Brown and ran 10 yards for another touchdown, has stressed consistency and improvement.

"You just never want to ride waves. You never want to get too high or too low," Hurts said. "The main thing is to keep going. Nothing else matters but chasing that growth every day. "We just want to continue to taste progress. We want to continue to learn from our mistakes, learn from our successes and keep continuing to grow." The Eagles stretched their lead for the NFC top seed, and a first-round bye plus home-field advantage in the playoffs, as Minnesota fell to 10-3 with a 34-23 loss at Detroit. Jared Goff threw for 330 yards and three touchdowns as the Lions improved to 6-7 at the Vikings' expense.

Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes threw for 352 yards and three touchdown passes with three interceptions but the Chiefs won 34-28 at Denver. Broncos star Russell Wilson threw three touchdown passes before exiting with a fourth-quarter concussion.

The Chiefs (10-3) could have clinched the AFC West division title and a playoff berth had the Los Angeles Chargers lost to visiting Miami, but Justin Herbert threw for 367 yards and a touchdown in LA's 23-17 victory. The Dallas Cowboys (10-3) barely avoided an upset home loss before defeating Houston 27-23. Ezekiel Elliott's 2-yard touchdown run in the final seconds capped a 98-yard Dallas drive to a fourth consecutive victory while the Texans lost their eighth straight. — AFP

