



2 FM: Gulf states reviewing Lebanon response to proposal to ease row



8 Startups bring Pakistan farming into digital age



16 Salah inspires Egypt to reach Cup of Nations semifinals



16 Nadal comes from two sets down to make history with 21st Slam



Deputy Amir hosts Arab FMs, calls for cooperation, unity

Sheikh Mishal: Kuwait has worked hard to defuse tensions



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks at the 156th Arab foreign ministers' consultative meeting yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hosted yesterday at Bayan Palace the 156th Arab foreign ministers' consultative meeting, underscoring necessity of mutual cooperation for serving the nation's interests. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince received HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit and Arab foreign ministers.

HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince greeted and welcomed his guests to their second home and conveyed his warmest sentiments to them. "Kuwait realizes the importance of Arab joint work and the importance of unity. It has worked hard to defuse tensions among all brotherly countries and mediated to resolve conflicts to maintain bonds," he said.

This meeting comes during very difficult regional and international circumstances, especially with the continuity of the COVID-19 pandemic, but may be this meeting, being held here today, gives optimism a few weeks ahead of "your upcoming meeting in March, which will help you in your priorities and

Continued on Page 2

Govt shuns COVID session, to start jabbing children

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A special National Assembly session called by opposition MPs to discuss issues related to the coronavirus pandemic was cancelled yesterday because the government did not attend. Under

Kuwait's constitution, the presence of at least one minister is essential for the session to be legitimate. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem announced the session could not be convened because of the government's absence.

Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mohammad Al-Rasheedi said on Saturday that the government had asked the speaker to coordinate with lawmakers who demanded the session to postpone it for a few days for preparations, but the MPs refused, so the government decided to abstain. MP Osama Al-Shaheen regretted the absence of the government and said the session should be held this week either separately or as a part of the regular sessions.

Continued on Page 2

Free food for MoH, MoI frontliners

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian announced yesterday he has given instructions to the ministry to offer free food supplies to frontline workers deserving rewards in the ministries of health and interior. The free supplies will be distributed to

the frontliners from March 1, 2022 in recognition of their distinguished efforts in countering the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ministry added in a press release that Shuraian ordered the ministry to start distributing the supplies to Kuwaitis and expatriates according to data sent by the ministries of health and interior, in accordance with Cabinet resolution 807 for 2020. The distribution of food supplies to expats will take place at public halls located throughout residential areas in the country. — KUNA

President of Zionist entity visits UAE

ABU DHABI: President of the Zionist entity Isaac Herzog started his first visit to the United Arab Emirates yesterday, the latest high-profile diplomatic trip since the countries normalized ties. It follows a visit by Naftali Bennett last month, the first by a Zionist premier, during which both sides

are understood to have discussed Iran's nuclear program, a top Zionist security concern.

Herzog, travelling with the first lady, arrived around 0800 GMT in the UAE capital, where he met with Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the president's office said. The visit comes some 16 months after the wealthy Gulf country forged diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity, becoming the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan.

Herzog also met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan at the presidential palace, the offi-

cial Emirati news agency WAM said. "The national anthems of the two countries were played, while 21 rounds of artillery were fired to welcome his visit," it reported. Sheikh Mohammed expressed hope that the visit would enhance bilateral relations, WAM said, adding that the pair discussed cooperation in fields including the economy, trade, investment, development, technology and health.

The president's office said the meeting lasted for over two hours. "We completely support your security requirements and we condemn in all forms and language any

Continued on Page 2

Iraqi women defy critics to work

BASRA: Each working morning, oil engineer Safa Al-Saeedi dons a safety helmet and heads into a gas complex for another day challenging conservative prejudices by being a professional woman in Iraq. "Society does not accept that a girl can live outside the family home," said 29-year-old Saeedi, who works in Iraq's southern oil and gas fields around Basra.

Saeedi, one of just 180 women among the 5,000 employees of the Basrah Gas Company, sees herself as a change maker

and encourages other women to join the industry. For many, a single woman working away from home in a male-dominated sector is frowned upon, and it is a hard task for women to break out of the role of wife and mother traditionally assigned to them.

"I often hear them say to me: 'You are almost 30, you will miss the boat! You will end up single,'" said Saeedi. "It makes me laugh, but I do not answer." The female labor force participation rate in Iraq is "one of the lowest in the world" at 13 percent, according to a joint report last year by UN Women, the agency working for gender equality, and the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA).

The 2021 UN report said surveys had found that "most Iraqis agree that univer-

sity education is equally important for both sexes". But it also reported that "attitudes toward equal rights in employment are discriminatory against women". The World Economic Forum ranked Iraq bottom in women's economic participation and opportunity, and put it 152nd overall out of the 153 nations assessed in its 2020 Global Gender Gap Index.

Saeedi, who graduated in 2014 after studying engineering at university in Basra, was immediately employed by oil giant Shell - a job that "required spending some nights away from home". Her mother opposed the job because she was "afraid of what people will say, and that it will affect my reputation and my chances of getting married", Saeedi said. "It was a challenge," she added. But Saeedi pressed

Continued on Page 2



BASRA: Safa Al-Saeedi (right) and Dalal Abedlamir are two of 180 women among the 5,000 employees of the Basrah Gas Company. — AFP

Info minister: Kuwait Times pioneer of journalism in Gulf



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din (center) is welcomed by Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain during his visit to the offices of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: The government is keen on supporting legislations that promote freedom of the press in Kuwait, a senior state official said yesterday. Minister of Information and Culture Dr Hamad Ahmad Rouh El-Din made those remarks during a visit to the offices of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News yesterday, where he was received

by Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain.

Minister Rouh El-Din praised Kuwait Times as a pioneer among English-language dailies in the Gulf and an ambassador of Kuwait and the Gulf region. "Kuwait Times is the cradle of English journalism in Kuwait and the Gulf," the minister said, emphasizing the newspaper's role as a witness to history and a voice for Kuwait's non-Arabic-speaking community.

Continued on Page 3

Local

Kuwait hails Lebanon's reply to trust initiative as "positive step"

Gulf states review Lebanon response to proposal to ease row



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah in a group photo with Arab ministers on the sidelines of their meeting in Kuwait yesterday.

KUWAIT: Kuwait said yesterday that a Lebanese response to a list of suggested measures to ease a diplomatic rift with Gulf Arab countries is currently under review. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said that receiving the response was a "positive step by the Lebanese authorities," hailing the move as potentially instrumental in getting Lebanon and Gulf Arab states back on the same page.

"We received a response from Lebanon (Saturday night), and Kuwait, along with other Gulf countries, will study this reply to determine the next step concerning Lebanon," Sheikh Dr Ahmad, who doubles as State Minister for Cabinet Affairs, told a press conference with Arab League chief Ahmed Abul Gheit after pan-Arab talks on a foreign ministerial-level, which was attended by Lebanon's top diplomat Abdullah Bu Habib.

Once the assessment of Lebanon's response is complete, Kuwait and Gulf Arab countries would take the appropriate steps that would "bode well" for all involved, added the Kuwaiti top diplomat, thanking Lebanese officials for their feedback on the initiative, which he said was not solely Kuwait's brainchild, rather, the "collective efforts" of all Gulf Arab countries.

Sheikh Ahmad visited Beirut last week and handed Lebanese leaders a list of suggested measures to ease a diplomatic rift with Gulf Arab countries. In October, Saudi Arabia and its allies suspended diplomatic ties with Lebanon after the airing of comments by then information minister Georges Kordahi criticizing Saudi Arabia. Kuwait recalled its ambassador from Beirut and also asked Beirut's charge d'affaires to leave the emirate. Kordahi resigned in November, in a bid to ease the standoff

and French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris and Riyadh had agreed to fully engage to restore diplomatic ties.

The measures presented by Kuwait are part of wider efforts to restore trust between Lebanon and its Gulf Arab neighbors as Beirut grapples with an unprecedented financial crisis. Despite Kordahi's resignation, tensions between Lebanon and Gulf Arab states have persisted. Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Beirut called on Lebanese political parties to "end Hezbollah's terrorist hegemony over every aspect of the state".

Brainstorming session

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad said that yesterday's Arab ministerial meeting was different as compared to previous conferences at this level. The session was distinguished with free atmosphere for the participating ministers to discuss matters without strains or a set agenda, he said at the news conference. "It was a brainstorming session where the ministers spoke freely," minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad added, indicating that there was consensus to hold the ministerial meeting regularly twice a year, in March and September. It was a fruitful gathering and the engaged ministers presented explicit proposals, pinpointing the problems in the Arab world, he added.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser stated that he was honored with the meeting, earlier today, with His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, where Sheikh Mishal gave instructions intended for bolstering Arab-Arab solidarity in line with the broadlines of the State of Kuwait foreign policy. — Agencies



Arab states discuss security cooperation

Iraqi women defy critics

Continued from Page 1

on, rising through the ranks to become a team leader in the Basrah Gas Company, a joint venture majority-owned by the Iraqi government, with Shell and Mitsubishi.

Her job requires her to live on site for a month at a time, staying in company accommodation. After work, she plays sport, or jogs around the huge gas storage tanks. On leave, she returns home to Basra - if she is not indulging in her passion for travel, which has taken her so far to some 30 countries. "I hope to reach a management position, because you rarely

see women in these positions, even though Iraq has many powerful and brilliant women," Saeedi said.

It is a tough path to follow. "I was initially overwhelmed with fear, because I was in a purely male environment," said chemical engineer Dalal Abdelmir. The 24-year-old works on the same site as Saeedi. "At the beginning, I thought that I was inferior, that I would never have the required level. I was even worried to ask questions," she said. "But this job and this position has taught me not to be afraid, not to hesitate and not to fear that I cannot do it, but to believe that I can."

Abdelmir joined the company via a graduate program which hired 20 men and 10 women. "We didn't go to Basra University saying we wanted to recruit women," said Malcolm Mayes, managing director of Basrah Gas Company. "We went there saying we wanted the brightest students". —AFP

government for boycotting the coronavirus session, adding that it should have been held to discuss hundreds of international medical reports speaking about the harmful effects of the coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the health ministry announced yesterday it plans to start vaccinating children in the age group between 5 and 11 years later this week. The ministry said in a statement that it will start with children most vulnerable to severe illness in case of infection. It added the ministry will provide the vaccines to everyone who has registered in order to protect and ensure children's health and safety.

Govt shuns COVID session, to start...

Continued from Page 1

He said he submitted a draft law calling to ask the government not to force people to get vaccinated. He said forcing people to take vaccines violates personal freedom and urged the Assembly to quickly approve the proposal. MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri criticized the



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (right) attends a press conference with Arab League chief Ahmed Abul Gheit in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

President of Zionist entity...

Continued from Page 1

attack on your sovereignty by terrorist groups," Herzog's office quoted him as saying during the meeting. "We are here together to find ways and means to bring full security to people who seek peace in our region," he added.

Herzog was later due to meet the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, during the two-day trip. Herzog, whose position is largely ceremonial, is the first Zionist head of state to officially visit the UAE. The UAE-Zionist normalization deal was part of a series of US-brokered agreements known as the Abraham Accords, pacts that have angered the Palestinians.

The deals broke with decades of Arab League consensus against recognizing the Zionist entity until it signs a peace agreement establishing a Palestinian state with a capital in east Jerusalem. They were negotiated by Bennett's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, who said they would offer the Zionist entity new regional allies against Iran and bolster its diplomatic efforts to stop Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The UAE meanwhile has strained relations with

Iran, backing government-aligned forces fighting the Tehran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen's civil war. That conflict has become increasingly regional, with Abu Dhabi hit this month by a Houthi missile and drone attack that killed three foreign workers - the first deadly assault on UAE soil acknowledged by the Emiratis and claimed by the Houthis.

Herzog, who was also set to visit Expo 2020 Dubai and to meet members of the Jewish community, vowed this month that "the bold new partnership" between the Zionist entity and the UAE "will transform the Middle East". About 200,000 Zionists visited the UAE in the first 12 months after the normalization deal was signed, and about 40 Zionist businesses have set up there, the Zionist entity's Dubai consulate has said.

Since normalization, the Zionist entity and the UAE have inked a series of deals on economic and trade cooperation, ranging from tourism to financial services. More are in the pipeline. The Emirati ambassador in the Zionist entity, Mohamed Al-Khaja, said ahead of Herzog's trip that it would "enhance the bilateral relations... as we aim to sign important economic and trade agreements... in the near future".

The Abraham Accords were negotiated under former US president Donald Trump and endorsed by President Joe Biden's administration. Bahrain and Morocco have also normalized ties with the Zionist entity under the accords. Sudan has agreed to do so, but formal diplomatic relations have not emerged so far amid escalating instability in Khartoum. — AFP

Deputy Amir hosts Arab FMs, calls...

Continued from Page 1

setting the appropriate conditions to ensure the success of your joint efforts", HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince added.

"We must make the best out of this meeting,

considering each one of you is representing his (her) country to face these challenges standing in the way of your cooperative efforts and take us to new horizons," he said. Elaborating, he said: "You have great responsibilities that are before our Arab countries. Cooperation and unity are the key to overcome these challenges; this meeting's friendly atmosphere may be in favor of paving the way to reach our goals. I pray to Almighty Allah to crown your efforts with success and bestow His blessings upon us, and make this meeting a starting point for your mutual endeavors." — KUNA

Info minister: Kuwait Times pioneer of journalism in Gulf



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din poses for a group photo with Kuwait Times and Kuwait News officials in the printing press. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Rouh El-Din highlighted the role that the Kuwaiti press plays and stressed the importance of supporting the local media to overcome challenges they face. "The press plays a very important role, especially at this time... and it is necessary that the press remains a partner of the government in the current phase," said the minister.

Journalism is an important component of democracy that Kuwait takes great pride in, Rouh El-Din said. "It is an inseparable part of tools to guide governmental and parliamentary work through constructive criticism and transparent coverage of political events and efforts to achieve the desired goals," he said.

"We are examining the current laws and trying to reduce the differences between them" in order to create more freedom for the press, the minister said, pointing out a law recently passed in parliament which scrapped the temporary jailing of suspects in cases related to expression of opinion.

"The general direction in Kuwait is now geared towards promoting more freedoms, but the process needs time to be properly organized," the minister said. "We realize that we cannot seek development in the country without more freedoms," he added, noting that his visit came to highlight the role of the press as partners.

In the meantime, Boftain expressed optimism in the direction the information ministry is taking



Exploring cooperation between KTV2, Kuwait Times

freedoms in your tenure," he said. "It is very important that we don't take any steps backwards."

Boftain also expressed readiness to cooperate with state media in order to achieve the desired goals. "We are ready to cooperate with KTV2 whether in terms of expertise or in any other way" that helps promote content of both media organizations, Boftain told the minister, who appreciated this suggestion and highlighted the potential of cooperation between the two.

Minister Rouh El-Din toured the various departments of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News during his visit, including the newsroom and printing press, where he met with the staff and was briefed on the process of work.

towards promoting more freedoms under Rouh El-Din, who is an elected lawmaker. "You are from the people, and we are looking forward to see more



Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din.



Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din is welcomed upon his arrival.



Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din speaks with Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain as Dr Nasser Al-Mujaibel looks on.



Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din interacts with a monitor in the editorial department.



Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain and Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din are seen during the tour.



Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din is seen in the reception area.



Abdullah Boftain briefs Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din during the tour of the printing press.



Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din poses for a group photo with Kuwait Times and Kuwait News officials.



Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din tours the editorial department.



Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din goes through the archives.

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CAN touts success in spreading cancer awareness

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN) Dr Khaled Al-Saleh said cancer awareness has increased among people in Kuwait, highlighting CAN's efforts in spreading health awareness in society. "CAN succeeded in cooperation with Arab Doctors Association for Fighting Cancer in introducing an Arab week for spreading awareness about cancer in which GCC countries, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Sudan, Mauritania and Lebanon participated," he said in a statement. Furthermore, Dr Saleh said CAN's role is not limited to increasing public awareness about cancer. "Rather, its role extends to training secondary school students to detect cancer early through the use of modern means," he explained. Meanwhile, member of the executive committee of CAN Dr Iman Al-Shimmari said the campaign continues to spread awareness among various groups of the society and especially about thyroid cancer, adding that several activities were carried out in January to spread public awareness about thyroid cancer. She said thyroid cancer is in second place among cancers in women, and fifth among men.



Dr Khaled Al-Saleh

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Kuwait's Foreign Minister discusses relations with Arab counterparts



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdullah Bu Habib. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Palestine's Foreign Minister Riad Al-Malki.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and State Minister for Council of Ministers Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah held separate meetings with various Arab foreign ministers on the sidelines of the Arab Foreign Ministers' consultative meeting that took place in Kuwait yesterday. The discussions during the meetings focused on the latest updates on regional and international fronts, topics on the consultative meeting agenda and joint Arab work, the foreign ministry said in statements to the press. Sheikh Dr Ahmad met with foreign ministers of

Lebanon Abdullah Bu Habib, Palestine Riad Al-Malki, Jordan Ayman Safadi, Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Qatar Sultan Al-Muraikhi, Yemen Dr Ahmad Bin Mubarak, Egypt Sameh Shoukry, Libya Najla Mangoush, Tunisia Othman Jerandi, Algeria Ramtane Lamamra, Mauritania Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmad, Sudan Ali Al-Saqed Ali, Somalia Mahmoud Abdi Hassan, and Djibouti Mahmoud Youssouf. Kuwait's Foreign Minister also met with the Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit. — KUNA



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud.

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Gulf drill sends message of resolve, peace: Hajraf

RIYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf on Saturday affirmed that the security of the GCC member states is an inseparable whole. "The Arabian Gulf Security 3 exercise is meant to send a message of resolve and peace," he said while attending the closing parade of the joint mobilization drills of the GCC security services. The event, hosted by the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia under auspices of Saudi Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud, gathered a number of interior ministers and senior police officers from the GCC states, according to a press release from the GCC Secretariat.

Dr Hajraf took pride in the high level of the coordination among the security services of the GCC states and their determination to protect the security and stability of the region as well as the safety of citizens. "Coordination and integration constitute the mainstay of security and stability in the GCC states," he said, applauding the level of integration, preparedness and self-discipline of the security personnel on parade who acted as one team throughout the exercise. The drill is a manifestation of the solidarity and interdepend-

ence among the GCC member states in the face of external security hazards, including the combat against terrorism, organized crime and narcotics.

Dr Hajraf noted that the exercise strengthened the unity of the GCC states in addressing the risks and challenges in the areas of cyber-security and border security. The GCC states have made outstanding gains in the march of joint security action with the adoption of the GCC Security Cooperation Agreement and the Counterterrorism Pact and launching of joint security bodies such as the Criminal Information Center to Combat Drugs (GCC-CICCD), the Police Organization (GCCPOL) and the Emergency Management Center (GCCEMC), he added.

On a similar note, Acting Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior Maj Gen Anwar Al-Bargas said the participating security forces showed high level of coordination and coherence throughout the drill. In statements to the press, he commended the high level of efficacy and professionalism displayed by the Kuwaiti security force in addressing all types of challenges. Maj Gen Bargas attributed the recent gains in combating criminal activity to the close coordination among the security services of the GCC states, stressing the need to pursue the path of joint action. The drills, which started on January 15 pursuant to the relevant decision of the GCC interior ministers, built on the achievements of the first two editions hosted by Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, respectively. — KUNA

Two fire stations battle Shuwaikh Industrial blaze



KUWAIT: Firemen extinguished a blaze reported in a printing press in Shuwaikh Industrial late Saturday night, Kuwait Fire Force said. Firefighters from the Shuwaikh Industrial and Shuhada fire stations rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call and worked on battling the blaze which started in a printing machine. No injuries were reported in the incident, KFF said, noting that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.





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International

Russia wants 'mutually respectful' ties with US

UK preparing new Russia sanctions law to leave 'nowhere to hide'

MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday that Moscow wanted "mutually respectful" relations with Washington, as the two countries remain at loggerheads over Ukraine. "We want good, equal, mutually respectful relations with the United States, like with every country in the world," Lavrov told Russia's Channel One. "Learning from bitter experience, we do not want to remain in a position where our security is infringed daily," Lavrov added.

Tensions have soared between Russia and the United States after Western governments accused Moscow of amassing 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. Washington has warned that Russia could invade at any moment, while Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky called on his Western allies to avoid stirring "panic". Citing the encroachment of NATO near its eastern border, Russia has put forward security demands to Washington and the US-led military alliance.

These include a guarantee that NATO will not admit new members, in particular Ukraine, and the United States will not establish new military bases in ex-Soviet countries. Lavrov said yesterday that NATO's line of defense "continues moving eastwards" and has come "very close" to Ukraine.

Lavrov added that ex-Soviet Ukraine "is not ready" to join the alliance and "would make no contribution to strengthening NATO security". Following a flurry of diplomatic efforts, Washington

and NATO presented Moscow with a written response to the proposals. Russia said the replies, which were not made public, did not address its main concerns but did not rule out further talks.

Meanwhile, Britain will unveil new sanctions legislation next week to hit "a much wider variety" of Russian economic targets as part of efforts to deter Moscow from invading Ukraine, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said yesterday. The UK's top diplomat said the draft law would widen the country's sanctions toolbox so "any company of interest to the Kremlin and the regime in Russia" could be targeted.

"There will be nowhere to hide for Putin's oligarchs," Truss told Sky News. "What I'll be announcing later this week is improved legislation on sanctions so we can target more Russian interests that are of direct relevance to the Kremlin."

"What the legislation enables us to do is hit a much wider variety of targets, so there can be nobody who thinks that they will be immune to those sanctions."

Relations between Russia and the West are at their lowest point since the Cold War after Moscow deployed tens of thousands of troops on the border of Ukraine.

The military build-up has prompted fears it is planning an invasion, spooking NATO and its members in the region and prompting the Western alliance to explore bolstering its own deployments there. Britain is preparing to offer NATO a "major



KYIV: A military instructor teaches civilians holding wooden replicas of Kalashnikov rifles, during a training session at an abandoned factory in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv yesterday. —AFP

deployment of troops, weapons, warships and jets in Europe as soon as next week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced late Saturday.

In her interview, Truss warned that European allies must remain united in deterring Moscow, and prioritise "defending freedom and democracy" over "immediate financial issues". She noted Germany

appeared to be taking "a much tougher line" on the controversial pipeline Nord Stream 2 built to relay Russian gas to Europe.

"We cannot favour short-term economic interests over the long-term survival of freedom and democracy in Europe. That's the tough decision all of us have got to make," Truss said. —AFP



Our security is infringed daily

'No justice': N Ireland marks 'Bloody Sunday' amid Brexit backdrop

LONDONDERRY, United Kingdom: The Northern Irish city of Londonderry began commemorations Sunday of one of the darkest days in modern UK history when, 50 years ago, British troops without provocation killed 13 unarmed civil rights protesters.

The anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" comes with Northern Ireland's fragile peace destabilised by Brexit, and with families of the victims despondent over whether the soldiers involved will ever face trial. Charlie Nash saw his 19-year-old cousin William Nash killed as members of the British Parachute Regiment fired more than 100 high-velocity rounds on January 30, 1972, at the demonstrators in Londonderry, known as Derry to pro-Irish nationalists.

"We thought there might be rioting, but nothing, nothing like what happened. We thought at first they were rubber bullets," Nash, now 73, told AFP. "But then we saw Hugh Gilmour (one of six 17-year-old victims) lying dead. We couldn't take it in. Everyone was running," he said. "It's important for the rest of the world to see what they done to us that day. But will we ever see justice? Never, especially not from Boris Johnson."

Amnesty?

The UK prime minister this week called Bloody Sunday a "tragic day in our history". But his government is pushing legislation that critics say amounts to an amnesty for all killings during Northern Ireland's three decades of sectarian unrest, including by security forces.

Thirteen protesters died on Bloody Sunday, when the paratroopers opened fire through narrow streets and across open wasteland. Some of the victims were shot in the back, or while on the ground, or while waving white handkerchiefs. At the entrance to the city's Catholic Bogside area stands a wall that normally proclaims in large writing: "You are now entering Free Derry."

This weekend the mural says: "There is no British justice." Several hundred people, including relatives of the victims, on Sunday retraced the fateful 1972 march, walking in sombre silence under a leaden grey sky ahead of a late morning memorial service. Children bearing white roses and portraits of the victims joined the poignant procession.

"I'm here to honour the people who were murdered by the British state who were trying to achieve their civil rights," said Michael Roach, 67, a Texan with Irish roots. "There will be no justice until the paratroopers are held to justice for murder."

'Unjustifiable'

After an initial government report largely exonerated the paratroopers and authorities, a landmark 12-year inquiry running to 5,000 pages found in 2010 that the victims were unarmed and posed no threat, and that the soldiers' commander on the ground violated his orders. "We in the inquiry came to the conclusion that the shootings were unjustified and unjustifiable," its chairman Mark Saville, a former judge and member of the UK House of Lords, told BBC radio on Saturday. "And I do understand, people feel that in those circumstances justice has yet to be done," he said, while expressing concern that with the surviving soldiers now elderly, the government should have launched any prosecution "a very long time ago". Then as now, Londonderry was a largely Catholic city. But housing, jobs and education were segregated in favour of the pro-British Protestant minority. —AFP

N Korea test-fires most powerful missile since 2017

SEOUL: North Korea yesterday tested its most powerful missile since 2017, ramping up the firepower for its record-breaking seventh launch this month as Seoul warned nuclear and long-range tests could be next. Pyongyang has never test-fired this many missiles in a calendar month before and last week threatened to abandon a nearly five-year-long self-imposed moratorium on testing long-range and nuclear weapons, blaming US "hostile" policy for forcing its hand.

With peace talks with Washington stalled, North Korea has doubled-down on leader Kim Jong Un's vow to modernise the regime's armed forces, flexing Pyongyang's military muscles despite biting international sanctions. South Korea said yesterday that North Korea appeared to be following a "similar pattern" to 2017 — when tensions were last at breaking-point on the peninsula — warning Pyongyang could soon restart nuclear and intercontinental missile tests.

North Korea "has come close to destroying the moratorium declaration", South Korea's President Moon Jae-in said in a statement following an

emergency meeting of Seoul's National Security Council. South Korea's military said yesterday it had "detected an intermediate-range ballistic missile fired at a lofted angle eastward towards the East Sea." The missile was estimated to have hit a maximum altitude of 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) and flown around 800 kilometres for half an hour, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

A lofted trajectory involves missiles being fired at a high angle instead of out to their full range. "North Korea did similar tests with its emerging medium and long range missile technology in 2017," tweeted Chad O'Carroll of specialist website NK News. "So this would imply today's test involves one of those missile types — or potentially something new. In other words, a big deal."

The last time Pyongyang tested an intermediate-range missile was the Hwasong-12 in 2017, which analysts said at the time was powerful enough to put the US territory of Guam in range. Japan's top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno said yesterday that the ballistic missile "was one with intermediate-range or longer range." The United States condemned the launch, with a State Department spokesperson telling Yonhap news agency it was a "clear violation" of multiple UN resolutions.



SEOUL: A woman walks past a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul yesterday, after North Korea fired a "suspected ballistic missile" in the country's seventh weapons test this month. —AFP

'Time is ripe'

Pyongyang has tested hypersonic missiles twice this month, as well as carrying out four launches of short-range ballistic and cruise missiles. Washington imposed fresh sanctions in response, prompting Pyongyang to vow a "stronger and certain" response to any attempt to rein it in.

Last week, leader Kim was photographed by state media inspecting an "important" munitions factory that produces "a major weapon system". "Kim has been withholding his

appetite for testing and provocations," Soo Kim, an analyst at the RAND Corporation, told AFP. Now, however, "the time is ripe, and North Korea's continued missile firing will only throw another wrench into Washington's already high plate of foreign policy challenges," she added.

The frenzy of missiles aims to remind the world that "the Kim regime hears external discussions of its domestic weaknesses," said Leif Easley, a professor at Ewha University. —AFP

Stray bullets kill bystanders as US shootings soar

WASHINGTON: A baby in his car seat. A man in bed. A girl walking with her mother: Stray bullets killed each of them days apart as surging gun violence ripples through the United States. In addition to the people killed in suicides or the homicides hitting record levels in some US cities, an untold

number of other victims are struck by bullets that weren't meant for them.

The deaths can spark fleeting spurts of media and police attention — similar to the nation's recurrent horror over mass shootings — only for the focus to ebb until the next tragedy occurs. "It happens so regularly," said Chris Herrmann, a gun violence expert at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. "If this happened in a foreign country, it would be headline news."

The southern US city of Atlanta was the scene of two cases this month. A 31-year-old British astrophysicist named Matthew Wilson was in bed on January 16 when he awoke to sounds of gunfire outside his girlfriend's apartment — and was fatally shot moments later.

330 killed since IS attacked Syria prison: Monitor

HASAKEH, Syria: More than 330 people have been killed in heavy fighting since Islamic State group militants first attacked a prison in northeast Syria, a war monitor said yesterday. The IS fighters on January 20 launched their biggest assault in years on the Ghwayran prison in the Kurdish-controlled city of Hasakeh, aiming to free fellow jihadists, and dozens remained holed up inside yesterday. The death toll in fierce clashes since then rose to 332 as the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) found over 50 more bodies overnight in prison buildings and nearby areas, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based group, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said that 246 jihadists, 79 Kurdish fighters and seven civilian had been killed so far in the

IS assault and battles since. "The newly discovered bodies were inside and outside the prison," Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Observatory, told AFP. He said the death toll was likely to rise further "because there are dozens of people who are wounded, others who are still missing, and information about more casualties" on both sides.

The SDF announced they had recaptured the prison on Wednesday but intermittent clashes continued until Saturday between Kurdish fighters and jihadists near the jail. On Saturday, an AFP correspondent saw a truck carrying away piles of bodies from an area near the prison, believed to be those of IS fighters. A bulldozer dumped more bodies onto the truck, which then headed to an unknown location.

Farhad Shami, who heads the SDF's media office, told AFP that the bodies would be buried in "remote, dedicated areas" under SDF control. According to the SDF, around 3,500 inmates and IS attackers had surrendered to its forces since operations began to recapture the



HASAKEH, Syria: US soldiers accompanied by members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) gather in the neighbourhood of Ghwayran in the northeastern Syrian city of Hasakeh, as they search for prisoners believed to be affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) group. —AFP

prison. But Kurdish officials estimated that between 60 and 90 IS fighters were still holed up in the prison basement and ground floor. Kurdish forces have repeat-

edly called for all IS fighters to surrender, while the Observatory said that around 20 of them had turned themselves in on Saturday. —AFP

International

Socialist reign at stake in Portugal election, far right eyes big gains

Stable govt is needed for Portugal to make most of €16.6-billion package

LISBON: Portugal voted yesterday in a close-fought election, with no party expected to garner a majority in parliament in a fragmented political landscape that could see the far right make huge gains. Socialist Prime Minister Antonio Costa is fighting for his political life after a late surge by the centre-right opposition PSD party clawed away his side's once comfortable poll lead.

The two parties are in a statistical tie according to final surveys. The prospect of another weak minority government comes as Portugal is trying to boost its tourism-dependent economy which has been badly hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

A stable government is needed for Portugal to make the most of a 16.6-billion-euro (\$18.7 billion) package of EU recovery funds it is due to receive by 2026.

"Portugal needs stability after these two difficult years of fighting against the pandemic," Costa, in office since 2015, told a final rally in second-city Porto on Friday.

Yesterday's snap polls were called after two far-left parties that had propped up Costa's minority government sided with right-wing parties to reject his 2022 draft budget in October.

PSD gains

While the survival of the Socialists' government is at stake, the party is faring better than its peers in many other European nations such as Greece and France where they have been virtually wiped off the map in recent years.



Rio accuses Costa of fear-mongering

If the Socialists again garner the most votes but lack a majority, Costa has said he plans to govern alone by negotiating support from other parties for laws on a case-by-case basis.

Such a government would have "little chance" of lasting until the end of its term in 2026, said Lisbon University politics professor Antonio Costa Pinto.

Under Costa's watch Portugal has rolled back austerity measures, maintained fiscal discipline and slashed unemployment to pre-pandemic levels.

But PSD leader Rui Rio says the economy should expand faster. It proposes corporate tax cuts to spur growth. Rio has managed to unify the often fractious party since he defeated a leadership challenge last year and his strategy of moving the PSD to the centre appears to be bearing fruit.

Under Rio the PSD defied the odds and booted the Socialists out of office in a regional election in the Azores islands in 2020 and the Lisbon mayor's office last September.

He is open to forming a coalition with the conservative CDS and the upstart libertarian Liberal Initiative

party. But such a coalition would need the support of far-right party Chega, which polls suggest could emerge as the third-biggest party in parliament, mirroring recent gains for such formations across Europe.

Far-right 'hostage'

Chega, which translates as "Enough", entered parliament for the first time with a single seat during the last election in 2019. Costa has warned that a

tional conflicts into existence" in order to bury projects "that have always been a thorn in one's side". He was referring to the controversial pipeline Nord Stream 2 built to relay Russian gas to Europe, which Washington and many EU nations alike have warned would increase reliance on Moscow.

Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht, also a Social Democrat, in early January argued the pipeline's future should not be linked to the Ukraine crisis. She later backed down as Scholz, under pressure from the United States and key allies, put all options on the table if Russia were to invade.

But at a time of the worst tensions between the West and Russia since the Cold War, Schroeder still sits as chairman on the board of Russian oil giant Rosneft. Voicing incomprehension, Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko said "Germany should ensure that lobbyists" like Schroeder "are legally banned from working for the Russian regime".

Detente and dialogue

The SPD's unusually cosy attitude to Russia grew out of the so-called Ostpolitik devised by former chancellor Willy Brandt. The policy of detente and dialogue with the then Soviet Union was a break from the strategy of Konrad Adenauer, who refused to recognise communist East Germany.

For many Germans, Ostpolitik is credited as a key strategy that led to rapprochement and eventually the successful reunification of Germany. Today, it remains in the DNA of Social Democrats. Subsequent chancellors have brought their own tweaks to Ostpolitik, but even Angela Merkel of the conservative CDU party championed dialogue and economic ties as a way to rein in Russia.

Through the 16 years of Merkel, an economic

tries that do not publish coronavirus data, such as North Korea and Turkmenistan. But Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering—a physician who still conducts surgeries on the weekend as a "de-stresser" from the pressures of office—said this week's death was "a bitter reminder that we need to do more".

Tshering said in a Facebook post late Saturday that "it felt like a bullet-hit to learn that one more precious life died with COVID-19. I grieved with the nation and continue to offer my prayers for our dear friend," he added.

The prime minister said Bhutan remained committed to completely eliminating the disease and said the nation could not afford "to lose our people to something that is preventable". Bhutan, like

told she could give birth there.

"We're happy for you, you can come and you won't have a problem," Bellis said in an interview about what the Taleban had told her. They also said, "Don't worry. Everything will be fine," she told the New Zealand Herald. "In my time of need, the New Zealand government said you're not welcome here. "When the Taleban offers you—a pregnant, unmarried woman—a safe haven, you know your situation is messed up."

Bellis, who once questioned the Taleban about what they would do to ensure the rights of women and girls, said it was "brutally ironic" she was now asking the same question of her own government. After going public with her situation, and involving lawyers, Bellis said she had been contacted by New Zealand officials who said her rejected application was under review. The government's COVID Response Minister Chris Hipkins said in a statement that he had asked officials to check whether the proper procedures had been followed in Bellis' case, "which appeared at first sight to warrant further explanation". Faced with an outbreak of the Omicron variant, New Zealand recently scrapped plans to ease entry for returning nationals and instead closed its borders—except for emergency cases—to anyone without an existing quarantine booking. — AFP



LISBON: Officials prepare to open the Galveias Palace polling station in Lisbon yesterday. Portugal voted yesterday in a close-fought election, with no party expected to garner a majority in parliament in a fragmented political landscape that could see the far right make huge gains. — AFP

PSD-led government would be a "hostage" to Chega, whose proposals include tougher COVID-19 confinement rules for Roma people and castrating sex offenders. Rio accuses Costa of fear-mongering.

He has vowed not to include Chega in a government but has indicated he is willing to head a minority government propped up by support in parliament from the far right.

The election is taking place amid a surge in new COVID-19 cases and many voters said they came

as soon as ballot stations opened to avoid crowds.

"It is important to come early because of what is happening," said Antonio Xavier, an 84-year-old retired shipyard mechanic after he voted at a school in Almada, a city just south of Lisbon.

"Election campaigns are very tiring. And very repetitive," he added. The authorities are allowing people who are quarantining because of the virus to leave home to cast their ballot, with a recommendation they vote in the slower final hour. — AFP

News in brief

Six-car Las Vegas pile-up kills nine

LOS ANGELES: Nine people died in Las Vegas when a car sped through a red light and smashed into five other vehicles, police said Saturday. One other person was in critical condition in hospital after the pile-up in the casino city in the western US state of Nevada. "We have not seen a mass-casualty traffic collision like this before," said North Las Vegas Police Department public information officer Alexander Cuevas. At about 3 pm, a Dodge Challenger ran a red light at an intersection, moving at "a high rate of speed," Cuevas told a press conference. It then "struck multiple vehicles, causing a chaotic event," he added, saying the smash involved six vehicles and 15 people. Nine people died, ranging in age from "young juveniles to middle-aged adults," while one person was still in a critical condition in hospital. Both people inside the Challenger were among those killed. — AFP

Mexico road accident leaves at least 13 dead

GUADALAJARA: At least 13 people died after a bus carrying pilgrims to a religious shrine in Mexico flipped over on Saturday, authorities said. Another 10 were injured in the accident in the western state of Jalisco. The bus was taking 23 people to the town of San Juan de Los Lagos, which hosts an annual Catholic celebration. The pilgrims were going even though this year's edition was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. The town's Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos draws an average of two million people annually. Five of those who died in Saturday's accident were thrown from the vehicle, and two were minors. Deadly road accidents are not uncommon in Mexico. Last year, at least 16 people were killed and 22 were injured in a September smash involving a bus and a truck in the northern state of Sonora. — AFP

Ukraine crisis spotlights German party ties to Russia

BERLIN: As Olaf Scholz's coalition tackles its first major international crisis with the threat of war in Ukraine, Germany's ambivalent stance towards Russia has come under the spotlight—and in particular, that of the chancellor's own party. Even as Russia masses tens of thousands of troops on the border with Ukraine, leading Social Democrats in Germany are openly questioning whether the risk of an invasion is exaggerated.

And former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, also of the SPD, is warning Kyiv against "sabre rattling" and arguing that the Russian military buildup is a reaction to NATO manoeuvres in the Baltics and Poland. The contradictory noises from members of the ruling party are muddying Scholz's message that Berlin is united with allies against the Russian threat, even though the chancellor has in fact toughened Germany's stance vis-à-vis Vladimir Putin.

The concerns are compounded by Germany's refusal to deliver weapons to Ukraine over what it described as its historical responsibilities following World War II. "The biggest handicap for Germany's foreign policy at the moment is the chancellor's party SPD," Spiegel weekly said. Large sections of the centre-left Social Democratic Party, it noted, remain caught up in a "sympathy for Moscow".

The party's general secretary Kevin Kuehnert recently warned against "talking potential interna-

Bhutan PM mourns rare COVID death

NEW DELHI: Bhutan's success in avoiding coronavirus is almost unrivalled but a rare patient death—just the kingdom's fourth—shows more work was needed to fight the pandemic there, its leader says. The remote Himalayan nation of around 800,000 people, sandwiched between China and India, has recorded fewer COVID fatalities than almost anywhere else in the world.

The only places with lower official tolls are a small handful of remote Pacific islands and coun-

Pregnant woman denied re-entry to NZ offered refuge by Taleban

WELLINGTON: A pregnant New Zealand journalist denied re-entry to her home country to give birth due to strict COVID-19 regulations said she has been offered refuge by the Afghan Taleban. "This just feels like such a breach of trust," Charlotte Bellis told Radio New Zealand yesterday from Kabul. Bellis had been working for Al Jazeera in Afghanistan, but said she didn't realise she was pregnant until she was at the media company's headquarters in Doha, Qatar.

It is illegal to be pregnant and unmarried in Qatar, so Bellis kept her pregnancy secret as she prepared to return to New Zealand. Upon being told she did not qualify for an exemption under New Zealand's strict COVID border controls, Bellis said she called senior Taleban contacts and was



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

pragmatism also dominated. Despite opposition from Western allies, the former chancellor also defended the Nord Stream 2 pipeline insisting it was a commercial project. Hence so-called Putinverstehers (Putin sympathisers) can be found across the German political spectrum, albeit to varying degrees.

The ingrained attitude on Russia, coupled with Germany's legacy of war guilt, has reinforced Berlin's reluctance on armament exports. A request from Estonia for Berlin to approve the transfer of eight old Howitzers from ex-communist East Germany is still pending in the hallways of bureaucracy. "A lot of Germans think that if you send arms to Ukraine now, it wouldn't help anybody... because all it would do is lead to escalation," said Marcel Dirsus, political scientist at the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University. A survey published this week found that 59 percent of Germans surveyed backed Scholz's government on its refusal to arm Ukraine. Only 20 percent disagreed. — AFP

much of the world, has seen a surge in infections linked to the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Friday's death came on the same day health authorities reported 205 new coronavirus cases—a national record since the pandemic began. The kingdom has still seen fewer than 5,000 cases overall since the disease emerged two years ago, and Bhutan had already vaccinated nearly all of its adult population by the middle of 2021. Neighbour and main trading partner India, by contrast, passed 41 million confirmed infections yesterday.

India has also recorded nearly 500,000 deaths, the world's highest confirmed fatality count after the United States and Brazil—though studies have suggested the country's true toll could be up to 10 times higher. — AFP

DR Congo sentences 51 to death

KANANGA, DR Congo: A military court in Democratic Republic of Congo Saturday sentenced 51 people to death, several in absentia, in a mass trial over the 2017 murder of two UN experts in a troubled central region. Capital punishment is frequently pronounced in murder cases in DR Congo, but is routinely commuted to life imprisonment since the country declared a moratorium on executions in 2003.

Dozens of people have been on trial for more than four years over a killing that shook diplomats and the aid community, although key questions about the episode remain unanswered. Michael Sharp, an American, and Zaida Catalan, a Swedish-Chilean, disappeared as they probed violence in the Kasai region after being hired to do so by the United Nations. They were investigating mass graves linked to a bloody conflict that had flared between the government and a local group.

Their bodies were found in a village on March

28, 2017, 16 days after they went missing. Catalan had been beheaded. Unrest in the Kasai region had broken out in 2016, triggered by the killing of a local traditional chief, the Kamuina Nsapu, by the security forces. Around 3,400 people were killed, and tens of thousands of people fled their homes, before the conflict fizzled out in mid-2017.

Prosecutors at the military court in Kananga had demanded the death penalty against 51 of the 54 accused, 22 of whom are fugitives and are being tried in absentia. The charge sheet ranged from "terrorism" and "murder" to "participation in an insurrectional movement" and "the act of a war crime through mutilation".

According to the official version of events, pro-Kamuina Nsapu militiamen executed the pair on March 12, 2017, the day they went missing. But in June 2017, a report handed to the UN Security Council described the killings as a "premeditated setup" in which members of state security may have been involved.

During the trial, prosecutors suggested that the militiamen had carried out the murders to take revenge against the United Nations, which the sect accused of failing to prevent attacks against them by the army. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022

Start-ups bringing Pakistan's farming sector into digital age

Foreign investment in Pakistan startups exceeded \$310 million in 2021

LAHORE: Agriculture entrepreneurs are bringing the digital age to Pakistan's farmers, helping them plan crops better and distribute their produce when the time is right. Until recently, "the most modern machine we had was the tractor". Aamer Hayat Bhandara, a farmer and local councillor behind one such project told AFP in "Chak 26", a village in the agricultural heartland of Punjab province.

Even making mobile phone calls can be difficult in many parts of Pakistan, but since October, farmers in Chak 26 and pilot projects elsewhere have been given free access to the internet—and it is revolutionizing the way they work. Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy, accounting for nearly 20 percent of gross domestic product and around 40 percent of the workforce.

It is estimated to be the world's fifth-largest producer of sugarcane, seventh-largest of wheat and tenth-biggest rice grower—but it mostly relies on human labor and lags other big farming nations on mechanization. Cows and donkeys rest near a muddy road leading to a pavilion in Chak 26, which is connected to a network via a small satellite dish.

This is the "Digital Dera"—or meeting place—and six local farmers have come to see the computers and tablets that provide accurate weather forecasts, as well as the latest market prices and farming tips. "I've never seen a tablet before," said Munir Ahmed, 45, who grows maize, potatoes and wheat.

"Before, we relied on the experience of our ancestors or our own, but it wasn't very accurate," added Amjad Nasir, another farmer, who hopes the project "will bring more prosperity".

Apps and apples

Communal internet access is not Bhandara's only

innovation. A short drive away, on the wall of a shed, a modern electronic switch system is linked to an old water pump. A tablet is now all he needs to control the irrigation on part of the 100 hectares (250 acres) he cultivates—although it is still subject to the vagaries of Pakistan's intermittent power supply.

This year, Bhandara hopes, others will install the technology he says will reduce water consumption and labor. "Digitizing agriculture... and the rural population is the only way to prosper," he told AFP.

At the other end of the supply chain, around 150 kilometers (90 miles) away in Lahore, dozens of men load fruit and vegetables onto delivery bikes at a warehouse belonging to the start-up Tazah, which acts as an intermediary between farmers and traders. After just four months in operation, the company delivers about 100 tons of produce every day to merchants in Lahore and Karachi who place orders via a mobile app. "Before, the merchant had to get up at 5 am or 5:30 am to buy the products in bulk, at the day's price, and then hassle with transporting them," said Inam Ulhaq, regional manager.

"Tazah brings some order to the madness." In the Tazah office, several employees manage the orders, but for the time being, purchases are still made by phone, as the part of the application intended for farmers is still in development.

The young company is also tackling a "centuries-old" system that stakeholders are reluctant to change, explains co-founder Abrar Bajwa.

Record investment

Fruit and vegetables often rot during their journey along poorly organized supply chains, says partner Mohsin Zaka, but apps like Tazah make the whole system more efficient.



LAHORE, Pakistan: In this picture, employees of Tazah Transforming Agriculture talk with customers at a call center in Lahore. — AFP

In addition to Lahore, Tazah is already operating in the largest city, Karachi, and is preparing to move into the capital, Islamabad. A \$20 million fundraising campaign is underway, the co-founder told AFP, at a time when investments are pouring into Pakistani start-ups.

Foreign investment in Pakistan startups exceeded \$310 million last year—five times the 2020 level and more than the previous six years combined, according to several reports. Further down the chain, Airlift—which provides grocery deliveries—raised

\$85 million in a record-breaking prospectus for the country in August. "A lot of the markets that venture investors are looking for, like India or Indonesia, are saturated," said Bajwa, a former director at Careem, the local ride-hailing app acquired by Uber in 2020.

Now Pakistan, the world's fifth-most populous country, is attracting attention and agriculture is a sector that is "completely untapped from a technological point of view", he said. It is "certainly the one where we can have the biggest impact" here, he noted. — AFP

Miami's lure during COVID sends housing prices through the roof

MIAMI: Miami resident Maria Ruby learned last month that her rent will shoot up 65 percent in February. She cannot afford it and does not know where to go. Her plight illustrates an unexpected effect of the coronavirus pandemic: Miami is seeing some of the highest housing cost increases anywhere in the United States. Metropolitan Miami was already a lure even before COVID, with its warm weather, white sand beaches and absence of state—though not federal—income tax.

It is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city that is attractive to European and Latin American investors. But the pandemic made Miami even more of a mecca. Strict lockdown rules in other parts of the United States and the rise of working from home for a company that could be far away caused many people to up and move to the south of Florida. They flocked from northeastern cities such as New York and Boston, as well as from California, and found cheaper rent and Republican politicians eager to get the state economy running again after the rav-

ages of COVID lockdowns.

"They started coming to South Florida in droves," said Jennifer Wollmann, board chair of the Miami Association of Realtors. "Our weather, business-friendly state and open spaces are very attractive for people coming from states that were cold and shut down," she said.

The effect quickly became apparent. People with better paying jobs than the going rate in south Florida caused housing prices to shoot up. A study released in December by Realtor.com said metropolitan Miami saw the steepest rent hikes last year in America. Median rent in November—it did not specify what kind of dwelling—was \$2,800, up a whopping 44 percent from the same month of 2020.

Sleepless nights

For Ruby, a 57-year-old cashier, this change has been very painful. For the past quarter-century, she has lived in an apartment in a 20-unit building in Hialeah, a town next to Miami with a majority population of people of Cuban descent. The building has new



MIAMI, US: A plane flies over Miami residential towers in Miami, Florida. The increase in real estate prices in South Florida is one of the highest in the US. — AFP

owners, a company called Eco Stone Group, and they told the tenants their rent is going from \$1,000 a month to \$1,650. Ruby earns \$14 an hour, lives with her daughter and son-in-law, and cannot afford that big jump. She does not know what to do.

"We don't sleep well at night," Ruby said. "I do not know what will become of us." The huge rise in demand in Florida has surprised experts such as Ned Murray, who teaches economics at Florida

International University. "It was unprecedented," Murray said of the increase, which has also involved home sale prices.

The real estate portal RealtyHop says Hialeah is the fifth-least affordable real estate market in America. A family of average income seeking to buy a house there would have to spend nearly 60 percent of its yearly revenue on that acquisition. Miami is second on that list of pricey digs, behind New York. — AFP

Peru says oil spill twice as big as previously thought

LIMA: The oil spill off the coast of Peru sparked by a volcanic eruption thousands of miles away is twice as big as previously reported, the government said. The announcement came hours after a court banned four directors from the Spanish oil company Repsol, which owns the refinery where the accident took place, from leaving the country for 18 months.

Environment Minister Ruben Ramirez told reporters the country has "a figure so far of 11,900 barrels" dumped into the sea on January 15, instead of the 6,000 reported earlier. Repsol confirmed that the figure was higher, but gave a slightly lower estimate than the minister.

The spill, described as an "ecological disaster" by the Peruvian government, happened when an Italian-flagged tanker, the Mare Doricum, was unloading oil at the La Pampilla refinery, just off Peru's coast around 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Lima.

Repsol said the tanker was hit by freak waves triggered by a tsunami after a massive volcanic eruption near Tonga, more than 10,000 kilometers away.

The oil slick has been dragged by ocean currents about 140 kilometers north of the refinery, prosecutors said, causing the death of an undetermined number of fish and seabirds. In addition, it left hundreds

of local fishermen unable to take their boats out. They have staged protests against the Spanish company. Deputy Environment Minister Alfredo Mamani said that 4,225 barrels of oil had been recovered from the sea and some 20 beaches, just over a third of the total. For its part, Repsol said in a statement in Lima that "the amount of oil spilled is 10,396 barrels and 35 percent of that has already been recovered."

Earlier Friday, Judge Romualdo Aguedo granted the prosecution's request to prevent the four executives, including Repsol Peru's Spanish president Jaime Fernandez-Cuesta Luca de Tena, from leaving the country, as investigators look into the catastrophic oil spill. Peru has demanded compensation from Repsol, and the energy giant faces a potential \$34.5 million fine, the Environment Ministry has said. — AFP



CALLAO, Peru: Cleaning crews work to remove oil from the Caverro Beach in Callao, Peru after a spill occurred during the offloading process of the Italian-flagged tanker "Mare Doricum" at La Pampilla refinery on January 15. — AFP

Hundreds of truckers pour into Ottawa to protest vaccine rule

OTTAWA: Hundreds of trucks and thousands of people blocked the streets of central Ottawa on Saturday as part of a self-titled "Freedom Convoy" to protest vaccine mandates required to cross the US border. Flying the Canadian flag, waving banners demanding "Freedom" and chanting slogans against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the truckers were joined by thousands of other protesters angered not only by COVID-19 restrictions but by broader discontent with the government.

An enormous clamor rang out as hundreds of big trucks, their engines rumbling, sounded their air horns non-stop. Closer to Parliament, families calmly marched on a bitterly cold day, while young peo-



TORONTO: Supporters for a convoy of truckers driving from British Columbia to Ottawa in protest of a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for cross-border truckers, gather near a highway overpass outside of Toronto, Ontario. — AFP

ple chanted and older people in the crowd banged pots and pans in protest under Trudeau's office windows.

Canadian media said the prime minister and his family had been escorted out of their home and taken to a secret location in the capital, with much of the protesters' wrath directed at Trudeau.

"I want it all to stop—these measures are unjustified," said one demonstrator, 31-year-old businessman Philippe Castonguay, outside the Parliament building. He had driven seven hours from northern Quebec province to make his feelings known: "The vaccination requirements are taking us toward a new society we never voted for," he said.

The protest originated last week in western Canada, where dozens of truckers organized a convoy to drive from Vancouver to Ottawa to demonstrate against COVID-related restrictions, particularly a vaccination requirement for truck drivers. Both Canada and the United States imposed that requirement in mid-January, affecting drivers who cross the 5,500-mile (9,000-kilometer) border—the world's longest. The movement rapidly gained steam as the original cross-country convoy was joined by others en route to the federal capital. — AFP

Business

We are confident of achieving even better results in 2022: Al-Bahar

NBK Deputy Group CEO in an interview with Bloomberg

KUWAIT: Mrs Shaikha Al-Bahar, the Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) said that the Bank's performance for 2021 was solid, noting that it managed to come out of the pandemic with a stronger balance sheet, as reflected in the strong loan growth, as well as solid asset quality, liquidity and capitalization ratios.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Al-Bahar stated that fourth quarter trends confirmed the optimism for gradual recovery and strong pickup in business activity on the back of the vaccination efforts done in Kuwait. "Throughout the past couple of years and as we were positioning for the implications of the pandemic, our focus was to maintain the strength of the balance sheet as this is the backbone of our operations," she indicated.

"In 2022, we expect the recovery in various markets to continue generating more lending opportunities for us especially in our key growth markets, Kuwait, Egypt and KSA which all have been doing very well." Al-Bahar continued. On the expectations of continuing growth trends in retail and corporate lending in 2022, Al-Bahar mentioned: "We expect to continue the strong growth in corporate and retail lending operations, as we are a regional bank with very strong opportunities in different markets. In addition, we consider the recent statements of the government regarding BOT projects promising for more private sector inclusion, which, of course, will boost banks' lending activity." Al-Bahar expressed optimism and confidence in achieving even better performance in 2022, stating that the Bank will continue focusing on its strong digital banking proposition.

Higher interest rates

Giving her take on interest rate outlook, Al-Bahar mentioned that higher interest rates can be the cherry on top, as we are very well-gearred for a rate hike. Our strong franchise has helped us in attracting and retaining free or low cost deposits, especially during the pandemic, as we benefited from flight to safety.

"Those deposits are usually less sensitive to rates, so any rate hike will lead to expansion in net interest margin and accordingly net interest income growth," she explained. Al-Bahar added that NBK has a well-diversified loan portfolio, with NPL/gross loans ratio around 1%, which is among the lowest, not only locally and regionally, but also globally, in addition to an NPL coverage ratio of 300%.

Strategic initiatives

Al-Bahar stated that NBK Group continues to implement the strategic initiatives including global wealth management where during the year we streamlined our wealth management offerings internally and reorganized the business under new leadership. This will allow us to better leverage our strong proposition of private banking, mainly in Kuwait, UK and Switzerland along with our wealth management platform in NBK capital. "The digital offerings across the Group will continue to grow and we will build on our digitization investments to grow our



customer base, offer new products and services and increase market penetration," Al-Bahar added.

"The Group continues to focus on the cross selling opportunity to best leverage its large branch network of subsidiaries and branches as well as its wide spread and diversified client base with special focus on wealth management in KSA and retail business in Egypt." "We seek to expand in the retail and wholesale banking in the Egyptian market by investing in digital banking services and focusing on acquisition of new customers and simplifying banking transactions," she noted. "In Saudi Arabia, we will continue to strengthen our recently established wealth management proposition and link it to the group's global wealth management platform, as we see huge potential in this area. We also seek to increase our commercial banking offerings in the Saudi market to gradually develop and strengthen our presence in the Kingdom and increase its contribution to the group's bottom line," she elaborated.

Sustainability

On NBK's sustainability strides, Al-Bahar stressed that the environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations have always been on our agenda even before it evolves to what ESG is today. Serving our communities is part of our mission statement and we have given it top priority in NBK over the years. In recent years, we expanded our sustainability disclosures, and aligned with GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) as the main reporting framework in addition to aligning with UNSDG, KNDP and Boursa Kuwait sustainability indicators, Al-Bahar continued.

Some of our recent development included the completion of our new LEED Gold headquarters, an improvement across all measured and reported environmental matrices including GHG emissions as well as paper and plastic recycling, she added.

On the social side, Al-Bahar highlighted that NBK is very advanced on the level of female participation in the workforce, the commitment to staff and work life balance, as well as the level of staff training and development. We have also been focusing on customer protection and education, cyber security and data protection along with strictly committing to human rights practices and labor

rights. On the governance side, she stated: "We have reformed board committees, appointed two independent board members including one with long standing experience in ESG practices and updated and published policies promoting transparency and business ethics."

Today, we are further developing our ESG practices to become more integrated in setting our long-term strategy. We are fully committed than ever to integrating impactful ESG strategies across all aspects of our business, Al-Bahar emphasized. In some of our locations, we have already developed risk models to assess climate change risk and approved business strategies that have ESG considerations. These are all practices we plan to roll out throughout the group and at a very accelerated pace in coming months, she mentioned.

Legislative agenda

Al-Bahar pointed out that the need for a debt law goes beyond what is viewed by various stakeholders including the rating agencies. Approving a debt law will confirm the determination to lead a reform agenda and institutionalize a borrowing mechanism for closing any future deficits. That's why we have a stronger view that it will eventually be passed with some commitment from the government on the use of the proceeds of any future issuances in return-generating projects and that it will not end up being consumed on more subsidies or other current spending types, she added.

On mortgage law, Al-Bahar accentuated the importance of this topic considering the commitment of the state to provide residential housing in Kuwait and the very young population that is creating significant demand on land distribution and construction funding. The existing subsidized structure to finance housing by Kuwait Credit Bank has worked historically but is becoming a bottle neck in today's efforts to resolve the growing residential housing demand in Kuwait. Even with the recent discussion around recapitalizing Kuwait credit bank leaves a significant funding gap in that sensitive sector, she continued. Considering that Kuwait is one of few countries with no mortgage law and that the role of the banking sector in closing that funding gap is inevitable, we believe the mortgage law is another key item on the legislative reform agenda, she said.

ABK raises awareness on risks of loan encashment

KUWAIT: As part of the Bank's ongoing commitment to enhance customers' financial knowledge, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) raises awareness of the risks associated with loan encashment. The initiative is part of 'Let's Be Aware', a campaign orchestrated by The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

Mahmoud Ahmed Assad, Head of Retail Lending at ABK, said:

"Consumers resort to loan encashment to overcome their debts sometimes without acknowledging the consequences. This may expose consumers to a new stream of arrears that exceeds their financial limits. In addition, loan encashment can lead to serious legal retribution and is considered a violation of transparency and accountability."

Furthermore, threats associated with loan encashment could lead to imprisonment due to presenting forged documents, countersigning data, or the inability to pay liabilities. As such, CBK regulates financial institutions in Kuwait to provide tailored counseling to consumers and assess their liabilities, permitting them to avail banking products within their means. Individuals need to contact their financial institution to discuss personal liabilities and current financial conditions during tough times. Additionally, consumers are encouraged to reconsider activities that cause financial distress, legal jeopardy and adversely impact the national economy.

The 'Let's Be Aware' campaign brings together regulators and financial service providers in Kuwait, spearheading a joint effort to raise consumer awareness of banking products and services as well as other crucial topics such as effective bank card usage, guidance on borrowing, complaints and escalation methods, fraud management, cybersecurity protocols, and more.

Ariel Dela Cruz

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner.

Al-Tijari announces Al-Najma weekly draw winner

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the weekly draw on Al-Najma Account yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmed Al-Basman.

The result of the draw was as follows:

- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Mohammed Abdullah Al-Saeed

The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize -

Top SoftBank exec quits after clash over compensation

TOKYO: Japanese investment giant SoftBank Group said Friday its chief operating officer Marcelo Claure is leaving the company, following reports that his demands for as much as \$1 billion in compensation had fuelled an internal clash. The group's founder Masayoshi Son said in a statement that US-Bolivian businessman Claure, 51, "made many contributions to SoftBank" during his nine years at the firm. "We thank him for his dedication and wish him continued success in his future endeavors," said Son, Japan's richest person according to Forbes who has transformed the telecoms group into a tech investment behemoth.

The statement came after Bloomberg News reported that Claure has clashed with Son in recent months as he pressed for compensation of \$1 billion after making \$16 million in the last fiscal year. Claure had argued he deserved more money and authority after making key contributions to the company, including the turnaround and sale of US telecom unit Sprint and the listing of troubled start-up WeWork, Bloomberg said. Michel Combes will take over Claure's responsibility for SoftBank Group International and oversee its operating and investment portfolio, the company said.

In the same news release, Claure said he would "forever be grateful for my experience at SoftBank". "I am particularly grateful to Masayoshi Son, who gave me the opportunity to thrive at SoftBank and served as a mentor and friend during my tenure," he added. —AFP

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Shadi Riman
- Abeer Shnawah Taher
- Tuwari Madloul Aldhafeeri
- Khaled Barakat Hashem

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Business

'No choice': Burkina miners toil in Ouagadougou quarry

Artisanal miners engaged in back-breaking labor

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso: Dust and toxic fumes billow from a cavernous, ashy granite quarry in the center of Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou. A giant crater located among the roads, houses and administrative buildings of the city's Pissy neighborhood, the mine has been dug by hand over 40 years.

Artisanal miners toil in the bowels of the earth, with men engaged in back-breaking labor as they smash rocks into smaller chunks with hammers and chisels. Women, often with only flip-flops for footwear, ferry the granite up the steep mine walls in pans weighing several kilograms balanced on their heads.

Some workers sell granite blocks at the bottom of the hole, while others are paid to haul them to the surface for women and teenagers who crush them into small pebbles before selling them.

The granite is used to make buildings, paving stones or roads, but the fruits of the workers' labor amount to a pittance—usually one or two euros per day.

"With this money I have to feed the children, pay for their schooling—it's really tough," Abarat Nikiema told AFP.

"I've been here for 10 years and until now I haven't got by. It's really sad."

'Serious injuries'

At 9 o'clock in the morning, a crowd of women, some with babies on their backs, hasten to empty their laden pans for buyers, collecting a few CFA francs to feed their families. Piles of freshly mined granite litter the ground surrounding the mine as a couple of male workers recline during a hard-earned break.

An acrid stench of burning rubber emanates from the pit as miners set fire to old tires and scrap metal over days to break up dauntingly large slabs of granite.

Maxime Sidibe works with his two-year-old daughter by his side, despite being all too aware of the perils of his trade. There is no sign of a mask, helmet or protective equipment, even as the workers inhale toxic smoke throughout the day.

"There are serious injuries, people cut up by pebbles, a hammer blow, shards in their eyes," he said. "There are people who slip going down and a lot of illnesses too."

Last Sunday, the miners heard gunshots in the neighboring Lamizana military camp that heralded a coup by Burkina Faso's army. But not even the start of a mutiny disrupted the workings of the mine. "We were scared, but we continued—we have no choice!" said granite seller Marcel Koala. —AFP



OUAGADOUGOU: A woman carries out a pan of granite up the side of Pissy Granite Mine in the center of Ouagadougou. —AFP

Hewlett Packard wins massive fraud case in UK

LONDON: US tech giant Hewlett Packard won its multibillion-dollar fraud case on Friday over its 2011 purchase of British software company Autonomy. A year after the deal, HP accused Autonomy of fudging its accounts, claiming it had inflated its value and caused huge losses for the US company when the true situation emerged after the \$11.1-billion (9.9-billion-euro) sale.

HP sued two executives, Mike Lynch, Autonomy's British founder, and former chief financial officer Sushovan Hussain, for around five billion dollars. In a summary of his decision in what is believed to be Britain's biggest-ever civil fraud trial, judge Robert Hildyard said HP and the other claimants had "substantially won".

Hildyard said the damages to be paid will be determined at a later date. HP claimed the two men had "artificially inflated Autonomy's reported revenues, revenue growth and gross margins... over a sustained period of time."

The company announced an \$8.8-billion write-down of the firm's value just over a year after the sale. Interior minister Priti Patel on Friday signed an order for the extradition of Lynch to the United States, where he faces separate criminal proceedings over the sale, the Home Office said in a statement. Lynch has the right to apply to the High Court to appeal the extradition order, it added.

Lynch has denied any wrongdoing. A lawyer for the businessman, Kelvin Nicholls, said the court's ruling was "disappointing", and added that Lynch "intends to appeal". Another of Lynch's lawyers, Chris Morvillo, said his client "firmly denies the charges brought against him in the US and will continue to fight to establish his innocence".

Lynch was "a British citizen who ran a British company in Britain, subject to British laws and rules and that is where the matter should be resolved," Morvillo said. Lynch, from Suffolk in eastern England, claimed HP was making him "a scapegoat for their failures".

HP's lawyer Laurence Rabinowitz told the court that Autonomy used "a variety" of fraudulent devices to boost or invent revenue. A US court in 2018 convicted Autonomy's finance chief Hussain of fraud relating to the sale and jailed him for five years. —AFP



Pablo Ning, President of Huawei Consumer Business Group - Middle East and Africa

New Huawei P50 Pro, Huawei P50 Pocket released in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei P50 Pro is the ultimate camera phone with aesthetic design while Huawei P50 Pocket brings fashion, beauty and tech innovations into the fold.

Huawei announced the launch of the Huawei P50 Pro - the ultimate Camera Phone with Aesthetic Design and the new HUAWEI P50 Pocket - a beautiful foldable phone with fashion beauty and technological innovation in Kuwait during a regional launch event held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia that was attended by various media and guests.

The Huawei P50 Pro will be up for grabs in two beautiful, premium finishes - Cocoa Gold and Golden Black in Kuwait on 3rd February 2022 with ongoing pre-order started from 27th January 2022 at a price of KD 319,900 and including free gifts for the Value of up to KD 131,000 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers.

While the Huawei P50 Pocket will be available in White and Premium Gold in Kuwait on 10th February 2022 with pre-order starting on 3rd February 2022 at a price from KD 429,900 and including free gifts for the Value of up to KD 173,000 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers.

Here are four reasons why we love these two magnificent flagships from Huawei.

Reason 1: It's all about the looks!

Both of these phones have amazing designs. The Dual-Matrix camera design of the Huawei P50 Pro is unique with its double ring structure and makes the phone instantly recognizable. On the front, the

phone features an expansive 6.6 inch 3D curved screen with a single punch hole camera. Gaming and watching videos on this HDR display with support for the full P3 color gamut is a pleasure. The display is a 120Hz True-Chroma Display with a 300Hz touch sampling rate for a smooth user experience. Moreover, the IP68 water and dust resistance will let you have peace of mind.

Coming to the Huawei P50 Pocket, it is a beautiful phone with a seamless fold that leaves no gaps and folds into a thin and light form. This makes the phone easy to hold and pocket. The seamless fold is made possible by the new-generation Multi-Dimensional Hinge with a short radius. This hinge, combined with the exclusive Multi-Dimensional Lifting design, allows the Huawei P50 Pocket to have a smooth and flat screen while also allowing the device to stay slim.

Reason 2: The cameras!

The Huawei P50 Pro's Dual-Matrix Camera system delivers True to Life imagery with extreme clarity. The Huawei XD Optics allow consumers to capture amazing images and reproduce fine details. Huawei P50 Pro also launches with XD Fusion Pro, an improved solution that incorporates a new Super Color Filter System, True-Chroma Image Engine and Super HDR technology to significantly improve detail, color and dynamic range. It also supports an unprecedented 200 times zoom range, helping users capture any object regardless of distance.

The True-Chroma Image Engine delivers the highest possible color accuracy, creating images that reflect what is seen by the human eye. The ambient light sensing system uses a 10-channel multi-spectrum sensor, which is coupled with color calibration of more than 2,000 colors across the P3 wide color gamut, to improve its ability to detect ambient light and average color hue accuracy by 50 percent and 20 percent respectively. In low-

light scenarios, pictures come out brighter and more detailed. The Super HDR technology captures 28 percent more of the dynamic range for better backlit performance, while light and shadows are optimized. The HUAWEI P50 Pro supports 4K video recording across the full focal range. The all-new AIS Pro image stabilization solution helps users easily capture stable handheld videos, while AI cinematograph is great for creative shots that showcase minor movements.

Reason 3: Long battery life and fast charging speeds

What powers the Huawei P50 Pro is a large 4,360mAh battery that supports 66W Huawei SuperCharge and 50W Wireless Huawei SuperCharge. What is mind-blowing is that even with a battery of this capacity, the phone is just 8.5mm thick. As for the Huawei P50 Pocket, it also has a large battery that supports the 40W Huawei SuperCharge.

Reason 4: Super device features

Both phones are powered by EMUI 12 that produces an innovative UI with a clean and elegant look. Controlling multiple devices at once is as easy as controlling just one single device, thanks to the Super Device features. With the Distributed File System, both of these phones can also function as a wirelessly connected external storage unit for the PC, meaning you can access the files you want more easily than ever before.

Lastly, one feature on the Huawei P50 Pocket worth mentioning is the Smart Cover Screen that allows you to check notifications, schedules, calendar, music, weather, and more. Content and services seamlessly flow between the main screen and the cover screen, and users can even access the camera from the Cover Screen.

So what do you think of the new flagships from Huawei? We absolutely love them!

New Delhi's homeless shiver through harsh cold snap

NEW DELHI: India's capital New Delhi is shivering through an unusually harsh bout of harsh winter cold, blamed for killing scores of homeless people and leaving other hard-up residents struggling to keep warm. The sprawling megacity's 20 million inhabitants are accustomed to year-round weather extremes, from blistering summer heat to torrential downpours and thick, toxic smog at the end of autumn.

Still, the bracing chill and blustery rains this month have been an ordeal for many, with Delhi on Tuesday recording its coldest January day in nearly a decade.

"There's no denying that it's very cold," 30-year-old Mukesh told AFP from his bed at a homeless shelter on the weekend. He and a small group of the shelter's residents have taken to huddling around an improvised wood fire, a scene repeated around the city's kerbsides each night this month. "The last ten days have been very cold and especially this past week, there was not much sunshine. We have been worried because we have to try hard to keep warm," Mukesh said.

Recent figures on homelessness across Delhi are hard to come by, but according to India's 2011 census, around 47,000 of the city's residents were sleeping rough. Activists, however, say that is a vast underestimate. Official figures show the city's homeless shelters are only able to accommodate around 9,300 people.

Sunil Kumar Aledia of the Centre for Holistic Development, who has worked with Delhi's homeless population for decades, said the city has seen around 176 deaths from exposure to the cold so far this year.

"Because of these extreme temperatures, many people on the streets die," he told AFP.

'This situation is not normal'

India's weather bureau has told local media that Delhi's maximum daily temperatures have been between two and six degrees Celsius below normal for most of January. On Tuesday, just 12.1 degrees Celsius (54 Fahrenheit) was recorded, the lowest January maximum since 2013 and 10 degrees below the long-term average for the month.

The lows have been in single digits for much of the last few weeks. "This situation is not normal," said Anjal Prakash of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy, a think-tank that has worked with the United Nations on climate change modeling. Extreme weather phenomena "are going to be much more frequent and also the severity of these events will (rise) in future", he told AFP.

The humans of Delhi are not the only ones suffering through the cold spell.

The city's stray dogs often congregate around markets and as the cold sets in each year, many are put in special jackets and fed hot meals to help them endure the weather. "This year, we felt the cold a lot more, both me and my dogs," said Raju Kashyap, who runs an outdoor tea shop and looks after some of the area's strays.

"But I had to get out of the home and run my stall... I have to come and stand here to feed them because they depend on me," he said. —AFP



NEW DELHI: In this picture taken on Saturday shows homeless people gathered besides a bonfire to keep themselves warm in a wintry evening in New Delhi. —AFP

China factory activity drops in Jan amid COVID outbreaks

Businesses struggle with sporadic disruptions due to cases

BEIJING: Factory activity in China edged down in January, official figures showed yesterday, but slightly exceeded expectations as businesses struggled with sporadic disruptions due to coronavirus outbreaks. The Purchasing Managers' Index—a key gauge of manufacturing activity—in the world's second-largest economy inched down to 50.1, just above the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction.

The data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows a slight decrease from last month's reading of 50.3, when activity was buoyed by an easing of commodity prices. "Faced with a complex and severe economic environment and scattered outbreaks ... China's economy continued to recover and develop, though growth levels somewhat declined," said NBS statistician Zhao Qinghe.

The NBS reading contrasted with a private survey of smaller manufacturers, which fell by 1.8 points to 49.1.

"The slowdown is particularly severe for the small firms," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. The NBS figures have hovered in

growth territory since November, following a seven-month downward trend in part due to power shortages and high raw material prices.

The reading fell below 50 for two months in September and October as the power crunch hit business operations. Meanwhile, the non-manufacturing business activity index was 51.1 in January, a contraction of 1.6 points from the previous month. The decline was due in part to a slowing recovery in the services sector and a seasonal slowdown in construction.

Analysts have warned that domestic coronavirus outbreaks will likely continue to weigh on China's economy as sporadic outbreaks dent consumer confidence and cause business shutdowns.

Beijing is on high alert for new virus outbreaks as it prepares to host next month's Winter Olympics. Authorities locked down an area neighboring Beijing this week following a handful of reported cases, appearing not to publicly announce restrictions that have confined around 1.2 million people in Xiong'an New Area to their homes. — AFP



FUYANG, China: Women working on an assembly line producing speakers at a factory in Fuyang in China's eastern Anhui province. Factory activity in China edged down in January, official figures showed yesterday. — AFP

Gulf Bank's WISE Investment portfolios achieve record returns in 2021

KUWAIT: For the fifth year in a row, Gulf Bank announced that its WISE Investments portfolios achieved record returns in 2021, with returns averaging 5.6 percent for conservative portfolios, and 18.6 percent for high-risk portfolios; total assets under management of the platform increased by 150 percent.

The bank indicated that the WISE Investments Islamic portfolio, which Gulf Bank launched at the beginning of 2021, achieved returns of 19.1 percent, while the Income portfolio returns (which also launched at the beginning of 2021) achieved returns of 9.7 percent, supported by annual dividends of 4.8 percent.

Dalya Al-Qassem, Head of Investment Advisory at Gulf Bank, commented: "We are extremely proud to celebrate our fifth successful year since Gulf Bank launched its WISE Investments platform. Due to WISE's resounding success, we are also especially

excited to announce that our clients have also increased by more than 100 percent in 2021 alone, a testament to our record returns."

Al-Qassem indicated that the WISE platform continued to achieve record returns and exceed client expectations, despite market fluctuations and the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. Thanks to the digital platform's competitive advantages, WISE continues to provide investment solutions that meet customers' goals, needs and desires, whether clients choose to invest in moderate, high-risk, and/or Shariah-compliant investments. At the same time, clients enjoy complete control over their portfolios, investing more or withdrawing their portfolios based on their needs, in addition to being able to track their portfolios anytime, anywhere through their mobile devices.

She noted that Gulf Bank's CMA-certified and diligent Investment Advisors continue to raise investment awareness and support their clients in their journeys to achieving their future investment and financial goals, assisting them in developing their wealth and savings over time.

Al-Qassem stated that Gulf Bank's WISE

Investments is the ideal solution to invest in global markets easily, transparently, and at a low cost, enabling investors to achieve their investment and saving goals through carefully selected, diversified investment opportunities. By building uniquely tailored portfolios for clients, that are customized based on their clients' financial goals, investment horizons and risk appetites, WISE Investments assists clients in attaining their investment goals and growing their wealth. She also pointed out that Gulf Bank's WISE Investments is an advisory and portfolio management service that follows a Nobel Prize-winning investment strategy, providing Gulf Bank clients with the opportunity to invest in international markets in an easy, transparent and cost-efficient way. The principle of WISE Investments is to invest through international, diversified portfolios while achieving the ideal risk-adjusted return in the long term.

Moreover, Al-Qassem noted that, as a digital investment tool, WISE provides its clients with the opportunity to invest in a globally diversified portfolio with a long-term approach. By filling out a simple questionnaire, WISE determines customers' financial goals, risk appetite, and investment horizon, to recommend a portfolio that is customized to their needs. Over the course of the investment period, Gulf Bank's investment managers continuously monitor and review their clients' portfolios, in an effort to safeguard and increase their wealth. In addition to periodic meetings with clients to ensure the alignment of the investment

performance with the client's goals.

It is noteworthy that investment through the "WISE" platform is available to Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, as well as Kuwaiti citizens residing abroad, who have accounts with Gulf Bank, noting that the minimum amount to open a portfolio is \$10,000.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with the different relevant parties to achieve it.

For more information on Gulf Bank's various initiatives and activities, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches or log on to Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number.



Dalya Al-Qassem



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 27 JANUARY 2022

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvest
al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	32,558	7,991.14	-0.5%	4.6%	4.6%	390,131,173	153,761,164	23,210	28.7	2.3	75.6%
Main Market	10,497	6,019.69	-0.7%	2.3%	2.3%	887,875,411	110,619,251	29,896	17.3	1.8	24.4%
All Share	43,055	7,326.82	-0.5%	4.0%	4.0%	1,278,006,584	264,380,415	53,106	26.5	2.2	100%

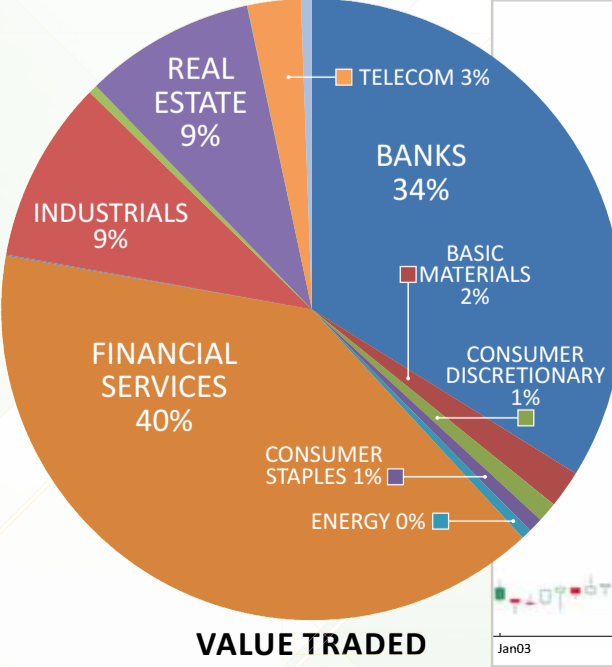
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	25,309	1,701.32	-0.7%	4.8%	4.8%	189,414,059	89,495,762	10,783	29.9	2.4	58.04%
BASIC MATERIALS	994	1,111.76	0.6%	8.5%	8.5%	11,121,933	5,151,868	917	27.2	1.6	2.28%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	737	1,437.76	0.1%	7.6%	7.6%	14,055,683	2,751,151	1,553	16.1	7.1	1.69%
CONSUMER STAPLES	222	728.28	-0.8%	-0.4%	-0.4%	3,435,187	2,003,912	284	14.8	1.5	0.51%
ENERGY	298	1,432.49	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	23,022,827	1,415,804	1,051	12.5	1.5	0.68%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,332	1,504.69	-1.1%	5.7%	5.7%	745,657,586	104,777,375	21,986	9.2	1.8	9.94%
HEALTH CARE	401	806.88	-0.5%	1.2%	1.2%	136,121	167,997	5	29.0	5.1	0.92%
INDUSTRIALS	4,142	1,166.79	0.2%	2.2%	2.2%	77,899,655	25,071,983	6,207	37.3	1.3	9.50%
INSURANCE	633	1,506.84	-0.6%	-1.7%	-1.7%	4,391,114	1,214,232	375	7.4	1.1	1.45%
REAL ESTATE	2,917	1,354.10	-0.6%	2.1%	2.1%	179,654,832	23,459,223	7,644	20.6	1.3	6.69%
TECHNOLOGY	9	668.57	-1.7%	-2.2%	-2.2%	685,400	62,788	72	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,363	1,094.87	0.1%	0.5%	0.5%	21,852,517	7,312,515	1,717	20.5	1.4	7.71%
UTILITIES	246	586.84	-1.3%	-2.2%	-2.2%	6,679,670	1,495,808	512	18.9	4.0	0.56%

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ACICO	161	15.83	28,171,659	4,227,232	781
ALSAFAT	162	15.71	61,215,243	9,337,122	1,385
AGHC	440	9.45	17,311,590	7,613,757	1,909
INOVEST	170	8.28	54,804,621	8,904,578	1,370
KPPC	60.9	8.17	45,380,431	2,676,566	967

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
PAPCO	54.7	-13.99	3	0	3
FTI	54	-12.48	4,799	267	3
ARGAN	100	-11.50	40,393	4,194,249	19
KHOT	70.8	-8.05	121	9	2
ERESCO	71.4	-7.99	4,414,198	320,477	300

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	101	-4.72	181,729,469	18,577,611	2,431
AAYAN	174	-1.14	76,458,891	13,398,522	1,131
AUB	279	-0.71	63,784,862	17,826,162	1,207
ALSAFAT	162	15.71	61,215,243	9,337,122	1,385
MANAZEL	55.4	1.10	55,664,625	3,141,586	1,653

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	905	-0.55	33,880,854	30,626,700	3,432
NBK	1,043	-0.10	18,704,204	19,471,528	1,776
GFH	101	-4.72	181,729,469	18,577,611	2,431
AUB	279	-0.71	63,784,862	17,826,162	1,207
AAYAN	174	-1.14	76,458,891	13,398,522	1,131



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value decreased 32% and 27%, respectively. Main market volume increased 1%, while value decreased 4%.
- Premier and Main indices dropped during the week due to geopolitical concerns but managed to rebound from support levels on Thursday.
- Technically, the All-Share index closed at 7326, support levels at 7318, 7286, and 7250, while resistance at 7357 and 7417. Premier index closed at 7991, support levels at 7979, 7938, and 7868, while resistance at 8005, 8044, and 8089. The Main index closed at 6019, support levels at 5990, 5970, and 5959, while resistance at 6023, 6058, and 6083.

Lifestyle | Gossip

Channing Tatum went on a road trip with his dying dog



The 'Magic Mike' actor has made his directorial debut with 'Dog' - in which he plays an army veteran who has a special bond with a mischievous hound - and he admitted his own relationship with his canine companion was part of the inspiration for the project. Channing - who has co-directed the movie with Reid Carolin - said: "My dog was dying and so we went on one last

road trip together. "When I came back, I told the boys at the office about the experience and how emotional it was, and that's really where the story came from. "We wanted to make it a feel good movie though, and have people enjoy the experience of being in the theatre, because every time we told people we were making a dog movie they were like, 'Does the dog die? I don't want to watch the dog

die.' " Channing also looked to Tom Hanks' classic canine cop caper 'Turner & Hooch' for tips. He said: "I really enjoyed that film as a kid, it's Tom Hanks and a dog, what's not to like? "In terms of acting with the dog, I actually took a lot of inspiration from that movie." But some dog films proved to be too much for the star and his eight-year-old daughter Everly, who he has with ex-wife Jenna Dewan.

He added to Empire magazine: "Then 'Benji' was also a big hitter for me. "I tried to show my daughter that movie and we didn't make it through, she just cried and cried. "I was thinking, 'Man, my parents let me watch this as a child? What's wrong with my parents?'"

Queen Elizabeth launches own line of condiments

Queen Elizabeth has launched her own line of condiments. The 95-year-old monarch is releasing her own tomato ketchup and brown sauce, made from ingredients grown on her Sandringham estate, with the ketchup described as "ideal for breakfast or any time of the day," while the brown sauce is "packed with vinegar and spices." They come in a 10 oz. glass bottle with a Royal Estate label. A note on the bottle states: "A real family favorite, packed full of tomato and lightly spiced, this ketchup is delightful. Vibrant and fruity, this ketchup can be enjoyed any time of the day, per-



fect to add flavor to a dish." Queen Elizabeth is said to be a fan of fish and chips, with a source previously explaining: "She very occasionally treats herself to fish and chips when at Balmoral. A footman is dispatched to get it from the local town of Ballater." And former royal chef Darren McGrady once revealed that kitchen staff would make their own versions of takeout food for the Queen and her family. He said: "It always tickled me at Balmoral, we would make our own burgers. They would shoot deer, and we would do venison burgers. There'd be gorgeous cranberry and everything stuffed into them, but we never set buns out. "The only thing you would pick up and eat with your fingers is afternoon tea."

Taylor Lautner's crying fiancée

Taylor Lautner's fiancée found it hard to accept his proposal because she was crying so much. The 29-year-old actor proposed to Taylor Dome in the kitchen of their home in November 2021 but admitted emotions got the better of Dome and she could barely answer his question through her tears. He told Access Hollywood: "It actually did take her a little longer than expected to say 'yes' because she was weeping so hard. She couldn't even walk up to me. So I was on my mark and I had to leave the mark to go get her to lift her up from crying ... It took a sec, but it was super sweet." The pair met through Lautner's sister Makena Moore and he was immediately smitten. He said: "I knew when I first met her that I wanted to get to know her more, and I really, really could see a future with her. She's a fantastic woman and I'm very lucky that she chose me. "She always has said, 'I don't want anything special. I don't want anything big and grand. [Propose] in the kitchen'. "I love cooking, so I make us food all the time in the kitchen and we just eat at the counter. And she's like, 'One night after we eat in the kitchen, that's all I want. Simple.' " However, Taylor joked that getting engaged to someone with the same name as him was incredibly narcissistic. He quipped: "It's going to get very confusing ... the narcissism is incredible."



Ronaldo '1000 per cent' sure he will wed Rodriguez

Cristiano Ronaldo is "1000 per cent" certain he will marry Georgina Rodriguez. The 36-year-old soccer star insisted he and partner Georgina, 28, will tie the knot and predicted it could even happen in the next month. Speaking on new Netflix series, 'I Am Georgina', he said: "I always tell Georgina that when we get that click, like everything with our life and she knows what I'm talking about. It could be in a year, or it could be in six months or in a month. I'm 1000 per cent sure it will happen." Georgina is currently pregnant with twins and the couple have four-year-old daughter Alana together. Cristiano is also dad to Cristiano Jr, 11, and twins Eva and

Mateo, four. Meanwhile, Georgina previously revealed she briefly ended her relationship with Cristiano after her father suffered a stroke. The former Gucci sales assistant had been on a string of dates with the soccer star when her dad Jorge was rushed to hospital in 2016, so she pulled back from their burgeoning romance because she felt too "sad" focus on her personal life. Cristiano said of their romance: "It wasn't sudden. It took a bit, perhaps a couple of months, because during that time we kind of stopped seeing each other." Georgina - whose father died in 2019 - explained: "Cristiano had a lot of games, the thing with my father also happened then. "For a bit I was a little absent, well I was sad... and one day we ran into each other at another event and he asked me for dinner I thought, 'Finally, my chance has come'. "Five years ago, my life changed. Thanks to love, my life is now a dream. Nothing in life has come easy. I know what it is to have nothing and to have everything."

Lamar Odom's ex is writing a tell-all book

Liza Morales - who has children Destiny, 24, and Lamar Jr., 20 with the troubled former basketball player - is preparing to share all about the "trauma" she endured during her relationship with Lamar. Speaking about her new book 'Cutting Trauma Ties', Liza, 42, told the New York Post's Page Six:



Blunt jokes he will release new music if Spotify does not remove Rogan podcast

James Blunt has jokingly threatened to release new music if Spotify doesn't remove Joe Rogan's controversial podcast. After Neil Young and Joni Mitchell demanded their tracks are taken off the streaming service due to their objections to podcaster Rogan spreading false information regarding the coronavirus vaccine, James, 47, quipped he will do the opposite and release more music in protest. He tweeted: "If @Spotify doesn't immediately remove @JoeRogan, I will release new music onto the platform. #youwerebeautiful." This comes after Neil had his music removed from Spotify as he expressed frustration that the service was "spreading fake information about vaccines". In a request to the company, the 76-year-old singer said: "I want you to let Spotify know immediately TODAY that I want all my music off their platform. They can have [Joe] Rogan or Young. Not both. "I am doing this because Spotify is spreading fake information about vaccines - potentially causing death to those who believe the disinformation being spread by them. Please act on this immediately today and keep me informed of the time schedule." The streaming service later responded: "We want all the world's music and audio content to be available to Spotify users. With that comes great responsibility in balancing both safety for listeners and freedom for creators. We have detailed content policies in place and we've removed over 20,000 podcast episodes related to Covid since the start of the pandemic. We regret Neil's decision to remove his music from Spotify, but hope to welcome him back soon." In a note on her official website titled 'I Stand With Neil Young!', Joni, 78, added: "I've decided to remove all my music from Spotify. Irresponsible people are spreading lies that are costing people their lives. I stand in solidarity with Neil Young and the global scientific and medical communities on this issue."

Gervais 'didn't kill' Golden Globes

Ricky Gervais has insisted he "didn't kill" the Golden Globe Awards. The 62-year-old actor has anchored the ceremony five times since 2010 but this year, the event was scaled back dramatically, only held online and not televised amid controversy surrounding a lack of diversity within Hollywood Foreign Press Association. And despite the outrage sparked during his hosting stints because of his mocking of the celebrity guests, the 'After Life' star insisted he had nothing to do with the fall of the event. He said: "It's not my fault. Please make it clear that it's not my fault. I didn't kill the awards. "I did enjoy doing the Golden Globes - it was three hours of my life once every few years, although for a lot of people it's what I'm most famous for. "The last time I hosted it was two years ago and it feels like a different



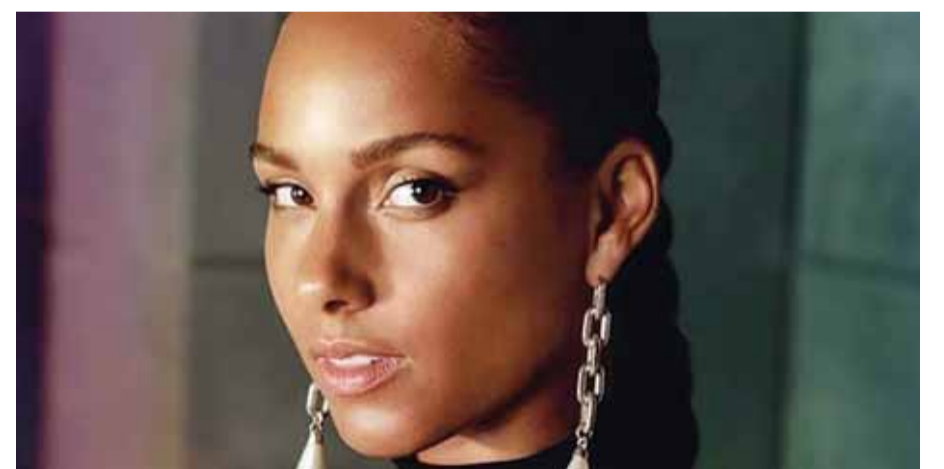
time... when the worst thing that was happening was me insulting actors." The 'Extras' star admitted hosting the Globes was the "most nerve-wracking" thing he's ever done - which is why he enjoyed it so much. He told heat magazine: "It's the most nerve-wracking thing I've ever done. "It's the only time I ever get an adrenaline rush or get nervous about stuff because I get one shot at it. "It's like taking a penalty. I've just got to score. "All I care about it, 'I've got to do that joke well. I don't care what they think of it. I don't care if I'm hated. I don't care if I have to go into hiding. I just have to say that joke well." "If I fluffed the joke - oh my god, I'd never get over it."



West drama only bringing 'Davidson and Kardashian closer together'

Kanye West is bringing Kim Kardashian and Pete Davidson closer together. The 44-year-old rapper has launched a series of vocal attacks on Pete, 28, after the comedian started dating Kanye's estranged wife Kim, 41, but the pair are determined to ignore the controversy and it has only made them stronger as a couple. A source told the New York Post's Page Six: "[Kanye's actions] in an effort to convince Kim to come back are actually bringing Pete and Kim closer together." However, Kim is said to be worried about how Kanye's actions are affecting their children, North, eight, Saint, six, Chicago, four, and Psalm, two. The source said: "Kim truly wants Kanye to be at peace with their marriage being over and find happiness, whether it's with Julia [Fox] or

someone else, so they can focus on raising their children together in a more positive way. "She is worried about how all of these things that are being played out so publicly on Kanye's end will affect their kids in the future and feels that any issues should be resolved privately." Meanwhile, it was recently revealed that Pete is looking to get his own place in Los Angeles to be closer to Kim. A source told Us Weekly: "Pete's been spending more time in LA to be close to Kim, and he's looking to find a place there. "They've definitely gotten serious." Meanwhile, Pete has already made a positive impression on Kim's family, with a source recently revealing that the Kardashian/Jenner clan "adore" the comedian.



Beatz learnt a lot about Keys from docuseries

Alicia Keys' husband learned a lot about her by watching her docuseries. The 41-year-old singer has been married to Swizz Beatz - the father of her sons Egypt, 11, and seven-year-old Genesis - since 2010 but the 43-year-old producer was still taken by surprise by some of the revelations in her YouTube program 'Noted: Alicia Keys the Untold Stories'. She said: "When we were at the end and finishing all the edits and everything, he said to me, 'There's so much about you I don't know. I didn't know a lot of this stuff.' "That was the first time I've been able to share these stories and see how they all connect together."

Although Alicia admitted it is easy to hide her "vulnerabilities", opening up in the show was easier because she'd already done so with her memoir 'More Myself'. She told America's OK! magazine: "I think all of us are expected to put on a certain fa ade and hide our pain and our vulnerabilities and I'm very familiar with that. "In my book, 'More Myself', which came out right when the pandemic hit, a lot of opening up had to happen to fill up the pages with these memories and stories. "It was hard, but I think I might have broken the wall with that. "When it came time to do the series, I took those things and went deeper." While she may have just released her eighth album, 'Keys', the 'Empire State of Mind' hitmaker isn't planning to rest any time soon as she's got a lot in the pipeline. She said: "There are so many things coming, films, television, and theatre pieces I'm developing. "I'm so excited about continuing to grow as an artist and creator. "So this is like the beginning. What I'm about to do is bigger and crazier than ever."— Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features

Mark Wright's cancer scare was a 'scary' time

The former 'Extra' presenter revealed last month he'd had a 12cm growth removed from his armpit and he has told how he had a "worrying" few weeks waiting to find out what had caused the tumor, with things particularly concerning because of the rate it was growing. Asked if it was frightening, he told Britain's OK! magazine: "It was at first. They couldn't tell me if it was

a lipoma. "Even after ultrasound scans and MRIs and stuff, they still couldn't tell me. "It was just so big and it was growing quite fast, so that's what was worrying for me. "Instead of doing a biopsy, they whipped it out and then I got the results about a week later and found it wasn't cancer. "So it was scary up until that point, then I felt so much better." Mark - who is married to actress Michelle Keegan - pre-

viously revealed he wanted to speak about his health issues in the hope it could help someone in a similar situation. He wrote on Instagram: "Ok, it's been a tough call whether or not to speak about this. "One part of me wants to keep something like this private and the other part is thinking, if I can help/potentially save 1 person, well.... this is the right thing to do." The 34-year-old star also encouraged his

fans to get things on their body checked out if they "don't look or feel quite right". He added: "MORAL OF THE STORY: If you notice anything that doesn't look or feel quite right. Don't leave it. Nothing in life is more important than your health and well-being. Get checked, check yourself and make sure you take good care of yourself. (sic)"



Roberts doesn't 'aspire' to be like her aunt Roberts

Emma Roberts has never felt under pressure to live up to her aunt Julia Roberts. The 40-year-old is the niece of the Hollywood icon - who has starred in movies such as 'Erin Brockovich' and 'Pretty Woman' - but explained that she wants to do her "own thing" when it comes to acting. Emma told Tatler magazine: "I never aspired to be her. I love her so much, I love her

work, but I'm just doing my own thing." The 'American Horror Story' star also revealed that some of her fondest childhood memories are of visiting Julia on the set of her movies and says it taught her a lot about the industry. Emma recalled: "I'd write the wardrobe tags and organize the make-up brushes and watch how they did their continuity books. I would ask questions without a



filter. This industry really is 'learn as you go'." She also discussed how her role in the 2008 movie 'Wild Child' - which told the story of an American girl who is forced to go to boarding school in England - enabled her to explore her love of Britain. Emma explained: "I was obsessed with the royals, obsessed with having an English accent. When I realize that the role meant filming in England for a summer, I felt my life was about to start. "I remember seeing Buckingham Palace and thinking, 'Wait, someone lives there?' "I would love to do a period drama in England. That's definitely on my acting bucket list." Emma also reflected on the unwanted attention that comes with fame and how she was hounded by paparazzi while pregnant with her 14-month-old son Rhodes, who she has with former partner Garrett Hedlund. The star said: "The way I was followed and treated when I was pregnant was disgusting. I'd be driving to a doctor's appointment and they'd be following me so closely. "At one point, I remember saying to them, 'Please don't do that, I'm eight months pregnant.' But they don't care. It's not the fun, creative part of the job, for sure."

Michael Buble prioritizes family over his music career

Michael Buble will always prioritize his family over his music career. The 46-year-old singer - who has Noah, eight, Elias, six, and Vida, three, with his wife Luisana Lopilato - insists it's impossible to find a perfect balance between his professional life and his personal life. He said: "You know that one will always be hurt by the other. "In my case, I will never allow my job to interfere with being a father and a husband - that's gotta be first, and everything else is a bonus. I think I have a lot of integrity in whatever I do work-wise, but that integrity is there because my family keeps me grounded." Michael knows he's in a privileged position as a successful musician. But the 'Haven't Met You Yet' hitmaker is determined to put his family before his career. He told

People: "It's scary, you know, the fame and fortune that comes with this. "There's not a ton of redeeming things about being in the business besides doing the work that you love. Once in a while I get into cool restaurants, that's true, and I'm not complaining, but I definitely think I've always tried to make sure to put family first and let everything else fall into place." However, Michael admits his attitude has changed markedly since the start of his career. He said: "Like anyone who wants to make it in this business, you have to prove yourself and fight for every single inch. "I often talk about it like I was a horse with blinders on. That's all I thought about. That's all I saw and, thank God, because it's the reason that I am where I am today, but now I always make sure that my priority is being with my family."



Magical but messy: Rome scares off its starlings

As the sun sets over central Rome, five figures in white overalls move under the trees. They wave speakers emitting a mix of sharp cries, and the birds rise into the air. Every winter, the skies over Italy's capital are filled with the mesmerizing sight of thousands of starlings swooping and diving in unison. But when they stop to rest on the trees, their droppings coat the pavements and cars below-prompting the city authorities, every year, to try to scare them away. "We act on their fear reflex by using their own alarm call," said Marianna Di Santo, clad head-to-toe in white protective clothing and heading towards the birds gathered in trees around Termini central train station. "It's as if they were warning each other that this is a dangerous place and they should move away," said Di Santo, whose company, Fauna Urbis, is hired by the Rome authorities to disperse the starlings.



In this file photo a murmuration of starlings flies over pine trees and the equestrian statue of King Vittorio Emanuele II as the night falls over Piazza Venezia in central Rome.



Members of the association Fauna Urbis carry out a wintering starlings removal operation.

Up to one million
Between October and February every year, millions of starlings migrate from northern Europe to Italy in search of warmer temperatures for the winter. Their synchronized ballets-murmurations-over the Eternal City's centuries-old churches, palaces and ruins entrances passers-by. "I've never seen such a thing in my life. It's spectacular," said Spanish tourist Eva Osuna, taking out her phone to capture the magic. The glossy dark-feathered birds, which measure up to 20 centimeters each, spend the day feeding in rural areas before heading back into town to sleep, explains ornithologist Francesca

Manzia from Italy's League for Bird Protection (LIPU). "In the city, the temperatures are higher and the light helps them find their way around, and protects them from predators," she told AFP. Warmer temperatures in northern European caused by climate change have shortened the starlings' stay in Italy, but their sheer numbers make them a force to be reckoned with. Between 500,000 and one million are believed to be in Rome this year, according to one expert. Naturally "gregarious", according to

Manzia, they stick together at night, creating collective dormitories in the trees. She insisted the starlings "do not carry diseases" but pose problems "because of their droppings, which make the roads slippery and smell very strong".

In their nature
Such is the problem that, even on a clear day, it is not uncommon to see Romans walking along tree-lined streets with umbrellas as protection against the birds. City authorities use sounds and

also lights not to chase the birds out of the city, but to split them up into smaller, more manageable groups. Sounds are "the most simply and effective" way of moving the birds on, said Valentina de Tommaso from Fauna Urbis. She works two or three times a week near Termini, which-with its lights and shelter from the wind-is a "comfortable" place for the birds to rest.

"We play recordings for about 10 minutes, with breaks in between so they do not get used to the noise"-a tactic that aims to be annoying but harmless, she

said. The piercing noise draws a small crowd, some of them approving, others less so. "They pose lots of problems. Walking around under flocks of starlings is not really ideal," said Francesco Fusco, a 55-year-old engineer. "They are magnificent," counters 16-year-old Alessio Reiti, saying he does not understand why they need to be scared away.

"It's in their nature. We are not going to make them wear nappies!" he said, laughing.-AFP



In this file photo a murmuration of starlings flies over pine trees and the equestrian statue of King Vittorio Emanuele II as the night falls over Piazza Venezia in central Rome.



Wintering starlings fly over Piazza dei Cinquecento by the Termini railway station.



This file photo shows starlings flying over the Altare della Patria monument in Rome.

NFL legend Brady poised to retire after 22 seasons

'All the moments. All the memories. Thank you for everything'

News in brief

Fan dies of cardiac arrest

LONDON: A Fulham supporter died on Saturday after suffering a cardiac arrest which led to the Championship game against Blackpool at Craven Cottage being halted for over 40 minutes. "It is with immense sadness that we inform fans of the passing of supporter, Paul Parish," Fulham said in a statement. "Paul suffered a cardiac arrest and received treatment in the Hammersmith Stand at this afternoon's match before being transferred to the hospital. He sadly passed away this evening. "Our condolences and the thoughts of everyone at Fulham Football Club go out to Paul's family, friends and loved ones." Aleksandar Mitrovic scored his 28th goal of the season to put Fulham ahead, but the match was stopped just after the quarter-hour mark as the supporter received medical treatment. Blackpool equalized in the 57th minute through Josh Bowler after play resumed and it finished 1-1. Blackburn remained second in the table following a goalless draw away to Luton. — AFP

Makabu retains WBC title

LOS ANGELES: Ilunga Makabu retained his World Boxing Council cruiserweight world title with a split-decision victory over Thabiso Mchunu in Warren, Ohio, on Saturday. Democratic Republic of Congo's Makabu beat the South African challenger for the second time, after stopping him in the 11th round back in 2015 in Durban. This time it was a close, strategic bout with two judges scoring it in favor of Makabu, 115-113 and 116-112, and the third judge seeing it 115-113 for Mchunu. "I already beat Thabiso the first time and did it again," said Makabu, who improved to 29-2 with 25 knockouts. "I didn't come for a knockout. I just came to box." Mchunu, who fell to 23-6 with 13 knockouts, was angry at the result, shoving Makabu aside after the fight. — AFP

Bordeaux-Begles beat Castres

BORDEAUX: Bordeaux-Begles dominated Castres to win 23-10 on Saturday and increase their lead at the top of the French Top 14 table, while reigning champions Toulouse lost at home to Racing 92. Bordeaux's fifth straight league victory took them 10 points clear of Montpellier, who beat La Rochelle 29-23 to move into second place. "The goal is to be in the top six," said Bordeaux boss Christophe Urios. "We are top and we want to stay that way for as long as possible." The home team led 20-0 at half-time following tries by Ulupano Seuteni and Louis Picamoles, both converted by Francois Trinh-Duc who also booted two penalties. — AFP

NEW YORK: Seven-time Super Bowl champion quarterback Tom Brady is poised to retire after 22 NFL seasons, according to multiple US media reports Saturday. The 44-year-old signal caller won his record seventh crown last year with Tampa Bay after taking six in 20 years with the New England Patriots. ESPN and the NFL Network reported Brady will hang up his helmet and cleats while CBS Sports declared his retirement was imminent, all citing unnamed sources. Brady's agent, Don Yee, would not confirm the gridiron legend's plans, only saying that nothing will be official until Brady says it is.

"I understand the advance speculation about Tom's future," Yee said in a statement to ESPN. "Without getting into the accuracy or inaccuracy of what's being reported, Tom will be the only person to express his plans with complete accuracy. "He knows the realities of the football business and planning calendar as well as anybody, so that should be soon." There was a sense that Brady did not wish to overshadow the NFL playoff games by making an announcement, but the reports drew wide reaction from around the league.

"All the moments. All the memories. Thank you for everything," the NFL tweeted, also sending, "GOAT" for Greatest of All Time and "Nobody Did It Better" with a list of Brady's historic achievements. Brady's own company, TB12sports, seemed to indicate his

mind was made up with a tweet "7 Super Bowl Rings. 5 Super Bowl MVPs. 3 League MVP Awards. 22 Incredible Seasons. Thank you for it all, @TomBrady" but they later deleted it. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers did not join in the Twitter farewells for Brady and only posted Brady highlights from the 2021 season on their website.

The Tampa Bay Times and BallySports reported that Brady had told Bucs general manager Jason Licht he had not made a decision, and Licht saying he would await official word from Brady on his decision. A reporter for KRON TV in San Francisco tweeted that Brady's father said the retirement reports were untrue. ESPN said it stands behind its reporting. Brady is a five-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player and three-time NFL season MVP. He won a record 243 regular-season games.

Brady set NFL passing records with 7,263 completions on 11,317 attempts for 84,520 yards and 624 touchdowns. He guided the Buccaneers to last year's Super Bowl title in his first season at Tampa Bay, then led them back into this year's playoffs, only to lose 30-27 to the Los Angeles Rams. Brady made an NFL one-season record 485 completions in the 2021 campaign for a career-high 5,316 passing yards, indicating that he could continue playing but will walk away on his own terms.

'I'll know when I know'

Brady spoke of being "satisfied" on



FOXBOROUGH: In this file photo, Tom Brady, #12 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, waves to the crowd as he runs off the field in the game at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. — AFP

his podcast last week, adding, "It's not always what I want. It's what we as a family want. And I'm going to spend a lot of time with them and figure out in the future what's next." Asked about a timetable, Brady said only, "I'll know when I know." Brady's exit would be the second retirement by a legendary NFL passer of the week after Pittsburgh Steelers star Ben Roethlisberger, a two-time Super Bowl winner, announced his retirement on Thursday.

ESPN reported Brady's decision

was based on several factors, including his family, his health and the need for the Buccaneers to make several roster moves in the off-season. "Thanks for everything big bro it was an honor," Bucs receiver Mike Evans tweeted. "The best ever," tweeted Bucs receiver Chris Godwin. "Congratulations bro @TomBrady grateful to have gotten to share the field with you! Much love fam." Former New England teammate and long-time Brady pal Julian Edelman tweeted, "Thanks for the memories, babe." — AFP

List edges Zalatoris in Torrey Pines playoff

LOS ANGELES: Luke List birdied the first playoff hole to beat Will Zalatoris in the Farmers Insurance Open on Saturday, notching his first US PGA Tour title in his 206th start. List, 37 and ranked 151st in the world, delivered a sensational final round on the South Course at Torrey Pines in La Jolla, California, where his seven birdies included four in a row on the front nine and a 13-footer for the clubhouse lead at the 18th.

His six-under par 66 put him at 15-under 273, and he had to wait a tense two hours to see if he'd be caught, with Zalatoris, former world number one Jason Day and current No. 1 Jon Rahm leading the charge. "It feels unbelievable," said List, who celebrated with his wife, Chloe, as he held their young daughter Ryann.

"I've worked really hard and to just have my family here means the world to me, so my daughter could see that," he said. "It's all worth it for this moment." Zalatoris, who started the day tied with Day for the lead, fired a one-under 71, moving to 15-under with birdies at the fifth and sixth and then paring his last

12 holes. Despite an errant tee shot at the 72nd hole he had an eight-foot putt for birdie and the win, but it ran out of steam and he and List headed back to the 18th tee to open the playoff with the light already fading on the California coast.

Both found the right fairway bunker off the tee - their balls nestling inches apart. Both blasted out into the fairway and from there List's masterful approach hit the green and curled toward the cup, leaving him a one-foot birdie putt. "I was just hoping for a playoff, and once I got that opportunity I just said, you know what, like I'm going to birdie this playoff hole whatever it takes. "Then I walked up and my ball's plugged and I said I'm still going to make birdie, I was super pumped," added List, who earned an invitation to the Masters.

Fighting like hell

He tapped it in, putting the pressure on Zalatoris, whose putt - similar to the one he faced in regulation - didn't threaten the hole. "It was a lot of fun," said Zalatoris, runner-up at last year's Masters to Hideki Matsuyama who remains in search of a first tour title. "I fought like hell all day." With darkness falling "fast," Zalatoris said, he had to "rely on past history" on the playoff hole. "I really couldn't see much in terms of the read, but I'm not even that disappointed with that part. I made three pars on 18 this week, and that's just not going to get it done." Australia's Day had moved to 15-under with a spectacular eagle at



LA JOLLA: Luke List hits the bunker on the 17th hole during the final round of The Farmers Insurance Open on January 29, 2022. — AFP

the par-four 14th, where he holed out from 118 yards out in the fairway.

But he bogeyed 16 and 17 before capping his round with a 10-foot birdie at the par-five 18th to finish in a tie for third with Rahm and Cameron Tringale. Spain's Rahm, who won his first major title at the US Open on the same Torrey Pines course last June, nabbed three of his four birdies in a burst at the seventh, eighth and ninth holes. He drained a 26-footer at 17 to pull within one shot of the lead but he couldn't take advantage of the par-five finishing hole. He closed with a 71, while Tringale carded a 70. — AFP

Al-Fatat win URC Women's Futsal League



Al-Fatat Club won the URC Women's Futsal League title by beating Kuwait 5-2 in the final match of the season on Saturday. Al-Arabi finished in third place.

Sports

Cameroon and Burkina Faso cruise into AFCON semi-finals

Burkina Faso stun Tunisia again as hero Ouattara turns villain

DOUALA: Cameroon and Burkina Faso qualified for the semi-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations on Saturday with Karl Toko-Ekambi's double leading the hosts to a 2-0 win over Gambia before the Stallions edged Tunisia 1-0 in the late game. French-born Lyon striker Toko-Ekambi scored twice in the space of eight minutes at the start of the second half in Douala as Cameroon played their first game at the tournament since the deadly crush in Yaounde. His goals led to ecstatic scenes of celebration and they were just reward for Cameroon, who completely dominated against a Gambian side appearing in their first Cup of Nations.

"We are proud to be in the semi-finals," said Toko-Ekambi and Cameroon march on to a last-four showdown with Egypt or Morocco as they continue their quest for a sixth continental title. The host nation's first and only visit to the country's economic capital in the tournament meant there was always going to be a frenzied atmosphere in the port city as fans descended on the 50,000-capacity Japoma Stadium. The Indomitable Lions had not taken to the field since Monday's tragic crush prior to their game against the Comoros in Yaounde which left eight dead and 38 injured.

Security measures

Authorities in Douala massively stepped up their security operation around the ground in an attempt to avoid any repeat. Army officers with rifles stood atop buildings lining the route to the stadium while vast numbers of police patrolled the streets and watched over entrances. On the eve of the game Cameroon's sports minister announced a raft of measures aimed at avoiding a repeat of the Olembé disaster. Those included stopping the distribution of free tickets and banning

children under 11 from attending games.

The minister also urged supporters to arrive earlier, and the gates at Japoma opened five hours prior to kick-off. That meant the deafening noise of vuvuzelas filled the air well before the Cameroon team arrived, dancing their way from the bus to the changing room, and only stopped momentarily for the silence in memory of the crush victims. Coronavirus restrictions put in place for the AFCON have limited crowds to a maximum of 60 percent of capacity but that is raised to 80 percent when the host nation play, and the official attendance was 36,259.

The opening goal arrived five minutes into the second half as right-back Collins Fai crossed and Toko-Ekambi headed into the far corner. Out came the vuvuzelas, and the crowd were on their feet again on 57 minutes as the impressive Martin Hongla sent a low ball across goal for Toko-Ekambi to finish emphatically for his fifth goal at this AFCON. Captain Vincent Aboubakar, with six, is the only player with more and together they have scored all of Cameroon's goals.

'Emotional'

Pending confirmation from the Confederation of African Football, Cameroon are now due to return to Olembé for their semi-final on Thursday. In Garoua in the north of the country, Dango Ouattara scored the only goal of the game on the stroke of half-time as Burkina Faso edged Tunisia to set up a semi-final against either Senegal or Equatorial Guinea.

Ouattara, just 19, then turned villain eight minutes from time when a yellow card for elbowing Ali Maaloul was changed to a red after the referee from Botswana checked the touchline VAR monitor. Success for Burkina Faso came just five days



DOUALA: Cameroon's forward Karl Toko Ekambi (right) celebrates after scoring his team's first goal past Gambia's goalkeeper Baboucarr Gaye during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 quarter final football match between Gambia and Cameroon on January 29, 2022. —AFP

after the landlocked west African country was plunged into political uncertainty when President Roch Marc Christian Kabore was ousted in a military coup.

"I'm very emotional. Allow me to dedicate this win to our people who are being tested by current events," said Burkina Faso coach Kamou Malo. "The Burkinabe people will always

toiled to break United down at Celtic Park.

Matt O'Riley missed a glorious chance to mark his home debut with a goal before half-time, while Benjamin Siegrist spread himself to block from Giorgos Giakoumakis. Bitton was dismissed nine minutes from time for second yellow card. But for the second time this season Celtic secured a late winner with 10 men when Abada controlled Jota's cross and slotted home his 12th goal of the season. "It was a frenetic finish," said Celtic boss Ange Postecoglou. "I'm delighted with the end result. Credit to the players, again they found something within them."

"We weren't at our best, especially in the first half. As long as the game goes, you think we have to find something special. For the last three and a half months, they've risen to every challenge." Hearts strengthened their position in third with a 2-0 win over Motherwell, while Livingston twice came from behind to beat Hibs 3-2 at Easter Road. The strong winds and rain that have hit Scotland as a result of Storm Malik saw Saturday's other top-flight matches between Aberdeen and St Johnstone and Dundee and St Mirren postponed. —AFP

Celtic's late winner cuts Rangers' lead to two points

GLASGOW: Celtic cut the gap on Rangers at the top of the Scottish Premiership to two points thanks to a 90th-minute winner from Liel Abada to beat Dundee United 1-0 despite having captain Nir Bitton sent off. The Hoops could now go top should they win Wednesday's Old Firm clash after Rangers threw away two points in stoppage time in a thrilling 3-3 draw at Ross County.

However, that match was overshadowed by racist abuse aimed at County goalscorer Charles Regan-Cook online. "I am extremely hurt and frustrated to come off the pitch today and be left multiple messages of racist abuse," Regan-Cook tweeted. "This makes us stronger and we will continue to fight against racism!" Rangers were left to rue two errors from goalkeeper Allan

McGregor which spoiled a brilliant debut for Manchester United loanee Amad Diallo.

The Ivorian scored inside five minutes of his Rangers debut but was forced off injured before County's late leveller. Jordan White leveled in the 25th minute after McGregor dropped a cross and Charles-Cook put the home team in front four minutes later. Rangers' James Tavernier equalized at the start of the second half and then Connor Goldson gave the champions the lead after 72 minutes. In the scramble following a County corner in the sixth minute of added time, the ball came off McGregor's body and Wright pounced.

"It's very disappointing," Rangers manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst told Sky Sports. "We give two goals to Ross County. That made it really difficult for us. The reaction we had in the second half was really good. "We had some chances to kill the game and make the fourth and decisive goal. "In the end in extra-time, we were too sloppy. We give the ball away, we give a corner away. It's not something I'm used to seeing — so many goals against us in this manner." Celtic looked set to pass up the chance to close in on their Glasgow rivals as they

opening period as Colombia probed relentlessly. James had a shot from outside the area deflected narrowly wide with goalkeeper Pedro Gallese beaten. Gallese then blocked Falcao's close-range prod after the striker was played in by Matheus Uribe before Falcao shinned an attempted volley high and wide. The once-prolific 35-year-old also headed over from a James corner.

Falcao and James's influence waned in the second period and Colombia rarely threatened with reported Liverpool and Tottenham target Luis Diaz of Porto a peripheral figure on the left wing. Colombia came closest when Gallese reacted brilliantly to tip over an inadvertent back header from a defender. Their profligacy came back to haunt them as Christian Cueva sent Flores scampering away down the left to embarrass Ospina, who had been a spectator throughout.

Venezuela's hopes of reaching Qatar were long over before kick-off but Rondon showed there is hope for the future with a clinical display. His near post header and then low finish into the corner put the hosts in control in Caracas before Bruno Miranda replied with a bullet header to give Bolivia hope at the break. Darwin Machis robbed goalkeeper Carlos Lampe after a defensive mix up to extend Venezuela's advantage before Leonel Justiniano was shown a straight red card on the hour mark for a stamp.

Rondon completed his hat-trick midway through the second half with an emphatic finish high past Lampe. On Thursday, Brazil goalkeeper Alisson Becker was sent off twice in the 1-1 draw away to Ecuador but both times was saved by a VAR review. The Liverpool goalkeeper was first shown a straight red card for catching Enner Valencia with a high boot in the first half before that was downgraded to



BARRANQUILLA: Peru's goalkeeper Pedro Gallese (left) and Colombia's Radamel Falcao (right) vie for the ball during their South American qualification football match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. —AFP

a yellow. And in second half stoppage time he was shown a second yellow for clattering Ayrton Preciado before that was overturned on review.

Ecuador goalkeeper Alexander Dominguez was sent off for catching Matheus Cunha in the neck with his studs, while Brazil's Emerson Royal was dismissed for two bookings. Casemiro gave Brazil a sixth minute lead but Felix Torres equalized 15 minutes from time. Ecuador, who had two penalty awards also overturned by VAR, stay third with a five-point gap to fifth-placed Uruguay. Seventh-placed Chile's hopes suffered a blow as they were beaten 2-1 at home by Argentina. —AFP

stand up, just like the team. We put in the time today and we want to go all the way in this competition." The remaining quarter-finals will both be played on Sunday at the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium in Yaounde, with Senegal hoping to have Sadio Mane back after he suffered suspected concussion in their last-16 win over Cape Verde. —AFP

Barty 'humbled' after joining tennis royalty

MELBOURNE: Ashleigh Barty says she feels "humbled" to have joined tennis royalty's most exclusive club with a Grand Slam crown on three different surfaces, but vowed: "There's still work to be done." The 25-year-old achieved the feat by becoming the Australian Open's first home champion in 44 years when she came from 1-5 down in the second set of Saturday's final to beat Danielle Collins 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).

It followed her breakthrough French Open success in 2019 and Wimbledon last year, putting her in elite company. The only other active players to snare majors on clay, grass and hard courts are legends of the sport—Serena Williams, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. Barty and Williams are the only two to win their first three Slams on three surfaces.

"I feel very humble to be in such a select group. To be honest, I don't really feel like I belong with those champions of our sport," said the world number one. "I'm still very much learning and trying to refine my craft and try and learn every single day and get better and better." Even her coach Craig Tyzzer is amazed at what Barty has achieved. "I think we've all got to sit back and just look at what she's been able to do on different surfaces and just her ability to play the level of tennis that she does," he said. "I mean, sometimes I'm just in awe of it."

Widely seen as one of the nicest players on tour, Barty has also rapidly become its best, with her dizzying array of slices, pinpoint serving and seamless forehand typifying her all-round game. She often pays tribute to Tyzzer for helping her become the player that she is, but it started at a much younger age with childhood coach Jim Joyce. "Ultimately that was one of the biggest challenges that Jim set out for me when I was young—to be a complete player and be really consistent across all surfaces and be able to play on all surfaces," she said.

"So to have a Grand Slam title on each surface is pretty amazing. I never probably thought it would ever happen to me. So very, very lucky and very humbled and privileged to be able to be a part of it." But the Australian added: "There's still work to be done, without a doubt." Barty said she spent the night after her triumph quietly, having a few drinks with her team and getting to bed at a reasonable hour, before posing for pictures with the trophy in a Melbourne park on Sunday morning. —AFP

Peru thump goal-shy Colombia; Venezuela thrash Bolivia 4-1

MONTEVIDEO: Second half substitute Edison Flores gave Peru a smash and grab 1-0 victory away to goal-shy Colombia as goalkeeper David Ospina's gaffe cost the hosts in Friday's World Cup qualifier. Salomon Rondon scored a hat-trick as rock bottom Venezuela thrashed 10-man Bolivia 4-1. Peru barely had a shot on goal all match, but five minutes from time Ospina somehow let Flores's fierce effort from a tight angle beat him at his near post as Peru snatched an unlikely victory on the counter attack. Colombia had dominated throughout but failed to score for the sixth successive match—a run of more than 550 minutes.

The result propelled Peru into the final of four automatic qualification spots in the single South American table with three matches to play. Colombia dropped to sixth, three points behind fourth-placed Peru, who did not manage a shot in the first half. Uruguay are fifth a point behind Peru, after Luis Suarez gave them a 1-0 victory at Paraguay on Thursday. With Brazil and Argentina already qualified, six teams a vying for the final two automatic berths.

Hosts Colombia paid for the same lack of clinical finishing that had blighted their previous five matches. Of 28 shots at goal, only two were on target. Veteran pair Radamel Falcao and James Rodriguez were lively in the

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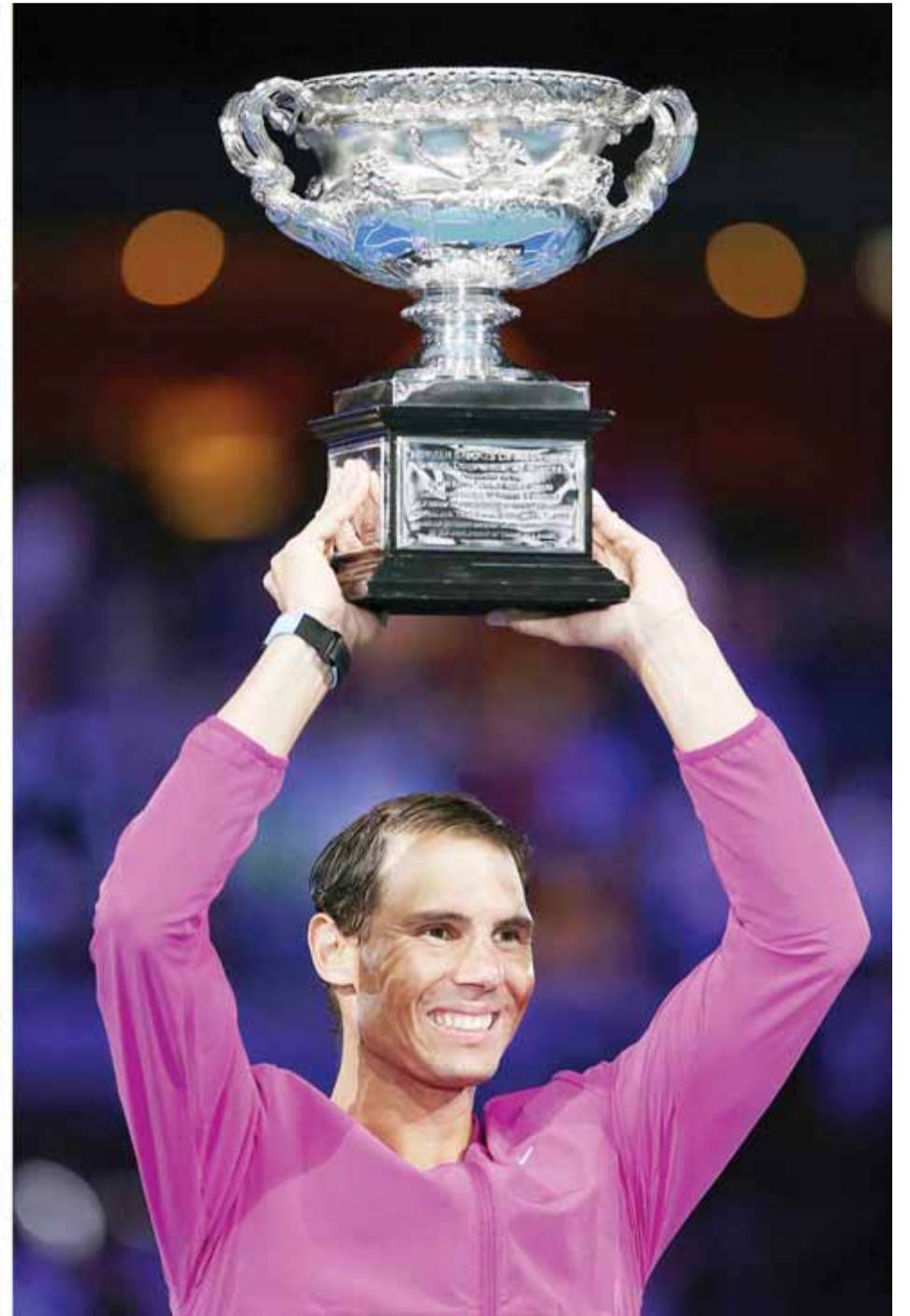
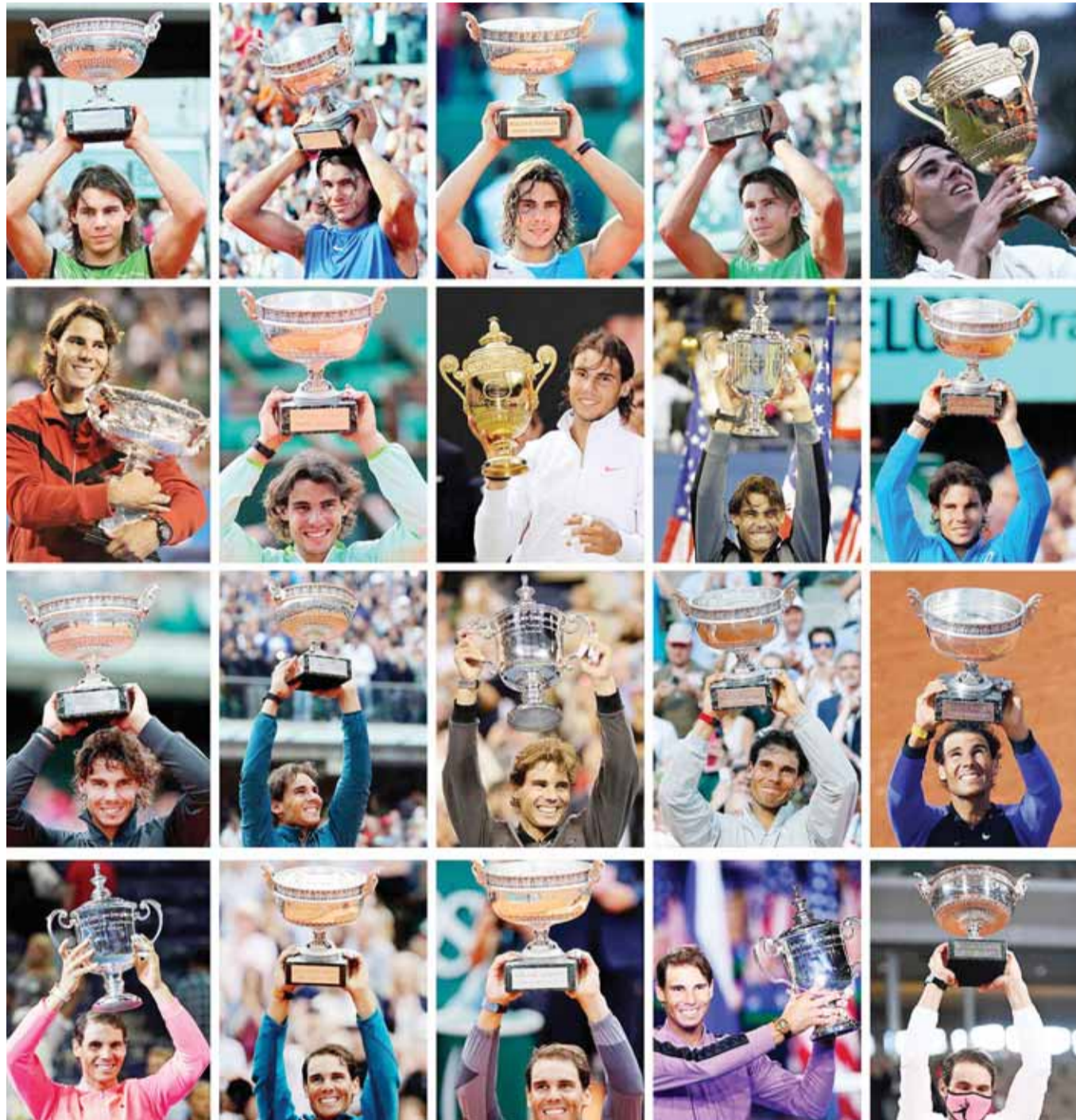
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Nadal makes history with 21st Slam

Fourth man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice



MELBOURNE: This combination of pictures shows Spain's Rafael Nadal posing with the trophies of his 21 Grand Slam victories. Nadal won the Australian Open at Melbourne yesterday after beating Russia's Daniil Medvedev in their men's singles final match. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal roared back from two sets down to win a titanic five-set duel with Daniil Medvedev and claim a record 21st Grand Slam men's title in the Australian Open final yesterday. The Spanish great looked dead and buried as the Russian world number two carved out a two-set lead but Nadal surged home for one of his mightiest comeback wins 2-6, 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 in 5hr 24min on Rod Laver Arena.

Nadal came out on top in the physical war of attrition to move ahead of era rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer on the all-time list of men's major winners. Djokovic missed his chance to improve on his nine Australian Open wins when he was deported over vaccination issues on the eve of the tournament, while Federer is injured.

It was one of the 35-year-old Spanish warrior's greatest title victories in his 29th Grand Slam final as he won his second Australian Open, 13 years after his first in 2009. "This has been one of the most emotional matches of my tennis career," Nadal said. "It's just amazing. I didn't know a few months back if I would even be playing again on the tour and I am back on this court before you all today. You don't know how much I fought to be here. "The huge support I have received in the three weeks here is going to stay in my heart for the rest of my life."

Nadal also became only the fourth man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice and the third oldest man in the Open Era (since 1970) to win a Grand Slam title, behind Ken Rosewall and Federer.

The final went down to the bitter end with Nadal being broken as he served for the championship only for the Spaniard to break back. On his second attempt to serve it out, Nadal powered to three match points to win amid chaotic scenes in his player's box and the frenzied crowd.

It is the fourth time in his storied career that Nadal had clawed back to win from two sets down, but the first time in a Slam final. It was the second time Nadal had denied Medvedev in a Grand Slam final, winning a five-set epic at the 2019 US Open. Nadal holds a 4-1 lead over Medvedev in their five matches to date.

It crowned an extraordinary effort from Nadal at the year's opening major, having to modify his game to compensate for a degenerative bone disease in

his left foot that ended his 2021 season last August. He then caught Covid in December which, he said, made him "very sick". Medvedev had wrecked Djokovic's calendar Grand Slam push and bid for a 21st title in New York four months ago and was aiming to do the same to Nadal in Melbourne.

Medvedev lost his second consecutive Australian Open final after falling in straight sets to Djokovic in last year's final. "It's tough to talk after five hours 30 and losing but I want to congratulate Rafa because what you did today, I was amazed," Medvedev said. "You raised your level after two sets for the 21st Grand Slam. I thought you were going to get tired, and maybe you did a little, but you still won the match. You are an amazing champion." —AFP

Warriors beat Nets; Raptors thwart Heat

LOS ANGELES: Klay Thompson drained a three-pointer with 12.5 seconds remaining to lift the Golden State Warriors to a 110-106 NBA victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Saturday. The Warriors' victory in San Francisco was just one close shave on a night that saw the Toronto Raptors edge the Eastern Conference-leading Miami Heat 124-120 in a triple-overtime thriller and the Philadelphia 76ers rally for a 103-101 victory over the Sacramento Kings.

"Splash Brothers" Thompson and Stephen Curry struggled early, combining for just seven points in the first half. But they scored the last 17 for Golden State as the Warriors toughed out a victory over a Nets team led by Kyrie Irving but missing the other two of their "Big Three" Kevin Durant and James Harden. Irving, who was needed by the San Francisco crowd over his refusal to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, scored 32 points and the Nets clawed back from a 19-point third-quarter deficit to cut the lead to one on two free throws from Patty Mills.

Golden State answered promptly as Thompson, left open as Curry drew the double-team, made his three-pointer for a 107-103 lead. Irving responded with a three-pointer, but a free throw from Curry and two from Thompson sealed the Warriors' win. Thompson, still returning to form after an injury lay-off of two-and-a-half years, finished with 16 points. Curry scored 19 and Andrew Wiggins led the Warriors with 24 points and eight rebounds. — AFP

Egypt book Africa Cup of Nations semi-finals spot

YAOUNDE: Mohamed Salah inspired Egypt to a place in the Africa Cup of Nations semi-finals yesterday as the record seven-time champions came from behind to defeat Morocco 2-1 in extra time in Yaounde. Sofiane Boufal's early penalty put Morocco in front in the last-eight tie but skipper Salah equalized for Egypt early in the second half and then made the winner for Mahmoud Trezeguet 10 minutes into extra time.

Egypt will play hosts Cameroon in the semi-finals in Yaounde on Thursday. Morocco took a 3-2 lead with one match drawn into the seventh showdown between the north African giants in the marquee African tournament. Coaches Vahid Halilhodzic of Morocco and Carlos Queiroz of Egypt made two changes each after last-16 victories over Malawi and the Ivory Coast respectively.

Aymen Barkok was introduced on the right side of the Moroccan midfield in place of Imran Louza and forward Mounir el Haddadi replaced injured Ayoub el Kaabi. Star Egypt goalkeeper Mohamed Elshenawy failed to recover from an injury incurred against the Ivorians and Mohamed Abou Gabal took his place. Midfielder Hamdy Fathy was also ruled out and Ayman Ashraf, normally a defender, came in with Queiroz conscious of the threat posed when Morocco right-back Achraf Hakimi drifts forward.

It took Hakimi just three minutes to make a major impact as Ashraf failed to connect with the ball and fouled the Paris Saint-Germain star, leading to a penalty after a VAR monitor check by the referee. After fluffing a penalty against the Comoros, Morocco changed takers, and Boufal did not let the Atlas Lions



YAOUNDE: Egypt's midfielder Mahmoud 'Trezeguet' Hassan celebrates after winning the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 quarter-final football match between Egypt and Morocco yesterday. — AFP

down, slotting his kick into the right corner as Abou Gabal dived in the opposite direction. The last time Egypt fell behind in the tournament, against Nigeria in their opening group match, they failed to equalize and had to settle for second place behind the Super Eagles in the final standings.

Desperate to atone for conceding the penalty, Ashraf brought a great two-hand parried save out of Morocco goalkeeper Yassine 'Bono' Bounou midway through the opening half. Egyptian defenders were not shy to shoot from long range and Ahmed Fatouh tested Bounou, with the Sevilla shot-stopper once again proving equal to the task of preventing an equalizer. Hakimi, who scored a brilliant match-winning goal direct from a free-kick against Malawi at the same ground five days ago, got a set-piece opportunity not far from the box, but fired wide.

Queiroz, the former Real Madrid manager and twice assistant to Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, was constantly agitated and both the referee

and the fourth official spoke to him. The first half ended with Morocco retaining their one-goal advantage, and not much seen of Egypt captain and talisman Salah, with the Liverpool star seeking his second goal of the tournament.

Egypt replaced injured defender Ahmed Hegazy with Trezeguet at half-time and the Aston Villa forward was narrowly wide with a snap shot just four minutes into the second half. Morocco were under the cosh and assertive Egypt leveled on 53 minutes as Salah tapped in from close range after Bounou could only parry a Mohamed Abdelmonem header off a corner.

Tempers boiled over minutes from time after Hakimi objected to being fouled by Mostafa Mohamed, triggering pushing from the teams and both players were booked by the overworked referee. As Morocco gradually regained the ascendancy, Abou Gabal rescued Egypt, pushing a Nayef Aguerd header on to the underside of the crossbar, and with no further goals the match went to extra time. — AFP