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JAMADA ALTHANI 2, 1444 AH
MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022

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22 dead as US megastorm cuts power, snarls travel

Amir sends condolences to Biden • Travelers stranded, residents trapped



CHARLESTON, South Carolina: Ice adorns a fountain on Dec 24, 2022, as temperatures were forecast to reach a high of 0° C. —AFP

NEW YORK: More than 200,000 Americans woke up without power on Christmas morning as a days-long winter megastorm that hammered several eastern US states Sunday left more than 20 people dead. The extreme weather, a mix of prolonged blizzards and historic cold, plunged wind chill temperatures in all 48 contiguous US states below freezing this weekend, stranded holiday travelers with thousands of flights cancelled and trapped residents in ice- and snow-encrusted homes.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable of condolences to US President Joe Biden, expressing sincerest condolences over the victims of the winter storm sweeping across the country and striking many states. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Twenty-two weather-related deaths have been confirmed across eight states, including at least seven fatalities in western New York, where ferocious snows, relentless winds and deep freezes have plunged Buffalo and surrounding towns into crisis. While large swathes of the country have begun shoveling out from the massive storm and temperatures in some locations were returning to seasonal normality, Buffalo remained in the grips of "a major

disaster", with emergency responders unable to reach several high-impact areas, a senior official said early Sunday.

"We do have seven confirmed deaths at this point as a result of the storm in Erie County. There may be more," county executive Mark Poloncarz told reporters. He described ferocious conditions, with hours-long whiteouts and bodies discovered in cars and under snowbanks in a region where Governor Kathy Hochul deployed the National Guard to help with rescues. "It was as bad as anyone has ever seen it," Poloncarz said.

The National Weather Service warned that blizzard conditions in the Great Lakes region caused by lake-effect snow would continue on Christmas Day, with "additional snow accumulations of 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 meters) through tonight." One couple in Buffalo, which sits across the border from Canada, told AFP Saturday that with the roads completely impassible, they would not be making a 10-minute drive to see their family for Christmas. "It's tough because the conditions are just so bad... a lot of fire departments aren't even sending out trucks for calls," said 40-year-old Rebecca Bortolin.

A broader travel nightmare was in full effect for millions. The "bomb cyclone" storm, one of the fiercest in decades, forced the cancellation of more

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News in brief

Cold wave forecast in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Climate expert Bader Al-Amirah said Kuwait is about to experience a harsh cold wave with subzero temperatures due to Siberian winds in the northwestern deserts of Kuwait. "Temperatures in the rest of Kuwait's coastal and residential areas will experience lows ranging between 3-7 Celsius during late-night hours, with highs around 14 degrees Celsius," Amirah said.

Oil ministry gets judicial powers

KUWAIT: The oil ministry said on Sunday it has assigned judicial powers to seven members of its staff in a bid to clamp down on environmental violations, a result of a deal it signed with the country's environmental body. The move has been completed after seven of the ministry's personnel were deemed "qualified" to carry out these duties "for the first time ever", Undersecretary Nimr Al-Sabah said. — KUNA

Mol warns against Anydesk app

KUWAIT: The interior ministry warned on Sunday against downloading and using the AnyDesk application due to the security threat posed by the program. In a press release, the ministry revealed many cases of fraud and theft were reported after using the app, which allows any person to gain remote access to phones and computers. The ministry also warned against sharing one-time password (OTP) messages, personal or bank information with suspicious individuals and entities. — KUNA

Recommendation to privatize schools rejected by govt

KUWAIT: Sources revealed that the government, represented by the education ministry, has rejected recommendations by an international consultant on

the roadmap for the future and the needs of the next 50 years to build scientific programs for schools and public education in Kuwait. "The recommendation involved the total privatization of all schools in Kuwait under the supervision of the government in terms of organization, regulation, performance and accountability. But it was met by government refusal because it does not believe that it fits the Kuwaiti society and there are suspicions that it could be unconstitutional," sources told Kuwait Times.

"The recommendation from the team showed this

idea is implemented in many countries, and some countries of the GCC have already began procedures towards this aim," sources said, pointing out that it could save Kuwait a lot of money spent on education without reaching decent educational outcomes, as evident by the outcomes of private education compared to public education.

"The education ministry's budget has exceeded KD 2 billion and is expected to double over the next few years. However, performance is generally

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Pope calls to end 'senseless' Ukraine war

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday appealed for an end to the "senseless" war in Ukraine, in his traditional Christmas Day message broadcast around the world. The head of the Catholic Church addressed thousands of people gathered in St Peter's Square, some of them holding Ukrainian flags, before delivering the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing ("to the city and the world").

A call to peace is traditionally the focus of the pope's message at Christmas, the holiday marking the birth of Christ, which he delivers from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica and is broadcast live worldwide. The 86-year-old on Sunday first turned to "our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who are experiencing this Christmas in the dark and cold, far from their homes".

"May the Lord inspire us to offer concrete gestures of solidarity to assist all those who are suffering, and may he enlighten the minds of those who have the power to silence the thunder of weapons and put an immediate end to this senseless war!" he said.

Continued on Page 6



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis delivers his Christmas 'Urbi et Orbi' blessing from a balcony overlooking St Peter's Square on Dec 25, 2022. — AFP

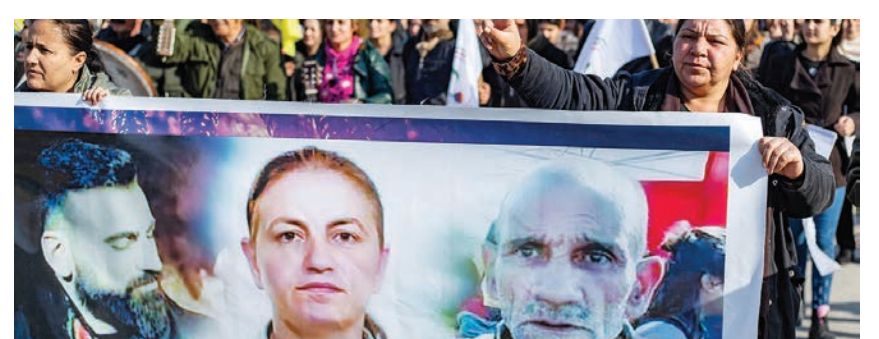
Paris shooter admits hatred of foreigners

PARIS: A French man suspected of killing three Kurds in a Paris shooting has confessed to a "pathological" hatred for foreigners, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau said on Sunday. The 69-year-old man was removed from custody for health reasons on Saturday and taken to a police psy-

chiatric facility. Beccau said in a statement that the suspect was "depressive" and "suicidal" and said he "wanted to kill foreigners" after a burglary in his home in 2016.

The shooting at a Kurdish cultural center and a nearby hairdressing salon on Friday sparked panic in the city's bustling 10th district, home to several shops and restaurants and a large Kurdish population. Three others were wounded in the attack but none are in a life-threatening condition, with one now out of hospital, the prosecutor said on Sunday.

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HASAKEH, Syria: Syrian Kurds hold a banner featuring photos of three victims during a protest on Dec 25, 2022 in response to a deadly attack targeting members of the community in Paris. — AFP



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Social media can be used to raise drug abuse awareness

Platforms have become a double-edged sword

KUWAIT: Obviously, social media platforms have become a double-edged sword as they either work towards ridding the world of drug addiction, or spark curiosity in the minds of the young to dabble in the world of narcotics. Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Psychology Professor at Kuwait University, Dr Amthal Al-Huwaileh believed that social media platforms could be an asset when promoting campaigns that raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse, and highlighting treatment options for those afflicted with it.

She further underscored importance of utilizing platforms to engage with the young, and encourage addicts to reach out for help, assuring them that no legal action would be taken against them. Rather, she maintained, they could be helped professionally and without experiencing relevant side effects only to withdrawal symptoms. Dr Al-Huwaileh believed it was quite necessary to put policies in place for websites and mobile apps those afflicted with addiction can turn to, to deal with the issue in a scientific, legal and confidential manner, according to the work ethic of professionals.

For his part, Chief of Public Relations Department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Khaled Al-Zaid, said that while there are social media sites with



Dr Amthal Al-Huwaileh



Khaled Al-Zaid

valuable educational material that could polish the skillsets of the young, other sites are the opposite as they distract them, ruining their attention span, and subjecting them to bullying and rumors. Al-Zaid indicated that to avoid the harmful impact of this matter, people should be well acquainted with dangers and negative effects of the Internet, in addition to the importance of cybersecurity and parents' involvement. —KUNA



Governments, workers, businessmen must seek dialogue, development

KUWAIT: Governments, businessmen, workers must seek development and mutual dialogue to boost the region's economies and safeguard laborers rights, said a top Arab Labor Organization (ALO) official on Sunday. On sideline of the ALO forum, held on December 25-26, the organization's Director General Fayed Al-Mutairi revealed that the ALO was embarking on its annual report concerning laborers and their issues.

He noted that the ALO, celebrating its 55th anniversary, would be collaborating with several

entities in the region to establish a fund for the unemployed on the Arab level. On his part, Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF) chairman Ahmad Al-Enizi indicated that the forum had touched on the formation of a GCC labor union to be headed by Saudi Arabia, setting a committee to deliver this goal.

The KTUF had and will continue to exchange expertise with other labor entities, he affirmed, adding that for instance, the Kuwaiti federation was very keen on benefiting from the Saudi experience in forming a laborers court. He noted that the KTUF was eager to increasing cooperation with business owners to increase productivity as well as safeguarding the rights of laborers. On the sideline of the forum, the Saudi national committee for laborers and the ALO signed a cooperation agreement to exchange expertise in with labor.

The ALO is the first Specialized Arab Organization concerned with labor affairs and employment issues on National Level. It was established in 1965, as one of the specialized organizations affiliated with the League of Arab States. ALO is believing in the importance of concerted tripartite in the Arab world, as a need and a core pillar for Arab unity and the recognition that cooperation in the field of employment is the best guarantee for the Arab human rights in decent life.

Founded on social justice, and the process of effective cooperation for developing Arab society on solid and sound foundations, ALO has a unique tripartite structure in the Arab world and gives an opportunity to (workers, employers and governments of 21 Arab countries) to freely debate, elaborate and shape labor standards, policies and programs.—Agencies

News in brief

Cassation court upholds imprisonment of sheikh

KUWAIT: The cassation court has upheld the court of appeal's decision to imprison a sheikh who had embezzled \$238 million from the Kuwait investment office in London for a period of five years and a fine of \$40 million. The appeal ruling was upheld because the accused did not appear before the cassation court, which is one of the conditions for accepting an appeal. The court had indicated that punishment alone does not suffice in combating crime, even if it achieves deterrence, but the activation of penalties requires measures taken by the state to prevent infringements on public money, so it imposes its control by effective means.

Baitak, gold and jewelry exhibitions conclude

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Fair announced concluding the Building and Construction Exhibition "Baitak" and the 18th International Gold and Jewelry Exhibition on Sunday with significant participation from visitors and companies. In a press statement, the fair's CEO of marketing and sales operations Basma Al-Duhaim noted that the two exhibitions are among the most important economic events in Kuwait. She added that the fair is ready to host different exhibitions and conferences in the upcoming period, as well as facilitating procedures for local and foreign companies. Kuwait International Fair is the country's largest exhibition center, established in 1971 in Mishrif. It consists of several large halls, hosting over 45 exhibitions and events every year.

Ministry of Commerce pays for unused leaves

KUWAIT: The Commerce Ministry has paid its employees for their unused annual leaves, one of the first ministries to start the process. "The commerce ministry paid 1,200 employees out of a total of 4,000 employees who requested to cash their annual leave. The cost is estimated to be around KD 4 million," sources told Kuwait Times. In other news, the electricity, water and public works ministries have started the process by sending a text message to employees who asked to cash their leaves, based on seniority. The ministries will begin crediting the accounts of 400 to 500 employees daily.

Ahmadi organizes fourth 'loyalty day for disabled'

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled has sponsored the fourth day for loyalty for people of disabilities organized by the governorate in cooperation with the public authority for disability affairs and Kuwait National Petroleum Company, among others. Sheikh Fawaz expressed, while touring the event of 25 public and private participants, his admiration on the variety of creative, skilled, handmade and artistic as well as traditional products. Moreover, he expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the political leadership represented by their highnesses the Amir, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, whose guidance proudly witnessed local achievements.

Director of disability affairs Hanadi Al-Mubailish has assured the importance of such events as they contribute to the cohesion of disabled individuals with the society, thanking the Ahmadi governorate for organizing such humanitarian events. Vice CEO of KNPC and official spokesperson Ghanem Al-Otaibi expressed his happiness that KNPC is able to contribute to the event, assuring they will always cooperate to sponsor such events as part of their social responsibility towards disabled individuals.

"KNPC's contribution to the activities today includes setting up a section to introduce the participants to the tasks and roles of the company and distributing its brochures and publications, in addition to organizing workshops, providing a number of wheelchairs for those who need them, and awarding prizes to the winners of competitions and recreational activities, as well as providing snacks to participants throughout the day," Otaibi added.



Fayis Asraf Ali, arrives in Kuwait on Saturday as part of a solo cycle expedition from India to London.



Pedaling his way to UK, Indian cyclist enters Kuwait

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Meet Fayis Asraf Ali, a young engineer from Kerala, who arrived in Kuwait on Saturday as part of a solo cycling trip from India to London. Pedaling his way through 35 countries in two continents and traveling around 30,000 kilometers over a period of 450 days, Ali is expected to cover around 1,000 destinations during the trip.

"Essentially, it is a goodwill journey to generate awareness, particularly among the youth, about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle," Ali told Kuwait Times on Sunday. He drew inspiration to embark on this herculean global journey from his previous experience, when he undertook a solo cycling

tour that took him to Singapore in 2019. The present trip also seeks to send out a message to the society on the need to protect the rights of children and encourage and inspire youths to undertake challenging tasks in their lives to realize their ambitious goals, Ali pointed out. With this trip, Ali also wants to share a message of peace in a world that is battered by war and conflicts.

As part of the journey, Ali has been meeting with children and youth groups in schools, universities and community centers on topics related to health, nutrition and lifestyle across the countries in which the expedition passes through. Around 500 schools and 35 universities are expected to be covered during the trip.

"Unfortunately, this is vacation time in Kuwait now, and therefore, interactive sessions with school students in Kuwait may be difficult," Ali said. The journey was flagged from Trivandrum by Kerala education minister on Aug 15. In the Middle East, Ali travelled through Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain before reaching Kuwait. He will pedal through Iraq and Iran before entering Europe, and the journey will culminate in the UK on March 24.



> Livestock salesman offers sheep before Eid al-Adha (2018).

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Local

1.165 million Kuwaitis 'are lactose intolerant'

82 percent of citizens can't digest lactose in dairy products

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Consultant of Internal Diseases, Digestive System and Liver Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash said according to a study she prepared, 82 percent of Kuwaitis, or nearly 1.165 million citizens, are lactose intolerant, which means they cannot digest lactose in dairy products. Dr Hashash said the study was conducted with patients who suffer from indigestion, flatulence, gas, change of toilet habits, constipation and diarrhea by taking a biopsy from the small intestine while having an endoscopy, then testing for the lactase enzyme.

"Under normal circumstances, lactase turns lactose into two simple sugars - glucose and galactose, and they are absorbed through the small intestine's lining into the blood stream. In case of shortage of lactase, the lactose in food goes into the colon instead of being processed and absorbed in the small intestine. The undigested lactose reacts with natural flora in the colon

and causes symptoms of lactose intolerance," she said.

Dr Hashash said there are several types of lactose intolerance, including primary lactose intolerance, which is most common, as patients start their lives by producing enough lactase. Then when children replace milk with other foods, the amount of lactase goes down naturally, but it normally remains high enough to digest the amount of milk available in the food of grownup individuals. She said in case of primary lactose intolerance, lactase production drops severely with maturity, making digestion of dairy products difficult.

Dr Hashash said secondary lactose intolerance occurs when the small intestine produces lesser lactase following an illness or surgery such as intestinal infection, celiac disease, Crohn's disease and overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine. She said there are risk factors that make the person more likely to have lactose intolerance, including advanced age, ethnicity, premature birth, small intestine dis-

eases, certain medicines and cancer treatments.

Dr Hashash said lactose forms around 20 percent of medicine formulae, such as contraceptive tablets, and indigestion pills, so the patient should ask the doctor about medicines that have lactose. Treatment of lactose intolerance depends on the severity of symptoms and includes reducing the amount of milk and dairy products, eating products that have lesser amounts of lactose or taking alternative products such as soy and almond milk. Those who are lactose intolerant should look for other sources to compensate for calcium and vitamin D such as almonds, sardines, tuna, salmon and soy products.



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash

Messi's bisht

In my view

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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The Arabian Gulf countries suffered in the '60s from some revolutionists, leftists and Arab progressives who considered the ruling system in the Gulf regressive. Some succeeded with their media apparatus in fixing this negative image about the Gulf and its people from the minds of the rest of the Arab people. This view only diminished at the start of the '70s by the failure of the revolutionary experiences in northern Arab countries and increased the need for economic support, the majority of which was coming from the Gulf.

That period got over, and the struggle calmed down, and the Gulf people succeeded in developing their countries economically and scientifically, while continuing with the same traditional ruling system and its slow development to allow for more popular participation. This success contributed to close the gap and succeeded in reducing the tension between the people of the Arab world. Only some losing voices remained, driven by negative human feelings in the form of grudges and envy, but they did not have any effect on the scene.

The surprise which we did not take into consideration in the 2000s is that these old negative feelings were adopted by the European West, particularly Britain and Germany. Western countries began with the same old Arab path, being hostile to Arab Gulf culture and accusing it of being regressive. They issued statements wrapped with human rights to direct accusations to use according to their views and not according to human rights, the rights of the human being who is innocent from their shameful behaviors.

When Qatar won the right to organize the World Cup, a few Arabs and many Europeans counted on the failure of the event. But Qatar's major success in organizing the World Cup rekindled the old negative feelings in the hearts of that minority of our Arab brothers with the help of some populists who live among us and always aim at dividing the Arab nation, which is the beating heart of Islam.

But thank God there were huge positive currents in our nation, especially with the unity of sport lovers among Arabs and their happiness towards Morocco's advances - that made negative voices barely heard. The noises being heard today are coming from Europe, as the English, who claim to be the first to introduce football, boycotted the World Cup in the media in their country, and those who visited or live in London said advertisements and media interest there is very weak compared to previous World Cups.

Germany attempted through some of its influencers to disturb the serenity of the World Cup with the homosexuality issue, which to them became more important than the millions of hungry people, millions of those deprived of education and millions of homeless in their own countries. The wave of fighting the World Cup escalated with many arguments, headed with a disappointing question: How the World Cup was a resounding success?!

Finally, the bisht the Argentine captain Messi wore, which was given to him by Sheikh Tamim of Qatar, became a new title for the hatred campaign in the German and British media. The World Cup success, development of Gulf countries, the jealousy of few of our brothers and envy of Europe, all are good signs in a way that we are still at its beginning.

The road to restoring the cultural, scientific and intellectual abilities to be a part of the Arab nation became a new beacon in the march of exchanging culture among the nation. I hope the Arab nation becomes aware of this lesson, and for this success to be a symbol of the return of confidence, adopt relying on each other, and know the truth of who is around us and their goals. I hope this becomes the best lesson of this outstanding World Cup.

Rise in the number of women reporting abuses in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recently witnessed a marked rise in the number of women turning to security and human rights authorities to enforce their rights due to the violence they face. In Kuwait, 71 percent of women have experienced physical abuse, 81 percent have experienced sexual abuse, 89 percent have experienced psychological abuse, 75 percent have experienced violence because of cultural or religious reasons and 65 percent of women were battered, facing severe abuse.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Mohammad Al-Jasem, a lawyer and Interpol-accredited expert in international law enforcement cooperation, said there is no distinction between men and women in law, as assault is an assault and a crime. Jasem revealed that the problem with filing a case by the abused person is that it has to be filed by themselves. "The person concerned must file her case. There are many people who want to help abused women, but the court will only accept a case from the person concerned. If the woman waives her right, no law protects her unless the assault was in a public place," he said.

"There are some girls who are afraid to file a case, for fear of an unknown future. Some girls are afraid of not having alternative care, so they accept violence and insults, although they have income from the government that may reach KD 600-700," he noted. He affirming that there are a



Mohammad Al-Jasem



lot of ignorant women who give up their rights, believing that women should educate themselves socially, educationally and culturally and start relying on themselves. Jasem indicated that in 2020, the public prosecution is looking at the issue of violence under the umbrella of the domestic violence law. This law has contributed to facilitating access to clear information in order to put out clear statistics on the general situation in society, away from other violent crimes.

Activist Sara Issam emphasized the significance of properly enforcing the protection law and for the national committee on family protection to adopt a comprehensive policy, noting that more women now have the bravery to seek protection for themselves. "The procedure for reporting domestic abuse cases to the public prosecution has significantly improved, and this has substantially aided in the growth of legal protection for battered women," she said. In order to address the rising number of cases of violence against women in the nation, she urged

the government to establish shelters for victims.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) reported that during 2022, they received 860 complaints of violence against women and girls, or 2.6 complaints per day. As of writing, 412 of those complaints involved what is known as violence in cyberspace. These include sending unsolicited communications, threatening to publish personal information and engaging in cyberbullying. The complaints committee received 345 domestic violence complaints this year, which equates to an average of one incidence per day.

According to the KSHR report, cases of abused women this year are categorized into economic, psychological, emotional, physical and human trafficking. The complaints committee received 103 complaints of human trafficking, which is one of the types of violence committed against women and girls, which means exploitation of people by means such as force, fraud, coercion or deception.

Kuwait Informatics Award winners announced

KUWAIT: His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award on Sunday announced four winners of the prize in its 22nd edition. In a statement to KUNA, member of the board of trustees and chairman of the supreme organizing committee, Bassam Al-Shammari said that this year's award went to Dar Al Qabas Press, Printing and Publishing Company for its distinguished work in the field of digital transformation, media, and information content industry.

The second award went to Faisal Abdul

Rahman Al-Shayji, the former Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Planning for Statistics Affairs, for his contribution to the establishment of the technical structures for government institutions. The two other awards went to the Public Prosecution in Qatar for its accomplishment in the digital transformation in the judicial field and the provision of modern electronic services, while (SmartMed) company from Tunisia won the fourth award for being distinguished in digital transformation in the medical field and creating one of the largest free interactive medical platforms.

The award reflects the importance of implementing the digital transformation in Arab societies, and encourages competition among contestants in the field of technical, digital platforms, and the information content, Al-Shammari added. The Award's qualification committee and the arbitration board include



Faisal Abdul Rahman Al-Shayji



Bassam Al-Shammari

volunteers with international digital experience in Kuwait and the Arab world, which would ensure transparency and objectivity for evaluation, Al-Shammari noted. —KUNA

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KUWAIT: A priest prays during a Christmas morning service at the Catholic Church in Kuwait City. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Tens of thousands of Christian faithful celebrate Christmas

Kuwait leadership lauded for promoting peace and religious tolerance



Gold hits \$1,789

KUWAIT: Gold Prices dropped by less than one percent to \$1,789 an ounce last week, after undergoing sharp ups and downs this past year, revealed a specialized report on Sunday. The report, issued by Dar Al-Sabaek Company, mentioned that in the year 2022, gold's highest point was at \$2,000 per ounce last March, whereas the lowest point was in November at \$1,629 an ounce.

The Kuwaiti gold company attributed the fluctuations in the gold market to the United States' financial policies regarding interest rate, as the price of gold drops in case of accelerated pace and as it slows down, gold price goes up. Last week, the report added, saw the rise of gold futures by 0.5 percent to record a \$1,804 per ounce, a \$90 increase from current prices, proving that investing in the gold market remains a safe bet in light of current economic uncertainty.

The gold market managed to sustain its gains despite fears of economic recession as preliminary data shows further shrinkage in industry and services sectors around the world, read the report adding that gold price could reach \$2,000 an ounce this upcoming year should the US continue tightening financial policies and raising interest rate. As for the local market, the report mentioned that gold price for 24 carats reached KD 17.7 per gram whereas the 22 carats reached KD 16.2 per gram, and the price of silver reached KD 281 per kilogram. —KUNA



Christian worshippers attend a Christmas morning service at the Catholic's Holy Family Church in Kuwait City on December 25, 2022.



Kuwaiti pastor Emmanuel Ghareeb and priests pose for a photo as Christians celebrate Christmas in Kuwait City.



A band plays during Christmas eve service at the St George Universal Syrian Malankara Orthodox Reesh Church in Kuwait City on December 24, 2022.



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By Chidi Emmanuel

KUWAIT: It was a glorious moment at the Catholic Church and National Evangelical Church in Kuwait as tens of thousands of Kuwaiti residents prayed in churches on Christmas Day (25th December). Christmas services were held in churches across Kuwait on Sunday and Saturday evening (Christmas Eve). Vigil mass and carols were organized all through the week.

Prayers were delivered in several languages including English, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, Tamil, etc to cater for the diverse expatriate population in Kuwait. Some buildings lit up for Christmas with malls showcasing dazzling Christmas trees and lighting. Social media is also abuzz with greetings, Christmas wishes and carols. "We are happy to be alive today to celebrate the birth of Christ. It was horrible last year and two years ago, COVID-19 brought the entire world to a standstill and we were not able to mark Christmas. Merry Christmas to you all", Esther Davis, an expatriate teacher told Kuwait Times as she celebrated with her friends and family in Kuwait City.

Christians all over the world celebrated Christmas for the second year after the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike last year, the Holy Family Cathedral Church in Kuwait City celebrated Christmas Mass without strict health protocols, requiring everyone to wear masks at all times. The churches in Kuwait are no longer required to observe social distancing.

Pastor Jolly Jee of Redeemed Christian Church of

God in Kuwait encouraged Christians to live a life worthy of emulation. He urged Christians to be good ambassadors of Christ. He praised Kuwait leadership for promoting peace and religious tolerance. The Catholic Church's Holy Family Cathedral and National Evangelical Church are two of the biggest Christian denominations in Kuwait. Both located in the heart of Kuwait City. There are other Christian churches in Kuwait too, such as the Coptic and Orthodox churches, but they celebrate Christmas on January 7.

In St Peter's Square, the head of the Catholic Church Pope Francis called for an end to the "senseless" war in Ukraine. In his traditional Christmas Day message broadcast, the pontiff urged "God to enlighten the minds of those who have the power to silence the thunder of weapons and put an immediate end to this senseless war". He asked God to inspire us to offer concrete gestures of solidarity to assist those who are suffering.

Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. It observed on December 25 as a religious celebration among billions of people around the world. As feast central to the Christian liturgical year, it is preceded by the season of Advent or the Nativity Fast and initiates the season of Christmastide, which historically in the West lasts twelve days and culminates on Twelfth Night. Most Christians celebrate on December 25 in the Gregorian calendar, which has been adopted almost universally in the civil calendars used in countries throughout the world.



A woman uses a phone on a 'selfie stick' to take a photo outside the Catholic Cathedral in Kuwait City on Christmas Day on December 25, 2022.





Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia

Troops deployed in San Salvador amid massive gang crackdown

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KYIV: Relatives of Ukrainian servicemen (POW's) and civilians captured by Russian forces hold placards during their rally at Independence Square in Kyiv, as they call to hasten their release from Russian captivity according to the formula "All for All". —AFP

West wants to 'tear apart' Russia: Putin

'War has brought us so much grief, we cannot remain under its influence'

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin blasted the West for trying to "tear apart" Russia and said his offensive in Ukraine aimed to "unite the Russian people". Meanwhile in Kyiv, a day after deadly shelling in southern Ukraine, residents held Christmas services on Sunday, defying Russian spiritual leaders who celebrate it on January 7.

Putin has used the concept of "historical Russia" to argue that Ukrainians and Russians are one people-undermining Kyiv's sovereignty and justifying his 10-month offensive in Ukraine. He said Russia's "geopolitical opponents (were) aiming to tear apart Russia, the historical Russia," Putin said in excerpts from an interview to be aired later on Sunday.

"Divide and conquer, that's what they have always sought to accomplish and are still seeking to do," Putin added. "But our goal is different: it's to unite the Russian people," he said. Putin said his government was acting "in the right direction... protecting our national interests, the interests of our citizens, of our people."

He repeated that Moscow was ready to negotiate and appeared unfazed when asked about the new air defence system the United States will deliver to Ukraine.

"Of course we will destroy it, 100 percent!" Putin said, referring to the Patriot missile battery promised to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Kherson 'terror'

In his first trip outside Ukraine since the offensive began, Zelensky earned firm pledges of support from US President Joe Biden, including the Pentagon's most advanced air defence system. Western military and financial aid has been crucial for Ukraine's push back of Russian troops—including from Kherson, the only regional capital held by Russia. Despite Russia's retreat from the city, Kherson remains within reach of Moscow's weaponry and under constant threat. The Ukrainian army counted 71 strikes on the partly recaptured region on Saturday, including 41 on the main city, also named Kherson.

This included deadly shelling on a busy market in the city centre that left 10 people dead and 55 injured. The Russian-installed head of the Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said on Telegram the shelling was "a disgusting provocation" by Ukraine used to blame Russia. Zelensky blasted Russian "terror" and urged his compatriots to persevere as they observed

a Christmas eve marked by destruction.

Defiant Christmas

On Sunday, church bells pealed throughout Kyiv as Orthodox Christians attended Christmas services, in break with the Russian spiritual leaders who will mark the holiday in two weeks. At a service in central Kyiv, worshipper Olga Stanko told AFP she supported any move that would distance Ukraine from Russia.

"The war has brought us so much grief," she said. "We cannot do this with Russia, remain under its influence." The decision by some Ukrainian churches to observe Christmas on December 25 highlights the rift between religious leaders in Kyiv and Moscow that has deepened.

An Interfax-Ukraine poll showed an increasing number in favour of moving the Christian holy day to December 25, jumping from 26 percent in 2021 to 44 percent in 2022, though 31 percent were still against it.

Ukraine had been under Moscow's spiritual leadership since at least the 17th century, but part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church broke with Moscow in 2019 over Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in the east. —AFP

More bodies pulled from sunk Thai ship

BANGKOK: Three more bodies have been recovered from the waters after a Thai warship went down in the Gulf of Thailand a week ago, the kingdom's navy said Sunday. The HTMS Sukhothai sank on December 18 roughly 37 kilometres (22 miles) off Thailand's south-eastern coast, with a massive rescue operation managing to pull 76 crew alive from the waves.

"We found three bodies which will be brought into an identification and autopsy process, which will take about three or four days," said navy spokesperson Pogkrong Montradpalin. He said in case of an oil leak, the area around the vessel and two others that sank that day

had been declared a "disaster prevention zone".

The navy increased the death toll to 18 with one body found on Saturday confirmed as a crew member and a further two discovered, although Pogkrong did not give any further details. Eleven members of the 105-strong crew are still missing, the navy said.

Helicopters, unmanned surveillance aircraft and warships have been combing the sea in hope of finding survivors. On Tuesday, Admiral Chonlathis Navanugraha called the incident "one of the most severe tragedies" in the navy's history.

The vessel—a corvette, among the smallest of military warships—ran into trouble after its electronics system was damaged. The Sukhothai was commissioned in 1987 and built in the United States by the now-defunct Tacoma Boatbuilding Company, according to the US Naval Institute. —AFP

Changed radically: How women fight in Ukrainian city

MYKOLAIV: The very day Russia launched its attack on her country, Svitlana Taranova enlisted in the Ukrainian army in the southern city of Mykolaiv, her birthplace. "At 11 am on February 24 my contract with the territorial defence was signed," said the former construction firm manager who is in her 50s. "It was the only possible decision, not a sacrifice," she said.

Mykolaiv came under threat rapidly after Kherson, 70 kilometres (43 miles) to the east, was taken by Russian forces. President Vladimir Putin's army needed to take Mykolaiv if it was going to conquer the Black Sea transport hub of Odessa, its main target and a two-hour drive to the west.

So the Russians began to pound Mykolaiv with artillery, massively and methodically, Taranova, by now in the infantry, often found herself in close combat with Russian troops. "In the beginning, I was terrified of the cluster bombs, my heart missed a beat every time one went off," she said. But then the fear gave way to grim determination. "I no longer feel I need to hide. All I want is revenge," she said. While an AFP team was in Mykolaiv in September and October, the city was bombarded almost every night.

'We feed the soldiers'

As Taranova was battling Russians in



MYKOLAIV: Julia Kirkina reacts as she plays piano in a cafe-restaurant in Mykolaiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

combat, other women contributed to the war effort in different ways, an AFP team found. "We're fighting here, too," said Svitlana Nitchouk, 41, a bakery employee. "We feed the soldiers."

When AFP met with her, she was watching an emergency unit clearing the rubble of an old apartment block in the city centre. The bakery where she works, on the ground floor, was badly damaged. The remains of a nearby regional authority building miraculously holds up after a Russian missile destroyed seven floors.

Julia, a resident living nearby, said her apartment had already been hit three times. The IT worker in her thirties took her daughter to the relative safety of western Ukraine, but regularly returns to Mykolaiv — mostly to distribute cars or military equipment to the fighters, funded

by online appeals she has launched.

In another neighbourhood Julia Kirkina, a musicologist, sings and plays piano in a restaurant every Friday. "Music is one of the best cures for the spirit," she said. "My vocal therapy helps people stay calm and be optimistic."

Mykolaiv remained within range of Russian artillery fire for 262 days, and escaped bombing for barely 50, according to local authorities. Then, on November 13, Kherson was recaptured by Ukrainian troops and Mykolaiv was no longer part of the war's frontline. By then more than 150 of the city's residents had been killed and 700 injured. Between 300,000 and 500,000 people had fled. Four-fifths of the women have left, according to the regional administration, making Mykolaiv a city populated almost entirely by men. —AFP

International

Troops deployed in San Salvador amid massive gang crackdown

'Honest citizens have nothing to fear and can continue to live their lives normally'

SAN SALVADOR: More than 2,000 soldiers and police surrounded two districts in El Salvador's capital on Saturday as part of President Nayib Bukele's war on gangs, the second such operation this month in the Central American country.

"As of this morning, the Tutunichapa district in San Salvador is totally surrounded," Bukele posted on Twitter. "More than 1,000 soldiers and 130 police officers will extract the criminals who still remain," he added.

Bukele later tweeted that 1,000 more soldiers and 100 police officers had been dispatched to La Granjita, another neighborhood in the capital. "After encircling Tutunichapa, a famous drug distribution center, we knew that many drug traffickers would take refuge in the neighborhood of La Granjita, another famous distribution center", Bukele tweeted. Images released Saturday by the office of the president showed heavily armed soldiers entering Tutunichapa, a populous district where small houses mostly constructed of concrete blocks stand alongside one of the many polluted streams that run through San Salvador.

Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro posted photos of members of an anti-narcotics police unit with drug-sniffing dogs. "We are going to extract every criminal from our communities," Villatoro said in a Twitter post.

'Bastion on crime'

Defense Minister Rene Merino said 23 people had been arrested in Tutunichapa, without specifying whether they were accused of being gang mem-

bers or drug traffickers. "All terrorists, drug traffickers and gang members will be removed" from the area, Bukele said in another tweet, adding that until recently it was a "bastion of crime."

"Honest citizens have nothing to fear and can continue to live their lives normally," he wrote. Local resident Edwin Diaz, 51, cheered the law enforcement action, saying the area has long been considered a dangerous place due to gang activity and drug sales.

"All our lives we have suffered the stigma that here there is drug dealing, gang members, bad things, and today with this security they have set up, there is nothing to fear," Diaz told AFP by phone on Saturday. Echoing Bukele's remark, Diaz added: "He who owes nothing, fears nothing."

Almost 60,000 arrests

Earlier this month, Bukele, who has declared a state of emergency to quash gang violence, sent 8,500 soldiers and 1,500 police officers to surround Soyapango, the country's third-largest city, with a population of nearly a quarter million.

The president had announced last month a plan to use troops to surround cities while house-by-house searches are conducted for gang members. Soyapango was first on the list. The siege there has seen armored military vehicles, some with artillery, carrying out constant patrols while heavily armed police search houses and people as they leave their neighborhoods, as well as random sweeps of public transport.

As of Saturday, some 650 suspected gang mem-



SAN SALVADOR: Alleged members of the Calle 18 gang and drug dealers captured by soldiers and police are seen at the Tutunichapa community in San Salvador. — AFP

bers had been arrested in Soyapango, Merino said. "We continue working in the rest of the territory looking for terrorist criminals," the defense minister added.

Almost 60,000 suspected gang members have been arrested since the launch of the state of emergency in March, which has prompted humanitarian groups to question what they see as heavy-handed

tactics. Despite that criticism, El Salvador's Congress on Thursday once again extended the state of emergency for another month. Over 75 percent of Salvadorans approve of the emergency declaration, and nine out of 10 Salvadorans say that crime "has decreased" with Bukele's policies, according to a Central American University (UCA) poll published in October. —AFP

Trump acolyte Kari Lake loses Arizona election appeal

WASHINGTON: An Arizona judge on Saturday dismissed a lawsuit brought by Republican candidate Kari Lake, a Donald Trump loyalist who sought to overturn her unsuccessful bid to become the southwestern state's governor.

The court found no "clear and convincing evidence of misconduct" that would have impacted the outcome of the November election as Lake alleged, Judge Peter Thompson said in his decision seen by AFP.

Lake, a 53-year-old former TV news anchorwoman, tweeted Saturday that "for the sake of restoring faith and honesty in our elections, I will appeal his ruling."

After losing to Democrat Katie Hobbs by a margin of 17,117 votes, Lake claimed that problems with ballot printing in Maricopa County, Arizona's most populous county which includes its capital, were intentional and aimed at her defeat.

The court cannot accept speculation or conjecture in lieu of clear and convincing evidence, said Thompson, who also upheld Hobbs's victory. Lake supporters had seized upon minor problems with vote tabulation machines in Maricopa, home to America's fifth biggest city, Phoenix, which left some people standing in short lines during the November vote.

Officials have forcefully insisted that no legitimate vote would be excluded, and mounted a well-



PHOENIX: File photo shows Republican gubernatorial candidate for Arizona, Kari Lake, speaks to members of the media after voting in the US midterm election, in Phoenix. —AFP

organized social media campaign to push back at falsehoods circulating online. Arizona has been under intense scrutiny for two years since Joe Biden eked out a narrow win in the state over Trump, the president at the time.

Maricopa County became ground zero for election deniers, who made unfounded claims about ballot stuffing, despite repeated investigations that turned up no evidence of wrongdoing. Lake made denial of the 2020 presidential election win by Joe Biden a key tenet of her campaign, and said that she would not have validated his victory if she had been in the governor's mansion at the time.

She was thought of as a leading light in the movement, and Republican Party insiders—as well as media pundits—have noted that regardless of the Arizona result, she could be well placed for a spot on a future White House ticket. —AFP

— even as the nation reached what is usually its busiest time of year for travel.

The extreme weather has severely taxed the country's electricity grids, with multiple power providers urging customers to reduce usage to minimize rolling blackouts in places like North Carolina and Tennessee. At one point on Saturday, nearly 1.7 million customers across the country were without electricity in the biting cold, according to tracker poweroutage.us. But the figure dropped substantially by Sunday, although more than 200,000 customers in eastern states still lacked power.

Canadian authorities have also issued severe weather warnings. Hundreds of thousands were left without power in Ontario and Quebec provinces, many flights were canceled in major cities and train passenger service between Toronto and Ottawa was suspended. In British Columbia province, authorities said 53 people were injured when a passenger bus crashed late Saturday on a highway known as the Okanagan Connector northeast of Vancouver. The cause of the crash was under investigation. —Agencies

for not being more explicit in blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin. In a magazine interview published last month, the Argentine pontiff denounced the cruelty of Russia's troops in Ukraine, drawing a formal protest from Moscow. On Sunday, the pope also urged those celebrating Christmas to remember those "who go hungry while huge amounts of food daily go to waste and resources are being spent on weapons."

"The war in Ukraine has further aggravated this situation, putting entire peoples at risk of famine, especially in Afghanistan and in the countries of the Horn of Africa," he said. "We know that every war causes hunger and exploits food as a weapon, hindering its distribution to people already suffering. On this day, let us learn from the Prince of Peace (Christ) and, starting with those who hold political responsibilities, commit ourselves to making food solely an instrument of peace."

On Saturday evening, the pope led the traditional Christmas Eve mass at St Peter's Basilica, using a wheelchair as he continues to struggle with knee pain. He prayed for "the children devoured by wars, poverty and injustice" and lamented that "men hungry for power and money swallow up their loved ones, their brothers". —AFP

Erdogan aide blames Paris unrest after shooting on PKK

ISTANBUL: A top aide to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday blamed street unrest that gripped Paris following the killing of three Kurds on outlawed PKK militants. "This is PKK in France," Erdogan's foreign policy adviser Ibrahim Kalin tweeted, posting images of overturned and burning cars in Paris.

"The same terrorist organisation you support in Syria," he wrote in apparent reference to the YPG. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is designated

as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and its Western allies.

Ankara has been feuding with the US and European powers about their support for Kurdish fighters in the People's Protection Units (YPG), which it portrays as the Syrian offshoot of the PKK. The YPG played a central role in the US-led campaign against Islamic State group jihadists in Syria. It is not proscribed as a terrorist organisation by either the US or the European Union—an issue of constant tension in their relations with NATO member Turkey.

"The same PKK that has killed thousands of Turks, Kurds and security forces over the last 40 years. Now they are burning the streets of Paris. Will you still remain silent?" Kalin wrote. The street protest broke out Friday after a 69-year-old white French gunman opened fire at a Kurdish cultural centre in Paris, killing three. —AFP

Syrian Kurds protest against Paris attack

HASAKEH: Hundreds of Syrian Kurds staged a protest in northern Syria on Sunday in response to a deadly attack targeting members of the ethnic community in Paris this week. A gunman opened fire at a Kurdish cultural centre and a hairdressing salon in Paris on Friday, killing three Kurds.

The suspected gunman, a 69-year-old Frenchman, was arrested and later confessed to a "pathological" hatred for foreigners, Paris prose-

cutor Laure Beccuau said. The semi-autonomous Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria called for the Sunday protest in Hasakeh, which drew hundreds of people brandishing photos of the three victims and calling for accountability.

"Kurds are fighting against oppression and they are massacred everywhere, even in Paris, the city of love and freedom," said feminist activist Evin Basha, 33, demanding that the killer be brought to justice. She was among those who marched through the city chanting "the martyrs of Paris are forever in our hearts" and repeating slogans against "the extermination" of the Kurdish people. Often described as the world's largest people without a state, the Kurds are a Muslim ethnic group spread across Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. —AFP

22 dead as US megastorm...

Continued from Page 1

than 1,500 US flights on Sunday, in addition to some 3,500 scrapped Saturday and nearly 6,000 on Friday, according to tracking website Flightaware.com. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg tweeted Saturday that "the most extreme disruptions are behind us as airline and airport operations gradually recover".

But travelers remained stranded or delayed at airports including in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Minneapolis and New York. Road ice and white-out conditions also led to the temporary closure of some of the nation's busiest transport routes, including the cross-country Interstate 70. Drivers were being warned not to take to the roads

Pope calls to end 'senseless'...

Continued from Page 1

"Tragically, we prefer to heed other counsels, dictated by worldly ways of thinking," he added, recalling "with sorrow" that "the icy winds of war continue to buffet humanity". "Our time is experiencing a grave famine of peace also in other regions and other theatres of this third world war," he said.

Francis referenced numerous countries in difficulty this Christmas, whether due to conflict or another crisis, from Afghanistan to Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, Lebanon and Haiti. For the first time, he also called for "reconciliation" in Iran, rocked by women-led protests for the past three months. The pope has called for peace in Ukraine ever since Russia invaded its neighbor in February, condemning the war but seeking to maintain a delicate dialogue with Moscow.

However, he has been criticized in some quarters

Recommendation to privatize...

Continued from Page 1

weak, as the educational curricula does not meet

Paris shooter admits hatred...

Continued from Page 1

The suspect said he initially wanted to kill people in the northern Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, which has a large immigrant population. But he changed his mind as few people were around and his clothing made it difficult for him to reload his weapon, the prosecutor said. He then returned to his parents' house before deciding to go to the 10th district instead.

The shooting has revived the trauma of three unresolved murders of Kurds in 2013 that many blame on Turkey. Many in the Kurdish community have expressed anger at the French security services, saying they had done too little to prevent the shooting. The frustration boiled over on Saturday and furious demonstrators clashed with police in central Paris for a second day running after a tribute rally.

The French capital's police chief Laurent Nunez told BFM television channel on Saturday that 31 officers and one protester were injured in the disturbances, while 11 people were arrested, "mainly for damage". Hundreds of Kurds in Syria demonstrated on Sunday in solidarity with the victims. The suspect — named as William M by French media — is a gun enthusiast with a history of weapons offences who had been released on bail earlier this month.

The retired train driver was convicted for armed violence in 2016 by a court in Seine-Saint-Denis, but appealed. A year later he was convicted for illegally possessing a firearm. Last year, he was charged with racist violence after allegedly stabbing migrants and slashing their tents with a sword in a park in eastern Paris. The prosecutor said no links with an extremist

the standards of the future. Moreover, higher education institutions in Kuwait affirm that they do not receive high school graduates at the level required," sources explained. The sources added the education ministry did not accept the idea of school privatization as free education is part of the Kuwaiti constitution, and the government does not have a clear framework about how to deal with any transformation.

ideology were found following a search of his parents' home, a computer and a smartphone. The suspect said he acquired his weapon four years ago from a member of a shooting club, hid it at his parents' house and had never used it before.

"He is mad, he is crazy," his father told AFP, describing him as quiet and reserved. He added that his son said nothing as he left his parents' home on Friday. Often described as the world's largest people without a state, the Kurds are a Muslim ethnic group spread across Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Of the six victims of the attack, five were Turkish nationals and one was a French national.

Meanwhile, a top aide to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blamed the street unrest that gripped Paris following the killing on outlawed PKK militants. "This is PKK in France," Erdogan's foreign policy adviser Ibrahim Kalin tweeted, posting images of overturned and burning cars in Paris. "The same terrorist organization you support in Syria," he wrote in apparent reference to the YPG.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies and has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. Ankara has been feuding with the United States and European powers about their support for Kurdish fighters in the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which it says is the Syrian offshoot of the PKK.

The YPG played a central role in the US-led campaign against Islamic State group jihadists in Syria. It is not proscribed as a terrorist group by either the United States or the European Union — an issue of constant tension in their relations with NATO member Turkey. "The same PKK that has killed thousands of Turks, Kurds and security forces over the last 40 years. Now they are burning the streets of Paris. Will you still remain silent?" Kalin wrote. Some of the people who joined the subsequent protests chanted slogans mentioning the PKK. —AFP

International

3 foreign NGOs suspend operations after Taliban ban on women staff

UN condemns ministry's directive, to seek an explanation from Taliban

KABUL: Three foreign aid groups, including Save the Children, announced on Sunday they were suspending their operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban ordered all NGOs to stop their women staff from working. The announcement came as top officials from the United Nations and dozens of NGOs operating in Afghanistan met in Kabul to discuss a way ahead after the Taliban's latest restriction delivered a blow to humanitarian work across the country.

The Ministry of Economy on Saturday threatened to suspend the operating licences of NGOs if they failed to implement the order. The ministry, which issues these licences, said it had received "serious complaints" that women working in NGOs were not observing a proper Islamic dress code.

A meeting of the Humanitarian Country Team, which comprises top UN officials and representatives of dozens of Afghan and foreign NGOs was being held in Kabul to discuss whether to suspend all aid work following the latest Taliban directive, aid officials told AFP. The United Nations condemned the ministry's directive and said it would seek an explanation from the Taliban about the order, which by excluding women "systematically from all aspects of public and political life takes the country backward, jeopardising efforts for any meaningful peace or stability in the country". US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the ban would be "devastating" to Afghans as it would "disrupt vital and life-saving assistance to millions".

Hell for women

"I'm the only breadwinner of my family. If I lose my job my family of 15 members will die of hunger," said Shabana, 24, a woman employee with an international NGO working in Afghanistan for decades.

"While the world is celebrating the arrival of the new year, Afghanistan has become a hell for women." The ministry said women working in NGOs were not observing "the Islamic hijab and other rules and regulations pertaining to the work of females in national and international organisations".

But women employees AFP spoke to dismissed the charge. "Our offices are gender segregated, and every



KANDAHAR: Afghan burqa-clad women travel in a vehicle along the road in Kandahar on December 25, 2022. — AFP

woman is properly dressed," said Arezo, who works for another foreign NGO. It remained unclear whether the directive impacted foreign women staff at NGOs.

The international community has made respecting women's rights a sticking point in negotiations with the Taliban government for its recognition and the restoration of aid. The ban comes at a time when millions across the country depend on humanitarian aid provided by international donors through a vast network of NGOs.

Afghanistan's economic crisis has only worsened since the Taliban seized power in August last year, which led to Washington freezing billions of dollars of its assets and foreign donors cutting aid. Dozens of organisations work across remote areas of Afghanistan and many of their employees are women, with several warning the ban would stymie their work.

"The ban is going to impact all aspects of humanitarian work as women employees have been key executors of various projects focussing on the country's vulnerable women population," said another top official of a foreign NGO in Kabul.

On Tuesday, the minister of higher education banned women from universities, charging that they too were not properly dressed. That ban triggered widespread international outrage and some protests, which were forcefully dispersed by the authorities.

Since returning to power in August last year, the Taliban have already barred teenage girls from secondary school. Women have also been pushed out of many government jobs, prevented from travelling without a male relative and ordered to cover up outside of the home, ideally with a burqa. They are also not allowed to enter parks or gardens. — AFP



Ban would be 'devastating' to Afghans

"We cannot effectively reach children, women and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE said in a joint statement. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan." Saturday's order issued by the Taliban authorities drew swift international condemnation, with governments and organisations warning of the impact on humanitarian services in a country where millions rely on aid. The latest restriction comes less than a week after the hardline Islamists banned women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities.

China to stop publishing COVID figures

BEIJING: China will no longer publish daily figures for COVID-19 cases and deaths, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Sunday, ending a practice that began in early 2020. Cities across China have struggled with surging infections, and a resulting shortage of pharmaceuticals and overflowing hospital wards, after Beijing rapidly dismantled its zero-COVID strategy. "From today, we will no longer publish daily information on the epidemic," the NHC said, without giving an explanation for its policy shift. But the end of strict testing mandates has made caseloads virtually impossible to track, while authorities have narrowed the medical definition of a COVID death in a move experts say will suppress the number of fatalities attributable to the virus.

"The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will publish information about the outbreak for reference and research purposes," the NHC said, without specifying the type or frequency of data to be published by the CDC. People in China, who are seeing a large discrepancy between official statistics and infections within their families and social circles, greeted the decision with cynicism. "Finally, they are waking up and realising they can't fool people anymore," wrote one user on the social network Weibo.

Another user said: "This was the best and biggest fake statistics manufacturing office in the country." Crematorium workers interviewed by AFP have reported an unusually high influx of bodies. "Are there crematorium workers here? Are you overloaded? Can you talk about it?" another Weibo user wrote.

While state media has largely ignored the surge of bodies arriving at crematoriums, they have, to some extent, said hospitals are under stress from an influx of patients and a shortage of anti-fever drugs. Official statistics have also been undermined by the new methodological shift, under which only people who have died directly from COVID-related respiratory failure are counted as being killed by the virus. China has announced only six COVID-19 deaths since its pandemic restrictions were lifted. But in a rare acknowledgement this week, a senior health official in the eastern city of Qingdao was quoted by the media as saying half a million people are being infected daily. — AFP

Afghans' future separated after university ban

KABUL: Marwa was just a few months away from becoming the first woman in her Afghan family to go to university—instead, she will watch achingly as her brother goes without her. Women are now banned from attending university in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, where they have been steadily stripped of their freedoms over the past year.

"Had they ordered women to be beheaded, even that would have been better than this ban," Marwa told AFP at her family home in Kabul. "If we are to be so unlucky, I wish that we hadn't been born at all. I'm sorry for my existence in the world."

"We are being treated worse than animals. Animals can go anywhere on their own, but we girls don't have the right even to step out of our homes." The 19-year-old had recently passed an entrance exam to start a nursing degree at a medical university in the Afghan capital from March. She was thrilled to be joining her brother, Hamid, in attending the campus each day. But now their futures have been pulled apart. "I wanted my sister to achieve her goals along with me—to succeed and move ahead," said Hamid, 20, a student of business administration at a higher education institute in Kabul. "Despite several problems, she had studied until the 12th grade, but what can we say now?"



KRUENG RAYA: Health workers check a Rohingya refugee who was feeling sick after his arrival by boat in Krueng Raya, Indonesia's Aceh province on December 25, 2022. — AFP

Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia

BANDA ACEH: A broken-down boat carrying 57 Rohingya refugees landed on Indonesia's western coast on Sunday after a month at sea, police said. Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, risk their lives each year on long, expensive sea journeys — often in poor-quality vessels — in an attempt to reach Malaysia or Indonesia. The wooden vessel with 57 men on board arrived around 08:00 am local time (0100 GMT) on a beach in the westernmost Aceh province, local police spokesman Winardy told AFP.

"The boat had a broken engine and it was carried by the wind to a shore in Ladong Village in Aceh Besar (district)," Winardy, who goes by one name, said. "They said they have been drifting at sea for a month."

Winardy added that police arrived at the beach after being informed by some locals that the boat had

docked there. He said four of the men on board were sick and had been transported to a hospital.

Telmaizul Syatri, the head of the local immigration office, said the refugees will be temporarily housed at a local government facility. "We will coordinate with the International Organisation for Migration and the UNHCR so that it can be handled well," Syatri said.

This is the third Rohingya refugee boat to arrive in Muslim-majority Indonesia in recent months. Two boats carrying a total of 229 Rohingya landed in Aceh on November 15 and 16, according to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).

Sunday's arrival comes after the UNHCR and Southeast Asian politicians called for the rescue of another vessel carrying as many as 200 Rohingya refugees, including women and children, which has been stranded at sea for several weeks.

That boat has been reported in waters close to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India in the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping routes. The UNHCR said last week that it has been in the water since late November, and it had received reports of at least a dozen people dying on board. Those left on the boat have no access to food or water. — AFP

salary to stay at home. They are also barred from travelling without a male relative and must cover up in public. Women are prohibited from going to parks, fairs, gyms and public baths. Marwa and Hamid come from an impoverished family but their parents had supported their pursuit of higher education.

With dreams of becoming a midwife, Marwa had planned to visit remote areas of Afghanistan where women remain deprived of health services. "I wanted to serve women in faraway places so that we never witness the loss of a mother's life during childbirth," she said. Instead she will now stay home to teach her six younger siblings, while her father, the family's sole breadwinner, earns money as a vegetable vendor.

History repeating

Minister Nadeem insists women students behaved in a way that insulted Islamic principles and Afghan culture. "They were dressing like they were going to a wedding. Those girls who were coming to universities from home were also not following instructions on the hijab," he said in an interview on state television.

But Hamid strongly rejected the justification for the ban. "When universities opened under the Taliban, different days were specified for boys and girls," he said. "They (girls) were not allowed to enter unless they wore a mask and hijab. How then can they (the Taliban) say they were without hijabs?"

After the Taliban seized power, universities were forced to implement new rules, including gender-segregated classrooms and entrances, while women were only permitted to be taught by professors of the same sex, or old men. — AFP



KABUL: Marwa (C), a student reads books with her brother Hamid (L) at their home in Kabul. — AFP

News in brief

Fuel tanker blast

JOHANNESBURG: The death toll from a fuel tanker explosion in a South African city east of Johannesburg has risen to 15, the health minister said Sunday. "Yesterday (Saturday), the death toll was at 10 people and now we are sitting at 15 as of this morning," Joe Phaahla told reporters at Tambo Memorial Hospital. The tanker, transporting liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), was caught beneath a bridge close to the hospital and houses on Saturday morning in Boksburg, east of Johannesburg. The minister said three hospital employees, two nurses and a driver, died later from severe burn injuries. Thirty-seven people were injured, including 24 patients and 13 staff members who were in the hospital's accident and emergency unit at the time of the blast. They "sustained severe burns and have been diverted to neighbouring hospitals", Phaahla said.

Bus plunges into river

MADRID: Four people died after a bus plunged into a river overnight while crossing a bridge in Spain's northwestern Galicia region, officials said Sunday. The accident occurred on Saturday night near Vigo and the border with Portugal. The regional La Voz de Galicia newspaper said the bus was carrying people visiting their loved ones jailed in Monterroso in central Galicia. The emergency services said two corpses had been recovered while two others, including the bus driver, had been rescued and taken to hospital. Spain's Civil Guard later said two more bodies were found on Sunday. The woman's body was recovered but a man's corpse was yet to be retrieved. "There could have been more people inside the bus," the emergency services had said on Twitter and posted a photo of the vehicle in turbulent waters.

Cairo stadium collapse

CAIRO: At least 27 people were injured on Saturday when part of a sports stadium south of Cairo collapsed during a basketball match, Egypt's health ministry said. Ministry spokesman Hossam Abdel Ghaffar said "27 people were injured, some with fractures and bleeding," adding that "most were non-life-threatening injuries". The Egyptian basketball federation suspended the match between Alexandria's Al Itihad and Cairo's Al Ahly as first responders rushed to the Hassan Mostafa Sports Hall in the October 6 suburb. More than 20 ambulances were dispatched to take the injured fans to hospital from the sports venue, the ministry added. Youth and Sports Minister Ashraf Sobhi has appointed a committee to look into the circumstances of the incident. — AFP

Prachanda returns as Nepal PM

KATHMANDU: Nepal's president appointed former guerrilla leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal prime minister for the third time on Sunday, after his Maoist party cobbled together a coalition following elections last month. Dahal, better known by his nom de guerre Prachanda or "the fierce one", hid out for years in the jungle during Nepal's 1996-2006 civil war that killed nearly 17,000 people and led to the end of the monarchy. Sagar Acharya, a spokesman for President Bidya Devi Bhandari, told AFP that Dahal, 68, has been appointed as the new prime minister and would be sworn in on Monday at 4:00 pm (1015 GMT). Following the 2006 peace accords, Dahal transformed his Maoist revolutionary movement into a political party and served briefly as prime minister in 2008-9, and again in 2016-17. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022

Solid purchasing power helps Kuwait ward off economic slowdown: Expert

'Kuwait remains insulated despite global economic headwinds'

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The world has been witnessing an economic slowdown in the past few years due to the coronavirus pandemic, price hikes due to the Russian-Ukrainian war and the temporary closure of important global markets such as China. As a result of these economic and political crises, several global reports indicate that the world is going through an economic slowdown or recession. But how does this affect the Kuwaiti market? Does purchasing power help prevent the effects of this slowdown in the local market?

Kuwait Times discussed the issue with financial expert Maitham Al-Shakhs. He clarified the economy in Kuwait does not depend on the private sector as a source of income, as the public sector is the main supporter of the economy and the country's revenues, which relies on the oil sector for more than 90 percent of its income. "Therefore, there will not be a huge negative effect from the private sector on the total local economy, even if there is a slowdown or decrease in some economic fields," he said.

"Kuwait doesn't have heavy industries and most



Maitham Al-Shakhs

of the consumables are imported from abroad. Some sectors participate in the country's GDP such as agriculture, but we can't define it as a main contributor as this field gets huge financial support from the government," Shakhs said.

On the other hand, he explained that if the country is affected by an economic slowdown in the private sector, then the banking field will be one of the main influencers as this sector finances executing companies that bid on major projects proposed by the country, especially since these companies contribute with a large amount of money.

"If oil prices decrease in the long term, the banking sector will be affected, as it will lead to an increase in the country's fiscal deficit, which will put the government under a pressure to postpone the completion of some projects and eventually



cause an economic slowdown," he said.

Purchasing power

Regarding the role of local purchasing power in preventing an economic slowdown, Shakhs said per capita income in Kuwait and its contribution to the economy defines income level. "Local income is high compared to other countries, therefore we still have the ability to resist an economic slowdown and high prices, unlike other countries such as the UK and some Arab and European countries, whose middle classes are in a bad financial situation due to their weak purchasing power," he said.

The previous situation affects the country's production, as the producers will decrease the amount of production and the importers will reduce importing to maintain the prices from falling down, he said.

"Despite an economic slowdown or economic recession that could lead countries to bankruptcy, there are always sectors that benefit from these situations" Shakhs said. "Banking, food sector and tourism are three sectors that could grow in a time of economic recession or slowdown." Regarding the banking sector, he explained people will be scared to spend their money, and this will compel them to save their money in banks. "During the pandemic, the US Federal Reserve cut the interest rate due to rising deposits and fewer requests for bank loans. Several psychological studies showed that during crises, demand for food and restaurants increases," he said.

Shakhs explained the tourism field witnessed a great growth, as seen in the previous experience of countries that suffered from economic crises, such as Turkey. When the Turkish lira fell dramatically, there was a huge increase in the number of tourists due to the favorable exchange rate," he said.

Debt rising in Middle East countries: WB

WASHINGTON: The World Bank released last week its latest annual end-of-the-year external debt stocks report, assessing that Egypt, Iran and Turkey's debt rose significantly last year.

The following is a break of Middle Eastern states and their debt at the end of 2022, according to the World Bank report. External debt stocks refer to the portion of a country's debt that was borrowed from foreign lenders:

Egypt

Egypt's external debt stocks amounted to \$143.3 billion, up from \$129.8 billion in 2020. Egypt has spent much of its borrowed money on infrastructure. Some analysts believe Egypt has strong potential to pay back its debt. Al-Monitor reported last year.

Iran

Iran's external debt stocks stood at \$10.4 billion. This is nearly double the \$5.4 billion in 2020. The Iranian news outlet Financial Tribune reported Sunday that Iran's foreign debt is going down again, citing central bank data. The outlet noted that US sanctions are a big impediment to foreign investment in Iran, along with "cumbersome laws and economic instability."

Iraq

Iraq's external debt stocks were \$25.3 at the end of 2021. In 2020, they were \$26.3, thus indicating a decrease. Iraq finally swore in a new government in October. One of the government's first moves was to



An empty market after a curfew was imposed to halt the spread of COVID-19 in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq.

sign a \$4 billion engineering agreement with Iran.

Jordan

Jordan's debt was \$41.8 billion, up from \$38 billion in 2020. In addition to loans from abroad, Jordan regularly receives economic aid from its wealthy neighbors in the Gulf to help fund its budget. One positive piece of news on the Jordanian economy is that tourism revenue is on the rise.

Lebanon

Lebanon's debt was \$66.9 billion, down from \$68.9 billion in 2020. Lebanon is in the midst of a devastating economic crisis. Despite debt going down slightly, many entities are reluctant to loan Lebanon money until it implements governance and anti-corruption reforms.

Syria

Syria's external debt stocks were \$5 billion at the

end of 2021, up from \$4.8 billion in 2020. Syria's economy is in tatters due to the ongoing civil war. Some observers have also said in recent years that US and European sanctions on the country are harming civilians.

Turkey

Turkey's external debt was \$435.5 billion, a decrease from \$441.2 billion in 2020. In June, the New York-based credit rating agency S&P Global reported that Turkey is vulnerable to a liquidity crunch due to its high debt and economic issues. Extremely high inflation in Turkey in particular is a problem.

Yemen

War-torn Yemen's debt was \$7.6 billion, up from \$7.1 billion in 2020. The World Bank did not include information from several regional states, including Gulf states. — Agencies

Kuwait exports first Europe-bound diesel shipment

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Sunday exported its first shipment of diesel, weighing some 66 tons towards Europe, as markets there have begun to increasingly turn to non-Russian suppliers to meet their needs, its state-run petroleum company said.

The shipment has been produced with special qualifications that meet "Winter Grade" standards; a formulation that resists gelling in freezing temperatures, according to a Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) statement. The company's ability to produce such a "quality variation" of diesel fuel that complies with "unprecedented standards" proves that it has now forayed into the global market, added the statement. — KUNA

Amazon to sell excess space on its cargo planes

NEW YORK: Amazon.com is trying to sell excess space on its cargo planes, according to people familiar with the matter: its latest effort to adjust from a rapid pandemic-era expansion to a slowdown in online growth. The e-commerce retailer, which has a fleet of about 100 planes in the US and Europe, in recent months has hired executives with experience marketing cargo space for airlines. Possibilities include filling empty jets returning from Hawaii and Alaska with pineapples and salmon, according to two of the people. An Amazon spokesperson declined to comment.

The long-term plan for Amazon Air hasn't changed despite the current turmoil, said one of the people, who asked not to be identified as the discussions are confidential. The pressure to make money from unused space aboard its jets is increasing as the company looks to boost profits in a period of slower revenue growth, another person said.

Amazon unveiled the air cargo service in 2016, prompting speculation that it would ultimately create an overnight delivery network to rival United Parcel Service and FedEx. Amazon Air operates out of smaller regional airports close to its warehouses around the country, helping the Seattle-based company quickly move inventory to accommodate one- and two-day delivery. The company's ultimate goal has befuddled industry experts, who have written conflicting reports about Amazon's ambitions. Fast growth in its earlier years and a \$1.5 billion investment in a hub at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport fuelled speculation that the company was ramping up to be an overnight parcel service.

Other investors said Amazon remains far shy of larger carriers like FedEx and UPS, which have more planes and more flight connections that don't overlap with Amazon's core online retail business. Demand for air cargo has cooled this year, and is expected to tail off again in 2023. IATA, an airline trade group, projects the sector will generate sales of \$149.4 billion, about \$52 billion less than 2022 but still \$48.6 billion more than in 2019. — Agencies

Wall Street rally instills optimism in global markets

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks closed higher on Friday, injecting a much-needed sliver of holiday cheer after investors probed new data for clues on likely Federal Reserve thinking. The benchmark S&P 500 erased earlier losses to end 0.6 percent higher, eventually dragging the Nasdaq Composite with it. The tech-heavy index closed up 0.2 percent. Volumes were generally light as year-end holidays began in earnest. Friday's gains were not enough, however, to stop either benchmark closing lower for a third consecutive week - the first such losing streak since September. With just four days of trading left in 2022, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite have this year lost about 20 percent and 33 percent, respectively, putting them on course for their worst performances since the 2008 financial crisis. Elsewhere, the FTSE All World share index has shed about a fifth of its value this year, while Bloomberg's broad aggregate index of the global bond market is off about 16 percent. "The past two weeks have been a weak gruel of fatalism mostly and halfhearted optimism," said Mike Zigmont, head of trading and research at Harvest Volatility Management.

"It's a weird psychological condition and it strikes me that the market [and] investors need a rest," Treasuries slid, pushing yields on benchmark 10-year bonds to 3.75 percent - their highest this month. The two-year Treasury yield was up 0.06 percentage points at 4.33 percent. Debt markets



NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks closed higher on Friday, injecting a much-needed sliver of holiday cheer after investors probed new data for clues on likely Federal Reserve thinking.

closed early on Friday for the holiday. Data earlier in the day showed US consumer income held up in November but spending slowed slightly, mostly in line with economists' forecasts. Also in-line were inflation figures in the report, showing the core personal consumption expenditure price index - the Fed's favoured measure of price pressures - rose 0.2 percent month-on-month in November. The annual rate of growth for the core measure cooled to 4.7 percent in November from 5 percent the previous month. Together with a larger-than-expected drop in orders for durable long-lasting goods, the reports provided "further evidence that the [US] economy has lost momentum", said Andrew Hunter, US econ-

omist at Capital Economics.

Slowing growth may encourage the Fed to moderate its plans to tighten monetary policy further. Policymakers raised interest rates half a percentage point in December, following four consecutive 0.75 percentage point increases. However, the central bank has also been clear that it plans to raise rates to just above 5 percent next year, up from the current target range of 4.25 percent to 4.5 percent, with no rate cuts until 2024. Currency markets were largely rangebound on Friday, leaving the dollar 0.1 percent lower against a basket of six other international currencies, but up 9 percent for the year. — Agencies

Business

Egypt denies rumors on selling Nile ports to foreign countries

Egyptian ports wholly owned by the state, subject to Egypt's sovereignty

CAIRO: The Egyptian government denied rumors on ceding the Nile River ports to a foreign country under a draft law reorganizing the General Authority for River Transport (GART).

The cabinet's media center said that it contacted transport ministry, which confirmed these claims are incorrect. The ministry stressed that the Egyptian ports are wholly owned by the state and subject to Egypt's sovereignty and will remain so. It explained that the draft law aims to encourage the private sector to invest in river transport, without selling or ceding ownership of any of the river transport ports. The obligations of public utilities will be granted to investors, it added, whether Egyptians or foreigners, for the purpose of establishing, managing, operating, maintaining and exploiting ports, river anchorages, locks and navigational routes.

This is done based on the contracting system according to the nature of each project, while adhering to the conditions and procedures that guarantee the protection of that facility. The ministry added that these facilities will be transferred to the state at the end of the commitment period, free of charge and in good condition. The draft law aims to achieve unified, tight and disciplined regulation of everything related to river transport in a way that addresses both the randomness of regulation and the conflict of competences between the various departments in the government, the ministry explained.



Thus, the GART will be exclusively utilized to issue navigational licenses for mechanized and non-mechanized river units, fixed buoys, floating hotels, and the crews working on them, as well as issuing licenses for berths and river ports on the Nile and its navigational branches.

It added that this will lead to the unification of the

authority issuing licenses to carry out the work of transporting passengers, goods, missions, materials of all kinds, containers, and the management and operation of shipping lines and ports. GART's new regulation will also achieve the integration of transport services and better raise the safety and security standards for all river units, operators and users of river transport, whether passengers or goods.—Agencies

US's flagship green economy to European firms, in a bid to end what threatens to become a major transatlantic trade dispute. In a joint paper, German economy minister Robert Habeck and French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said it was in the US and EU's mutual interest to "swiftly find common ground" in the stand-off over the \$369bn Inflation Reduction Act, calling for a "green

US president Joe Biden said early this month during a visit by France's Emmanuel Macron that "tweaks" to the rules could make it easier for European companies to participate in the regime, but that the details have yet to be ironed out. The joint French-German paper said: "It is in our mutual interest to swiftly find common ground here and to avoid disruptions to the level play-

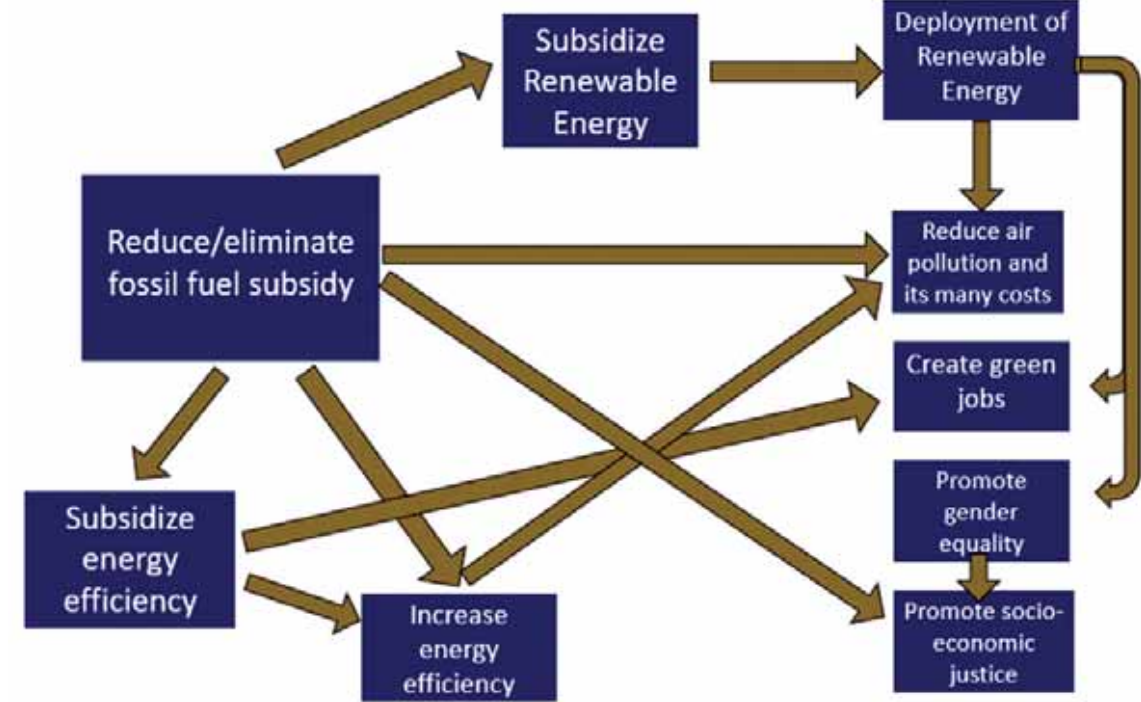
UK outlines US green subsidy opposition in letter

LONDON: Britain outlined in a letter to Washington its opposition to US green subsidies, claiming they would "harm multiple economies" and "undermine UK-US trade and investment flows", UK media reported Friday. The Financial Times (FT) and The Times newspapers cited the letter by UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch to US counterpart Katherine Tai that hit out at the climate subsidy package worth around \$370 billion.

Washington's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) also contains tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries, to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy. It claims the subsidies are needed in the race to battle climate change. But Badenoch said the plan would "harm multiple economies across the world and impact global supply chains in batteries, electric vehicles and wider renewables", according to the FT. The subsidies, "also undermine our shared goals to promote free and fair trade internationally", The Times quoted Badenoch as saying. "The UK expects to be and should, as the closest of US allies, be part of any flexibilities in the implementation of the IRA," she reportedly added. Contacted by AFP, Britain's trade department would not comment on Friday's reports. Britain had already joined the European Union and countries outside the bloc in opposing the IRA. The EU sees the domestic production requirement as a threat to European jobs, especially in the energy and auto sectors.

But European nations have been divided on how to respond to the IRA. French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Europe to adopt its own lavish subsidies while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has favored dialogue with Washington. The IRA has exemptions for products from its trade bloc partners Canada and Mexico, and on Monday Paris and Berlin called for such exemptions to be expanded to EU nations.

The EU's two biggest member states have urged the Biden administration to extend benefits contained in the



economic partnership" with the US. Both Paris and Berlin want to see Washington extend subsidies for American, Canadian and Mexican green technologies to "partners and allies", including the EU. The EU has warned that the act, which includes \$369bn-worth of subsidies and tax credits for green technologies, is damaging to the bloc's industrial base and breaches World Trade Organization rules. Brussels has created a task force with the White House aimed at resolving the dispute. Please use the sharing tools found via the share button at the top or side of articles.

ing field between close partners, at a time of trustful co-operation to face the Russian war against Ukraine." The EU, South Korea, Japan and the UK have all criticised the subsidies for electric car manufacturers in the US and its neighbors, saying the measures were discriminatory against their companies and in violation of WTO rules. Rules in the US regime requiring green content to be sourced locally should be waived to ensure that European products were eligible for the same tax credits that apply to US products, Habeck and Le Maire said.—AFP

Burgan Bank appoints Al-Zanki to key position

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the assignment of Mohammed Najeeb Al-Zanki the responsibility of managing the Financial Institutions Department, following the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on December 6th, 2022. In addition to his current role as Head of Corporate Banking - Assistant General Manager at the Bank.

Commenting on the new assignment, Raed Abdullah Al-Haqhaq, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer & CEO - Kuwait at Burgan Bank, said, "We are happy to congratulate Mohammed Al-Zanki on his new leadership duties at the Bank, and we fully confident that his extensive banking and financial experience will continue to add value to our organization.



Mohammed Najeeb Al-Zanki

His responsibilities and his growing leadership role, will enable him to drive greater success across the organization and help us together achieve Burgan's strategic vision". Al-Haqhaq also appointed to Al-Zanki's long career at the Bank and the various position he has held throughout that period - the latest being Head of Corporate Banking-Assistant General Manager, adding: "Al-Zanki is well versed in the culture and strategy of Burgan, and we look forward to him leveraging that knowledge and his industry acumen even further to bring our growth and development plans to fruition."

Al-Haqhaq pointed out that Al-Zanki's new responsibilities managing the Financial Institutions Department is a pivotal one for Burgan Bank; given the importance of financial institutions in the banking and investment business, and their future development in line with the strategic plans of the Bank, in addition to its major role in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

It is worth noting that Al-Zanki has a long and distinguished career in the banking sector and Kuwaiti financial institutions, spanning more than 18 years, with over 8 years in leadership positions. Mr. Al-Zanki also has extensive experience in corporate banking.

Al-Zanki joined Burgan Bank in 2010 and held the position of Senior Corporate Relationship Manager until 2015, then Head of the Contracting Unit at the Bank from 2015 to 2017, and has held the position of Head of Corporate Banking - Assistant General Manager since 2018. He holds a Bachelor of Science in International Business Administration from the University of Baltimore in the United States, a postgraduate degree in investment from the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), and is an alumni at Harvard Business School Program for Leadership Development.

IMF reviews new credit facility for Argentina

WASHINGTON: The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the second review of the extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Argentina. The Board's decision enables an immediate disbursement of SDR 3 billion (about \$3.8 billion), bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to about \$17.5 billion.

In completing the review, the Executive Board assessed that recent decisive actions were critical to stabilizing markets, rebuilding confidence, and to secure key quantitative targets, including the end-September floor for net international reserves and ceiling on monetary financing of the fiscal deficit. The Board also approved waivers of non-observance for the continuous performance criteria relating to exchange restrictions and multiple currency practices.

Argentina's 30-month EFF arrangement, with access of SDR 31.914 billion (equivalent to \$44 billion, or about 1000 percent of quota), was approved on March 25, 2022. The authorities' IMF-supported program provides Argentina with balance of payments and budget support that is linked to the steadfast continued implementation of program policies aimed at strengthening public finances, tackling persistent high inflation, boosting reserve accumulation, and setting the basis for sustained and inclusive economic growth.

Following the Executive Board discussion on Argentina, Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, issued the following statement:



Kristalina Georgieva

"In response to the market disruptions of mid-2022, Argentina's new economic team adopted decisive corrective measures that are starting to restore confidence and policy credibility. Prudent macroeconomic policies and steadfast program implementation will be needed to address the still fragile situation, strengthen stability, and deliver the objectives of the authorities' Fund-supported program, which remains a key macroeconomic anchor.

"Achieving the fiscal primary deficit targets of 2.5 percent of GDP in 2022 and 1.9 percent of GDP in 2023 is critical to moderate import growth, accumulate reserves, strengthen debt sustainability, and further reduce reliance on central bank financing of the deficit. This will require further strengthened expenditure controls and increased efficiency of subsidies and social spending, which in turn would create

space for critical energy infrastructure projects and targeted assistance to the vulnerable.

"Continued resolute implementation of the monetary policy framework is essential to sustain positive real interest rates and tackle the persistent high inflation. Doing so will also encourage demand for peso assets, increase external competitiveness, and boost reserves. While targeted FX measures can temporarily support the balance of payments, they are not a substitute for sound macroeconomic policy. As such, exchange restrictions and multiple currency practices should be unwound as conditions permit and reserve coverage strengthens.

"A proactive debt management approach, coupled with prudent macroeconomic policies, remains necessary to mobilize domestic peso financing while mitigating rollover risks. Continued good faith efforts, on all sides, are also needed to secure a successful restructuring of Paris Club debt. Ensuring that international partners deliver on financing commitments is also critical to support key program objectives.

"The structural reform agenda remains critical to address deep-seated economic challenges. Continued progress is needed to strengthen public financial management, monetary transmission and central bank finances, as well as the frameworks to combat tax evasion and money laundering. Similarly, strong and stable regulatory frameworks can help boost Argentina's export potential in key sectors, including energy. "Amid the challenging global environment and ongoing domestic risks, resolute implementation of the program and agile policy making are critical to meet objectives and secure stability. Broad political support for the program's policies remains essential in the period ahead."

—IMF Communications Dept



Announcing Nominations for Candidacy to the Election of the Board

Kuwait Financial Center K.P.S.C. ("Markaz") announces the start of candidacy for election to the Board of Directors for a period of two weeks from 27th December 2022.

Anyone who wishes to nominate themselves for the position of a member of the Board of Directors, may apply by filling the CMA's Nomination Form, provided they meet the requirements of the Fit and Proper rules per CMA Law No. 7 of 2010, the Companies Law and the Articles of Association of the Company.

The Nomination Form should be submitted along with the required supporting documents to the Company at the following address:

Kuwait Financial Center K.P.S.C. "Markaz"
Sharq - Ahmad Al-Jaber Street - Universal Tower - 9th floor
8:00 AM until 3:00 PM
From 27th December 2022 until 10th January 2023

Note that the Nomination Form is available on the Company's website www.markaz.com

For further queries, please contact the Board Secretariat office at 22248036

Careful management of Kuwait's public finance vital for economy

CBK raises discount rate by 0.50% to 3.50%

KUWAIT: Until November 28, 2022, when the government program was issued, there was no economy in the country as the public sector contributes directly about 70 percent of its GDP, and the government employs more than 83 percent of Kuwaiti citizens and supports the rest.

All of the above depends on oil revenues, directly or indirectly, i.e. its savings, which has been financing the public budget expenditures by 90 percent over a period of 60 years. This limits the interest to "finance" or the second topic in the program. At a time when Kuwait's economy was just a tent in stormy weather, the only pillar of that tent was the public finance. In order for us to succeed in building an economy in the future, we must be very careful about the safety of that pillar. However, the content of the current government's program and the flow of parliamentary populist projects, that column carries much more than it can carry.

Examples of these pressures include the need to employ 96,000 graduates within 4 years, 85 percent of whom are in the public sector, or about 82,000 citizens with the hope that the private sector can absorb 14,000 citizens with labor support allocations, regardless of job availability or even space capacity. One of the simplest requirements in the program was to calculate the potential for the sustainability of the labor market together with the public finance.

The government intends to dissolve the housing issue by the horizontal expansion policy at 75 percent by 2026, i.e. constructing 80,000 homes. Such expansion has direct financial needs such as housing loans and indirect financial needs such as infrastructure. The simplest function of the government is to calculate the financial projection on expenditures and its mutual impact on achieving the target housing. The government has a declared goal to adjust the demographics.

In addition to the impossibility of achieving this with the horizontal housing expansion, what it will reap from the contradiction of its policies is an unbearable inflation in labor wages that create financial pressures in the construction sector and others. Moreover, its impact on the sustainability of families' private finances is negative and large. The government wants to expand the provision of education services and the cost of public education in Kuwait is exorbitant in its infrastructure. Kuwait University is an example or the current student cost. Another example is health services with a promise to expand the establishment of healthy cities, increase the capacity of existing hospitals and to host one international hospital at least, and, at the same time, to

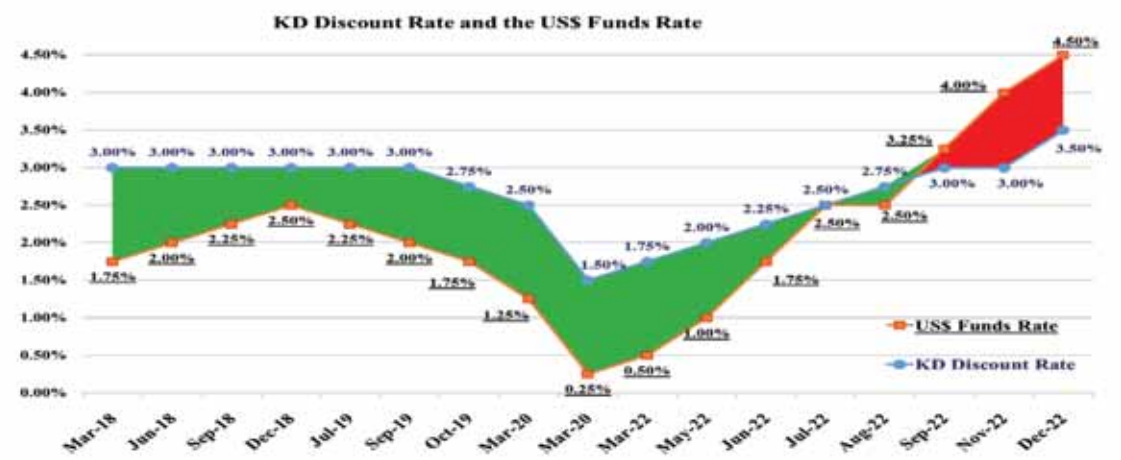
expand the citizens' involvement in health insurance projects in a country where health services are free.

Despite the above, we do not find any projection with it regarding the possibility of achieving these goals and ensuring the sustainability of public finances. The government intends to increase investment doses to diversify sources of income in the petrochemical industries, aluminum smelters, the railway project and the completion of Mubarak port...etc. All of those exert pressures on public finance, offset by a modest goal of increasing non-oil revenues from KD 2.396 billion in the final account of the last fiscal year to KD 3.500 billion, without knowing when. Perhaps the most dangerous indicator is the government's adoption of populist projects, such as buying vacations and rewards for the front ranks, and before that, postponing the payment of loan installments. Some deputies stepped in and opened hell on public finance and other deputies showed awareness and care for the country's future from certain loss.

We appreciate their sacrifice putting the sustainability of the homeland before the sustainability of their positions. What applies to contradictory targets above applies to all other topic targets. What will happen is a repetition of the 2020 scenario when the government announced the possibility of its inability to achieve anything, including the payment of salaries and wages. A declared dispute erupted between the Ministers of Finance and Oil at the time over the eligibility of either ministry to the KD 7 billion, which the oil sector was late in paying to the public treasury.

In any country in today's world, a set of contradictory goals is not presented within the plan or program unless they are calculated within reciprocal matrices that estimate the cost of achieving those goals and the possibilities of meeting them, then arrange the priority of each goal according to its importance, i.e. achieving what is possible from each goal instead of missing out all, and with it the loss of the future of more than half of the citizens. The real challenge facing the country is how to change the approach to sharing the country's resources and turn it into a stable approach to building it and ensuring the stability of all its generations.

That was supposed to be the core of the government's program. We are still waiting for a promise to present a vision that guarantees financial and economic stability, and we will not delay our support to it if it takes into account those concerns; and if those concerns that we mentioned prove to be incorrect, then we owe them an apology.



Source: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)

Discount rate spiked

On December 7th 2022, the Central Bank of Kuwait raised the discount rate on the Kuwaiti dinar by 0.50 percent or from 3.00 percent to 3.50 percent. This happened immediately after the completion of the formation of its board of directors. The decision was correct in our estimation and reduced the gap in favor of the US dollar from 0.75 percent-1.00 percent to 0.25 percent-0.50 percent. On December 14th 2022, the US Federal Reserve issued its decision to raise the base interest rate on the US dollar by 0.50 percent to between 4.25 percent-4.50 percent, that decision restored the gap in favor of the US dollar interest to 0.75 percent-1.00 percent.

The US Federal Reserve's decision was followed by an increase in interest rates by the same rate, i.e. 0.50 percent, on the currencies of all the other five GCC countries. The Central Bank of Kuwait did not make a decision to increase or issue a statement explaining its position or intentions. Before the US Federal Reserve's decision to increase interest rates, the markets were confused as to whether an increase of 0.50 percent or of 0.75 percent was likely. Two weeks earlier, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve stated that inflationary pressures began to ease and thus forecasts predicted the increase, if any, would be minimal.

The Central Bank of Kuwait is a professional authority

and deserves all respect. It is an independent authority that takes its decisions based on a crowd of detailed information available to it. As its job is sensitive, disagreement with its opinion is within narrow limits, assuming that the possibility that its position is correct is the most likely possibility. Regarding its position on not raising the discount rate on the KD after raising it on the US dollar and all the currencies of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, we have a different opinion. We disagree with it though we respect its decision. What we do not understand is the lack of a statement confirming that position. The work environment will remain reluctant to take a decision for fear of an upcoming hike, as the deposit - owner is reluctant, the lender and the borrower are both reluctant, and even the trader in the stock exchange is reluctant. The role of central banks - as did the chairman of the US Federal Reserve before the decision to raise the interest rate - is to reduce the unknown space in front of the decision-maker in the business sector to the lowest possible level. Increasing the space of the unknown is the fiercest enemy before the correct decision. We believe that the CBK should announce its intentions regarding discount and whether there will be an upcoming rise, or the stability of the discount rate is the decision, along with its justifications.

Deliveroo's global 'top 100 trending dishes'

KUWAIT: On 24 December, 2022, food-delivery service Deliveroo took a look-back over the past year to reveal its annual 'Deliveroo 100 Report' - a list of the top trending dishes ordered on the platform from across the world.

Food lovers in Kuwait have made their mark on the global list, with nine dishes from Kuwait making Deliveroo's top 100 trending dishes ordered around the world in 2022. From burgers to shawarma, the most ordered dishes from Kuwait that made Deliveroo's top 100 include:

1. Iced Cafe Americano from Starbucks
2. The Original Burger from Thinnies Burger
3. #1 Sweet Chuck from Chuck's
4. Cheeseburger from Five Guys
5. Small Cup (With Topping) from PICK
6. Majboos Chicken Freej from Suwaileh
7. Box Combo from Raising Canes
8. Chicken Shawarma Sandwich from Ebn Amy
9. ShackBurger from Shake Shack

It's no secret that food lovers in Kuwait also love their coffee. Kuwait's most ordered food item, an Iced Cafe Americano from Starbucks, also made Deliveroo's 'top ten' trending dishes globally. Whether fried, grilled, rolled into a wrap, or between two buns, it's clear that people love chicken with poultry-based dishes filling nearly a quarter (23 percent) of all the spots on this year's Deliveroo 100. In Kuwait, chicken dishes from Chuck's, Freej Suwaileh, Raising Canes, Ebn Amy, Treek, Grillz, and Deboned all made Deliveroo's top 30 dishes in Kuwait.

Tasty traditions

Some countries around the world are keeping it traditional, with favorite national dishes making it to the list, including Majboos Chicken from Freej Suwaileh in Kuwait, Pain Au Chocolat from Chez Meunier in France, and Spice Bag from Xian Street Food in Ireland.

Comforting classics

Our classic comfort foods - pizza, burgers, burritos and kebabs - fill 34 of the spots on this year's Deliveroo 100, with favorites including the ShackBurger from Shake Shack, Kuwait, Chicken Sando from PICKL, UAE, and Burrito from Chipotle, UK.

Fro-yo forever

It looks like the froyo fad is very much still relevant - five sweet dishes have made it onto this year's Deliveroo 100, two of which are Frozen Yogurts, the Small Cup (With Topping) from PICK, Kuwait and, Original Frozen Yogurt with Toppings from Snog, UK.

Hands on

Customers around the world are ditching the knife, fork, and spoon for a more hands-on experience - 60.6 percent of the 94 dishes in the global Deliveroo 100 list (excluding drinks and grocery items) are foods that people tend to eat with their hands.



Seham Al-Husaini

stc success story: From KSA to Bahrain and Kuwait

KUWAIT: The growth and expansion plan launched by stc Group at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century was not just dead letters, but rather a realistic strategy sought by the group as a result of the technical development witnessed in the region. Over the past few years, stc group has transformed from a mere company that provides communication and internet services to a digital enabler that is considered the most prominent in the Middle East region. The comprehensive strategy launched by the group had the superlative role in endorsing digital transformation in the gulf region, as it sought to diversify investment opportunities. And during the past two years it launched many subsidiaries in the fields of cybersecurity, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, infrastructure and 5G technologies that serve different gulf communities and support the digital transformation in the region.

Today, the market value of the stc group has reached more than 187 billion riyals and the value of the stc brand reached \$10.6 billion, according to the Forbes magazine classification. Furthermore, the group obtained the most valuable brand certificate in the

Middle East region in the telecommunications sector, according to the classification of Brand Finance International. The success story of this development, growth and accomplishments achieved by the group extended to become the main driving force of the communications and information technology sector for both Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain. How did the group contribute to transforming the status of communications and information technology in the Gulf region?

The beginning of the group's success story in the expansion and growth process was from Kuwait, where in 2008 it witnessed the birth of a new star that shone its light in the sky of communications, and its features emerged in its first steps to draw the shapes of a giant who will transfer the communications and information technology sector to a promising future. During its first year, it attracted half a million customers in Kuwait, and within only 4 years it began to achieve profitable returns for investors, and the company's official listing on the Kuwait Stock Exchange was one of the shapes of success and growth, as the volume of retained profits increased with the development of the company's profits.

Contributing to national visions

2019 witnessed the launch of the unified brand in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The company also launched an updated and developed a strategy that fits the company's basic objectives during the subsequent years in 2019 to enhance the process of enabling the



LuLu Hypermarket launches festive season promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer and destination of choice for discerning shoppers in the region, is holding an amazing promotion and grand sale to mark the year-end festive season. The promotion, which was launched in the first week of December and runs until the New Year, is being held across all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait.

The promotion was inaugurated by Dr Susovana Sujith Nair, Medical Oncologist, Breast Unit, Kuwait Cancer Control Center on 22 December at the Al-Rai branch in the presence of the top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, along with a large gathering of customers and well-wishers of the brand.

A highlight of the month-long promotion is an amazing range of offers and discounts on an array of world-class products, including exclusive promotional offers never seen before. Adding further excitement to the

promotion several fun-filled competitions themed around Christmas are being held for the kids. Among the fun competitions is the 'Santa Claus Fashion Show' where children dressed in the characteristic Santa attire mimicked Father Christmas to the best of their ability. Winners of the competition were rewarded for their efforts with attractive prizes, including KD 50 worth of gift vouchers to the first prize winner, KD 30 gift voucher for the second placed 'Santa', and gift voucher of KD 20 to the third place winner.

Another competition that brought out the spirit of the season was the 'Xmas Tree Decoration' contest, which saw competitors adorning the traditional festive tree with innovative decorations besides the traditional bright stars and glittering tinsels. The first place winner was presented with a gift voucher worth KD 25, while the second and third place winners received gift vouchers worth KD 20 and KD 10 respectively.

The range of competitions rounded off with a 'Cake Decoration' competition, where little chefs had to decorate pre-baked cakes in the most attractive way they could think of. Their efforts and ingenuity were appreciated and rewarded with the first prize winner receiving gift vouchers worth KD 25, the second prize winner being presented with gift vouchers worth KD 20, and



company's digital transformation in line with the national visions in each country.

In Kuwait, the Kuwait strategic Vision 2035 seeks digital transformation among the many goals set by the state, to keep pace with the internet services at all levels. stc had a fundamental and vital role in accelerating the transformation process, as the company's acquisition of Quality-net and its transformation into "solutions by stc" had a prominent role to be the active technical arm in enabling the business sector and supporting local projects.



the third place winner walking away with a gift voucher worth KD 10.

The tremendous efforts of the more than 150 children who participated in the competitions were acknowledged by the judges, and all the young Santas, tree decorators, and little chefs were presented with various consolation prizes and gifts by the hypermarket's top officials, while Santa was present in person to hand over chocolates and gifts to the participants.

In addition to the excitement of the competitions and adding further fervor to the promotion an Xmas special band performance played scores that immersed shoppers in the festivities of the season. And, to keep up the cheer, a 30-member group of choristers led by Choir Master Mathews Pallipad, pitched in with melodious choir renditions. The promotion, which runs to the New Year, is expected to witness further surprises and superb promotional offers at year-end, so that shoppers can ring in the New Year in the most fabulous way. The festive season promotion at LuLu Hypermarket once again underlines the brand's commitment to participate in all community celebrations, and to provide shoppers with the best products at the most competitive prices, so as to make shopping in any branch of the hypermarket a truly remarkable experience

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US shrugs off inflation worries, but job market remains tight

No new year cheer in UK as economy falls deeper into recession

KUWAIT: The resolute resilience in the US economy is showing no signs of being battered or disheartened. Even though the recent bag of data came in mixed, it still shows an overall robust and growing economy. The final GDP reading in Q3 this year was revised upwards unexpectedly from 2.9 percent to 3.2 percent. Driving the growth was strong exports and healthy consumer spending. As for the job market, applications for US unemployment benefits were little changed last week. Rising by just 2K to reach 216K, it sticks near a historically low level and underscores businesses' reluctance to lay off workers in a supply-constrained labor market.

The job market is still extremely tight despite some signs of cooling and the ongoing imbalance between labor supply and demand continues to put upward pressure on wages. In one sign that the Federal Reserve's persistent rate hikes are serving their purpose by slowing the economy, sales of existing US homes shrunk by 7.7 percent in November, marking the 10th straight month of decline as high mortgage rates stifle affordability. In another, the Fed's favored gauge of inflation, the Core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Price Index rose more modestly in November by 0.2 percent month-on-month and 4.7 percent from a year ago in line with expectations. The pace of growth slowed down from last month's 0.3 percent rise and annual rate of 5 percent.

Nevertheless, with inflation easing and gasoline prices dropping to the lowest since mid-2021, Americans are feeling better about the economy. Consumer confidence in December rose to the highest since April following back-to-back monthly declines. The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index increased to 108.3 up sharply from 101.4 in November. The Present Situation Index-based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions-increased to 147.2 from 138.3 last month. The Expectations Index-based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions-improved to 82.4 from 76.7.

However, expectations are still lingering around 80, a level associated with recession.

With data hinting that price pressures may have peaked and markets speculating a pause from the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes ahead, hawkish sounds intensified. The Fed has made it very clear that with annual headline inflation still running above 7 percent, it is far too soon to let off the gas on interest rates. Central bank officials vowed to keep raising rates until they are confident inflation is coming down. The Fed's economic projections appeared to incorporate an assumption that inflation would prove resurgent at the end of this year and officials expect core inflation to end 2022 around 4.8 percent, up from the 4.5 percent figure they forecast in September. The US Dollar regained itself after getting caught off guard this week from the Bank of Japan's monetary policy meeting. Fed hawkishness and a strong economic backing kept the dollar steady at 104.325 and major peers' gains limited.

Optimism in eurozone

In a sign that price pressures are slowly being doused, producer prices in Germany decreased by 3.9 percent month-on-month in November, the second time prices declined significantly compared with a month earlier, thanks to the developments to lower energy prices.

On the sentimental side, a sense of hope is flowing across Europe. Germany's business outlook in December improved for a third month amid signs that double-digit inflation may be peaking and a deep recession over the winter can be avoided. The country's most prominent leading indicator, the Ifo Business Climate survey, rebounded to 88.6 this month from 86.4 in November. Germany was among the countries reporting slower inflation in November as pressure from surging energy costs receded. Well-filled gas-storage facilities have also lowered the likelihood that Russia's war in Ukraine will lead to disruptive shortages in the coming months. Another survey, the German GfK Consumer Climate Index also rose for the third time in a row to -37.8 from

-40.1, thanks to moderating energy prices and the German government's relief packages to curb energy costs. Nevertheless, stormy recession clouds are hovering nearby. Despite some relief in global supply chain frictions, early leading indicators from Asian nations point to potential weakening in global trade in the coming months along with the next chapter of the pandemic in China unfolding which may affect trade. Finally, elevated energy prices are gradually

price gains are headed back to the 2 percent target. Guindos suggested another 50bps on the table at the next ECB meeting early in February. Governing Council Member and Germany's Bundesbank President Joachim Nagel also stressed the need to increase rates given it will take some time until inflation slows to the central bank's 2 percent target. The single currency held steady in the 1.06 region, ending the week at 1.0618.

| Currencies | Previous Week Levels | | | | This Week's Expected Range | | 3-Month Forward |
|------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Open | Low | High | Close | Minimum | Maximum | |
| EUR | 1.0596 | 1.0587 | 1.0635 | 1.0618 | 1.0400 | 1.0800 | 1.0683 |
| GBP | 1.2045 | 1.2020 | 1.2094 | 1.2062 | 1.1900 | 1.2300 | 1.2084 |
| JPY | 132.32 | 132.13 | 133.14 | 132.79 | 133.00 | 138.00 | 131.13 |
| CHF | 0.9306 | 0.9284 | 0.9346 | 0.9333 | 0.9200 | 0.9500 | 0.9237 |

being passed on to consumers, a trend which will continue throughout next year and therefore may weigh on private consumption. Although a European recession still looks likely, the data flow is increasing the prospect of a shallower than expected contraction.

On the political side, nations of the European Union (EU) ended months of political wrangling and reached a deal over whether to intervene in the energy crisis that risked pushing the region into a recession. The EU decided to cap gas prices at A180 per megawatt-hour, which will apply for one year starting February next year, as a temporary measure designed to prevent extreme price swings. The cap is much lower than the earlier proposal, which would have not prevented the spikes that the region saw earlier this year when Russia curbed gas supplies during its war in Ukraine.

On the fiscal side, like their American counterparts, European Central Bank (ECB) officials kept up the hawkish talk. ECB Vice President Luis de Guindos said the central bank will raise interest rates until projections show that unprecedented regional

No new year cheer in the UK

The British economy is falling deeper into contraction when the revised GDP for Q3 this year was downwardly revised, falling by 0.3 percent instead of the first estimate of falling by 0.2 percent. During the third quarter, the services sector grew by 0.1 percent while the production sector fell by 2.5 percent. Compared with pre-COVID levels, services output is now 1.3 percent below its Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2019 levels, revised down from previously 0.9 percent below. Production output has now contracted for five consecutive quarters since Quarter 3 2021. The manufacturing and construction sectors were the hardest hit and real household disposable income continues to fall amid rising inflation. Annual real GDP is now estimated to have increased by 7.6 percent from 2020 to 2021, revised from the previous estimate of 7.5 percent. However, despite an upward revision to annual growth in 2021, downward revisions across the quarters of 2022 mean that real GDP is now estimated to be 0.8 percent below its pre-COVID level, revised from the previous estimate of being 0.4 per-

cent below. Strengthening headwinds and recessionary forces gaining momentum capped the cable at 1.2062.

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) stunned markets at their latest monetary policy meeting last week. While keeping the interest rate at rock bottom and unchanged at -0.10 percent, the BoJ adjusted its yield curve control policy much sooner than expected. The yield curve target was kept at 0 percent for the 10-year bond, but the yield trading band was widened to 0.50 percent, double the previous limit of 0.25 percent. As rising inflation rates pile pressure to the upside, raising the cap on Japanese government bond yields means Japanese debt can pay higher interest rates. The BoJ also said it would significantly increase its bond purchases to +9 trillion (\$67.5 billion) per month compared with the currently planned +7.3 trillion per month. Governor Haruhiko Kuroda argued that the purpose was to improve liquidity in the bond market and enhance the sustainability of monetary easing. However, many investors are seeing it as the first step towards policy normalization. Some are even suggesting that the BoJ could raise rates sometime next year.

Japanese inflation data continues to jump higher despite Governor Kuroda's claim that it is transitory and temporary. Core CPI, which excludes food but includes energy costs, hit a 40-year high of 3.7 percent annually in November as companies continued to pass on rising costs to households. Another core measure that excludes both food and energy also rose 2.8 percent annually in November from 2.5 percent in October. The figures entail how inflationary pressures are seeping into the broader economy. Markets reacted sharply after the BoJ yield curve control policy move. The 10-year yield jumped to 0.46 percent from 0.25 percent after the decision. The yen strengthened to as much as 132 against the dollar, compared with 137.16 immediately before the meeting, and ended the week at 132.79.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30605.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 22 DECEMBER 2022

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| Market | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Premier Market | 34,988 | 8,009.60 | -2.0% | -5.7% | 4.8% | 235,418,939 | 103,611,446 | 22,218 | 20.6 | 2.4 | 79.8% |
| Main Market | 8,843 | 5,571.77 | -1.4% | -1.9% | -5.3% | 321,847,766 | 37,779,567 | 15,090 | 46.5 | 1.4 | 20.2% |
| All Share | 43,831 | 7,209.33 | -1.9% | -4.9% | 2.4% | 557,266,705 | 141,391,013 | 37,308 | 25.8 | 2.2 | 100% |

| Sector | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-------|-------------------|
| BANKS | 29,629 | 1,773.26 | -2.0% | -4.9% | 9.3% | 102,526,307 | 58,025,981 | 9,320 | 22.9 | 2.3 | 67.60% |
| BASIC MATERIALS | 771 | 868.20 | 0.2% | -1.5% | -15.3% | 861,626 | 693,631 | 284 | 5.3 | 1.5 | 1.76% |
| CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY | 984 | 1,468.93 | 0.4% | -0.7% | 9.9% | 19,756,209 | 3,887,726 | 1,797 | 27.4 | 11.0 | 2.25% |
| CONSUMER STAPLES | 148 | 486.49 | -0.5% | -0.4% | -33.5% | 3,692,455 | 1,414,368 | 245 | 0.0 | 1.2 | 0.34% |
| ENERGY | 212 | 1,125.52 | -2.0% | 3.1% | -21.2% | 4,316,519 | 214,983 | 225 | 10.9 | 1.2 | 0.48% |
| FINANCIAL SERVICES | 4,316 | 1,259.17 | -1.1% | -5.5% | -11.5% | 264,476,467 | 33,041,344 | 11,675 | 75.0 | 1.7 | 9.85% |
| HEALTH CARE | 74 | 461.85 | -0.4% | 1.7% | -42.1% | 30 | 20,700 | 1 | 10.7 | 12.5 | 0.17% |
| INDUSTRIALS | 1,559 | 1,040.01 | -2.9% | -8.5% | -8.9% | 51,345,398 | 24,287,357 | 6,520 | 11.5 | 1.8 | 3.56% |
| INSURANCE | 616 | 1,548.26 | 0.4% | 0.3% | 1.0% | 1,579,348 | 165,510 | 163 | 9.4 | 1.0 | 1.40% |
| REAL ESTATE | 2,545 | 1,217.26 | -2.3% | -5.0% | -8.2% | 90,570,819 | 10,538,892 | 3,731 | 19.0 | 1.3 | 5.81% |
| TECHNOLOGY | 10 | 705.67 | 3.3% | 3.2% | 47.141 | 4,615 | 47 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.02% | |
| TELECOMMUNICATIONS | 2,967 | 1,162.46 | -2.6% | -4.3% | 6.7% | 15,079,145 | 8,559,129 | 2,891 | 12.6 | 2.1 | 6.77% |
| UTILITIES | 0 | 481.58 | -2.7% | -7.1% | -19.7% | 3,015,241 | 557,454 | 409 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.00% |

Top Gainers

| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|--------|
| AGHC | 326 | 15.19% | 7,487,655 | 2,411,453.634 | 784 |
| MADAR | 104.0 | 8.33% | 563,737 | 58,558.082 | 9 |
| ASIYA | 52 | 7.90% | 16,443,607 | 816,937.565 | 666 |
| NIH | 126 | 7.69% | 16,543,149 | 2,016,190.524 | 616 |
| SECH | 74 | 7.25% | 8,050,856 | 568,588.277 | 247 |

Top Losers

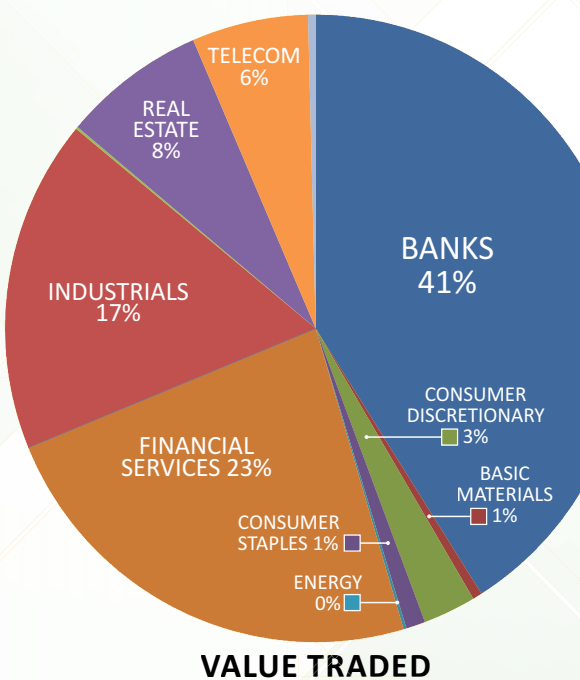
| Stock | Last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| MRC | 53 | -18.46% | 324,923 | 16,974 | 88 |
| NRE | 128 | -12.33% | 18,364,776 | 2,475,184 | 736 |
| SALBOOKH | 15 | -9.15% | 66,992 | 1,036 | 15 |
| URC | 69.3 | -8.58% | 3,183,210 | 223,070 | 254 |
| ALSAFAT | 106.0 | -7.83% | 3,469,262 | 371,341 | 382 |

Top Volume

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| GFH | 76 | -3.55% | 46,609,335 | 3,547,809 | 1,555 |
| KFH | 804 | -2.90% | 41,430,279 | 33,627,610 | 4,615 |
| AAYAN | 135 | 0.75% | 37,386,616 | 4,889,053 | 833 |
| NIND | 218 | -3.11% | 26,420,481 | 5,716,817 | 886 |
| IFA | 99 | -6.19% | 22,678,834 | 2,286,946 | 720 |

Top Value

| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
|-------|-------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| KFH | 804 | -2.90% | 41,430,279 | 33,627,610 | 4,615 |
| AGLTY | 681 | -5.02% | 22,331,758 | 15,363,709 | 3,432 |
| NBK | 1,075 | -1.10% | 9,555,250 | 10,294,669 | 1,331 |
| ZAIN | 550 | -3.85% | 13,146,160 | 7,300,327 | 2,151 |
| NIND | 218 | -3.11% | 26,420,481 | 5,716,817 | 886 |



Market Summary:

- Premier Market weekly volume and value dropped 12% and 29%, respectively, and Main Market volume and value dropped 19% and 53%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices continued moving on a downtrend while the volume kept dropping simultaneously.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7209, with support levels at 7162, 7105, and 7041, and resistance at 7214. The Premier index closed at 8009, with support levels at 7977, 7926, and 7841, while resistance at 8064. The Main index closed at 5571, with support levels at 5550, 5523, and 5484, while resistance at 5616.



In this photo taken on Oct 25, 2022, Roshan Melwani of Sam's Tailor works alongside his team as he talks to a client in the US during a video call at his shop in Hong Kong.



Manu Melwani of Sam's Tailor works at his shop in Hong Kong.



Manu Melwani of Sam's Tailor is reflected in a mirror as he watches his son Roshan working at their shop in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

Hong Kong tailors livestream in pandemic survival fight

Assistants wielding multiple livestreaming mobile phones are now as crucial to Roshan Melwani's tailor shop as the measuring tapes, needles and fabrics that have made his Hong Kong family business so famous. The Melwani family has dressed everyone from American presidents to aristocrats and celebrities over the decades. But the pandemic nearly sunk them - and many of Hong Kong's once thriving tailoring businesses have not survived.

Few places remained internationally cut-off during the coronavirus pandemic for as long as Hong Kong, a self-imposed isolation that the city's government has only begun to lift in the last two months. As a result, Melwani's shop Sam's Tailors has been reliant on online sales for most of the last 2.5 years, long after rivals in Saville Row, Milan and New York reopened their doors.

"Understand that if I did not have 60 years of cash behind me, I could not operate," Melwani, a third-generation tailor, tells AFP as a frenetic day of video calls with customers and livestreams to showcase new designs gets underway.

"Pre-pandemic I had a minimum 20 people that I would work with per day, sometimes 40 people, up to six days a week."

Quality and speed

Tim, a client in the United States, is the kind of customer that has helped keep Sam's Tailor afloat. During the pandemic, he ordered an entire new wardrobe and now he's on the look-out for something more daring. With the help of assistants broadcasting a dizzying array of choices over video call, Melwani steers Tim towards a burgundy three-piece with an inner lining featuring pin-up girls. "Yeah, let's get to it," Tim says over the phone as assistants frantically jot down all the extra details in yellow notebooks.

Before the pandemic Hong Kong's tailors were a must-visit for many tourists thanks to their reputation for quality - and their ability to turn a bespoke suit around as little as 24 hours. The walls of Sam's Tailors are festooned with photos of famous patrons, from Bill Clinton, George Bush and Boris Johnson, to Bruno Mars, Russel Crowe and Meghan Markle. The



Roshan Melwani is filmed by his team as he talks to a client in the US during a video call.

city's tailoring scene traces its origins back to Shanghai, which was renowned for its quality and craftsmanship at the start of the twentieth century.

Many of those tailors relocated to Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Chinese Communist Party's civil war vic-

tory in 1949. "People can get 10 suits in Hong Kong with the frequency they get one suit in Saville Row," Andy Chan, President of the Hong Kong Tailors Association, told AFP. "This is why everybody came to Hong Kong to get a custom-made suit for them."

Tourist desert

In recent years Hong Kong's tailoring industry has struggled against fast fashion and online sales. But the pandemic has been especially brutal. Hong Kong went from welcoming 65 million people in 2018 to just 91,000 in 2021 at the height of the pandemic, when all overseas arrivals had to pay for hotel quarantine of up to three weeks. "We estimate for these four years (2018-2021) we had over 40 percent of the tailors that shut down," Chan lamented.

Hong Kong only scrapped mandatory hotel quarantine in September, long after rival hubs like Singapore had reopened to the world. Even after that the city was still restricting where tourists could go for the first three days after arriving as they waited for test results, a measure that was removed earlier this month. Roshan Melwani says there are times he feels angry but he tries not to dwell. "You think it doesn't hurt my father, all his years of saving money, all that cash gone?" he said. "I don't have time to feel that hurt, I have to devote my time to taking us forward". — AFP

Aston, the bull who thinks he's a horse

At the foot of the vineyards outside a sleepy village in northern France, Sabine Rouas and her steed Aston, a 1.4-ton bull, make stately progress. A van pulls to a halt and the bemused driver takes out his phone to record the scene. Aston's outings often trigger the same reaction, and give Sabine a chuckle. "Honestly, I didn't invent this," she says. "Look around the world, people ride all sorts of animals - ostriches, camels, elephants."

Aston is a local celebrity in the Meuse region, and now around the world, on the web. Sabine's husband Yannick Kirschhoffer is the bull's social media manager, and Aston has 62,000 TikTok fans, 90,000 YouTube subscriptions and almost as many followers on Facebook.

Dramatic decision

Today the scene is cheerful, but the story begins in Sabine's grief for her dead racehorse. "Every rider has a particular relationship in their life with a horse. When he died, I didn't want to hear about horses anymore," she tells AFP. At that time in her life, Sabine - a sales manager - was living over the border in Luxembourg in a house by a cattle farm.

As time passed she watched the daily life of the cows and one day she decided to ask the farmer if she could meet them, to restore her bond with larger animals. "I still had a problem with horses, but I missed being in contact with them. So I headed down to the farm and spotted a cow that seemed more alert than



In this photograph taken on Dec 13, 2022, French horse trainer Sabine Rouas rides her bull "Aston" in Vieville-Sous-les-Cotes, northeastern France. — AFP photos

the others," she said. "I started to brush her. I could tell she was intelligent. She learned to raise her hoof to me, to say hello, to respond to her name," she said.

Sabine was delighted with her new friend but, when the cow had a calf, she took a dramatic decision, and bought them both - despite not having a farm of her own to keep them on. "For me it was hellish," she says. "They said I was completely mad and it's true I didn't know anything about how to go about things."

Bovine hurdler

But Sabine knew how to train cats and, believing in the bond between humans and animals, set about training the calf, Aston, to live alongside her. It wasn't easy. She fell from the young bullock at least 38 times in three months, but nine years later Aston is a show pony: Vaulting small hurdles, galloping, prancing sideways. Today, the team lives in France and Aston has been learning

lessons from his neighbors.

"Watching me ride horses, Aston wanted to do the same thing," Sabine gushes. "By watching them, he learned a lot, so we played on his talent for mimicry." "When people see that, they tell me that Aston thinks he's a horse, and it's true that he loves to copy them. But I can't make him do anything he doesn't want to do."

He's bull-headed, in other words. "He weighs 1.4 tons and he has his own personality. If he jumps over obstacles, it's because he enjoys it." And if he does enjoy online stardom, he's also spreading the joy. Aston is now much in demand to perform at equestrian events and has appeared in movies while developing an online brand. "Now people contact me to ask how to ride their bulls. I give advice," says Sabine. "I can't quite believe it, he's famous all the way to Japan." — AFP



Rouas brushes her bull "Aston", who performs in horse jumping and dressage competition.



From robot fireflies to okra plasters: 2022's nature inspired solutions

Even as animals and plants face widespread extinction from human-driven causes like climate change, the natural world continues to inspire scientific discovery in unexpected ways. "Nature has spent hundreds of millions of years optimizing elegant solutions to extremely complicated problems," said Alon Gorodetsky, a biomedical engineer at the University of California, Irvine. "So if we look to nature, we can shortcut our development process and get to a valuable solution right away," he told AFP. From squid-skin food warmers to a lubricant made of cow mucus, here is a selection of this year's scientific work inspired by nature.

Okra plasters stop bleeding hearts

Stopping the bleeding hearts and livers of dogs and rabbits without stitches may now be possible with a biodegradable plaster made of sticky okra gel. Okra is a fuzzy green vegetable with a slimy texture that inspired Malcolm Xing from Canada's University of Manitoba to turn it into a medical adhesive. "Okra is a fantastic material," said Xing.

In the July study published in *Advanced Healthcare Materials*, researchers discovered that refining okra in a juicer and then drying it into a powder creates an effective bioadhesive that quickly creates a physical barrier and starts the blood clotting process. The researchers plan to test this plaster on humans in the coming years.

Cow mucus lubricant

Snot may invoke feelings of disgust, but laboratory tests found that a lubricant made of cow mucus showed promise at curtailing the spread of certain sexually transmitted infections. The study, published in *Advanced Science* in September, is very preliminary, however. It has not yet been tested on humans and should not replace other forms of protection, like condoms.

Researchers extracted the mucus from the salivary glands of cows and turned it into a gel that binds to and constrains viruses. Mucus is made of a protein called mucin that might have antiviral properties. It is also both a sol-

id and a liquid. "Being a solid, it can trap bacteria or viruses in the body. Being a liquid, it can clear those pathogens from the body," said study co-author Hongji Yan from Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

Robot fireflies

Fireflies that light up the night sky inspired scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to create tiny, bug-sized robots that emit light when they fly. The glowing artificial muscles help the honeybee-sized robots communicate with each other, which may make them useful for search and rescue missions someday. Though the robots can only operate in a laboratory environment so far, the researchers are excited at their potential future uses.

Cancer-sniffing ants

There are an estimated 20 quadrillion ants in the world, and researchers have discovered that one species might be able to sniff out cancer in human breasts. In a study conducted at Sorbonne Paris Nord University and published on the preprint server bioRxiv, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, scientists used a sugar-water reward to train ants to smell the difference between mouse urine implanted with, and without, human tumors. While dogs can be trained to use their super noses to detect cancer, this is expensive and takes time. Ants might provide a cheaper, albeit less cute, alternative.

Squid-skin tea cosies

The strange skin of squids has inspired a packaging material that can keep coffee and food warm for as long, or as little, as wanted, according to a March study published in *Nature Sustainability*. Squids have miniature organs called chromatophores that can drastically change size, and also help them change color. To mimic "these pigment-filled organs", study co-author Alon Gorodetsky, from the University of California, Irvine, said they developed "little metal islands that you could move apart" and contract.

The heat level can then be controlled by how much the material is stretched. "If you put it around a warm object - for example, a coffee-filled cup or a hot sandwich - you can control the rate at which it cools down," he said. "Nature really is the epitome of innovation and engineering," Gorodetsky added. — AFP



A man dressed as Santa Claus gives presents to children during a Christmas celebration in Yogyakarta.



A deacon walks with a censer during the Christmas morning mass at the Syriac Orthodox Church of Virgin Mary in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province.



Christmas around the world

People walk along an illuminated street on Christmas Eve in Colombo.



Father Firas Dardar, patriarchal vicar for Basra and the Gulf, walks along the nave during the Christmas Eve midnight mass at the Syriac Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart in Iraq's southern city of Basra.



Pope Francis looks at Nativity scenes as he attends the Christmas Eve mass at the St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican



Hospital staff dressed up as Santa Claus greet staff on duty at the children's emergency room at a hospital in Pasig City, Metro Manila.



A Syrian man dressed as Santa Claus sells a sweet milk pudding, known as sahlab, at a Christmas market in Al-Hatab square in Syria's northern city of Aleppo.



A man dressed as Santa Claus gives presents to children during a Christmas celebration in Yogyakarta.



Pilgrims pray together in the crypt of the grotto at the Church of the Nativity in the biblical city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank on Christmas Day.



Christian devotees take part in a Christmas prayer at the St John's Cathedral Church in Peshawar.



Artists of Kharkiv theaters perform and congratulate military personnel for Christmas at the positions of the National Guard of Ukraine in the north of Kharkiv region.



A couple takes a selfie with a Christmas tree in Tokyo



Worshippers of the Legio Maria African Church Mission attend the Christmas Eve vigil mass at St Helena Mathare Parish in the informal settlement of Mathare in Nairobi.

Sports

Stade Francais move second, hammer 'shameful' Racing 92

Tedder stretchered off, rushed to hospital

PARIS: Stade Francais moved second in France's Top 14 on Saturday with a compelling 48-10 win over Paris rivals Racing 92 who were branded as "shameful" by one of their own players. First half tries from backrow forwards Romain Briatte and Sekou Macalou - an intercept off a Finn Russell pass - helped Stade into a 23-10 lead at half-time with Racing scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec replying for the home side. Full-back Leo Barre, wing Lester Etien and replacement back Paolo Odogwu added further tries for the visitors in the second half to secure the offensive bonus point as a sorry Racing disintegrated.

"Frankly it's shameful," said Racing's Argentinean wing Juan Imhoff. "I have nothing else to say. The whole team suffered, even the president and the staff. I don't think we can do worse than that." The win moves Stade Francais into second place on 37 points at the halfway mark of the regular season. They are seven points behind leaders Toulouse whose ugly 22-18 win over Castres on Friday featured 17 points for France full-back Melvyn Jaminet, playing his first game in two months after being

sidelined with an ankle injury.

In spite of their mid-season slump, Racing, who lost both of their Champions Cup matches in the last fortnight, remain in third, just two points behind their local rivals. Last season's champions Montpellier are fourth after their 38-10 win over Perpignan on Friday which was overshadowed by a worrying incident three minutes in when South African full-back Tristan Tedder lost consciousness for two minutes after being hit hard in a tackle.

Tedder was stretchered off and rushed to hospital but was discharged later in the evening. "The first examinations made at the hospital in Montpellier were reassuring, the player was allowed to go home last night to Perpignan to spend Christmas with his friends and family," the club said. "We wish him a good recovery," they added. European Champions Cup winners La Rochelle hit a speed-bump when they were unable to get out of first gear, slipping to a 12-8 home defeat against Bordeaux-Begles. On Thursday, Wales fly-half Dan Biggar kicked 11 points on his Top 14 debut to help new club Toulon to beat Lyon 21-3. — AFP



NANTERRE: Racing92's French flanker Baptiste Chouzenoux (left) runs with the ball as he is tackled by Stade Francais' South African wing Jeremy Ward during the French Top14 rugby union match between Racing92 and Stade Francais on December 24, 2022. — AFP



Ali Al-Kharafi receiving his award along with other riders.

Kuwait's Al-Kharafi wins fourth round

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: International star, Kuwait riding center's Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi won the fourth round of the second edition of Kuwait Equestrian Federation League following a tough competition with the rest

of the riders on Friday and Saturday, at the Hunting and Equestrian Club. Al-Kharafi won the 140 cm height in 39.49 seconds without faults after a differentiation round with Antonio Morozo, Abdelrahman Al-Fuzaie, Ghazi Al-Juraiwi and Abdallah Al-Awadhi. In the minor prize (130 cm), Kuwait's Ghazi Al-Juraiwi took first, followed by Antonio Morozo, Fawaz Al-Subaie, Abdallah Al-Awadhi and Madhi Al-Khamis respectively. Administrative Manager of Kuwait Equestrian Federation Safayan Bugammaz said the fourth round was a success and congratulated the winning riders.

Final doubles match of 2nd Arab Masters

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The final doubles match of the 2nd Arab Masters Tennis Tournament will be held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex between Tunisians Mohamed Aziz Dougaz and Iskander Almansouri on one side and Jordanians Abdallah Shelbayeh and Mousa Al-Kotop on the other side. Meanwhile, the singles semi-final matches will be played ahead of the doubles' final at 4:00 pm.

The Arab Master Tournament will be concluded on Tuesday with the final singles match. The conclu-



Faleh Al-Otaibi



Abdallah Shelbayeh

sion of the groups round was highly exciting and the huge surprise was the exit of the number one seed Tunisian Iskandar Almansouri after being defeated by Morocco's Yassine Dlimi. Dlimi, Akram Al-Salali (Egypt) from group one; Benjamin Hassan (Lebanon) and Mohammad Safwat (Egypt) from second group; Abdallah Shelbayeh (Jordan), Hassan Ibrahim (Leb) from third group and Aziz Dougaz (Tunisia) and Kareem Maamoun (Egypt) from the

Fatat Futsal Women team secure top spot

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Fatat Futsal Women team secured top spot after defeating their co-leader Tadhamon 5-1 in their seventh round match -

raising their total point to 18. Tadhamon remained at 15 (in second place). The match was exciting from the first whistle as Tadhamon's player Mayar Firmanda scored the first goal after which, Fatat replied with five goals. Rareeni Christian scored two goals; Mariam Baroun scores two while Dina Ali scored the fifth and final goal. In the second match, Kuwait team did not have any difficulty in beating Fatayat Al-Oyoun 4-1 - raising their point total to nine while Fayat Al-Oyoun remained pointless. Francisca Valera scored two goals; Fajer Al-Amer scored two also for Kuwait, while Fatayat Al-Oyoun's lonely goal was scored by Alona Kirilshok.



Supermaxi skippers target new record

SYDNEY: Skippers of the supermaxi yachts preparing for Monday's Sydney to Hobart bluewater classic are targeting a new record in a high-speed race they predict will go to the wire. With northerly winds forecast for one of the world's most challenging ocean events, Comanche's one day, 9 hours, 15min and 24sec record for the 628-nautical-mile (1,200-km) endurance test, set in 2017, is under threat.

"It's a race that could definitely rack up a record, especially with Andoo Comanche (in the field)," Mark Richards, skipper of nine-time line honours-winning supermaxi Wild Oats, said on the event website. "It all depends on the actual conditions. But if it's dead the whole way, I'd say not, but then it only has to change a couple of degrees and all of a sudden, it's all on. "If there's breeze in the Derwent (River), absolutely."

The NSW Bureau of Meteorology has forecast north-easterly winds for Monday's start, which augurs well for the 100-foot supermaxis - Andoo Comanche, Black Jack, Wild Oats and LawConnect - among the 109-strong fleet. They are predicted to get off to a flying start from Sydney harbour, with the winds propelling them down Australia's east coast before they tackle the notorious Bass Strait towards the Tasmanian state capital Hobart.



SYDNEY: Supermaxi LawConnect leads the pack at the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race on Sydney Harbor. — AFP

Black Jack skipper Mark Bradford, which won line honors last year, said he expected a nail-biting race right up to the run down Derwent River towards Hobart. "The boats should technically get from A to B - B being Tasman Island - at roughly



Iskander Almansouri and Aziz Dougaz

fourth group qualified for the semi finals.

Secretary General of Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF), Tournament Director Faleh Al-Otaibi lauded the efforts of President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, and his keenness to follow all details of the tournament. He said the tournament is moving on as scheduled with total cooperation from players and committees.

Bangladesh bowlers rattle India as match hangs in the balance

DHAKA: Bangladesh fought their way into what earlier appeared a lost cause on Saturday, knocking over four Indian wickets to leave the visitors teetering after Liton Das compiled a gritty half-century on the third day of the second Test in Dhaka. The Bangladesh bowlers were given 145 runs to defend after Liton's steely 73 and a wagging tail steered the hosts to 231 all out.

Despite the subpar score, spinners Mehidy Hasan and Shakib Al Hasan rose to the challenge, reducing India to 45-4 at stumps with 100 still left to chase, leaving the match unexpectedly hanging in the balance. Mehidy claimed three wickets after Shakib's initial breakthrough, removing Cheteshwar Pujara (six), Shubman Gill (seven) and Virat Kohli (one). Shakib started the slide with the wicket of captain K.L. Rahul for two. Axar Patel survived the day to stay unbeaten on 26 alongside nightwatchman Jaydev Unadkat (three), with first-innings heroes Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer yet to come in.

Axar had earlier downed three Bangladesh batters and all of India's bowlers were among the wickets. Liton rode his luck in an innings where he was dropped twice by Kohli - first off Axar and then Ravichandran Ashwin - to score what could be 73 vital runs. There was little support on the other end for Liton after opener Zakir Hasan (51) fell soon after lunch until wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan joined him at the crease and the pair compiled an aggressive 46-run stand.

That stand was broken by Axar when he drew Nurul out of his crease to set up an easy stumping for Pant. Liton then added another brisk 60 runs alongside Taskin Ahmed (31 not out) before he was bowled by a Mohammed Siraj delivery that nipped back in and found the gap between bat and pad. Even with those small pockets of resistance, India looked to be in complete control of the match, picking up regular wickets with all their bowlers getting a part of the spoils.

Ashwin had Najmul Hossain trapped leg-before for five in the second over of the day before Siraj removed Bangladesh's first-innings top-scorer Mominul Haque for the same score. Unadkat then got skipper Shakib (13) to spoon a length delivery to Gill at cover in his first over of the day. With the hosts struggling, Axar added to their misery on the stroke of lunch, trapping the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim lbw for nine. He added two more to his tally after the break, getting Mehidy lbw for nought before dismissing Nurul for 31. —AFP

the same time, but the journey along the way will be very different directions," he said. "We'll see everyone commit to their boats and their modes. Then we'll get to Tasman Light (house) within eyesight of each other." — AFP

Sports

Hatate, Furuhashi hit double as Celtic sweep past St Johnstone

Champions Celtic strengthen their grip on top spot

GLASGOW: Japan's Reo Hatate and Kyogo Furuhashi both scored twice as champions Celtic strengthened their grip on top spot in the Scottish Premiership with a 4-1 victory over St Johnstone on Saturday. The success in front of their own fans at Parkhead saw Celtic restore their nine-point lead over arch Glasgow rivals Rangers.

Drey Wright pulled a goal back for the visitors in a match where Celtic substitute David Turnbull was sent off in stoppage time after a VAR check for his foul on Saints goalkeeper Remi Matthews. Hatate's double was all the more impressive given the midfielder was deployed at right-back in the absence of the injured Anthony Ralston and with Josip Juranovic on a post-World Cup break.

"He was great," said Celtic manager Ange Postecoglou of Hatate. "Reo has played left-back earlier in his career, which I knew from Japan, but he's not a full-back, that's for sure. "Credit to him, I thought even defensively he did a good job and kept his discipline and his position. As soon as I told him, he was all in." Celtic went ahead in the 14th minute when Furuhashi sent compatriot Daizen Maeda sprinting down the left. Maeda's low cross eventually came to Hatate, with the makeshift full-back's 20-yard strike completing a made in Japan goal.

Furuhashi doubled Celtic's lead four minutes later, flicking in a cross from Matt O'Riley, before his close-range finish five minutes before half-time left the Hoops in complete command at 3-0.

Hatate's second goal in the 52nd minute was initially disallowed for offside before being reinstated following a VAR check. Elsewhere, St Mirren defeated 10-man Aberdeen 3-1 despite missing two of their three penalties. Aberdeen, who had already lost to Celtic and Rangers this week, went ahead through Matty Kennedy before captain Anthony Stewart was sent off in the 35th minute.

His exit saw Saints awarded their first penalty, with Mark O'Hara hitting the post before the ball went in off the back of goalkeeper Kelle Roos for an unlucky own-goal. O'Hara made it 2-1 from the spot in the 53rd minute before Jonah Ayunga missed the chance to extend the Buddies' lead from a third penalty. Aberdeen sent Roos up for a corner in a desperate search for an equaliser deep into stoppage time, but Saints counter-attacked and Greg Kiltie rolled the ball into an empty net from 30 yards.

Lawrence Shankland's late penalty secured a 2-2 draw for Hearts at Dundee United in a match overshadowed by a serious injury to Scotland goalkeeper Craig Gordon. Steven Fletcher and Dylan Levitt scored for the hosts either side of Michael Smith's equaliser before Shankland's 94th minute spot-kick gave the visitors a point at Tannadice. Hearts keeper Gordon, 39, was carried off with his leg in a brace midway through the second half after a collision with Fletcher.

The draw meant Hearts remained fourth in the table. Edinburgh rivals Ilibernian ended a run of seven defeats in eight Premiership matches with a



Celtic's Japanese midfielder Reo Hatate

4-0 rout of 10-man Livingston. An extraordinary first-half saw Jason Holt sent off after 15 minutes before Hibs scored three goals in a mere eight minutes through Kevin Nisbet, Chris Cadden and

Kyle Magennis before Magennis grabbed a second goal early in the second half. Hibs captain David Marshall made two penalty saves late on to preserve his clean sheet. — AFP

Howe ignoring EPL table as Newcastle resume in 3rd place

LONDON: Eddie Howe has insisted he has no interest in looking at the Premier League (EPL) table as Newcastle bid to maintain their impressive start to the season following the World Cup break. England's top flight paused for the tournament in Qatar with the Saudi-backed Magpies riding high in third place, having lost just one game in all competitions all season and won their last five in the league.

Newcastle, who haven't won a major domestic trophy since lifting the 1955 FA Cup, resume their league campaign away to Leicester on Monday with manager Howe trying to keep a lid on the growing expectation of the team's large and passionate fan-base. "I haven't actually looked at the league table once, genuinely I haven't," he said. "That's not to say that I'm not aware of where we are, but for me the focus is always on the next training session to make sure we give the players the

best chance to play well in the next game and let everything else fall into place."

This time last year, Newcastle were firmly fixed in the relegation zone after winning just one of their first 18 fixtures. But, aided by a January transfer window spending spree that saw Kieran Trippier, Dan Burn, Bruno Guimaraes and loan signing Matt Targett all arrive at St James' Park, they climbed away from danger to preserve their top-flight status.

Howe, however, had no great interest in looking back despite overseeing Newcastle's remarkable rise since being appointed in November 2021. "I tend not to reflect too much, to be honest, because it's maybe something you do at the end of the season when you're bringing your ideas together for what the next season will look like," said the 45-year-old former Bournemouth boss. "It has gone, no denying it, amazingly well and we've enjoyed what we've done to this point, but it feels like we're only halfway through."

Monday's match sees Newcastle up against a Leicester side they will face in next month's League Cup quarter-finals, with the Foxes having won six of their last seven matches in all competitions after a sluggish start to the campaign. "They're a top team with a top manager and that never changed,



Newcastle United's English head coach Eddie Howe

in my opinion, even though they had a difficult start to their season," said Howe. "The quality of Brendan's (Rodgers) work always shines through in his teams and if you look at their players, not a dramatic amount has changed from the team that excelled in previous years, so we respect them immensely." — AFP

Wigglesworth wins first game as Leicester boss

LONDON: Richard Wigglesworth's first game in charge of Leicester saw the reigning champions enjoy a convincing 28-13 victory over Gloucester in the English Premiership on Saturday as they became the inaugural winners of the Slater Cup. The match was named in honor of Ed Slater, who played for both clubs but was forced to retire in pre-season after being diagnosed with motor neurone disease.

Former lock Slater, 34, was present at Welford Road to present the trophy. Wigglesworth ended his playing career aged 39 following last week's Champions Cup win over Clermont after being thrust into the role of interim head coach when Steve Borthwick, together with assistant Kevin Sinfield, left Leicester to take charge of England. England's Anthony Watson scored two tries for Leicester, with Guy Porter also crossing, as Freddie Burns kicked three penalties and two conversions.

Albert Tuisue and England flyer Jonny May scored tries for Gloucester, with Scotland international Adam Hastings adding a penalty in a match that sparked into life after a drab first half ended with Gloucester 8-6 ahead. "I am learning as I go along and I intend to put everything into it," said Wigglesworth, a former England scrum-half. "We made some errors today and were scratchy at times but hopefully we will show more cohesion in the



Richard Wigglesworth

weeks ahead as it's been a delayed start to our team-building this season with the England boys away."

Defeat for the visitors was made worse by the sight of Wales wing Louis Rees-Zammit going off early on with a leg injury—a worry for Warren Gatland ahead of the New Zealander's second stint as Wales boss, which begins with a Six Nations clash at home to Ireland on February 4. The Cherry and Whites' plans were disrupted further by an injury to Argentina star Santiago Carreras. "We had a game plan but losing two of our strike runners didn't help and possibly, I should have addressed it more at half-

time as we got sucked into still playing our game with a reserve nine (scrum-half) on the wing," said Gloucester boss George Skivington.

Leicester's win saw them leapfrog Gloucester into fourth place in the table. In Saturday's other English top-flight encounter, Exeter withstood a Bath fight-back to win 20-15 at Sandy Park. Exeter's Dave Ewers and Henry Slade both scored tries as the hosts surged into a 20-10 half-time lead. Bath, however, dominated the second half but only had replacement hooker Niall Annett's 62nd-minute try to show for their efforts. — AFP

Iraq launches ticket sales for Gulf Cup

BAGHDAD: Iraq's football federation on Saturday launched ticket sales for the 25th Gulf Cup, the first regional football competition to be hosted by the country for more than 40 years. The Cup brings together the hosts as well as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. It will be held in Iraq's southern city of Basra from January 6-19.

Hosting the event is a major challenge for Iraq, which has experienced decades of conflict and upheaval, and whose security situation remains fragile. "Today, we are launching the sale of Gulf-25 tickets," Adnan Dirjal, head of Iraq's football federation, told a press conference in Basra on Saturday. The federation shared a link for the ticketing website on its Facebook page, with prices ranging from \$10-\$30.

Earlier this month, Iraqi authorities announced they were scrapping visa fees for fans entering Iraq for the competition. The move seeks to attract football fans from across the Gulf region, particularly Kuwait, whose border with Iraq lies less than 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Basra. One of the city's stadiums has a capacity of 65,000, while the second can hold 30,000 fans and will be inaugurated on Monday with a friendly between two local clubs from Iraq and Kuwait.

Football's governing body FIFA earlier this year lifted a ban on international competitions in Iraq that had been in place for years due to security concerns. In January, Baghdad's packed Al-Madina Stadium hosted a friendly between the Iraqi team and Uganda, the first international match in the capital since 2013, FIFA said at the time. Iraq first hosted the Gulf Cup in Baghdad in 1979, when it also won the tournament. The country was set to hold the Cup's 2014 edition but it was instead shifted to Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|----------|
| Sabah Hospital | 24812000 | | |
| Amiri Hospital | 22450005 | Kaizen center | 25716707 |
| Maternity Hospital | 24843100 | Rawda | 22517733 |
| Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital | 25312700 | Adaliya | 22517144 |
| Chest Hospital | 24849400 | Khaldiya | 24848075 |
| Farwaniya Hospital | 24892010 | Kaifan | 24849807 |
| Adan Hospital | 23940620 | Shamiya | 24848913 |
| Ibn Sina Hospital | 24840300 | Shuwaikh | 24814507 |
| Al-Razi Hospital | 24846000 | Abdullah Salem | 22549134 |
| Physiotherapy Hospital | 24874330/9 | Nuzha | 22526804 |

Clinics

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| 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, ABDUL KHADER holder of Indian Passport No. Z3284430 having permanent address Telangana India 500005, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Abdul Khader

Omer and Surname: Bawazeer.

I, Shaik Ahmed, R/o : 18-12-418/o/72/a/1, Hafez Baba Nagar, Omer Colony, Bandlaguda, Hyd, 05.T.S.has changed my name as Omer Abdallah Bawazeer.(C#2823)

I, Ahla Haroon Rasheed D/o Haroon Rasheed from India, Kerala, Thrissur, 680616 have changed the surname of my minor daughter from ZAIRA FEDIL KAREEM (of Passport No. V9363964) to ZAIRA SHAAZ AHLA and she shall hereafter be known as ZAIRA SHAAZ AHLA. (C#2824) - 23-12-2022

Cowboys stun NFL-best Eagles as Ravens book a playoff spot

Vikings edge Giants; Steelers pay tribute to Harris



ARLINGTON: Tyler Bidasz #63 of the Dallas Cowboys recovers a fumble by Dak Prescott #4 during the fourth quarter in the game against the Philadelphia Eagles on December 24, 2022. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Dak Prescott threw for 347 yards and three touchdowns to spark the Dallas Cowboys over NFL-best Philadelphia 40-34 on Saturday, keeping the Eagles from clinching a top playoff seeding. The Cowboys' defensive unit forced four turnovers and seized command late in a deadlocked game to stun the visiting Eagles (13-2). "This was a huge game, not only beating one of the best teams in the league, but the way we did it," Prescott said. "We can use this and continue to build."

The victory kept Dallas, 11-4 in the NFC East division title hunt and Minnesota, 12-3, moved closer in the fight for the NFC top seed and a first-round playoff bye. The Baltimore Ravens clinched a playoff berth on a day when eight games were played in sub-freezing temperatures, the most in any NFL gameday in 26 years, while the New York Giants missed a chance to clinch a post-season spot on a last-play loss at Minnesota.

Prescott completed 27 of 35 passes and kept his poise after having an early interception returned for a touchdown. "It was just about moving on," said Prescott. "All I did is just keep my head down and keep playing. I focused in and we were able to come out with this one." In the last minutes, Dallas defender DaRon Bland intercepted a Gardner Minshew pass and Anthony Barr recovered a fumble by Philadelphia's Miles Sanders to set up Brett Maher field goals of 48 and 26 yards

for the decisive points.

"They gave us chance after chance," Prescott said. "With those four turnovers, they gave us short field position and we were able to capitalize on some. When they do that, we're a tough team to beat." The Cowboys stopped Philadelphia's final drive on downs at the Dallas 20 with 14 seconds remaining. "I said if we want to be a championship team, a championship defense, this is for our lives," Dallas linebacker Micah Parsons said. "In that last six minutes, we were able to get them stops and get the win."

Buffalo clinched a third consecutive AFC East division title and stayed ahead of Kansas City in the fight for the AFC playoff top seeding with a 35-13 victory at Chicago. Josh Allen threw for 172 yards and two touchdowns, Devin Singletary ran for 106 yards and a touchdown and James Cook rushed for 99 yards and a touchdown for the Bills (12-3). Kansas City (12-3) stayed on Buffalo's heels with a 24-10 home triumph over Seattle. Patrick Mahomes threw for 224 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another touchdown for the Chiefs.

At Baltimore, Tyler Huntley capped a 13-play, 70-yard drive with a 6-yard touchdown pass and ran for a two-point conversion for the decisive points in the Ravens' 17-9 victory over Atlanta. The Ravens (10-5) clinched a playoff berth when the New England Patriots lost to visiting Cincinnati 22-18. Cincinnati's Joe Burrow threw for 375 yards and

three touchdowns for Cincinnati (11-4), which stayed a game ahead of Baltimore in the AFC North.

Giants overpowered

Philadelphia, Minnesota, Dallas, San Francisco, Kansas City, Buffalo and Cincinnati had already secured playoff spots. Pittsburgh's Kenny Pickett threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to George Pickens with 46 seconds remaining to give the host Steelers a 13-10 victory over the Las Vegas Raiders. The Steelers paid tribute to former running back Franco Harris, who died earlier this week at age 72, only days before the 50th anniversary of his "Immaculate Reception" playoff touchdown catch against the Raiders. The outcome means the Los Angeles Chargers can clinch an AFC wildcard playoff spot with a victory Monday at Indianapolis.

Minnesota's Kirk Cousins threw for 299 yards and three touchdowns and Greg Joseph kicked a career-longest 61-yard field goal on the final play to give the Vikings a 27-24 victory over the Giants. The Giants, 8-6-1, moved to the brink of clinching a playoff berth with Seattle's defeat at Kansas City and Detroit's 37-23 loss at Carolina. New York's hopes were also aided by Washington's 37-20 loss at San Francisco. Tennessee's playoff hopes suffered a blow with a 19-14 home loss to Houston (2-12-1). The Titans (7-8) had a fifth consecutive loss to slide level with Jacksonville for the AFC South lead. — AFP

Warriors' Curry out for weeks



INDIANAPOLIS: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors grimaces after being hurt in the third quarter of the game against the Indiana Pacers at Gainbridge Fieldhouse. — AFP

SAN FRANCISCO: Four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry, sidelined since suffering a partially dislocated left shoulder, will be out for at least another two weeks, the reigning champion Golden State Warriors said Saturday. Curry, who suffered the injury December 14 at Indiana while trying to make a steal, has missed the team's past four games. The Warriors said Curry was recently reevaluated and the exam indicated Curry is "making good progress" in his recovery and "will be re-evaluated again in two weeks," the team said in a statement.

The 34-year-old guard, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and last season's NBA Finals MVP, will miss at least six games in the next two weeks, starting with Golden State's home showdown Sunday against Memphis. That contest is part of the NBA's annual Christmas Day NBA schedule, this year featuring five games involving most of the league's best clubs and biggest stars.

In other holiday games, the Philadelphia 76ers will visit New York while Dallas plays host to the Los Angeles Lakers. Milwaukee travels to Boston and Phoenix plays at Denver. The Boston-Milwaukee contest pits the team's with the NBA's best records against each other, the Celtics leading the league at 23-10 with Giannis Antetokounmpo-led Milwaukee on 22-10. Denver and Memphis share the Western Conference lead at 20-11.— AFP

Vieira slams Martinez 'stupid' celebrations

LONDON: Crystal Palace manager Patrick Vieira believes Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez's "stupid" celebrations have tarnished Argentina's World Cup final win. Martinez was a key figure in Argentina's victory over France. He made a fine save to deny Randal Kolo Muani in extra-time and then denied Kingsley Coman in the shoot-out in Qatar as Argentina won a thrilling final.

But the keeper was then seen making a crude gesture after winning the golden glove trophy for the best goalkeeper at the tournament. Then, during Argentina's victory parade in Buenos Aires, he was seen holding a baby doll with its face covered by a photograph of France star striker Kylian Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in the final but still finished on the losing side.

Vieira, a World Cup winner with France in 1998, was unimpressed by Martinez's antics. "Some of the pictures I saw from the Argentinean goalkeeper, I think, take away a little bit what Argentina achieved at the World Cup," said Vieira a pre-match press conference ahead of Palace's Premier League match against London rivals Fulham. "I don't think they really needed that. "You can't control sometimes people's emotional decisions. But that was a stupid decision, I think, from Martinez to do that," he added.

Martinez will return to Birmingham next week, with Villa manager Unai Emery intending to talk to



LUSAIL: Argentina's goalkeeper #23 Emiliano Martinez deflects a shot from France's forward #20 Kingsley Coman during penalty shootouts during the Qatar 2022 World Cup final football match between Argentina and France. — AFP

the 30-year-old about his controversial behavior. "When you have big emotion, sometimes it is difficult to control it," Emery said. "I will speak to him next week about some celebrations but I respect that he is now under the national team and when he will be with us, he is our responsibility then we can

speak about it." French sports minister Amelie Oudea-Casteran was scathing about Martinez's conduct, saying: "I find it pitiful. "It's just vulgar, inappropriate, really not up to the occasion. This Emiliano Martinez is not distinguishing himself. It is rather pathetic." — AFP