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MPs call to resolve housing problem, create more jobs

Seven MPs renew confidence in defense minister



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem bangs the gavel during a parliamentary session yesterday. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: During the National Assembly session yesterday, MPs called on the government to take extra measures to resolve the decades-old housing crisis, and pay greater attention to improving education and health services. During their debate of the Amiri Address, delivered by the prime minister at the current term's opening session in October, the lawmakers also called on authorities to create more jobs for Kuwaiti graduates by replacing expats. They also expressed strong rejection of reported government plans to impose taxes and charges.

Opposition MP Saifi Al-Saifi said he has submitted a motion to hold a special session to debate a draft law that will allow courts to handle cases related to Kuwaiti citizenship, currently considered a sovereign issue that courts are banned from hearing. MP Fares Al-Otaibi asked the finance minister why the ministry is delaying the implementation of a law to transfer Kuwait Airways into a commercial company.

MP Osama Al-Munawer claimed the government is intentionally exhausting assets in the state reserve fund through financing arms deals and foreign aid with the aim to impose financial burdens on citizens. He asked the finance minister why the ministry is not transferring profits of state-owned companies to the state reserve fund. The next Assembly session will be held on Jan 26 to vote on the no-confidence motion

against the defense minister. The next regular session is after two weeks.

Meanwhile, seven lawmakers said yesterday they will vote in support of Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, who is facing a no-confidence vote next week filed by 10 opposition MPs. Six of the seven MPs were until recently among the opposition group which enjoyed a strength of 31 lawmakers in the 50-seat National Assembly. They include MPs Obaid Al-Wasmi, Bader Al-Humaidi, Farz Al-Mutairi, Fayez Al-Jamhour, Saud Al-Mutairi and Musaed Al-Mutairi. The seventh is pro-government MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji.

The declaration means that the chances of the opposition to unseat the defense minister have become too slim and the no-confidence motion is expected to falter. This is because around another 15 pro-government MPs are expected to back the minister.

The motion was filed on Tuesday following a grilling by MP Hamdan Al-Azemi, who accused the minister of violating Kuwait's traditions by allowing women to join the military and for failing to take proper actions against suspected corruption in the multibillion-dollar deal to purchase 28 Eurofighter warplanes. The minister denied the charges in the grilling. The opposition needs the support of at least 24 MPs to vote the minister out of office, but with today's declaration, that possibility looks highly unlikely.

News in brief

Saudi to jail rumormongers

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has warned that spreading "rumors" is a crime punishable by up to five years in jail, after sexual harassment claims circulated widely on social media. "Publishing or contributing in any way to rumors and lies via social media on matters affecting public order is a serious crime," said a statement from the public prosecutor's office. It also warned of fines of up to \$800,000. — AFP

2021 among 7 hottest years

GENEVA: The past seven years have been the hottest on record, the United Nations confirmed yesterday, adding that 2021 temperatures remained high despite the cooling effect of the La Nina weather phenomenon. "The warmest seven years have all been since 2015," the UN's World Meteorological Organization said in a statement. — AFP

US to distribute 400m masks

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's administration announced yesterday it will distribute some 400 million high-quality N95 masks for free to Americans as part of its effort to rein in the coronavirus pandemic. The masks will be made available beginning next week at tens of thousands of distribution points nationwide, particularly pharmacies and community health centers. — AFP

World's oldest man dies

NEW YORK: The world's oldest man, Spaniard Saturnino de la Fuente Garcia, has died at the age of 112 years and 341 days, the Guinness World Records said yesterday. He had been declared the oldest living man in the world when he turned 112 years and 211 days old, the London-based organization said, and had been due to celebrate his 113th birthday next month. — AFP (See Page 12)

Palestinian home razed in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Zionist police demolished the home of a Palestinian family and arrested at least 18 people as they carried out a controversial eviction order in the sensitive east Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah early yesterday. The looming eviction of other families from Sheikh Jarrah in May last year partly fueled an 11-day war between the Zionist entity and armed Palestinian factions in Gaza.

Before dawn, Zionist officers went to the home of the Salhiya family, who were first served with an eviction

notice in 2017, after courts ruled the house had been built illegally. Jerusalem authorities have said the land will be used to build a school for children with special needs, but the eviction may raise tension in a neighborhood that has become a symbol of Palestinian opposition to Zionist occupation.

Zionist police said they had "completed the execution of an eviction order of illegal buildings built on grounds designated for a school for children with special needs". "Members of the family living in the illegal buildings were given countless opportunities to hand over the land with consent," a police statement said.

A bulldozer raked through rubble hours after the home was destroyed. A police spokesman told AFP 18 family

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JERUSALEM: A man on crutches holds pictures on the ruins of the Palestinian Salhiya family house demolished by Zionist forces in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood yesterday. — AFP

World Cup tickets sold at low prices

DOHA: Qatar World Cup ticket sales were launched at reduced prices yesterday, with residents and migrant workers able to attend games for just \$11 as concerns persist over COVID-19. Authorities have not yet announced how many fans will be allowed into stadiums for the first World Cup in an Arab country, which runs from Nov 21 until Dec 18.

Football's world governing body FIFA opened a draw which offers individual match tickets for as little as \$69 for international fans - about one third less than at Russia 2018 - but a ticket for the final could cost up to \$1,607. Qatari residents, including migrant laborers whose treatment has been a source of controversy for the



DOHA: Photo taken on Oct 22, 2021 shows a view of the Al-Thumama Stadium in the Qatari capital. — AFP

organizers, will be able to get tickets for as little as \$11.

Fans who apply now for the different packages - for individual games or following a team, or for special stadium tickets - will go into a draw after the first deadline on Feb 8. FIFA said fans who are successful in a random draw will be told by March 8. Qatar has spent billions of dollars preparing for the

first winter World Cup and FIFA is staking a lot of its prestige in making sure it goes smoothly.

Seven stadiums have been purpose-built and one refurbished, but as there will not be enough hotels some fans may have to stay on cruise ships for the event. "This is a FIFA World Cup for Qatar, the region and the world, and the

Continued on Page 2

Evidence of fraud in Trump family business

NEW YORK: New York Attorney General Letitia James said her investigation into the Trump family's business dealings had uncovered evidence suggesting the fraudulent valuing of multiple assets and misrepresentation of those values for economic benefit. In a court filing late Tuesday, James said as the beneficial owner of the Trump Organization, former president Donald Trump "had ultimate authority over a wide swath of conduct by the Trump Organization involving misstatements to counterparties, including financial institutions, and the Internal Revenue Service."

James is seeking to question Trump and his two eldest children, Donald Trump, Jr. and Ivanka Trump, as part of her years-long civil probe. In her filing Tuesday, the attorney general said the trio should be compelled to testify. "Until January 2017, Ms. Trump was a primary contact for the

Continued on Page 2

Local

Crown Prince receives Qatar Amir's letter to Kuwait Amir

Kuwait, Qatar Foreign Ministers discuss regional developments



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads a letter from Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a letter from Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The letter, handed over by the visiting Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in a meeting at Bayan Palace yesterday, dealt with deep-rooted ties between both countries, issues of common interest and latest developments on regional and international arenas.

The meeting between His Highness the Crown

Prince and the visiting Qatari official was attended by the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Undersecretary and Head of His Highness the Amir Office Ambassador Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad. Also attending the session were Head of His Highness the Crown Prince Office Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Thyab, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary at His Highness the Crown Prince Office Mazen Essa Al-Essa, and Foreign Minister Assistant for Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) Affairs Ambassador Hamad Rashed Al-Merri.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in presence of Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, received the visiting Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and his accompanying delegation. The meeting, which took place at Seif Palace, was also attended by His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Chairman Abdulaziz Dakheel Al-Dakheel, Assistant Foreign

Minister for GCC Affairs Hamad Rashed Al-Merri and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Salah Al-Seif.

Later yesterday, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad met with his Qatari counterpart at the ministry's headquarters on the occasion of his official visit to the country. During the meeting, both ministers discussed the deep brotherly relations between Kuwait and Qatar, and ways to strengthen and raise them to a higher, more integrated and comprehensive levels. They also discussed the latest developments in regional and international arenas. — KUNA

'Oasis of security' UAE faces Yemen rebel threat

DUBAI: Deadly attacks by Yemeni rebels have struck the United Arab Emirates' image as an "oasis of security" and left it pondering a dangerous new phase in the conflict, analysts say. The UAE had kept the seven-year war at arm's length, but Monday's drone and missile assault on key infrastructure laid bare the threat posed by the Iran-backed Houthi insurgents.

Three people were killed and six wounded as the Houthis' attack set off an explosion next to oil giant ADNOC's storage facilities and started a fire at Abu Dhabi airport. Such incidents are frequent in Saudi Arabia, which neighbors Yemen. Riyadh, which has since 2015 led the military coalition that includes the UAE supporting Yemen's government in the fight against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels, launched deadly counterstrikes against the insurgents in response.

But the attack was a jolt for the wealthy UAE, an oil, trade, tourism and transport center known as a bastion of calm in an often turbulent region. While Yemen is riven by conflict, the ambitious Gulf state has thrived, constructing marvels such as the world's tallest building, the 828-m Burj Khalifa, and sending the first Arab into space.

"If these sort of attacks increase in scale and quantity, it would certainly tarnish UAE's reputation, since it is built on being an oasis of security in the Middle East," said Dania Thayer, director of the Gulf International Forum research institute.

The UAE has never before acknowledged an attack by the rebels on its soil, although the Houthis claimed to have launched an assault in 2018. The UAE, whose capital Abu Dhabi lies about 1,500 km east of Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa, announced a troop withdrawal in 2019.

Instead, the UAE switched to supporting Yemeni militias, including the Giants Brigade, a force which drove the rebels out of Shabwa governorate earlier this month, their platform for attacking the strategically vital city of Marib further north. "The Houthis appear to be aware of how UAE's reputation is at the heart of its strategic goals, and are hoping to gain a low-cost but high-return strike against the UAE as retribution for their recent setbacks in Shabwa," Thayer said.

However, Eman Alhoussein, non-resident fellow of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, said the UAE's image would remain intact despite the setback. "I do not think the attacks will have a significant impact on the UAE's reputation, as it has built a strong brand and image that can withstand the recent attacks," he told AFP.

Two weeks ago the rebels, normally exclusively land-based, hijacked a UAE-flagged ship in the Red Sea and released footage purporting to show weapons on board. "This is not a new front against UAE interests abroad or in the homeland, but rather a direct escalation," said Mohammad Al-Basha, Yemen expert for the US-based Navanti research group.

Now, with the intractable conflict dragged to their doorstep, the Emiratis' choices include either sticking to their guns, or dialing down to reduce the risk to their oil, business and tourism interests. Elisabeth Kendall, a researcher at the University of Oxford, called the attack a "significant escalation" but did not expect a "knee-jerk reaction" like recommitting troops.

"It is unlikely to veer from its long-term strategy, for example by scaling up its own troop presence in Yemen again, on the basis of a provocation," she said. Jack A. Kennedy, head of Middle East Country Risk at research company IHS Markit, said the UAE was now likely to "intensify" its support for Yemen's southern militias.

"The Houthis are likely to counterbalance further territorial losses with increased cross-border attacks, using ballistic missiles and attack UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones) against Saudi Arabia, UAE and civilian and military targets in Yemen," he warned. — AFP

ed my husband and all the young men," she said.

Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the Gaza Strip, blasted the demolition as a Zionist act of "aggression". The Palestinian Authority, based in the occupied West Bank, called it a "crime", as part of the Zionist entity's move to "Israelize" Jerusalem.

Human Rights Watch (Zionist entity) and Palestine director Omar Shakir labelled "the forcible expulsion of the Salhiyeh family" as "war crimes". He noted that the family had previously been forced from their west Jerusalem home during the Zionist entity's creation in 1948, and yesterday's eviction made them "two-time refugees".

Hundreds of Palestinians face eviction from homes in Sheikh Jarrah and other east Jerusalem neighborhoods. Circumstances surrounding the eviction threats vary. In some cases, Jewish Zionists have lodged legal claims to plots they say were illegally taken during the war that accompanied the Zionist entity's creation in 1948.

Zionist law allows Jewish Zionists to file such claims, but no equivalent law exists for Palestinians who lost land during the conflict. Palestinians facing eviction say their homes were legally purchased from Jordanian authorities who controlled east Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967.

The Zionist entity captured east Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed it, in a move not recognized by the international community. More than 200,000 Jewish settlers have since moved into the city's eastern sector, fueling tensions with Palestinians, who claim it as the capital of their future state. — AFP

The constituent assembly, a turning point in Kuwait's political history

KUWAIT: Today marks the 60th anniversary of inaugurating the first session of constituent assembly. The assembly, considered a turning point in Kuwait's political history, aimed to lay groundwork for a modern state through establishing a democratic regime via a constitution drafted with real popular participation. The late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah issued a decree in August 1961 forming a higher council tasked with working on a law organizing constituent assembly elections. The law divided the country into 10 electoral areas from which two representatives would be elected via secret ballot. Members of assembly would amount to 20 elected representatives as well as appointed ministers. The law also specified that an elected representative must not be younger than 30 years of age, and that he masters the Arabic language in reading and writing.

On December 30 of the same year, elections were held, and 20 members were elected. They were joined

World Cup tickets sold...

Continued from Page 1

products launched today reflect FIFA's goal of bringing the beautiful game to as many fans globally as possible," said FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura. "The first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world will be an extraordinary event," said Nasser Al Khater, Qatar's chief organizer. "Qatar cannot wait to bring fans together to celebrate their shared passion for football, experience a new culture and enjoy everything that our country and region have

by appointed members of government, dubbed transitional government, formed on January 17 by decree of Amir. The government included 14 ministers, 11 of which were members of the royal family, and three were elected members. In the morning of January 20, 1962, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem inaugurated the assembly in a speech declaring principles of democracy, and describing it as a pillar of the modern state and affirmed that it is the duty of the assembly to propose modes of governance qualified for a democratic future. During that session, Abdulateef Thunayan Al-Ghanem was chosen as assembly speaker and Dr Ahmad Al-Khateeb as deputy.

The assembly formed a committee of five personnel to draft the constitution, including all of Yaqoub Al-Humaidhi, Humoud Al-Khaled, Abdulateef Al-Ghanem, Saud Al-Abdulrazzaq as well as late Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. The committee accomplished its task in 23 meetings between March of 1962 and October of the same year, and handed in its report to the assembly which discussed and voted on it. The Amir rectified and published the constitution on November 11, 1962. Assembly speaker at the time, Abdulatif Al-Ghanem, stated while handing in constitution draft to the late Amir, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, that it was a great honor for the committee to work on a constitution built on the principles of democracy and inspired by the reality of Kuwait, in an effort to achieve the hopes of the Amir for his people. — KUNA

to offer." FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who is now based mainly in Qatar, said one year ago he was confident the coronavirus pandemic would be over by the time the World Cup starts, and that the matches would be played in full stadiums.

Organizers have predicted up to 1.2 million visitors could pour in for the 32-team tournament. With the Omicron variant ravaging many countries, Qatar currently imposes tight restrictions on visitors including quarantine for new arrivals. FIFA and the Qatar government "are committed to putting health first" and would lay on "required safeguards" for the finals, the world body said. Fans will need a special pass, a Hay'ya Card, to get access to stadiums and this could include COVID test information. All players, officials and fans "must follow the travel advice from the Qatari authorities", FIFA said. — AFP

"The Trumps must comply with our lawful subpoenas for documents and testimony because no one in this country can pick and choose if and how the law applies to them. We will not be deterred in our efforts to continue this investigation and ensure that no one is above the law." She launched her investigation in March 2019 and suspects that the Trump Organization fraudulently overstated the value of certain properties when seeking bank loans, and later reported much smaller values when declaring assets so it could pay less tax.

Trump's son Eric, who is executive vice president of the Trump Organization, was interviewed by James' office on the issue in Oct 2020. The former president is facing pressure from several legal probes. In Washington he is trying to prevent a congressional probe into the January 6 attack by his supporters on the US Capitol from accessing White House records related to that day. The Trump Organization is also under investigation by the Manhattan district attorney for possible financial crimes and insurance fraud.

In July last year, the Trump Organization and its long-serving finance chief, Allen Weisselberg pleaded not guilty in a New York court to 15 felony fraud and tax evasion charges. His trial is due to begin in the middle of this year. Trump was also questioned for more than four hours in October as part of a lawsuit by a group of protestors who allege that his security guards assaulted them six years ago. He is also battling to prevent years of his tax returns from being released to prosecutors. — AFP

Palestinian home razed...

Continued from Page 1

members and supporters were arrested for "violating a court order, violent fortification and disturbing public order," but no clashes took place during the eviction.

When police arrived to carry out the order on Monday, Salhiya family members went up to the building's roof with gas canisters, threatening to set the contents and themselves alight if they were forced out of their home. Police had eventually backed off, but returned early yesterday amid heavy rainfall in Jerusalem.

Salhiya family lawyer Walid Abu-Tayeh told AFP the police had "illegally" arrested 20 people during the operation, six of them Zionist citizens, with the latter being released, adding that "the Arab detainees were assaulted". The authorities "want to liquidate the (Palestinian) population" of Jerusalem, he said.

Abu-Tayeh also confirmed reports that the Palestinian father Mahmud Salhiya is married to a Jew named Meital. In an audio recording distributed to local Arab-language media, Meital, who speaks Arabic, said the family was woken early yesterday by the sound of loud booms and police had cut the electricity. "They took me out of the house with my daughter and children who were crying, and arrest-

Local

Speaker requests isolated room in Assembly building for infected MPs

Health minister vows special attention to special needs' citizens

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem has asked Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed to set up a special room at Abdullah Al-Salem Hall to isolate infected members of parliament. This came in Ghanem's speech in the follow up session yesterday that discussed a message from some members to provide a room for infected members to attend and take part in voting on laws and resolutions in all assembly sessions.

Ghanem explained that the message was directed to the Minister of Health on January 16th and requested an urgent answer to start preparing the isolation chamber. The request is in line with article 15 of Law 8/1969 regarding preventative health measures against communicable diseases that grants the minister the power to implement any new rules in order to control the pandemic. Meanwhile, Dr Saeed said that the message was received, noting that the concerned department is studying the situation and would send back an answer as soon as possible.

In the meantime, Dr Saeed vowed to employ his long expertise in children medicine to overhaul the Public Authority for Disability Affairs. The minister was replying to a statement by an MP during yesterday's session regarding the authority's tasks. "I will do my best to resolve problems and remove obstacles facing our citizens of special needs so they may attain their rights," the minister assured the MPs.

Minister Dr Saeed expressed solidarity with this segment of the society, pledging to follow up on all affairs concerning them. He also promised to protect public funds and warned that he would seek legal measures against offenders. MPs held a follow-up session today looking into a host of issues and recommendations, namely with respect of the



KUWAIT: A general view showing lawmakers attending the parliament's session yesterday. —KUNA

recent heavy rain that drenched the streets, formed raging flash waters and pools and inflicted damaged public and private properties.

Recommendations approved

During the session, the National Assembly approved several papers and recommendations namely referral of the issue of rain damage to the concerned commission. Among the approved letters was one forwarded by chairperson of the parliamentary economic and financial affairs MP Ahmad Al-Hamad with respect of "the strategic alternative"

concerning the pay scale, leaderships' jobs — the latest would be referred to the parliamentary committee of human resources, in line with the parliament bylaw. The MPs approved a recommendation asking the utilities commission to probe damage inflicted in the recent heavy rains. The committee term would be until end of the current parliamentary session. Another blessed recommendation addressed the environment safety, amending the law of the Credit Bank of Kuwait, taking action against land monopolization, power bills and regulating ownership in the residential sector. —KUNA

The patriarchal narrative

By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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In my view

From an ex-MP stating that feminists should be sent to rehabilitation centers to a current MP expressing his discontent regarding the enlistment of women in the military to a local man who claimed that women shelters will dissolve the family unit, it is hard to miss the fact that the patriarchy is feeling threatened by women's prominence in all aspects of society.

The ladies of Abolish 153, Lan Asket, and Soroptomist Kuwait, all notable and laudable local feminist movements, are each using their platforms to dissolve the patriarchy, to change mindsets, and to rid our society of male domination, spousal and financial abuse, domestic violence, honor killings, rape and harassment, voicelessness and intimidation. These movements not only provide women with security and opportunities but give women a platform to express themselves safely and freely. Each of these movements are not only up against a legal system-masked behind layers of red tape and fortresses of bureaucracy-which favors the straight, domineering male, but they also face an uphill climb trying to transform a male-dominated narrative which subjugates women into a gender-equal society.

And that is what feminism is about. Plain and simple. Feminism is a reaction to millennia of oppression. Because whenever anything on our planet tips the scales too far in terms of power, there will be a reaction, a much-needed reaction, which recalibrates and restores equilibrium. Without such a reaction, violence and oppression will continue to plague us. There's nothing "toxic" about removing toxicity. What is toxic is that a woman cannot give citizenship to her children if her husband is non-Kuwaiti. What is toxic is men telling women what to wear, whether they can go out or work, who they can see, who they can marry. What is toxic is following women home at night or sexually harassing them. What is toxic is raping a woman. What is toxic is beating up a woman, pushing her down the stairs, killing her in the name of honor.

For the ego-based patriarchy, the solution to "dealing" with women who speak up is: "Lock 'em up" or "Put them away." To a man of the patriarchy, a feminist is a threat because she reminds him that he can no longer get away with what he has gotten away with for eons. The dominant male ego is frightful when it is about to dissolve. It will do everything to stay in power, even if it means uttering discriminatory statements or attempting to pass legislation bordering on the ridiculous. Power, after all, is a drug. And, like any addictive substance, when the power-drug leaves the system, it can produce overwhelming withdrawal symptoms. Members of the patriarchy are hooked on their power, their control over women, their self-appointed place as regulators. And instead of assuming responsibility for their addiction and how it poisons not only themselves but society, they gaslight women. "Send them to rehab! They are sick, not us!"

What is most threatening to such men is that more and more men in our society are speaking out against the subjugation of women. While women (and the men who support them) fight for inclusive rights, patriarchal men fight to keep their rights exclusive. Women want their rightful place in all arenas of society. And if they want to join the army, it is not for a man to decide. As for women shelters, as Warsan Shire puts it: "No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark." And though Shire was referring to refugees, the quote is as applicable as ever here. Women shelters do not dissolve families. Rape does. Domestic and financial abuse does. Intimidation does. Fear does. And, oh, denial does.

And, finally, if feminism entails protecting women from rape, violence, male aggression, intimidation, fear, harassment, abuse (be it spousal, domestic, financial), then sign us up, women and men. What are we (Ku)-waiting for?

Motorist dead, another injured in Fifth Ring Road crash

KUWAIT: A motorist died and another was critically injured in an accident reported on Fifth Ring Road near Rumaithiya, Kuwait Fire Force said yesterday. Rescue teams used hydraulic equipment to free the injured driver who sustained several fractures, before he was taken to hospital for treatment. The other driver's body was taken to the coroner, KFF noted. An investigation was opened into the accident.



Kuwait reports 4,337 new COVID cases, one death

KUWAIT: Kuwait reported 4,337 new COVID-19 cases yesterday in addition to one death and 4,063 recoveries. Meanwhile, the number of patients in ICU increased from 37 Tuesday to 43 yesterday. The number of patients hospitalized also increased from 296 to 336, while total active cases rose from 44,158 to 44,431. The percentage of daily new cases to new tests dropped from 15 percent to 14 percent, while the percentage of recovery remained unchanged at 90.2 percent, according to the health ministry's bulletin.

Meanwhile, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added Kuwait under 'Level 3: COVID-19 High' in the most recent update of its four-tier list of countries that assesses risk levels based on the spread of coronavirus. The CDC advises people traveling to countries listed in Level 3 to "make sure you are fully vaccinated before traveling to these destinations." It further states that "unvaccinated travelers should avoid nonessential travel to these destinations."

In other news, Kuwait Football Association announced yesterday postponing a Crown Prince Cup match between Al-Yarmouk and Al-Shabab after eight Yarmouk players tested positive for COVID-19. KFA had recently announced that any match would be postponed if eight players or more of one team, or all of its goalkeepers, tested positive during mandatory pre-match testing.

Residents over 60 face layoffs

KUWAIT: While 54,000 residents over 60 years of age without a degree wait for a final decision with regards to renewing their work permits, there has been a "wave" of layoffs of people in this category in some companies, Al-Rai reported yesterday quoting sources familiar with the situation.

The sources said companies that terminated the jobs of their expat employees aged over 60 were forced to take this step in order to limit the risks of a long wait for the government's decision. Employees were also told in case their work permits are approved, their return to work will be according to the company's need for them.

Meanwhile, residents who face layoffs before their work permits are renewed face a new problem, which is searching for a new sponsor. The issue of banning renewal of work permits for residents aged 60 and above is still awaiting a decision to transfer jurisdiction of the manpower authority from the social affairs minister to the justice minister. State Minister for Integrity Affairs Jamal Al-Jalawi can cancel the ban or impose a fee of up to KD 500 along with compulsory health insurance.

Kuwait's first int'l academic development conference opens

KUWAIT: Kuwait's first international convention for academic development started yesterday under the slogan "New Vision for a New Era". Deputy Director of Kuwait University Dr Bader Al-Bedaiwi said in a virtual press conference that this convention will discuss university rankings, academic accreditation, global competitiveness, leadership, professional technology and management. Bedaiwi stressed transforming this vision into a tangible reality that takes Kuwait's education to higher horizons.

Charge d'Affairs of the College of Education Dean's office Dr Fayeza Al-Dhafiri said the purpose of this convention is to create a new vision that parallels Kuwait 2035 vision and provide scientific and developmental assistance. Dr Aisha Al-Azmi affirmed that these conventions are a great chance for all scholars and scientists to brainstorm new ideas and share expertise to elevate education. —KUNA

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held for 1,152 officers

Batch 49 was divided into two groups



KUWAIT: Pictures taken from the graduation ceremony. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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The Light

By Layan Abdullah Al-Qenaai

Look up, find chances, create adventures and write your own story because that is what life is all about. To never give up! Once you fail, take a break, take a deep breath and start all over again. That scholarship did not work for you? Try another university, or even wait another year. That job interview was not successful? Go and dig yourself a new job or even create your own company. In every dark situation, there is always a light waiting for you. The darker the situation, the brighter the shine waiting for you at the end. Build your own empire by yourself for yourself. The "anger" of not succeeding in any type of matter in your life is normal. It is also normal to be jealous and to compare yourself with others. What is not normal is to drain yourself into toxic thoughts of coming out of the "not succeeding" hole. Look at it from a positive point of view in order to succeed. And never, ever stop trying because your future is in your own hands!

Kuwait oil price
up to \$89.43 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price rose \$1.71 to \$89.43 per barrel on Tuesday compared to \$87.72 pb Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the Brent crude went up by \$1.03 to \$87.51 pb and West Texas Intermediate oil also rose by \$1.61 to settle at \$85.43 pb. The OPEC daily basket price stood up by \$1.54 to \$88.08 a barrel Tuesday, compared with \$86.54 the previous day, the cartel said yesterday. The annual average of the OPEC's basket price amounted to \$69.89 pb last year, the organization said in its bulletin. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, decided early January to proceed with a production hike of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd), keeping their current policy of slight monthly increases in output.

OPEC said that the monthly increase of 400,000 bpd would begin in February as previously agreed on, describing it as a measure aiming to keep the global oil market stable. The conferees had also underlined the paramount significance of utter compliance and compensation mechanism for the alliance's member states. The OPEC+ alliance also agreed to follow up on the developments of the epidemiological situation, monitor its repercussions on the market, and make immediate adjustments if necessary. The oil-producing countries of OPEC+ are expected to continue changing the production until amending the current level of 5.8 million bpd. They will re-examine market conditions and performance of the stakeholders at the 25th ministerial meeting, due to be held virtually on February 2. —KUNA

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: More than 1,150 officers and enlisted students graduated yesterday as part of the 49th batch of recruits. These graduates will now complete the second phase of service, during which they will receive civil and military training at the national military service institute.

This is the first batch of recruits without overnight stays. "This course is according to a new plan, as it was shortened to only two months without overnight stays. So the number of participants was huge," said Maj Gen Emad Amaan, Staff Chairman of national military service, during the graduation ceremony.

He had two messages for the graduates. "We are sure that during this training course you gained

knowledge and discipline that will be useful in your life in general. We are proud of you. Adhere to national unity and ignore negative phenomena. Commit to the rest of the service that is 10 months long," he said.

The 1,152 recruits received training at five locations in the south and north of Kuwait, in addition to the main national military service institute. "We made it simple for the participants, as they were trained in the location close to their homes," added Amaan. During the course, participants studied military law, military training and discipline, and at the end of the course, they were trained in shooting. "We wish all courses will be like this one. It was very successful and we didn't face any problems," he added.

Batch 49 was divided into two. "This was the first

one, of cadets that joined in November 20, 2021, while the second will start on January 30, 2022. The same conditions will be applied with the same content," Amaan explained. "I would like to thank the participants for their commitment and discipline, as well as their parents and families, who were our supporters and gave us positive feedback that their sons' behaviors have positively changed," concluded Amaan.

Col Mohammed Dahl, Middle School Command, noted that the national military service institute is ready for the upcoming courses. "The participants of the course received field and off-field training, including in the discipline, using weapons, fitness and skills. In addition, they learned theoretical subjects including security, military police, military judgment, firefighting, supply, first aid and others," he pointed out.

stc organizes professional iPhoneography training course

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has organized a training course on how to take professional photos using the iPhone. The training aims to empower aspiring photographers and those who wish to improve their photography skills using the advanced features and options available on the iPhone.



Danah Al-Jasem

stc released a statement indicating that the professional iPhoneography course, organized by stc's Public Relations Specialist, Ahmad Al Shayji, was conducted by Apple certified photography instructor, Abdulla Al-Shayji. The training course was open to the public, where individuals that registered got a chance to learn more about the hidden features and photography tips that would enhance their photographs on a professional level. The initiative was organized under stc's corporate social responsibility framework, which focuses on different aspects and causes related



to the community.

Commenting on the training, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "The successful turnout and positive reception we received from participants who attended the training reflects the demand for such courses in the community, especially amongst the younger generation who are always eager to experience the latest technological trends introduced

worldwide. We are thrilled to have had a certified Apple instructor guide attendees through the different approaches of enhancing their photography skills and gaining a different perspective on how to produce high-quality and professional looking photographs."

Jasem added, "This initiative further builds on our strive to empower and encourage the younger generation to pursue their desires, dreams, and

aspirations. We will continue to explore similar initiatives that are guided through educational platforms with an aim of creating a positive impact in our community. On behalf of stc, I would like to thank Abdulla Al-Shayji for conducting the training session and providing those who registered with valuable tips and professional insights on how to continue developing and improving their photography skills in the future."



Indonesian militant jailed over 2002 Bali bombings

Blinken in Kyiv urges Putin to choose 'peaceful path' on Ukraine

US authorise an additional \$200 million in security aid to Ukraine

KYIV: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to choose the "peaceful path" on Ukraine, as he visited Kyiv in a show of support ahead of crunch talks with Russia later this week.

In Ukraine in advance of talks with European allies in Berlin and his Russian counterpart in Geneva tomorrow, Blinken urged Putin to calm fears he is planning an invasion of his pro-Western neighbour.

"I strongly, strongly hope that we can keep this on a diplomatic and peaceful path, but ultimately, that's going to be President Putin's decision," Blinken said at the US embassy after he landed in the Ukrainian capital. With tens of thousands of Russian troops massed on the Ukrainian border, tensions between Moscow and the West have reached a post-Cold War high and there are real fears of a major conflict in Eastern Europe.

Moscow insists it has no plans to invade, but is demanding wide-ranging security guarantees — including a ban on Ukraine ever joining NATO — in exchange for a lowering of tensions.

Blinken's arrival yesterday in Europe upped the diplomatic stakes, and after Kyiv he was headed to Berlin for four-way talks with Britain, France and Germany to seek Western unity, and finally to Geneva tomorrow for a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

New US military aid

On the streets of the separatist-held city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, residents told AFP they hoped an all-out conflict could be avoided.

"Talks are good, at least it's not war," said Alexei Bokarev, a 77-year-old retired miner. "The guns are quiet and negotiations are going on, it means that

there is some kind of a search for a solution. How will this end? Nobody can say."

Speaking at the embassy ahead of talks with President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Ukrainian counterpart, Blinken warned that Russia could easily send more forces towards Ukraine.

"We know that there are plans in place to increase that force even more on very short notice, and that gives President Putin the capacity, also on very short notice, to take further aggressive action against Ukraine," Blinken said.

A senior US official meanwhile confirmed that the United States had authorised an additional \$200 million in security aid to Ukraine, on top of

“Guns are quiet and negotiations are going on”

\$450 million already delivered by President Joe Biden's administration. "We are committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and will continue to provide Ukraine the support it needs," the official said on condition of anonymity.

'Extremely dangerous situation'

As Blinken left Washington, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki warned of an "extremely dangerous situation" around Ukraine, saying "no option is off the table" in terms of a US response



KYIV: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks during a meeting with Ukrainian President at the Bankova, in Kyiv, yesterday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked the United States for its help during a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken amid fears of Russian aggression towards its neighbour. —AFP

to an invasion. Lavrov on Tuesday said there would be no further negotiations until the West responds, in writing, to its demands for sweeping security guarantees. As well as a permanent ban on Ukraine joining NATO, Moscow is demanding measures that would limit military activities in former Warsaw Pact and ex-Soviet countries that joined the alliance after Cold War.

Washington has rejected the demands as "non-starters" and warned that any invasion of Ukraine would be met with a severe economic counter-measures.

Tensions increased on Tuesday with the launch of joint military drills between the forces of Russia and Belarus, which also neighbours Ukraine.

A US official said the exercises could presage a permanent Russian military presence involving both conventional and nuclear forces in Belarus.

Kyiv has been battling a pro-Moscow insurgency in two breakaway regions bordering Russia since 2014, when the Kremlin annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula. The conflict in eastern Ukraine has so far left more than 13,000 dead. — AFP

Johnson calls end to COVID restrictions

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said most restrictions deployed to fight the latest wave of the COVID pandemic in England would be lifted from next week. People will no longer have to wear masks in closed spaces, work from home and prove vaccination to enter public spaces such as nightclubs, Johnson told parliament.

"Because of the extraordinary booster campaign... we can return to Plan A in England and allow Plan B regulations to expire," Johnson said. Last month, England switched to "Plan B" in order to cope with what Johnson called a "tidal wave" of expected infections from the Omicron variant.

But he had to fight his own party to get the changes into law, as Conservative colleagues called the restrictions a step too far and a curb to public freedoms. The relaxing of restrictions have been seen as a concession to critics angry at revelations that he and his staff broke COVID lockdown rules by holding parties at Downing Street.

Johnson told MPs: "While there are some places where cases are likely to continue rising, including in primary schools, our scientists believe it is likely that the Omicron wave has now peaked nationally." Secondary school pupils will no longer be required to wear face masks from today, Johnson said, calling for a review of self-isolation rules to be brought forward from March 24.

Pandemic 'not over'

After the Omicron variant emerged, Britain's daily caseload for COVID topped a record 200,000 infections in early January, but has now dropped to less than half that. "As COVID becomes endemic, we will need to replace legal requirements with advice and guidance, urging people with the virus to be careful and considerate of others," Johnson said.



LONDON: Britain's main opposition Labour Party deputy leader Angela Rayner (R) reacts as she leaves from the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, central London yesterday. —AFP

There was however still significant pressure on the state-run National Health Service "across our country", Johnson said, encouraging people to have a booster vaccination. "We know that around 90 percent of people in intensive care are not boosted," Johnson said, insisting "the pandemic is not over". "Omicron is not a mild disease for everyone, especially if you're not vaccinated."

Latest government figures on Tuesday recorded 438 deaths within 28 days of a positive test for COVID, taking the overall toll to more than 152,500 since early 2020.

Facing restive Tory backbenchers, the prime minister had rebuffed calls by some scientists to impose a full lockdown in December, and allowed sporting events to continue with capacity crowds in England. The devolved governments of Scotland and Wales imposed bans on large crowds at sports fixtures last month, but have now lifted that rule in time for the Six Nations rugby tournament starting next month. — AFP

Troops from the bloc that includes ex-Soviet states Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia began arriving on January 6 following an invitation from President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The withdrawal began on Thursday.

Serdyukov confirmed the completion of the mission under the auspices of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), a six-member military bloc led by Moscow. "The peacekeeping operation... on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been completed," said Serdyukov.

The withdrawal comes on the same day that oil-rich Kazakhstan ended states of emergency across the country imposed after violence erupted that authorities blamed on bandits and "terrorists".

Confirming the end of the state of emergency at midnight, Tokayev's spokesman Berik Uali said that "the unity and integrity of the people, law enforcement agencies and military" had ensured the restoration of order and peace in Kazakhstan.

"May there be peace and goodness in our country always!" Uali wrote on Facebook. The situation remained tense however in Almaty yesterday where AFP correspondents observed police blocking access to several central roads after a banned opposition group called for protests. — AFP

Russian troops leave Kazakhstan

ALMATY, Kazakhstan: A Russia-led military contingent completed its withdrawal from Kazakhstan as the country lifted a state of emergency yesterday after unprecedented unrest in the Central Asian state.

The Russian defence ministry said that four military planes carrying its last remaining troops had departed from the capital Nur-Sultan and Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty. "The last units of the peacekeepers and the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent headed by Colonel General Andrei Serdyukov will return home on these planes," it said, according to Russian news agencies.

Images published by the Russian defence ministry showed military airplanes landing at an airport in the southern Russian city of Ulyanovsk, where a ceremony was held to mark the troops' return. Ex-Soviet Kazakhstan has been roiled by clashes that followed peaceful protests over a New Year fuel price increase and which left at least 225 people dead, including 19 fatalities among servicemen.

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K.O. 0.795

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International

Taleban PM calls for Muslim nations to recognise Afghan government

Afghanistan is in the grip of a humanitarian disaster

KABUL: The Taleban's prime minister called yesterday on Muslim nations to be the first to officially recognise the government that seized power in Afghanistan in August. No country has yet recognised the Taleban government, with nations watching to see how the hardline Islamists—notorious for human rights abuses during their first stint in power between 1996 and 2001 — will rule this time around.

Although the group has promised a softer brand of governance, women are largely excluded from government employment, and secondary schools for girls have mostly remained shuttered.

“I call on Muslim countries to take the lead and recognise us officially. Then I hope we will be able to develop quickly,” Mohammad Hassan Akhund told a conference in Kabul to address the country's massive economic crisis.

“We do not want anyone's help. We don't want it for the officials,” Akhund said, referring to diplomatic recognition. “We want it for our public,” he said, adding that the Taleban had fulfilled all necessary conditions by restoring peace and security.

Women's rights

Aid-dependent Afghanistan is in the grip of a

humanitarian disaster, worsened by the Taleban takeover in August—when Western countries froze international aid and access to assets held abroad. Jobs have dried up, and many government workers have not been paid for months in a country that was almost entirely dependent on foreign aid under the previous US-backed government.

The United Nations has warned that half the population is threatened with food shortages.

Nations face the delicate task of channelling aid to the stricken economy without propping up the regime, with many members of what the Taleban call their interim government—including Akhund—on an international sanctions list.

The Taleban veteran was a close associate and political adviser to Mullah Omar, the founder of the movement and its first supreme leader. Last month, a special meeting of the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) declined to formally recognise the government, and the new regime's foreign minister was excluded from the official photograph taken during the event.

The OIC did, however, pledge to work with the United Nations to try to unlock hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars in frozen Afghan assets. It also urged Afghanistan's rulers to abide by international obligations regarding the rights of women.

lions of dollars in frozen Afghan assets. It also urged Afghanistan's rulers to abide by international obligations regarding the rights of women.



KABUL: In this handout photograph released by the Afghan Taleban and taken yesterday, shows Taleban Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund speaking next to second deputy prime minister Abdul Salam Hanafi (R) at the former Presidential Place in Kabul. —AFP

“We want it for our public”

‘We are homeless’: Victims of Afghan quakes await aid

QADIS, Afghanistan: Survivors of twin earthquakes in Afghanistan were waiting yesterday for aid to arrive after spending their second night exposed to sub-zero temperatures following tremors that killed at least 22 people and wrecked homes. Rescuers continued to comb through debris in search of survivors from Monday's quakes, which jolted Qadis district in the western province of Badghis, damaging hundreds of buildings.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said two earthquakes hours apart of magnitudes 4.9 and 5.3 rocked the district, a rural area not easily accessible by road. Many survivors spent a second straight night out in the open while some took shelter in tents on Tuesday night, an AFP correspondent reported. Scattered aid has begun to reach the area but the vast majority of victims are still awaiting assistance.

“We lost everything that we had. We are homeless. Everything is buried under the rubble,” Abdul Rahman, a survivor whose house in Qadis was damaged, told AFP late Tuesday. When the tremors

began “everybody started screaming”, he said. “Everyone from every house just ran out from their homes and fled.”

Footage of the earthquake's aftermath showed completely destroyed mud houses, with survivors including children searching the ruins for their belongings. One man, his face covered in mud, could be seen walking through the debris carrying an infant, as clothes, carpets and household items lay scattered around.

“We were buried under the walls... only our heads were out of the mud,” said Khair Mohammad, another resident. “We are alone here. We all live far from each other.” Many fear that rain could make houses even more vulnerable to collapse, exacerbating the crisis.

The Taleban government said up to 1,000 houses had been damaged and that tents, food and medicine were being sent to the victims. The epicentre of the quake was near the city of Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis, less than 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the Turkmenistan border, according to the USGS.

Afghanistan is already in the grip of a humanitarian disaster, worsened by the Taleban takeover of the country in August when Western countries froze international aid and access to assets held abroad. The United Nations has said Afghanistan needs \$5 billion in 2022 to avert the ongoing catastrophe. A devastating drought has compounded the

crisis, with Qadis one of the worst affected areas. Afghanistan is frequently hit by earthquakes, especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which lies near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. Even weak quakes can cause significant damage to poorly built homes and buildings in the impoverished country.

In 2015, more than 380 people were killed in Pakistan and Afghanistan when a 7.5-magnitude earthquake ripped across the two countries, with the bulk of the deaths in Pakistan. —AFP



QADIS: Local residents examine a damaged house at Qadis district in Afghanistan's western Badghis Province, after an earthquake hit the region. At least 26 people were killed and several more wounded after an earthquake hit western. —AFP

Indonesian militant jailed over 2002 Bali bombings

JAKARTA: An Indonesian court sentenced an Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militant to 15 years in prison yesterday for his role in the 2002 bombings that killed more than 200 people on the resort island of Bali. The blasts, which came just over a year after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, ripped through two bars packed with foreign tourists, and remain the deadliest militant assault in Indonesia's history. Zulkarnaen, a high-ranking member of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militant group, was on trial for the Bali bombings as well as several other attacks carried out by a special unit under his command. He “is guilty of committing terrorism and is sentenced to 15 years behind bars”, said the presiding judge at East Jakarta District Court, punishing him for assisting militants, hiding information about attacks and his association with the JI cell.

The 58-year-old Zulkarnaen, whose real name was listed with the court as Arif Sunarso, had been on Indonesia's most-wanted list since the bombings, having evaded authorities for nearly two decades until his arrest in December 2020.

Indonesian prosecutors had said Zulkarnaen set up the special JI cell and described him as a “key asset” for the group because of his experience as a

trainer at militant camps in Afghanistan and the Philippines. During the trial, Zulkarnaen denied involvement in the Bali bombings, but admitted they were carried out by his team. He told the court that JI operatives did not tell him about the attack in advance and that he was not involved in specific planning. But the judges were not convinced. “The fact that he was the head of the team and agreed on a plan in Bali... it could be considered agreeing to the plan,” the presiding judge said.

The court also flagged other attacks by Zulkarnaen's cell during the sentencing, including a 2000 attack on the Philippines embassy, and a series of church bombings. His unit was also tasked with inciting ethnic and religious violence in Sulawesi and Molucca islands, where thousands were killed between 1998 and 2002, according to the police. The prosecution had sought a life sentence, and said it would appeal. Zulkarnaen appeared in court via video link because of coronavirus rules. “It was down from a life sentence to 15 years so my client accepted it,” said his lawyer Kamsi, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

Al-Qaeda links

Zulkarnaen was among the top leaders of JI, which was founded by Indonesian militants exiled in Malaysia in the 1980s. The group grew to include cells across Southeast Asia, and also developed links with international Islamist groups. It has been designated a foreign terrorist group by several nations, including the United States and Australia—which lost 88 nationals in the Bali bombings.

Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), said the “bogus, politically motivated charges” against Sokha should never have been brought to court. “This whole charade has been about preventing anyone from using the ballot box to meaningfully contest Hun Sen's leadership,” Robertson said in a statement.

Sokha was arrested in 2017 and his party dissolved ahead of widely criticised elections the following year—leaving the CPP to canter to victory virtually unopposed. The opposition leader was first detained in a remote prison and then placed under house arrest before his bail conditions were relaxed in November 2019. More than two dozen activists jailed on charges of incitement against the government were released late last year after a court reduced their sentences or granted bail. HRW said at least 60 political prisoners remained in custody as their mass trial resumed in December. —AFP

critics say Hun Sen has wound back democratic freedoms and used the courts to stifle opponents. Phil

Cambodia oppn leader calls for charges to be dropped at trial

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha called yesterday for treason charges against him to be dropped as his trial resumed after two years of delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The case against the 68-year-old has been widely condemned as politically motivated and has dragged on for years.

He stands accused of conspiring with foreign entities to overthrow the government of strongman ruler Hun Sen, according to court documents—charges he vehemently denies. As he left home yesterday, he urged the court to throw out the case. “I have been

Taiwan VP to attend Honduras inauguration

TAIPEI: Taiwan said yesterday its deputy leader will go to the inauguration of Honduran president-elect Xiomara Castro as the island faces the potential loss of yet another diplomatic ally in Latin America.

Castro said during campaigning that she would “immediately open diplomatic and commercial relations with mainland China” if she won.

Last month, neighbouring Nicaragua switched its allegiance to Beijing, leaving Honduras as one of just 14 countries that still diplomatically recognise Taiwan rather than China.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory, to be retaken one day, by force if necessary, and has stepped up efforts to isolate it on the world stage.

Taiwanese Vice President William Lai will lead a 26-member delegation to attend the January 27 inauguration, President Tsai Ing-wen's office said.

Tsai had said she hoped official relations with Honduras would “continue to deepen” when congratulating Castro on her election victory in the November poll.

Lai is scheduled to hold a meeting with Castro “to exchange views on issues of mutual concern” during the six-day visit, according to deputy foreign minister Alexander Yui.

“We have quite good communication and interactions with president-elect Castro herself and her team,” Yui told reporters.

“They understand that ... the various cooperation projects Taiwan has been promoting in Honduras have really benefitted the people,” he said.

Yui said in an interview with Honduran media last year that many promises from Beijing were unfulfilled and left some countries in serious “debt traps.”

‘Only a matter of time’

Latin America has been a key diplomatic battleground for China and Taiwan since the two split in 1949 after a civil war. Beijing has spent decades successfully encouraging Taiwan's diplomatic allies to switch sides, a campaign it ramped up after Tsai's 2016 election.

Since then, China has poached eight of the island's allies, including four in Latin America — Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua.

Chinese vice foreign minister Le Yucheng on Tuesday said it was “only a matter of time” before Taiwan's diplomatic allies “fall to zero,” adding that Nicaragua's move away from the island reflected “a general trend.”

Taipei recently accused Beijing of trying to lure allies away by offering COVID-19 vaccines.

Before November's election, Taiwan warned Honduras against “flashy and false” promises by China, after Castro, of the main opposition Liberty and Refoundation Party, said she planned to switch sides.

The leftist politician, wife of ousted former president Manuel Zelaya, won by a comfortable margin over her right-wing opponent, Nasry Asfura.

Taiwanese media said Lai was planning to transit in the United States en route to Honduras, a move likely to irritate China, which has previously protested US stopovers by President Tsai. —AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022

Zain Kuwait selects Ericsson to upgrade BSS to support 5G standalone charging

Partnership to pave the way for commercial launch of 5G charging services in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait has signed a strategic agreement with Ericsson to upgrade and modernize its existing Business Support Systems (BSS) in order to pave the way for the commercial launch of 5G services. The modernization of the existing BSS will enable Zain Kuwait to address 5G use cases, improve customer experiences, and deliver the full potential of 5G.

Ericsson BSS solutions will provide Zain Kuwait with more flexibility, increased efficiency, and a shortened time-to-market when launching 5G services. Being agile, flexible, and scalable, Ericsson's BSS solutions will also support Zain Kuwait's new 5G business models as well as the new value and capabilities enhanced by 5G.

Ericsson's BSS portfolio, which includes solutions such as Ericsson Charging, Ericsson Catalog Manager, Ericsson Order Care, Ericsson Dynamic Activation, and Ericsson Mediation will enable Zain Kuwait to efficiently capitalize on 5G opportunities

and also help Zain Kuwait to handle data growth and adapt faster to business needs.

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer, said: "Through our strategic partnership with Ericsson on their BSS solutions we are building a digital infrastructure backbone that will soon help us deliver high-performance and reliable 5G services to residents and enterprises across the country. Moreover, with 5G driving digitalization around the world, we look forward to leverage connectivity to play a vital role in the digital transformation journey of Kuwait."

Fadi Pharaon, President of Ericsson Middle East and Africa says: "Our full suite of Ericsson BSS solutions will not only help Zain Kuwait boost business efficiency but also help them discover and implement new 5G business models. As 5G adoption increases in Kuwait, the upgrade of our BSS solutions will provide the building blocks that will support Zain Kuwait to provide nationwide applica-



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Fadi Pharaon sign the agreement

- Ericsson Business Support Systems (BSS) solutions will provide Zain Kuwait with increased efficiency and shortened time-to-market when launching 5G SA charging services
- The modernization of Zain Kuwait's existing BSS will lay the groundwork for its future digitalization journey

tions for advanced industry 4.0 technologies including artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and smart manufacturing in the near future."

As 5G enabled technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning and augmented reality

exponentially change the information and communication technology (ICT) landscape, Ericsson's full suite of end-to-end BSS solutions will help Zain Kuwait realize its digital transformation goals and drive 5G innovations in the region.

Pakistan's economic woes put PM Khan's future in doubt

KARACHI: Housewife Maira Tayyab has considered begging for money to feed her family in inflation-hit Pakistan, while shop owner Mohammad Hanif finds his thoughts turning to crime. They're too proud and honest to act on the impulse, but their woes are shared by millions of Pakistanis whose disgruntlement threatens Prime Minister Imran Khan's chances of re-election next year.

"We cannot beg as we are white-collar people," Tayyab, 40, told AFP in Karachi, a bustling port city that is Pakistan's financial capital. But, she said: "We don't know how we make ends meet."

Inflation hit about 10 percent last year, according to the World Bank. The cooking oil price is up 130 percent since Khan took power and the cost of fuel has risen 45 percent to 145 rupees (\$0.82) a liter in a year. Tayyab's sentiments are echoed by Kursheed Sharif, a 50-year-old mother of five, who unleashes a slew of curses as she describes her family's woes.

"Only death seems an alternative to survival under this government," she told AFP, close to tears, outside her unplastered rental shack. Khan promised to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism when his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party swept to power in 2018.

But his failure to deliver is already being felt at the polls, and last month the PTI was soundly thrashed in provincial elections in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stronghold. "The government boasts about its economic feats, but in reality it has lost its ground and credibility," said Tauseef Ahmed Khan, a rights activist and political commentator.

Inherited a mess

Khan had campaigned on a platform of creating an Islamic welfare state, with efficient taxation on businesses and individuals funding social projects to benefit the poor. Analysts admit he inherited a mess—and the COVID-19 pandemic has not helped—but his policies have done little to change the state of affairs. "Nothing is stable," said Rashid Alam, who works for an international bank in Karachi.

"Increased unemployment, increased inflation... this is the political and economic reality in Pakistan."

The numbers bear him out. Although the economy is forecast to grow four percent in 2022, for the past three years it has remained largely stagnant.

The rupee has also taken a pounding, losing 12 percent to the dollar since July—not helped by a \$5 billion trade deficit, and despite forex remit-



KARACHI: In this picture taken on January 10, 2022, a shopkeeper waits for customers at a market in Karachi. — AFP

tances from a vast diaspora growing nearly 10 percent to \$12.9 billion. Khan argued this week that Pakistan's problems—specifically inflation—were not unique, saying it remains "one of the cheapest countries" in the world. There are some pluses. The manufacturing and service sectors are rebounding as lockdowns ease, the World Bank has said, and better rains this year will boost agriculture.

But the biggest problem facing the economy is servicing nearly \$127 billion in debt. Khan successfully negotiated a \$6 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan package in 2019, but only a third was paid before the tap turned off after the government failed to implement promised reforms—including slashing subsidies on a range of essentials.

Pakistan has had to accept painful conditions, such as increasing petrol and electricity prices. Ahead of an IMF meeting later this month to decide whether to release another tranche, the government has pushed through a mini-budget with new or increased taxes on a range of imports, exports and services—that has drawn the ire of millions. "Can you imagine oil and sugar prices reaching this level?" housewife Sharif lamented.

On the brink of defaulting, Islamabad has recently tapped \$3 billion each from China and Saudi Arabia, and \$2 billion from the United Arab Emirates. "All the loans it has been taking now, from whatever sources, are to pay past loans," said Qaiser Bengali, an independent economist. — AFP

IMF risks losing legitimacy over Argentina loan, says minister

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's economy minister, renegotiating a massive loan with the International Monetary Fund, warned the lender risked losing credibility if it "pushes" the country "into a destabilizing situation." Argentina has received \$44 billion of a \$57 billion loan the lender itself said last month had failed to achieve its objectives of restoring confidence in the country's fiscal viability and fostering economic growth.

Latin America's third-largest economy has been in recession since 2018 and is seeking to renegotiate its down payment plan, with amounts of \$19 billion and \$20 billion due in 2022 and 2023. The country registered GDP growth of 10 percent in 2021 after a drop of 9.9 percent the previous year largely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Guzman, in an interview with AFP, said the repayment calendar was "unsustainable" for a country battling a poverty rate of some 40 percent and one of the highest inflation rates in the world at 50 percent. The government of center-left President Alberto Fernandez, who refused to accept the last

\$13 billion of the IMF's biggest-ever loan arranged in 2018 under his conservative predecessor Mauricio Macri, is seeking a deal that will reduce Argentina's fiscal deficit through economic growth, not reduced public spending.

Here is what the minister said:

Q: How do you see 2022 unfolding? Is there a risk of a default?

A: Argentina has a very high trade surplus, which is at the highest levels we have achieved. It was over \$15 billion in 2021. What is the balance of payments problem facing Argentina in 2022? It is precisely the debt with the IMF. And that is why it is important to refinance it. It is important for the country and also for the IMF.

If the IMF pushes Argentina into a destabilizing situation, it will also have less legitimacy in the future when other countries require multilateralism in order to solve their problems with the international community. If we want to protect each other and protect the workings of multilateralism, it is important to agree on something that is credible. And credible means implementable.

We have a set of economic and social objectives, and of course we want to deliver on our commitments, but we need time. We need to be able to refinance these debts. We need not, for that time, to be burdened with a conditionality that stops recovery and inhibits Argentina's capacity for development in the medium and long term.

Q: Are you expecting support from the United States as the IMF's biggest shareholder? What do

you make of the call by Democratic lawmakers to US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to back a review of IMF surcharges on larger, outstanding loans, especially at a time that countries need additional resources to fight the pandemic?

A: That was an important request to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States to support in the IMF board a review of this policy, which harms countries in crisis that have what is called "exceptional access to the International Monetary Fund." They are charged more when the situation is worse. That... does not help to fulfil the Fund's mission of ensuring global financial stability. Countries with these interest surcharges lose resources with which to carry out the investments needed to improve repayment capacity.

Q: Where does the disagreement lie?

A: There is nearly agreement on where to converge; what is the primary fiscal outcome (before the payment of interest).

The disagreement lies in the speed (of repayment) and this has to do with differing objectives.

In 2021, with an economy growing at 10 percent, the primary fiscal deficit fell by 3.5 percent of GDP. The fiscal deficit in 2021 was between 2.9 percent and 3.0 percent of GDP — the figure will be known on January 20. It is a strong decline. Good fiscal consolidation is taking place.

What the IMF has put forward is that there must be faster fiscal consolidation. But there are two problems: the first is that how they propose it be done would halt economic recovery in the short

Omicron will pinch, not derail US growth: Yellen

WASHINGTON: The latest coronavirus variant will weigh on US economic growth in the months ahead but will not derail it, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen assured the nation's mayors yesterday as they gathered in Washington.

"Yes, Omicron has presented a challenge and will likely impact some of the data in the coming months, but I am confident it will not derail what has been one of the strongest periods of economic growth in a century," Yellen said according to remarks released ahead of her speech.

"None of this was guaranteed. I think it's important we recognize that," she adds in her appearance before the US Conference of Mayors. "There's a very real counterfactual where Omicron did derail our recovery; a scenario where the new variant hurdled our economy backwards towards its state on Inauguration Day 2021" when Joe Biden assumed the presidency.

The Omicron variant has led to a surge in infections and quarantine cases, keeping many Americans away from their jobs. Airlines, for example, have cancelled thousands of flights since Christmas due to staff shortages.

As a result of the COVID-19 surge, economic growth is expected to slow in the first quarter of 2022, economists forecast. But Yellen will insist the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress in March 2021 under the impetus of Biden, just weeks into his White House job, "acted like a vaccine for the American economy, protecting our recovery from the possibility of new variants." — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: Argentine Economy Minister Martin Guzman gestures as he speaks during an interview with AFP in Buenos Aires. — AFP

term. The second is that... it would focus on a smaller expansion of investment in public infrastructure. For us this is critical, because that investment is what Argentina needs most, from a productive point of view. That is where the tension lies.

Q: You have made reference to the difference between a perfect agreement and an acceptable one. Are you getting closer to an acceptable deal?

A: There is no perfect agreement...

What we are looking for is to move forward rather than backward. I'd say we are a little better than we were a week ago, but there is a long road ahead. The frequency (of contacts with the IMF) is not only daily, but several times a day. — AFP

Business

British inflation hits decades high in cost of living squeeze

Cost of living forecast to soar even higher in April owing to tax hike

LONDON: British annual inflation accelerated to a near 30-year high in December, official data showed yesterday, stoking fears over a cost of living squeeze as wages fail to keep pace.

Economies worldwide are battling decades-high inflation that is forcing central banks to lift interest rates, including the Bank of England (BoE) which last month raised its key borrowing cost for the first time in more than three years. The UK's inflation rate hit 5.4 percent last month, rising further above target on price gains for clothing, domestic energy, food and furniture, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The BoE, whose chief task is to keep inflation close to a 2.0-percent target, is now expected to hike again at its next meeting in February amid easing concerns over economic fallout from the Omicron coronavirus variant. The pound yesterday hit a 22-month peak versus the euro on increased hopes of another rate rise. Finance Minister Rishi Sunak insisted the Conservative government understood the cost of living squeeze.

However, the main opposition Labour Party argued that families would be rocked by "substantial" tax rises and "huge" increases in energy bills.

'Cost of living squeeze'

The cost of living in Britain is forecast to soar even higher in April owing to a tax hike and further planned increases to domestic energy bills, according to analysts.

National insurance, paid by workers and employ-

ers, is being lifted to help fund social care for the elderly. Analysts expect more painful tax increases to foot the vast bill for COVID.

In addition, electricity and gas prices are set to rocket higher when the UK government shortly lifts a cap on energy bills amid record-breaking wholesale costs. "With consumer prices rising at their fastest rate for three decades and wage growth slowing, Britons are being squeezed ever harder by the cost of living," said Jay Mawji, head of trading provider IX Prime.

UK annual inflation was last higher in March 1992 when it had stood at 7.1 percent. The rate had already forged a decade-high of 5.1 percent in November. "The inflation rate rose again at the end of the year and has not been higher for almost 30 years," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. "Food prices again grew strongly while increases in furniture and clothing also pushed up annual inflation."

Consumers and businesses are struggling with surging costs, hit also by ongoing pandemic turmoil and supply chain problems.

At the same time, real wages in November fell on the year for the first time since mid-2020 following a spike to inflation, official data showed Tuesday.

Rate hike 'inevitable'

"More pain lies ahead in the form of tax rises in April and a likely 50-percent jump in energy bills," added Mawji. The BoE has in December raised its key borrowing cost to 0.25 percent from a record-



LONDON: Food prices grew strongly during the year, while increases in furniture and clothing also pushed up annual UK inflation. — AFP

low level of 0.1 percent, as it attempted to combat inflation.

Capital Economics economist Paul Dales forecast the BoE would hike rates to 0.5 percent next month. Equity trader Marc Kimsey, at stockbroker

Frederick & Oliver, agreed that a February rate hike would now be "inevitable". Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey is set to be grilled over rocketing inflation at a parliamentary committee later Wednesday. — AFP



NEW YORK: LaGuardia Airport is seen in the background of the Chrysler Building from the 86th floor observatory of the Empire State Building in New York on Tuesday. — AFP

AT&T, Verizon agree to delay 5G deployment at some airports

NEW YORK: AT&T and Verizon agreed Tuesday to a partial delay in activating their 5G networks to allay airline safety concerns but several major international carriers said they were canceling or amending some US services.

Telecom giants spent tens of billions of dollars to obtain 5G licenses last year but aviation industry groups have raised concerns about possible interference with airplanes' radio altimeters—which can operate at the same frequencies—particularly in bad weather.

Japan's ANA and Japan Airlines were among the major airlines to announce flight cancellations on concerns over the 5G rollout, which had been scheduled for yesterday. "The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has indicated that radio waves from the 5G wireless service may interfere with aircraft altimeters," ANA said in a statement.

"As a result, Boeing has announced flight restrictions on all airlines operating the Boeing 777 aircraft, and we have cancelled or changed the aircraft

for some flights to/from the US based on the announcement by Boeing."

Emirates, the biggest 777 operator, said it had suspended flights to nine US destinations, including San Francisco, Chicago and Newark, because of "operational concerns" over the 5G rollout. "We are working closely with aircraft manufacturers and the relevant authorities to alleviate operational concerns, and we hope to resume our US services as soon as possible," Emirates said in a statement late Tuesday. Air India said it was canceling some US flights and changing aircraft types.

Warnings of disruption

Delta also warned it was "planning for the possibility of weather-related cancellations caused by the deployment of new 5G service in the vicinity of dozens of US airports, starting as early as Wednesday." The chief executives of the largest airlines in the United States have warned of a "catastrophic disruption" to travel and shipping operations if the 5G rollout went ahead as planned.

AT&T described its latest delay as voluntary and temporary, with a spokesperson saying it was working with the airline industry and the FAA "to provide further information about our 5G deployment, since they have not utilized the two years they've had to responsibly plan for this deployment." "We are launching our advanced 5G services everywhere else as planned with the temporary exception of this limited number of towers." —AFP

Bobby Kotick: Activision CEO faces grim future

WASHINGTON: Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick built a video game empire with flagship titles like "World of Warcraft", but he could lose control of it after a whopping Microsoft buyout deal announced Tuesday.

As Activision has been ensnared in allegations that the firm discriminated against women employees, he has weathered calls to step down from some of his workers and critics. But once the \$69 billion deal is finalized by mid-2023, he is expected to depart, the Wall Street Journal reports.

The running scandal — which has prompted ugly headlines, vows of company reform and an apology from Kotick himself — follows decades of success in business. Legend has it that part of Kotick's destiny was laid out by Apple founder and tech legend Steve Jobs one day in 1983.

Jobs advised him to leave the University of Michigan, where he was an art student, to become an entrepreneur, Kotick has said. It was the start of a life in business for the native of Long Island, a suburb of New York City, who while still in high school made cash by running parties at night clubs for his fellow teenagers.

The young man convinced casino magnate Steve



SUN VALLEY, US: In this file photo taken on July 10, 2019, Bobby Kotick, chief executive officer of Activision Blizzard, attends the annual Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference, in Sun Valley, Idaho. — AFP

Wynn to write him a check to start developing a cheap graphical interface for Apple, in partnership with a friend, Howard Marks, the project's programmer. An old-fashioned entrepreneur, Kotick differs from many big names in computing and video games, more interested in business than in the technology.

According to Forbes, he even believed in the 1980s that playing video games was a waste of time. After trying to buy the microcomputer giant Commodore in 1987, he managed to get his hands on Activision, on the verge of bankruptcy, in 1991, for a pittance. He restructured the company, raised new money and changed its strategy. —AFP

Millionaires make unusual plea: 'Tax us now'

PARIS: More than 100 millionaires made an unusual plea yesterday: "Tax us now". Their appeal came as a study backed by wealthy individuals and non-profits found that a wealth tax on the world's richest people could raise \$2.52 trillion per year-enough to pay for COVID vaccines for everyone and pull 2.3 billion people out of poverty.

In an open letter to the World Economic Forum's online Davos meeting, 102 millionaires, including Disney heiress Abigail Disney, said the current tax system is unfair and "deliberately designed to make the rich richer". "The world-every country in it-must demand the rich pay their fair share," the letter says. "Tax us, the rich, and tax us now."

Their plea follows a report by global charity Oxfam this week which said that the world's 10 wealthiest men doubled their fortunes to \$1.5 trillion during the first two years of the pandemic while inequality and poverty soared. "As millionaires, we know that the current tax system is not fair," says the letter circulated by groups including Patriotic Millionaires, Millionaires for Humanity, Tax me Now, and Oxfam.

"Most of us can say that, while the world has gone through an immense amount of suffering in the last two years, we have actually seen our wealth rise during the pandemic-yet few if any of us can honestly say that we pay our fair share in taxes."

The signatories include wealthy men and women from the United States, Canada, Germany, Britain, Denmark, Norway, Austria, the Netherlands and Iran. The Patriotic Millionaires took part in a the wealth tax study with a network of non-profits and social movements, including Fight for Inequality Alliance, Oxfam and the US-based Institute for Policy Studies think tank.

In addition to funding vaccines worldwide and alleviating poverty, the tax would be enough to provide universal health care and social protection to

3.6 billion people in low- and middle-income countries, the group said. The tax would be set at two percent for those worth over \$5 million, three percent for over \$50 million and five percent for over \$1 billion.

'Realistic' tax

The group said a steeper progressive tax, which includes a 10 percent levy on billionaires, would raise \$3.62 trillion a year. The actual levels of taxation would be country specific. Jenny Ricks, global convener of the Fight Inequality Alliance, told AFP the group chose a lower progressive tax that was on the "realistic side".

A plan to tax the wealth of some 700 American billionaires was floated by Democrats in the US Congress last year, but it was cut from President Joe Biden's \$1.75 trillion social spending and climate change program. Yesterday's tax proposal was made as global government and business leaders



take part in the virtual Davos meeting this week. The in-person gathering was postponed due to the spread of the Omicron variant.

"There is no defending a system that endlessly inflates the wealth of the world's richest people while condemning billions to easily preventable poverty," Patriotic Millionaires chairman Morris Pearl, a former BlackRock investment firm managing director, said in a statement. "We need deep, systemic change, and that starts with taxing rich people like me," Morris said. —AFP

Europe stocks climb despite rate-hike fears; oil extends rally

LONDON: Europe's stock markets rose yesterday, with easing Omicron virus concerns eclipsing fresh fears of monetary policy tightening in both Britain and the eurozone as the world battles rocketing inflation, dealers said.

World oil prices zoomed to more seven-year peaks on renewed unrest in the crude-rich Middle East, and on expectations of resurgent post-pandemic demand. London stocks won 0.3 percent around midday as official data showed UK inflation hit 5.4 percent in December.

That sparked speculation of another Bank of England interest rate hike in February and briefly pushed the pound to a 22-month euro peak. Paris gained 0.7 percent and Frankfurt added 0.4 percent in early afternoon eurozone deals. Yields for 10-year German bonds rose above zero percent for the first time since May 2019, as surging inflation also prompted fears of monetary tightening in the eurozone.

'Slightly more optimistic'

Despite the prospect of more interest rate hikes, there remains a broad belief that the global recovery is still on track as economies reopen and fears over the less-severe Omicron coronavirus variant recede. "We have to consider that markets have been extremely worried about the potential for further lockdowns/restrictions resulting from the recent Omicron variant," XTB analyst Walid Koudmani told AFP.

"Since that has proven to be a less significant

concern than previously expected, markets are now slightly more optimistic as many economies are expected to extend the post-pandemic recovery." In contrast, Asian equity markets were hit by growing fears about the US Federal Reserve's plans to fight surging inflation by ramping up interest rates, following a hefty sell-off on Wall Street.

A rise in prices since early 2021 has forced central banks around the world to start winding back the colossal financial support put in place at the start of the pandemic, with many warning that failure to act could see them run out of control. The main focus is now on the Fed — the central bank of the world's biggest economy — which has so far refrained from lifting rates to bring US inflation down from four-decade highs. Officials are currently reining in their massive bond-buying program and aim to hike borrowing costs in March. Some commentators predict a 50 basis-point rise — which would be the first that big since 2000 — having initially estimated 25 points. —AFP



TOKYO: A pedestrian walks in front of an electronic quotation board displaying the closing share price of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

Business

Huawei Watch GT Runner experiencing with Kuwait's athlete in collaboration with KAF

Sports smartwatch is also a personal training instructor



KUWAIT: Under the patronage and support of the President of the Kuwait Athletics Federation, Sayar Saleh Al-Anizi and Dr Manea Mahdi Al-Ajmi, the Assistant General Secretary of Kuwait Athletics Federation, as guests of honors, Huawei Consumer BG held an entrancing activity for its upcoming product; Huawei Watch GT Runner at the Kuwait Athletics Federation Sports Stadium. The Huawei Watch GT Runner, the latest smartwatch that is not only the wearer's smart assistant, but also the personal training instructor. Numerous athletic figures (especially mid-range and long-range runners) were invited to test out the sporty watch on track!

The event was engaging numerous of Athletes along-with other dignitaries from the Kuwait Athletics Federation.

Sayar Saleh Al-Anizi, the president of the Kuwait Athletics Federation: "On my behalf and on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Athletics Federation, I am pleased to welcome you, thanking and appreciating your kind initiative. We hope that this initiative will serve as a prelude to further cooperation between your company and Kuwait Athletics Federation, in order to serve the Kuwaiti Federation's mission to advancement and rise of the sport of athletics. Once again, thank you for your kind gesture."

Jason Jiang, General Manager of Consumer Business Group in Kuwait: "By leveraging Huawei's strong R&D capabilities, we have introduced a series of innovative products with unique features



and benefits to our valued customers. Huawei will continue its commitment to developing innovative and meaningful products and services that truly impact people's lives in a positive way."

Huawei Watch GT Runner is compatible with Huawei devices as well as Android and iOS devices. The Huawei Watch GT Runner will be available in Kuwait on Huawei's official website and in some of their partner suppliers' stores.

Built for sports

The Huawei Watch GT Runner is a professional watch designed for sports. Featuring the new



Huawei TruSeen 5.0+ heart rate monitoring technology, it offers a newly developed heart rate module, 8 PIDs in circular order, and enhanced dynamic heart rate monitoring. More signal input, and generally improved accuracy in heart rate monitoring.

Huawei Watch GT Runner focuses on the circle of running fans and gains insight into in-depth operating data. While ensuring that the watch body is light and wear-resistant, it also gives the watch an artistic design. Inspired by the supercar's air intake grid, the Huawei HGT Runner offers a sleek design that represents speed and passion. Furthermore, the hollow lug increases the area of contact with air when running, so that it is sweat-resistant and breathable, resulting in a more comfortable wearing experience.

Up to 2 weeks long battery life

Huawei Watch GT Runner inherits the powerful battery life of Huawei's wearable family, delivering 14-day1 battery life in smart mode under typical usage scenarios and offers 8-day of long battery life in heavy usage scenario.

All-day health management

The Huawei Watch GT Runner provides continuous, real-time, and precise SpO2 (Blood Oxygen Saturation), sleep and stress monitoring features for a comprehensive health management.

The Huawei Watch GT Runner sports the Huawei TruSleep 2.0 sleep monitoring technology which

can perform sleep stage monitoring, real-time heart rate monitoring, sleep breathing monitoring, and provide you with assessment of sleep quality without disturbing your sleep. The Huawei Watch GT Runner is also a stress management assistant. This sports watch monitors your stress 24/7 and it will even notify you if your stress levels are high and even help you out with breathing guidance to help relieve some of the stress off you.

The new Healthy Living Shamrock has added many small features to better-fit users' daily health needs. Through personalized settings, users can receive regular reminders like Health challenges, daily water intake, daily mindfulness, early sleep reminder, exercise volume, and stay positive are all small things related to your health.

Convenient life assistant features

The Huawei Watch GT Runner supports Bluetooth calls, which enables users to make and receive calls via Bluetooth connection right from their wrist. Some of us like to listen to music when running, to help pump and get us into the rhythmic vibe, the Huawei Watch GT Runner comes with a large storage space which can store up to 500 songs, so that more of your favorite songs can be saved and listened to during workouts. In addition, you can receive, read and reply to SMS messages right from your wrist thanks to the convenient message notifications aboard the Huawei Watch GT Runner.

German bond yields top 0% for first time since May 2019

BERLIN: Yields for 10-year German bonds jumped into positive territory yesterday for the first time since May 2019 as surging inflation in the eurozone prompted fears of monetary tightening.

At 0715 GMT, Bund yields passed zero for the first time since the European Central bank launched a stimulus program in 2019 to tackle the risk of a recession in the eurozone.

A bond generates a negative yield when investors are willing to pay more for it than the actual sum they are investing in it plus the returns it is offering. German government 10-year bonds are seen as a safe haven for investors to turn to in times of instability.

The benchmark figure touched minus 0.91 percent in March 2020 when the coronavirus was taking hold in Europe, as investors were willing to take a loss in exchange for the relative safety offered by the government bond. The further relaxation of the ECB's policy to prop up the economy kept yields deep in negative territory until recently.

But unusually high inflation in recent months has encouraged central banks everywhere to tighten their response, with the ECB announcing a "step-by-step" reduction to its asset-purchasing program. The massive bond buying program is the ECB's main crisis-fighting tool, aimed at keeping borrowing costs low to stoke economic growth.

Inflation in the eurozone reached a record five percent in December, its highest value since records began in January 1997. But unlike in the United States, where expectations are mounting that the Federal Reserve will hike rates multiple times this year, the ECB's guidance still points towards its first rises in 2023 at the earliest.

The Frankfurt-based institution has long held its interest rates at historic lows, including a negative overnight deposit rate, which charges banks to park their money at the ECB.

Expectations of monetary tightening in the US have sent yields for US bonds, known as Treasuries, rocketing towards two percent. So long as ECB policymakers stuck to their current approach, yields for German bonds should only track the upwards trend taken by Treasuries with "limited enthusiasm", said LBBW analyst Elmar Voelker. —AFP

Gulf Bank to announce winner of its KD 1.5m prize next Saturday

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment to providing its customers with exceptionally unique services and periodic draws, Gulf Bank will be conducting its annual Al-Danah grand draw prize of the year 2021. As part of the draw, Gulf Bank will be announcing the lucky winner of the grand prize, worth a total amount of KD 1.5 million, on Saturday, January 22.

The draw will be held under the supervision, and in the presence, of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the international consulting company, Ernst & Young.

In keeping with the latest health requirements and in light of the increase of COVID-19 cases, the Bank has also decided to conduct this year's draw as part of a live virtual event, taking place on Saturday at 7 pm on Al-Rai TV and 360 FM Radio. In addition, the event will be aired across the Bank's various social media platforms.

Two millionaires every year

The Al-Danah account's newest slogan is 'Al-

'Throwaway economy' foiling climate goals

PARIS: Countries are neglecting the massive impact of the "throwaway" economy on planet-warming emissions, according to research published yesterday that calculated more than half a trillion tonnes of virgin materials have been consumed since the 2015 Paris climate deal.

From clothing to food, planes to buildings, research by the organisation Circle Economy estimates that 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are linked to the manufacturing and use of products.

But in its annual report on the state of the world's use of materials, researchers said national climate pledges to reduce emissions focus narrowly on fossil fuel use and ignore the mounting global appetite for stuff. Matthew Fraser, head of research at Circle Economy, said the report aimed to look beyond just fossil fuel use and the transition to green energy and ask about the emissions implications of using fewer resources.

"What if we reimagine our relationship with stuff, what would that bring us? Actually, it is quite significant," he told AFP. The report estimates that if the economy were more circular, reducing resource extraction and consumption by 28 percent, then the world could meet the Paris warming target of 1.5

Danah Enriches You' which represents the bank's draw prize scheme that was updated in 2021. The bank has updated its draw prizes with a remarkable increase in the semiannual draw prize, now KD 1 million making it the second largest prize following the annual grand draw prize of KD 1.5 million. The new draw prize scheme makes Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account one of the most rewarding savings accounts of the year, granting two people the opportunities of a lifetime: to become millionaires!

On this occasion, the General Manager of consumer banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are always pleased to provide our customers with an exceptional and noteworthy banking experience that complements our societal role of encouraging a culture of savings; by rewarding savers with monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual draws, we hope to motivate our customers and reinforce their saving habits, encouraging others to do the same. This is why the Bank has decided to increase the number of Al-Danah Millionaires to two millionaires per year."

He added: "At Gulf Bank, we are keen to provide the best services and products to our esteemed customers, as we strive to continuously increase our customer satisfaction levels. Customer satisfaction was our main motivation for adjusting the new draw structure for the Al-Danah account, and continues

degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

But only a third of nations' climate pledges mention the circular economy as part of their emissions goals, the report said. It warns that humanity is consuming 70 percent more virgin materials than the world can safely replenish.

Economic 'metabolism'

The analysis looks at global material flows based on national import and export figures and translates them into estimates of materials used — and reused. It calculates annual resource use has grown from 89.8 billion tonnes in 2016 to more than 100 billion tonnes in 2019 and estimated it at 101.4 billion last year. Circle Economy found that almost all of the materials extracted go to waste, with just 8.6 percent of materials recycled in 2020, what they call the circularity gap.

That is an even lower proportion than in 2018, when reused materials were 9.1 percent of the total, as the global demand for more things surges.

"Even though we are getting more efficient with how we use materials — computers are getting smaller, cars are becoming lighter, recycling is getting better — these micro gains in efficiency just aren't stacking up relative to the total increasing demand," said Fraser.

The report identified a number of practices across sectors from food production to transportation that it said could help rein in the ever-expanding use of virgin materials. Fraser said the model that enables people in richer countries to buy products from all over the world to be delivered within

to be the main driving factor behind our periodic launches of various products and services that are characterized by growth, simplicity and innovation, as we continue to exceed the requirements and needs of our customers. Our team continues to pay close attention to the smallest of details in keeping with developments in the local and international banking market as we continue to consolidate Gulf Bank's leading position as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

Al-Qattan continued, "We are waiting for our customers next Saturday to participate in this exceptional annual event that will be aired on Al-Rai TV, 360 FM Radio, and the bank's social media channels, and we are wishing all our Al-Danah account holders the best of luck in our upcoming draws." Exclusive Loyalty Program Increases Your Chances of Winning!

As part of Gulf Bank's commitment to reward customers for their loyalty, the AlDanah account provides account holders with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2021 have been transferred to the 2022 draws, and this will be repeated in 2023 onwards. Terms and conditions apply.



Researchers said national climate pledges to reduce emissions focus narrowly on fossil fuel use and ignore the mounting global appetite for stuff. —AFP

hours and days "will inevitably have to change".

The report also weighed strategies like enabling electrical goods — which contain critical raw materials including gold, silver and cobalt — to be repaired, redesigning items to be easier to recycle, restricting single-use plastics and renting items like cars rather than buying them.

One sector it identified as having a significant opportunity to reduce its materials footprint was buildings and construction, where Fraser said current practices were far from sustainable. — AFP

Business

NBK unleashes the potential of the Kuwaiti youth in 'Tamakan' program

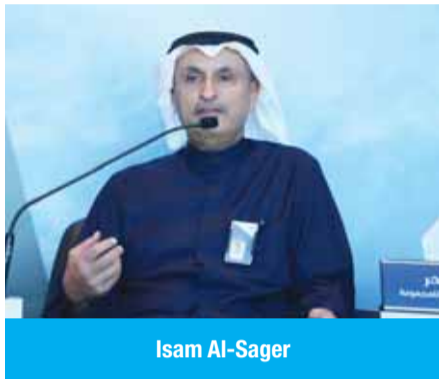
The third edition of the program launched under the bank's strategic sponsorship



NBK Executive Management during a panel discussion with the trainees.



Fresh Kuwaiti university graduates attending the new edition of "Tamakan" training program



Isam Al-Sager



Shaikha Al-Bahar



Salah Al-Fulaij



Sulaiman Al-Marzouq



Faisal A Al-Hamad

KUWAIT: The new edition of "Tamakan" training program for fresh Kuwaiti university graduates offered by Creative Confidence Consulting Company was launched with the strategic sponsorship of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) for the third consecutive year.

In this hands-on training experience, NBK hosts 34 trainees at different training locations at its headquarters for three months, starting from 18 January until 27 March 2022, during which the bank provides them with courses aimed to develop their skills and qualify them to the labor market.

The program was launched in a ceremony held at NBK's headquarters following all precautionary and social distancing measures. This included holding a panel discussion with the trainees in the presence of the bank's executive management, in line of their commitment to support all initiatives aiming to empower and develop the Kuwaiti youth and preparing them to be future leaders.

The panel discussion was headed by Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO, Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Group Deputy CEO, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Faisal A Al-Hamad, Chief Executive Officer - Global Wealth Management at National Bank of Kuwait, as well as Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources, and Mohammed Al-Othman, GM - Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait.

Investing into the future

On the sidelines of the panel discussion held at the program's launch, NBK Group CEO, Isam Al-Sager noted that sponsoring Tamakan program comes in line with NBK's unshakable commitment towards the youth and supporting them in their career considering that a real investment into the future.

NBK always places the youth as a top priority to ensure achieving a prosperous future for Kuwait, he added. Al-Sager highlighted that these and other initiatives come in line with NBK's commitment to its social responsibility and its role in achieving sustainable development, which depends on preparing an innovative, hardworking generation that is able to take responsibility.

He stressed that, as the largest Kuwaiti private sector institution, NBK always shows a role model in delivering on its social role and responsibility by con-

tributing to qualification of young national cadres.

"The remarkable success achieved by the program over the past years was a great driver to continue our sponsorship of its new version. Therefore, I ask the trainees to show perseverance to realize their future goals, which are only attainable through dedicated efforts and hard work," he concluded.

The quality of education

On her part, Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Group Deputy CEO, emphasized that investing in the youth is investing in a better future, therefore, the quality of education should be our top priority so that we can build a better future for our country. Al-Bahar called on the government to work hard to develop the entire educational system, including the various stages of the educational process, in addition to the human factor represented in educational cadres.

"The rapid and changing development we are witnessing in all sectors and different industries by reliance on technology requires us to develop the human capital to keep pace with these developments to achieve sustainable growth, as the absence of well-qualified cadres means the inability to manage the country's wealth in the future," she explained.

Al-Bahar mentioned that the coronavirus pandemic showed the importance of digitization, as well as the urgent need to qualify the youth for a rapidly advancing and changing future, stressing the need to make a radical change in education to keep pace with what the labor market requirements, which is now looking for competent and experienced cadres in the areas of advanced technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and robotic systems and programming.

Al-Bahar urged the youth to work hard to get prepared for the future to be active contributors in the development of Kuwait.

Having the passion

From his side, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK-Kuwait advised the youth to raise the ceiling of their ambitions and have the passion to achieve their desired career development. He pointed out that developing personal skills and perseverance in knowledge acquisition and learning are critical factors for a successful career path and qualification for the highest leadership positions in the future.

time needed to charge much larger cells. But the tech works better for mopeds, said Gogoro founder and chief executive Horace Luke, as the batteries and stations need not be so large.

"Instead of the four-wheeler infrastructure that needs to be built, our system is really like a vending machine that goes into different locations based on where the consumer goes and where the consumer needs energy," he said. The facilities already outnumber petrol stations in four major Taiwanese cities, the company said, and vice-president Alan Pan told a news conference last week that the firm's goal for 2022 was to "surpass the number of petrol stations island-wide".

With more than 240 million battery swaps since 2015, Gogoro says it has kept about 360,000 tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. "We are working on solutions that... create a new industry as the world looks now to sustainability and how to curb global warming and climate change," Luke told AFP in an interview. According to government sales figures, e-bikes make up 21 percent of all motorbikes in Taiwan, with sales of traditional petrol models in double-digit decline annually.

India, China, Indonesia

Luke said that, through local partnerships, Gogoro was moving to expand into the world's largest motorbike markets: China, India and Indonesia—all countries with smog-choked cities. The company has teamed up with top players in the industry, including Hero MotoCorp in India, the world's biggest motorcycle maker, China's world-leading e-bike maker Yadea and, most recently, Indonesian ride-hailing firm Gojek. In China its battery-swapping system was launched in October in the city of Hangzhou, with plans to expand to other places this year. The push could benefit from major government incentives for e-vehicles in the giant Asian countries.

Last year, India rolled out \$3.5 billion in incentives for the auto sector to boost production of

Al-Fulaij stressed that to hold a leadership position at NBK, it took a long journey and years of dedicated efforts, giving, and unwavering pursuit of investing in one's self, noting that success requires striving for development and unquenchable eagerness for learning and accomplishment.

Hard work and dedication

Speaking on this occasion, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK-Kuwait said that the government sector has an issue in fair job process, which creates much frustration for the youth aspiring for a successful career.

Hard work and dedication are the keys to development in the private sector, which provides proper guidance to enhance personal skills and helps identify the strengths and weaknesses for personal skills development, he elaborated.

Al-Marzouq emphasized that the new generation has much better potentials and capabilities than previous generations, as we are now living in a more developed and open era, and all a successful person needs is to develop a strategic plan to manage their strengths and highlight their skills.

Investing in oneself

In his speech, Faisal A Al-Hamad, Chief Executive Officer - Global Wealth Management at National Bank of Kuwait advised the Kuwaiti youth of the necessity of investing in themselves, early planning for the future, and focusing on joining an encouraging work environment that contributes to learning and development. Al-Hamad called on the youth to search for an ideal that stimulates the potential energies and helps in development and thinking, which is pivotal in developing one's personality in his career. He advised the youth to be flexible, innovative and actively pursue knowledge in order to keep pace with this massive transformation taking place in the labor market.

Potential energies

Tamakan program requires full-time commitment being a full-time job experience; the program aims to develop the personal skills needed to become compelling candidates for employment in addition to motivating Kuwaiti youth to explore the potentials and energies within them, and unleashing the creativity of

young cadres. The program adopts the blended learning methodology, and focuses on many themes and workshops about creativity and innovation, design thinking, business model design, career exploration and innovative de-risking solutions.

Remarkable interest

Given the great success of the program's first two editions, there was a remarkable interest in joining the program, with 550 applicants and 150 interviews, following which the number of trainees was increased to 34 trainees. The program also witnessed developing the methodology and design of educational materials by hosting international experts and holding workshops to stimulate the creative energies of the trainees.

Enhancing the skills

On the sidelines of the program launch event, Rana Al-Rasheed, Strategy Director at Creative Confidence expressed her pleasure with NBK's sponsorship of Tamakan program for the third year in a row, noting that for 10 weeks, the program will qualify trainees and enhance their skills to fit in the real life job market, as it constitutes an innovative training experience for Kuwaiti graduates who need support to face the challenges of employment or setting up their own business, by developing required skills as well as providing experience.

Creative Confidence is a Kuwaiti consulting and training company specializing in stimulating innovation and creativity and providing practical training experiences for Kuwaiti graduates with the aim of developing young Kuwaiti cadres.

A major supporter

At the end of the reception ceremony, the trainees extended their thanks to National Bank of Kuwait for sponsoring the program and providing its long-standing expertise to develop their skills and qualify them for the labor market in a professional way, benefiting from the bank's highly professional organizational approach. It is worth mentioning that NBK sponsors various social initiatives serving Kuwait National Development Plan, including empowering youth and developing education, in line with its belief that the youth are Kuwait's most valuable resource, and the cornerstone for the country's development.

'Game changer' e-moped batteries spread from Taiwan across Asia

TAIPEI: Every day, Aiden Lee joins the hundreds of thousands of people getting around Taipei on two wheels. But when most of his fellow riders head to a petrol pump to refuel, he takes his e-motorbike to one of Taiwan's increasingly commonplace battery-swapping stations—tech its creators say could supercharge the shift from fossil fuels. "Honestly, if it weren't for battery swapping—which by the way is even faster than filling up at a petrol station—I wouldn't use an electric bike," the marketing executive said. "I don't think I have the time to wait for the battery to charge."

Lee has used the rechargeable batteries provided by Taiwanese startup Gogoro since 2015, putting him among the 450,000 subscribers who swap an average of 330,000 batteries each day, according to company figures. He says it costs about 10 percent more than buying petrol each month. Now eyeing regional expansion and a New York listing, Gogoro has more than 2,300 stations outside convenience stores or in car parks across Taiwan, where e-moped riders stop to exchange depleted batteries for freshly charged cells.

Quick swap

Previous attempts to roll out battery swaps have proved tricky, especially for electric cars. Companies in China, the United States and Israel have struggled to provide easy access to swappable batteries for e-cars, in part because of the high cost of building charging facilities and the



Horace Luke, founder and chief executive officer of Gogoro - a Taiwanese company that developed a battery-swapping refueling platform for urban electric two-wheel scooters, mopeds and motorcycles during an interview at the company's headquarters in Taipei. —AFP

electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, while Indonesia has offered tax perks for manufacturers, transport companies and consumers. Gogoro plans to list on the Nasdaq in the first quarter of this year through a merger with a special purpose acquisition company, establishing an entity valued at \$2.35 billion. Global sales of electric motorbikes, scooters and mopeds are estimated to have topped 25 million units in 2020, or 35 percent of total sales of two-wheeled vehicles, according to BloombergNEF.

And market research firm Guidehouse Insights says "battery swapping has become a legitimate technology platform solution that is being exported to original equipment manufacturers in foreign markets". Countries in Southeast Asia "with strong two-wheeler cultures, high urban density rates, supportive policy frameworks for EVs, and a strong desire to reduce urban air pollution will likely be next in line", it said in a report. Luke added: "I think battery swapping was a real game changer and is a real game changer." —AFP

Activision Blizzard: Troubled powerhouse in gaming world

NEW YORK: Activision Blizzard is a star developer of gaming hits like "Call of Duty", but the firm has been roiled by serious sex discrimination allegations that have led to lawsuits, firings and official scrutiny. Microsoft's buyout deal values the company at a whopping \$69 billion, despite the scandal that has put an unflattering spotlight on the "Candy Crush" maker's leadership and company culture.

Founded in 1979 by former Atari programmers unhappy with their pay, Activision had more than \$8 billion in sales in 2020. It relies on a few major franchises, namely "World of Warcraft", a multiplayer game that is still very popular almost 30 years after its launch, the first-person shooter "Call of Duty" and the "Candy Crush" puzzle game. Yet since last year, the company has been hit by a major equality scandal. Trouble began to surface with the launch, in late July, of a lawsuit by the state of California, which reported sexual harassment and discrimination against women, who represent about 20 percent of the firm's employees. A nearly all white and male suite of executives, pay disparities and other markers of gender disparity have turned up in regulators' allegations.

The documents also report claims of a "frat boy" party culture of heavy drinking in which women workers were groped, had to fend off sexual advances and faced retaliation if they spoke up. "Male employees proudly come into work hungover, play video games for long periods of time during work while delegating their responsibilities to female employees, engage in banter about their sexual encounters, talk openly about female bodies, and joke about rape," the California state suit says. Activision Blizzard has reached an agreement with a US federal discrimination watchdog to create an \$18 million fund to settle claims alleging sexual harassment and gender discrimination. —AFP



Photos show excavations around the Al-Nuri mosque in the old town of Iraq's northern city Mosul, at the site heavily damaged by Islamic State (IS) group fighters in the 2017 battle for the city. Under the Al-Nuri Mosque, one of the landmarks of the city of Mosul in Iraq, the floors of an ancient chapel dating back to the twelfth century were discovered, which is an important archaeological discovery and the fruit of excavations that began four months ago, two officials said. —AFP photos



12TH CENTURY PRAYER ROOM FOUND UNDER MOSQUE IN IRAQ'S MOSUL



The foundations of a prayer hall from the 12th century have been discovered under the Al-Nuri mosque - where the Islamic State group once proclaimed their "caliphate" - in Iraq's Mosul, site managers said Tuesday. The mosque, which along with its iconic leaning minaret was severely damaged by IS during the battle to dislodge the jihadists from Mosul in 2017, has been undergoing reconstruction. The prayer room was found during excavation underneath the mosque, according to Khairiddine Nasser, director of

the department of antiquities and heritage in Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital.

Four additional rooms for the performance of ablutions were also discovered under the prayer room, Nasser said. Those rooms "are interconnected and built of stone and plaster". The discovery allows for "better knowledge of the surface of Al-Nuri mosque and this ancient prayer room, but also the ablution basins" found there. Each ablution room measures three meters in height and 3.5 meters in width, Nasser said. "They

are about six meters underground," he added.

He said the discovery "amplifies the importance of this historical and archaeological site". The excavation was carried out by his department, with support from UNESCO and funding from the United Arab Emirates. "The foundations of the old prayer hall are more extensive than those of the prayer hall built in the 1940s", he added. The mosque was constructed in 1172, but much of it was destroyed and reconstructed in 1942, with the exception of its

minaret, which endured.

UNESCO raised more than \$100 million in 2019 as part of its initiative to "revive the spirit of Mosul". About half of the funds were pledged by the UAE. Reconstruction work is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi made his sole public appearance as IS chief at the mosque in the Summer of 2014, when he proclaimed the establishment of a "caliphate" after a lightning offensive saw the jihadists capture a third of Iraq. —AFP

92-YEAR-OLD MALAWIAN MUSIC LEGEND FINDS FAME ON TIKTOK

At 92, Giddes Chalamanda has no idea what Tik Tok is. He doesn't even own a smartphone. And yet the Malawian music legend has become a social media star, with his song "Linny Hoo" garnering over 80 million views on the video-sharing platform and spawning mashups and remixes from South Africa to the Philippines. "They come and show me the videos on their phones, but I have no idea how it works," Chalamanda told AFP at his home on the edge of a macadamia plantation, about 20 kilometers from Malawi's main city Lilongwe.

"But I love the fact that people are enjoying themselves and that my talent is getting the right attention," he said, speaking in Chewa. Despite his grey hair and slight stoop, the nonagenarian singer and guitarist, who has been a constant presence on the Malawian music scene for seven decades, displays a youthful exuberance as he sits chatting with a group of young fans.

He first recorded "Linny", an ode to one of his daughters, in 2000. But global acclaim only came two decades later when Patience Namadingo, a young gospel artist, teamed up with Chalamanda to record a reggae remix of "Linny" titled "Linny Hoo". The black-and-white video of the recording shows a smiling, gap-toothed Chalamanda, nattily dressed in a white shirt and V-neck sweater, jamming with Namadingo under a tree outside his home, with a group of neighbors looking on.

The video went viral after it was posted on YouTube, where it racked up more than 6.9 million views. Then late last year, it landed on Tik Tok and toured the globe. Chalamanda only learned of the song's sen-



Malawian musician Giddes Chalamanda, 92, plays his acoustic Banjo at his home in the Madzuwa Village near Chiradzulu, southern Malawi. —AFP

sational social media popularity from his children and their friends. Since then he and Namadingo have recorded remixes of several others of his best-known tracks.

His daughter Linny's 16-year-old son Stepson Austin told AFP that he was proud of his grandfather's longevity. "It is good that he has lived long enough to see this day," said the youngster, who himself aspires to become a hip-hop artist. Born in Chiradzulu, a small town in southern Malawi, Chalamanda won fame in his homeland with lulling songs such as "Buffalo Soldier" in which he dreams of visiting America and "Napolo". Over the past decade, he has collaborated with several young musicians and still performs across the country.

"Dance around the world"

On Tik Tok, DJs and ordinary fans have created their own remixes as part of a

#LinnyHooChallenge. "When his music starts playing in a club or at a festival, everyone gets the urge to dance. That is how appealing it is," musician and long-time collaborator Davis Njobvu told AFP. "The fact that he has been there long enough to work with the young ones is special." South Africa-based music producer Joe Machingura attributed the global appeal of a song recorded in Chewa, one of Malawi's most widely-spoken languages, to the sentiments underlying it. "The old man sang with so much passion, it connects with whoever listens to it," he said, adding: "It speaks to your soul."

Chalamanda, a twice-married father of 14 children, only seven of whom, including Linny, are still alive, said he has no idea how to secure royalties for the Tik Tok plays. Chalamanda and his wife hope to benefit financially from his new-found stardom. "I am just surprised that despite the popularity of the song, there is nothing for me," he said. "While I am excited that I have made people dance all around the world, there should be some gain for me. I need the money."

His manager Pemphero Mphande told AFP that he was looking into the issue and the Copyright Society of Malawi said it was ready to assist. Arts curator Tammy Mbendera of the Festival Institute in Malawi credited platforms like Tik Tok with creating new opportunities for African talent. "With songs from our past especially, they were written with such profoundness that they still can resonate today," she said. "All one has to do really, is get the chance to experience it, to acknowledge its significance. I think that's what happened here." —AFP



WORLD'S OLDEST MAN DIES 3 WEEKS SHORT OF 113TH BIRTHDAY

The world's oldest man, Spaniard Saturnino de la Fuente Garcia, has died at the age of 112 years and 341 days, the Guinness World Records said Wednesday.

BY AFP

World's oldest man dies 3 weeks short of 113th birthday

The world's oldest man, Spaniard Saturnino de la Fuente Garcia, has died at the age of 112 years and 341 days, the Guinness World Records said yesterday. He had been declared the oldest living man in the world when he turned 112 years and 211 days old, the London-based organization said, and

had been due to celebrate his 113th birthday next month.

Owing to his diminutive stature, the 1.5 meter tall Spaniard, who was born in Ponte Castro, Leon, on February 11 1909, avoided being drafted to fight in the 1936 Spanish Civil War and instead ran a successful shoe business. He had seven children, 14 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren. According to the Guinness website, the oldest person ever recorded was France's Jeanne Louise Calment who died in 1997 at the age of 122 years and 164 days, having been born in February 1875. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

FURY OVER HONG KONG'S MASS CULL OF HAMSTERS, SMALL PETS



People queue up to drop off their hamsters at the New Territories South Animal Management Centre in the Shatin area of Hong Kong yesterday.



A hamster named 'Marshmallow' plays inside a cage before being dropped off at the New Territories South Animal Management Centre in the Shatin area of Hong Kong yesterday.



A woman holds up a cage with a hamster named 'Marshmallow' before entering the New Territories South Animal Management Centre in the Shatin area of Hong Kong yesterday.

Hong Kong's government faced outrage yesterday over its decision to cull thousands of small animals after hamsters in a pet store tested positive for COVID-19. Like China, Hong Kong maintains a "zero-COVID" policy, stamping out the merest trace of the virus with contact tracing, mass testing, strict quarantines and prolonged social-distancing rules. Their latest measures target hamsters and other small mammals - including chinchillas, rabbits and guinea pigs - which authorities on Tuesday said will be culled as a "precautionary measure".

The move came after hamsters sold at the Little Boss pet shop tested positive for the Delta variant - now rare in Hong Kong. Officials dressed in full PPE gear carried red garbage bags marked with biohazard warnings out of the shop on Tuesday night. Authorities "strongly encouraged" anyone who bought a small mammal after December 22 - right before Christmas - to give up their pet for culling.

Outside a government-run animal centre yesterday, a man surnamed Hau told AFP his 10-year-old son was inconsolable about culling "Pudding", a recently bought hamster, but that he was worried about the health of his elderly parents living in the same household. "I have no choice - the government made it sound so serious," Hau told AFP, showing videos of his son wailing in front of Pudding's pink cage. One hamster lovers' group said it received more than 20 inquiries about whether owners had to give up their furry friends.

Authorities said Tuesday the COVID-positive creatures were believed to be imported from the Netherlands, with Hong Kong's health secretary defending the move as part of "precautionary measures against any vector of transmission" - despite a dearth of evidence showing animal-to-human transmission. About 1,000 animals sold at Little Boss and another 1,000 hamsters in dozens of pet shops will



A hamster named 'Marshmallow' plays inside a cage before being dropped off at the New Territories South Animal Management Centre in the Shatin area of Hong Kong yesterday. Pet owners were instructed by the government to give up recently purchased hamsters, chinchillas, rabbits and guinea pigs as the city culls thousands of small animals after hamsters in a pet store tested positive for COVID-19. —AFP photos

be culled, authorities said. The import of small mammals has also been halted.

'No one can take my hamster'

Animal lovers across Hong Kong reacted with alarm: a Change.org petition garnered more than 23,000 signatures in less than a day,

and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) denounced the decision. "The SPCA is shocked and concerned over the recent announcement about the handling of over 2,000 animals," it said in a statement sent to AFP yesterday. One owner - who bought her pet on January 1 - was defiant, pushing back on

the government's cull.

"No one can take my hamster away unless they kill me," she told local media outlet The Standard yesterday. She recalled a recent birthday party attended by officials that resulted in multiple COVID infections and left Hong Kong's leadership red-faced. "Will they also kill all infected COVID-19 patients and their close contacts?" the owner demanded. "If all people who attended the birthday party are culled then I will hand my hamster to the government."

A grim humor settled on Hong Kong-centric social media accounts, with netizens publishing illustrations of hamsters wearing surgical masks or facing off with the Grim Reaper. The city's largest opposition party also waded into the controversy, saying the "indiscriminate killing" policy will only cause "public resentment". "If cats, dogs or other animals get infected in the future, will they also be targeted for 'humane dispatch'?" wrote Felix Chow, the animal rights spokesperson for The Democratic Party, on the group's official Facebook page.

'An unpopular decision'

But the government's decision has some supporters. Top microbiologist and government advisor Yuen Kwok-yung had praised the measure Tuesday as "decisive" and "prudent". Yesterday he told local radio that his defense of the policy had earned him "some emails telling me to go to hell". Yuen said the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department did not have enough staff to quarantine hamsters and test them daily, "so they had no choice but to make such an unpopular decision". When questioned about Hong Kong's hamster cull, the World Health Organization said some animal species can be infected with the coronavirus, and animals can reinfect humans. "That risk remains low but it is something that we are constantly looking at," said the WHO's Maria Van Kerkhove. —AFP



Iraqi musician Naseer Shamma plays the oud during rehearsals at the Iraqi National Theater in Baghdad. Long uprooted from his native Iraq, Shamma, an icon of the Arabic oud, has returned home to help rekindle the flame of Iraqi music, snuffed out by decades of conflict. —AFP photos



ARABIC OUD ICON SEEKS TO 'CHANGE SOUL' OF IRAQ WITH MUSIC

Long uprooted from his native Iraq, Naseer Shamma, an icon of the Arabic oud, has returned home to help rekindle the flame of Iraqi music, snuffed out by decades of conflict. "When you are in your own country, you feel very high emotions with the audience," the master string player said in an interview with AFP. At nearly 60, the virtuoso who studied under late Iraqi oud legend Munir Bashir still appears in awe of his instrument, as well as those that accompany it.

"All those instruments are Iraqi-you have the santur for example. Each one is from 2000 BC," he said at the national theatre orchestra packed with Iraqi instruments. "They are very historic instruments and the sound is a very special sound." Speaking between rehearsals, he added: "There is nostalgia here, with friends. I studied in Baghdad for six years and I always feel more comfortable when I play here."

But such nights in Baghdad have become more of an exception than the rule for Shamma, a native of Kut, in the country's southeast. Exiled in



1993 under dictator Saddam Hussein, he only returned to Iraq for the first time in 2012. In the interim, he spent time in Cairo, as well as launching schools of Arabic oud across the Middle East, before settling in Berlin, where he lives now.

'Education first'

Aside from his musical mission, his latest Baghdad performances come with another purpose. "Now we're playing to help education. My new project is called 'education first'. We need to help Iraqi schools," Shamma

said. As UNICEF has pointed out, "decades of conflict and under-investment in Iraq have destroyed what used to be the best education system in the region and severely curtailed Iraqi children's access to quality learning."

From the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s to the subsequent international embargoes, the 2003 US-led invasion and the later Islamic State group takeover, Iraq has struggled to emerge from bloody turmoil. "And of course, three or four generations paid the price of this," Shamma said.

Despite the sluggish pace of Iraq's recovery and the political disputes that always threaten to erupt into new violence, the musician is hopeful for change. "We hope that music... will change the soul of people," he said. While Iraq is still far from its cultural heyday of the 1970s and 80s, it has recently seen a fledgling renaissance, with art galleries opening and book fairs and festivals being held. "We need to close the bad past and start again a new life with a new memory and a new vision for the future," Shamma said. —AFP

South African lions and pumas contract COVID

Big cats caged in zoos are at risk from catching COVID-19 from their keepers, a study said Tuesday. Research led by scientists at the University of Pretoria found three lions and two pumas fell ill with coronavirus - and the clues point to infection by their handlers, some of whom were asymptomatic. "Reverse zoonotic (animal-borne) transmission of COVID-19... posed a risk to big cats kept in captivity," the authors said.

The investigation was launched after three lions at an unnamed private zoo in Johannesburg fell ill last year with breathing difficulties, runny noses and a dry cough. One of the three developed pneumonia while the other two recovered after experiencing milder symptoms. As the signs were similar to coronavirus among humans, the animals were tested for COVID-19 and these came back positive. To establish the source of the infection, 12 zoo workers who had had direct and indirect contact with the animals were then tested, five of whom tested positive.

"This data suggests that SARS-CoV-2 was circulating among staff during the time that the lions got sick, and suggests that those with direct contact with the animals were likely responsible for the reverse zoonotic transmission," said Marietjie Venter, a professor of virology at the university. Genome sequencing on viral samples taken from the humans and the animals found that the lions had become infected with the Delta variant of COVID-19, which was circulating in South Africa at the time.

A year earlier, two pumas that had exhibited signs of anorexia, diarrhoea and nasal discharge also tested positive for COVID. They were treated and recovered after three weeks. A PCR test of the pumas' faeces at the time confirmed the presence of COVID. When the scientists tried later to do genetic sequencing, there was insufficient viral material left to determine which variant was to blame. The assumption however, is that the pumas also fell ill after being infected by humans. The research appears in a peer-reviewed, open-access journal called Viruses. —AFP

Sports

Chelsea slump goes on as Brighton earn draw

Tuchel's 'tired' Chelsea need a break after Brighton blow

BRIGHTON: Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel blamed fatigue for an alarming slump in form that continued with a 1-1 draw at Brighton on Tuesday. The European champions have won just one of their last seven Premier League games to realistically end their title challenge and leave the third-placed Blues looking over their shoulder at the contenders for a top-four finish. For the second meeting with the Seagulls in 20 days, Chelsea surrendered the lead. The visitors went ahead through Hakim Ziyech's snap shot which caught Robert Sanchez in the Brighton goal by surprise.

But Adam Webster's towering header earned Brighton a fully deserved point. "You can see we are mentally and physically tired," said Tuchel after his side's 15th game since the start of December. "We knew they were well prepared, they had more time and less games to prepare this match." Chelsea host Tottenham on Sunday in their final league game for nearly a month due to an international break and their commitments at the Club World Cup in February.

And Tuchel is hoping he will be able to give his squad the rest they need to come back stronger in the final months of the campaign. "The boys need some days off, there is no other solution," he added. "In the moment it is difficult to be too harsh on our players because I know what is going on." Tuchel had been stinging in his criticism of record signing Romelu Lukaku after a 1-0 defeat at Manchester City on Saturday, but kept faith with the Belgian and Ziyech in attack as Timo Werner and Kai Havertz were again left on the bench.

But there was little to impress the German once

more as Lukaku and Ziyech got into a heated discussion during the first half and both were replaced after the break. Brighton have only won twice in their last 16 league games themselves, but once again just lacked the cutting edge to their impressive build-up play. "I was really pleased and proud of the performance," said Brighton boss Graham Potter. "We could work the goalkeeper a bit more, but apart from that we had everything."

After a bright opening, the hosts were hit with a sucker punch when Ziyech justified his inclusion with a powerful low effort that Sanchez should have done better to save down to his left. Callum Hudson-Odoi wasted a great chance to double

“You can see we are mentally and physically tired”

Chelsea's lead just before the break when he was put through by Lukaku in one of his few productive moments. Brighton were again faster out of the blocks after half-time and Kepa Arrizabalaga did brilliantly to turn Alexis Mac Allister's deflected shot onto the post.

But Chelsea's reprieve did not last long as from the resulting corner, Webster was given a free run



BRIGHTON: Brighton's English defender Adam Webster (left) starts to celebrate as his header beats Chelsea's Spanish goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga (right) for their first goal during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Chelsea on January 18, 2022. — AFP

to power home from Mac Allister's cross. Lukaku had Chelsea's one clear chance to retake the lead when Sanchez made amends for his earlier error by blocking the ball into the side-netting. Chelsea's record signing was then replaced as Tuchel turned

to his compatriots Havertz and Werner for the final quarter. The German international duo were just as ineffective as Brighton held out comfortably and could even have snatched all three points with more composure on the counter-attack. —AFP

Not just for the elite: China's ex-athletes in school sport push

BEIJING: Petite but commanding, China's former world champion gymnast Sui Lu stood among a sea of yoga mats doling out encouragement to her students as they bent their torsos towards their outstretched legs. Sui was four years old when she was picked out by China's state sports machine and began training as an elite athlete. She became world champion on the balance beam in 2011 and won silver at the London Olympics the following year.

But the pupils taking instruction from her in the bright, airy room in a Shanghai university harbored no such ambitions - Sui's class was on basic physical fitness. Lessons taught by former top athletes are part of a recent government push to carve out more time for youth fitness in the world's most populous country, as it hopes to capitalize on heightened enthusiasm for sport ahead of next month's Beijing Winter Olympics. "People didn't like sports before. They were under pressure to study and didn't have time for exercise. But now everyone values sports," Sui told AFP, after running her students through more stretches and balletic exercises.

The new state emphasis on exercise - schoolwork has been reduced, and targets such as a two-hour minimum of daily physical activity have been introduced - has forced a scramble to find qualified teachers. That has given Sui and other ex-athletes new career options in a previously limited system. "It's not like before when everyone thought professional athletes could only teach other professionals after retirement," Sui said. She sees her mission as not about creating elite - or even middling - athletes, but to break down Chinese perceptions that sport is only for top-level competitors and a waste of time for everyone else.

'Study not the only way'

The fitness revamp is one piece of a broader Communist Party campaign to encourage healthier lifestyles that has included cracking down on industries that considers harmful distractions, such as cosmetic surgery and video gaming. Concern has risen over the education system, geared toward rote learning, pressure-packed exams and additional after-school cramming at private tutoring businesses as anxious parents push their children to keep up.

The schooling situation has been blamed for contributing to youth obesity, near-sightedness, and rising despair over a society many young people say they increasingly view as a stressful dead-end rat race. Jiang Yujing was a member of China's winning squad in the 2010 World Junior Badminton Championships, and now teaches the sport in Shanghai at a combined primary-middle school.

She said parents are realising that "study is not the only way" to find success. "It's not the same as before. Parents nowadays wouldn't insist on tutoring at home on weekends. They hope more to follow their child's natural instincts, and relieve their stress through sports," she said. One of her pupils, fourth-grader Song Xuanchun, said he and his classmates were enjoying the change in focus. "Most of my class is in better shape. Previously a lot of my classmates would often get nosebleeds or become ill, but not any more," he said. — AFP

Mandatory Olympics app has 'devastating' encryption flaw

BEIJING: An app all attendees of the upcoming Beijing Olympics must use has encryption flaws that could allow personal information to leak, a cyber security watchdog said Tuesday. The "simple but devastating flaw" in the encryption of the MY2022 app, which is used to monitor COVID and is mandatory for athletes, journalists and other attendees of the games in China's capital, could allow health information, voice messages and other data to leak, warned Jeffrey Knockel, author of the report for Citizen Lab.

The International Olympic Committee responded to the report by saying users can disable the app's access to parts of their phones and that assessments from two unnamed cyber security organizations "confirmed that there are no critical vulnerabilities." "The user is in control over what the... app can access on their device," the committee told AFP, adding that installing it on cellphones isn't required "as accredited person-

nel can log on to the health monitoring system on the web page instead."

The committee said it had asked Citizen Lab for its report "to understand their concerns better." Citizen Lab said it notified the Chinese organizing committee for the Games of the issues in early December and gave them 15 days to respond and 45 days to fix the problem, but received no reply. "China has a history of undermining encryption technology to perform political censorship and surveillance," Knockel wrote.

"As such, it is reasonable to ask whether the encryption in this app was intentionally sabotaged for surveillance purposes or whether the defect was born of developer negligence," he continued, adding that "the case for the Chinese government sabotaging MY2022's encryption is problematic." The flaws affect SSL certificates, which allow online entities to communicate securely. MY2022 doesn't authenticate SSL

Rooney ascent raises prospect of Everton return

LONDON: Derby manager Wayne Rooney is in contention for an emotional return to Everton after the former England star's impressive handling of affairs on the pitch despite a financial crisis at the Championship club. Rooney is among the bookmakers' favorites to take permanent charge at Goodison Park after Rafael Benitez was sacked on Sunday. The 36-year-old made his name at Everton as a precocious teenager before rejoining his boyhood club following a glittering spell at Manchester United.

And, in his short time as a manager, Rooney has offered evidence that the potential return of the prodigal son would be more than just an olive branch to Everton supporters infuriated by the dismal reign of the despised Benitez. While Derby have a rich history, the former England forward could not have asked for a more daunting first managerial assignment when he took over 12 months ago after initially joining as player-coach.

Rooney managed to save the Rams from relegation on the final day of last

season. But Derby were plunged into the abyss in September when they went into administration, with owner Mel Morris apologizing to fans. With Derby so far unable to find a buyer for a club saddled with around £50 (\$68 million) of debts, Rooney has been left to pick up the pieces. With worries about whether players and staff would be paid their wages, it would have been easy for Rooney to walk away from a seemingly impossible situation.

There has even been the threat of Derby potentially being expelled from the Football League if the crisis is not resolved. But Rooney - a man whose ferociously competitive playing style was honed on the tough streets of his Croxteth home - is no quitter. "I'm a fighter. I grew up on a council estate in Liverpool. I don't walk away from challenges easily," Rooney said recently. Sleeping on the sofa in his office at Derby's training ground after long nights spent plotting the team's survival, Rooney's dedication to his youthful squad is clear.

'A different Wayne Rooney'

Derby are second from bottom of the Championship after being deducted 21 points due to their financial issues and are also under a transfer embargo. Yet, despite a situation that would have shattered many teams, Rooney has miraculously kept them in

Rangers frustrated as Aberdeen rescue draw

GLASGOW: Rangers dropped Scottish Premiership points for the first time in Giovanni van Bronckhorst's reign as Aberdeen rescued a 1-1 draw on Tuesday. Alfredo Morelos conceded a 73rd minute penalty when he was penalized for handball and Lewis Ferguson netted from the spot to leave

Rangers frustrated at Pittodrie. Van Bronckhorst's side had taken the lead against the run of play in controversial circumstances in the 20th minute. Ianis Hagi scored from close range seconds after the Dons had a strong penalty appeal waved away by Kevin Clancy when Allan McGregor caught Ryan Hedges.

Rangers had forward Ryan Kent sent off in the 83rd minute for his second booking after a foul on Scott Brown. The Scottish champions are four points ahead of second placed Celtic, who beat Hibernian 2-0 on Monday, but it was the first let down for Van Bronckhorst since he succeeded Steven Gerrard at Ibrox. Josh Ginnelly scored a

second-half double as Hearts beat St Johnstone 2-0 at Tynecastle. St Mirren ended their 11-game winless run with a 2-1 victory over Dundee United 2-1 at Tannadice.

The Buddies opened the scoring in the first half with a well taken goal by Jay Henderson, before making it two after the break thanks to Eamonn Brophy. United pulled one back courtesy of an Alan Power own goal but St Mirren held on. Regan Charles-Cook bagged a second half brace as Ross County boosted their survival bid with a 3-1 home win over Motherwell. Bruce Anderson's double earned Livingston a 2-0 victory over Dundee at the Tony Macaroni Stadium. — AFP



BEIJING: A worker walks in front of a display of Bing Dwen Dwen (left) and Shuey Rhon Rhon (right), mascots of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games respectively. — AFP

certificates, meaning other parties could access the app's data, while data is transmitted without the usual encryption SSL certificates have, Knockel wrote. While the app is transparent about the medical information it collects as part of China's efforts to screen COVID-19 cases, he

said "it is unclear with whom or which organization(s) it shares this information." MY2022 also contains a list called "illegalwords.txt" of "politically sensitive" phrases in China, many of which relate to China's political situation or its Tibetan and Uighur Muslim minorities. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: In this file photo, Everton's English striker Wayne Rooney and his children make a walkabout on the field after the English Premier League football in Liverpool. Derby manager Wayne Rooney is in contention for an emotional return to Everton after the former England star's impressive handling of his stricken Championship club's financial meltdown. — AFP

with a chance of avoiding relegation. Derby have lost only seven of 26 games and would be 11th in the second-tier Championship if the points penalties did not apply. Of all the members of England's "Golden generation" to go into management, Rooney was the one whose decision raised the most eyebrows. Rooney won five Premier League titles and the Champions League during a trophy-

laden playing career in which he became United and England's all-time leading scorer. But his natural talent often had to speak for him. He was not seen as the most natural communicator, which made it hard to envisage him as a leader of men. Even Rio Ferdinand, who played with Rooney for United and England, admits he has been surprised by his rapid development as a manager. — AFP

Sports

Senegal held 0-0, Guinea lose but both book Cup of Nations last 16

Minnows Comoros send Ghana crashing out

BAFOUSSAM: Senegal were held 0-0 by minnows Malawi in Bafoussam on Tuesday despite the return of stars Edouard Mendy, Kalidou Koulibaly and Idrissa Gueye, but still won Group B at the Africa Cup of Nations. On an evening of surprises, Guinea fell 2-1 to already-eliminated Zimbabwe in Yaounde and scraped into the round of 16 as runners-up thanks to a better head-to-head record than Malawi. Brave Malawi finished third and must wait until today to see if they will be among the best four third-placed teams and qualify for the second round.

Senegal came to the Cup of Nations as one of the favorites but have won only once and scored only once from a Sadio Mane penalty in three matches. The Teranga Lions, runners-up to Algeria at the last Cup of Nations in 2019, needed 97 minutes to beat Zimbabwe, and were held by Guinea and Malawi, who are 109 places lower in the world rankings.

Malawi believed they should have been awarded a penalty in the second half when Gomezgani Chirwa had his shirt pulled by Bouna Sarr, but the referee disagreed after looking at the VAR monitor. As Senegal sought a late goal, they introduced midfielder Pape Gueye off the bench in place of ineffective Boulaye Dia. Gueye, barred by FIFA last week over a disputed transfer from Watford to Marseille, took his case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and won.

First Zimbabwe triumph since 2006

Chelsea goalkeeper Mendy and Napoli defender Koulibaly missed the first two matches and Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Gueye the second due to COVID-19. Zimbabwe triumphed at the flagship African tournament for the first time since 2006 when they held on for victory over previously impressive Guinea. A Knowledge Musona header and a Kudakwashe Mahachi shot gave them a two-goal half-

time advantage that was reduced when Liverpool midfielder Naby Keita netted on 49 minutes.

The match was refereed by Rwandan Salima Mukansanga, the first woman to do so in the 65-year history of the Cup of Nations. On Monday, a Confederation of African Football (CAF) statement said Mukansanga would handle the match with two female assistants, Carine Atemzabong of Cameroon and Fatima Jermoumi of Morocco. However, when the officials entered the pitch for the match at Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo, both assistant referees were males.

Ghana crash out

Meanwhile, four-time champions Ghana were eliminated from the Africa Cup of Nations after crashing 3-2 to minnows Comoros in Group C on Tuesday in Garoua. The Black Stars had captain Andre Ayew sent off after 25 minutes and, after wiping out a two-goal deficit, lost when Comoros' Ahmed Mogni scored his second goal five minutes from time. Morocco and Gabon drew 2-2 in Yaounde in the same group to retain first and second places respectively and qualify for the round of 16, which kicks off on Sunday.

Comoros, representing a tiny island nation off the south east coast of Africa, finished third and must wait until today to know if they are among the best four third-placed teams, who get last 16 spots. "We did not back down even after Ghana equalized. We always believed we could achieve a famous victory for our nation," said Comoros coach Amir Abdou, who has been in charge since 2014.

"I sent on attacking players in the belief that we could score a third goal and my decision paid off. Now we must wait to see if we are among the best four third-placed teams and play in the second round. "We are satisfied with the way we played. We had a plan and stuck to it. We learnt from the



YAOUNDE: Zimbabwe's forward Admiral Muskwa (left) and Guinea's defender Ousmane Kante jump for the ball during the Group B Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 football match between Zimbabwe and Guinea on January 18, 2022. —AFP

mistakes we made in previous games. Obviously, I'm unhappy that we conceded twice, but we will improve." Serbian-born Ghana coach Milovan Rajevac said he would not resign despite his team finishing last with just one point. "I came to Ghana to qualify the team for the World Cup. That is my primary target," he said. "I will stay and lead the team in the March play-offs," he added.

A disastrous night for Ghana started after just four min-

utes when Serbia-based El Fardou Ben Mohamed fired the first-time qualifiers in front. Mogni, who plays for French third-tier club Annecy, added a second just past the hour only for 10-man Ghana to hit back through goals from Richmond Boakye and Alexander Djiku. Mogni struck again when he pushed a low cross from Ben Djaloud past goalkeeper Joseph Wollacott to give the islanders a stunning triumph. —AFP

Dortmund dumped out of German Cup

HAMBURG: Holders Borussia Dortmund were dumped out of the German Cup on Tuesday after a shock 2-1 defeat at second division side St Pauli in their last 16 tie. "It was a really bad day from us, we woke up too late. St Pauli did well, but we're out," Dortmund captain Marco Reus said after the match.

The hosts took an early lead through Togo striker Etienne Amenyo, then Dortmund midfielder Axel Witsel scored an own goal. Star striker Erling Haaland gave Dortmund hope by converting a second-half penalty, but the visitors failed to force an equalizer. The result means neither Dortmund nor Bayern Munich, who suffered a humiliating 5-0 defeat at Borussia Moenchengladbach in the previous round in October, will be in the quar-

ter-final draw for the first time since 2006/07.

St Pauli, currently top of the second Bundesliga table, were ahead after four minutes when Amenyo got in between Dortmund captain Marco Reus and Manuel Akanji to convert a cross. Amenyo's shocked expression during his celebrations showed he could barely believe his luck while there were ashen faces in the Dortmund defense. The away side's problems were compounded when they were 2-0 down at half-time after Witsel turned the ball into his own net just before the break while trying to block a cross to Amenyo.

Dortmund grabbed a lifeline when Mats Hummels' pass clipped the outstretched arm of St Pauli defender Jakob Medic in the box and Haaland converted the resulting penalty just before the hour mark. Dortmund pushed for an equalizer, but Reus and Donyell Malen both squandering chances. Earlier, Bundesliga club Cologne also crashed out against second-tier opposition after losing a penalty shoot-out 4-3 at home to Hamburg.

In curious scenes, Cologne mid-



HAMBURG: (Center, left-right) Dortmund's Norwegian forward Erling Braut Haaland, Dortmund's German defender Mats Hummels and St Pauli's defender Leart Paqarada vie for the ball during the German Cup DFB football match on January 18, 2022. —AFP

fielder Florian Kainz hit the net with his crucial final spot-kick but it was ruled out because he touched the ball twice, sending Hamburg through. There had already been dramatic scenes in extra time when Cologne striker Anthony Modeste converted a last-gasp penalty to equalize in the 122nd minute and

cancel out a Robert Glatzel goal. Hamburg will be joined in the last eight by fellow second-tier club Karlsruhe after their 1-0 win at third division 1860 Munich. Bochum won their all-Bundesliga tie at home to Mainz when forward Milos Pantovic netted twice in a 3-1 win. —AFP

But Carvalho scored his second and Antonee Robinson helped himself to the sixth as Fulham made it 19 goals in three goals. Ten-man Preston staged a second-half escape act as they came from behind to draw 2-2 with Sheffield United at Deepdale. The hosts looked down and out after Jayden Bogle and Billy Sharp scored for the Blades before half-time, while Andrew Hughes was dismissed. But Ryan Lowe's side grabbed a point thanks to late goals from Alan Browne and Emil Riis. —AFP

Fulham crush Birmingham 6-2 to maintain goal spree

LONDON: Fulham maintained their remarkable goal spree as the Championship leaders crushed Birmingham 6-2 to move five points clear at the top on Tuesday. Marco Silva's side have promo-

tion to the Premier League in their sights and are well on course after their latest demolition job.

Having won 7-0 at Reading and hammered Bristol City 6-2 in their previous matches, the Cottagers were back on the goal trail in west London. Marc Roberts' 10th minute own goal started the rout, with Neeskens Kebano, Fabio Carvalho and Tom Cairney netting before the break. Birmingham's Ivan Sunjic pulled one back and Gary Gardner gave Blues brief hope of an unlikely comeback when he struck in the 74th minute.

Referee receives death threat, abusive emails

BERLIN: A German referee has revealed he has been the target of a death threat and abusive emails since England midfielder Jude Bellingham sharply criticized his handling of last month's Bundesliga match between Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich. "My official email account has received numerous messages which are unbelievable and very difficult to deal with and ignore," referee Felix Zwayer told Sky.

The 40-year-old from Berlin has also been contacted by police to inform him that there is a "death threat against me on the internet". Zwayer has not refereed since December 9, five days after his performance in Dortmund's 3-2 home defeat by Bayern was blasted by Bellingham. Zwayer added the abuse he has received has taken a toll on his wife.

"You try to pack your rucksack and say goodbye to your wife at the door, as you have done for 15 years. And then you see her burst into tears," he said. "Not because she misses me when I'm gone, but because she worries about me and maybe about what's going on at home. "This is a situation that is very difficult to bear, to be honest." Dortmund's Bellingham was fined 40,000 euros (\$45,000) by the German Football Association (DFB) for slamming Zwayer in a post-match interview.

The 18-year-old England midfielder was fuming when Zwayer awarded Bayern a penalty for a Mats Hummels handball, which resulted in the winning goal. Shortly before, Zwayer had waved on play and refused Dortmund a penalty after Bayern defender Lucas Hernandez appeared to foul Marco Reus in the area. "You can look at a lot of the decisions in the game. If you give a referee who has match-fixed before the biggest game in Germany, what do you expect?" Bellingham told Norwegian channel Viaplay. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaizen center	25716707
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Rawda	22517733
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Adaliya	22517144
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Khalidiya	24848075
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaifan	24849807
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shamiya	24848913
Adan Hospital	23940620	Shuwaikh	24814507
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Nuzha	22526804
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
		Qadsiya	22515088
		Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

Clinics

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This is to inform in general public that I, Mohammad Rizwan Khan, S/o Abdul Rahman Khan, R/o H.No.89, Ward-6, Nr Masjid, Nanus, Valpoi, Sattari, Goa, hereby changed my name from Mohammad Rizwan to Mohammad Rizwan Khan & I further state that I have changed my father name from Abdul Rahaman to Abdul Rahaman Khan in my passport. Hence after in all my dealings & documents I will be known as Mohammad Rizwan Khan. (C 1406) I have changed my old name Kutbuddin to my new name as Kutbuddin Panwala Vide Gazette No.P-2143485 Dated 21/Dec/2021. (C 1405) 18-1-2022

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Barty, Badosa, Osaka power through

Osaka and Barty stride closer to showdown as Nadal rolls on



MELBOURNE: Australia's Ashleigh Barty hits a return against Italy's Lucia Bronzetti during their women's singles match on day three of the Australian Open tennis tournament yesterday. (Inset) Japan's Naomi Osaka serves against Madison Brengle of the US during the women's singles match yesterday. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Naomi Osaka played the role of smiling assassin and top seed Ashleigh Barty was ruthlessly efficient at the Australian Open yesterday as they moved closer to a potential fourth-round showdown. Rafael Nadal ramped up his march towards an unprecedented men's 21st Grand Slam crown but needed five match points to put away tenacious qualifier Yannick Hanfmann.

The impressive Barty, chasing a first title at her home Slam, barely broke sweat in her second round match, breezing past Italian qualifier Lucia Bronzetti 6-1, 6-1 in just 52 minutes in the heat of Rod Laver Arena. Not to be outdone, defending champion Osaka rushed through the first set 6-0 against Madison Brengle but then had a couple of dicey moments in the second set, before polishing it off 6-4, greeting the beaten American with a smile at the net. Rivals Barty and Osaka, who share six major titles between them, are now one victory away from a last-16 showdown at Melbourne Park.

But first Barty, the Wimbledon champion and hot favorite in Melbourne, faces a potentially tricky task against 30th seed

Camila Giorgi. "She is an incredible ball striker and one of the most athletic girls out there," said the world number one of the experienced Italian. The ultra-consistent Barty, who won the lead-up tournament in Adelaide, hasn't dropped her serve for 48 straight games over five matches this year. Japan's Osaka faces American Amanda Anisimova, a budding talent who sprang a shock in defeating Olympic champion Belinda Bencic.

Osaka, winner of the 2019 and 2021 Australian Opens, has vowed to have more fun on court this year, following a difficult last year in which she said she had suffered from depression. "I am a bit of a perfectionist. I feel that if I compare myself to the past I will never be satisfied," she said, to cheers from the crowd. In-form eighth seed Paula Badosa, who won the Sydney warm-up tournament, and French Open champion Barbora Krejickova both sailed through to round three in two sets. Maria Sakkari, the Greek fifth seed, also won with little fuss.

Nadal quest for 21

With defending champion Novak Djokovic departed on the eve of the sea-

son's first Grand Slam, the men's draw has opened up for Spanish veteran Nadal. The 20-time Slam winner, who recently won his first tournament after five months out battling a foot injury, was never really troubled by the German Hanfmann until the end. Down 3-5, 0-40, the world number 126 fought back to extend the contest and saved two more match points, before finally succumbing 6-2, 6-3, 6-4.

Next up for the 35-year-old Nadal is Russian 28th seed Karen Khachanov, which should be an altogether bigger test of his title credentials. Nadal, the sixth seed, could face third seed Alexander Zverev in the quarter-finals but he is refusing to look that far ahead. "I don't know, I am in the third round, I need to win very tough matches to be there," the Spanish great said. "I never think that far. You can imagine now less than ever, no?" he added, an apparent nod to his recent injury struggles. Nadal also had Covid last month.

Olympic champion Zverev made light work of Australian hope John Millman, dismissing him in three sets, the German's power game silencing the partisan crowd. Seventh seed Matteo Berrettini, who



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Germany's Yannick Hanfmann during their men's singles match on day three of the Australian Open tennis tournament yesterday. — AFP

endured frequent lavatory trips in a gutsy four-set win on Monday, defeated American Stefan Kozlov and plays teenage 31st seed Carlos Alcaraz. Also through, after surviving in five sets over

Korean Kwon Soon-woo, was Canadian 14th seed Denis Shapovalov. But Poland's 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz was a notable casualty at the hands of Frenchman Adrian Mannarino. — AFP

Warriors stun Pistons; T'Wolves thump Knicks

LOS ANGELES: Klay Thompson scored 21 points and Stephen Curry tallied 18 as the Golden State Warriors began a seven-game homestand with a dominating 102-86 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Tuesday. The Warriors opened with a 26-13 scoring burst to lead 66-38 at halftime. They led by as much as 34 points in the third quarter, 73-39, and then cruised to their third-straight win.

It was the best performance of the season for Thompson, who returned five games ago as he works his way back from ACL and Achilles injuries. He played 22 minutes and hit three three-pointers. Curry, who returned after a one-game absence, shot six for 11 from the floor with four three-pointers and eight assists. He fell on his right hand during a win in Chicago on Friday, then missed Sunday's 119-99 loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Andrew Wiggins chipped in with 19 points for the Warriors. Rodney McGruder paced the Pistons for a season-high 19 points off the bench. Elsewhere, Anthony Edwards scored a team-high 21 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 as

Minnesota rallied to edge the mistake-prone New York Knicks 112-110. The Timberwolves surrendered a 12-point lead but stayed in the game despite being outscored 40-25 in the third quarter and then outscored the Knicks 10-3 down the stretch.

D'Angelo Russell added 17 points and Jaylen Nowell chipped in 14 for the Wolves, who are 6-2 in their last eight games since falling to 16-20 with a loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on January 2. Evan Fournier led all scorers with 27 points and Julius Randle finished with 21 points, nine assists and nine rebounds for the Knicks, who dropped below .500 in the standings and are 8-5 in their last 13 games. RJ Barrett finished with 17 points and also committed seven of the Knick's 18 turnovers. "It was a hard-fought game and didn't get it done down the stretch," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said.

The Wolves held a 61-51 lead at halftime and a 78-73 advantage with 4:48 left in the third before the Knicks closed the quarter on an 18-8 run to claim a 91-86 lead. Towns converted the go-ahead three-point play with 29 seconds remaining moments after Russell came up with clutch defensive play down the stretch against the Knicks. Minnesota got another solid performance from their reserves as Nowell and Malik Beasley came off the bench to score 14 and 10 points respectively. The Timberwolves next game is Wednesday against the Atlanta Hawks. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Trey Lyles #8 of the Detroit Pistons and Gary Payton II #0 of the Golden State Warriors go for a loose ball in the second half at Chase Center on January 18, 2022. — AFP