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Kuwait Times, Kuwait News honored at Kuwait Creativity Award 2022



KUWAIT: Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, son of the founder of Kuwait Times (left), Managing Partner of Kuwait News Abdullah Boftein (right) and Secretary-General of Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamis (center) attend the Kuwait Creativity Award ceremony. Kuwait Times was awarded for its long media march, while Kuwait News was awarded for social responsibility. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

By B Izzak & KUNA

KUWAIT: The government presented its four-year program of action based on introducing major political, economic, social and administrative reforms, and providing policies to reduce the number of expats in the country. The government has outlined a meticulous plan aiming to keep national development on an upward trajectory, Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid said on Tuesday, citing clear and well-defined objectives to bring that goal to fruition.

The first "glimpses of reform" are seen in innovative plans based on "diligence and seriousness", the minister told the National Assembly, underlining the need to sort out national priorities and interests as

part of efforts to achieve development goals. The best interests of Kuwaiti nationals form the bedrock of the government's plan, he emphasized, saying the success of any plan largely hinges on cooperation between ministers and lawmakers, which is necessary to help the economy flourish.

Addressing the Assembly to explain the government's program, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi said the program aims at introducing reforms in all fields including political, justice, education, economy, manpower, health and others.

He said the program aims at providing homes to 40 percent of housing applicants (more than 40,000 homes) and providing a fairer system for

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European Parliament panel to rediscuss Kuwait visa waiver

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) is expected to discuss a draft law lifting Schengen visa requirements for citizens of Kuwait and Qatar, most probably in January, according to EU sources. At the opening of the European Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg Monday evening, the parliament voted in favor to refer the draft proposal back to the LIBE for further discussion.

The issue will be discussed by the European Parliament's political groups and then by LIBE, and

if they agree on a new draft law, the issue will go before the European Parliament again for its endorsement, the sources told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), speaking on condition of anonymity, on Tuesday. LIBE might discuss it in its January meeting, "but the whole process will take quite some time", noted the sources.

European Parliament rapporteur on visa exemptions for Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Ecuador, Erik Marquardt, on Monday commented on the decision to send a draft law lifting visa requirements back to the committee for review. The decision, based on rule 198 of the parliament's rules of procedure, was adopted with a show of hands.

After the decision, Marquardt said: "We must ensure that this process has not been influenced by corruption. We also have to make sure that any attempt to attack our democracy has consequences.

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Crypto tycoon charged with 'massive' fraud

NEW YORK: US prosecutors slapped disgraced cryptocurrency tycoon Sam Bankman-Fried with multiple criminal charges on Tuesday for massive fraud as he built his FTX crypto empire. The charge sheet landed as Bankman-Fried



Samuel Bankman-Fried

appeared in a Bahamas court and indicated that he would fight an extradition request by the United States and asked to be released on bail pending a hearing. The founder of the FTX platform, who was arrested in the Bahamas Monday at the request of the United States, is facing a raft of accusations, including from US market regulators who say that the investor knowingly built a fraudulent house of cards.

In a Nassau courtroom, attended by US embassy officials and Bankman-Fried's parents, Bahamian prosecutors argued that the suspect was a flight risk and should be denied bail pending an extradition hearing, the New York Times reported.

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US announces nuclear fusion breakthrough

WASHINGTON: US researchers announced a historic nuclear fusion breakthrough on Tuesday, hailing a "landmark achievement" in the quest for a source of unlimited, clean power and an end to reliance on fossil fuels. The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in California said an experiment it conducted this month "produced more energy from fusion than the laser energy used to drive it".

The US Department of Energy described the achievement of fusion ignition as a "major scientific breakthrough" that will lead to "advancements in national defense and the future of clean power". LLNL director Kim Budil described it as "is one of the most significant scientific challenges ever tackled by humanity".

Scientists have been working for decades to develop nuclear fusion - touted by its supporters as a clean, abundant and safe source of energy that could eventually allow humanity to break its dependence on the fossil fuels driving a global climate crisis. The LLNL said a team at its National Ignition Facility (NIF) conducted the first controlled fusion experiment in

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End of an era as BTS' Jin begins military service

SEOUL: BTS star Jin started his mandatory South Korean military duty on Tuesday, the band's first member to enlist since a hiatus announcement this year left fans heartbroken over the K-pop juggernaut's uncertain future. The septet is widely considered the country's biggest-ever cultural phenomenon, selling out stadiums around the world and dominating the charts while rak-

ing in billions and building a global legion of fans known as ARMYs.

But all able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military and, while there was a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, they confirmed in October that all members will enlist. Jin - whose full name is Kim Seok-jin - reported to a frontline boot camp in Yeoncheon on Tuesday to begin his five-week training, kick-starting 18 months of military service.

He was riding one of the black vans that arrived in a row around 20 minutes before a 2:00 pm (0500 GMT) deadline, according to BTS's agency

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WASHINGTON: US officials hold a press conference to announce a major milestone in nuclear fusion research at the US Department of Energy on Dec 13, 2022. — AFP



YEONCHEON, South Korea: A fan holds a picture of BTS singer Jin in front of a military training unit on Dec 13, 2022, where he arrived to begin his military service. — AFP



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Local

Zain wins top titles at 10th Kuwait Creativity Award

Most recognized company in the award's 10-year history



Mohammed Bin Naji and Madhi Al-Khamis with Waleed Al-Khashti and Zain's team.



Waleed Al-Khashti and Madhi Al-Khamis with guests and Zain's team.

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, was recognized with four accolades during the tenth Kuwait Creativity Award in recognition of its notable track of media productions and digital campaigns, becoming the most recognized company in the award's 10-year history. The announcement was made during the special event held under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, attended by Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Information Mohammed Bin Naji and a distinguished group of actors, artists, and public figures from the local and regional media scenes.

Zain received a total of four awards: Direction Award in recognition of its Ramadan TVC, Creativity Award in recognition of its Eid TVC, Entertainment Programs Excellence Award for its Eid Play Zain Forever, and the Public Relations Award presented to Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.

Zain was awarded with the Direction Award for its Ramadan 2022 TVC, produced by Joy Productions, in recognition of Director Samir Aboud. The TVC featured Lebanese star Nadine Nassib Njeim and Bahraini star Hala Al-Turk, and was written by Heba Meshari Hamada, with music by Ehab Abdelwahed, music arrangement by Wissam Abdelmonem, and sound engineering by Amit Nathan. The TVC has yielded over 16 million views since its launch.

Zain received the Creativity Award in recognition of its much beloved Eid 2022 TVC, produced by Joy Productions and A One Productions, directed by Ahmed Abdulwahed, music production by Music Yard, music composition by Ehab Abdulwahed, lyrics by Menna Al-Keiy, music arrangement by Wessam Abdulmonem, and sound engineering by



Amit Nathan. As of today, the TVC has a staggering 184 million views.

Zain was also awarded with the Entertainment Programs Excellence Award for its Eid 2022 Play Zain Forever, which made a comeback after a two-year pause due to the COVID pandemic. Zain celebrated the tenth year of producing Eid Al Fitr theatrical productions with the debut of Zain Forever, which drew joy and happiness on the faces of children and their families throughout the Eid holiday at Arena Kuwait, 360 Mall.

The show centered around the story of a little girl and her friends adventuring through challenges and surprises via beautifully made art scenes like snowy fields, green forests, and deep oceans. The play featured stunning musical pieces and child-focused lyrics, and was written by Heba Hamadah, composed by Haneen Hussain, arranged by Ammar

Al-Bunni, and directed by Samir Aboud.

The annual event, hosted by the Arab Media Forum in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Media and Communications Society and the Integrated Media Academy, witnessed the presence of many media organizations, public figures, creative people, and media professionals from across the Arab world.

This recognition comes in light of Zain's distinguished advertising and media efforts, and further showcases the company's role as a leading private sector company launching distinguished marketing and advertising campaigns all year round. Zain will continue supporting this very important field which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole, whether through traditional or modern media tools.



Zain is the most recognized company in the award's 10-year history.

Official Sahel app launched for business owners

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Information Mazen Al-Nahedh announced Tuesday the launch of the official version of the Sahel app for business owners. In a press statement, he said the application aims to enable owners of companies and institutions to complete single-window transactions, with 16 government departments providing I4I services.

He added that the official launch came after succeeding in trial phases, in which 3,800 subscribers registered, received 23,000 notifications and 22,500 statements, and completed about 3,000 services. Nahedh indicated that the application also enables owners of companies and institutions to authorize others to complete their transactions. He also noted that the licensing system has been linked automatically with government agencies in issuing various licenses through the application. —KUNA



No admission for expats in KU until 2024

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The dean of admissions and registration at Kuwait University Dr Abdullah Al-Hajri told Kuwait Times that no new foreign students will be accepted until the second registration period of next year during a press conference in Shuwaikh on Tuesday. "We are currently holding off admitting foreign students to the

university as spots are reserved for Kuwaiti students as a priority for the upcoming registration period," he said.

"Admissions will be restricted to Kuwaitis until next year, as admission of foreign students will be open during the second registration and admissions window for the 2023/24 academic year in the winter of 2024," Dr-Hajri told Kuwait Times. Regarding requirements for admission of expatriates to the university, he said: "Foreign students are required to have a minimum of 90 percent in their high school grade certificate, on top of an admission test on registration."

As for Kuwaiti students, minimum grades for the science stream for high school graduates are 70 percent and 78 percent for high school graduates for the arts stream. "Kuwaiti students can register for the second term of the 2022/23 academic year starting

Saturday, December 31 until January 10 online or at the admissions headquarters," he said during the press conference.

Dr Hajri concluded his statement by inviting applicants to view the instructions and guidelines provided by the university on its official website, stressing the need to strictly adhere to the deadlines set for submitting applications for enrollment and approval of admission, as no application will be accepted after the end of the declared period, wishing success to all students.



Dr Abdullah Al-Hajri

Assembly lends hand in combating drugs

KUWAIT: The National Assembly plays a prime role in the national efforts against drugs and banned enhancement products and enacts legislations aimed at enlightening the youth about narcotics' hazards and prevent the scourge from spreading. MPs and parliamentary committees monitor the relevant authorities' efforts at this level, pinpointing any shortcoming and bringing officials to account for failure to perform their duties properly in the fight against this threat.

Marking KUNA's campaign against the drugs, chairperson of the parliamentary committee for interior and defense affairs Khaled Al-Otaibi told the news agency that the campaign has come at the high time to take a firm and noticeable stand in the face of "this curse that threatens current and future generations". "During regular meetings of the blocs in the Assembly, we have placed combating narcotics among the

priorities," Otaibi said.

Concerned MPs have proposed establishing a national authority for combating narcotics, medical examination prior to marriage and building hospitals and centers for treating addiction, he said, predicting concrete action at this level soon. The lawmaker indicated at MPs' "pressure on the concerned authorities" to carry out "preemptive strikes against drugs' gangs and dealers" and present bounties for informants who report about illicit dealers and depots.

Affirming the high need for "standing together" in the face of the hazard, MP Hamad Al-Obaid, rapporteur of the values committee, warned that many male and female youngsters have become addicted. Confronting this menace is a collective social responsibility, involving first the family, then the National Assembly and the civil society, Obaid said, noting that the commission had debated this danger in meetings attended by officials from the ministry of interior and the customs. He affirmed MPs' readiness to intervene to tackle any "legislative loopholes" impeding the concerned authorities tasks' performance.

The Cabinet decided at the end of October



Khaled Al-Otaibi



Hamad Al-Obaid

to launch the national campaign against drugs in line with guidelines by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, aimed at educating the youth about dire effects of addiction and establishing centers to treat the afflicted privately. KUNA, for its part, is playing its part in this respect through its campaign to raise public awareness of the harms caused by the illegal materials, employing all its resources namely the news outlets at the disposal of public guidance against the menace. —KUNA

MoE to speed up hiring of teachers

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the education ministry plans to start the work of contracting teachers from abroad before the end of the school year and not during the summer break to avoid any delays with contracted teachers and ensure their arrival in Kuwait before the start of the new academic year.

The sources said most teachers who signed contracts with the education ministry from abroad arrived in the middle of the school term, and some were delayed until the start of the second term, due to the delayed issuance of visas by the interior ministry, adding these drawbacks will be avoided during the next school year.

Sources said education ministry will prepare two contracting committees - one will go for Jordan and the second to Palestine. Both will leave in May instead of July, adding no committees will be sent to countries other than Jordan and Palestine. They said the required specialties are mathematics, physics and chemistry.

They said the plans estimate the two committees will sign with at least 300 teachers, adding that the education ministry brought in the interior ministry in its contracting committees through a liaison officer to speed the issuance of entry visas and send them to contracted teachers before the end of August.

MoI hails bomb squad efficiency after WCup drills

DOHA: A Kuwait interior ministry bomb squad was praised on Monday for proving their efficiency and adaptability after taking part in drills at the Qatar World Cup. Maj Abdulrahman Al-Majed said the exercise, which involved some 20 members of the police force, gave them great experience in dealing

with such a large gathering of individuals at a vital global event such as the World Cup. The squad, which worked alongside fellow units from France, Spain, Turkey and host nation Qatar, exchanged security expertise with these countries, he explained. Their tasks included the inspection and securing of vital sites followed by a handover to competent authorities as well as responding to reports of explosives. The squad members were tasked with several locations, namely the Corniche area, Msheireb, several match-hosting venues, the FIFA fan festival zone and amongst security patrols. —KUNA



DOHA: A Kuwait interior ministry bomb squad inspects a stadium. —KUNA

Local



KUWAIT: Dr Ziad Yousuf Al-Alyan, son of the founder of Kuwait Times (center), receives the Kuwait Creativity Award for its long media march flanked by Secretary-General of the Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamis (left) and Acting Undersecretary at the Ministry of Information Mohammad Bin Naji (right).



Managing Partner of Kuwait News Abdullah Boftain receives the Kuwait Creativity Award for social responsibility, flanked by Madhi Al-Khamis and Mohammad Bin Naji.

Kuwait Times, Kuwait News honored at Kuwait Creativity Award 2022

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf, won the Kuwait Creativity Award at a ceremony organized by the Arab Media Forum on Monday, presented to Dr Ziad Yousuf Al-Alyan, son of the founder of Kuwait Times. This recognition comes in light of Kuwait Times' distinguished media march throughout the past 61 years, which will continue supporting this very important field that carries a significant and informative message for the community.

Meanwhile, Kuwait News won the Creativity Award in the category of social responsibility for its campaign "In the same boat", which aimed at helping local small businesses survive the pandemic crisis. Managing Partner Abdullah Boftain received the award.

Under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, the Kuwait Creativity Award 2022 in its 10th edition was held to honor and recognize creativity by Kuwaiti and regional organizations. In his opening speech at the ceremony, Madhi Al-Khamis, Secretary-General of the Arab Media Forum, said the Kuwait Creativity Award is keen to raise the standards of the media industry in Kuwait and the Arab world.

He added that the ceremony highlighted the efforts by Kuwaiti media, advertising and production house to encourage them to develop this key industry, noting the jury was keen to choose the best creative ideas, content and positive values within the community. Khamis stressed the importance of such events in developing the industry, adding the partnership between the association and the media forum contributes to achieving this goal.

This year, new standards were set in selecting the winning companies and institutions. The award included a number of competitive categories that included public relations, social responsibility, creativity, branding, television and radio programs, YouTube channels and Arabic advertisements, in addition to awards for excellence in the field of entertainment, social media platforms, national works, artistic creativity, innovation, advertising initiatives and media personality of the year.

The Kuwait Creativity Award 2022 is organized by the Arab Media Forum, Kuwaiti Society For Media & Communication and the Integrated Media Academy, in addition to a number of private entities, where 1,081 participants from various Arab countries competed in various categories. The jury included 10 members of academics and specialists in the media industry. The entries were evaluated over two stages to qualify for the second and final stage to get an award. The works were filtered and evaluated, and the best ones were chosen.

The Arab Media Forum awards ceremony is considered as one of the renowned events that take place in the region, which brings together representatives from different industries in one place to celebrate their tremendous revolutionary efforts in innovation and creativity. The awards ceremony has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events attended by Arab media. Every year, the event brings together many ministers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen and social figures from all around the Arab world.



Dawoud Hussein receives his award.



Kuwaiti actress Suad Abdullah receives her award.



Kuwaiti actor Khalid Al-Obaid being awarded at the ceremony.



Yousuf Jassem being awarded at the ceremony.



Zain's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti and Madhi Al-Khamis.



Kuwaiti artistes awarded in the ceremony.



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Winter Wonderland to offer more tickets

KUWAIT: The organizing committee of Winter Wonderland Kuwait issued a statement confirming its keenness to gradually increase the number of tickets for the public and deal with cases of tickets sold on the black market. "In response to what was raised on social media about the unavailability of Winter Wonderland Kuwait tickets and incidents of ticket sales on the black market, the organizing committee is interested in clarifying the following for transparency: Since its opening, the website for booking tickets has attracted thousands of visitors who took the initiative to book their tickets with ease," it said, noting that a maximum of 10 tickets can be reserved by each person.

The events have attracted thousands of visitors who expressed their satisfaction with the reservation procedures and the high level of organization at the project site. The project operates in accordance with the highest standards of security, safety and organization followed at international entertainment sites. Therefore, a specific capacity has been determined, which will gradually be increased within days to reach the maximum allowable level. The event will be opened to the largest number of visitors and the number of tickets will be increased gradually without affecting the quality of services provided to the public, the committee said.

"Incidents of selling tickets on the black market will be controlled and new mechanisms will be put in place to deal with this matter, and we confirm that these cases do not reflect the general image of the organized work that is being conducted. Some individual actions may occur that have nothing to do with the project at all. We affirm that we are dealing with any case that is discovered or reported in accordance with legal procedures that preserve the rights of everyone, especially the public. We also affirm that providing a safe entertainment environment according to the highest quality standards remains our foundation, far from any material goals," the committee said.

Kuwait, Canada seek to boost partnership, ties

Sajjan hails wisdom of Kuwait and its balanced foreign policy

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met Monday visiting Canadian Minister of International Development Harjit Sajjan and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides discussed means of enhancing and activating bilateral partnership in several development fields, mainly humanitarian, with the aim of backing humanitarian situations across the globe. The two sides further covered the latest regional and international developments, and their bilateral coordination. The Kuwaiti minister lauded advanced and prosperous cooperation between Kuwait and Canada on all levels.

Meanwhile, Sajjan said he looks forward to continuing deep-rooted cooperation between the two friendly countries in all domains. He commended wisdom of Kuwait and its balanced foreign policy as well as efforts to cement pillars of preserving peace and security in the region. Sajjan voiced appreciation to Kuwait's efforts, relentless endeavors, humanitarian projects and support for development and peoples all over the world. He also referred to the honoring of Kuwait as a center for humanitarian action and its late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a humanitarian leader.

After the gathering, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation between the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) to finance economic and social development in the developing



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Canadian Minister of International Development Harjit Sajjan. —KUNA

countries. The memo also covers bilateral coordination on response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters, and technical expertise and information

sharing, which show determination of the two countries on developing bilateral ties and boosting them in all fields and on all levels. —KUNA

Cabinet lauds outcomes of Riyadh summits

KUWAIT: The Cabinet commended the positive outcomes of the Arab-Chinese and the Gulf-Chinese summits as well as the 43rd session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held recently in Riyadh. This came in the weekly meeting, led by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the Amiri Airport on Monday, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Sheetan.

Such summits reflected the keenness of the leaders of the Gulf and Arab countries, and China to achieve solidarity and joint integration, and advance the strategic partnership towards achieving the aspirations of peoples and common interests, he told reporters. Then the Cabinet reviewed the results of the participation of the representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during attending the three gatherings hosted by the Saudi capital, Riyadh, last Friday. During the summits, the leaders, heads of delegations of the Gulf and Arab countries, and China's President discussed the most outstanding issues that would strengthen the joint Gulf and Arab action. They stressed constants based on their policies of cooperation

and solidarity in light of the current situation in the Arab Gulf region and the Arab region.

Moreover, the Cabinet was informed about the departure of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, this afternoon, to the Italian capital, Rome, for usual medical tests, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow everlasting health upon HH the Amir. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Bader Al-Mulla briefed the ministers on the signing of a memorandum of understanding on developing the Durra gas field between the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and Saudi Aramco Gulf Operations Company Sunday.

The memo aims to agree on a direct mechanism and implement the development of the field between the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments, in implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two governments on Dec 24, 2019. Furthermore, the Kuwaiti cabinet adopted a decree, naming Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi as Deputy Foreign Minister. The Cabinet also approved a decree to appoint Brig Staff (Rtd) Mohammad Abdulaziz Buarki as chairman of the national cybersecurity center with a rank of undersecretary. The two decrees have been referred to HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final endorsement, according to a press release from the Cabinet.

The Cabinet discussed the affairs of the National Assembly, and was briefed on the proposals submitted by the MPs. Afterwards, the ministers focused on the political affairs at the Arab and international levels. The Cabinet congratulated the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain on its 51st



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs a Cabinet session at the Amiri Airport on Monday. —KUNA

National Day next Friday. On this occasion, the Cabinet extended its sincere congratulations to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and the brotherly Bahraini people. It voiced the depth of the historical brotherly relations between the two countries and the two brotherly peoples, praising the blessed renaissance and the distinguished achievements in Bahrain. The Cabinet also expressed Kuwait's welcome of signing the framework political agreement in Sudan, lauding this deal, which is an important step towards achieving national reconciliation and ending the political crisis in the country. It stressed Kuwait's supportive position to the tripartite mechanism to facilitate dialogue between the parties to the transitional phase and all steps that would achieve security, stability and peace in Sudan. —KUNA

Kuwait Airways launches program to attract talents

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways announced the launch of the "Wathiq" program to provide career opportunities for national talents in the Blue Bird, during the period from Dec 2022 to mid-Jan 2023. This comes within the framework of the company's objectives to encourage fresh graduates to engage in the field of aviation and the air transport sector, as well as to enhance the spirit of patriotism of being a part of the national carrier of the State of Kuwait.

Director of Human Resources department at Kuwait Airways, Ahmed Al-Bannai stated: "Kuwait Airways is pleased to launch its latest program and campaign, 'Wathiq', to provide job opportunities for national talents. Through this program, the company is keen to attract national talents who have the determination, ambition, and passion to become an added value to the Blue Bird in its development and progress, as well as in providing the best levels of service to its valued passengers."

Bannai added: "These successive campaigns which have been launched recently by the company are in line with its strategic objectives in the short and medium term to increase the levels of nationalization and are based on the directives of KAC's board of directors and the executive management to attract national talents with technical and administrative specializations in the company's various departments. Kuwait Airways is taking steady steps in moving forward and to reach its desired goals in the localization of vacant positions and places immense importance to the national element in joining the Blue Bird."

8 people rescued from burning house

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force announced eight people were rescued after their house burned down while they were trapped inside in Jaber Al-Ali. "Central command received a call on Tuesday about a fire in a house with people inside. Immediately, teams from Qurain and hazmat stations were sent to the site," the public relations department at KFF announced. "Upon arrival, the teams were able to evacuate eight people by ladders and transferred them to hospital, while other teams continued to combat the fire and control it without any injuries," it added.



Manager of Talent Acquisition at Kuwait Airways Alaa Al-Yaqout said: "Kuwait Airways is determined to attract new national talents and those with a spirit of initiative, competence and dedication to work. The airline has confidence in national talents and believes that they are an integral part of the future of the country and the company."

Yaqout pointed out that the aim of the "Wathiq" program is to enable Kuwaiti youth to confidently work in the aviation field and to encourage them to be part of the development of the national carrier. In addition, Kuwait Airways recently launched successive campaigns on its website and various accounts to recruit and attract national talents in 18 different departments at the company, including the operational and support services, and in various specializations related to the aviation sector.

Kuwait Airways has recently intensified its participation in student forums, and recruitment fairs to attract the best young national talents from the various universities in Kuwait and from different specializations and was hopeful that the national talents who would be joining would support its development and progress, that has been achieved since its establishment in 1954.



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French court to rule on 2016 Nice terror attack suspects

US rolls out red carpet, opens wallet for African leaders



WASHINGTON: Stephanie Bernstein, whose husband Michael Bernstein was killed in the Pan Am Flight 103 Lockerbie bombing, speaks alongside her daughter Sara with reporters outside the federal court after the trial proceedings for a Libyan man accused of making the bomb that exploded the plane. —AFP

Lockerbie bombmaker charged in US court

Masud's arrest was 'an important step to honor the victims'

WASHINGTON: An alleged former Libyan intelligence agent accused of making the bomb that blew up a Pan Am jet over Scotland in 1988, killing 270 people, appeared in a US court Monday to face charges for the deadliest-ever terror attack in Britain.

Abu Agila Mohammad Masud Kheir al-Marimi, who allegedly worked as an intelligence operative for the regime of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi between 1973 and 2011, faces three counts related to the Lockerbie bombing.

Federal prosecutors said they did not intend to seek the death penalty but Masud could face life in prison if convicted of "destruction of an aircraft resulting in death" and two other related charges.

The judge presiding over the hearing in a US District Court in Washington read the 71-year-old Masud the charges and his rights before ordering him held without bond until a detention hearing on December 27. The balding and white-bearded Masud was provided with an Arabic interpreter for the hearing, his first court appearance since being brought to the United States.

Scottish prosecutors announced Sunday that the Tunisian-born Masud was in American hands, but

officials have not provided any details on how he had been transferred to US custody.

"Yesterday, the United States lawfully took custody of Abu Agila Mohammad Masud Kheir Al-Marimi and brought him to the United States," Homeland Security advisor Liz Sherwood-Randall said in a statement. "This action underscores the Biden Administration's unwavering commitment to enforcing the rule of law and holding accountable those who inflict harm on Americans in acts of terrorism," she added.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland said Masud's arrest was "an important step forward in our mission to honor the victims and pursue justice on behalf of their loved ones. "American and Scottish law enforcement have worked tirelessly to identify, find, and bring to justice the perpetrators of this horrific attack," Garland said.

'Gaddafi thanked him'

Only one person has been convicted for the December 21, 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. The New York-bound aircraft was blown up 38 minutes after it took off from London, sending the main fuselage plunging to the ground in the town of

Lockerbie and spreading debris over a vast area.

The bombing killed all 259 people on the jumbo jet, including 190 Americans, and 11 people on the ground. Two alleged Libyan intelligence operatives—Abdelbaset Ali Mohmet al-Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah—were charged with the bombing and tried by a Scottish court in the Netherlands.

Megrahi spent seven years in a Scottish prison after his conviction in 2001 while Fhimah was acquitted. Megrahi died in Libya in 2012, always maintaining his innocence.

His family lodged a bid for a posthumous appeal to clear his name in 2017, but Scotland's High Court upheld his conviction in 2021. Masud's fate has been tied up in the warring factionalism of Libyan politics that followed Gaddafi's ouster and death in 2011. Masud was reportedly imprisoned in Libya for his alleged involvement in attacks on Libyan opposition figures in 2011.

According to a September 2015 article in The New Yorker, Masud was sentenced that year to 10 years in prison in Libya after being accused of using remote-detonated bombs against Libyan opposition members in 2011.

The Lockerbie probe was relaunched in 2016

when Washington learned of Masud's arrest and his reported confession of involvement to the new Libyan regime in 2012.

According to an affidavit from an FBI agent involved in the probe, Masud worked as a "technical expert" for Libya's External Security Organization, building explosive devices and earning the rank of colonel. Masud confessed in a 2012 interview with a Libyan law enforcement officer to assembling the bomb that brought down Flight 103, the affidavit said.

"Masud confirmed that the bombing operation of Pan Am Flight 103 was ordered by Libyan intelligence leadership," it said. "Masud confirmed that after the operation, Gaddafi thanked him and other members of the team for their successful attack on the United States."

According to the FBI agent's affidavit, Masud also admitted to committing the April 1986 bombing of the LaBelle Discotheque in Berlin which killed two US service members and a Turkish woman.

In a statement US Secretary of State Antony Blinken thanked those who helped bring Masud into US custody "following an intensive diplomatic effort." —AFP

7 dead as Peru's leader fails to quell protests

LIMA: Five more protesters died in Peru on Monday as violent demonstrations over the ousting of the former president showed no sign of calming, despite his successor's efforts to quell the unrest. Seven people, including three teenagers, have now died in escalating protests since the leftist Pedro Castillo was accused of an attempted coup, impeached and arrested last week.

New President Dina Boluarte tried to ease tensions on Sunday, announcing she would seek to hold elections two years early and declaring a state of emergency in flashpoint areas. But that had little effect as protesters continued to demand her resignation, blocking roads in several cities around the country with logs, rocks and burning tires.

Some 2,000 protesters smashed runway lighting, burned security booths and forced the closure of the airport in Peru's second-largest city Arequipa for several hours on Monday before police dispersed them with tear gas.

Around 100 Castillo supporters were camped out in front of the police facility in Lima where he is being held, demanding he be released and returned to office. "We have been sleeping here for four nights and we will continue until we get the president back to the (presidential) palace," protester

Ana Karina Ramos told AFP, with tears in her eyes.

Also Monday in Apurimac, demonstrators torched the public prosecutor's office and a police station. In Arequipa, protesters occupied one of the largest factories in the country, owned by the dairy company Gloria.

Train services between Cusco and Machu Picchu, Peru's best known tourist site, will be suspended from Tuesday to ensure passenger safety ahead of a national strike called for by Castillo supporters, the rail operator said.

Cusco's international airport was also closed after protesters attempted to "violently enter" it on Monday, aviation authorities said. Seven people have been killed since Sunday, a source from the public defender's office told AFP on condition of anonymity.

UN Human Rights Office spokeswoman Marta Hurtado warned that "the situation may escalate further" and urged "all involved to exercise restraint." Hurtado also called on authorities to "allow people to exercise their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of opinion and expression."

Castillo has been in detention since last Wednesday, and is facing charges of rebellion and conspiracy after he dissolved Congress and vowed to rule by decree. The former president met with his lawyers in Lima ahead of a hearing Tuesday in which he will seek his immediate release.

Meanwhile, the leftist governments of Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Bolivia released a joint statement in support of Castillo, saying he had been "the victim of antidemocratic harassment" since his election. —AFP



SARAJEVO: File photo shows, flags of the European Union and Bosnia-Herzegovina are projected on the facade of Sarajevo City Hall. EU countries agreed December 13, 2022, to grant Bosnia "candidate status" to join the union, diplomats told AFP, putting the volatile Balkan nation at the start of a long road to membership. —AFP

EU agrees to give Bosnia candidate status

BRUSSELS: EU countries agreed Tuesday to grant Bosnia "candidate status" to join the union, diplomats told AFP, putting the volatile Balkan nation at the start of a long road to membership. Russia's war on Ukraine has breathed fresh life into the European Union's willingness to consider letting in more of its eastern neighbours after years at a standstill.

The EU is concerned that other powers, such as Russia or China, might spread their influence into the Balkans if countries hopeful of joining the bloc are thwarted. European affairs ministers meeting in Brussels gave the green light to Bosnia becoming a candidate after the bloc's executive arm in October recommended that they launch the membership process.

The step is expected to be signed off formally by EU leaders at a summit in Brussels on Thursday. The move comes despite long-standing concerns over the political situation in Bosnia, a country of three million people burdened with ethnic divisions since its devastating war three decades ago.

It remains partitioned between a Serb entity and a Muslim-Croat federation connected by a weak central government. It has a dysfunctional administrative system created by the 1995 Dayton Agreement that succeeded in ending the conflict in the 1990s, but largely failed in providing a framework for the country's political development.

The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, has laid out 14 priorities for reform that it insists Bosnia must make good on before it can move on to the next stage of opening formal accession negotiations.

EU enlargement commissioner Oliver Varhelyi has told Bosnia it is now at "a crucial juncture" on its path to the bloc. Bosnian politicians insist it is high time that the country be granted candidate status. "It is time for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to receive a positive message from the European Union," Denis Becirovic, the Bosnian member of the country's tripartite presidency, said last week.

"But of course, that will only be the beginning of the real work." A stand-off has seen Bosnia's Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, block state institutions and cause "virtual paralysis" in the reform process, the EU has said.

There are also concerns over calls by Serb leaders for closer ties with Russia and the entity's nationalist president Milorad Dodik has vowed to stall the push towards the EU if it means more centralisation of power in Bosnia.

Bosnia will join seven other nations with candidate status: Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine. The process to join the European Union can take many years as candidates implement reforms that have to be rigorously evaluated by Brussels.

It can also grind to a halt, which is the case with Turkey's bid. Ukraine and Moldova were the most recent countries to be made candidates when they were given the status in June, four months after Russia unleashed its war on Kyiv. Kosovo has announced its intention to apply for membership before the end of the year. —AFP



LIMA: Supporters of Peruvian former President Pedro Castillo clash with the police on the outskirts of the Lima Prefecture, where Castillo is under detention, in Lima. —FP

International

French court to rule on 2016 Nice terror attack suspects

Five other suspects charged with weapons trafficking and criminal conspiracy

PARIS: A French court will issue verdicts Tuesday for eight suspects charged in the harrowing 2016 terror attack in Nice, where an allegedly radicalised Islamist attacker is accused of ploughing his truck into a crowd celebrating the July 14 national holiday.

Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a 31-year-old Tunisian resident, killed 86 people and injured over 450 after speeding onto a seaside embankment in the southern city, rampaging for four minutes before being shot dead by police.

Prosecutors are seeking 15-year prison terms against three suspects on charges of association with terrorists. Ramzi Arefa, who has admitted to providing Lahouaiej-Bouhlel with a gun that he fired at police without hitting anyone, faces charges relating to supplying the weapon.

He is not thought to have been aware of the attacker's radicalisation. "I'm guilty of selling a weapon, without thinking about it, and since then it's been six years that I haven't stopped thinking about it," Arefa told the court in his closing statement Monday.

But two others, Mohamed Ghraieb and Chokri Chafroud, allegedly knew about the attacker's turn to Islamist radicalism and his potential to carry out a terror attack, based on records of phone calls and text messages among the three in the days ahead of the massacre.

Ghraieb, a 47-year-old from the same Tunisian town as Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, and Chafroud are also accused of helping him rent the delivery truck. They have denied the charges. "I am not a terrorist, I had nothing to do with what happened," Ghraieb said Monday, while Chafroud, 43 and also Tunisian,

declined to address the court.

Prosecutor Jean-Michel Bourles had argued however that "there can be no doubt: They acted in full awareness of his discourse and his fascination, his proximity with the Islamic State."

The Islamic State group later claimed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel as one of its followers, though investigators have not found any links between the attacker and the jihadists who at the time controlled swathes of Iraq and Syria.

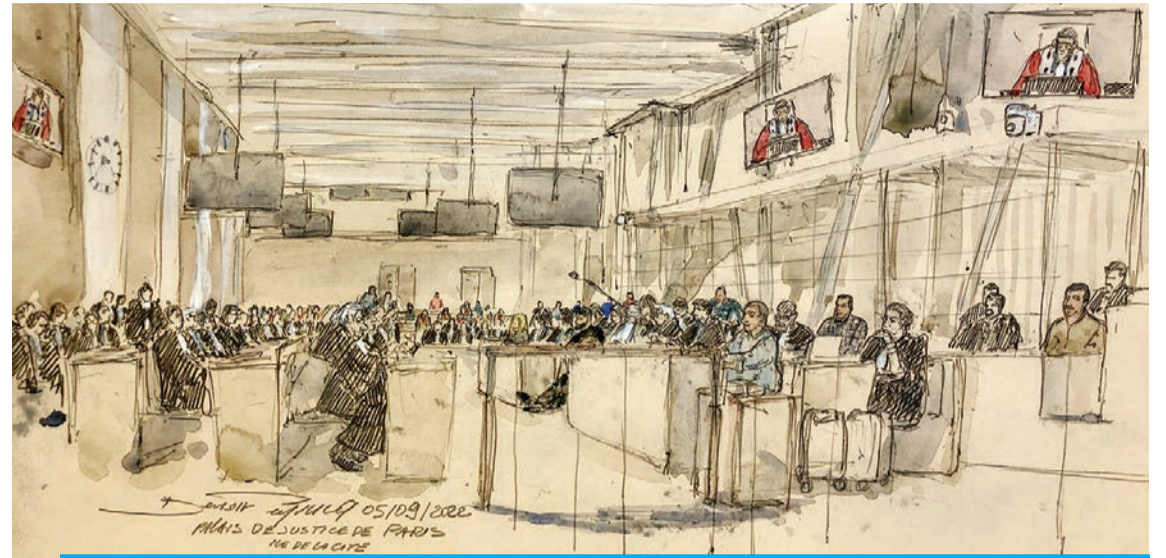
Night of horror

Five other suspects, a Tunisian and four Albanians, are charged with weapons trafficking and criminal conspiracy but without any terrorism link. But Brahim Tritrou is being tried in absentia after fleeing judicial supervision to Tunisia, where he is now believed to be under arrest.

Some 30,000 people had gathered on the Nice seafront to watch a fireworks display celebrating France's annual Bastille Day holiday on July 14 when Lahouaiej-Bouhlel began his rampage. According to French and Tunisian press reports, his body was repatriated to Tunisia in 2017 and buried in his hometown of M'saken, south of Tunis. This has never been confirmed by the Tunisian authorities.

France has been buffeted by a wave of Islamist terror attacks since the killings at the satirical Charlie Hebdo newspaper and a Jewish supermarket in Paris in January 2015, often by "lone wolf" attackers acting in the name of IS or other jihadist groups.

In October, a Paris appeals court upheld the life sentence of Ali Riza Polat, accused of helping to find the weapons for the Charlie Hebdo attackers.



PARIS: File court-sketch shows a general view of the courthouse in Paris during the opening day of the trial of suspects over the 2016 Nice truck attack which killed 86 people and injured over 450. — AFP

The Nice trial is taking place at the historic Palais de Justice in Paris, in the same purpose-built courtroom that hosted the hearings over the November 2015 terror attacks in Paris that left 130 people dead.

A special venue has also been set up in Nice to allow victims to follow proceedings via a live broadcast. For many of the victims, the sentences sought by prosecutors fail to match the scope of the suffering.

During the trial, many of the survivors gasped in horror when prosecutors showed grisly video footage, never seen publicly, of the vehicle as Lahouaiej-Bouhlel swerved through the crowd, trying to mow down as many people as possible.

"I hope the court will be more severe than they've asked—I cannot understand them after all that's been said in the hearings," said Anne Murriss, president of the Memorial des Anges victims' association, who lost her daughter in the attack. — AFP

Ramaphosa faces impeachment debate

CAPE TOWN: South African MPs on Tuesday prepared to debate whether to initiate proceedings that could force out President Cyril Ramaphosa over allegations he concealed a huge cash theft at his farm.

Ramaphosa—championed as a graft-busting saviour after corruption-stained predecessor Jacob Zuma—is counting on support from the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, which has been further divided by the scandal.

An extraordinary parliamentary session opening in Cape Town at 1200 GMT will discuss the findings of an independent panel which said Ramaphosa may be guilty of serious violations and misconduct.

Lawmakers are called to decide in an open vote, by simple majority, whether to launch an impeachment investigation against Ramaphosa—a lengthy probe that could lead to his removal from office.

The 70-year-old president seems likely to survive the day, although analysts predicted the debate could be long and bitter. Last week, he secured the renewed backing of the ANC, which holds 230 of the National Assembly's 400 seats, after mounting a legal bid to have the damning report annulled.

"We are going to use our numbers as ANC... because we cannot be dictated to by a panel that has not been objective," Communications Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni told reporters before



CAPE TOWN: Supporters of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa hold placards as they gather ahead of a debate to the possibility of initiating proceedings to remove the President from office in Cape Town on December 13, 2022. — AFP

entering parliament. "We are not going to be bullied by anyone," she said.

Political analyst Ongama Mtimka from the Nelson Mandela University predicted ANC MPs would toe the party line ahead of a crunch meeting this Friday, when they hold a five-yearly conference to elect new leaders.

The ANC conference "presents the members with a chance to make a change at a party level, where it matters the most," said Mtimka. Yet others

believe there might be room for surprises, as the scandal has deepened rifts within the deeply factionalised ANC.

Its national executive vowed last week to vote down any attempt to force Ramaphosa from office. That decision upset some, who said the executive had forced their hand. Ramaphosa's graft-tainted predecessor Zuma survived several no-confidence motions during his tenure, before his own party forced him to resign in 2018. — AFP

400 protesters jailed over Tehran protests

TEHRAN: Courts in Tehran have sentenced 400 people to jail terms of up to 10 years over their involvement in protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death, Iran's judiciary said Tuesday. Iran has been gripped by nearly three months of protests—which officials describe as "riots"—since the death of Amini after her arrest for an alleged breach of the country's dress code for women. "In hearings on cases of rioters in Tehran province, 160 people were sentenced to between five and 10 years in prison, 80 people to two to five years and 160 people of up to two years," Tehran's judiciary chief Ali Alghasi-Mehr said, quoted by the judiciary's Mizan Online website.

The Islamic republic has drawn widespread international condemnation after executing two men in the past week in connection with the unrest. Majidreza Rahnavard and Mohsen Shekari, both 23, were hanged on Monday and Thursday respectively on the charges of "moharebeh"—or "enmity against God" under Iran's Islamic sharia law. Prior to the two executions, Iran's judiciary said it had issued death sentences to 11 people over the protests, but campaigners say around a dozen others face charges that could see them also receive the death penalty. — AFP

European Parliament panel to rediscuss...

Continued from Page 1

For now, we will not proceed towards visa liberalization for Qatar. We need to review the rules in the European Parliament and how these are implemented. There must be strict consequences for those who bribed and for those who have been bribed," he said.

Govt lays out four-year plan...

Continued from Page 1

wages and subsidies, in addition to creating more than 30,000 jobs and raising the country's credit ratings. Mahdi added the government is working towards empowering women so that they occupy 30 percent of positions and digitalizing 80 percent of public services. He also said the program aims to raise non-oil revenues in the budget to around KD 3.5 billion from under KD 2 billion now.

The Assembly also passed the conflict-of-interest law stipulating jail terms and hefty fines for ministers, MPs and civil servants who misuse their jobs to make personal gains out of graft. The Assembly also passed a law to add some 18,000 Kuwaiti women, mainly elderly housewives, widows and divorcees to a special health insurance scheme (Afya) for retired Kuwaitis.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi announced a plan to provide short- and long-term solutions to the problem of a shortage of a large number of vital drugs. In a lengthy statement in the Assembly, the health minister acknowledged the problem but he said the ministry has taken a series of measures to provide the drugs as soon as possible. Dr Awadhi said the ministry has introduced

controls on the process of dispensing medicines to rationalize their use. The minister said that he issued a new decision last week to amend a decision issued in 1997 to restrict providing vital and expensive drugs to expats. He however did not say how many drugs have been barred for expats, who pay annual fees to benefit from medical treatment at public clinics and hospitals.

But Dr Awadhi said the best way to ensure that shortage of drugs does not happen again is through manufacturing drugs in the country, adding that Kuwait has the infrastructure to become a center of pharmaceutical industries in the region. He also said that the ministry has formed a committee to probe the reasons for the shortage and find those responsible. The minister said the ministry has asked for a budget of KD 260 million to boost the strategic reserve of drugs and medical equipment and expand storage spaces for medicines.

Kuwait also plans next year to have a direct cooperation agreement with renowned French cancer center institute Gustave-Roussy, the health minister said on Tuesday, without the need to have a "third party" involved. Dr-Awadhi has directly contacted the French institute's public relations chief to discuss the plan, the ministry cited him as saying in a statement, underlining the initiative as an effort to provide quality healthcare services to patients in Kuwait. Such measures also aim to transform Kuwait into a "regional hub" for cancer treatment, added the minister.

End of an era as BTS' Jin begins...

Continued from Page 1

HYBE. Hundreds of media personnel and BTS fans packed an intersection in front of the boot camp's main gate, where a sign reads "A cradle for top class combat soldiers." "We have mixed feelings today because on one hand, it's normal that he does this enlistment because it's an obligation anyway for any Korean men," said Veronique, a 32-year-old fan from Indonesia.

"But on the other hand we cannot see him for a minimum of 18 months ... Happy but also sad but

also proud," she said. The location of Jin's boot camp close to the border with North Korea, with which the South remains technically at war, has sparked local media speculation that he is expected to be deployed to a "frontline unit" after training.

Fans were stunned in June when BTS revealed they were going on hiatus, citing exhaustion and pressure as well as the desire to pursue solo careers. But analysts said the announcement was timed because of the compulsory military duty. The group will reunite around 2025, when its seven members have completed their service. "For a while, it's true that there were many fans who would spend days just crying," a South Korean fan, who runs the Twitter account @5heterotopia, told AFP. Nimah Mustafa, a 20-year-old fan in Dubai, added: "(Jin's absence) will be like a huge... void for me." — AFP

US announces nuclear fusion...

Continued from Page 1

history on December 5, achieving what is known as "scientific energy breakeven".

"This is a landmark achievement for the researchers and staff at the National Ignition Facility who have dedicated their careers to seeing fusion ignition become a reality, and this milestone will undoubtedly spark even more discovery," US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm said.

Nuclear power plants around the world cur-

rently use fission - the splitting of a heavy atom's nucleus - to produce energy. Fusion on the other hand combines two light hydrogen atoms to form one heavier helium atom, releasing a large amount of energy in the process. That's the process that occurs inside stars, including our sun.

On Earth, fusion reactions can be provoked by heating hydrogen to extreme temperatures inside specialized devices. Researchers at the LLNL use the massive National Ignition Facility - 192 ultra-powerful lasers all pointed into a thimble-sized cylinder filled with hydrogen. Like fission, fusion is carbon-free during operation, but has many more advantages: It poses no risk of nuclear disaster and produces much less radioactive waste. However, there is still a long way to go before fusion is viable on an industrial scale. — AFP

Crypto tycoon charged with...

Continued from Page 1

The criminal charges, made by federal prosecutors

in New York, posed the greatest threat to Bankman-Fried who risks a long jail sentence given the billions of dollars involved. "Mr. Bankman-Fried is reviewing the charges with his legal team and considering all of his legal options," his lawyer Mark Cohen said in a statement. In their indictment, US prosecutors said Bankman-Fried also carried out money laundering, violated campaign finance laws and committed wire fraud since the start of his company in 2019. — AFP

International

India accuses China of trying to 'change status quo' on border

'Our response measures were professional to stabilise the situation on the ground'

NEW DELHI: India's defence minister Tuesday accused China of trying to "unilaterally change the status quo" on their disputed Himalayan border last week when clashes left troops on both sides injured. The incident is thought to be the most serious on the nuclear-armed Asian giants' disputed frontier since 2020, when 20 Indian troops and four Chinese soldiers died in brawling.



Work with China to maintain peace and tranquility

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh confirmed in parliament that Indian and Chinese troops engaged in the fresh confrontation on December 9 in the northeastern Indian state Arunachal Pradesh. China and India fought a full-scale war in 1962 over control of Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims in its entirety and considers part of Tibet.

"On 09 December 2022, PLA troops attempted to unilaterally change the status quo by encroaching on the Line of Actual Control, in the Yangtse area of Tawang sector," Singh said, referring to China's People's Liberation Army and the de-facto border.

The face-off, which followed recent joint US-India military exercises near the border that angered



Indian and Chinese troops exchanging pleasantries at the border.

Beijing, led to "injuries to soldiers on both sides", Singh added. "A scuffle ensued in this face-off. The Indian Army bravely prevented the PLA from encroaching on our territory, and forced them to withdraw to their posts. Some soldiers from both sides were injured in the skirmish." A military source told AFP that at least six Indian soldiers were injured. In Beijing, PLA Western Theatre Command spokesman Long Shaohua claimed Indian troops had "illegally crossed the Line (of Actual Control)" and "obstructed" Chinese border patrol troops.

"Our response measures were professional, standard and forceful, and stabilised the situation on the ground. At present, China and India have disengaged," said Long, according to a post on the PLA's official WeChat account.

"We ask the Indian side to strictly control and restrain front-line troops, and work with China to maintain peace and tranquility on the border," he added. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said earlier Tuesday that the situation was "stable overall", but gave no details of what hap-

pened or whether Chinese troops were injured. He added that the two sides "maintained unobstructed dialogue on the border issue through diplomatic and military channels."

'Face-off'

Singh added that local commanders from both sides held a flag meeting on December 11 and the incident was discussed. Singh added that in the latest incident "none of our soldiers have died, nor has anyone been seriously injured". The military source said that there was another "face-off" between Indian and Chinese troops in the last week of November in the Demchok region of Ladakh, to the northwest, near where the June 2020 incident took place.

It was unclear if there were any injuries resulting from that incident, which was the most serious since September 2020. The army source said that there had been increased activity in Ladakh by the Chinese military, as well as a "possible" airspace violation by the Chinese air force in the same area. This follows joint military exercises that irked Beijing last month between India and the United States in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, which borders China. The Chinese soldiers also displayed a banner objecting to the Indo-US military exercises, the source said. Even before the June 2020 clash, India was moving strategically closer to the West, deepening security cooperation with the United States, Japan and Australia in the Asia-Pacific region. United by their concern about China's increasing influence in the region, the countries make up the so-called Quad alliance. — AFP



KABUL: A general view shows burnt and broken windows a day after a deadly attack by gunmen at a hotel in Kabul on December 13, 2022. At least three people were killed when gunmen attacked a hotel popular with Chinese business people in the Afghan capital. — AFP

China 'shocked' by attack on Afghan hotel

KABUL: Beijing said Tuesday it was "shocked" by a deadly attack on a Kabul hotel popular with Chinese business visitors, adding that five of its nationals were wounded. The Taliban 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 like this one claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State group.

"This terror attack is abominable and China is deeply shocked," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing. "As far as we know, five Chinese citizens were injured in the terrorist attack, and several Afghan military and police were also killed." The Taliban's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, however, said Monday only three attackers were killed in the raid on the Kabul Longan Hotel. Two foreigners were hurt escaping from the building, he said. Mujahid told AFP Tuesday "a few other" injuries may have since been reported.

The Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency NGO, which operates a hospital just one kilometre from the blast site, said Monday they had received 21 casualties, including three people dead on arrival. Taliban casualty figures following such incidents are usually lower than those reported by hospitals and other independent sources. On Tuesday, the

hotel facade was blackened by fire that erupted during the attack and windows of the 10-storey building had also been blown out. "I heard the sound of a loud explosion and shots. Of course everyone was scared," said a vendor in an adjacent street, asking not to be identified. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, issuing photos of two men it said were the perpetrators.

It also claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing outside the Russian embassy in September that killed two staff, as well as an attack on Pakistan's mission this month that Islamabad decried as an assassination attempt against the ambassador.

No country has recognised Afghanistan's Taliban government but China, Russia, and Pakistan are among a handful that have maintained their embassies in Kabul. "This looks like (at least in part) a campaign to dent the efforts of the Taliban, IS-K's rival, to gain legitimacy both at home and abroad," tweeted Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center think tank.

China, Pakistan, and Russia were expected to base decisions about international recognition on security rather than the Taliban's human rights record, he said. In Beijing, Wang reminded Chinese nationals that foreign ministry advice was to evacuate from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Chinese business visitors have flocked to the country since the Taliban's return in pursuit of high-risk but potentially lucrative business deals. China shares a rugged 76-kilometre (47-mile) border with Afghanistan and it has long feared Afghanistan could become a staging point for minority Uyghur separatists in China's sensitive border region of Xinjiang. — AFP

sion continuing against the party for the last 15 years," Matiur Rahman Akand, Jamaat's publicity secretary, told AFP. For years, Jamaat was a major ally of the right-of-centre main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and their coalition ruled the country between 2001-2006.

But after Hasina came to power in 2009, Jamaat's entire leadership was arrested and tried for war crimes dating back to the country's 1971 independence war against Pakistan. Five of its top leaders were hanged between 2013 and 2016 after they were found guilty by a war crimes court.

The party called the trials politically motivated and part of a wider vendetta against its leaders. Hundreds of party activists were shot dead and tens of thousands detained after they staged violent protests against the executions.

The fresh arrest of Jamaat's chief came days after two of the BNP's leaders were arrested on charges of inciting violence on the eve of a giant anti-government rally on Saturday. The BNP has demanded Hasina step down and let a caretaker government hold a free and fair election. — AFP

Bangladesh arrests chief of largest Islamist party

DHAKA: Bangladeshi police said on Tuesday that they had arrested the chief of the country's largest Islamist party, days after it announced it would join the main opposition in protests to oust Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Counter-terrorism officers arrested Jamaat-e-Islami party emir Shafiqur Rahman in Dhaka, metropolitan police spokesman Faruq Ahmed said, without elaborating on the charges. A spokesman for Jamaat-the country's third-largest political party, which has been banned from contesting elections since 2012 — condemned the 64-year-old's arrest, saying it was intended to "scuttle the opposition's anti-government movement".

"This is just another episode of the unjust oppres-

HK court delays media tycoon Lai security trial

HONG KONG: The national security trial of pro-democracy Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai was pushed to September 2023 by a court on Tuesday, as authorities seek to have his overseas lawyer barred from the defence. Lai, the 75-year-old founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily newspaper, is facing up to life in prison for "colluding with foreign forces", a crime under the security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong to quash huge democracy protests in 2019.

The trial was meant to start this month but has been delayed by months of legal wrangling over who can represent him. Hong Kong allows lawyers from common law jurisdictions to work in its courts if they have specialities, one of its key appeals as an international legal and business hub.

Lai wants to be defended by veteran British lawyer Tim Owen but the government has opposed foreign representation for national security trials. Three levels of Hong Kong judges have backed Lai's choice and ruled repeatedly against the government.

But Hong Kong authorities have now asked Beijing

to intervene and decide once and for all whether foreign lawyers can take part in national security cases. On Tuesday, leading national security prosecutor Anthony Chau told the High Court that Beijing had yet to respond to that request.

The three judges agreed to an adjournment and pushed the trial start to 25 September, 2023. Lai is already in jail serving a string of convictions related to his involvement in protests. On Saturday, he received another 69 months of jail after being convicted of fraud in a contract dispute with a government agency.

His lawyer Owen has now left Hong Kong after immigration authorities refused to extend his working visa. The national security charges against Lai largely revolve around the coverage and content of his Apple Daily newspaper which supported the 2019 democracy protests as well as international sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials.

The law has transformed Hong Kong. Most of the city's prominent democracy activists have been jailed, fled overseas or fallen silent. It has also been used against media outlets that were critical of the government. In a separate court hearing on Tuesday, journalist Chung Pui-kuen was released on bail after 11 months in pre-trial custody. Chung was the chief editor of the now shuttered Stand News online outlet. He and colleague Patrick Lam are being prosecuted for conspiring to publish "seditious publications". — AFP



HONG KONG: Chung Pui-kuen, the ex-chief editor of the now shuttered Stand News online outlet, walks outside the district court after being released on bail after 11 months in pre-trial custody in Hong Kong on December 13, 2022. — AFP

US rolls out red carpet, opens wallet for African leaders

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday is rolling out the red carpet to leaders across Africa with plans to unveil \$55 billion in support as part of a renewed bid to win back influence in the continent.

Nearly 50 African heads of state or government have descended on Washington in the midst of a pre-Christmas cold snap for three days of courtship by President Joe Biden after years of inroads in the continent by China and Russia.

Previewing the summit, Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said the administration would seek \$55 billion for Africa over the next three years "across a wide range of sectors to tackle the core challenges of our time." He said the blueprint would be the African Union's own Agenda 2063, its plan for sustainable development. "We are lifting up African voices and African priorities in what we are doing in this summit," Sullivan told reporters. The Biden administration, which has identified China as its top global competitor, hopes to show a subtle contrast from Beijing during the summit rather than hammering home criticism. "This is going to be about what we can offer. It's going to be a positive proposition about the United States, its partnership with Africa," Sullivan said.

"We are bringing the resources to the table in significant numbers," he added. Welcoming African entrepreneurs for a reception Monday evening, Secretary

of State Antony Blinken said the United States was guided by the principle of partnership. "We can't solve any of the really big challenges we face if we don't work together. So it's about what we can do with African nations and people, not for them," Blinken said.

Push on democracy

Biden during the summit will outline US support for the African Union to gain a formal berth in the Group of 20 club of major economies, months after he threw support behind a permanent African seat on the UN Security Council. Unlike China, which holds summits every three years with Africa, the United States plans to promote democratic values. Sullivan said Biden will meet with African leaders facing election in 2023.

"We would like to do everything we can to support those elections being free, fair and credible," Sullivan said. Successive US presidents have pursued signature initiatives for Africa, with George W. Bush launching a major push to fight HIV/AIDS that he considers among his top legacies and Barack Obama spearheading a drive to bring electricity, which US officials say has brought power for the first time to 165 million people. Obama's successor Donald Trump, by contrast, made no secret of his lack of interest in Africa, and Biden's summit with the region's leaders will be the first by a US president since Obama's landmark first edition in 2014. In the eight ensuing years, China's investment in Africa has consistently outpaced that of the United States, with countries brushing aside US warnings that Beijing's billions in infrastructure spending could put them in long-term arrears. Ahead of the summit, China's ambassador to Washington, Qin Gang, said that his country was "sincere" in Africa and that its investment "is not a trap." — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022

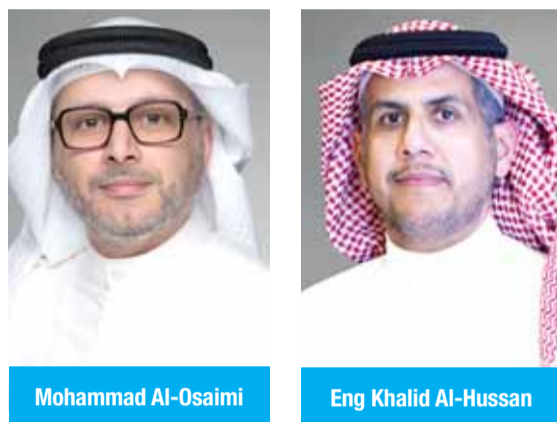
Boursa Kuwait signs MoU with Saudi Tadawul Group

Partnership aims to bolster growth of capital markets in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: Boursa Kuwait signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Saudi Tadawul Group that aims to continue to build on the partnership and form the basis of cooperation between the two stock exchange operators. The MoU, which was signed on the periphery of the GCC Stock Exchange Summit in Riyadh, aimed to explore collaboration opportunities in financial technology (fintech), products as well as developing sustainability and in the fields of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting and implementation. Collaborations on organizing mutual events, Investor Relations initiatives as well as cross-listing of companies on both exchanges were also included as part of the MoU.

In addition, the MoU aims to synergize the efforts of both bourses in the areas of financial literacy and raising awareness among market participants from both countries to the latest developments in capital markets regionally and across the globe. Through the memorandum, both Boursa Kuwait and the Saudi Tadawul Group will exchange perspectives on how best to entice family businesses, government entities and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to list on their respective exchanges.

Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi spoke on the occasion of the signing, saying, "We value the ongoing cooperation between the Kuwaiti capital market and its Saudi counterpart since its inception, and the signing of the memorandum of understanding today is an indication of our long-term partnership to develop the market and enhance the investment environment locally and across the region. Guided by our strategy, we at Boursa Kuwait work towards creating an attractive business environment and an adaptable, solvent capital market with high levels of transparency, that is able to attract more and more investors from the region and around the world.



Mohammad Al-Osaimi

Eng Khalid Al-Hussan

Through this MoU, we hope to broaden cooperation and knowledge transfer across Gulf markets in what benefits these markets and the national economies of all parties."

Eng Khalid Al-Hussan, CEO of Saudi Tadawul Group, said: "We are confident that our new partnership with Boursa Kuwait is another step towards championing a diverse, interconnected, and advanced capital market in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Today's memorandum comes in line with our commitment to elevating the Saudi Capital Market for regional and international investors, while facilitating greater connectivity with other exchanges in the GCC. We look forward to using this collaboration to encourage further knowledge sharing between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and enhance the experience for all market participants."

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to create a thriving capital market that attracts local and foreign investors through a broad spectrum of new products and services, infrastructure upgrades, and market reform initiatives, as part of its multi-phase market development plans.

The company was fully privatized in 2019, the



Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi and Eng Khalid Al-Hussan during the signing of the MoU.

first government entity in the State of Kuwait to successfully undergo the process, bringing about greater levels of efficiency. Boursa Kuwait also self-listed in September 2020 and has made great strides in sustaining its operations and business continuity in the face of uncertainties and challenges.

Over the past six years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans. The company also

showcases some of the standout listed companies and the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market through its series of Roadshows and Corporate Days, putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions and highlighting their financial health and business strategies and outlooks, in an effort to help investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.

Permanent HQ of KAAA opens

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Representative of HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, head of the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, opened on Monday the new permanent headquarters of the Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors. Sheikh Ahmad said during the opening ceremony that the association, which was established more than 50 years ago, is a main pillar in the banking and financial sector, stressing his keenness to provide all support to accountants in their tireless and continuous work to fight corruption.

Honorary President of KAAA Youssef Saleh Al-Othman indicated the new headquarters is considered a distinctive launch that includes a clear vision urged by community motivation, expressing his thanks to everyone who contributed to the realization of the new headquarters, from licensing to completion and material and moral support.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of KAAA Rashid Awad Al-Hattani said the opening of the permanent headquarters of the association is the most important message on the importance of teamwork in accomplishing tasks. "As far as the challenges come, the achievements made by the first founders from previous boards of directors, who spared no effort since 2002 to this day to accomplish this edifice, we all hope will be a quantum leap in the development of the accounting and auditing profession in Kuwait that was and still is a major pillar in the development of the business sector and its protection from the negative repercussions by successive economic changes," he said.

Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the opening of the permanent headquarters of the association building and the former chairman Faisal Abdul Mohsen Al-Tubaikh said the permanent headquarters of the Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors building will put Kuwait on the map of the development of the accounting and auditing profession and on the path of global-



KUWAIT: Honoring Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Rashid Awad Al-Hattani.



Youssef Saleh Al-Othman

ization through continuous follow-up of all developments in the profession. It will also increase the ability of the association to absorb more of those wishing to undergo its professional training programs and courses that it offers to its members.

Tubaikh indicated there are great hopes and broad aspirations that the officials of the board of directors of KAAA have in achieving them, the most important of which is the establishment of an independent body for the accounting and auditing profession that is responsible for developing the profession and increasing the capabilities of its employees. This is an important source of income in the country's budget, he said, adding it is working to increase the number of workers in the accounting and auditing profession and university graduates.



Faisal Abdul Mohsen Al-Tubaikh.

Global stocks surge, dollar drops as US inflation cools

NEW YORK: Stocks surged while the dollar dropped Tuesday as US inflation slowed more than expected, opening the way for the Federal Reserve to reduce the tempo of interest rate hikes.

US consumer prices rose at an annual pace of 7.1 percent in November, down from 7.7 percent in October, according to Labor Department data. The consumer price index (CPI) is a closely-

watched measure of inflation and was forecast by analysts to come in at 7.3 percent. The bigger-than-expected drop should come as a relief to monetary policymakers after wholesale inflation came in hotter than expected last week. "The key takeaway from the report at first blush is that overall inflation is cooling and that the Fed should be convinced to temper the pace of its rate hikes and perhaps place a lower ceiling on its terminal rate," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

The central bank is widely expected to lift interest rates 50 basis points Wednesday—a slowdown from the previous four 75-point hikes. Lower inflation and interest rates are positive for businesses, and stock prices in Europe surged

after the US inflation data was released, with London up 1.0 percent, Paris 2.1 percent, and Frankfurt 2.2 percent in afternoon trade.

Wall Street's main indices jumped at the opening bell, with the Dow climbing 2.1 percent. The S&P 500 rose 2.6 percent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq 3.6 percent. "In summary, Santa has delivered a nice enough package to the Fed, who can now celebrate the Christmas with more peace knowing that inflation is moving in the direction that they want with plenty of tail wind behind," said Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at Avatrade. The prospect of the Fed slowing interest rate hikes was not positive for the US dollar, however, which lost more than one percent against its main rival currencies. —AFP

UK rail strikes begin festive season walkouts

LONDON: UK rail workers on Tuesday began a two-day national strike, kicking off a month of walkouts involving nurses to passport control workers that could spell Christmas misery for millions.

Rush hour commuters faced a battle to get to work, while many opted to stay at home, as thousands of members of the country's biggest rail union the RMT launched their latest stoppage over a below-inflation pay offer. Braving the ice and snow that has already hit travellers, picketers appeared at major railway stations early Tuesday, as train services wound down and people were advised only to travel if essential.

Trains were only running from 7.30 am (07.30 GMT) to 6.30 pm on strike days, with just one in five services expected to run. At London's Kings Cross station, Allan Smith, a 28-year-old web developer, said he had sympathy with the strikers, despite struggling to get to Heathrow airport.

"I totally get it. It's hard for the people at the moment," he told AFP. Former firefighter Chris McBride, 74, blamed "incompetent government" for the chaos, with more stoppages planned between now and into the New Year.

Festive misery

The UK is experiencing a wave of industrial action on a scale not seen since the 1980s, with inflation in double digits pushing up the cost of living and energy costs soaring due to the war in Ukraine. Postal workers are staging a two-day strike on Wednesday, while nurses are set to walk out for the first time in their union's 106-year history on Thursday, again over pay. Rail workers will hold another two-day strike from Friday, when they will be joined by bus drivers, highway workers and airport baggage handlers.

Border Force staff checking passports at major airports including Heathrow and Gatwick will strike over Christmas. RMT members on Monday rejected an 11th hour pay offer from Network Rail, which owns the UK's railway infrastructure, leading its staff, along with workers from 14 train companies, to walk out. Network Rail had offered its workers a pay rise of five percent backdated for this year and a further four percent at the start of 2023.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "This is a huge rejection of Network Rail's standard offer." He said the pay offer was tied to "thousands of job losses" as well as an increase in unsocial hours. —AFP

Business



KUWAIT: Officials attending the Competition Promotion Conference titled "Challenges and Ambition" on Tuesday.

Nahedh stresses crucial role of competition protection agencies

Kuwait's GDP expected to grow by 6% by year-end

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Mazen Al-Nahedh said human evolution has pushed the world towards major economic transformations and boosted the role of the private sector, leading to the development of a market policy. This in turn has resulted in an increase in production, growth of service sectors and formation of various global economic blocs, he said.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Competition Promotion Conference titled "Challenges and Ambition" held on Tuesday, Nahedh said the previous situation put the entire world in front of a reality that required the establishment of international rules governing competition policy and mechanisms to combat monopolistic practices that prevent the accomplishments of goals of global trade liberalization.

As a sequel to this development, Kuwait, through its program to restructure the economy in accordance with the New Kuwait 2035 vision, relied on the transformation from a system of directed economy to a free market economy. The minister affirmed that the roles of competition protection agencies and bodies are very important, as they play a vital role in the economy. "This requires the application of competition protection laws in our country as a regulatory framework teemed with technologically powerful bodies that could tackle any harmful practices to competition," Nahedh said.

He indicated practical necessities force monitoring of markets in order to achieve a strong competitive climate. "We must notice the deterministic relationship between the existence of competition among companies and what it leads to, including increasing productivity, developing markets and products and prompting com-

petitors to raise the efficiency of their economic activity in order to develop their products and provide them at reasonable prices," Nahedh said.

"Competition protection rules help to attract foreign investments and localization of national investments, in addition of developing the private sector, while competition agencies that monitor the markets make sure that it is free of harmful practices," he added. He said the spread of competition laws globally cannot be ignored, as it considered a guide to economic

development, which calls for activating these laws on the ground, with the inevitability of having strong agencies that can enforce the law and monitor the markets in an effective manner, as Kuwait still has a long way to go to improve the performance of competition mechanisms in the markets.

2022 is the year of Kuwait's recovery from COVID-19, expecting GDP will rise to pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year, expecting it to grow by 6 percent. "While we note this remarkable economic recovery, we must not lose sight of the fact that the largest proportion of this growth depends on the oil sector, which constitutes 95 percent of revenues, and this excessive dependence may restrict the prospects for economic growth in the long term, especially in the event of low oil prices," Dashti said.

the digital economy brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. Executive Director of the Competition Protection Agency Abdullah Saleh Al-Owaisi emphasized the importance of achieving a healthy competitive environment characterized by economic freedom through the effective application of the provisions of the law and the spread of a competitive culture in Kuwaiti society. He stressed the importance of this conference in raising awareness of the essential role played by the Competition Protection Agency in promoting competi-



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Mazen Al-Nahedh delivers his speech.



KUWAIT: Executive Director of the Competition Protection Agency, Abdullah Saleh Al-Owaisi delivers a speech.



KUWAIT: Undersecretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Rola Dashti speaks.

Undersecretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rola Dashti clarified in her speech that

Reliance on oil

Undersecretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rola Dashti clarified in her speech that

She pointed out that ESCWA welcomes development efforts of the non-oil sector in Kuwait, as these efforts pave a promising path for prosperity and achievement of development goals. "ESCWA aims in this conference to raise awareness of the importance of promoting fair competitive practices and addressing the economic challenges facing Kuwait and the important role assigned to it by the Competition Protection Agency," she said. Dashti indicated the competition policy is one of the most important tools that the Kuwaiti government can use, especially after the rapid growth in

tion and addressing the major economic challenges facing Kuwait, which also seeks to enhance knowledge of the provisions of the competition law and the benefits of its application at the level of the parties.

"This conference comes with the Kuwait's 2035 vision, which aims to transform the country into a commercial, regional and global financial center that attracts investment, in which the private sector leads economic activity, achieves human development, encourages competition and raises production efficiency under a supportive institutional apparatus," Owaisi said.



LONDON: Governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey holds a press conference after the bank issued its latest Financial Stability Report at Bank Of England, on December 13, 2022, in London. — AFP

BoE plans to test 'shadow banking' after markets chaos

LONDON: The Bank of England will test so-called shadow banking institutions such as pension funds, that played a key role in recent UK bond market chaos, it said Tuesday. The BoE was forced to buy UK debt in September in an emergency intervention to avert financial catastrophe, after a controversial tax-slashing budget by the government caused bond yields to soar and sparked panic.

The crisis, which sparked the downfall of former Conservative prime minister Liz Truss, threw the spotlight on non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) and their risk to stability, the BoE noted Tuesday. "There is a need to develop stress-testing approaches to understand better the resilience of NBFIs to shocks" and their links with commercial lenders and markets, it added in a report. "The bank will run, for the first time, an exploratory scenario exercise focused on NBFI risks, to inform understanding of these risks and future policy approaches," it revealed.

September's turmoil, centered on the exposure of pension funds to UK debt market volatility, highlighted a "material risk" to stability, the BoE warned. Some pension funds use Liability Driven Investments (LDIs), which are linked to financial derivatives and intended to help ensure that the income generated by the assets covers their long-term commitments. However, the chaos caused the value of assets, notably government bonds, to tumble. That forced pension funds to sell the bonds, known as gilts, to swiftly access liquidity, sending yields rocketing. "The rapid and unprecedented increase in yields exposed vulnerabilities associated with LDI funds, in which many defined benefit pension schemes invest," the BoE said. "This led to a vicious spiral of collateral calls and forced gilt sales that risked leading to further market dysfunction, creating a material risk to UK financial stability." — AFP

United Airlines announces huge Boeing 787 order

CHARLESTON, US: Betting on robust demand for international travel, United Airlines on Tuesday unveiled an order of 100 new Boeing 787 Dreamliners with options for an additional 100 jets. The huge order, the largest by an American carrier for this class of aircraft, marks a victory for Boeing, which has targeted mid-decade as the period it expects to return to its pre-pandemic financial health after the 737 MAX scandal and other woes.

United Chief Executive Scott Kirby, who also announced a giant Boeing and Airbus order in June 2021 ahead of rivals, predicted the airline's ambitious 787 plan would pay off for the carrier during a capacity-constrained period. "United is really uniquely positioned to grow in a way that's going to be a huge challenge for others," Kirby told reporters. White House Chief of Staff Ronald Klain touted the order, saying on Twitter, "Another day, another huge investment in US manufacturing — advanced production, high-quality jobs in the USA." United expects deliveries of the jets to take place between 2024 and 2032, aiming the new aircraft as a replacement for the 767 fleet that will be removed from service by 2030. The Dreamliner saves 25 percent of the carbon emission compared with the jets being retired.

United executives did not offer an estimate as to the total potential cost of the contracts, but projected that capital spending would rise to \$9 billion in 2023 and \$11 billion in 2024. United said it also exercised

options for an additional 44 737 MAX planes between 2024 and 2026, and ordered 56 more MAX jets for 2027 and 2028.

Production ramp-up

After the 737 MAX, the 787 Dreamliner — which flies transatlantic journeys as well as other international itineraries — has been Boeing's other leading source of orders and deliveries. United officials said beefing up the fleet of 787s made sense at a time when the carrier already flies the jet, making it an easy transition for pilots and helping the company add capacity quickly. But United officials praised the A350, the rival widebody offering from European aerospace giant Airbus, and said they still plan to take delivery of 45 of the Airbus jets from 2030. For Boeing, the United order signals a victory for the 787, for which production was slowed to a trickle while the company halted deliveries of new jets for more than a year while addressing production problems.

Boeing resumed 787 deliveries in August after getting the green light from the Federal Aviation Administration, which has heavily scrutinized Boeing processes in the aftermath of the 737 MAX crisis. "This is an opportunity for Boeing to ramp up at Charleston, perhaps with two production shifts," said Michel Merluzéau, director of aerospace and defense analysis at AIR consultancy.

In October 2020, Boeing consolidated manufacturing of the 787 to Charleston, ending production of the wide-body jet in Washington state in an efficiency move as it battled financial losses during the COVID-19 downturn. At its investor day in November, Boeing officials outlined a plan to restore 787 production to 10 passenger jets per month. Shares of Boeing gained 0.9 percent to \$187.91 in early trading Tuesday, while United rose 1.3 percent to \$44.80. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on January 9, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner operated by United Airlines takes off at Los Angeles International Airport. — AFP

Fed opens meeting with smaller rate hike on the cards

WASHINGTON: US central bankers started a two-day policy meeting Tuesday, with all eyes searching for clear signs that decades-high inflation in the world's biggest economy is definitively slowing.

The Federal Reserve is widely expected to implement a smaller hike than previous ones in the benchmark lending rate after officials convene, with consumer prices easing and sectors like housing already reeling from tightening policy. Indeed, US consumer inflation eased in November, according to government data released Tuesday, bringing some relief to policymakers with the smallest annual increase in nearly a year. The consumer price index (CPI), a closely-watched measure of inflation, jumped 7.1 percent from a year ago, down from 7.7 percent in October, the Labor Department said.

As costs rocketed this year, worsened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's zero-COVID measures, the US central bank hiked interest rates six times, bringing its range from close to zero to between 3.75 percent and four percent. The aim was to make borrowing more expensive and lower demand, eventually reining in price increases.

With the pace of inflation ticking down in recent months, analysts expect policymakers to opt for a 0.5-point rate hike this week. While this is still a steep rise, it marks a step down after four bumper 0.75-point hikes. A Fed spokesperson confirmed the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) started its meeting as scheduled on Tuesday, and it is scheduled to announce its decision on Wednesday afternoon.

"Inflation seems to have peaked... We've seen goods inflation become negative recently. But we need service price inflation to come down," said Marc Giannoni, chief US economist at Barclays. Wage pressures will have to ease, he told AFP, adding that it will be hard to have "sustainably low inflation without having some slowing on the labor market, and some slowing in particular on the demand for services." Policy makers are watching wage changes, given concerns that fast-growing salaries will add to the costs of delivering services.

But economists caution that a lower headline number does not mean the Fed will immediately step on the brakes in its forceful campaign to cool the economy. "Powell recently noted there hasn't been clear progress toward returning inflation to the (longer-term) two percent target," said Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics. — AFP

Business

US inflation slows in November, easing pressure on policymakers

Surging costs of living force households to dip into their savings

NEW YORK: US consumer inflation eased in November, according to government data released Tuesday, bringing some relief to policymakers with the smallest annual increase in nearly a year. Officials are closely eyeing the monthly inflation report for signs that painfully high consumer prices are definitively moderating at last, as surging costs of living force households to dip into their savings.

The consumer price index (CPI), a closely-watched measure of inflation, jumped 7.1 percent from a year ago, down from 7.7 percent in October, according to Labor Department figures. But the overall number is still about three times the pre-pandemic pace. Prices ticked up 0.1 percent from October to November, a smaller-than-expected increase after a prior 0.4 percent jump, the latest data showed.

Meanwhile, core prices, which exclude the volatile food and energy segments, rose 0.2 percent in November, down from a 0.3 percent pick-up in October. "The index for shelter was by far the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, more than offsetting decreases in energy indexes," the Labor Department said in a statement. Food inflation nudged up as well, underscoring the financial squeeze that households are still experiencing. While an improvement from before, the data likely reinforces official views that costs remain far too high, and US central bankers are poised to push on in their quest to cool the world's biggest economy.

The Federal Reserve has raised the benchmark lending rate six times this year in hopes of lowering demand, walking a fine line between reining in prices and triggering a recession. The lower inflation figure is likely to fuel optimism for easing in the Fed's aggressive campaign as its policy-setting committee starts a two-day meeting Tuesday that is widely expected to culminate in a smaller rate hike.

Right direction

Consumer inflation remains much higher than the Fed's longer-term goal of two percent, even as prices are "moving in the right direction," said economist Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics Tuesday. But "further sustained improvement" over the coming months could allow the Fed to slow its pace of rate hikes more, she added.

While goods prices are decelerating, they still contribute heavily to CPI changes and a reversal of the trend will take time, she warned in an earlier analysis. Shelter inflation remains a key factor behind inflation, and James Knightley of ING told AFP that while the asking price for rents appears to be falling in many cities, most people are still paying "considerably more" than last year. Analysts have also been watching price increases in services, given that quickly rising wages feed into this segment and "continue to run hot," he noted. "This is clearly an area of concern for the Fed," he said. —AFP



WASHINGTON: The consumer price index (CPI), a closely-watched measure of inflation, jumped 7.1 percent from a year ago, down from 7.7 percent in October, according to Labor Department figures. —AFP

CBK issues bonds and tawarruq worth KD 240m

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced Monday new CBK bonds and related tawarruq valued at KD 240 million. The securities bear a return rate of 4.125 percent and a maturity of three months, according to a CBK statement. Last Monday, CBK issued bonds and tawarruq worth KD 230 million (around \$759 million) with a three-month maturity term and a return rate of 4.25 percentage. —KUNA

German investor morale climbs on energy hopes

BERLIN: German investor confidence rose more than expected in December, a closely watched survey showed Tuesday, as hopes grow that surging energy prices are coming down and record-high inflation is nearing its zenith. The ZEW institute's economic expectations index jumped by 13.4 points to minus 23.3 points, the third consecutive increase after months of decline.

Analysts surveyed by Factset had forecast a smaller boost in morale, predicting a reading of minus 29 points. "The vast majority of financial market experts expect the inflation rate to decline in the coming months," ZEW president Achim Wambach

said in a statement. "Together with the temporary stabilisation on the energy markets, this leads to a significant improvement in the economic outlook."

Germany's inflation rate eased to 10 percent in November, after hitting a record-high of 10.4 percent the month before. The surprise drop came on the back of slightly lower energy prices, although they remain far higher than in previous years as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The German government has unveiled a 200-billion-euro (\$210-billion) support package to mitigate the impact of the energy crisis, including a cap on gas prices for businesses and households. The government nevertheless expects Europe's biggest economy to contract by 0.4 percent in 2023.

Meanwhile, Germany's influential machine-tool makers' federation warned Tuesday against an abrupt break from China, amid growing scrutiny of business ties between Europe's top economy and the authoritarian country. German firms have faced calls to reduce their heavy dependence on the

world's number two economy following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent move to slash energy exports to Europe.

But the VDMA industry body said that China was an "enormously important market" for its 3,500 members, and warned against moving too hastily.

"The Chinese market cannot be replaced in the short and medium term," VDMA president Karl Haeusgen said. "Exports to China provide well-paid and highly qualified jobs in Germany."

He instead called for Berlin to provide German business support and "help to open up new sales markets", and urged the European Union to seal new free trade agreements in Asia. Haeusgen did however recognize China's economic policies were having a negative impact on foreign companies and called on Berlin to reassess its relationship with Beijing. But he also defended flourishing business ties with China over the years, saying "economic openness" had helped to lift "hundreds of millions" of Chinese people out of poverty. —AFP

Ghana reaches \$3bn deal with IMF

ACCRA: Ghana on Tuesday agreed on a \$3 billion credit deal with the International Monetary Fund as part of the country's battle to end its worst economic crisis in decades. The West Africa state is facing more than 40 percent inflation, growing debt and a sharp decline in its cedi currency since the start of the year. The IMF said Ghana's government had committed to "a wide-ranging economic reform program" that will restore stability and debt sustainability.

The three-year IMF loan agreement has yet to be approved by the fund's board. "Reducing inflation, enhancing resilience to external shocks, and improving market confidence are also important program priorities," the IMF statement said. A top cocoa and gold producer, Ghana also has oil and gas reserves, but its debt payments have soared and like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa it has been hit hard by fallout from the COVID pandemic and the Ukraine war.

The crisis forced President Nana Akufo-Addo's government to reverse its position earlier this year and seek IMF help as economists warned the country risked a default on its debt payments.

The government has already announced a domestic debt swap as part of the program to ease a crunch in payments and is soon expected to release details about restructuring its foreign debt. IMF mission chief Stephane Roudet told reporters in Accra, IMF board approval would come after Ghana's creditors give assurances and the debt exchange program showed progress. —AFP



KFH supports employee innovation

KUWAIT: Acting Group CEO of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Abdulwahab Iesa Al-Rushood, stressed the importance of innovation, research, and development in KFH systems, saying that they are vital in enhancing the leadership position of the bank.

He added that encouraging employee innovation would also contribute to supporting KFH in leading the competition and enhancing customer service and brand value.

He added that this is achieved by allowing employees to share their innovative ideas and

creative projects, stating that a flexible work model has been adopted for facilitating the implementation of innovative ideas, as well as allocating the material and human resources required to implement the successful innovations of KFH employees.

In his speech during the ceremony honoring a group of KFH employees who presented their innovative ideas, Al-Rushood called for more efforts towards innovation, creativity, and the development of performance under controls, obligations and policies that derive their strength from strategic and methodological foundations. He revealed that the innovative ideas are subject to an assessment by a committee entrusted with screening and studying the contributions of employees, which amounted to 30 ideas and projects since the beginning of the year. Al-Rushood indicated that these ideas are in harmony with the latest banking developments in the world,



as well as the needs, and aspirations of customers. The innovations also take into account the extent of competition, quality, professional and regulatory standards adopted locally, regionally, and globally. Al-Rushood stated that KFH, as a world leading Islamic financial institution, provides an enabling environment for innovation and development, which is carried out by granting opportunities for staff at KFH to share their brilliant ideas at Kuwait level, or at the Group level in Turkey, Bahrain and Malaysia. Subsequently, the Bank rewards them for their contributions, noting that this trend enjoys the high support of the senior and executive management.

Al-Rushood pointed out that innovation and creativity are key priority in KFH's method of work that supports the creative performance of its employees, who provide novel ideas and positive concepts that have a tangible impact on the various aspects of work.

Meanwhile, KFH's Manager-Digital Innovation, Sulaiman Abughosh said that the employees awarded by KFH have won the competition, among other competing colleagues, at Kuwait level. In addition, the winners are expected to compete at the end of the year in the innovation competition at the Group's level. He pointed out that KFH has assigned a committee for the study and evaluation of proposals submitted by all departments and sectors subject to specific professional standards. The most prominent of these standards are compatibility of ideas with the general policy of KFH, the originality of ideas proposed, and their contribution to improving service quality.

He pointed out that the concerned committee is constantly receiving constructive innovative ideas from various departments of KFH, which reflects the leading standing of the Bank and builds a solid and continuous base for innovating new services and products.

Employees in META feel robots should be more widely used

KUWAIT: According to Kaspersky research, employees in the META region believe that the better robots become at different tasks, the fewer jobs will remain for humans. The majority of employees (78 percent) believe that robots should be more widely used across different industries, however, many fear robot hacking.

Today robotics are used together with industrial control systems and other information technology to handle production processes, replacing manual labor and improving efficiency, speed, quality and performance. Kaspersky conducted a study to learn the opinion of employees of manufacturing companies and other large organizations around the world about the consequences of automation and increased use of robots. The goal was to see what employees think about the security of robots and automated systems in their companies. The survey included respondents from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Egypt, and South Africa.

Employees reported increase in robotization level in their companies over the last 2 years. 36 percent employees said their organizations already use robots, 41 percent of organizations plan to use them in near future. Research showed that people expect job loss because of robotization. The better robots become at different tasks, the fewer jobs will remain for humans. The majority of employees across the META region (92 percent) believe robots will eventually replace

humans in their industry. As robots are advancing in all market sectors, humans need to receive new knowledge and skills not to lose their job to robots. And they are ready to do so: among those who think that their jobs could be replaced by robots, the majority (71 percent) are willing to learn new skills or improve their existing skills and expertise. At the same time, many employees remain optimistic in view of robots taking away jobs. They think robot adoption will make humans' roles safer and intellect-demanding, along with increasing the efficiency of production. 68 percent believe that enough new jobs will be created to counter the loss of jobs to robots. More jobs will emerge for programmers, data scientists, and engineers - these people will drive robot adoption in the years to come.

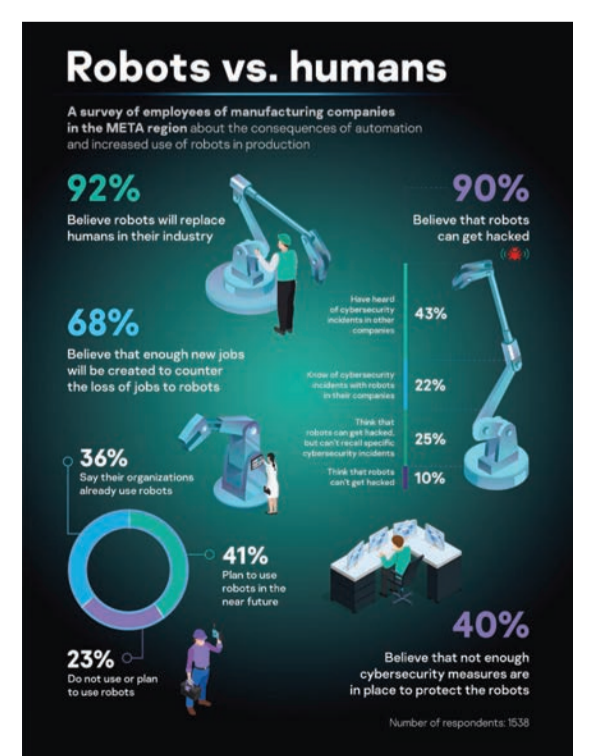
Another important finding was that cybersecurity risks increase because of robotization. The majority of respondents (90 percent) believe that robots can get hacked, and 65 percent know of such incidents in their company or other local companies. Respondents split in their assessment of how protected robots are: almost half of employees in the META region (40 percent) believe that not enough cybersecurity measures are in place to protect the robots in different industries.

"More and more tasks are done by robots, and they are potentially vulnerable to cyberthreats. Kaspersky sees its mission in ensuring that cybersecurity remains at the forefront of robot technology adoption, helping to tackle the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities that robotization presents," comments Emad Haffar, Head of Technical Experts at Kaspersky. "In our research, we asked the respondents to judge not only how convenient and efficient robots are to use in production, but also how safe they are. It turned out that many employees believe that using robots causes

risks. Robots are going to become the prime vector for cyberattacks in the coming years, and they need protection here and now. Before one integrates robots into production, one needs to guarantee network intrusion robustness and overall network security. It's also important to ensure protection of robotic controllers, automation systems, and supply chains. Dedicated solutions like Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity may become an efficient assistant for protecting robotics in production."

To keep your industrial computer systems protected from various threats, Kaspersky experts recommend:

- Conducting regular security assessments of OT systems to identify and eliminate possible cyber security issues.
- Establishing continuous vulnerability assessment and triage as a basement for effective vulnerability management process. Dedicated solutions like Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity may become an efficient assistant and a source of unique actionable information, not fully available in public.
- Performing timely updates for the key components of the enterprise's OT network; applying security fixes and patches or implementing compensating measures as soon as it is technically possible is crucial for preventing a major incident that might cost millions due to the interruption of the production process.
- Using Industrial EDR solutions such as Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity for Nodes with EDR for timely detection of sophisticated threats, investigation, and effective remediation of incidents.
- Improving the response to new and advanced malicious techniques by building and strengthening your teams' incident prevention, detection, and response skills. Dedicated OT



security trainings for IT security teams and OT personnel is one of the key measures helping to achieve this.

Lifestyle | Features



The original first mechatronic E.T. character from Steven Spielberg's 1982 film "E.T. the Extra Terrestrial" on display at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California on December 12, 2022, ahead of the 'Julien's Auctions and TCM Present: Icons & Idols: Hollywood.'



A complete and original Stormtrooper suit worn and used in the 2019 Disney+ Star Wars series 'The Mandalorian' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022, ahead of the 'Julien's Auctions and TCM Present: Icons & Idols: Hollywood.'



A Berman and Nathans red halter dress worn on-screen by Valerie Perrine in her portrayal of Miss Eve Teschmacher in the 1978 film 'Superman' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022, ahead of the 'Julien's Auctions and TCM Present: Icons & Idols: Hollywood.'



The original costume worn by Ricard Chamberlain in the classic miniseries "Shogun" is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills.

Something to phone home about: E.T. model goes up for auction

The original animatronic model used to bring big-eyed alien E.T. to life in Steven Spielberg's tear-jerker movie is up for auction. The extra-friendly extra-terrestrial, whose glowing finger and childlike innocence melted hearts in 1982, became a touchstone of cinema history as audiences welled up over the creature's bond with an Earthling and his desperate desire to go home again.

Now the model Spielberg's team used to create movie magic can be yours if you've got \$2-3 million to spare. With 85 mechanical joints, nearly everything moves, from the eyes, to the neck, and of course that pointy finger that was held aloft as E.T. informed his new friend Elliot that he wanted to "phone home."



A mask prop for Jim Carrey's character Stanley Ipkiss from the 1994 film 'The Mask' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California.



A production-made prop "Shooting Star" Hogwarts school broom from the 2001 film 'Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022, ahead of the 'Julien's Auctions and TCM Present: Icons & Idols: Hollywood.'



A 1943 Academy Award presented to W. Howard Greene for his work in color cinematography for the 1943 film 'Phantom Of The Opera' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12, 2022.—AFP photos



A stunt flare pistol used by "Imperator Furiosa" played by Charlize Theron and Max, portrayed by Tom Hardy in the 2015 film 'Mad Max: Fury Road' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California, on December 12.—AFP

A team of puppeteers helped bring the alien to life opposite Elliot (Henry Thomas) and his little sister Gertie (Drew Barrymore), says Martin Nolan, executive director of Julien's Auctions.

Movie makers "had to work day and night to create what you see... because it's not just about creating visuals," he said. "It also had to be a working creature. I mean, Drew Barrymore who was

the little girl—the sister in the movie—she actually believed that he was a living species."

If \$3 million is a little rich for your blood, but the idea of getting away from it all has appeal, you could always bid on one of the bicycles Elliot and his friends used as they tried to elude the police.

A specially designed BMX bike, which flew across the setting sun in the movie, is expected to fetch up to \$50,000. And if pedaling is not your thing, but zipping through the sky sounds attractive enough, how about a Nimbus 2000 Hero Broom, from "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban"? Yours for around \$100,000.

The haul of movie memorabilia—which also includes lightsabers from the Star Wars franchise, the staff that Charlton Heston used to part the Red Sea in "The Ten Commandments" and Robert De Niro's "Raging Bull" boxing gloves—goes under the hammer this weekend in Beverly Hills. — AFP



A Mae West-inspired black evening gown worn by Marilyn Monroe during the filming of the 1955 film 'The Seven Year Itch' is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills.

Video game hub Japan confronts problem of addiction

From Super Mario to Final Fantasy, Japan has long been synonymous with gaming, but some experts and parents fear a growing addiction problem is going unaddressed. While nearby nations like China and South Korea have imposed drastic restrictions on

youth gaming in recent years—with mixed results—some Japanese families feel they are being left to deal with the issue on their own.

Each month, a group meets in Tokyo to swap stories and strategies for tackling their children's gaming habits. "My only comfort is that he has been keeping his promise to stay offline overnight," one father says, as another confides their child has been attending a rehab day camp.

The group's founder, Sakiko Kuroda, says children in Japan now start playing video games early in primary school,

and pandemic restrictions mean many are playing for longer. Many parents do not know how to deal with the issue, and there is "a lack of action by the government and the gaming industry," said Kuroda, who started the group in 2019 as an informal meet-up.

"People come from across the country to take part, as this kind of self-help gathering is rare in Japan."

The World Health Organization describes "gaming disorder" as behavior that results in "significant impairment" of areas like relationships, education or work, and lasts at least a year. As gaming can overlap with other online activities like social media use, it is hard to quantify the problem, though anecdotal evidence from doctors suggests more families in Japan are worried—particularly since the pandemic.

'Playing all night'

An education ministry survey this April showed that 17 percent of children aged six to 12 spend more than four hours a day gaming—up from nine percent in 2017, with a similar jump seen among those aged 12 to 15. "Games have clever systems to lure people into continuing to play... including constantly updated apps and virtual money," said Mia Itoshiro, who works with a group that gives seminars on preventing gaming addiction.

"Parents are increasingly consulting us saying 'my children can't go to school because they're tired after playing all night'." China in November announced it had "solved" youth gaming addiction by limiting the time children can play online games to just three specified hours a week, enforced through facial recognition software and

ID registration.

Meanwhile, South Korea last year removed a decade-long ban on PC-based online gaming for children under 16 between midnight and 6:00 am, which local media had branded outdated and ineffective.

Japan has had no similar rules, and even a much-debated 2020 local ordinance that banned under-18s from playing more than an hour on weekdays had no enforcement mechanism. Parents and experts say gaming can tip into obsessive behavior in children because of other problems, including COVID-related stress or bullying. The mother of a 13-year-old girl told AFP that video games became a "lifeline" for her daughter when she was struggling

at school.

When she tried to take away the girl's tablet, her daughter, then 10, replied: "If you deprive me of this, I'd want to die."

"I was shocked to hear her say something like that," the mother said. Others who have experienced gaming addiction also say it became a lifeline for them during times of struggle.

Underlying problems

Takahisa Masuda, now a 46-year-old social worker, plunged into gaming as a bullied middle school student, and he believes the escape mechanism saved his life. "I had thought about killing myself, but I wanted to finish Dragon Quest," Masuda told AFP. By the time he had, he felt strong enough to face his tormentors, and he committed to his studies, eventually realizing his goal of working in the gaming industry. So, while parents are often inclined to ban gaming or remove devices, Susumu Higuchi, a doctor and director of the Kurihama Medical and Addiction Centre, instead offers children counselling to tackle underlying problems.

His clinic also provides offline activities from art and cooking to sports, intended to open patients up to other hobbies and social situations.

He wants the government and industry to do more to prevent children from becoming addicted in the first place. "Discussing gaming and online tools requires a balance," Higuchi said.

"But at the moment it seems to me that measures to rein in the negative aspects are dwarfed by the promotion of gaming." — AFP



In this file photo, children play a video game in Oita. From Super Mario to Final Fantasy, Japan has long been synonymous with gaming, but some experts and parents fear a growing addiction problem is going unaddressed.—AFP



This photo taken on June 7, 2022 shows Mia Itoshiro, who works with a group that gives seminars on preventing gaming addiction, speaking during an interview with AFP in Tokyo.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Spectators needing a walking aid attend a concert specifically tailored to people living with dementia at the Wiener Musikverein in Vienna.



Elderly spectators needing a walking aid arrive to attend a concert specifically tailored to people living with dementia at the Wiener Musikverein in Vienna.

'EVERYTHING IS ALLOWED': VIENNA'S DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY CONCERTS

The elegant audiences for its world-famous New Year's Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic may be the epitome of buttoned-up reserve, all tailcoats and taffeta. But the gilded columns of Vienna's grand old Musikverein are now home to concerts where something very different happens—where older people, often living with dementia, can let it all hang out and just go with the music.

"People can get carried away, they can dance and sing, which allows you to feel the music much more intensely," said Andreas Trubel, a 67-year-old former IT developer dealing with neurocognitive issues, who heads a self-help group for "people who forget".

He said he loved the "relaxed style" of the six-concert "Souvenir" series with people able to get up, walk around and talk as he listened to Schubert, Schumann and Brahms and a seasonal sprinkling of Christmas carols. "Everything is allowed, every reaction is allowed and welcome," the Musikverein's director Stephan Pauly told AFP.

The series, which began in October, is



Spectators in wheelchairs attend a concert specifically tailored to people living with dementia at the Wiener Musikverein in Vienna.— AFP photos

a "huge success", he said, and has already become a "very beautiful and very important part" of its output, with more shows planned for the next season.

'Still receptive to music'

Rows of seats are spaced out to allow for movement and wheelchairs, and there are few of the normal rules of concert-

going, so people with or without dementia "feel welcome", said Pauly.

"People are still receptive to music even in an advanced stage of dementia," said the concerts' moderator Veronika Mandl, "because it connects to different areas of the brain. "Music is memory, an emotion, a connection with different things," she said. Mandl did "a lot of

research" into music that spectators might recognize as she was coming up with the program, she said.

And she watches closely how the audience reacts, with some leaning on each others' shoulders as they are moved. At the beginning of each concert, which lasts around an hour, Mandl sets the tone. She tells the audience they can move around, go to the toilet if they wish, or even leave when they want.

Staff are also trained to understand people living with dementia and help them feel more comfortable.

An audience member who mumbled through a recital by a young Polish trio was gently guided to another place to give her more space. Nursing home caregiver Iris Krall-Radulian, a trained musician herself, said many of the spectators were concertgoers before they got dementia. "We know that (the music) has an enormous impact. They are much happier and they feel alive" after the concerts, she said. — AFP

Nuclear fusion: Harnessing the power of the stars

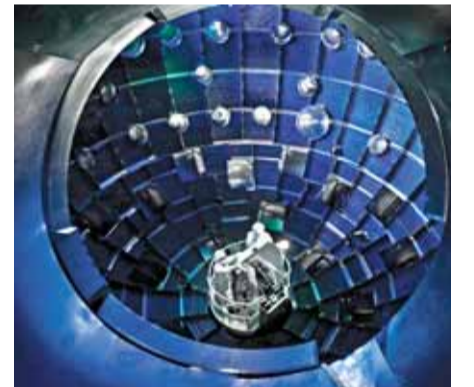
The US Department of Energy's nuclear fusion laboratory says there will be a "major scientific breakthrough" announced Tuesday, as media report that scientists have finally surpassed an important milestone for the technology: getting more energy out than was put in. The announcement has the scientific community abuzz, as nuclear fusion is considered by some to be the energy of the future, particularly as it produces no greenhouse gases, leaves little waste and has no risk of nuclear accidents. Here is an update on how nuclear fusion works, what projects are underway and estimates on when they could be completed:

Energy of the stars

Fusion differs from fission, the technique currently used in nuclear power plants, by fusing two atomic nuclei instead of splitting one. In fact, fusion is the process that powers the sun. Two light hydrogen atoms, when they collide at very high speeds, fuse together into one heavier element, helium, releasing energy in the process. "Controlling the power source of the stars is the greatest technological challenge humanity has ever undertaken," tweeted physicist Arthur Turell, author of "The Star Builders."

Two distinct methods

Producing fusion reactions on Earth is only possible by heating matter to extremely high temperatures—over 100 million degrees Celsius (180 million Fahrenheit). "So we have to find ways to isolate this extremely hot matter from anything that could cool it down. This is the problem of containment," Erik Lefebvre, project leader at the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), told AFP. One method is to "confine" the fusion reaction with magnets. In a huge donut-shaped reactor, light hydrogen isotopes (deuterium and tritium) are heated until they reach the state of plasma, a very low density gas.



This handout picture provided by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) dated July 7, 2008 shows a service system lift that allows technicians to access the target chamber interior for inspection and maintenance at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California.—AFP

Magnets confine the swirling plasma gas, preventing it from coming into contact with the chamber's walls, while the atoms collide and begin fusing. This is the type of reactor used in the major international project known as ITER, currently under construction in France, as well as the Joint European Torus (JET) near Oxford, England. A second method is inertial confinement fusion, in which high energy lasers are directed simultaneously into a thimble-sized cylinder containing the hydrogen.

This technique is used by the French Megajoule Laser (LMJ), and the world's most advanced fusion project, the California-based National Ignition Facility (NIF). Inertial confinement is used to demonstrate the physical principles of fusion, while magnetic confinement seeks to mimic future industrial-scale reactors.

State of research

For decades, scientists have attempted to achieve what is known as "net energy gain"—that is, more energy is produced by the fusion reaction than it takes to activate it. According to reports by the Financial Times and the Washington Post, that will be the "major scientific breakthrough" announced Tuesday by the NIF. But Lefebvre cautions that "the road is still very long" before "a demonstration on an industrial scale that is commercially viable." He says such a project will take another 20 or 30 years to be completed. To get there, researchers must first increase the efficiency of the lasers and reproduce the experiment more frequently.

The NIF's reported success has sparked great excitement in the scientific community, which is hoping the technology could be a game-changer for global energy production. Unlike fission, fusion carries no risk of nuclear accidents. "If a few lasers are missing and they don't go off at the right time, or if the confinement of the plasma by the magnetic field... is not perfect," the reaction will simply stop, Lefebvre says. Nuclear fusion also produces much less radioactive waste than current power plants, and above all, emits no greenhouse gases.—AFP



Angelo Badalamenti

Angelo Badalamenti, composer of 'Twin Peaks' theme, dies at 85

Angelo Badalamenti, the Grammy-winning composer who wrote the haunting theme music for David Lynch's TV series "Twin Peaks," has died aged 85, US media reported. Badalamenti died at his family home in New Jersey, according to the New York Times, which cited his niece.

The Hollywood Reporter also carried the news, saying his niece had told the publication he died of natural causes. Born on March 22, 1937 in New York City, Badalamenti grew up in Brooklyn and graduated from the Manhattan School of Music, according to movie database IMDb.

The classically trained musician first worked with Lynch on the 1986 mystery-noir "Blue Velvet," starting a partnership that would see them collaborate on "Wild at Heart," "Lost Highway" and "The Straight Story." Badalamenti also made forays in front of the camera, including playing an espresso-obsessed gangster in Lynch's "Mulholland Drive."

But he was best known for writing the theme to Lynch's mesmerizing, groundbreaking TV series "Twin Peaks." Badalamenti later won a Grammy for his score. He also found fame as a songwriter, working with Nina Simone, Shirley Bassey, David Bowie and Paul McCartney. He described how he and Lynch came up with the opening music to "Twin Peaks" in an interview with Spirit and Flesh magazine. "The notes just came out," he said. "David was stunned, as was I. The hair on his arms was up and he had tears in his eyes: 'I see Twin Peaks. I got it.' I said, 'I'll go home and work on it.' 'Work on it?! Don't change a note.' And of course I never did."

Born in Brooklyn, New York in March 1937, Badalamenti, went on to receive a Grammy Award for best pop instrumental performance for his Twin Peaks theme in 1990. He was one of David Lynch's closest collaborators and also worked with him on projects such as Wild at Heart and Mulholland Drive.—AFP

Why Indigenous people are vital for saving biodiversity

For countless generations prior to European colonization, Canada's Indigenous people relied on caribou both as a source of subsistence and as an integral part of their cultural practices.

Hunting and butchering the animal in frigid temperatures was long seen as a rite of passage, and members of the First Nations were the first to detect their serious decline. "Fundamentally we are people of caribou," Valerie Courtois, director of Canada's Indigenous Leadership Initiative and a member of the Innu nation, told AFP. "Caribou is what has really enabled us to survive, and to be who we are."

Today the species, which is known as reindeer outside North America, is endangered across much of Canada as a result of widespread habitat destruction from logging, roadbuilding, construction of transmission lines and more. But an innovative pilot program led by Indigenous people might show a path to wider recovery. As delegates from across the world meet in COP15 in Montreal this week to hammer out a new deal for nature, the case highlights the value of Indigenous stewardship in protecting ecosystems that benefit all humanity.

As detailed in a March 2022 paper in "Ecological Applications," the Klinse-Za subpopulation of caribou in British Columbia were once so plentiful they were described as "bugs on the landscape" but by 2013 had dwindled to just 38 animals. That year, the First Nations of West Moberly and Saulteau devised a plan that saw them first cull wolves to reduce caribou predation, then added a maternal pen-fenced enclosures for females to birth and raise calves.

Their efforts saw the number of caribou of the herd triple in the area from 38 to 114.

With the threat of localized extinction averted, the two nations signed an agreement in 2020 with the governments of British Columbia and Canada to secure 7,900 square kilometers (3,050 square miles) of land for caribou, hoping to eventually revive their traditional hunt. "When you protect caribou, a lot of animals come along for the ride," Ronnie Drever, a conservation scientist with nonprofit Nature United, told AFP.

"Good caribou conservation is also climate action," he added, because the old-growth forests and peatlands they live on are invaluable carbon sinks.

Science catching up

Globally, Indigenous people own or use a quarter of the world's land, but safeguard 80 percent of remaining biodiversity—testament to centuries of sustainable practices that modern science is only just starting to understand. A paper published this October in Current Biology looked at tropical forests across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, finding those located on protected Indigenous lands were the "healthiest, highest functioning, most diverse, and most ecologically resilient."

A 2019 paper in Environmental Science & Policy analyzed more than 15,000 areas in Canada, Brazil and Australia. It found that the total number of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles were highest on lands managed or co-managed by Indigenous communities.

Protected areas like parks and wildlife reserves had the second highest levels of biodiversity, followed by areas that were not protected.

"This suggests that it's the land-management practices of many Indigenous communities that are keeping species numbers

high," said lead author Richard Schuster, in a statement.

Partnership crucial

Jennifer Tauli Corpuz, of the Kankana-ey Igorot people of the Philippines, who is a lawyer and biodiversity expert with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, stressed that collaborative efforts were crucial. "Conservation does not have a good history with Indigenous peoples, it's resulted in displacement," she told AFP.

National parks established on Euro-American notions that the land was once pristine "wilderness" typically prohibited Indigenous peoples from exercising their customary land uses, and forcibly displaced many from their ancestral homes. Instead, she says, the rights of Indigenous groups need to be woven into the fabric of the new global biodiversity deal—including a cornerstone pledge to protect 30 percent of land and water by 2030. Indigenous groups say they should have greater autonomy to take the lead as managers of protected areas, arguing their successful record demonstrates they can pursue economic activity sustainably.

"The current biodiversity crisis is often depicted as a struggle to preserve untouched habitats," said a study published last year in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, which found that areas untouched by people were almost as rare 12,000 years ago as they are today. "Current biodiversity losses are caused not by human conversion or degradation of untouched ecosystems, but rather by the appropriation, colonization, and intensification of use in lands inhabited and used by prior societies," it concluded. — AFP



Frankie the Dinosaur, the United Nations Development Programme's "special guest," makes a media appearance at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on December 12, 2022.



Indigenous activists protest in front of the Canada Pavilion against Belo Sun, a Canadian mining company, at United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on December 12, 2022.—AFP photos

Sports

US backs 'neutral' Russian athletes at Paris Olympics

Two countries isolated from international sport

LOS ANGELES: The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee backs moves to allow athletes from Russia and Belarus to compete at the 2024 Paris Olympics provided they do not participate under their countries' colors or flags, officials said on Monday. US officials said that there was "unanimous interest" amongst delegates to an International Olympic Committee (IOC) summit to come up with a pathway that would allow athletes from Russia and Belarus to return to competition. The two countries have been isolated from international sport ever since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in February.

However USOPC chairwoman Susanne Lyons told reporters on a conference call that the "fabric" of the Olympic movement was at risk if athletes were not given the chance to compete as neutrals. "There was a

lot of discussion about whether athletes who happened to have been born in (Russia and Belarus) and have passports from those countries have a pathway whereby they can compete as clean and neutral athletes going forward," Lyons said. "I think there's a fair amount of desire for that to happen over time because our mission is to bring the world together in peace through sport.

"Prohibiting individual athletes from competing is hard for the movement to tolerate." Last week's Olympic summit included delegates from the Olympic movement as well as representatives from the US, Chinese and Russian Olympic Committees. No Ukrainian Olympic representatives attended the meeting. Lyons said Olympic officials wanted Russian and Belarusian athletes to have the chance to compete

as neutrals in order to avoid a return to the boycotts of the 1970s and 1980s.

'Olympic fabric' at risk

"There are conflicts around the world every day, countries at war every day, and if people decide they want to boycott things, tit-for-tat, - 'You didn't come to our games, so we won't come to your games' - very quickly the fabric of the Olympic and paralympic movement falls apart," Lyons said. At this year's Winter Olympics in Beijing, Russian athletes were only allowed to compete under the country's Russian Olympic Committee flag due to previous doping violations.

However many athletes from Russia competed in uniforms in the colors of the Russian flag. Lyons said Olympic officials would only allow Russian athletes to

compete in future provided they wore "strictly neutral" uniforms. "In the past when they competed as neutrals, it was in the same colors and had the word Russia in it," Lyons said. "But there was absolute agreement that this would have to be strict neutrality. It can't be the colors, it can't be the name of the country. A stricter neutrality would have to be maintained." Olympic officials would also attempt to look into ways of vetting athletes to ensure they had never supported Russia's conflict in Ukraine, although Lyons acknowledged that might be "impossible" to determine. "The athletes are supposed to have not been supporting the actions of their government's actions against Ukraine," she said. "I don't know how they could possibly know. But there is an agreement that they would want to have athletes who have not actively supported the conflict." — AFP

Australia, Italy shatter relay world records

MELBOURNE: Emma McKeon led Australia to a new world record in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay on day one of the World Short Course Championships in Melbourne Tuesday, while Italy shattered the men's mark. The Australians - Mollie O'Callaghan, Madi Wilson, Meg Harris and McKeon - stopped the clock at 3mins 25.43secs to obliterate the old best of 3:26.53 set by the Netherlands in 2014.

The Americans led through the first 300m but pool queen McKeon - who won seven medals at the Tokyo Olympics last year, a feat no other female swimmer has achieved - reeled in Erika Brown and powered to the wall first. Canada took bronze "It's extra special doing it in front of a home crowd," said McKeon. "It's great for the sport." The Italian men were also firing with Alessandro Miressi, Paolo Conte Bonin, Leonardo Deplano and Thoma Cecon outpacing Australia to set a new world record of 3:02.75.

It bettered the previous best of 3:03.03 held by the United States since 2018. An electric Lani Pallister, meanwhile, claimed the women's 400m freestyle title for Australia after Chinese defending champion and world record holder Li Bingjie failed to show up. Li, who was the hot favorite, reportedly has a high fever and missed the heats, as did several other Chinese swimmers, including rising medley star Yu Yiting. Li shattered Australian Ariarne Titmus's short course record at her national championships in October, clocking 3mins 51.30secs.

In her absence, Pallister outpaced New Zealand's Erika Fairweather to touch in a personal best 3:55.04. "It's a dream come true," said Pallister. "My parents are in the stands and winning this first medal in front of a home crowd in Australia is special." Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Kate Douglass (2:02.12) won the women's 200m medley gold ahead of fellow American Alex Walsh, with Australia's Kaylee McKeown third and Canadian defending champion Sydney Pickrem fifth.

South African Matthew Sates (1:50.15) took out the men's 200m medley honours, hitting the wall ahead of the USA's Carson Foster. Japanese defending champion and top seed Daiya Seto could only manage fifth. "I genuinely don't know what to say. I'm so pleased with this swim," said Sates. Italian great Gregorio Paltrinieri capped an exceptional season by winning the 1500m in 14:16.88, adding to his long course world title in Budapest, where he set a new European record. — AFP



Emma McKeon

Duathlon competition to be on January 20th

KUWAIT: Players (of both genders) from Defense and Interior ministries, National Guard and Fire Force will participate for the first time (in Kuwait and Gulf) in the Duathlon - an athletic event consisting of a running leg - followed by a cycling leg and ends with another running leg race to be held on January 20th in Arafjan area.

Chairman of Kuwait Triathlon Club Rashid Al-Kandari said the first participation of the uniformed athletes in the third Duathlon race will enrich this type of sport and will create a large competition among the 500 participants, adding that there will be Gulf and disabled participants.



Rashid Al-Kandari

Tomoooh Sports Club delegation in Saudi for walkathon

KUWAIT: A delegation from Tomoooh Sports Club travelled to Saudi Arabia for the 11th walkathon Championship. The event was organized by Al-Oun Center in Jeddah from 13th to 16th December. The delegation is headed by the Club's secretary General Sadeeqa Al-Ansari and has 5 male and female athletes. Al-Ansari said Tomoooh Club is keen on participating in this event to give "the athletes an opportunity to interact and compete with others and to activate their social role and integrate them in the society".

She said the participation is within the joint cooperation protocol that was signed last year between Tomoooh and Oun center to exchange expertise and skills. Al-Ansari said the Walkathon competitions will include the 2,000 meters and 500 meters walking and running with actual and virtual presence of more than 1,000 athletes from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Oman, and Morocco.

Bantamweight king Inoue eyes next challenge

TOKYO: Japan's Naoya Inoue said he had not yet reached his "goal" after becoming the first undisputed bantamweight world champion in half a century Tuesday with a knock-out win over England's Paul Butler. The unbeaten Inoue, nicknamed "Monster", had to work hard to grind down a defensive Butler in Tokyo but finally dropped him to the canvas with a flurry of shots in the 11th round. The win saw Inoue achieve his long-held ambition of becoming the first undisputed bantamweight world champion since Panama's Enrique Pinder in 1972, adding Butler's WBO title to his own WBC, WBA and IBF belts.

But he warned that his rampage through the boxing world was not finished yet and that he will review his options before making his next move. "This is not the goal," said the 29-year-old Inoue, who is widely expected to make the step up to the super-bantamweight division. "Tonight was something great to see with the fans from where I was standing in the ring, but this is just a point along the way. "Do I feel satisfied? I am satisfied but I want to turn my mind to what comes next."

Inoue becomes only the ninth undisputed world champion since the four-belt era began in 2004, and the first in the bantamweight division. He took his record to 24-0, with 21 knock-outs, after finally managing to put away underdog Butler, who was fighting away from home for the first time. Inoue started the bout in characteristically ferocious fashion, landing several big shots in the opening round. He continued to punish Butler in the early stages but the Englishman held firm and refused to emerge from his defensive shell.

Super challenge

Inoue grew frustrated by Butler's approach and

'Legends': NZ's PM hails women Rugby WCup champions

WELLINGTON: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Tuesday hailed the New Zealand women's rugby team as "legends" during celebrations marking last month's World Cup triumph. The hosts staged a dramatic fight-back to win the final at Auckland's sold-out Eden Park 34-31 over England, who had been on a 30-match winning streak.



First International Women Handball tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Salwa Al-Sabah Club First International Women Handball tournament began yesterday at the Club's hall and will continue until December 18th. The event was organized in cooperation with Kuwait Handball Association which provided the referees to officiate the tournament. Teams from Oman, Kuwait (Fatayat Al-Oyoun and Salwa Al-Sabah), Egypt (Ahli) and Bahrain teams are participating.

The tournament is the first to be held in Kuwait with international participation and will enhance the technical level of the players as they prepare for championships abroad. Tournament patron, Chairwoman of Salwa Al-Sabah Club Sheikhha Naema Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said "having such tournament with teams who have vast experience in women's basketball will contribute to the development of the game and create an experienced generation of players."

Salwa Al-Sabah Club secretary Engr Rasha Al-Sayegh said the committees prepared well for the hosting of the tournament. Al-Sayegh lauded the role of Sheikhha Naema and her support. Salwa Al-Sabah Club coach Mohammad Mirza said his Club is ready for the tournament and players are expected to show good performance.



Sheikhha Naema Al-Ahmad

praised his opponent afterwards for his "thorough game plan". "He tried to get through the first half and then make it a contest from the middle of the fight onwards," said Inoue. "I expected that but he had a good plan to stop me. I had to change my own style and try to coax him out." Inoue finally broke down Butler's resistance with a juddering body shot in the 11th, then made sure he went down with a volley of punches.

Butler paid tribute to Inoue as a "very, very good fighter" and acknowledged that he "felt just short". "You can see the punches coming but sometimes you can't react quick enough to get out of the way, because he is that fast," said Butler, whose record dropped to 34-3. "That's what really good fighters do - they have good timing, good accuracy and good

speed, and sometimes you just can't get out of the way of that." Inoue said he had "no real impression" of Uzbekistan's Murodjon Ahkmaliev and American Stephen Fulton - two champions in the super-bantamweight division.

He said he would take time to decide whether to move up to their weight class but Butler warned that he would need to improve to succeed at that level. "He's quite ignorant in his defense," Butler said of Inoue, who became the first Japanese boxer to top Ring Magazine's prestigious pound-for-pound rankings as the best fighter across all weight divisions earlier this year. "He knows he's got punching power and he knows he's got a good chin himself. "Maybe when he goes up the weights, not that he'll come unstuck but I think he'll have a little bit more to think about." — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Naoya Inoue (left) and Britain's Paul Butler fight during their bantamweight title unification boxing bout in Tokyo on December 13, 2022. — AFP

A noisy crowd of about 1,000 people cheered the team following a reception hosted by Ardern at New Zealand's parliament in Wellington on Tuesday. Broadcaster Spark says 1.3 million New Zealanders - about a quarter of the population - tuned in to see the hosts win the final on November 12. "We will remember where we were when we watched those games during the World Cup but we will especially remember where we were for that final," Ardern told the crowd.

She quoted a sign she saw at Eden Park - "they're not girls, they're legends" - in thanking the squad for "making our national game everybody's game". "Thank you for showing girls that they can do anything," she added. "Thank you for being world champions." New

Zealand have won six of the nine editions of the women's Rugby World Cup but this was the first time they had lifted the title on home soil. They were defending champions.

Black Ferns centre Stacey Fluhler, who scored a try in the second-half fightback, said the World Cup win had given women's rugby a huge boost in New Zealand. "So many more people are talking about it," she told AFP. "I am going to be honest - when I was growing up I had no idea who the Black Ferns were. "But you see these kids out here now," she added, gesturing at the Wellington crowd. "They know exactly who we are. They know the players, they know it's a profession they can pursue. "It's given us much more exposure." — AFP

Sports

Reyna hits back over US World Cup bust-up

US seizes 55 websites for illegally live-streaming World Cup

NEW YORK: Gio Reyna has hit back at US coach Gregg Berhalter over comments regarding the Borussia Dortmund forward's behavior during the World Cup. Reyna, widely regarded as one of the most talented young players in US soccer, was hardly used by Berhalter in Qatar, where the Americans reached the last 16. The 20-year-old's limited involvement was the source of intense speculation, with Berhalter suggesting Reyna was not fully fit - a claim contradicted by the player.

Recent US media reports have lifted the lid on tensions between Reyna and Berhalter, revealing that the player was almost sent home because of his attitude during training sessions. Reyna was allowed to stay in the squad after being forced to apologize in front of his team-mates, the reports said. Without naming Reyna directly, Berhalter appeared to confirm the reports at a recent conference on "moral leadership" in New York.

Berhalter told the conference the US team staff had "a player that was clearly not meeting expectations on and off the field". He added: "We were ready to book a plane ticket home, that's how extreme it was." In a statement posted on Instagram, Reyna acknowledged that he had reacted badly after being informed by Berhalter shortly before the World Cup that he would have a "very limited" role at the tournament.

"I fully acknowledge that I let my emotions get the best of me and affect my training and behaviour for a few days," Reyna said. "I am disappointed that

there is continuing coverage of this matter... and extremely surprised that anyone on the US men's team staff would contribute to it." Reyna said Berhalter had always stated that issues within the team would remain "in-house". "I hoped not to comment on matters at the World Cup. It is my belief that things that happen in a team setting ought to remain private."

55 websites seized

In another development, fifty-five websites have been seized for illegally live-streaming matches from the World Cup in Qatar, the US Justice Department said Monday. The websites were shut down after a FIFA representative identified sites being used to distribute copyright-infringing content without the authorization of the soccer world governing body, the department said in a statement.

FIFA holds exclusive rights to the World Cup, which has reached the semi-final stage. "While many may believe that such websites do not constitute serious threats, the infringement upon rights holders of any intellectual property is a growing threat to our economic viability," said special agent James Harris of the Homeland Security Department. "The impact can be felt across multiple industries, and it can be the conduit to other forms of criminal activity," Harris said. The Justice Department did not identify the seized websites but said visitors to the sites would be redirected to another site for additional information. — AFP



MURCIA: In this file photo, Saudi Arabia's defender Saud Abdulhamid (top) vies with US midfielder Gio Reyna during the friendly football match between Saudi Arabia and United States at the Nueva Condomina stadium. — AFP

Neymar acquitted of corruption over Barcelona transfer

BARCELONA: A court in Spain on Tuesday acquitted Brazilian superstar Neymar of corruption charges related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013. The judges decided to acquit the nine defendants who were being prosecuted in this trial, including FC Barcelona, former club presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, Santos FC and Neymar's father, the court said in a statement. Neymar's high-profile trial got underway in mid-October in Barcelona, just a month before the start of the World Cup in Qatar where the 30-year-old-who is now at French champions Paris Saint Germain-and Brazil crashed

out after a penalty shootout against Croatia in the quarter finals.

Prosecutors had initially sought a two-year jail term and a 10-million-euro (\$10.5 million) fine for Neymar but in a surprise move they dropped corruption and fraud charges against all the accused at the end of October. Brazilian sports investment firm DIS, which owned 40 percent of Neymar's sporting rights when he was at Santos, filed a lawsuit in 2015 alleging it had been defrauded during the player's transfer to Barcelona. It claimed Neymar, Barcelona and the Brazilian club colluded to mask the true cost of his transfer thereby cheating it of its proper share of the player's transfer.

DIS also argued that it was not informed of the existence of an exclusivity contract in 2011 between Neymar and Barcelona. But Spanish prosecutors, which initially shared DIS' view, later said the firm's allegations were not based on "evidence". They concluded the case was a matter for civil rather than criminal justice. Even though



Brazilian superstar Neymar

prosecutors dropped their charges the case continued because the court was also considering a separate indictment filed by DIS as it is allowed by Spanish law. DIS is seeking to recover 35 million euros it claims it was cheated of. — AFP



PARIS: President of the French Rugby Federation (FFR) Bernard Laporte (right), accused of favoritism in awarding a shirt sponsor contract for the national side to a close friend, arrives at the correctional court in Paris on December 13, 2023, to hear for its decision. — AFP

Rugby supremo gets suspended sentence

PARIS: A French court on Tuesday sentenced French Rugby Federation (FFR) president Bernard Laporte to a two-year suspended term for corruption, less than a year before France hosts the World Cup. Laporte was convicted after the court ruled he showed favoritism in awarding a shirt sponsor contract for the national side to a close friend, Mohamed Altrad, the billionaire owner of Top 14 champions Montpellier. Laporte's lawyer said he would appeal. He was also banned from holding any rugby post for two years but this is suspended pending the appeal.

He is also vice-chairman of the sport's global governing body World Rugby. The court deemed Laporte ensured a series of marketing decisions favorable to Altrad - who was given an 18-month suspended sentence - and he benefited from a 180,000 euro (\$191,000) image licensing contract that was never actually carried out. At the trial's close in September, prosecutors said they were seeking a three-year prison sentence for Laporte, now 58, of which he should serve one behind bars, and the two others on probation.

According to the charges, which his defense said were "trumped up", Laporte carried out illegal influence-peddling and passive corruption, mostly for the benefit of Altrad. The two men's friendship and business links are at the heart of the case. It goes back to February 2017 when they signed a deal under which Laporte, head of the FFR, agreed to appear in Altrad group conferences, and sold his image reproduction rights, in return for 180,000 euros. But while that sum was indeed paid to Laporte, prosecutors claim that he never actually provided the services he signed up for.

Suspect deals

Laporte did, however, make several public statements backing Altrad and, in March 2017, signed a 1.8-million-euro deal with the businessman making his namesake firm the first-ever sponsor to appear on the French national team's jerseys. Even now, Altrad's logo features on the shirts thanks to a follow-up deal negotiated by Laporte in 2018 and which prosecutors say bears all the hallmarks of corruption. Laporte, formerly a highly successful coach who guided France twice to the World Cup semi-finals (2003 and 2007), is further accused of intervening with French rugby's federal disciplinary commission. The commission reduced a fine against an Altrad company to 20,000 euros - it was originally 70,000 euros - after a call from Laporte. While prosecutors see this and several more incidents as proof of illicit favoritism, Laporte himself has claimed there was no "cause-effect relationship". — AFP

Rawalpindi stadium penalized for 'below average' pitch

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium's pitch received a second successive demerit point after the lifeless track yielded 1,786 runs across four innings of the first Test between Pakistan and England last week. If a venue accumulates five demerits in five years it is suspended from hosting international cricket for 12 months.

"I found the pitch to be 'below average' as per the ICC guidelines," match referee Andy Pycroft was quoted as saying in an International Cricket Council statement released Tuesday. "It was a very flat pitch which gave almost no assistance to any type of bowler. That was the main reason why batters scored very fast and both sides posted huge totals."

The pitch was given a demerit point in March during the previous Test played at the venue when some 1,187 runs were scored for the loss of just 14 wickets as Pakistan and Australia meandered to a tame draw. In the first Pakistan-England Test that ended last Monday, the visitors piled up 657 runs in the first innings - including a world record opening day score of 506-4. Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja called the pitch "embarrassing", adding it was not a good advert for Test cricket.

Four England batters scored centuries on the



RAWALPINDI: England's Harry Brook falls on the pitch after playing a shot during the fourth day of the first cricket Test match between Pakistan and England at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, in Rawalpindi. — AFP

opening day, another record, while Pakistan responded with three of their own in a 579-run reply. Despite the flat pitch, a bold England declaration produced a thrilling finale with the visitors winning by 74 runs after dismissing the last Pakistan batter with just minutes left in the five-day match. England, playing a Test series in Pakistan for the first time since 2005, lead the three-match series 2-0. They also won the second Test in Multan by 26 runs on Monday, while the last Test begins in Karachi on Saturday. — AFP

"For more than five years, we've been working on the UGC as a short-formed, strategic and tactical golf tournament," Smith said in a statement released through the Australian PGA. "We are appealing to a wider fan base, giving people a new way to consume their golf, sport and entertainment, and we think that it's a great way to grow the game of golf." "We see this concept appealing to a younger audience because we will see a result in two hours of golf. We see parochial sports fans getting behind their own city team."

Along with Bangkok, Dubai and New York, others teams locked in will represent Delhi, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Shanghai, Seoul and Tokyo. "We know once this world-first format has some of the best players in the world showcasing it on TV next year, Ultra Golf Championship will become a part of all golf fans' life," said PGA Tour of Australia tournaments director Nick Dastey. "This is an event we are passionate about, and it continues to align with our innovation in the game in Australia."

It will debut at a yet-to-be-announced course next December with Smith planning to turn it into a global series, with "some really high net worth (individuals) behind it". "We are already in (negotiations) with five or six really key players from around the world," he told The Australian newspaper. "Again, the feedback from these guys has been amazing. They love it, they see it is different. "People around the world have seen what has happened with cricket and that short-form game. To be perfectly honest, we have modeled it off the Indian Premier League." — AFP

Ferrari name Vasseur as new F1 team principal

PARIS: Frenchman Frederic Vasseur was named team principal and general manager of Ferrari on Tuesday, tasked with ending Red Bull's dominance in Formula One. It will be the 54-year-old's first job with one of F1's heavyweights. "Ferrari NV today announced that Fred Vasseur will join Scuderia Ferrari on January 9 as team principal and general manager," said Ferrari in a statement.

Vasseur fills the void left by the resignation of Mattia Binotto last month after Ferrari failed to mount a serious and sustained challenge to Red Bull, despite a promising start to the campaign. Vasseur until recently held the position of CEO and team principal of Sauber Motorsport (currently Alfa Romeo F1 Team), having been there since 2017.

Sauber announced on Tuesday that former McLaren team principle Andreas Seidl would become their new CEO as of next month. "Together with the team Seidl will now work on the appointment of its new team principal, which will be communicated in due course," Sauber said. Prior to his spell at Sauber, Vasseur was the team principal of Renault in 2016. "We are delighted to welcome Fred Vasseur to Ferrari as our team principal," said Ferrari CEO Benedetto Vigna.

"Throughout his career he has successfully combined his technical strengths as a trained engineer with a consistent ability to bring out the best in his drivers and teams. "This approach and his leadership are what we need to push Ferrari forward with renewed energy." — AFP

France face tough exam from Africa giant-killers Morocco in WCup semi

France seek to become first team in 60 years to retain trophy

DOHA: Defending world champions and title favorites France face African history-makers Morocco on Wednesday in what is sure to be a high-octane World Cup semi-final at the Al Bayt stadium. France, who defeated England on Saturday, are looking to become the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy but they can expect fierce resistance from the surprise package of the tournament. Morocco's giant-killing run to the last four, the first time an African nation has made it this far, has electrified fans at home and delighted the Moroccan diaspora in Europe and beyond.

The Atlas Lions will again be roared on by thousands of passionate supporters in the stadium on the desert outskirts of Doha and can count on local Qatari support too as the first Arab team ever to make it to the last four. "It's not over yet, our ambition is to go to the final," former Morocco international Aziz Bouderbala, part of the 1986 World Cup team that reached the last 16, told AFP. "We are living a historic moment. We are among the four best teams in the world but it's fabulous, it's delirium."

The game will have added spice given France was Morocco's colonial power and hundreds of thousands of people with Moroccan roots live and work in the country. Morocco coach Walid Regragui, who was born near Paris and spent most of his playing career in the French league, believes his team have become the neutral's favorite. "We've become the team people feel positive towards at this World Cup," said Regragui. "We're showing the world what's possible with less talent, less quality,

less money, and what you can achieve with desire, hard work and belief."

France will have fewer fans in the stadium but will be supported in person by President Emmanuel Macron. On paper Didier Deschamps' team, packed with talent and experience, should progress with some comfort. But if the France coach, a World Cup winner as a player in 1998, is worried about complacency undoing his team, he need only remind his players how Morocco got to this stage.

In the round of 16, playing aggressive, hard-running football, Regragui's team knocked out 2010 winners Spain on penalties before eliminating highly rated Portugal, leaving Cristiano Ronaldo in tears. Morocco had earlier served notice of their intent by topping Group F, beating Belgium and Canada and drawing with 2018 runners-up Croatia. They have only conceded one goal in the entire competition but it will require another night of heroic defending if they are to keep out a potent France attack.

Mbappe threat

Kylian Mbappe, the tournament's top scorer with five goals, attacks from the left while Olivier Giroud, level with Lionel Messi on four goals, occupies the traditional centre-forward role. Antoine Griezmann has been outstanding in a deeper, creative role. France defeated Poland and England in their two knockout games and pre-tournament concerns about their injury losses-Paul Pogba, N'Golo Kante and Karim Benzema - have dissipated.

But the French will also have to be alert them-



DOHA: Morocco's coach Walid Regragui (center) attends a training session at the Al Duhail SC Stadium in Doha. —AFP

selves to Morocco's swift counter-attacks, with Chelsea winger Hakim Ziyech on the right flank and Sevilla forward Youssef En-Nesyri looking to exploit weaknesses in Deschamps' back line. Morocco's willingness to run with the ball and then harry to retrieve should make for a high-energy game.

"Obviously we know they are having an exceptional World Cup and have beaten some big nations, so it is a match we will be taking seriously," said France right-back Jules Kounde. "They are no longer a surprise package, they deserve to be here. We hope to make things difficult for them and qualify." — AFP



AL-RAYYAN: Croatia's goalkeeper #01 Dominik Livakovic saves a shot by Brazil's forward #21 Rodrygo during penalty shoot-out in the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between Croatia and Brazil. —AFP

Dinamo Zagreb - cradle of Croatia's WCup team

ZAGREB: Three Dinamo Zagreb players, including penalty shootout king Dominik Livakovic, have gone from playing in front of several thousand fans in a neglected stadium to the brink of the World Cup final. As Croatia prepare to face Argentina in Tuesday's first semi-final, the outstanding Livakovic as well as his Dinamo teammates Bruno Petkovic and Mislav Orsic can all expect to play a key role.

The influence of Dinamo on the current team, and the one that reached the World Cup final four years ago, cannot be overstated - eight other players in the squad in Qatar, including Croatia's greatest ever player Luka Modric, were developed by the club. Goalkeeper Livakovic has been a national hero ever since he saved three penalties in the last-16 shootout against Japan. "King Livi", as Croatian

media call him, cemented that status after Croatia's 4-2 win over Brazil on penalties in the quarter-final, when he saved Rodrygo's attempt.

Substitute Petkovic scored in extra time from a cross supplied by his clubmate Orsic to force the 1-1 draw against Brazil that led to that penalty drama. The Jutarnji List daily praised the "trio who earn their bread in Croatian league stadiums, playing often in an obscure atmosphere in front of one or two thousand fans". While the nation of 3.9 million people has enjoyed success internationally, at home it is struggling with hooliganism, corruption and poor infrastructure.

A stand of Dinamo's Maksimir stadium has been closed since March 2020, when it was damaged by a powerful earthquake that hit Zagreb. Since Croatia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the club has dominated Croatian football, winning 23 national championships and 16 cups. Since 2006, Dinamo have failed to win the title just once, when Rijeka took the honors in 2017. "Dinamo as a word symbolizes force, power. And Dinamo Zagreb is the source of the energy of Croatia's squad," prominent Croatian sports journalist Dean Bauer told AFP. —AFP

Defiant and witty, Morocco's coach wants more history

DOHA: Never mind the fireworks and deafening pop music that await at Al Bayt stadium - the real pre-match show for the World Cup semi-final between Morocco and France was provided on Tuesday by Walid Regragui. The 47-year-old coach of the first African and first Arab team to reach the last four of the World Cup took full advantage of the chance to address the world's football press in a Doha auditorium, the day before the clash with Didier Deschamps' team. The Moroccan exuded pride, optimism, defiance and humor in a refreshing contrast to the usual drone of non-committal cliches that coaches ritually role out before big games.

He mocked the game's modern focus on possession, ridiculed the 'Expected Goals' stats and laughed in the face of those who wrote of his team before they eliminated Spain and Portugal. But along with the quickfire responses and talking points, there was a defiant refusal to play the role of the satisfied minnow and an evidently burning belief that his team can beat France and then do it again against Argentina or Croatia in Sunday's final.

"We want to win the World Cup," he said. "It's not just words, we have to go further, maybe we won't have another opportunity," he said. "We are not the favorites but we are confident - maybe that makes me mad, crazy? A bit of crazy can be good," he said with a grin. Having already dubbed his team as "the Rocky Balboa of this World Cup" after they knocked out Portugal in the quarter-finals, Regragui was not pulling any punches.

Asked whether his team will continue in the same style, which has seen opponents enjoy plenty of possession, he was unapologetic about his team's approach. "We will play to our strengths... this idea of possession, it is amazing how football journalists love these figures about 60-70% possession, but it is no good if there are only two shots on goal," he said, perhaps recalling Spain's 77% possession and one shot on target against his team. "The expected



Morocco's coach Walid Regragui

goals too... we should have won, we had 4% expected goals'....Well, we are here to win, that's all," he said. "If France give us possession, we will take it but I don't think they will. So we will try to stop them," he added. — AFP

Today's match on TV

FIFA World Cup 2022	
France v Morocco	22:00
Alkass EXTRA TWO HD	
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
beIN 4K HDR	
Alkass EXTRA One HD	
beIN Sports HD	
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
BBC One	
Alkass One HD	
beIN Sports 2 FR	
beIN Sports Connect	

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ABUZAR SAMIM AHMAD ANSARI holder of Indian Passport No. T7644912 having permanent address Maharashtra, India # 421302, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: ABUZAR SHAMIM AKHTAR and Surname: ANSARI. (C#2817) - 14-12-2022

I, ABDUL (Current name in passport), holder of Indian National

Passport Number S3692812 having permanent address house no. 20 TRIPOLLOYA GATE KOTAWALA BAG RATLAM MADHYA PRADESH PIN CODE 457001 India residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given Name ABDUL KADAR and Sumame ALOT WALA. (C#2815) - 13-12-2022

I, JAVEED CHPPALI, holder of Passport No. V9396560, do hereby change my name to JAVEED (as Given name) CHAPPALLI (as Surname) for all purposes. I will

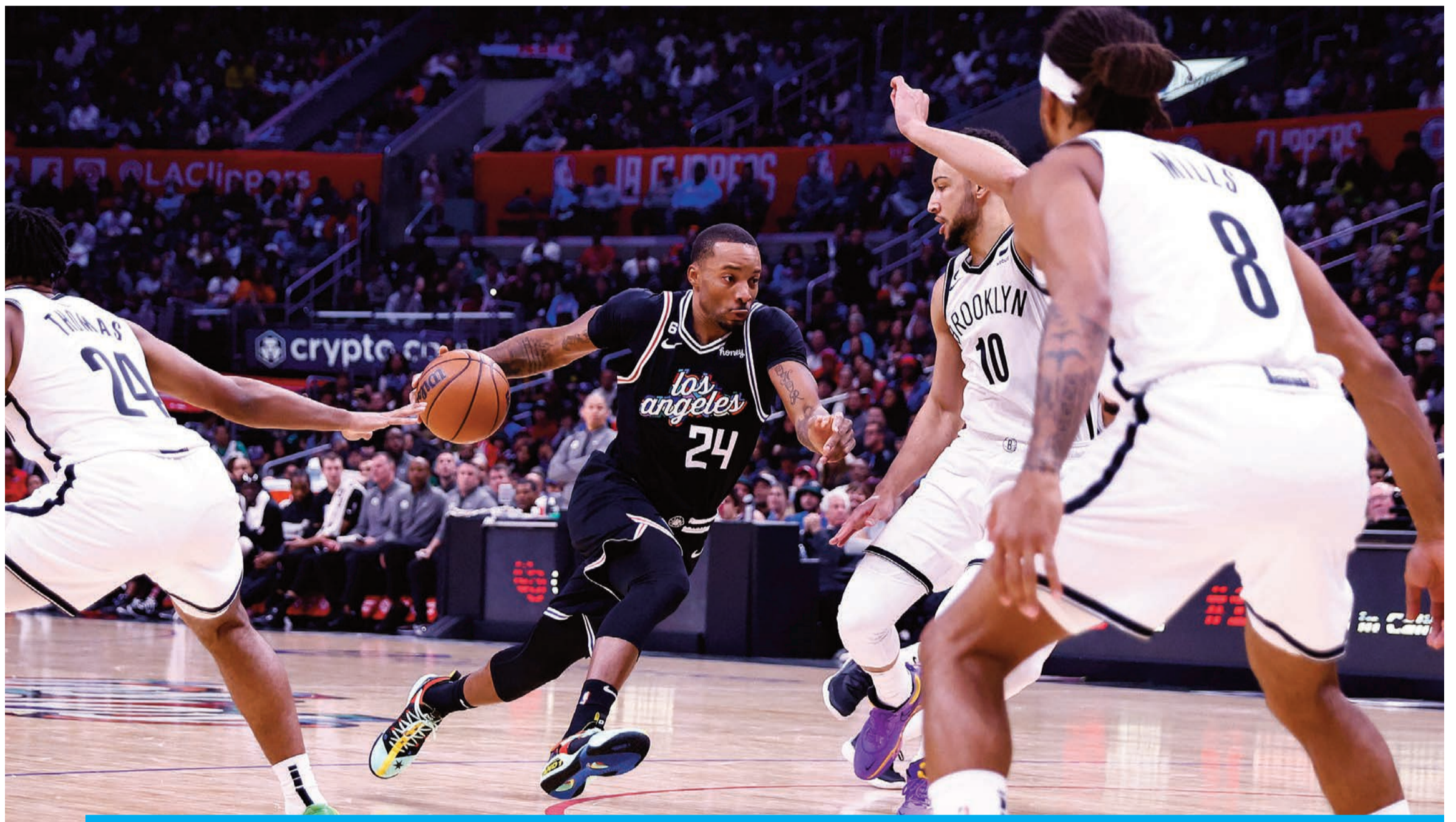
henceforth be known in the name JAVEED CHAPPALLI and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2812)

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

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Clippers humiliate Celtics; Nets cruise past Wizards

Memphis Grizzlies down Atlanta Hawks



LOS ANGELES: Norman Powell #24 of the LA Clippers in the second half at Crypto.com Arena on November 12, 2022 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Clippers dealt the Boston Celtics another setback Monday, beating the top team in the NBA in decisive style, 113-93. Paul George scored 26 points and Kawhi Leonard scored a season high of 25 points with nine rebounds and six assists as the injury-plagued Clippers showed how good they can be at full strength. Jalen Brown scored 21 points and Jayson Tatum added 20 with 11 rebounds for the Celtics, who were coming off a 123-107 loss to the NBA champion Golden State Warriors in an NBA Finals rematch on Saturday.

It's the first time since October that the Celtics have dropped two games in a row, their league-best record falling to 21-7. The Clippers dialed in defensively on the Celtics' dangerous scorers, limiting Tatum to four-of-12 shooting in the first half as Los Angeles took a 56-47 lead at the break. Tatum and Brown combined for just three three-pointers in 14 attempts as the Celtics made just nine of 39 from beyond the arc.

Leonard said the strong defensive display was "a

group effort by everybody. "Being locked in to their plays, making sure that Tatum is getting double-teamed and Brown is seeing a lot of hands when he shoots the basketball, that's what it took." Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said he thought the Celtics "lost our poise" in the third quarter, which Leonard and George started on a scoring tear. "But the margin for error is small," Mazzulla said. "When you get great looks and you don't make them you have to find other ways to win."

Elsewhere, the Brooklyn Nets cruised to their fourth straight victory as Kevin Durant's 30 points fueled a 112-100 win over the Wizards in Washington. The Nets, who battled through early season struggles that saw coach Steve Nash sacked then dealt with the suspension of Kyrie Irving in an anti-Semitism row, have now won eight of their last nine games. "We're building something," Durant said. "We've got to keep fine-tuning."

On Monday, the Nets led by double digits for much of the second half, holding the Wizards to 45 points after the interval. Durant added nine

rebounds and six assists and Irving added 24 points as the Nets dealt the Wizards a seventh straight defeat. Will Barton scored 22 points off the bench to lead the Wizards, who had 20 points apiece from Kristaps Porzingis and Kyle Kuzma. The Nets trail Cleveland by just half a game for third place in the East after the Cavaliers were up-ended by Western Conference stragglers San Antonio 112-111.

Josh Richardson scored 24 points to lead the Spurs, who were up by 10 with 4:35 to play and held on despite a Cavs rally that cut the deficit to two on Donovan Mitchell's putback basket with 53 seconds remaining. Evan Mobley added a free throw that pulled Cleveland within one with 37.9 seconds left. But Keldon Johnson blocked a shot by Mitchell, Cleveland's Darius Garland missed a three-pointer and Spurs reserve Devin Vassell came up with a steal to seal the victory.

Grizzlies down Hawks

The injury absence of Ja Morant was no problem for the Memphis Grizzlies, who roared to a 128-103

home victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Tyus Jones scored 22 points and Jaren Jackson delivered 15 points, seven rebounds and a career-high eight blocked shots - which tied the Grizzlies' franchise single-game record shared by Marc Gasol, Pau Gasol and Stromile Swift. The Grizzlies won their sixth straight and moved within half a game of the New Orleans Pelicans atop the Western Conference.

In Dallas, Luka Dončić scored 38 points and pulled down 11 rebounds in the Mavericks' 121-114 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder. Tim Hardaway Jr added 20 points for the Mavericks, who drained 22 three-pointers and withstood a 42-point performance from Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander to snap a two-game losing streak. In Portland, Damian Lillard drilled 11 three-pointers on the way to 38 points in the Trail Blazers' 133-112 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Lillard might have challenged the single-game record of 14 three-pointers, held by Golden State's Klay Thompson, but he sat out the fourth quarter with the game in hand. — AFP

Morocco wins Africa support

TUNIS: His country is in diplomatic crisis with Morocco, but that's not stopping Tunisian Wissam Sultani supporting the first ever Arab or African team to reach a football World Cup semi-final. "There's no politics on the pitch. Supporting an Arab country, whichever one, is a duty when it gets to this stage of a tournament," said Sultani, a 41-year-old greengrocer in Tunis, capital of the North African nation. "Football brings people together, but politics divides them." Morocco's "Lions of the Atlas", who beat Portugal on Saturday to reach the final four, will face former colonial power France on Wednesday.

They will have the backing of many fans across Africa and the Arab world. Three African teams-Cameroon, Ghana and Senegal-have made it to the quarter-finals since 1990, but Morocco is the first ever to reach the semis. Sultani is one of many Tunisians supporting the team-with little regard for a diplomatic stand-off between their two governments over the disputed Western Sahara territory. Morocco withdrew its ambassador from Tunis in August after Tunisian President Kais Saïed welcomed the head of the Polisario Front, which seeks independence for the Western Sahara.

Morocco, which called Saïed's act "hostile", sees the mineral-rich desert region as a sovereign part of its own territory. "Political problems end when the match starts," said Tunis lemon merchant Hamza



DOHA: Morocco supporters hold a replica of the World Cup trophy as they cheer ahead of the start of the Qatar 2022 World Cup at the Al-Thumama Stadium in Doha. — AFP

Ayari, aged 35. "What's important is to see the Arab team win". In a nearby Tunis street, a sports shop plays Moroccan folk songs to attract customers, and the red jersey of the Moroccan team is the highlight of the display. Tunisia's media hailed the Moroccan victory over Portugal in glowing terms. "The kingdom of courage has struck again by taking Portugal out after Spain," the La Presse newspaper wrote.

Even in the kingdom's arch-rival Algeria-which failed to qualify for the tournament-many have celebrated the Moroccan wins. Official media has remained silent, but the private press has heaped praise on the team. "The Atlas Lions were able to count on an iron defense to reach the last four. Solidity and efficiency, the ingredients for success," Algeria's Reporters newspaper wrote. — AFP

Murray wounded in Cardinals' NFL loss to Patriots

LOS ANGELES: The New England Patriots kept themselves in the NFL playoff picture with a 27-13 victory on Monday over the Arizona Cardinals, who lost quarterback Kyler Murray to injury on their opening drive. Murray was carted off the field with a knee injury and was visibly upset after going down without contact on the third play from scrimmage, his right leg buckling beneath him.

He was to have an MRI exam on Tuesday to confirm the extent of the injury, which made a disappointing season worse for the Cardinals, who fell to 4-9 with the defeat. "It doesn't look good," Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury said. "But we'll know more in the morning. It's tough, no doubt," Kingsbury said. "You see teams go through it every week but you lose your starter on third play of the game, non-contact, it's just tough to watch. I've never seen him in that type of shape," Kingsbury added. "So I assumed it wasn't good."

New England improved to 7-6 to remain in the hunt for a wild card berth. The Patriots defense had six sacks and an interception, forcing one fumble and coming up with four fourth-down stops and one touchdown. Josh Uche sacked Cardinals backup quarterback Colt McCoy three times. Linebacker Raekwon McMillan gave the Patriots a 20-13 lead



GLENDALE: Kyler Murray #1 of the Arizona Cardinals is carted off the field after being injured against the New England Patriots during the first quarter of the game at State Farm Stadium on December 12, 2022. — AFP

when he collected DeAndre Hopkins's fumble and returned it 23 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter.

Patriots quarterback Mac Jones connected on 24 of 35 passes for 235 yards and an interception and rookie running back Pierre Strong rushed for 70 yards and a TD. "Shout out to the defense," Jones said. "Had some great stops. We're still working through it but we came here to win and we got the 'W.'" With that in the books, Jones said, a relative lack of offensive production was beside the point. "We came here, we just wanted to win the game. That's all we cared about," he said. "To do that you've got to execute on a play-by-play basis, and we did that pretty well." — AFP