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Amir accepts resignation of defense, interior ministers

Lawmakers propose law to ban imitation of opposite sex after court ruling



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah



Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: An Amiri decree was issued yesterday accepting the resignation of the defense and interior ministers, a day after they quit in protest against the unfavorable political atmosphere. The decree appointed Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah, who on Wednesday narrowly survived a no-confidence vote, as caretaker defense minister and Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Mohammad Al-Fares as acting interior minister.

The outgoing ministers of defense

and interior - Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah respectively - resigned on Wednesday, immediately after the foreign minister survived the no-confidence motion. They said in a joint statement that the ongoing political disputes in the country were making reforms almost impossible to achieve. The two outgoing ministers and the foreign minister are the only ruling family members in the Cabinet headed by a leading member of the family. The posts of defense, interior and foreign affairs are normally held by

members of the ruling family.

Meanwhile, 11 opposition MPs yesterday called on the government to slap a ban on the entry of members of the India's ruling Bhartiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over atrocities against Muslims in the country. The lawmakers said in a statement that Indian Muslims have been subjected to attacks instigated by members of the BJP, and accordingly Kuwait should ban them from entering the country until the atrocities cease. The call is not binding for the Kuwaiti government, which maintains strong ties with India. Kuwait

is home to close to one million Indians who work in the country.

Also, a number of lawmakers yesterday said they have submitted draft legislation to criminalize the imitation of the opposite sex, a day after the constitutional court struck down an article in the penal code that barred such imitation. That article, used for many years against transgender people and those who dress similarly to the opposite sex, was ruled by the top court as against the constitution. Islamist MP Ahmad Al-Azemi urged all MPs to support the new bill to fill the gap created by the court's ruling.

News in brief

Unjabbed foreigners can't enter Kuwait

KUWAIT: Only Kuwaitis who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 or are partially vaccinated will be allowed to enter Kuwait from Feb 20 as long as they provide a negative PCR test result taken at least 72 hours before arrival, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation explained. Non-Kuwaitis must be fully vaccinated to be able to enter.

13 killed in India well fall

NEW DELHI: Thirteen women and girls died after accidentally falling down a well during marriage celebrations in northern India. The victims were sitting on an iron slab covering the well on Wednesday when it gave way, senior police officer Akhil Kumar told reporters in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the accident was "heart-wrenching". — AFP

Afghan boy trapped in well

KANDAHAR: Rescuers were desperately scrambling yesterday to reach a five-year-old boy trapped for two days down a well in a remote southern Afghan village. Video shared on social media showed a boy named as Haidar wedged in the well, able to move his arms and upper body. The video was obtained by rescuers lowering a camera down the narrow well by rope. Local officials said the boy appeared trapped about 10 m down the 25-m shaft. — AFP

Missing US girl found alive

NEW YORK: A six-year-old girl missing for over two years has been found hidden in a "dark and wet" makeshift room under a staircase in rural New York state. Paislee Shultis was reported missing in 2019 with officers at the time suspecting her biological parents of abducting her after losing custody. — AFP

Chile's last Yaghan speaker dies

SANTIAGO: Cristina Calderon, the last native speaker of Chile's indigenous Yaghan language, has died at the age of 93, her family said Wednesday, in a blow for a dwindling culture at South America's extreme southern tip. Calderon, known locally as "Grandma Cristina", was recognized in 2009 by the Chilean government as a "living human treasure" for her work in preserving a culture at risk of extinction. — AFP

Kuwaiti women irked over curbs to join army

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women are angry after the military, having allowed female soldiers in combat roles, decided they need the permission of a male guardian and banned them from carrying weapons. Activists have decried the policy as "one step forward, two steps back" after the defense ministry also decided that women in the armed forces, unlike civilians, must wear head coverings.

The moves have sparked an online backlash in

Kuwait, usually regarded as one of the most open societies in the Gulf. "I don't know why there are these restrictions to join the army," Ghadeer Al-Khashti, a sports teacher and member of Kuwait Football Association's women committee, told AFP. "We have all kinds of women working in all fields, including the police force."

She said her mother had helped the resistance when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 1990 invaded Kuwait and occupied it for seven months before being pushed out by a US-led international coalition. "My mum during the Iraqi invasion used to hide weapons under her abaya and transport them to members of Kuwait's resistance, and my father encouraged it," said Khashti. "I don't understand on what basis they see women as weak."

The ministry decided in October to allow women

in combat roles but then imposed the restrictions after the defense minister was questioned by conservative lawmaker Hamdan Al-Azmi. Azmi, emboldened by an Islamic religious edict, or fatwa, had argued that having women in combat roles "does not fit with a woman's nature".

Lulwa Saleh Al-Mulla, head of the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society, said the ministry's restrictions are discriminatory and unconstitutional and vowed legal action by the organization. "We have women martyrs who defended their country of their own volition," she told AFP. "No one ordered them to do that but the love for their country. We are a Muslim country, that is true, but we demand the laws not be subject to fatwas. Personal freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, on which the country's laws are based."

Continued on Page 2

US warns on Ukraine as tensions soar

MOSCOW: The United States stepped up warnings of an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine yesterday, despite Moscow's continued denials and announcements of troop withdrawals from near the border. Adding to the already fierce tensions, Ukraine and Moscow-backed separatists traded accusations of intensifying shell fire across their frontline, with Western officials saying Moscow was looking to create a pretext for an invasion.

The threat of an invasion is "very high, because they have not moved any of their troops out. They've

moved more troops in," US President Joe Biden told reporters at the White House. "Every indication we have is that they're prepared to go into Ukraine," he said, accusing Moscow of preparing a "false flag operation" as a pretext to invade. "My sense is it will happen in the next several days," Biden said.

At the United Nations, where the Security Council was set for a heated meeting on the crisis, the US envoy said Washington wanted to make clear that risk of a war in Europe was growing.

"Our goal is to convey the gravity of the situation. The evidence on the ground is that Russia is moving toward an imminent invasion. This is a crucial moment," Linda Thomas-Greenfield tweeted ahead of the meeting.

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STANYTSIA LUHANSKA, Ukraine: This handout photograph taken and released yesterday shows debris after the reported shelling of a kindergarten in this settlement. — AFP

11 years since revolt, Libya far from democracy

TRIPOLI: Libyans yesterday marked 11 years since the revolt that toppled dictator Muammar Gaddafi, but the democracy many hoped for seems as elusive as ever, and many fear a return to conflict. The anniversary comes as the country, for years plagued by divisions between east and west, finds itself with two rival prime ministers based in the capital Tripoli.

Just weeks after national elections planned for Dec 24 were indefinitely postponed, the east-based parliament voted to appoint influential former interior minister Fathi Bashagha to

replace the interim unity government. Incumbent Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, appointed as part of a United Nations-driven peace process, has insisted he will only hand over power to an elected government.

The resulting showdown has sparked fears of another conflict - not between east and west, but within Tripoli itself. As the anniversary approached, the streets of the capital were lined with the red, black and green flags adopted after Gaddafi's overthrow.

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TRIPOLI: Libyans gather in Martyrs' Square yesterday as they commemorate the 11th anniversary of the uprising that toppled longtime strongman Muammar Gaddafi. — AFP

Local

Arab gatherings important step towards unified visions: Speaker

Al-Ghanem participates in 32nd conference of Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union

CAIRO: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem said that every Arab meeting, conference, and gathering that focuses on the values of Arab solidarity is an important step towards unified visions. This came during Al-Ghanem's participation in the 32nd conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union. In his speech, Al-Ghanem pointed out that Arab history is full of examples that Arab solidarity has happened repeatedly towards common goals and causes.

Moreover, Al-Ghanem stressed the importance of cooperation and unifying visions to solve all problems and challenges facing the Arab world. Al-Ghanem expressed his sincere thanks to the Speaker of the UAE Federal National Council, Saqer Ghobash, for his good management and leadership of the Arab Parliamentary Union over the past period, wishing Bahraini Parliament Speaker Fawzia Zainal all success in assuming the presidency of the Union in the coming period. — KUNA



CAIRO: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem addresses the 32nd conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union in Cairo yesterday. —AFP

Kuwait reports 1,501 new COVID cases, one death

KUWAIT: Kuwait health ministry confirmed yesterday 1,501 new coronavirus cases and one death during the past 24 hours. In a statement to KUNA, the ministry's spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that the total infections surged to 609,453, while the deaths climbed to 2,525. He also noted that the total recoveries went up to 580,056 after confirming 4,253.

The spokesperson pointed out that 88 patients are receiving treatment at the ICU. About 22,424 swap tests were induced in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 7,403,856 since the outbreak of the virus in the country. — KUNA



Kuwait Fire Force concludes orientation program



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force concluded a weeklong orientation program focused on safety precautions and fire prevention. Thirteen officers and engineers participated in the program, which was held at the interior ministry.



The program was conducted in order to familiarize the participants with the mechanisms of firefighting equipment, fire alarms and other engineering services.



KUWAIT: The overturned vehicle on the Arabian Gulf Road. According to KFF statement, a Gulf national was killed and a citizen sustained injuries when the vehicle they were riding overturned on the Arabian Gulf Road yesterday.

Vienna 'Asparagus Palace' hides Iran nuclear tensions

VIENNA: The calm outside Vienna's luxury Palais Coburg hotel yesterday belied the fraught diplomatic talks on Iran's nuclear program being thrashed out inside. Aside from a few television cameras keeping watch for envoys arriving in black saloons, there are no indications that the negotiations to revive the 2015 deal could achieve a breakthrough or fail in the next few days.

The building, built by Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in 1845 on an old city wall bastion, was soon dubbed the "Asparagus Palace" by locals in the Austrian capital on account of its slender columns. Behind the ornate facade, meetings have often stretched into the evening, including at weekends.

The Iranian delegation's refusal to sit around the same table as the United States means the EU's Enrique Mora, who is coordinating the talks, constantly shuttles between the two. Also present at the Coburg - where the deal was originally struck - are the other parties to the accord: Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

The 2015 deal eased some sanctions on Iran in

return for strict curbs on Tehran's nuclear program. However, it began falling apart after former US president Donald Trump withdrew in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions. His successor Joe Biden took office in 2021 saying he wanted to revive the deal and negotiations started last April.

For Vienna, whose all-important tourism and conference sectors have been decimated by the pandemic, the talks have been a welcome lifeline as the city reprises its historic role as a venue for international negotiations. The American delegation is briefed in the five-star Imperial hotel - home to heads of state and celebrities over the decades - or a few hundred meters away from the Coburg, in the Marriott hotel.

The Iranian delegation, staying on the other side of Vienna's Stadtpark, comprises no fewer than 40 people, compared to less than 10 for France. The diplomats have been kept at arm's length from the press. The roughly 200 accredited reporters from around 30 countries gather in a large white tent on the square outside the hotel, offering some shelter from the Viennese winter.

Noisy protests by opponents of the Iranian regime have enlivened the atmosphere. A few steps away from the press tent, they have displayed a series of images of Western prisoners in Iran. The negotiations have even attracted activists who have gone on hunger strike to demand the detainees' release - a reminder of unresolved tensions even if the nuclear talks succeed. — AFP

a long period of relative peace, since a landmark ceasefire in Oct 2020 formally ended eastern military chief Khalifa Haftar's ruinous year-long bid to seize the capital. That laid the way for UN-led peace efforts which saw Dbeibah appointed, a year ago this month, at the head of a new unity government with a mandate to lead the country to December 24 elections.

But bitter wrangling over the legal basis of the polls and the presence of divisive candidates - including Dbeibah as well as Bashagha - led to them being indefinitely postponed. The country's UN mission, UNSMIL, on Thursday urged Libyans to "preserve stability and calm in the country". In a statement, it vowed to continue working towards a "comprehensive and consensual political process leading to free and transparent national elections as soon as possible."

Despite the failures, Libya expert Jalel Harchaoui said the country had seen progress on many fronts. "Libya hasn't seen a major exchange of fire since June 2020," he said. "Among the elites, many mortal enemies two years ago are talking to each other and in some cases making alliances. That represents the start of a reconciliation."

In December, just days before the elections, Bashagha had headed to Benghazi to meet Haftar - another controversial presidential candidate - in what he said was a gesture of national reconciliation. Haftar's forces have since backed Bashagha's appointment as prime minister. And now that he has won the backing of the Tripoli-based High State Council, a body that has often opposed the east-based parliament, Bashagha has until February 24 to form a government. Given the country's tumultuous recent history, the next question will be whether Dbeibah will go peacefully. — AFP

11 years since revolt, Libya...

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Concerts and fireworks are planned for Friday - a day late due to bad weather - in Tripoli's Martyrs' Square, where Gaddafi once gave a famous, desperate speech before the "February 17 revolution" swept him from power.

Yesterday, Dbeibah attended a passing-out ceremony for army recruits at a base on the edge of the capital. In a speech, army chief Mohamed al-Haddad vowed that Libyans "will never forget the martyrs of the February revolution, who sacrificed their lives for a democratic state". The political vacuum that followed the NATO-backed uprising sparked a bitter power struggle, fueled by regional and tribal rivalries, as well as the involvement of outside groups.

And despite the country's vast oil wealth - the biggest-proven reserves in Africa - many Libyans are living in poverty. "The situation even got worse," said Ibad Doghman, 26. A civil servant by day and a grocer by night, he holds down two jobs, like many of his compatriots, as "it's the only way to get by". Since Gaddafi's ouster, Libya has had no fewer than nine governments and two full-scale civil wars - but has yet to organize a presidential election. Following parliament's latest move, pro-Bashagha armed groups in Misrata - both his and Dbeibah's hometown - converged on Tripoli in a show of force.

The uptick in tensions could threaten what has been

Kuwaiti women irked over curbs...

Continued from Page 1

Kuwaiti women earned the right to vote in 2005 and have been active both in Cabinet and parliament, though they are poorly represented in both. Unlike most Gulf countries, Kuwait is known to have an active political scene, with MPs regularly challenging the authorities. Earlier this month, dozens of Kuwaiti women staged a protest against the suspen-

US warns on Ukraine as...

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Russia meanwhile responded to previous US security proposals aimed at defusing the crisis, insisting it was not planning any invasion but making clear that it felt its key demands were being ignored. "In the absence of will on the American side to negotiate firm and legally binding guarantees on our security from the United States and its allies, Russia will be forced to respond, including with military-technical measures," the foreign ministry said.

"We insist on the withdrawal of all US armed forces in Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Baltics," it added. Russia also expelled the number two US diplomat in Moscow, the US State Department said, condemning what it called an "unprovoked" action. Ukraine has been in conflict with Moscow-backed rebels in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions since 2014, in a war that has cost thousands of lives.

The Ukrainian army accused Russian-backed separatists of 34 ceasefire breaches on Thursday, 28 of them using heavy weapons. It said that two Ukrainian soldiers and five civilians had been injured, including three adults wounded by artillery fire that hit a kindergarten in the village of Stanysia-Luganska while children were inside.

"The shelling of a kindergarten... by pro-Russian forces is a big provocation," President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Twitter. Russian news agencies meanwhile quoted authorities in the separatist Lugansk region saying they blamed Kyiv after the fighting on the frontline "escalated significantly". There were no immediate reports of deaths, and clashes involving artillery and sniper fire are common along the frontline, but any significant increase in fighting could be the spark to ignite a wider conflict.

The United States has claimed Moscow could be looking for a pretext to invade and earlier this week Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Kyiv was committing "genocide" in the eastern Donbas region. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin described yesterday's reports as "troubling". "We've said for some time that the Russians might

do something like this in order to justify a military conflict. So we'll be watching this very closely," Austin told journalists after a meeting with NATO counterparts.

"We have been warning of the likelihood of a false flag operation and that is what we are seeing taking place," British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on a visit to Kyiv. "Russia can still take the path of diplomacy. They can de-escalate, they can move their troops away from the border," she said. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the kindergarten shelling was "a false flag operation designed to discredit the Ukrainians," without explaining how an alleged attack by separatists on Ukrainian soil could discredit Kyiv.

Western officials say Russia has amassed well over 100,000 troops and significant military hardware near Ukraine's borders in preparation for a potential invasion. Russia has said "large-scale" military exercises are taking place in various areas, including near Ukraine, but has not provided any specific numbers and has repeatedly denied any plans for an attack.

Moscow has made several announcements of troop withdrawals this week and on Thursday said that units of the southern and western military districts, including tank units, had begun returning to their bases from near Ukraine. Defence ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said some troops had returned to their garrisons in several areas far from the border, including Chechnya and Dagestan in the North Caucasus, and near Nizhny Novgorod, some 300 km east of Moscow.

After previously announced withdrawals earlier this week, the United States, NATO and Ukraine all said they had seen no evidence of a pullback, with Washington saying Russia had in fact moved 7,000 more troops near the border. Russia has blamed the West for provoking the tensions, saying Washington and its European allies have for too long ignored Moscow's security concerns on its doorstep.

Putin has demanded that Ukraine be forever banned from fulfilling its hopes of joining NATO and for the alliance to roll back its deployments near Russia's borders. Zelensky said Thursday his country was not looking for foreign forces within its borders. "We have no need for soldiers with foreign flags on our territory. We are not asking for that. Otherwise, the entire world would be destabilized," he told the RBK Ukraine website. — AFP

Local

Many in Kuwait willing to pay a fee for single-use plastic bags

Others call for complete ban on plastic or switch to paper bags

By Shakir Reshamwala

KUWAIT: Plastic bags seem to be everywhere - in parks, sewers, deserts, forests, oceans, and lately, in the news, after authorities in Dubai announced they are ending the free distribution of single-use plastic bags in a drive towards more sustainable practices. "In line with enhancing environmental sustainability and encouraging individuals to reduce the excessive use of plastics, the Executive Council of Dubai has approved the policy to limit single-use bags by imposing a tariff of 25 fils (about \$0.07) on single-use bags," the authorities said. The decision will come into force at the start of July in shops, restaurants, pharmacies and for home deliveries.

In Kuwait, there are no restrictions on single-use plastic bags, and despite attempts by supermarkets to promote reusable bags, there aren't many takers due to their relatively high cost and the freely available plastic bags. It is common for baggers at supermarkets to place each item in separate bags, and it is not uncommon to see shoppers shamelessly grab a bunch of extra bags at checkout counters.

Nevertheless, people are waking up to the threat these plastic bags pose to the environment. In an online survey conducted by Kuwait Times whether Kuwait should also charge for single-use plastic bags, a majority of respondents voted in favor of such a move. Many however pointed out they do reuse them as garbage bags. Others called on authorities to go a step further and ban plastic bags altogether, expressing skepticism whether a token charge will deter their usage.

"There is a charge on plastic bags worldwide. Why not in Kuwait too?" one user responded. "Sell reusable canvas bags at checkouts. I'm tired of seeing a sea of plastic everywhere I go," said another. Other respondents to the survey called for using paper bags instead, while some pointed out that waste in Kuwait needs to be segregated to make recycling easier.

Those against charging for plastic bags had their own reasons. "Ban plastic bags but use recyclable alternatives. Everything here is already expensive and overpriced. We consumers are suffering, so adding even a little more to the equation makes no sense," commented a user. "We use those bags for the trash, so let them be free," wrote another.

Explaining their decision, the authorities in Dubai vowed that this is the first step of a strategy planned over several stages, aimed at completely banning single-use plastic bags within two years. "With sustainability becoming a global priority, changing the behavior of the community to reduce the environmental foot-



The ecobags distributed by the Environment Public Authority to cooperative societies.

print of individuals is crucial to preserve natural resources and environmental habitats," the authorities said. In March 2020, Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, announced its "new environmental policy" aiming to eliminate single-use plastics by 2021 - but regulations have yet to be applied.

A report by wildlife group WWF last week warned plastic has infiltrated all parts of the ocean and is now found "in the smallest plankton up to the largest whale", calling for urgent efforts to create an international treaty on plastics. According to some estimates, between 19 and 23 million tons of plastic waste is washed into the world's waterways every year, the WWF report said. In one 2021 study, 386 fish species were found to have ingested plastic, out of 555 tested. Separate research, looking at the major commercially fished species, found up to 30 percent of cod in a sample caught in the North Sea had microplastics in their stomachs.

To be fair, authorities in Kuwait are not totally oblivious to the plastic problem. In a first step, the Environment Public Authority last year distributed one million ecofriendly bags to cooperative societies in all the governorates, part of a campaign to raise public awareness about environment protection and minimize the use of plastic bags. The ecobags are made of organic materials that disintegrate in hot water without any harmful effects on the air, soil or water. Each ecobag is strong enough to carry up to 10 kg - although the weight of expectations over this move is seemingly a lot higher. (With agency inputs)

DHAMAN discusses a range of healthcare topics with KMA



KUWAIT: DHAMAN and Kuwait Medical Association officials pose for a photograph.

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) and Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) discussed a range of topics related to healthcare in Kuwait, as well as reviewed the Company's most important activities, developments, preparations and its medical facilities.

The meeting included DHAMAN CEO Thamer Arab, KMA President Dr Ibrahim Al-Tawala, the President of the Kuwaiti Association of Family Medicine & General Practitioners in KMA Dr Mohammad Al-Azemi. Attendees from DHAMAN also included Corporate Director of Public Relations & Corporate Communications Ali Al-Hamad, Corporate Director of Primary Healthcare Centers Operations Colm Benson, Director of Local & Overseas Services Adel Al-Jumhour, and Administration Manager of Dhajej Primary Healthcare Center - Dhajej, Dr Mohamed Sewilam.

Thamer Arab lauded the role of KMA as partners in achieving the highest levels of healthcare in line with the New Kuwait Vision 2035, noting the importance of collaboration and cooperation between various healthcare bodies in Kuwait to support the efforts of the Ministry of Health, especially with DHAMAN being the first organization in the Middle East to provide its services in the health maintenance organization (HMO) model by providing the health assurance certificate with an integrated system of healthcare centers, hospitals and various related services such as laboratories,

pharmacies, radiology and other matters related to consultations, diagnosis, treatment and prevention to raise healthcare indicators in Kuwait through prevention and community awareness. This, along with DHAMAN being the first healthcare public-private-partnership (PPP) in the Middle East, contributing to diversifying sources of income and supporting the Kuwaiti economy.

On his part, Dr Al-Tawala said that in the event of combining efforts between the Ministry of Health and DHAMAN centers, the services provided in the healthcare centers of the Ministry of Health will improve, calling for the cooperation of all parties to achieve the various goals of DHAMAN due to it being a government initiative in which the private sector participates for the benefit of all the people of Kuwait.

Additionally, Dr Al-Azemi expressed overall joy with the capabilities he saw at DHAMAN Primary Healthcare Centers, pointing out that the activation of DHAMAN's services will positively affect citizens, who will receive better services due to the elimination of overcrowding in Ministry of Health's centers and hospitals. The meeting included a tour in Dhajej Primary Healthcare Center to view the services provided at DHAMAN centers, the quality levels, latest medical devices and equipment used, in addition to a detailed corporate presentation detailing the Company's vision, objectives, achievements, and current and future plans.

CBK chief receives UK's minister for investment



KUWAIT: The Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel poses for photo a with UK Minister of State (Minister for Investment) Lord Grimstone of Boscobel Kt and the accompanying delegation.

KUWAIT: The Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel received on Tuesday the UK Minister of State (Minister for Investment) Lord Grimstone of Boscobel Kt, and an accompanying delegation, to discuss key global economic developments, and the post-pandemic global economic horizon.

The Governor's meeting with Lord Grimstone touched on developments in the UK economy in view of completion of the EU exit plan and the

impact on the global economy, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The CBK appreciates the importance of the historical relations Kuwait has with the United Kingdom, especially in the economic, financial, and investment domains. Such communications among policymakers of the world's major economies also facilitate exchange of views and visions and therefore bolster cooperation between the State of Kuwait and friendly nations in the economic and financial fields.

product can be examined by placing the phone camera close to the item.

Diabetics are expected to benefit most from the application as it is helpful to avoid non-recommended food for their condition. Moreover, the application recommends an alternative and a healthier commodity. The application has been introduced in Kuwait as a result of coordination among the institute, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, George Institute for Global Health and the Australian University of Canberra. Dr Al-Duwairi advised shoppers to use the application for its certain benefits, especially for persons who suffer from diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure. —AFP

Dasman Institute launches application for wise shopping

KUWAIT: Director of Dasman Diabetes Institute Dr Qais Al-Duwairi said the institute has recently launched "the food switch" application that can be set on smart phones. The application guides shoppers to choose healthy food while shopping, he said in a statement to KUNA yesterday. Ingredients of a

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News in brief

Amir congratulates
Kosovo on national day

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the President of the Republic of Kosovo Vjosa Osmani on the occasion of his country's national day. In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed best wishes, good health for the president and prosperity to the republic's friendly nation. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, marking the national occasion in Kosovo. —KUNA

USD steadies against
Kuwait dinar

KUWAIT: The US dollar steadied against the Kuwaiti dinar yesterday at 0.301 but the euro went down to KD 0.340 in contrast to Wednesday's rates, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said. The pound sterling stabilized at KD 0.432, the Swiss franc went down to KD 0.310, however the Japanese yen firmed at KD 0.002. In international markets, the green-back maintained a bearish trend against the other hard currencies, amid jitters caused by main oil exporters' failure to hammer out an agreement on capping crude oil output as well as further negative American economic reports. —KUNA

Indian Embassy to
mark National Days

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the National Day of Kuwait, the Embassy of India, Kuwait is organizing a week-long cultural festival titled 'Namaste Kuwait' from 20 - 28 February 2022 as part of the celebrations of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (AKAM) to commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence and 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. The festival will be inaugurated on 20 February 2022 at 6 pm at embassy auditorium, Embassy of India, a press release issued by the embassy said. The release urged all Indian nationals and friends of India in Kuwait to attend the inaugural ceremony and events during the festival. Details of the program will be uploaded on embassy's social media platforms.

Kuwait's January
trade surplus with
Japan up 161.1%

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan surged 161.1 percent from a year earlier to JPY 59.5 billion (\$516 million) in January, up for the 10th consecutive month, fueled by robust exports, government data showed yesterday. Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 14 years on a monthly basis, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan soared 98.7 percent year-on-year to JPY 69.8 billion (\$606 million) for the 10th straight month of expansion.

Imports from Japan fell 16.4 percent to JPY 10.3 billion (\$90 million), down for the fifth month in a row. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan swelled 106.7 percent to JPY 759.5 billion (\$6.6 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region growing 80.8 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 93.9 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, jumped 82.3 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan increased 13.5 percent on demand for steel and electrical machinery. Japan logged a global trade deficit of JPY 2.2 trillion (\$19.0 billion) in January for the sixth straight month of red ink, as higher energy prices and a weaker yen continued to push up the value of its imports.

Exports from the world's third-biggest economy went up 9.4 percent from the year before, thanks to shipments of steel, mineral fuels and electrical parts. Imports inflated 39.6 percent on surging energy bills, chiefly crude oil, LNG and coal. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — AFP

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A view of the Seif Palace in Kuwait City, located opposite the Grand Mosque, one of Seif Palace's best-known features is the watch tower, covered in blue tiles and with a roof plated in pure gold. Local materials such as clay, rocks, limestone, wood and metals were used in its construction. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

IWG holds mesmerizing Zoom event to
celebrate National and Liberation Days

Event covers Kuwait's history, its traditions and customs



KUWAIT: Photos from the Zoom event hosted by IWG to celebrate Kuwait's National and Liberation Days 2022.



KUWAIT: IWG proudly celebrated Kuwait National and Liberation Days 2022 with a festive and informative Zoom event, covering Kuwait's history and an array of Kuwait's traditions and customs.

Cristiana Baldocci, President of IWG and also wife of Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait, welcomed members and guests by saying that National and Liberation Days represent the spirit of Kuwait and its people, built on three fundamental pillars: "Defending freedom, solidarity and generosity, respect for human values". This is the time when we are filled with celebration and joyous acts of patriotism; reflecting on when 4,000 students carried the longest flag in the world in the 2019 Kuwait National Day Parade as has been acknowledged by the Guinness Book of records. Baldocci thanked Sheikh Hanouf Bader Al-Muhamad Al-Sabah for her video address which mentioned the following: "Today we celebrate 61st National Day, marking the independence of the state of Kuwait, as well as the 31st anniversary of our Liberation from the brutal Iraqi occupation. In another respect, we also celebrate decades of achievements and national progress filled with pride and honor as a result has succeeded in elevating Kuwait, to have its flag fly high among nations of the world." Sheikh Hanouf Bader Al-Muhamad Al-Sabah also said that the citizens and residents share in celebrating Kuwait's accomplishments, its leadership, and its effectiveness at regional and international levels.

A nation committed to humanitarian work around the globe with its steadfast support of true and just causes. Last but not least, she hoped that the suffering and social disruption caused worldwide by the COVID-19 pandemic would soon come to an end and that everyone is spared from more sorrow. Sheikh Hanouf's closing words were: "On this happy and dear occasion, I am pleased and honored



to present, on behalf of myself and all the members of this esteemed group, my most sincere and best wishes, and my congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and to the people of Kuwait and all those who reside in this wonderful nation.

The event then continued with a presentation by Kefah Al-Mutawa, who spoke on the courage shown and the sacrifices made, during the dark days of the invasion; recounting his experiences during the occupation of Kuwait and captivity in Iraq. He mentioned a defining moment when all those living in Kuwait went to the roofs of their homes to cry out for freedom in defiance of the occupier and the joy that their calls were answered, and their gratitude for the allied forces for making it happen.

The event continued with a moving musical Oud

recording by Abdullah Al-Mulla. Then on to Aisha Al-Saleh, a researcher on Kuwait's heritage, entertained the audience with many of the beautiful Kuwaiti celebratory traditions and customs of the past from Burgaa to Boushiya to swaying girl's hair at weddings. Treats such as Elba and Ghraybeh were also arranged by Al-Saleh. The event continued with a traditional dance performed by BSK students and was followed by BSK musicians who took the stage to perform Kuwait's National Anthem, enthralling the audience.

The final segment of the event was an informative documentary on modern Kuwait, its present and future; sufficient evidence of the nation's unparalleled recovery and proof of an outstanding future ahead. In closing remarks, Baldocci thanked the participants, members of the board and all the members and honored guests for joining IWG's National and Liberation Day celebrations.

ABK sponsors
Porsche Club
Kuwait's 70th
anniversary

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently sponsored Porsche Club Kuwait's 70th anniversary cele-

bratory event, held in collaboration with the Public Authority of Sport (PAS) and the Kuwait Motor Town of the Amiri Diwan on 4th February 2022. A number of exciting activities took place throughout the day, including the display of seventy iconic Porsche models, a parade, a track challenge for racing aficionados and an exciting ABK draw that saw one lucky winner enjoy a ride with one of the Porsche racers.

Johair Marafi, Acting General

Manager of Retail Banking at ABK said: "We are very happy to have been part of Porsche Club's celebration. The event brought together motor enthusiasts and truly encapsulated Kuwait's passion for automotive which is embedded in its culture. It was a pleasure to showcase our latest Alfouz draw account in such an exciting surrounding. On behalf of ABK, I would like to congratulate Porsche Club on their anniversary and great success."



Johair Marafi



Japan eases virus border rules for workers, students

Controversy as UK pushes 'anti-woke' schools guidance

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PETROPOLIS, Brazil: Residents look out over a scene of destruction during the second day of operations at the scene of a mudslide in Petropolis, Brazil yesterday. —AFP

Despair, solidarity for Brazil storm victims

Many in tears, fleeing the devastation left by deadly landslides

PETROPOLIS, Brazil: Holding the few possessions they are able to carry, families stream down the slopes of the hillside neighborhood of Alto da Serra, many in tears, fleeing the devastation left by deadly landslides in the Brazilian city of Petropolis.

Their modest neighborhood was one of the hardest hit by Tuesday's storms, which dumped a month's worth of rain on this scenic tourist town in a matter of hours, triggering flash floods and torrents of mud that gushed violently through the city.

"It's devastating. We never could have imagined something like this," says one fleeing resident, Elisabeth Lourenco, clutching two bags in which she stuffed some clothing when emergency officials ordered everyone in the neighborhood to evacuate.

"When the rain was falling hardest, a huge amount of mud came pouring down the hillside, and some tree branches fell on my house," says the 32-year-old manicurist, on the verge of tears.

Nearby is a scene of total chaos. A giant swathe of hillside is covered in mud and strewn with the remains of shattered houses.

Authorities say the disaster killed at least 104 people across the city. There are fears the death toll, which rose steadily Wednesday, could climb further still as rescue workers continue digging through the mud and ruins.

Watching the rescue operation in disbelief, residents shudder with each deafening pass of the helicopters hovering overhead. "I was eating dinner when the storm started. My brother came in and said, 'We need to get out of here, the hillside is collapsing,'" says Jeronimo Leonardo, 47, whose home sits at the edge of the area wiped out by the landslide.

“ We had no choice but to wait ”

'Up to our waists'

Residents of Alto da Serra have been evacuated to a church that sits atop another hill nearby. From the square outside the small blue building, they can see the disaster zone through the mist. Dozens of families swarm

the church, carting their belongings in bags.

Outside, volunteers unload a truck of bottled water, as others sort through donated clothing. "Can I have some shoes?" asks a little boy standing barefoot, his clothes stained with mud. Inside, mattresses line the floor. "We started taking people in as soon as the tragedy started Tuesday evening. We're hosting around 150 to 200 people, including a lot of children," says Father Celestino, a parish priest.

Yasmin Kennia Narciso, a 26-year-old teacher's assistant, is sitting on a mattress nursing her nine-month-old baby. "I didn't sleep all night," she says. She tells the story of how she fled with her two daughters around 11:00 pm.

"We tried to leave earlier, but there were boulders strewn across the path and everything was flooded. We were in water up to our waists. We had no choice but to wait until it went down," she says. She adds that she is still waiting for news on several neighbors.

"An older lady and her three grandchildren who lived just above us were buried in the mud."

Survivors know they likely face a long wait to learn if and when they can return home—for those who still have homes left. —AFP

Police issue ultimatum to protesters to leave Canada capital

OTTAWA: Canadian police issued an ultimatum Wednesday to protesters who've been choking Ottawa streets for 20 days to leave the capital, as provincial and US state leaders called for an end to the cross-border vaccine requirement that sparked the trucker-led movement. Officials, meanwhile, announced a negotiated peaceful end to the last of several recent blockades by protesters of border crossings between Canada and the United States.

"You must leave the area now," Ottawa police said in a notice distributed to truckers outside parliament. Anyone blocking streets or assisting others in doing so will be arrested and face charges, as well as fines and seizures of their trucks, the statement said.

Police also warned that anyone charged or convicted for taking part in the illegal demonstration may, in addition to criminal penalties, be barred from traveling to the United States. As the notices were handed out, AFP journalists saw hundreds of trucks continuing to occupy streets in the parliamentary precinct, blaring horns—despite an extension Wednesday of a court order against the deafening noises, obtained by an area resident fed up with the disruptions.

"We're still a lot of trucks holding the line," trucker David Shaw, 65, told AFP. If arrested, he added: "I'll keep coming back." Fellow protester Jan Grouin, 42, decried Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's decision earlier this week to impose a state of emergency, calling it "a little overreacting maybe to think that we are terrorists."

In a statement, Ottawa interim police Chief Steve Bell said "a methodical and well-resourced plan" would be carried out over the coming days "to take back the entirety of the downtown core and every occupied space."

"Some of the techniques we are lawfully able and prepared to use are not what we are used to seeing in Ottawa," he said. "But we are prepared to use them... to restore order." Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, meanwhile, asked Canadian and US leaders in a letter signed by 16 US governors—all members of the Republican party—to exempt truckers from vaccine and quarantine requirements when crossing the Canada-US border. They were joined by Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, who has endorsed the truckers' convoy.

"The timing of your decision to terminate the vaccine and quarantine exemptions could not have been worse, as North America already faces grave supply chain constraints," said the letter addressed to US President Joe Biden and Trudeau. "These constraints, combined with increasing inflation, place significant burdens on the residents of Canada and the United States."

Unable to dislodge the protesters, Trudeau this week invoked the Emergencies Act, which gives the government wide new powers to end the demonstrations over Covid restrictions. The move marked only the second time in Canadian history such emergency powers have been invoked in peacetime.

Trudeau told reporters Wednesday that with police now getting help from various other law enforcement units, they should "be able to begin their actions." "It's time for this to end," he said, adding that it was up to "police to decide when and how." —AFP

France, allies announce Mali withdrawal

PARIS: France announced yesterday that it was withdrawing troops from Mali due to a breakdown in relations with the country's ruling junta, after nearly 10 years of fighting a jihadist insurgency. The Mali deployment has been fraught with problems for France—of 53 French soldiers killed serving in West Africa's Sahel region, 48 of them died in Mali.

"Multiple obstructions" by the military junta that took power in August 2020 meant that the conditions were no longer in place to operate in Mali, said a statement signed by France and its African and European allies. The decision applies to both 2,400 French troops in Mali, where France first deployed in 2013, and a smaller European force of several hundred soldiers, called Takuba, that was created in 2020 with the aim of taking the burden off the French forces.

"We cannot remain militarily engaged alongside de facto authorities whose strategy and hidden aims we do not share," President Emmanuel Macron told a news conference, saying that he "completely" rejected the idea that France had failed in the country.

Macron said that France's bases in Gossi, Menaka and Gao in Mali would close within the next four to six months. But, he vowed, the withdrawal would be carried out in an "orderly" manner. The announcement comes at a critical time for Macron, just days before

the president is expected to make a long-awaited declaration that he will stand for a second term at elections in April.

Macron's priority will now be to ensure that the withdrawal does not invite comparisons with the chaotic US departure from Afghanistan last year. France initially deployed the troops against the jihadists at Mali's request in 2013. But the insurgency was never fully quelled.

Jihadists scattered by French firepower regrouped, and two years later moved into the centre of Mali, an ethnic powderkeg, before launching raids on neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Now, new fears have emerged of a jihadist push toward the Gulf of Guinea.

'Collapse of state'

"It is an inglorious end to an armed intervention that began in euphoria and which ends, nine years later, against a backdrop of crisis between Mali and France," wrote French daily Le Monde. Macron denied that the intervention had been in vain.

"What would have happened in 2013 if France had not chosen to intervene? You would for sure have had the collapse of the Malian state," he said, hailing the decision of his predecessor Francois Hollande to deploy troops.

Even after the pullout from Mali, however, France and its allies vowed to remain engaged in fight-



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron (R) speaks with Senegal's President Macky Sall prior to a meeting on the Sahel at The Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris yesterday. —AFP

ing terror in the region, including in Niger and the Gulf of Guinea, adding that the outline of this action would be made clear in June.

Speaking alongside Macron, Senegalese President Macky Sall said fighting "terrorism in the Sahel cannot be the business of African countries alone." Macron warned that Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group had made the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea nations "a priority for their strategy of expansion." Macron announced that Takuba forces in Mali would be redeployed alongside Niger forces close to the Mali border.

Wider impact

Around 25,000 foreign troops are currently deployed in the Sahel.

They include around 4,600 French soldiers, though France last year had already announced the start of a drawdown. Army chief of staff spokesman Colonel Pascal Ianni said the Mali withdrawal would mean that within six months there would be 2,500 to 3,000 French soldiers deployed across the region. At its peak, there were 5,400 troops in the mission, known as Barkhane.

In Mali specifically, there is also the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA, established in 2013, and EUTM Mali, an EU military training mission for the Malian army. Macron said France would still provide air and medical support for MINUSMA in the coming months before transferring these responsibilities. —AFP

International

Libyan town awaits justice over family militia's reign of terror

Lions were rumoured to be fed on the flesh of their enemies

TARHUNA, Libya: For years, a family clan that kept lions to sow terror in the Libyan town of Tarhuna tortured and killed hundreds of people, then dumped their bodies in mass graves.

Now, the six Kani brothers and their militiamen are gone, either dead or in hiding, but the survivors in this western town are still waiting for justice. Eleven years after the toppling of dictator Muammar Gaddafi plunged the North African country into chaos, they have been left to mourn their loved ones, 260 of whom have been discovered in row upon row of graves.

Today, 60-year-old Ghazla Ali Ounis sits outside her house, surrounded by her orphaned grandchildren whose parents were killed by the Kani family.

"The people who killed my brothers and my sons, I want to catch them alive," said the grieving woman who lost 11 male relatives to the militia.

The Kani brothers and their gunmen first seized the town in 2015 and set about systematically silencing rivals. Lions they kept were rumoured to be fed on the flesh of their enemies. For a time, the group called the "Kaniyat" sided with militias based in the capital Tripoli, 80 kilometres (50 miles) away. But when eastern-based military strongman Khalifa Haftar in 2019 launched an assault to seize the capital, the clan switched sides and offered him Tarhuna as a rear base.

When Haftar's forces were routed a year later, the Kani brothers disappeared — some are believed killed, others to be in hiding. The town then began the search for the mass graves, desperate to find signs of the many disappeared.

In December 2019, armed men in khaki uniforms had dragged away four of Ounis's sons and seven of her brothers. "They ambushed them in their

sleep and took them away by force," she said. "I never saw them again." All were tortured to death, she said.

'Long-haired criminals'

Her nephew, Walid al-Romani, remembers when his father was abducted by "long-haired criminals". "They circled the house, beat him up and took him away," the 15-year-old said. "I heard one of them say 'mission accomplished' into a walkie-talkie before they disappeared.

"Where's the justice system, the state, punishment?" he asked. Behind him, old car engines belonging to his father, who was a mechanic, rusted amid piles of scrap metal.

Tarhuna residents say they feel an aching sense of injustice, and pain over being abandoned by a state that has provided no compensation and only arrested very few of the killers.

Three of the brothers, including leader Mohamed Al-Kani, have been killed, but the other three remain at large, residents say. They are rumoured to be hiding out in the eastern city of Benghazi or further afield in Egypt or Jordan,

people in Tarhuna say.

Despite arrest warrants issued by Tripoli prosecutors, "there have been no arrests, and the killers are on the run," said Ounis. She said she had tried to meet Libya's unity Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah to discuss the issue, but that "he didn't want to receive me".

'Lots of horrors'

On the edge of Tarhuna, men armed with spades chip away at the hard ochre earth as they search for more bodies in a suspected mass grave. Residents



TARHUNA, Libya: Libyan Ashraf Jaballah (R), 35, speaks during an interview at his home in the western town of Tarhuna. For years a brutal family clan that kept caged lions to sow fear killed hundreds of people in the Libyan town of Tarhuna, then dumped their bodies in mass graves. —AFP

are still holding funerals for loved ones extracted from newly-discovered graves.

So far, 260 bodies have been recovered. Ahmed Ferrara, head of operations at Libya's authority for the disappeared, said his department was "seriously lacking resources". Libya expert Jalel Harchaoui said civilians in the North African country had experienced "lots of horrors" between 2014 and 2019.

"Most of the perpetrators are still free today, even sometimes taking part in political life as if they were innocent," he said.

Meanwhile Ashraf Jaballah, 35, is impatiently waiting for justice.

In December 2019, he was attending a funeral when Kani fighters attacked him and his relatives.

"We tried to resist but there were so many of them," he said. Ten of his relatives were taken away to an unknown location. All would later be identified in mass graves. He says that when the grave was discovered, the shock put him in hospital.

"They burned down our houses, stole our belongings," said Jaballah. "The state has still done nothing." —AFP



Bodies were dumped in mass graves

Russian 'space rocket spy' denies charge in German trial

MUNICH, Germany: A Russian scientist accused of spying for Moscow while working at a German university denied the charges at the opening of his trial yesterday, saying recent months had been "a horror". Ilnur Nagaev is accused of having shared information about Europe's Ariane space rocket programme with Russia's foreign intelligence service SVR.

He allegedly received 2,500 euros (\$2,800) in cash in exchange, according to prosecutors. But addressing the Munich court at the opening of his trial, Nagaev said he had "never heard of and did not know about the existence" of the SVR.

"No-one asked me if I would like to work for a secret organisation," Nagaev told the court. "If someone had asked, I would have said no immediately." Prosecutors allege that Nagaev was contacted by the SVR in the autumn of 2019 at the latest.

After agreeing to cooperate, he allegedly "passed on information on research projects in the field of aerospace technology, in particular the various development stages of the European launcher Ariane".

At the time of his arrest last year, he was working at the University of Augsburg, a Bavarian town that hosts several key suppliers to the European Space Agency's Ariane programme.

Nagaev is the latest in a string of alleged Russian spies uncovered on German soil. The case comes amid the worst tensions between Moscow and the West since the Cold War, centred on President Vladimir Putin's troop build-up at the border with Ukraine.

It reportedly led to the expulsion of a diplomat from Russia's consulate in Munich, after two other members of embassy staff were declared persona non grata over the 2019 assassination — allegedly ordered by Moscow — of a former Chechen commander in a Berlin park.

SpaceX competition

The European Union's Ariane programme consists of a series of transportation rockets designed to ferry heavy loads including satellites into space. The 40-year-old programme, often held up as a model of industrial and political cooperation between European countries, faces growing competition from newcomers such as Elon Musk's SpaceX.

According to prosecutors, Nagaev held "regular meetings" from late November 2019 onwards with a senior officer of Russia's foreign intelligence service stationed in Germany. Nagaev told the court he met a man he named as Struchov "completely by chance" during a rafting tour in 2019.

The two had decided to go to the fish market after the tour, where they met another man who spoke to them in Russian and who introduced himself as Leonid. "I never imagined that Mr Struchov could be an employee of a spy organisation," Nagaev told the court, adding that the contact "never asked me to keep anything secret".

Tensions

Germany and Russia have been at odds over the years on several burning issues, including cyberattacks and a string of espionage cases that Berlin has blamed on Moscow.

In October 2021, a German man was handed a two-year suspended sentence for passing on floor plans of parliament buildings to Russian secret services while employed by a security company.

Last August, a former employee of the British embassy in Berlin was arrested on suspicion of having passed on documents to Russian intelligence. —AFP

Spanish port devastated by shipwreck tragedy

MARIN, Spain: Flags at half-mast, black ribbons everywhere and families devastated by grief: the Spanish port town of Marin was left reeling after a deadly shipwreck left 21 sailors dead or missing at sea. The fishing trawler which sank off eastern Canada early on Tuesday was based in this small port in Spain's northwestern Galicia region and several members of its 24-strong crew lived here.

"All our solidarity with the Villa de Pitaxno" reads a huge banner strung up along the main road, referring to the vessel which went down 250 nautical miles east of Newfoundland in Spain's worst fishing tragedy in nearly 40 years. Onboard were 16 Spaniards, five Peruvians and three Ghanaians. Only three people survived.

Rescuers only managed to recover nine bodies, leaving 12 missing, presumed drowned, with the Canadian authorities ending their search of the freezing waters at 2000 GMT after an "exhaustive" 36-hour operation in which they combed 900 nautical square miles.

'Children in shock'

"My children are devastated," said Carolina, wife of Jonathan Calderon, a 39-year-old Peruvian fisherman who had been living and

Controversy as UK pushes 'anti-woke' schools guidance

LONDON: Britain's government yesterday stoked controversy by issuing new schools guidance that urges teachers to avoid "contested" areas in history, anti-racism and climate change.

The guidance, which singles out the activist group Black Lives Matter, comes with Prime Minister Boris Johnson fighting for his political survival and accused of trying to distract voters' attention by pushing an "anti-woke" agenda. Citing the Zionist entity-Palestinian conflict and the legacy of the British Empire, the Department for Education said "teachers must not promote partisan political views and should offer a balanced overview of opposing views when political issues are taught".

Anger over US police racial 'bias' in mall fight video

NEW YORK: A video of US police violently tackling a Black teenager during a fight with a young white man has sparked outrage, prompting the state governor to condemn Wednesday what appeared to be "racially disparate treatment".

The video-posted by the platform Storyfy and picked up by ABC, CBS and CNN—shows a fistfight between two teenagers at a shopping mall in Bridgewater, New Jersey, a suburb of New York city. After about 10 seconds, two police officers arrive and forcefully separate the teens.

But while the Black teenager is violently thrown on the floor by the police officer, the young white man is simply made to sit on a sofa. A policewoman is then seen putting her knee on the back of the young Black man as he lies flat on his stomach, while the male police officer handcuffs him.

"They basically tackle me to the

ground and then the one—the male officer put his knee in my back and then he starts putting me in cuffs," the Black teen, who gave his name as Kye, told ABC. "And then the female officer came over and put her knee on my upper back too and started helping putting cuffs on me."

The video does not show the rest of the arrest of the Black teenager, nor what became of the young white man who was not arrested. Police in Bridgewater Township acknowledged on Facebook that the video had "made members of our community upset" and promised an internal investigation.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy

condemned the police action. "Although an investigation is still gathering the facts about this incident, I'm deeply disturbed by what appears to be racially disparate treatment in this video," he tweeted. Racism in law enforcement is a lightning rod issue in the United States, with young Black men at much greater risk from police violence than white men. Viral footage of the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man, in 2020 sparked nationwide protests and calls for reform of law enforcement. Steffie Bartley, Northeast Regional Director of the anti-racist National Action Network, condemned what he called the "implicit bias" seen in the Bridgewater video. —AFP

working on boats in Marin for more than a decade. Speaking to AFP, she said it was very important "that they find all the bodies, more than anything else, because that's very important for the families".

Her husband, she said, "knew the sea well because he had worked in Uruguay, then in the Falkland Islands and had spent 12 years working on the Pitaxno". Carolina, who is from Chiclayo, a city in northern Peru, said the last time she spoke to him was Monday and he didn't mention anything about bad weather.

At her side, Carolina's mother is in tears as she talks about the impact on the couple's 16-year-old son and daughter, 10. "My grandson is in shock, he thinks his Dad is coming home but my granddaughter seems to have accepted it because she says: 'Daddy's dead,'" she sobs.

'Uncertainty part of our DNA'

With very little news about the fate of their loved ones, several families were gathered at the headquarters of Manuel Nores, the firm that owned the Villa de Pitaxno. The firm was only letting in immediate family members who were being supported by therapists from the Red Cross, an AFP correspondent said.

Opposite the port, where several buildings were draped with large black mourning banners, the flags on Marin's town hall had all been lowered to half mast. On Wednesday evening, the town of 24,000 residents, which sits on a river that flows into the Atlantic Ocean, observed a minute's silence for the victims.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi stressed that no subject should be "off-limits in the classroom". But it should be taught "in an age-appropriate way, with sensitivity and respect, and without promoting contested theories as fact", he said in a statement.

With Johnson under police investigation over a series of lockdown-breaching parties held in Downing Street, the government has been making a renewed push on "culture wars" ahead of nationwide local elections in May.

The government is driving through legislation to toughen up penalties for vandalising historical sites, after one statue of a historical slaver was toppled in Bristol and another of wartime prime minister Winston Churchill was defaced in London.

In a speech this week at a right-wing think-tank in Washington, Conservative party chairman Oliver Dowden denounced a "painful woke psychodrama" that he said was undermining democratic freedoms in the West.

Dowden, who sits in Johnson's cabinet, said "woke"



MARIN, GALICIA, Spain: Kevin Franco (R), son of Rogelio Franco, one of the Peruvian crew member of the "Villa de Pitaxno" trawler that sank off the coast of Canada, is comforted by a relative. —AFP

"As people of the sea, we know what it is to live with uncertainty, it is part of our DNA, just like salt water, fishing and the seafaring culture," town hall said in a statement. "We can hardly imagine the sense of shock, the immense sorrow and the pain that the families of the Villa de Pitaxno are experiencing. We just aren't able," it added.

The pain felt in Marin is etched in the face of Maria Dolores Polo, a 52-year-old legal adviser as she walks past the port in the pouring rain. "I feel a huge sense of sorrow because these people went out to sea like that and haven't been able to come home," she told AFP. "Let's just see if they manage to recover the bodies," she said. —AFP



Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi stoked controversy by issuing new schools guidance.

International

Japan eases virus border rules for workers, students

Kishida: Quarantine requirements would now be eased

TOKYO: Japan will ease its strict virus border rules to allow students and businesspeople into the country from March, but tourists will still be barred, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said yesterday.

The move comes with growing pressure on Japan from the business community and academics to loosen the border restrictions, which are the toughest in the G7 but have broad support from Japanese voters. Japan has barred tourists since the early days of the pandemic, and has in some cases prevented even existing foreign residents from entering the country.

Last November, the government slightly loosened the rules to allow some students and businesspeople to enter, but then quickly reversed the plan weeks later as the Omicron strain emerged.



TOKYO: Members of the media raise their hands to ask a question as Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (top C) takes part in a press conference to update the country about the COVID-19 pandemic and certain border restrictions, in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP



Tourists will still be barred: PM

After an Omicron-driven spike in infections, cases in Japan now appear to have peaked, experts say. From March 1, Kishida said “we will allow new visitors, except those coming for tourism”, adding that a cap on daily entrants will be raised to from the current 3,500 to 5,000.

More than 400,000 people whose visas have already been approved by authorities were waiting to enter Japan as of January 4, an immigration agency official told AFP. More than 150,000 of those are students, with another 129,000 workers hired to take part in a technical training programme that is a key source of foreign labour for several industries in the country.

While Japan has not pursued a zero-COVID policy and has avoided strict lockdowns, it has made

tough border measures a centrepiece of its pandemic response. Even citizens and returning residents able to enter have been subject to quarantines of up to two weeks, with testing before and after entering the country.

Kishida said quarantine requirements would now be eased, going from seven to three days, if arrivals test negative. Quarantine will be removed altogether for those with three vaccine doses coming from countries judged low-risk, he added, without specifying particular nations.

Japan has recorded more than 20,950 deaths in the pandemic and polls show Japanese broadly favour the tough restrictions, with nearly 60 percent of respondents in a recent survey by public broadcaster NHK

backing a continued ban on entry.

Davide Rossi, an Italian entrepreneur living in Japan who campaigns for students stuck outside the country, said the news was a light at the end of the tunnel, and many now hope they can enter Japan before the new semester in April.

“There is a very high sense of urgency. People are really on the verge of quitting, but now, with this announcement, they have some hope,” he told AFP.

But he recalled the way the border restrictions were tightened in November, just weeks after being eased. “Hopefully this is a lesson, too, and the borders won’t close again like they did in November, because that really hurt a lot of people so much. I hope things will get better from today.” — AFP

before being moved, and non-target species can become snagged.

‘We all know the risks’

The attack has rocked beach communities in Sydney’s east, where being in the water is a part of everyday life. Each morning before dawn and later as the sun sets, surfers, swimmers and paddleboarders flock to the waves to work out or take a break from the strains of work life. According to Sports Australia, 4.5 million Aussies swim regularly and at least 500,000 surf. Whales, dolphins, rays and several species of shark live along the coast and it is not uncommon to spot animals in the water, or to hear the ringing of shark alarms urging everyone back to the beach. But most Sydneysiders take the risk in their stride. “We all know that we take a risk every time we get in the water,” said 45-year-old Kim Miller, who took up ocean swimming when she returned to Sydney in 2020.

At the beginning, she admitted “I was scared of seaweed, and fish. I did have a real fear around it.” “When I first started seeing grey nurse sharks at (nearby) Maroubra, I thought I’d run on water. But it was such a peaceful, beautiful experience that I found myself diving down to get closer to them.” Yesterday, as 13 beaches across the city were closed, swimmers’ WhatsApp groups filled with graphic images of the attack and messages to check if friends were safe and well. An 800-competitor ocean swimming race scheduled for the area on Sunday has been postponed.

“It’s hit a little bit closer today when we heard it was a long-distance ocean swimmer, knowing it’s a route that we’ve done so many times,” Miller said. “I feel a little bit sick this afternoon.” Her morning swim on Thursday was confined to an ocean pool, but she insisted “eventually we’ll all have the courage to get back in”. — AFP

Hunt on for great white shark that killed swimmer

SYDNEY: Sydney authorities yesterday deployed baited lines to try to catch a giant great white shark that devoured an ocean swimmer, as beach communities in Australia’s largest city were rocked by the first such attack in decades. Drones scoured the ocean from the air, spotters launched on boats and six drum lines were set to try to catch the creature, which is believed to be at least three metres (10 feet) in length.

Police believe they have identified the victim, a 35-year-old ocean swimmer who was attacked on a sunny Wednesday afternoon, leaving shocked fishermen and golfers to watch helplessly from nearby cliffs. A rescue helicopter and four ambulances were dispatched, but the victim perished after suffering what emergency responders described as “catastrophic injuries”.

It was the first fatal shark attack in Sydney since 1963. “Based on footage provided by the public including eyewitness accounts... shark biologists believe that a White Shark, at least three metres in length, was likely responsible,” the state government’s Department of Primary Industries said.

The department announced it was deploying “six SMART drumlines” around Little Bay Beach, near where the attack occurred in the city’s east. Drum lines feature hooks loaded with bait and are used to trap sharks that can then be tagged and moved to deeper ocean away from the coast. Their use is controversial because hooked animals have been known to die



SYDNEY: A fisheries boat patrols the site of a fatal shark attack off Little Bay Beach in Sydney yesterday, as authorities deployed baited lines to try to catch a giant great white shark that devoured an ocean swimmer, the city's first such attack in decades. — AFP

Morocco, Germany renew ties after ‘misunderstandings’

ABAT: Morocco and Germany agreed to overcome “misunderstandings” and renew “close amicable relations” after a year-long diplomatic freeze, including over the issue of the disputed Western Sahara. The announcement followed a video conference between Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock on the eve of a summit in Brussels between the European Union and the African Union.

The pair agreed to “build on the special quality of bilateral relations in all spheres in the spirit of... mutual respect”, a joint statement said. “They stressed the

considerable interest of both sides in close amicable relations,” it added, and “agreed to enter into a new dialogue with a view to overcoming the misunderstandings that have arisen”.

Baerbock “welcomed the return of His Majesty’s ambassador to Berlin” and said a new German ambassador would arrive in Rabat “shortly”—the first concrete signs of the thaw. Rabat in March last year said it was suspending contacts with the German embassy in the North African kingdom over “deep misunderstandings” on “issues fundamental for Morocco”.

Then in May it announced the recall of its ambassador for consultations and accused Germany of unspecified “hostile acts”. The post of German envoy to Morocco has since been vacant. Germany’s criticism of former US president Donald Trump’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara was among the apparent points of friction. Germany is one of Morocco’s main economic and trade partners. — AFP

News in brief

Swiss president tests positive

GENEVA: President Ignazio Cassis has tested positive for COVID-19, the government said yesterday — the same day Switzerland lifted almost all remaining coronavirus restrictions despite high case numbers. Wednesday’s “test came back positive and the president went into self-isolation this morning as soon as he learned of the test result,” a government statement said. “Mr Cassis has no symptoms and is in good health.” The former cantonal doctor, aged 60, who holds the annually-rotating Swiss presidency alongside his foreign affairs brief, will return to his office next week. Cassis struck an upbeat tone on Wednesday as he announced Switzerland was joining European countries including Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway in dropping almost all of COVID-19 restrictions. “The light is definitely there on the horizon,” he told a press conference, adding it was time to “learn to live with the virus”. “We shouldn’t be afraid of a return to normal, but we shouldn’t be too enthusiastic either,” he said. — AFP

Gunmen kill eight traders

LAGOS: Gunmen have attacked a cattle market in southeast Nigeria, killing eight traders and 51 cows, police said yesterday, in the latest violence to hit the restive region. Southeast Nigeria, where separatist agitations are on the rise, has seen a spate of attacks, with more than 130 police and other security personnel killed by gunmen since last year, according to local media tallies. It was not immediately clear if Tuesday’s attack on the cattle market in Aba in Abia state was linked to separatist violence. “There was an attack on the cattle market in Aba by unknown gunmen who killed eight traders and 51 cows on Tuesday,” state police spokesman Geoffrey Ogbonna told AFP. He said an investigation was underway to determine the motives. Ogbonna said traders from various parts of the country used and patronised the market. “It is a new market. The traders were recently relocated to the site and it is patronised by different ethnic groups in Nigeria.” Ogbonna said no group has claimed responsibility. — AFP

Storm halts rail, air travel

FRANKFURT: A heavy storm swept across Germany on the night of Wednesday into Thursday, grounding flights and trains and forcing schools in several states to close. Police warned residents to stay home and avoid parks or forests, as gale-force winds whipped in from the north of the country. The strongest winds were felt on Brocken, the highest point in the Harz highlands in central Germany, with speeds of up to 152 kilometres (94 miles) per hour. Long distance trains were halted throughout northern Germany including in Hamburg, Berlin and Bremen until midday yesterday at the earliest, the national rail operator Deutsche Bahn said. Significant cancellations and delays were also expected on regional services. The airline Lufthansa cancelled 20 flights destined for Hamburg, Berlin and Munich, departing from Frankfurt, the country’s largest airport. Travellers were encouraged to consult the company’s website to see the status of their flight. — AFP

French prosecutor says near solving 2012 British murders in Alps

GENEVA: Investigators are close to solving the brutal 2012 murder of a British family in the French Alps, the lead prosecutor in one of France’s most notorious cold cases said yesterday. In September 2012, Saad al-Hilli, a 50-year-old Iraqi-born British tourist and his wife Iqbal were shot dead in front of their two young daughters in a forest car park close to Lake Annecy, near France’s border with Switzerland.

Iqbal’s mother was also killed in the execution-style attack, as was a French cyclist who apparently stumbled upon the scene on a remote mountain road. French investigators have struggled for more than nine years to identify a motive for the killings.

An unnamed man was held for questioning in mid-January, raising hopes of a breakthrough, but he was released a day later and ruled out as a suspect. “I think we’re nearly there,” Annecy public prosecutor Line Bonnet said in an interview with Swiss daily la Tribune de Geneve. “We’ll succeed thanks to scientific evidence,” she said. Saad al-Hilli, 50, his 47-year-old wife and 74-year-old mother-in-law were killed in an isolated car park near the village of Chevaline.

Each had been shot in the head several times. More than two dozen spent bullet casings were found near their British-registered BMW estate car.

The couple’s two daughters, aged seven and four at the time, survived the attack, although the older girl had been shot and badly beaten. — AFP

Chinese officials probe case of chained woman in shack after outcry

BEIJING: The case of a woman chained by the neck in a shack in rural China is going to be investigated, Chinese authorities said yesterday, after shocking viral footage triggered outrage online and intense debate on mental health and human trafficking. The woman’s conditions were thrown under the spotlight after a blogger filmed a video in China’s eastern Jiangsu province, showing him interviewing her in freezing weather.

She could be seen with a chain and padlock around her neck, wearing thin clothing despite the climate, and seemed dazed and unable to understand him. Local authorities said that the woman’s 55-year-old husband, named Dong, is suspected of illegally detaining her.

“Imagine what this big sister has experienced in these temperatures,” the blogger asked in the video, adopting a respectful term for older women. He was shown putting a coat on the woman. “Where has our love gone?”

Officials confirmed Dong and the woman had eight children together and said their identity information was not properly verified when they registered for marriage.

She has since been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Yesterday, Jiangsu authorities pledged to “thoroughly uncover the truth, severely punish the relevant illegal and criminal acts in accordance with the law, and seriously hold the responsible people to account”.

The video, published last month, triggered a firestorm of debate online about the treatment of people with mental health issues and women in rural communities. “I hope this can be a chance leading to a nationwide crack-down on the problem of human trafficking... ending the occurrence of abduction and trafficking of women and children from the root,” one user said.

Many were angry that it had taken so long for authorities to respond. Alumni of top Chinese universities including prestigious Peking University had petitioned for the central government to look into the case.

Local officials said last week the detained woman, called ‘Xiaohuamei’, was originally from a village in southern Yunnan province, some 2,000 kilometres away. Another couple — a woman surnamed Sang and a man surnamed Shi — are suspected of abduction and trafficking in connection with the case.

‘Xiaohuamei’ — which means ‘little plum blossom’ and is likely a nickname — was apparently entrusted to Sang to be taken for treatment in Jiangsu, which she never seemed to have received. China’s draconian one child policy — which was only relaxed in 2016 — has led to a shortage of women due to a preference for boys, prompting fears from Beijing policymakers over social unrest due to large numbers of unmarried men. This massive gender imbalance has also fuelled a trade in human trafficking and child abductions. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2022

G20 warned of Ukraine threat to global recovery

Summit focus on reforming global health systems to face future pandemics

JAKARTA: The crisis in Ukraine is a serious threat to the global economy's post-pandemic recovery, Indonesia's leader yesterday warned a meeting of finance chiefs from the G20 nations. The Group of 20 — which brings together the world's top economies including the US, China and some European nations—is holding talks in hybrid format in the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

Opening the two-day meeting, Indonesian President Joko Widodo warned of the risks to the fragile recovery from the crisis in Ukraine, where fears are growing that Russia is set to invade. "This is not the time for rivalries and creating new tensions that disrupt the... recovery, let alone endanger the safety of the world, as is happening in Ukraine," said Widodo, whose country currently holds the G20 presidency.

"All parties must stop the rivalry and tension." He urged the G20, which includes Russia, to instead focus on "collaborating" to help boost the global economy. The threat of a Russian invasion of its ex-Soviet neighbor presents a fresh challenge for a world already struggling to keep a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic on track as inflation surges.

Also on the agenda at the meeting—originally due to take place on holiday island Bali before being moved due to an Omicron virus wave—was how to reform global health systems to be better prepared for future pandemics.

'Mobilize funds'

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, speaking via video-link, said that "we must act urgently to strengthen the global health architecture so that we have the tools to prevent, prepare for, and respond to future health crises". "We must also focus on mobilizing the funding needed to address gaps in the system." Calls have been growing for new funding systems, especially following the challenges in producing and distributing COVID vaccines.

Financing needs are "undeniable", with estimates of the amount required running to \$75 billion over the next five years, Yellen said. Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said the G20 was discussing establishing a fund to combat future health crises, which would be coordinated by the World Health Organization.

Efforts to strengthen the global health architecture can only succeed if they bolster the WHO's role, the body's chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed. "It's clear that at the centre of this architecture, the world needs a strong and sustainably financed WHO... with its unique mandate, unique technical expertise and unique global legitimacy," Tedros told the talks.

Another key topic was skyrocketing global inflation, and how central banks in developed nations proceed with hiking rates and withdraw-



JAKARTA: Australia's Treasurer Joshua Frydenberg (right) listens to president of Asian Development Bank, Masatsugu Asakawa (left), during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

ing massive pandemic stimulus without causing shocks in developing countries. Withdrawing stimulus will "potentially create tighter global financial

conditions and may induce capital outflows from emerging markets," warned Perry Warjiyo, governor of the Indonesian central bank. —AFP

European supply constraints could last into 2023: IMF

WASHINGTON: Supply constraints that held back growth in Europe last year by an amount equal to some countries' normal rates of expansion could last into 2023, the IMF warned yesterday. Without these constraints that included factory closures and component shortages, growth last year would have been about two percentage points higher, the Washington-based crisis lender said in a blog.

That is equivalent "to about one year's worth of growth in normal pre-pandemic times for many European economies," it said. While forecasts were for the constraints to ease this year, the fast-spreading Omicron variant of the virus "has injected new uncertainty," managing director Kristalina Georgieva and other officials wrote.

"Europe and China have imposed new restrictions and more disruptions could follow. All in all, supply disruptions could last for longer, possibly into 2023," they said.

Manufacturing output in the euro area would have also been six percent higher without the supply troubles. The report attributed 40 percent of the supply shocks to shutdowns caused by the pandemic, which it said should be transient. It warned labor shortages and



WASHINGTON: Supply constraints that held back growth in Europe last year by an amount equal to some countries' normal rates of expansion could last into 2023, the IMF warned yesterday.

worn-out infrastructure "could however have more persistent effects on supply and inflation than shutdowns." Countries whose factories rely the most on global supply chains were hit hardest, with the IMF saying Germany and the Czech Republic would have seen output 14 percent higher.

The lender called for tackling "supply bottlenecks directly with regulatory measures wherever possible," including expanding operating hours at ports, speeding up licenses required for transportation and logistics operations and pro-

moting immigration to address shortage of workers. The blog also said spending measures could be used to help the situation but "support should... be well targeted," and warned against broad policies that could drive up demand and make bottlenecks and inflation worse.

"The more successful regulatory and targeted fiscal measures are in alleviating the supply bottlenecks, the less likely it is that policymakers will be forced to dampen down aggregate demand and economic growth to contain inflation," the officials wrote. —AFP

Turkey keeps rate stable as inflation soars

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank yesterday kept its main interest rate steady again as the country faces soaring inflation that has put pressure on households and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government.

The bank left its policy rate at 14 percent for the second time in a row after a four-month streak of cuts which caused a currency crisis late last year that decimated people's purchasing power. Inflation reached nearly 50 percent in January, a two-decade high that further cut people's purchasing power. The Turkish lira lost 44 percent of its value against the dollar in 2021.

Erdogan vehemently opposes high interest rates, claiming they are the "mother and father of all evil" and cause high inflation. Central banks normally raise rates to tame inflation. He has claimed his unorthodox thinking on monetary policy is part of a "war of economic independence" which aims to move Turkey away from relying on foreign capital inflows. The cost of living crisis could put pressure on his government's hopes for victory ahead of a general election expected in 2023.

On Saturday, Erdogan cut sales tax on dairy products, fruit, vegetables and other basic food items from eight to one percent, and vowed to help with rising energy bills. The yearly increase in food prices was over 55 percent in January's reading. —AFP

Stocks lower as traders track Ukraine crisis

NEW YORK: Stock markets moved lower yesterday as investors assessed the latest twists in the Ukraine crisis, while oil prices retreated on further signs of a breakthrough in Iran nuclear talks, analysts said.

Have investment gold won support, rising very close to \$1,900 an ounce over concerns of a potential invasion of Ukraine by neighboring Russia. The crisis in Ukraine is a serious threat to the global economy's post-pandemic recovery, Indonesia's leader warned yesterday at a meeting of finance chiefs from the G20 wealthy nations. The Kremlin yesterday said that the country's withdrawal of forces from around Ukraine's borders would take place over an extended period, while Kyiv's allies said it appeared to still be moving towards an invasion.

Meanwhile, there were reports of intensifying shell fire between Ukrainian forces and Moscow-backed separatists, and Russia expelled a senior US diplomat. "This is a storm cloud hanging over the market and everyone is hoping it passes by, but it remains part of a stationary front," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick J. O'Hare.

Global equities were sent plunging and crude surged at the start of the week after a top US official said Russia could invade



HONG KONG: People walk past a sign showing the numbers for the Hang Seng Index before it closes, as Hong Kong shares fell by the most in two weeks. —AFP

Ukraine imminently, but Moscow appeared to soothe those fears Tuesday by saying it had started withdrawing some soldiers. European stocks initially held up fairly well thanks to a slew of good earnings results. European aircraft giant Airbus posted record profits in 2021 after two years of losses as it cruises past the pandemic-induced crisis in the travel industry, company results showed yesterday. Air France-KLM posted another net loss in 2021, though it cut the losses in half, at 3.3 billion euros, compared to 2020.

Elsewhere, Swiss food giant Nestle's

net profit and sales rose in 2021 as it sold shares in cosmetic company L'Oréal and hiked prices amid soaring global inflation.

High oil prices, which have contributed heavily to the soaring inflation, fell yesterday on growing hopes that talks on the Iran nuclear deal could soon bear fruit. Tehran's top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani said an agreement was "closer than ever" and while Washington and Paris were a little more circumspect, the comments raised the possibility that Iranian crude could return to the market soon. —AFP

World funds own destruction with \$1.8tn subsidies

PARIS: The world must slash \$1.8 trillion in annual subsidies that destroy the environment, according to a study yesterday from business groups including one founded by tycoon Richard Branson. The report, estimating the value of damaging state subsidies, was commissioned by Branson's nonprofit initiative The B Team and global coalition Business for Nature, which comprises academic, corporate and environmental organizations.

The vast subsidies, totaling two percent of global GDP, fund the "global destruction of nature" and governments worldwide must act, the two organizations added in a statement. The study "finds the fossil fuel, agriculture and water industries receive more than 80 percent of all environmentally harmful subsidies per year", the organizations concluded.

And they called upon governments to "redirect, repurpose or eliminate" those subsidies by 2030 to help "finance a net zero global economy". Governments across the world pay an

estimated \$640 billion in support to the fossil fuel industry, contributing to climate change, air and water pollution and land subsidence, the study found.

Agriculture receives some \$520 billion in subsidies that contribute towards soil erosion, water pollution, deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and loss of biodiversity and natural habitats, it claimed. And another \$350 billion in subsidies for the water industry is said to help fund water pollution and risk ocean and waterway ecosystems.

"Nature is declining at an alarming rate, and we have never lived on a planet with so little biodiversity," said Christiana Figueres, head of The B Team's climate working group. "At least \$1.8 trillion is funding the destruction of nature and changing our climate, while creating huge risks for the very businesses who are receiving the subsidies." She added that "harmful subsidies must be redirected towards protecting the climate and nature, rather than financing our own extinction".

The study was published one month before the next phase of the UN biodiversity summit COP15 in Geneva. The research was based on data from the International Energy Agency watchdog and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is a club of industrialized economies that includes wealthy G20 members. —AFP

Business

Airbus reports record profit, eyes more deliveries in 2022

Aircraft giant cruises past pandemic-induced crisis in travel industry

PARIS: European aircraft giant Airbus posted record profits in 2021 after two years of losses as it cruises past the pandemic-induced crisis in the travel industry, company results showed yesterday. Net profit surged to 4.2 billion euros (\$4.8 billion) with deliveries of aircraft rising eight percent to 611 planes, Airbus said in an earnings statement. Signaling its optimistic outlook for the future, the company is targeting 720 commercial aircraft deliveries in 2022, an 18 percent increase. "2021 was a year of transition, where our attention shifted from navigating the pandemic towards recovery and growth," Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury said in the earning statement.

"Thanks to the resilience and efforts of our teams, customers and suppliers, we delivered remarkable full-year results," he said. The good results were due to the higher number of deliveries, good performance of the company's helicopter, defense and space businesses, and efforts to contain costs, Faury said. Deliveries are an important gauge of profitability in the aviation industry as clients pay most of their bills when they receive their orders.

In its guidance for 2022, Airbus said it "assumes no further disruptions to the world economy, air traffic, the Company's internal operations, and its ability to deliver products and services," Airbus said.

Airbus will return profits to shareholders with plans to offer a dividend payment of 1.50 euros per share. No dividends were paid in the past two years. Its rival, US aerospace giant Boeing, has not fared as well as it fell into a third straight annual loss in 2021, with

mounting costs connected to delayed deliveries of its widebody 787 aircraft and costlier production processes.

Production ramped up

The air travel industry collapsed in 2020 as the emergence of Covid-19 prompted countries to close borders. Airbus drastically reduced production and cut nearly 10,000 jobs when COVID spread around the world in 2020. The group, which employs more than 126,000, plans to recruit 6,000 people this year.

The company has ramped up production again, making 45 single-aisle A320 planes per month late last year after the pace had fallen to 40 in 2020. It plans to produce 65 A320 planes per month in 2023.

Revenue rose four percent to 52.1 billion euros last year thanks to the higher number of commercial aircraft deliveries. Its adjusted operating profit reached 477 million euros as the company abandoned its A380 jumbo jet program. The company also fielded 507 net orders, almost double from 2020, including the first orders of its new A350 freighter. While air traffic remained low last year and should only return to pre-COVID levels in 2023 for domestic travel and 2025 for long-haul flights, "it has become clear that people want to fly again and do so as soon as travel restrictions are lifted," Faury said at a news conference.

Global air traffic is expected to double compared to its pre-crisis level by 2050. Airlines still struggled with travel restrictions last year, especially in Asia where China has maintained strict border measures. — AFP



TOULOUSE, France: This file photo taken on June 30, 2020 shows the Airbus logo on a building at the company headquarters in Blagnac, southern France. — AFP

Air France-KLM slashes losses by half in 2021

PARIS: French-Dutch aviation giant Air France-KLM yesterday said its net loss narrowed by more than half last year but would need more capital strengthening measures due to the pandemic.

The airline's losses totaled 3.3 billion euros (\$3.8 billion) last year. It said the capital strengthening measures could amount to some 4.0 billion euros and acknowledged that the Omicron COVID-19 variant had hampered positive trends after a good

start to the fourth quarter. "This new step in the recapitalization plan measures intends to further restore the equity position," it said. The company said it would not be giving guidance for 2022 due to the uncertainty over the pandemic and over when Japan and China would fully reopen to travel.

"After a good start of the fourth quarter and the reopening of the United States early November, the rise of the Omicron variant hampered in December the continuous increase in load factors for the medium haul and domestic traffic," it said. Omicron also led to a spate of flight cancellations through January after a better than expected 4th quarter showing which brought operating profits of 178 million euros for that period-better than the corresponding period of 2019 before the health crisis hit. Despite the final quarter chink of light and the cutting back of losses compared with 2020's 7.1 billion

euros, the carrier's net debt remains high, at 8.2 billion euros.

The Delta virus variant seriously undermined the first half of 2021 to the extent that full-year sales came in at a disappointing 14.3 billion euros — 29 percent better than 2020 but down a massive 47.5 percent on a year earlier. Group director general Benjamin Smith saw the final quarter take-off as representing "a turning point" but warned that "the crisis is not yet over" with the Omicron virus variant having further buffeted the industry. The airline has drastically slimmed down personnel in the face of the crisis with Air France cutting 8,500 posts and KLM 5,500.

The group underpinned its faith in an eventual long-term upturn notably by ordering in December 100 Airbus A320neo medium-haul jets-with purchase rights for an additional 60.

Second recapitalization

For the first half of the current year Air France-KLM will provide seat capacity of between 73 and 78 percent of 2019 levels and by 2024 expects a return to pre-pandemic levels, notwithstanding the further headwinds of strongly rising oil prices, on which it has hedged purchases in advance. As it looks to pare down debt Air France-KLM said it was ready to launch a second round of recapitalization, following a first last April, to the tune of as much as four billion euros.

That would likely prioritize current stakeholders who include, with a 28.6 percent stake, the French state. Air France-KLM indicated that both the French and Dutch states could participate on a prorata basis. The Dutch stake is 9.3 percent. France put four billion euros on the table for the first round of recapitalization though any state injections will come under European Commission scrutiny. — AFP



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 17 FEBRUARY 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1034	1058	1060	1021	39	34,183,594	24	2.32%	6.12%	1052	1060	22.9	2.21	2.8%	1.26
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	300	309	311	298	13	23,266,669	8	2.66%	10.75%	303	310	24.8	1.44	2.2%	1.13
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	223	227	229	220	9	37,386,528	3	1.34%	4.13%	226	230	79.8	0.99	0.0%	1.01
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	273	276	276	268	8	18,628,286	2	0.73%	9.96%	271	275	20.9	1.25	1.8%	1.05
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	901	933	938	898	40	49,467,123	29	3.21%	12.14%	919	938	36.6	4.08	1.3%	1.40
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	807	820	820	804	16	5,538,339	12	1.49%	3.80%	813	822	60.5	4.73	0.6%	1.04
204	National Investments	Financial Services	290	326	328	290	38	37,744,880	32	10.88%	48.86%	310	330	10.4	1.38	3.1%	1.25
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	160	163	165	156	9	18,844,273	1	0.62%	14.79%	161	168	37.1	2.02	2.3%	0.60
252	Al Intiat Investment	Financial Services	131	137	137	129	8	43,735,558	3	2.24%	16.10%	137	142	NM	0.84	6.2%	1.00
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	176	175	178	170	8	28,038,707	-1	-0.57%	-2.23%	174	178	27.0	1.27	0.0%	0.97
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	808	820	822	802	20	5,949,449	9	1.11%	3.40%	820	831	18.1	1.87	1.7%	1.10
501	National Industries	Financial Services	291	290	294	284	10	16,495,466	-4	-1.36%	2.47%	284	292	5.7	1.04	0.0%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	972	1168	1176	972	204	3,641,532	165	16.45%	34.10%	1090	1176	41.2	1.18	4.3%	0.94
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	935	947	954	930	24	1,578,312	-2	-0.21%	11.15%	935	949	26.9	2.23	5.6%	0.74
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	389	400	403	388	15	17,268,419	6	1.52%	15.27%	393	407	NM	1.09	3.8%	0.75
603	Agility	Industrials	997	1035	1,037	997	40	15,906,130	17	1.67%	9.52%	1035	1045	2.3	1.12	0.8%	1.48
605	Zain	Telecommunications	611	630	633	602	31	38,361,849	15	2.44%	5.88%	621	631	14.4	2.29	3.2%	1.34
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,450	3,696	3,704	3,400	304	3,698,045	217	6.24%	14.64%	3585	3750	8.1	4.03	10.8%	0.50
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	216	229	234	215	19	19,729,024	11	5.05%	5.05%	229	234	NM	0.73	0.0%	0.88
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,605	1,800	1,923	1,575	348	2,835,616	176	10.84%	39.53%	1680	1810	NM	17.16	1.8%	0.74
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	287	294	298	284	14	100,941,759	5	1.73%	5.76%	290	297	20.2	2.27	1.2%	1.14
821	Warba Bank	Banking	274	278	279	269	10	18,061,940	1	0.36%	1.46%	269	278	21.2	2.75	0.0%	1.00
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	591	583	600	579	21	12,066,976	-15	-2.51%	-1.02%	579	590	18.2	1.64	3.0%	0.43
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	388	393	399	388	11	1,932,234	-8	-2.00%	2.30%	388	398	NM	1.65	0.0%	0.47
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	223	223	224	220	4	5,066,739	0	0.00%	-2.19%	222	227	18.9	3.95	4.0%	0.62
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,210	2,286	2,351	2,200	151	1,495,114	6	0.26%	13.17%	2180	2300	29.3	8.13	2.8%	0.64

* As of end of week closing

Business

China needs to be 'more active' in G20 debt relief effort: Yellen

'Some global fallout' from any Russia sanctions likely

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said China needs to do more to accelerate global efforts to provide debt relief for poor nations that ramped up borrowing during the pandemic. In an interview with AFP, Yellen acknowledged the Group of 20's initiative to help debtor nations "has not been going very rapidly," and the United States "would hope to see more active participation" from China.

Yellen participates virtually in the meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bankers in Jakarta Thursday and today, where growing concerns about the economic prospects of developing nations will be a central issue.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the G20 put in place the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to help countries that borrowed heavily to deal with the twin health and economic crises, but that program ended in December.

The G20 last year adopted the Common Framework plan meant to offer a path to restructure large debt loads, but it remains subject to uncertainty, and only three countries—Chad, Ethiopia and Zambia—have requested a negotiation under its terms. The World Bank and IMF have each warned of dire consequences unless more nations are granted forbearance.

A key hurdle is the lack of information on the size of debt owed to China, as well as some other lenders, by private companies as well as governments. While countries like China "have agreed to participate in the initiative," Yellen said, "we certainly need to move more expeditiously than we have... to facilitate faster and more effective relief of debt through the common framework."

China on Thursday defended the country's participation, saying Beijing "comprehensively implements the Debt Service Suspension Initiative" and takes steps to "play a positive role in relieving the relevant countries' debt burdens." Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin pointed instead at creditors from developed countries as well as multilateral organizations, which he said "have a greater

responsibility to help developing countries reduce their debt burden."

COVID help

Yellen told AFP G20 finance officials this week also will continue to work on strategies to help countries deal with the pandemic, "which continues to be a major problem in many parts of the world." "We'll certainly focus on the need to help low-income economies and debt-ridden economies that are especially pressed because of the pandemic, (and on) how to facilitate faster and more effective relief of debt through the common framework," Yellen said. The G20 also is working on boosting financing mechanisms through the IMF and World Bank, channeling resources to trust funds to satisfy immediate needs like vaccine distribution and broader efforts to prevent future pandemics, as well as to deal with climate issues, she said.

Yellen added that the officials will continue discussions on implementing a 15-percent global minimum corporate tax to "try to keep the momentum going." She said G20 countries need to make more progress on the domestic steps needed to implement the tax on "highly profitable, multinational corporations."

In the United States, those steps were included in President Joe Biden's Build Back Better legislative package, which opposition Republicans have blocked in the Senate. Yellen said the tax language in the bill was "widely agreed upon," and would provide funds to pay for other priorities, and she is "confident there will be some legislation later this year."

Yellen said "some global fallout" would result if the West moves ahead with the punishing, coordinated sanctions threatened against Russia, should it attack Ukraine. If the penalties are imposed, "of course, we want the largest cost to fall on Russia," Yellen said in an interview. "But we recognize that there will be some global fallout from sanctions," she said.

Her comments echoed President Joe Biden's warning on Tuesday that an escalation of the con-



GLASGOW: In this file photo taken on November 03, 2021 US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks to the press during the COP26 UN Climate Summit in Glasgow. —AFP

flict would not be "painless" for Americans. With Russian troops massed on the border with Ukraine, Biden continues to work with US allies on a diplomatic solution to the crisis, but has repeatedly warned Moscow of the dire consequences it will face if it moves against its neighbor.

But she acknowledged worries about the "potential impacts on energy markets, given the importance of Russia's role as a supplier of oil to the world market and of natural gas to Europe."

Washington is "working with our European allies to try to, as best as possible, shield them from undue impact," by ensuring that "supplies that are

available, that come from other parts of the world" and to "try to make sure that oil and natural gas continue to flow to Europe."

European Union officials said Wednesday they have secured alternate sources of natural gas and could survive a supply squeeze by Russia. Amid the prospects of armed conflict, and threats Russia could cut off energy supplies, oil prices have risen sharply in recent weeks, hitting \$96 a barrel on Wednesday, the highest level since 2014. Natural gas prices have been more volatile, but also increased in the past week after dipping earlier in the month. —AFP

High US inflation 'not acceptable' but recovery on track: Yellen

WASHINGTON: Soaring US inflation rates are "not acceptable" but the health of the world's largest economy is fundamentally sound thanks to policies that have mitigated the impact of the pandemic, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. Yellen conceded in an interview she is "concerned" about inflation running at its highest level in decades, and warned of further "global fallout" if the West moves ahead with punishing sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

But President Joe Biden's Treasury chief struck a confident note on the broader outlook for the US economy, which despite two years of pandemic upheaval has avoided the catastrophic damage seen in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. In particular, Yellen pointed to the strength of the job market.

And she voiced confidence that the Federal Reserve will act in an "appropriate way" to contain inflation while ensuring the US recovery continues. Prices have been on the rise globally for months, triggered by pandemic supply and logistics snags that initially hit industries like autos and appliances, but have since spread to a wide range of goods.

US consumer prices in January climbed 7.5 percent compared to a year earlier, their largest increase since February 1982. Months of surging prices defied predictions from central bankers and

other economists who said inflation pressures would abate quickly, and have undermined Biden's popularity.

Tools at the ready

The US central bank is now poised to embark on a series of interest rate increases, pulling back the extraordinary stimulus pumped into the economy at the start of the pandemic.

But rising borrowing rates could slam the brakes on economic activity—something the Fed has struggled with in past recoveries. "I have confidence the Fed... (will) deploy their suite of tools in an appropriate way to keep the recovery on track, but also deal with the excess pressures that we have that are causing inflation," Yellen said.

Energy prices have contributed to rising inflation pressures, and tensions with Russia over Ukraine threaten to worsen the situation. "We are concerned about potential impacts on energy markets, given the importance of Russia's role as a supplier of oil to the world market and of natural gas to Europe," she said. Treasury is working with US allies to prepare a package of sanctions to retaliate against Russia if it invades Ukraine.

While Russia would be the target, "we recognize that there will be some global fallout from sanctions as well," Yellen said.

Strong recovery

She said high prices should diminish as the pandemic impact wanes, and the Biden administration is "doing everything that we can" to help alleviate the bottlenecks for key supplies like semiconductors that have impacted prices of goods such as autos.

"Inflation is clearly a great concern to Americans, and it really needs to be addressed," she said, adding, "Certainly it's not acceptable to stay at cur-

LuLu Hypermarket marks National Day with unique display

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retail chain in the region, has always attracted shoppers to its various outlets in the country for the wide variety of products offered at competitive prices, and for the range of promotions and celebrations held throughout the year. Now, in what is undoubtedly a first time, huge crowds of shoppers and visitors are heading to the Al-Qurain outlet of LuLu Hypermarket to witness a stunning display of creative ingenuity.

As part of celebrations to mark the 61st anniversary of Kuwait's National Day and the 31st anniversary of Liberation Day, LuLu Hypermarket has displayed a unique recreation of the three structures that comprise the iconic Kuwait Towers. The towering display, made from more than 17,000 individual milk and fruit juice packets from local firm Kuwait Danish Dairy (KDD), is attracting hordes of people eager to see the display first-hand, and to pose for 'selfies' before the artistic creation.



The spectacular creative display, crafted from stacking and balancing the small dairy and juice tetra packets from KDD to a height of nearly six meters high, has around 88 layers of packets stacked one above the other. Amazing is a word that barely does justice in describing this stu-

pendous creativity in what is described as a record and a first in Kuwait.

LuLu Hypermarket, which has long prided itself on offering customers an exciting shopping experience has certainly outdone itself with this dramatic display of dexterity and creativity.



ARLINGTON, US: A sign advertises to purchase cars at a used car dealership in Arlington, Virginia. —AFP

rent levels." However, Yellen said most Americans overlook the problems that were avoided thanks to massive government aid, which underpinned a rapid recovery in employment after millions of jobs were lost at the start of the pandemic.

"President Biden worked with Congress to put in place the American Rescue Plan to shield households and businesses from those adverse consequences."

In contrast, the US economy saw a "very slow recovery" following the 2008 financial crisis, when thousands of American families lost their homes. Government aid in the past two years prevented evictions, helped "enormously" to prevent hunger in children, and now "we have a very strong job market, very low unemployment, (and) households feel good about their current financial circumstances," Yellen said. But she cautioned, "the pandemic isn't over—it's still with us," and state, local and national authorities will need to continue to provide support to get the economy "back to normal." —AFP

'No basis': Beijing dismisses US' WTO criticism

BEIJING: Beijing yesterday dismissed the United States' assessment of China's World Trade Organization membership, saying its criticism had "no basis in international economic and trade rules".

The commerce ministry's retort came a day after Washington said China, 20 years after its accession, had not adopted the rules of the WTO, retaining and expanding its state-led approach, to the detriment of businesses and workers globally. The annual report to Congress by the office of the US Trade Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai also said China had a "long history of violating, disregarding and circumventing WTO rules to achieve its industrial policy objectives".

Commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng noted that the US labeled China as non-market-oriented, but added that "these remarks have no basis according to international economic and trade rules, and are completely inconsistent with the facts". He also urged the US to ensure its trade tools "comply with WTO rules instead of waging unilateralism, protectionism, and bullying in the name of seeking a new strategy".

Gao said China hoped the US would "adopt rational and pragmatic economic and trade policies toward China". Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the WTO works to enforce rules governing international trade, including promoting fair competition and open trade. —AFP



Nestle 2021 turnover swells on inflation fuelled price hikes

GENEVA: Swiss food giant Nestle's turnover increased in 2021, results showed yesterday, thanks not only to its shift towards the booming vegetarian market—but also price hikes triggered by cost increases. Nestle's net profit and sales rose as it sold shares in cosmetic company L'Oreal and increased prices amid soaring global inflation.

Businesses have faced supply chain disruptions and decades-high inflation as the global economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and energy prices surge. Nestle—which makes everything from coffee to pet food and plant-based products—said its net profit bounced by 38.2 percent to 16.9 billion Swiss francs (\$18.3 billion, 16.1 billion euros) last year.

Total sales rose 3.3 percent to 87.1 billion francs as catering sales recovered and price hikes accelerated in the last quarter under inflationary pressure.

"In 2021, we remained focused on executing our long-term strategy and stepping up growth investments, while at the same time navigating global supply chain challenges," Nestle chief executive Mark Schneider said in a statement. "We limited the impact of exceptional cost inflation through diligent cost management and responsible pricing," he said. In developed markets, growth reached 7.2 percent—the highest level for more than a decade, the group said. But growth remained slightly stronger in emerging markets at 7.8 percent.

The growth was driven by coffee—in particular by pods marketed under the Starbucks brand—pet food and vegetarian products, which are expanding rapidly. Pet products also performed well, with double-digit growth for Purina PetCare. Sales in vegetarian and plant-based food—an area where Nestle and other food companies have been investing—also grew at a double-digit rate to reach 800 million francs.

Nestle's organic growth—which excludes the effects of acquisitions or divestments to focus on a company's core operations—reached 7.5 percent, exceeding objectives, with coffee the largest contributor. Organic growth at the group, which owns Nespresso coffee pods, Maggi soups and Smarties confectionery, had been 3.6 percent in 2020.

Nestle's operating margin was however slightly below its forecasts, at 17.4 percent against a predicted 17.5 percent, due to what it said was the significant increase in the cost of raw materials, packaging, transport and energy.

On top of this came the costs of integrating the brands of The Bountiful Company, a US dietary supplements firm. Nestle was less optimistic in its forecasts for 2022, lowering the bar for its organic growth target to five percent, while it also expects an operating margin of 17-17.5 percent. Its dividend for 2021 will be increased by five centimes to 2.80 francs per share. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



A photograph shows an installation made of 6,600 plastic bottle caps collected from the beaches of Cornwall and displayed during the exhibition "Waste Age: What can design do?" at Design Museum, in London. — AFP photos



A photograph shows a sculpture made of discarded takeaway coffee cups, displayed during the exhibition "Waste Age: What can design do?" at Design Museum, in London.

Musk donated \$5.7 billion to charity in November

Elon Musk donated \$5.7 billion worth of Tesla shares to charity in 2021. The 50-year-old businessman gave a total of 5,044,000 shares in the carmaker to unnamed organizations between November 19 and 29 last year, according to its filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The donation came shortly after he tweeted promising to sell stock and donate \$6 billion to the United Nations World Food Program. He wrote at the time: "If [the United Nations World Food Program] can describe... exactly how \$6 billion will solve world hunger, I will sell Tesla stock right now and do it." The SEC filings didn't make it clear which charity - or charitable groups - the shares have been donated to.

The donation means Musk is ranked as America's second-biggest donor behind Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates for 2021, according to data from the Chronicle of Philanthropy. The entrepreneur - who is worth an estimated \$283.6 billion - forgoes a cash salary for his role as CEO, and he gets paid in Tesla stock awards instead.

Meanwhile, he previously revealed on Twitter he would pay more than \$11 billion in taxes in 2021 because he would be exercising stock options which were due to expire. Bob Lord - an associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies who studies tax policy - noted there would be a tax benefit for him potentially donating Tesla stock, as shares donated to charity aren't subject to the same capital gains tax than if they were sold. Lord said: "His tax benefit would be huge. He'd save between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the \$5.7 billion in tax, depending on whether he could take the deduction against his California income, and he'd avoid the gains tax he would have to pay if he sold the stock."

—Bang Showbiz

Treasured trash: UK waste gets new lease of life

From facial scrubs using coffee grounds to clothes made from plastic bottles and furniture decorated with agave fibers, efforts to upcycle or repurpose waste products are gaining traction in Britain. Every day a bike courier for the skincare brand Upcircle visits 25 cafes in London and collects some 100 kg (220 pounds) of coffee grounds that would otherwise be thrown away.

Set up six years ago by Anna Brightman and her brother Will Brightman, Upcircle reuses the coffee grounds to make beauty products, adding ingredients such as chamomile infusions or a powder made from olive stones. The siblings took the plunge to set up their own business after working for multinational companies. "I wanted to do something that was closer to my heart," Anna Brightman told AFP. "It was my brother who had the initial inspiration when asking out of curiosity at the coffee

shop where he was going every day what happened to the coffee grounds," she said.

"He was shocked to learn the coffee was disposed of at a landfill and they had to pay on top for it." She joked that she and her brother have since "made a name (for themselves) as the crazy siblings collecting coffee around London and making cosmetics". Once the coffee collections got going, "people started to contact us with all types of by-products," Anna said, noting more than 15 of them are now incorporated into their range. Among these are water from making concentrated fruit juices, fading flowers that get thrown away by florists and left-over chai spices.

'Not gross'

Upcircle pay for some of these ingredients, though the coffee grounds, for example, are free. But the logistics involved in collecting them can be com-



Clothes made with waste materials and designed by British fashion designer Stella McCartney are displayed.



Triporous, a pollutant absorbent material made of rice husks and developed by Sony is displayed.



A prototype for an alternative onboard meal tray made to replace single-use materials with a combination of edible, reusable and biodegradable materials, including coffee beans and rice husks is displayed.



Clothes made with waste materials and designed by British fashion designer Stella McCartney are displayed.



An architectural wall prototype made of calcium carbonate and bagasse waste, by-products of the sugar-refining process at Tate & Lyle is displayed.

plex and costly. Every year, half a million tons of coffee grounds are thrown away in the UK and the firm claims to have recycled 400 tons to date. Nevertheless, the idea of marketing a beauty product made from "trash" initially got a thumbs-down from industry insiders, Anna Brightman admitted.

She said they have to work to get the message across that "these ingredients we are working with are not gross, old or unclear". Younger people are "more open to the idea of the circular economy", she added. "For obvious reasons, they are concerned about the future of our planet".

Used coffee grounds work better as a skin care ingredient than dry ones, said Barbara Scott-Atkinson, the formulator for Upcircle's products. "It's been heated and it's damp. This makes it more suitable to use than plain ground coffee and the level of antioxidants increases."

The company sends the ingredients for repurposing at its factory in Bridport on the southwest coast of England. The smell of citrus essential oils wafts through the factory as they are being used to make a scrub. The production process is simple: coffee grounds are mixed with sugar and essential oils, then whipped shea butter and a natural preservative is added. The extoliant is then poured into glass jars, 3,000 of which are distributed around the UK every week.

Demand is growing rapidly, particularly in the United States, according to the company, which is reluctant to give figures on its sales or growth. The burgeoning interest in repurposing food waste puts Upcircle in competition with other brands of natural cosmetics, such as Britain's Wildefruit or Australia's Frank Body, or even the UK giant Body Shop.

'Put in landfill'

As a result, coffee grounds are starting to become sought-after, Anna Brightman said. "Some cafes tell us

they... would like if we could split the week: they get the coffee waste Monday and Tuesday, and us the rest of the week," she added. To combat ravaging the planet's resources, entrepreneurs and designers are increasingly coming up with new ways to create value from waste.

An exhibition called "Waste Age" at London's Design Museum (until February 20) showcases the use of agave, or sisal fibres, by Mexican designer Fernando Laposse, who studied at London's Central St Martin art school. Laposse turns the natural fibres of the plant-used to make tequila-into avant-garde furniture such as tables, benches and hammocks.

He also uses colorful corncobs from his country of birth to make furniture and veneer, helping boost the "circular economy" and create jobs. "In the UK, we recycle 15 percent of our waste, the rest is incinerated or put in landfill", said the exhibition's curator Gemma Curtin. The Design Museum exhibition also shows chairs made from old fridges, baskets decorated with fishnets recovered from the ocean and creations by fashion designers, such as Stella McCartney and Phoebe English, who use recycling. Curtin added this prompts visitors to question what is really "luxury"?

The exhibition's final room shows furniture and building blocks made of takeaway coffee cups. In Britain alone, 2.5 billion of these are thrown away each year, with their thin plastic coating making them impossible to recycle.

The huge amounts of plastics being made and then thrown away globally have prompted scientists to call for urgent production caps. The United Nations will hold a meeting on tackling plastic pollution in Nairobi later this month, a potential prelude to talks on a worldwide plastics treaty. — AFP



Elon Musk

Sotheby's tips largest blue diamond at auction to fetch \$48m

Sotheby's announced Wednesday that it would offer the largest-ever blue diamond to go up for auction at a sale in Hong Kong in April. The auction house said it expected the 15.10-carat De Beers Cullinan Blue diamond to sell for more than \$48 million. The diamond is the "largest internally flawless step cut vivid blue diamond" ever graded by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), Sotheby's said in a statement. The sale will mark the first time a blue diamond of more than 15 carats has ever gone under the hammer, the press release added.

Sotheby's said the diamond, which previewed in New York this week, would be offered on a yet-to-be determined date during its Hong Kong Luxury Week in April. It was cut from a rough stone discovered in discovered at the Cullinan mine in South Africa in April 2021. The diamond is bigger than the Oppenheimer Blue, a 14.62 carat stone that set the world record price for a blue diamond at auction in May 2016 when it sold for \$57.5 million. Earlier this month, Sotheby's in London sold the Enigma-the largest cut diamond ever to come to auction at \$55.55 carats-for £3.16 million (\$4.3 million). — AFP



In this file photo Model Stephany Martins holds up the "The De Beers Cullinan Blue" blue diamond during a press preview at Sotheby's in New York. — AFP



This file photo shows clothes and accessories made from banana leaves at the 'Premiere Vision Paris', a fair dedicated to the companies supplying materials and services for the fashion and luxury industries, at the Parc des Expositions convention centre in Villepinte, north of Paris. — AFP photos



British designer Ifeanyi Okwuadi poses next his exhibition at the 'Premiere Vision Paris', a fair dedicated to the companies supplying materials and services for the fashion and luxury industries.



A person shows a black fabric made from banana leaves at the 'Premiere Vision Paris'.

BANANAS TO FISH SCALES: FASHION'S HUNT FOR ECO-MATERIALS

Sneakers made from banana or pineapple leaves, dresses from nettles or fish scales—the search for sustainable materials has taken the fashion industry to some wild places. Experts warn these new textiles are not a quick fix for fashion's enormous problems with over-consumption and waste, but may be a necessary step in developing cleaner technologies. "You could possibly eat the final product," said Hannes Schoenegger, co-founder of Bananatex, which uses leaves from banana trees in the Philippines to make bags, T-shirts and a line of shoes for H&M that sold out within two hours.

He was speaking at the Premiere Vision Paris conference, where industry professionals gather to find out which fabrics will dominate coming seasons. "We only harvest the sides of the plants, and they're already growing in the forest, so no chemicals, pesticides or even

water are used," Schoenegger added. He was among multiple stalls presenting new bio-sourced materials. Brazil-based Nova Kaeru offered leather made from the discarded scales of the giant pirarucu fish and another from the tropical "elephant ear" plant. Nearby, Ananas Anam showed off some Nike shoes made from waste pineapple leaves.

Nettles are in

These textiles can be relatively niche, but some companies are determined to bring them into the mainstream. Spanish firm Pyratex offers multiple options, from recycling the waste of corn and sugar cane production, to making fibres from Icelandic seaweed, Chinese bamboo or Austrian wood. "It's not about replacing cotton with one alternative crop. It's about finding a wide variety of substitutes to make sure that nothing is over-used," said spokesperson Pilar Tejada Lopez.

One plant getting particular interest is the nettle, which can be turned into a silk-like and incredibly strong fabric that can be used in everyday and luxury clothing. It highlights the fact that many of these technologies are not new. "Nettles have actually been used for clothing for centuries, but we have largely forgotten," said Lopez. "Part of our job is reintroducing these ideas that have been lost."

Natural limits

Others warn of over-reliance on new materials in the drive towards sustainability. "Replacement materials serve no purpose if we continue to make the same amount of clothing," said Victoire Satto, of The Good Goods, a media firm specialising in responsible fashion. They could even add to the problem if scaled up by encouraging further deforestation to make way for newly fashionable

plants, she said.

That is why companies like Bananatex refuse to go beyond natural farming limits. "Our project is part of a reforestation program, a good way of revitalizing soils and providing work to local families," said Schoenegger. "There's a natural limit and we won't go beyond that, because then it would be harmful."

Pyratex similarly puts a lot of emphasis on partnering with responsible farmers, and avoiding the ultra-complex supply chains that make it difficult for clothing companies to know who grows their raw materials and in what conditions. But Satto says more research is also needed on the durability of bio-sourced materials, since half the ecological damage from an item of clothing is linked to its disposal. "If the product only lasts six months, that's enormous in terms of environmental impact," she said.

Iterations

Ifeanyi Okwuadi, an award-winning British designer, says his focus is on how clothes are made—not what they are made from. "When I speak about sustainability, I'm talking about the construction—right down to using the right stitch-length for each stitch because that kind of minute detail affects the longevity of the garment when you put it in the wash," he said.

He says many bio-sourced materials are still evolving. "Right now, there's a lot of buzzwords to draw you in, but eventually we won't need to say it's from bananas or whatever—it will just be plant-based fibers." "I don't use them in my work because the tech at the moment is quite primitive. But I see them as iterations, like with all technology, and we need these innovations." — AFP

Courtney Cox's home was haunted

The 'Scream' star - who is playing a woman who believes she is possessed in the upcoming horror-comedy 'Shining Vale' - has revealed she has had several paranormal experiences. She told 'Entertainment Tonight': "I didn't believe it at first until a situation happened and there was no way not to believe it as the UPS saw someone behind me and I'd heard enough." The 57-year-old actress - who is dating Snow Patrol's Johnny McDaid - added of another recent encounter with the supernatural in the UK: "I'm in England. How many people are old that die here. I'm in the stomping ground for ghosts!" Meanwhile, the 'Friends' legend's ex-

husband David Arquette recently revealed their daughter won't watch 'Scream'. The actor - who met Coco's mother on the set of the cult classic horror - has admitted his daughter finds it too "weird" to watch her parents in the film. He said: "I tried to watch one with her once, she was like, 'I can't do this, this is too weird'. I don't know. It's hard for me to watch too." "She's 17 right now, I'm not sure she's really ready to dive deep into the origins of her parents' earlier relationship."

The 50-year-old star married Courtney in 1999 and they welcomed Coco into the world in 2004, the same year the sitcom wrapped up following its tenth season. The pair were together for over two decades, but split in 2010 and eventually divorced in 2012. The former flames just reunited for the fifth movie in the horror franchise, along with fellow original cast members Neve Campbell, Roger L Jackson and Marley Shelton.

—Bang Showbiz



Courtney Cox

Jonah Hill has denied he's engaged

The 'Knocked Up' star, who went official with his girlfriend Sarah Brady in September 2021, has put to bed rumors he has popped the question to his girlfriend. The celebrity gossip site DeuxMoi had falsely claimed on Instagram that Jonah, who is vacationing in Hawaii with his partner, "will return to Hollywood this Thursday ENGAGED!!! Friends say they'll come back engaged but want to keep the buzz on the DL!! Ooops!!!! (sic) After many speculated the post was referring to the 'Get Him To The Greek' star, the comedian issued a statement on Instagram, which read: "The rumors are not true. I am engaged. But not to my girlfriend." He quipped: "I am engaged to your mom, I know this is shocking but please respect our privacy at this time."



Jonah Hill

Jonah jokingly tagged the post at "Your Mom's House". Sarah also laughed off the proposal hearsay. The 25-year-old graduate wrote on her own page on the social media app: "The rumors are not true. I am engaged. But not to my boyfriend. I am engaged to Baby Yoda. This may seem like a betrayal but I have chosen a side. Please respect our privacy at this time." It is unclear when exactly the couple began dating, however, they made their romance Instagram official just over a year after Jonah had separated from his former fiancée Gianna Santos.

The pair share a love of surfing and Jonah confirmed they are dating by posting a sweet snap of himself sat alongside Sarah with the caption: "[heart emojis] grateful for you @sarahbrady (sic)" The image marked the first time Sarah had appeared on the actor's Instagram page. However, she has posted various shots of Jonah on her Instagram account. In early August, the loved-up couple posed for a series of beach selfies. Sarah - who has a degree in Anthropology of Climate Change and Human Solutions from UC San Diego - captioned the post at the time: "My whole heart [heart emoji] (sic)"

— Bang Showbiz



Lil Wayne

Lil Wayne to perform first UK show in 14 years

Lil Wayne is set to perform in the UK for the first time in 14 years. The controversial rapper was due to perform in the country in 2011, but visa issues prevented the star from entering the UK. In December 2020, Wayne plead guilty to possessing a firearm - a .45 calibre gun and six rounds of ammunition - after authorities searched his private plane in December 2019. However, then-US President Donald Trump pardoned the 'Lonely' rapper on his last full day in office before he could be sentenced. The chart-topping music star is a convicted felon, following a gun charge back in 2007, and was facing the possibility of a 10-year spell in prison. However, he made bail for the sum of \$250,000. Now, Wayne is set to make his comeback at Strawberries Creem festival, which takes place between June 17 and 19 in Cambridge.

Wayne received a pardon from Trump, having previously endorsed the former world leader for reelection. He previously wrote on Twitter: "Just had a great meeting with @realdonaldtrump @potus besides what he's done so far with criminal reform, the platinum plan is going to give the community real ownership. He listened to what we had to say today and assured he will and can get it done (sic)" Wayne's tweet included a picture of the two of them together and prompted a backlash from some of his followers.

In June last year, Wayne was also accused of pulling a gun on one of his bodyguards. The 39-year-old rapper reportedly got into an argument with a member of his security detail at his Hidden Hills home and when things got physical, he allegedly aimed an assault rifle at the man. Sources told TMZ Wayne - whose real name is Dwayne Carter - pulled out the gun after he told the bodyguard to leave and instead of immediately vacating the premises, the staff member stopped off to use the bathroom. — Bang Showbiz



Romeo Miller

Romeo Miller has become a father for the first time

The 32-year-old rapper and actor took to Instagram to reveal he and his girlfriend Drew Sangster have welcomed a baby girl into the world. In a caption alongside a video of himself and Drew surrounded by pink balloons, he wrote: "It's been hard to hold this in, but it was important for us to make sure our baby girl got here safe and healthy before making any announcements to the world during this sacred journey. Psalms 127:3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. My great granny always said if you live long enough, you'll realize that everything (and the best things) are on God's time, never yours. The best Valentines ever. Been waiting for this moment my entire life. Thank you @drewsangster. I'm a #GirlDad babbbyyy. Song: Unchained Melody. (sic)" In another post, he wrote: "Meet Baby R! That's my lil twin! Swipe left to see what I'm talking bout ha. Ps: Baby R and her mom got a new baby company coming soon; mines gone be good for life. Go follow @thedrewyco and visit DrewyCo.com — Bang Showbiz

Rihanna is using moisturizer 'more than ever' during her pregnancy

Rihanna is using moisturizer "more than ever" during her pregnancy. The 33-year-old popstar - who is expecting her first child with partner A\$AP Rocky - is trying to avoid dry skin more since becoming pregnant and named her favorite product do so. She said: "I would say I'm staying more moisturized than ever. Butta Drop Whipped Oil Body Cream is my go-to." Rihanna - who is the founder of cosmetics company Fenty Beauty - was also asked which two items from her range she would gift her each of her fans, naming and urged fans about the importance of using moisturizer through the rapidly changing seasons.

She said: "I would want [my fans] to have the Hydra Vizor Invisible Moisturizer because it has SPF. Spring and summer are about to come around the corner like that, and you're going to need it. I would

also gift the Icon Refillable Lipstick because I feel so proud of this product, from the packaging all the way to the bullet - which was designed to match the shape of my Cupid's bow - to the texture and performance of the lipstick itself." The 'Umbrella' hitmaker then went on to explain that since becoming pregnant, she has made the effort to make her beauty regimes more eco-friendly and that her companies have done a "great job" at becoming more sustainable. She told Allure: "Pregnancy makes me look at being more sustainable - with everything, all around," she says. "We've done a great job at that with Fenty Skin, so now we want to make sure we're doing that with Fenty Beauty as well." — AFP



A\$AP Rocky and Rihanna pose for a picture as they celebrate her beauty brands Fenty Beauty and Fenty Skin at Goya Studios.



Spanish director and screenwriter Carla Simon poses during a photo call after being awarded the Golden Bear for Best Film award for the film "Alcarras" after the awards ceremony of the 72nd Berlinale Film Festival in Berlin.

Spanish director and screenwriter Carla Simon (second right), producer Maria Zamora (center) and team members pose with the Golden Bear for Best Film for "Alcarras" during the awards ceremony of the 72nd Berlinale Film Festival. — AFP photos

Spanish agricultural drama 'Alcarras' wins Berlin film fest

The 72nd Berlin film festival awarded its Golden Bear top prize on Wednesday to Spanish director Carla Simon's semi-autobiographical drama "Alcarras", about a family of peach farmers fighting for their future. This year's Berlinale was held in-person for the first time in two years but was a shorter competition than usual, with strict regulations for audiences just as Covid-19 infections were peaking in Germany. There were 18

European film festival in a row to award its top prize to a woman director, following Cannes and Venice last year. German-Turkish comedian Meltem Kaptan, 41, won the festival's second ever gender-neutral acting prize for her performance in "Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W. Bush". The film by German director Andreas Dresen tells the true story of a mother's battle to bring her son back from Guantanamo Bay. Kaptan



French director and screenwriter Claire Denis poses after receiving the Silver Bear for Best Director award for her film 'Avec amour et acharnement' (Both Sides of the Blade).



South Korean director and screenwriter Hong Sang-soo poses with the Silver Bear for Grand Jury for the film 'So-seol-ga-ui Yeong-hwa' (The Novelist) during a photo call after the awards ceremony of the 72nd Berlinale Film Festival in Berlin.



Austrian filmmaker Ruth Beckermann poses with the 'Encounters Award for Best Film' for her film 'Mutzenbacher'.

Winners

Golden Bear for Best Film: "Alcarras", Spain/Italy, by Carla Simon with Jordi Pujol Dolcet

Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize: "So-seol-ga-ui Yeong-hwa" (The Novelist's Film), South Korea, by Hong Sang-soo with Lee Hye-young and Kim Min-hee

Silver Bear Jury Prize: "Robe of Gems", Mexico/Argentina/US, by Natalia Lopez Gallardo with Nailea Norvind (debut film)

Silver Bear for Best Director: "Avec amour et acharnement" (Both Sides of the Blade), France, by Claire Denis with Juliette Binoche and Vincent Lindon

Silver Bear for Best Leading Performance: Meltem Kaptan in "Rabiye Kurnaz gegen George W Bush" (Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W Bush), Germany/France, by Andreas Dresen

Silver Bear for Best Supporting Performance: Laura Basuki in "Nana" (Before, Now & Then), Indonesia, by Kamila Andini

Silver Bear for Best Screenplay: Laila Stieler for "Rabiye Kurnaz gegen George W Bush" (Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W Bush), Germany/France, by Andreas Dresen with Meltem Kaptan and Alexander Scheer

Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Contribution: "Everything Will Be OK", France/Cambodia, by Rithy Panh (documentary). — AFP

films from 15 countries vying for the Golden Bear, with the jury led by Indian-born American director M. Night Shyamalan ("The Sixth Sense"). Simon, 35, dedicated the prize to her family, saying that "without them and my closeness to this world I wouldn't have been able to tell this story".

The Berlinale is now the third major

dedicated the award "to all the mothers whose love is stronger than borders".

'Sly humor'

Six of the festival's seven top prizes went to women, including the gong for best director, clinched by France's Claire Denis for "Both Sides of the Blade". A tense pandemic-era love story, the film

stars Juliette Binoche as a woman caught between two men—her longtime partner Jean and her elusive ex Francois. The Hollywood Reporter called it a "smart, moody, superbly acted melodrama", while Britain's Screen Daily said Binoche and co-star Vincent Lindon, who plays Jean, were "at the top of their game". "The Novelist's Film", an understated drama from South Korean director Hong Sang-soo with a small cast of characters who reconnect by chance in the suburbs of Seoul, bagged second prize.

Variety called it a "gently circuitous, conversation-driven charmer", while the Hollywood Reporter praised its "sly humor and insights into the insecurities of the artistic process". Third prize went to "Robe of Gems", a gritty Mexican crime drama from writer-director Natalia Lopez Gallardo that explores the trauma inflicted on families in Mexico when relatives go missing. The award for best screenplay went to Laila Stieler for her work on "Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W Bush".

"Everything Will be OK", Cambodian Rithy Panh's exploration of a dystopian future where animals have enslaved humans and taken over the world, won a Silver Bear for artistic contribution. And Michael Koch's meditation on death and loss set in the Alps, "A Piece of Sky", received a special mention.

'Struggle of family'

Set in Catalonia, "Alcarras" follows the story of the Soles, a large, tight-knit family who spend their summers picking peaches in their orchard in a small village. But when they are threatened with eviction due to new plans for the land, which include cutting down the peach trees and installing solar panels, the family members start to grow apart. Jury chief Shyamalan praised the film's cast of non-professional actors, who he said were able to "show the tenderness and struggle of family" and highlight "our connection and dependence

on the land around us".

Variety called it a "lovely, bittersweet agricultural drama", praising Simon's "warm affinity for this alternately parched and verdant landscape". Simon, who grew up in the village of Alcarras and whose family also grow peaches, dedicated the prize to the "small families of farmers that cultivate the land every day for this food to get to our plates". "I think that this way of farming does not have much of a future," Simon told AFP ahead of the premiere of the film on Tuesday. "There is very little price regulation, there are more and more big companies that are farming... Only in organic farming do I see some hope, because it is a kind of farming that is difficult to do in a big way." — AFP



Indonesian director Kamila Andini poses with the Silver Bear for Best Supporting Performance for actress Laura Basuki for the film "Nana" (Before, Now & Then).



Cambodian director Rithy Panh poses during a photo call after winning the Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Contribution award for his film 'Everything Will Be OK'.



Iranian filmmaker Mitra Farahani poses with her Special Jury Award in the Encounters section for the film 'A vendredi, Robinson'.



South Korean director and screenwriter Hong Sang-soo and South Korean actress and production manager Kim Min-hee pose on the red carpet outside the Berlinale Palace with their Silver Bear for Grand Jury for the film 'So-seol-ga-ui Yeong-hwa' (The Novelist).



German-Turkish actress Meltem Kaptan with the Silver Bear for Best Leading Performance award (left) and German screenwriter Laila Stieler (right) with her Silver Bear for Best Screenplay in the film 'Rabiye Kurnaz gegen George W Bush' (Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W Bush) pose on the red carpet.



Mexican director Natalia Lopez Gallardo receives the Silver Bear Jury Prize for her film 'Robe of Gems'.



Director Bruno Ribeiro winner of the Silver Bear Jury Prize (Short Film) for "Manha de Domingo".

Sports

Lakers beat Jazz after Davis hurt, Nuggets stun Warriors

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis went down hard but LeBron James picked up the Los Angeles Lakers and carried them to a 106-101 NBA victory over the Utah Jazz on Wednesday. James scored 15 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter, when the Lakers erased a 12-point deficit. James keyed the comeback, his contribution including a huge dunk off a pass from Russell Westbrook that put the Lakers up by two with 2:08 remaining.

They wouldn't trail again on the way to a victory that looked unlikely when star forward Davis rolled his ankle shortly before halftime when he landed on Rudy Gobert's foot after rising to collect a pass. Davis, who had 17 points on seven-of-nine shooting, clutched his ankle in pain before he was helped off the court by teammates. The Lakers said X-rays were negative, and Davis would receive treatment over the upcoming All-Star break.

Davis was averaging 23.3 points and 9.1 rebounds per game this season. He had already missed 17 games with knee trouble. "It's very deflating to see AD go down the way he did," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "There's an energy you have to overcome and there's how we adjust tactically. Credit our guys for hanging in there and continuing to fight," added Vogel, who said Westbrook was a key motivator during the timeouts.

"And what we saw LeBron do was just remarkable," Vogel said. "At this point in his career, to take over in the fourth quarter the way he did with just energy and will and determination was just really something special." Westbrook finished with 17 points and seven rebounds for the Lakers, who had 15 points from Malik Monk.

Donovan Mitchell led Utah with 37 points. The

Lakers' win, which ended a three-game losing streak, was just one of the comeback victories that livened up the night. In San Francisco, Monte Morris drained a three-pointer over Stephen Curry at the final buzzer to lift the Denver Nuggets to a 117-116 victory over the Golden State Warriors, who led by eight with less than three minutes to play.

The Phoenix Suns rallied in the fourth quarter for a 124-121 victory over the Houston Rockets, pushing their winning streak to seven games and improving their league-leading record to 48-10. The Brooklyn Nets rallied from 28 points down to stun the New York Knicks 111-106 at Madison Square Garden. Brooklyn rookie Cam Thomas scored 16 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, draining a long three-pointer with 7.7 seconds left to push the Nets' lead to six points and essentially seal the win.

'One-on-one time'

The shot had superstar Kevin Durant, watching from the bench as he continues to recover from a knee injury, on his feet celebrating. "I knew it was one-on-one time," Thomas said. "I just went to my go-to move. Glad it went in, cause I was struggling tonight," added Thomas, who had made just two of three shots through the first three quarters. "I just had to keep playing through it," Thomas said. "I'm glad it worked out for us."

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 38 points to lead the Bulls to a 125-118 victory over the Sacramento Kings and break a record set by NBA great Wilt Chamberlain. DeRozan became the first player in league history to score 35 or more points and connect on 50 percent or more of his shots in seven straight games. Chamberlain did it in six



LOS ANGELES: Mike Conley #11 of the Utah Jazz drives to the basket against LeBron James #6 and Russell Westbrook #0 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the fourth quarter at Crypto.com Arena on Wednesday. — AFP

straight games on two occasions, during the 1960-61 season and the 1962-63 campaign.

Coby White drained six three-pointers on the way to 31 points for Chicago. Nikola Vucevic added 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulls, who notched a fifth straight win and edged ahead of the Miami Heat atop the Eastern Conference. Detroit's Jerami Grant drained the game-winner with 19.6

seconds remaining in Boston, lifting the Pistons to a 112-111 triumph that ended the Celtics' nine-game winning streak.

Grant finished with 24 points for the Pistons, who had lost their last eight and 14 of their previous 16 games. Jayson Tatum had a last chance for the Celtics, but his jump shot from the top of the key bounced off the rim. — AFP

Germany eyes historic T20 World Cup place

BERLIN: When Steven Knox first took charge of the German national cricket team in 2014, the idea that they could have qualified for a World Cup would have been absurd. "We played a tournament in England that year and we were pretty hopeless. We've improved dramatically since then," the Germany coach and former Scotland international tells AFP. Now, Germany are just a few games away from a place at the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia later this year.

The ICC associate member finished second in their European Qualifier in 2021, earning a place at the Global Qualifier in Oman, where they face the likes of Bahrain, Ireland and the UAE. Rank outsiders Germany have never played at this level before, but Knox is cautiously optimistic, noting that they need just three wins to earn a berth to the World Cup.

"I'm not going to say it's impossible. It's absolutely not impossible. But we would need to play out of our skins and meet a couple of teams on their off days," the 48-year-old says cheerfully. In his eight years as coach, Knox has seen cricket boom in popularity in Germany, driven in part by a rise in immigration from cricketing countries such as Afghanistan. That has also helped the national team to strengthen, and Cricket Germany CEO Brian Mantle talks excitedly about the talent in the current squad.

"We've had a lot of players move to Germany who have a very high standard of cricket," he tells AFP. Left-arm spinner Rasul Ahmad arrived in Germany as a refugee after learning to play on the streets of Kabul, while 22-year-old South African born all-rounder Justin Broad has been playing for Surrey's second XI in England. "Our strength and conditioning coach is also called Kieran Anderson, so we've got our very own Broad and Anderson," jokes Mantle, in a reference to England's veteran superstar strike bowlers.

'400 percent growth'

Fitness coach Anderson has played a particularly important role in Germany's preparation, with many of the players unable to play or forced to train irregularly in the build-up to the tournament. "It's winter so there have been some restrictions on training and there is not a lot of infrastructure. We are focusing on fitness," explains team captain Venkatraman Ganesan.

Lack of facilities remains a big problem for German cricket, despite moves to work more closely with the country's national Olympic body (DOSB), and open a new national performance centre in Krefeld, to the north-west of Dusseldorf. "We're talking about 400 percent growth in clubs and members in the last six or seven years, and the facilities haven't grown at the same speed," says CEO Mantle.

Germany still has no grass wickets, and most of the grounds double up as football or rugby pitches, meaning the outfields are often uneven or overgrown. The slow outfields affect the way German players play the game, explains Knox, with batters preferring to hit the ball in the air and fielders less likely to dive and slide.

Yet there is hope that the appearance in the global qualifier will help boost cricket's profile in Germany, despite frustration that the games will be shown on the ICC's registration streaming app, rather than on national TV. "It's not going to reach as many people in Germany as we would have liked. But we just have to go out there and do the best we can. If we cause an upset and beat Ireland, I'm sure that will get coverage," says Knox. — AFP

New Zealand ahead after Henry's seven destroys South Africa

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand dominated South Africa to hold a 21-run lead on day one of the first Test in Christchurch yesterday after Matt Henry spearheaded the attack with a career-best seven for 23. Henry's bounce and movement saw South Africa fold for 95 before tea, and at stumps New Zealand had benefitted from the wicket bowling off in the late afternoon and were 116 for three.

Henry Nicholls was not out on 37 with night-watchman Neil Wagner, dropped in the final over, on two. "Obviously today's been a great day for us," Henry said, describing his own performance as "pretty surreal" returning the third best bowling figures for New Zealand behind Richard Hadlee and Ajaz Patel. Henry's previous best was twice taking four for 93, and he has struggled to be a regular member of the New Zealand attack, where Tim Southee and Trent Boult have long been the new-ball bowlers.

It's only his 16th Test in seven years but with Boult on paternity leave, the Christchurch-born Henry relished the chance to perform in front of his home crowd. "It's not always easy," he said of the long gaps between Tests. "You try not to focus too much on those external things you cannot control and make sure I'm still in that mindset of trying to get better every time you get that opportunity to play for New Zealand."

Crucial to New Zealand's performance was Tom Latham winning the toss - for the first time in the nine Tests he has been captain - and putting South Africa in to bat. Hagley Oval, with its green-tinged wicket, was tailor-made for New Zealand's swing and seam attack and Tim Southee set the standard with the opening ball, a huge inswinger to Dean Elgar that finished down leg side. With the 10th ball of the match, Henry started the rout when he had Elgar caught at third slip with a ball that nipped away, and after 49.2 overs South Africa were all out for their lowest ever score against New Zealand.

Tourists drop catches

New Zealand faced 39 overs in the final session, losing Will Young for eight when he edged a rising delivery from Marco Jansen to wicketkeeper Kyle

Lord's dumps Oxford vs Cambridge, Eton vs Harrow games

LONDON: Two of English cricket's oldest fixtures, Oxford v Cambridge and Eton v Harrow will no longer be staged annually at Lord's after this year, ending a tradition stretching back 200 years and which once enjoyed the sight of poet Lord Byron strolling to the crease. Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which owns 'the home of cricket', said both matches would take place in late June but added they "will no longer be played as regular annual fixtures at Lord's after 2022".

The club, often portrayed by its critics as elitist, said the decision had been taken in order to "further MCC's goal to broaden the scope of the fixture list" and give "a wider range of players" the chance to play at Lord's. Oxford and Cambridge, England's two oldest universities, have played annually at Lord's since 1851, with the exception of the years of the two World Wars and the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

They played men's first-class fixtures until 2000 and a men's limited-overs fixture until 2021. Last year, the Stump Out Sexism campaign was launched by a former Oxford captain, Vanessa Picker, in protest that Lord's had never staged a women's fixture between the universities. MCC were reluctant to step into what they saw as a decision for the universities.



CHRISTCHURCH: South Africa's Marco Jansen bowls as New Zealand's captain Tom Latham looks on during day one of the first cricket Test match between New Zealand and South Africa at Hagley Oval yesterday. — AFP

Verreynne. Captain Latham, who had a life on nine when Jansen spilled a chance in the gully, progressed to 15 before he was bowled by Duanne Olivier. Olivier thought he had Nicholls for five but the ball was dropped at third slip, one of six dropped catches by the tourists, and the batsman responded by cracking boundaries off the next two deliveries.

Just before stumps the South African snared a second wicket when he bowled Devon Conway for 36. When South Africa batted, Henry ripped through the top order to have three wickets in the morning session when the tourists went to lunch at four for 44 and he took four more in the second session before the innings folded just before tea.

When South Africa looked to be showing some resistance with Zubayr Hamza and Verreynne in a 33-run partnership, he triggered a four-wicket slump which saw the tourists fall from five for 86 to nine for 88. Henry removed Hamza, playing his first Test in two years, for South Africa's top score of 25 and then in one maiden over claimed Verreynne (18), Kagiso Rabada and debutant Glenton Stuurman. Aiden Markram (15) and debutant Sarel Erwee (10) were the only other batsmen to reach double figures.

Erwee started confidently and left well as the ball

But replying to a request from the campaign to find an "equitable solution", MCC chief executive, Guy Lavender, wrote in a letter that Lord's would be "very happy to accommodate a men's and women's T20 double header on the same day next year". This year Oxford and Cambridge will play a T20 double-header on June 27, although the women's match could now be the first and last between the two universities played on the main square at Lord's.

Eton and Harrow, two of England's oldest and most exclusive fee-paying schools, have played each other at Lord's since the early 19th century, with the poet George Byron taking part in the inaugural 1805 edition. Henry Blofeld, the cricket commentator who has played in both fixtures - he was a schoolboy at Eton and a student at Cambridge - told The Times: "I suppose the 'antis' will be cheering and old farts like me will be sad. It is inevitable with the way that society has moved."

Although the universities have produced several former England captains, including Colin Cowdrey and Mike Smith (Oxford) and Mike Brearley and Mike Atherton (Cambridge), they no longer have first-class cricket status. The Varsity match, as the fixture between Oxford and Cambridge is known, used to be played over three days. But the Lord's version of the match was reduced to a one-day game in 2001, with a four-day game between the universities alternating between Fenner's in Cambridge and the Parks in Oxford. Once a highlight of the English summer social season, the match between Eton and Harrow once attracted tens of thousands of supporters but crowds have declined significantly in recent years. — AFP

moved into and away from the batsmen. But towards the end of his 30-ball stay there were emerging signs of indecision and when he prodded at a rising delivery from Kyle Jamieson the ball was edged to Daryl Mitchell at first slip. — AFP

Hockey 'optimistic' that NHL stars will return to Olympics

BEIJING: Ice hockey's governing body said yesterday that it will work with the National Hockey League to avoid another "frustrating" absence of NHL stars from future Winter Olympics. The Beijing Olympics are the second straight Winter Games without NHL players, depriving hockey fans from seeing the world's best go head-to-head.

The no-show - this time because of COVID - has particularly affected the USA and Canada teams, both of which were knocked out in the men's quarterfinals on Wednesday. "We really want to start discussions... to try to push this frustration away from both sides," Luc Tardif, president of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), said in Beijing.

He said the IIHF would soon discuss prospects for coordinating their schedules to allow the league to pause its season for the Olympics. The NHL said in December that it would bar its players from travelling to Beijing, citing health concerns related to the pandemic. NHL players also missed Pyeongchang 2018.

The NHL season clashes with the Winter Games and the league also is believed to be concerned about injuries at the Olympics. The NHL absence is "frustrating for the fans, for the players, that's why I am optimistic for the next one", Tardif said. Tardif also said he was pleased by the performance of China in hockey in Beijing, after the IIHF nearly barred the Chinese men from the Games over poor play, despite having an automatic berth as host nation.

The Chinese team - half of which were Canadian and US players - was eventually allowed to compete. They were eliminated after losing all four games. The women however, won two of their four matches. "For the men, everybody was worried," Tardif said. "I think we are happy because they (both teams) did well. But we are going to have to build a real Chinese organization. (That) is going to take time." He said the IIHF would "push" to develop the sport in China, which could include a professional league spanning China, South Korea and Japan. — AFP

Sports

Liverpool see off spirited Inter to put one foot in quarters

MILAN: Liverpool put one foot in the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday with a 2-0 win at Inter Milan which came after a hard-fought encounter at a bubbling San Siro. Goals from Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah in the last quarter of an hour gave Liverpool a commanding lead ahead of the last-16 second leg at Anfield in three weeks' time.

The result was harsh on Italian champions Inter, who dominated the contest in front of a passionate home crowd for long periods after the break and struck the woodwork through Hakan Calhanoglu in the 16th minute. However they could not find their way past a Liverpool backline impeccably marshalled by Virgil van Dijk and were punished late on by a Reds team who have now won their last seven matches in all competitions.

"Tough place to come, a very good team, difficult to break down and I really enjoyed the atmosphere and the crowd. A good result to take back to Anfield," Van Dijk said to BT Sport. "Everyone expects to be under pressure, it is the Champions League. The message before was you need to be ready to suffer and do the hard work. It is a very good performance, clean sheet and happy days."

The last eight now looks a step too far for Inter after making the last 16 of the Champions League for the first time in a decade, leaving Juventus as Italy's only real hope of success in the competition. "I think it was a good match and we should be proud of the way we played against one of the best teams in the world. For 65-70 minutes we deserved to win," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi told reporters after the match.

Liverpool strike late

Inzaghi's side started with all the enthusiasm expected of a team back in the knockouts after such a long time away and Lautaro Martinez got the crowd on their feet in the fifth minute with a long-range effort which flew just wide. Liverpool responded almost immediately and established territorial dominance, with a Salah shot well blocked and Thiago Alcantara shooting over from the edge of the box.

However it was Inter who had the best chance of the half through Calhanoglu, who after being fed by the rampaging Ivan Perisic let off a shot from a tight angle which beat Alisson but smashed out off the crossbar. They were unlucky again 10 minutes later when, after being sent charging down the right flank, Denzel Dumfries flashed over a low cross which was cut out just as it looked destined to find the feet of an unmarked Edin Dzeko.

Inter came out with the bit between their teeth after the interval and swarmed over a clearly flustered Liverpool but again could not get past Van Dijk and company, who kept getting a foot or head in just as danger seemed imminent. Perisic hung over a beautiful cross in the 52nd minute which Martinez could not quite get to, and a similar pattern was repeated several times with Liverpool rebuffing an increasingly frustrated Inter team unable to convert its supremacy into goals.

The away side punished them with their first proper chance of the second half, Firmino beating Alessandro Bastoni to Andy Robertson's 75th-minute corner and guiding his header past Samir Handanovic. Perisic flashed a distance effort just over but then Salah gave Liverpool a huge advance



MILAN: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah fights for the ball with Inter Milan's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg match at the Giuseppe Meazza (San Siro) stadium on Wednesday. —AFP

age eight minutes after Firmino's opener with a fortunate strike which squirmed home and gave the Egyptian an incredible eighth goal in seven Champions League games this season. With the San

Siro atmosphere thoroughly deflated, Liverpool then calmly saw out the remainder of the match to almost guarantee themselves a place in next month's draw for the last eight. —AFP

Coman equalizer spares Bayern blushes in Salzburg

SALZBURG: French winger Kingsley Coman spared his side's blushes with a late equalizer as Bayern Munich laboured to a 1-1 draw away to Red Bull Salzburg in the Champions League last-16 first leg on Wednesday. Coman prodded the ball in at the far post in the last minute of normal time to cancel out Junior Adamu's first-half opener and save Bayern from a first away defeat in the competition since 2017.

"Someone who isn't a Bayern fan might say Salzburg deserved it today, but I think it was a fair result," Bayern's stand-in captain Thomas Mueller told DAZN after his side battled their way back into the tie in the second half. "I think it was clear in the second half that we really wanted to win this game. We are not in the right flow at the moment, and we need to bring that winning mentality to every game," added team mate Joshua Kimmich.

Bayern arrived in Austria looking to bounce back from their shock defeat to Bundesliga minnows Bochum on Saturday, but there were early signs of the same defensive wobbles which had plagued

them at the weekend. A mistake from Niklas Sule opened up a chance for Brenden Aaronson after just a few minutes, as Salzburg snapped at the heels of the Bayern back line.

The visitors also had chances, but continued to look vulnerable and Salzburg deserved their lead on 21 minutes. A soaring long ball from Mohamed Camara opened Bayern up on the counterattack, and Adamu curled the ball in with an elegant first-time finish. Adamu had come on as an early substitute for the injured Noah Okafor, and he and his fellow forwards continued to unsettle the Bayern defence before the break.

The hosts had a penalty appeal waved away just before half-time, before sitting back and soaking up pressure in the second half. But despite dominating possession and running Salzburg's full-backs ragged, Bayern toiled in their search for an equalizer. As the pressure mounted towards the end of the game, Salzburg keeper Philipp Koehn denied Coman with a reflex save and neutralized a sharp counterattack by snatching the ball from the feet of Leroy Sane.

A mistake from Sane almost allowed Salzburg to kill the game off 10 minutes from time, but Benjamin Pavard denied Adamu his second with a desperate block on the line. Bayern's patience paid off when Coman finally broke the Austrian defenses as the clock ticked down towards injury time. A floating



SALZBURG: Bayern Munich's French forward Kingsley Coman and Salzburg's Argentinian midfielder Nicolas Capaldo vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League last-16 first-leg match on Wednesday. —AFP

cross from Pavard was flicked on by Thomas Mueller to Coman, who slotted the ball past Koehn to avoid a second shock defeat for Bayern in the space of just five days.

"It feels a bit like a defeat when you concede such a late goal, but 1-1 is a good result," said Salzburg striker Karim Adeyemi. "We are young, hungry and full of energy and we want to irritate Bayern," he added with an eye on the second leg in Munich on March 8. —AFP

Woods 'long way' from return to top-flight golf

LOS ANGELES: Golf superstar Tiger Woods remains confident he'll return to top flight competition, but the timetable remains a mystery one year after a car crash left him with devastating leg injuries. "I can come back, yes," Woods said Wednesday on the eve of the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club, where the 15-time major champion is the tournament host. The 46-year-old reiterated that he doesn't envision playing a full US PGA Tour schedule, and admitted that so far he has no idea when he will be ready to return.

"I wish I could tell you when I'm playing again," Woods said. "I want to know, but I don't. My golf activity has been very limited. I can chip and putt really well and hit short irons very well, but I haven't done any long

stuff seriously," he added. Woods's comments will damp down expectations he could make a miraculous return for the Masters at Augusta National in April.

Woods excited fans with an appearance alongside son Charlie at the PNC Championship in Florida in December. But he said the family-focused event was a far cry from proper tournament golf, including allowing the use of golf carts. To walk a tournament course over practice rounds, pro-am rounds and tournament rounds, would still be beyond him, Woods said.

"I'm still working on the walking part," he said, "working on strength and development in that. It takes time. What's frustrating is it's not my timetable," Woods said. "I want to be at a certain place, but I'm not. I've just got to continue working. I'm getting better, yes, but as I said, not at the speed and rate that I would like. You add in the age factor, too. You just don't quite heal as fast, which is frustrating."

Every day a fight

Woods said his work on the driving range had been limited because that practice "involves more loading, more torquing of the leg". "I can play weekend warrior golf, that's easy," Woods said. "But to be able to be out here and play, call it six rounds of golf - a practice round, pro-am, four competitive days - it's the cumulative effect of all that. I'm not able to do that yet. I'm still working on getting to that point."

Woods, who has battled serious knee and back injuries in his career, showed no indication he had lost his appetite for the battle. "Each and every day's a fight," Woods said. "And I welcome that fight. Get up in the morning, let's go a few more rounds." And despite his frustration at how long his latest injury recovery is taking, Woods said he considered himself "very lucky" to be where he is after fears he would lose his right leg after suffering two compound fractures.

He underwent multiple surgeries to repair his leg after the SUV he



Tiger Woods

was driving left the road in the Los Angeles suburb of Rancho Palms Verdes, flipping several times. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department found that "unsafe" speed was the primary cause of the early morning accident. "I'm very lucky, very lucky," Woods said. "I didn't know if I was going to have the right leg or not. So to be able to have my right leg still here, it's huge. I still have a lot of issues with it, but it's mine and I'm very thankful for that." —AFP

McIlroy 'so sick' of Super League discussion

LOS ANGELES: Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy is "sick" of talking about the proposed Saudi-backed golf Super League, and thinks the PGA Tour offers plenty of opportunity for quality golfers. "Oh, I'm so sick of it," the Northern Ireland star said Wednesday at the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club when asked if he was growing tired of the topic.



Rory McIlroy

McIlroy, 32, has already made it plain he's not a fan of the proposed league, which has been championed by Australian great Greg Norman but has yet to officially confirm its first signed-up player. "I guess I'm intrigued who would (join)," McIlroy said. "Certainly for the younger guys, it just seems a massive risk."

"I can maybe make sense of it for the guys that are getting to the later stages of their career, for sure. I don't think that's what a rival golf league is really, that's not what they're going to want, is it? Tiger Woods, Brooks Koepka and Justin Thomas have also indicated they wouldn't be interested. But talk about the league has ramped up recently thanks to comments from Phil Mickelson blasting the "greed" of the US PGA Tour as something that would make the league - which would offer big guaranteed money - attractive.

There have been reports that PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan will ban any player who joins the Super League from the US tour. McIlroy, who is on the PGA Tour's policy board, said he believed the PGA Tour was in a strong financial position, and players stood to benefit from increased prize money and bonus programs in coming years.

"There's a forecast through 2025, yeah," McIlroy said. "Any forecast that the PGA Tour has produced in the last 10 years, they've hit their target. So the forecast for 2025, it looks good." McIlroy said he didn't know if he was authorized to discuss figures, but said: "There's a ton of guys out here that are going to get rich if they play well." —AFP

Kuwait paralympic team to participate in Asian games

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's paralympic teams will head to Bahrain today to take part in the 3rd West Asia Paralympic Games to be held in Manama from Feb 18 until Feb 26 with 12 Arab countries and more than 700 athletes participating. Kuwait's delegation, which includes 75 athletes and officials, is headed by Chairman of Kuwait Paralympic Committee Nasser Al-Ajmi and Secretary General Sharifa Al-Ghanim.

Kuwait Paralympic athletes will participate in six games: Basketball, athletics, table tennis, weightlifting, bocce and badminton. Ajmi said Kuwait athletes are aiming to join the celebrations of national and liberation days by winning the largest possible number of



gold medals and be in top places despite the expected tough competition in the games that are sanctioned by Asian and international associations. Ajmi said the basketball team prepared well and held a training camp in Turkey and played several friendlies, and will arrive in Manama directly from Turkey. He added that the badminton and bocce teams returned recently from a training camp in Egypt, while athletics, table tennis and weightlifting teams held their camps locally. He wished all teams the best of luck.



PAS deputy chief meets top athletes

KUWAIT: Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Dr Saqer Al-Mulla visited the

Leaders Development Center in Khaldiya, where the Asian training course is being held to grant the B certificate to elite athletes of the national team. Discussions took place between Mulla and the players in the presence of lecturers Abdelaziz Hamada and Dr Bader Abdeljalil about the most important needs of the national coach to develop sports and football in particular.



Russia's Kamila Valieva reacts after competing in the women's single free skating of the figure skating event during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games at the Capital Indoor Stadium in Beijing yesterday. (Inset) USA's Mikaela Shiffrin competes in the women's alpine combined downhill event during at the Yanqing National Alpine Skiing Centre in Yanqing yesterday. —AFP

Broken Valieva falls out of medal places

Shiffrin to exit Beijing without individual medal as Gisin triumphs

BEIJING: Teenager Kamila Valieva finished fourth in the women's figure skating at the Beijing Olympics yesterday as a doping scandal engulfing the pre-Games favourite appeared to take its toll. Her Russian team-mate Anna Sheherbakova took gold after the 15-year-old Valieva produced an error-filled performance and was left distraught at the end of her free program. Another Russian, Alexandra Trusova, took silver, and Japan's Kaori Sakamoto won bronze.

"The importance of this is so huge that I cannot fully understand it yet," said Shcherbakova, herself only 17. All eyes had been on Valieva, who was in pole position after topping the short program on Tuesday and had been expected to add the singles title to the team crown she led Russia to before the doping controversy erupted. The International Olympic Committee had said that for the first time in Olympic history, no medals would be awarded if Valieva finished in the top three because she could yet be punished for taking the banned substance trimetazidine.

In the end, that was not a factor as Valieva, dressed in black and red, fell several times. The teenager had her head in her hands on the ice and then

seemed to break down as she waited to hear her score. It was the latest chapter in a saga which began when a sample from Dec 25 tested positive for trimetazidine, a drug used to treat angina but which is banned for athletes by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) because it can boost endurance.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled during the Games that Valieva could continue to skate in the Olympics, but it did not absolve her of doping and the investigation looks set to rumble on well after the action ends in Beijing. There will be no medal ceremony during these Games for the team event because of Valieva's involvement. The doping affair has focused attention once more on Russian athletes' at Olympic Games. They are taking part in Beijing under the banner of the Russian Olympic Committee because Russia as a country is serving a two-year ban as punishment for a state-sponsored doping program.

'Mind-boggling' for Shiffrin

Valieva's closely watched appearance was the climax of a colorful day at the Olympics featuring a judging controversy, a dramatic crash and more disap-

pointment for US ski ace Mikaela Shiffrin. A forlorn Shiffrin saw her last chance of winning an individual medal at these Olympics vanish. The American crashed out of the alpine combined event, meaning she has failed to complete three races and finished out of the medals in two others - an almost unthinkable disappointment for one of the world's best skiers.

Michelle Gisin of Switzerland went on to win the alpine combined, retaining her title from four years ago. The 26-year-old Shiffrin had seemed perfectly placed after posting the fifth-fastest downhill time. But in the slalom, a discipline in which she was Olympic gold medalist in 2014, the American went wide on one turn and could not get back on course.

Shiffrin's only chance of any kind of medal is now tomorrow's program-ending mixed team parallel. "I didn't make it to the finish again and that's like 60 percent of my DNF (did not finish) rate from my entire career has happened at this Olympic Games," she said, describing her performance as "mind-boggling".

Camera collision

There was more US disappointment

in the women's ice hockey, where Canada beat the Americans 3-2 to avenge a loss in the final four years ago. Canada raced out to a lead 3-0 in the second period and held on to win to collect the country's fifth Olympic gold in the event. "It's just so good, it's a great feeling," said Marie-Philip Poulin, who scored twice. "It was one hell of an effort. This is redemption."

It was all happening meanwhile in freestyle skiing. Finland's Jon Sallinen had an unfortunate cameraman to thank after flying out of the halfpipe and colliding into him. The 21-year-old Sallinen said he thought he had broken his collarbone but he was "lucky not to land on my head". "I maybe got a little cushion from the camera guy," he said.

In the women's ski cross final, Switzerland's Fanny Smith lost out on a bronze medal when she was penalized for kicking a rival. Swiss head coach Ralph Pfiaeffli said the 29-year-old Smith was too distraught to speak to reporters after the race, but he said he believed the contact was "clearly incidental and not intentional". With the Games wrapping up on Sunday, Norway top the medals table on 14 golds, Germany have 10 and the United States have eight. —AFP



MARANELLO: This handout picture released by Ferrari press office yesterday shows Ferrari's driver Carlos Sainz posing with the new Ferrari F1-75 following its online official presentation. —AFP

Ferrari unveil sleek new car to end title drought

MARANELLO, Italy: Charles Leclerc said "expectations are very high" as Ferrari yesterday unveiled their new F1-75 car which they hope can challenge Mercedes and Red Bull for the Formula One world title this year. Ferrari have not won the constructors' title in 14 years, with the Scuderia finishing third last season and sixth in 2020. The most successful Formula One team won the last of their record 16 constructors' titles in 2008, with Finland's Kimi Raikkonen lifting the last drivers' title for the Prancing Horse in 2007. Their last race victory came with former driver Sebastian Vettel, who led a Ferrari one-two ahead of Leclerc at the Singapore Grand Prix in 2019.

Monaco's Leclerc and Spaniard Carlos Sainz will continue their quest to break Mercedes and Red Bull's domination next season. Sainz, 27, finished fifth last season, two places above 24-year-old Leclerc. "Expectations are very high because we are Ferrari and we are always expected to win," said Leclerc. "But we will only know once we're on the track."

Revealed at Maranello, the F1-75 takes its name from an important anniversary for the team, 75 years since founder Enzo Ferrari produced his first Ferrari car. The car features a darker red and black livery, a throwback to the Scuderia's oldest cars, combined with the innovative design of the new F1 machines.

But the F1-75 has a different profile from its predecessor to comply with the new regulations coming into force this season, which many people expect to make the grid more competitive. The latter favors the ground effect, or suction, rather than aerodynamic support in order to allow F1 cars to overtake more easily in the race, with the cars featuring larger wheels.

The new Ferrari also features a two-piece nose with the wing attached to the lower one, which should give engineers a greater range of settings to suit the characteristics of different circuits. Red Bull has already presented a preliminary version of its F1 2022 car and Mercedes is due to present its own on Friday. The first pre-season tests are scheduled in Barcelona from Feb 23-25 and the first race will take place in Bahrain on March 20. —AFP

Boozy Rams celebrate Super Bowl triumph

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Rams celebrated their Super Bowl triumph in a blizzard of blue and gold confetti on Wednesday as the team took a boozy victory parade before thousands of cheering fans. Quarterback Matthew Stafford swigged tequila and defensive star Aaron Donald quaffed beer and champagne as the NFL champions marked Sunday's victory over the Cincinnati Bengals with an open-top bus tour.

Hordes of fans thronged the route to salute the team in blazing sunshine before a victory rally held in front of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Rams star Stafford, who had been chugging beers during the bus tour, addressed the crowd with a tequila bottle in his hand. "This is unbelievable to be out here today celebrating with you guys," said Stafford, who led the Rams game-winning drive in Sunday's 23-20 win.

"It's an unbelievable journey we've been on, so many ups and downs. But you know what you guys were out there with us every step of the way. "I am so blessed to be a part of this team. I'm hugging every single one of them right here." Stafford drew some advice from retired former Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady,

who was famously pictured being helped off a boat looking the worse for wear after celebrating his seventh Super Bowl win last year. "Mix in a water Matt...trust me," Brady commented on Twitter above parade footage of Stafford smoking a cigar.

'Run it back!'

Defensive star Donald, meanwhile, whose sack of Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow effectively sealed the Super Bowl win, admitted he'd been having a "little fun". "So if I slur my words I apologize," Donald said. "I dreamed this for so long .. we're world champions. That's what it's all about. "It's surreal. We're having a good time. The last team standing."

Donald's future with the Rams has been the subject of speculation since Sunday's Super Bowl win, with one report suggesting he may be contemplating retirement. Rams coach Sean McVay urged Donald to commit to return for another season, leading the crowd in chants of "Run it back! Run it back!" "We built the super team, if we can bring the super team back, why not run it back?" Donald replied.

Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Cooper Kupp, the star wide receiver who scored the winning touchdown, paid tribute to late Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant. "Kobe is a part of this, he belongs here, he set the standard," said Kupp, wearing a Lakers jersey emblazoned with Bryant's name and number. Bryant died in a helicopter crash in Los Angeles in 2020.



LOS ANGELES: Fans celebrate as double-decker buses carry the team outside the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum during the Rams NFL Super Bowl LVI victory parade on Wednesday. —AFP

Meanwhile, the Rams' veteran offensive lineman Andrew Whitworth, who at 40 is another player reported to be mulling retirement, said he hoped his story would serve as an inspiration. Whitworth joined the Rams in 2017 after the Bengals declined to offer him a new long-term contract at the age of 35. "Five years ago I was told I was a little too old, and that maybe my time was done," Whitworth told the crowd.

"For every single person standing out there who's ever doubted themselves - bet on yourself because five years later I'm holding this trophy up and I'm 40 years old. "Don't let anyone's opinions of you become your reality. Bet on yourself. World. Damn. Champions." —AFP