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PM: Iraq 'serious' in pursuing true partnership with Kuwait

Crown Prince, Premier meet Sudani • Baghdad eyes 'balanced relations' with neighbors

News in brief

Women judges increase to 15

KUWAIT: The number of female judges in Kuwait has risen to 15 after the promotion of two women judges from the public prosecution to the high court. "There is great trust from the prosecution and the high court to appoint two Kuwaiti prosecutors and more are expected to be promoted as judges in accordance with the rules and regulations, who will join their fellow judges in issuing verdicts," sources told Kuwait Times. The judges will handle important cases including public funds cases, as some of them headed their own departments. "There is a plan to appoint more judges for criminal litigations and court management after they successfully handled misdemeanor cases," the sources added.

Apple Pay to launch on Dec 7

KUWAIT: Apple Pay will officially launch in Kuwait for all users on Dec 7. The launch of Apple Pay comes after completing all the requirements and conducting the necessary tests, and it will be available to all Apple phone and Apple watch users in Kuwait. Apple Pay is a contactless payment technology for Apple devices that allows users to make payments in person without the need of using any bankcards.

Cosmetics with lialil banned

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies announced the withdrawal of cosmetics and personal care products of all kinds that contain butylphenyl methylpropional, also known as lialil, and its derivatives, which are classified as carcinogens by the European Chemicals Agency. On Tuesday, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communications and Technology Mazen Al-Nahedh issued a ministerial decision banning the import, sale and purchase of all types of cosmetics containing lialil. Head of the Union Ali Al-Fahad said the union will conduct inspections to ensure markets heed the decision, warning against the danger of this substance to the health and safety of consumers. — KUNA

Bomb kills Iran colonel in Syria

TEHRAN: An improvised bomb has killed an Iranian colonel from the aerospace division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps near Syria's capital Damascus, Iranian media reported Wednesday, blaming archfoe the Zionist entity. "Colonel Davoud Jafari, one of Iran's military advisers in Syria and a member of the Guards' aerospace arm, was killed with a makeshift bomb planted by the roadside," the Tasnim news agency reported citing a Guards statement. — AFP



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani at Bayan Palace on Nov 23, 2022. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani affirmed Wednesday his country's seriousness in pursuing a true partnership with Kuwait: a clear and tangible relationship that benefits both nations. Speaking to KUNA, Sudani said the Kuwait visit reflects deep-rooted and historic ties between the two countries. "We listened and sensed the Kuwaiti leadership's real desire to further communication, cooperation and coordination across various fields," Sudani said in reference to his meetings with the country's top officials.

Sudani was welcomed by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. The Iraqi delegation later left the country after the one-day official visit.

Sudani arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday after his Monday visit to Jordan, where he met King Abdullah II in Amman. The twin diplomatic trips are Sudani's first official visits after assuming the premiership. Sudani stressed "Iraq's keenness to build balanced relations with its neighbors based on mutual respect and preservation of sovereignty", a statement read.

In early 2022, Iraq paid all its due financial obligations resulting from the former regime of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Baghdad paid \$352 billion in total as war reparations over 30 years. Following the end of the three-year war against IS, Kuwait hosted a donation conference for Iraq's reconstruction efforts. Iraq in recent years has attempted to normalize ties with its Gulf neighbors to attract their investment into the country's war-ravaged infrastructure. — Agencies

Top court endorses elections; MPs call for Kuwaitization

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court on Wednesday turned down several petitions challenging the legality of the general elections held on Sept 29. The

petitions called on the court, whose rulings are final, to nullify the entire election process, claiming that two Amiri decrees issued ahead of the polls to regulate the elections violated the constitution.

The first decree authorized the use of civil IDs as proof of identity of voters and proof of address, while the second added new residential areas to the electoral constituencies. The new ruling means that the general elections have been confirmed and shielded against any challenges in the future.

The court also rejected 13 petitions filed by candidates challenging the results of the polls, while it decided to continue looking into 35 other petitions,

setting Dec 26 and 28 for next hearings. The candidates claim there were mathematical errors in the counting of votes and demanded a recount. The court had asked for detailed tallies from the interior ministry to study them.

Meanwhile, head of the National Assembly priorities committee MP Abdullah Fahhad said the government informed the panel that it will submit a number of draft laws to achieve political and economic reforms, one of them being a bill to enforce Kuwaitization of government jobs occupied by expats.

Continued on Page 6

Saudi win sparks rare Arab unity

DOHA: Saudi Arabia's unexpected World Cup victory over giants Argentina triggered a rare moment of joint celebration across the fractured Arab world including among Qataris - less than two years after a seething regional dispute. A caravan of Qatari cars, horns honking, paraded through the streets of Doha after the Saudis' famous 2-1 win over the South American champions, one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history.

Such scenes would have been unthinkable during the nearly four-year, Saudi-led blockade that cut Qatar's diplomatic, trade and transport ties with its closest neighbors over disputed claims of supporting extremists and being too close to Iran. Complicated regional relations were forgotten as Tunisians, Moroccans, Egyptians, Lebanese and Jordanians joined the throng of Saudi fans that paraded in the Qatari capital.

Continued on Page 6



RABAT: Fans of the Morocco national team pose for a photo with their country's flag and that of Saudi Arabia after watching Morocco's Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup match against Croatia at a cafe on Nov 23, 2022. — AFP

Employee kills 6 in US Walmart mass shooting

WASHINGTON: A Walmart employee shot dead six people at a store bustling with Thanksgiving holiday shoppers, before turning the pistol on himself, police said Wednesday, in America's second mass shooting in four days. Four other people remained hospitalized in unknown condition following the Tuesday night

rampage in Chesapeake, Virginia, police chief Mark Solesky said.

Solesky told a news conference the gunman was believed to have died of a "self-inflicted gunshot wound," and that the motive behind the country's latest deadly outburst of gun violence was not immediately known. President Joe Biden condemned "yet another horrific and senseless" attack, mourning the fact "there are now even more tables across the country that will have empty seats this Thanksgiving." He added: "There are now more families who know the worst kind of loss and pain imaginable."

The assault two days before the quintessential American family holiday, marked this year on Nov 24,

followed a weekend gun attack at an LGBTQ club in Colorado that killed five people. It was also the second mass shooting in the state of Virginia this month: three students at the University of Virginia who played on its football team were killed November 13 by a classmate after a field trip.

Emergency calls were first made just after 10:00 pm Tuesday (0300 GMT Wednesday) while the store was still open. Officers arrived in a matter of two minutes and entered the Walmart two minutes later, Solesky said. US media reported that the gunman opened fire in a room where employees take meal breaks but the police chief said he could not confirm this.

Continued on Page 6



Local

Kuwait PM holds discussions with Iraqi PM

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held official talks with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani on Wednesday at Bayan Palace. They looked into bilateral relations and ways to boost them in several fields to serve the common interests of both countries.

The two sides also discussed the latest regional and international developments and the importance of continued coordination on issues of common interest. First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Bader Hamed Al-Mulla, Chief of His Highness

the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Mazen Saad Al-Nahedh, senior state officials and His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan officials attended the talks.

The Iraqi prime minister and his accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday on a single-day-long official visit. He was welcomed by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. An official reception was held for the Iraqi guest, in the presence of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh

Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barak Ali Al-Shaitan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Bader Hamed Al-Mulla, Chief of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Mazen Saad Al-Nahedh, senior commanders of the army, police, National Guard, General Fire Force, senior state officials, His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan, and the ambassadors of the two countries. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah holds official talks with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani on Wednesday at Bayan Palace. —KUNA

Korean Embassy holds culinary festival, introduces kimchi

Ambassador commends Kuwaiti interest in Korean culture and cuisine

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait and the Middle East Chapter of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Commission (PUAC) held a Korean culinary event 'Kuwait Kimchi Class 2022' on Tuesday, titled "Discover the kimchis across the Korean Peninsula". South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha said Nov 22 marks Kimchi Day to recognize the importance of the Korean dish and celebrate Korean culture. "Kimchi Day is marked on November 22 because it has 11 ingredients and 22 health benefits," he said.

"We started the event last year when we hosted kimchi-related events. Last year, we had a food competition using kimchi, and this year we invited experts to tell us about the dish. The discovery of a new dish means happiness for human beings. I think the discovery of kimchi will be the best way to understand and discover the Korean people and culture," Chung noted.

"We see today that many Kuwaitis show interest in Korean culture, K-drama, K-films and even K-pop stars. If you watch Korean films, you will say that you love Korea, but if you have a taste of kimchi, understand it and make it, you are already a Korean. It is really good to see many



South Korea's Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha



KUWAIT: Dr. Ji-Young Hong, professor at the College of Southern Nevada, speaks during the festival.



Kuwaitis showing interest in making Kimchi, and I think it is kind of a way to better understand the Korean culture," he said.

The ambassador revealed the embassy will organize a food festival to introduce the culture of Korea. "Wintertime in Kuwait is the best season. We are going to host a food festival in December at the embassy from 5 pm to 8 pm to let people enjoy Korean street food."

Regarding the BTS member who performed at the opening of the World Cup in Qatar, he said the performance of the K-pop superstar Jung Kook was great, adding it represented the power of Korean culture and made a contribution to the success of the World Cup, hoping to arrange a visit of the band to Kuwait.



Dr. Ji-Young Hong, a Professor at the College of Southern Nevada and an expert in K-culture, spoke about the history of kimchi, its origin and the science behind it. She explained how to cook the spicy, salty and sour traditional Korean side dish that has gained international popularity. "I created special ingredients for Kuwait. The kimchi that will be made today will not be authentic kimchi. I used local ingredients from the market of Kuwait to make all people enjoy the kimchi with Kuwaiti ingredients," she said.

"We have our own way to make kimchi. I tried to follow the authentic way but with local ingredients, lowering the level of spiciness and adjusting the sweetness. The main ingredients are cucumber, onion, green onion, sugar, garlic, red pepper, salt and spices. I asked around what the level of spiciness Kuwaiti people enjoy and adjusted the recipe

according to that. Korean people love it spicy," Hong pointed out. She said this is her first participation in Kuwait, her third country to have a kimchi class after the US and Cuba.

Kimchi is not simply a side dish for most Koreans but a representative cultural icon of Korea. This typical Korean food is world-renowned as the most authentic Korean dish, praised for its nutritional value as well as unique flavor and taste. The Korean Embassy and PUAC partnered to bring the kimchi class to Kuwait, which covered everything about making and enjoying kimchi from scratch.

This culinary event also allowed all participants to experience hands-on kimchi making and sampling six kinds of kimchis with different ingredients and recipes. Chung introduced kimchi as Korean soul food having historical and sentimental ties and a distinct identity.



KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait News Agency Dr Fatima Al-Salem receives Austrian Ambassador to the country Marian Alexander. —KUNA

KUNA DG, Austrian envoy discuss media role in promoting ties

KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem discussed Wednesday with Austrian Ambassador to the country, Marian Alexander, role of media in promoting bilateral ties between the two nations, and support-

ing diplomatic efforts. Dr Al-Salem, during the meeting in her office, affirmed KUNA's keenness on boosting Kuwaiti-Austrian relations across various fields, and hoped for more development and progress especially in media and diplomacy.

The Austrian Ambassador, on his part, congratulated Dr Al-Salem on her appointment, and commended the agency's sense of responsibility, fortitude, and its role in advancing media in Kuwait. He also noted the significant role of Kuwaiti media as a whole in supporting bilateral ties, and thanked KUNA for its efforts in connecting people and its credibility and objectivity in relaying facts and events. —KUNA

Municipality shuts fitness centers, arrests workers

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Municipality sent an emergency team for field inspections on several fitness and wellness centers in Jabriya and Salmiya areas in Hawally governorate. The inspection resulted in the arrest of a number of workers who were taken into custody for engaging in immoral activities. The team also issued violations on three stores in addition to shutting down two others.

Head of the emergency department in Hawally Municipality, Ibrahim Al-Sabaan said: "The campaign in Jabriya and Hawally was carried out to enforce safety and security of the people and ensure health regulations are strictly complied by the businesses at all health centers."

"We have arrested a number of workers who were involved in immoral acts and issued three violations on stores that did not follow regulations such as advertisement, licensing and expired health insurance. Moreover, two stores were shut down. The first, the owner exceeded space indicated in



licensing, while the other in Salmiya, has changed the location of the store without obtaining a license from the municipality," he clarified.

He said the Municipality will make sure that regular field inspections are conducted by supervisory teams at all governorates and called on business owners to strictly follow regulations stipulated by the Municipality.



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Local

Weight loss conundrum: Many wonder why healthy food and lifestyle don't help

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Being fit and practicing a healthy lifestyle has become a trend among people of all ages in the last couple of years, and despite this being a good thing, especially with the danger of obesity, people still struggle with some detailed techniques that affect their weight loss journey. One of them is not losing weight despite commitment to sports and healthy eating.

Kuwait Times spoke to nutritionist Mohammad Al-Hayek, who shared some tips for losing weight. In the beginning, Hayek explained, there are three main factors affecting weight loss. "The most essential factor is that sometimes we don't calculate or take the calories that our bodies need, as some people may take less or more calories than actually needed. We should

only decrease 25 percent of the calories we eat so the body will burn calories in a natural way," he said.

"The amount of protein we eat should be equivalent to our body's need. Increasing protein intake will not help in losing weight," Hayek explained. "Also, if someone is working out and lifting weights and are focusing their attention on the weighing scale as a number only, it could give them false indications, as they are not losing weight, but actually losing fat. When people do weightlifting, they increase the percentage of muscles in the body, which will increase body weight. Despite this, they are not gaining weight but muscles, which is the main goal of the whole journey," he said.

Hayek pointed out some details that could affect weight stability. "Eating lots of salts and preservatives lead to increasing the water

stored under the skin, which will affect the number on the weighing scale.

Regarding the increment of the workout and its effect on the weight stability, stressed that if the body did not take enough amount of calories in the line of increasing the workout, it will not lead to weight stability. "The transition from an absence of sports activities in our lives to suddenly being very active won't help the body to have time to adapt to the new changes," he said.



Nutritionist Mohammed Al-Hayek



CSC launches training course plan for 2022-23

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Development Affairs at the Civil Service Commission, Ibrahim Al-Hajri, announced that the commission has launched the training plan for the 2022-23 season. The plan was prepared on the basis of a study of training requirements of all government sector subject to the law and procedures of the commission. The plan is the first after two training seasons were interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The training plan for this year includes 43 programs to meet all the needs of government sector employees and job levels, starting from the senior category to the executive category, indicating the CSC's keenness to intensify specialized programs for this season due to their importance in developing employees' skills in all fields and specializations. This will also bolster the efficiency of performance in their workplaces," Al-Hajri said.

"The plan for the upper category included training programs, workshops and forums, and focused on programs for preparing second row leaders to assume leadership positions by improving performance, raising productivity and keeping pace with development and growth in various fields," he clarified.

"Programs for the middle category include five training programs to meet the needs of authorities in developing skills in the field of governance and how to face reality and challenges of crisis management, as well as the creative vision of managers in delegating powers and enhancing the integrity and transparency of the institution," he added. He also indicated that the administrative development sector at the CSC implements and supervises these programs in cooperation with government agencies, training institutes and companies with the help of a group of best lecturers who have distinguished experiences in various state agencies.

He called on those wishing to participate in these programs to review the local training department at their employers' side, noting that the training plan can be viewed on the website and social networking sites of the CSC by scanning the barcode of the plan, as well as by filling special forms prepared by Diwan. The implementation of the training plan begins in next December and continues until the end of the financial season in 2023.



Salmiya fire extinguished

KUWAIT: The public relations department at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has said on receiving information, KFF team was dispatched to Salmiya to extinguish a fire that broke out in the basement of a building. The basement contained paper archives, plastic material, food and steel material.

"A team from Salmiya, Bedaa and Al-Helali fire stations had been sent to the location and they controlled the fire without resulting in any injuries," the public relations department at the KFF said.

KFAS launches E-Poster day event

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences launched the E-Poster Day event on Wednesday. "The establishment of scientific events strengthens the bonds of cooperation between researchers and the exchange of scientific expertise among them, in addition to building a knowledge communication network that deepens their local and international experiences," Director General of KFAS Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel said.

GCC reference center for cancer research sought

KUWAIT: Following the 5th joint Gulf conference on cancer in Sharjah under the patronage and attendance of Sharjah Ruler Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi, in which more than 50 international and Gulf speakers participated, as well as the Gulf Center for Cancer Control and Prevention, the drafting committee met and put down the conference recommendations.

Secretary General of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh said the recommendations included the following:

- Participants agreed on the importance of scientific research in the field of cancer and its positive effect on treatment and providing budgets.
- There should be work on creating a unified reference center for cancer research in GCC countries.
- Urging Gulf entities to adopt sustainable health development principles as approved by the UN,



Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh with Sharjah Ruler Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi

especially cooperation with NGOs, and enabling them to work in the awareness and early detection fields.

Dr Saleh thanked Sheikh Sultan and his wife Sheikhha Jawaher bint Mohammad Al-Qasimi, along with the organizing team for the good choices of speakers and topics.



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Director General of Ahmadi Education Zone Waleed bin Ghaith on the occasion of his appointment and wished him luck. Sheikh Fawaz reiterated his emphasis on the integral role of education, and called for official and societal efforts to work together to face violence and drugs in the society, particularly in schools.

NG undersecretary receives Italian defense official

KUWAIT: The undersecretary of the National Guard Hashem Al-Refaei received the head of the Italy's Chief of the Defense Staff Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone in the presence of a number of officials.

The undersecretary conveyed the greetings of the head of the National Guard Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and his deputy Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to the delegation.

The two sides explored opportunities for more military cooperation while noting that the relationship between the two friendly countries is exceptionally strong.



"The leadership assures that the exchange of expertise with acclaimed military institutions is important," he said adding that a memorandum of understanding might be signed by the two institutions soon. The head of the Italian military force welcomed the opening more channels of military cooperation between the countries.



The event aims to review the results of research projects implemented by Kuwaiti researchers and funded by the foundation. "The event aims to highlight high-level research, especially those that deal with topics within the foundation's strategy and related to national priorities such as energy, health, environment, food security, science, engineering and research on tackling the COVID pandemic," Fadhel said.

Dr Khawla Al-Shayji, Deputy Director General of Strategic Programs at KFAS, said: "This scientific event seeks to focus on research related to capacity development and the dissemination of science. It is an opportunity to share important and published research in prestigious scientific journals with the local scientific research community, which contributes to preparing researchers for future international conferences, improving the vision of Kuwaiti research from a global perspective and sharing their experience with Kuwaiti researchers," she added. —KUNA



In my view

Scientific research



By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.net

As soon as some people spot the words "scientific research", they stop reading the column. There is a lack of awareness among many citizens of our countries on the importance of scientific research and its relation to the improvement of their lives. Last week, a special meeting was held in the presence of Sharjah Ruler Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi and ministers from Gulf Cooperation Council member countries, including Kuwaiti Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, to discuss the need of our region a reference center for cancer research. This meeting was part of the sixth joint Gulf conference on cancer in GCC countries to be held in Sharjah from Nov 21 to 23.

Cancers are among chronic diseases that have gained major interest from a majority of countries, especially since we doctors are still far from recognizing their direct causes and we are still searching for more risk factors of cancers so we may succeed in halting their spread.

There is a clear failure in the field of scientific research in GCC countries. Although GCC countries are considered high-income countries, we spend less than one percent of our GDP on scientific research. In Kuwait, we spent 0.59 percent, UAE 0.6 percent, while the rest of the Gulf countries are close to this percentage or even less. Of course all these percentages are less than the accepted rate around the world, as the US spent 2.84 percent of its national income on research (over \$168 billion), while Japan spends 3.2 percent of its national income (\$130 billion).

As for the Zionist entity, which is in the Middle East, it spends around 4.95 percent of its GDP on scientific research and publishes a number of annual research papers that are equal to 30,000 scientific papers per million people, compared to the entire Arab world that publishes around 1,700 scientific papers per million individuals.

As for our research cadres in the Arab world, including the GCC countries, they are way off, as the number of scientists in the US are over 3,500 per million. In Europe the number is around 2,400 scientists per million, but in our Arab world, it is no more than 360 - yes three hundred and sixty scientists per million individuals! Minimal spending, and scientists who either left or are appointed in jobs that are far from their specialties.

Challenges are many, but this time it is different, when a Gulf country take over this issue under the leadership of a man who is known for the love of science - the situation must change. We hope, as a first step, that leaders of GCC countries support the proposal of that meeting in which the International Agency for Research on Cancer participated with its Director Dr Elisabete Weiderpass. It is a proposal that opens the door for reference research centers, and we start with cancer. It does not stop at a certain limit, as the fields of sciences are many and expand every day.

The future of the Gulf will be more secure if scientific research becomes one of the means of evaluation, development and innovation. Each dinar spent on science brings back manyfold, and this is the true investment.

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15th annual Kuwait urinary surgery conference kicks off

27 Kuwaiti and international speakers to attend conference

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Urology Association will launch the activities of the 15th Annual Kuwait Urology Conference on Thursday under the auspices of the Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadhi. A huge participation of eminent international urologists are expected to attend the conference wherein latest findings of scientific studies and medical research in urinary tract diseases will be discussed.

The head of the Kuwaiti Urology Association, consultant urologist and conference chairman, Dr Dulaim Al-Hajri, told KUNA: "The conference, which will last for

three days, will discuss several issues that include six categories and will review the latest developments in the field of urology."

"27 Kuwaiti and international speakers at the conference will discuss surgical topics including renal and urethral endoscopy, stone surgeries, complex surgeries, and kidney and urethral tumor surgeries," he clarified.

"The conference offers, for the first time, training workshops for doctors and nurses, including a workshop on laparoscopic surgery that includes training doctors. A scientific workshop is also being

held to train nursing practitioners with urologists to learn how to deal with diseases, operations, and endoscopy training, as well as equipping them in operating rooms," he added. Al-Hajri mentioned that the conference will witness another academic training workshop that will also be held for the first time for doctors regarding the cystocele and training devices in addition to a workshop on impotence and approved global methods of treatment. Al-Hajri called on urologists to attend and benefit from the conference. —KUNA



Dr Dulaim Al-Hajri



Kuwaiti researcher Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim being honored.

Islamic manuscripts panel honors Dr Al-Ghunaim

MADRID: Darul Makhtutat, tasked with the preservation of ancient Arabic and Islamic manuscripts, held a ceremony in the Spanish Andalusian city of Granada to award Kuwaiti researcher Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim in recognition of his achievements and works. Dr Al-Ghunaim, currently the president of the Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait, is a former Kuwait University professor who assumed the role of College of Arts dean, former education minister and former Institute of Arabic Manuscripts director at the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation. He has also written many publications, mostly specializing in historical mapping. Darul Makhtutat, based in Istanbul, was launched in November under the sponsorship of a Kuwaiti charity in cooperation with the Faculty of Andalusian Studies in Granada, with the aim of the preservation of Arab and Islamic heritage.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Al-Ghunaim said he was sincerely thankful and appreciative for the honoring, describing the historic city of Granada, established by the Muslim Umayyad dynasty, as a "fragrant land." Granada, he said, introduced to the world the renowned Andalusian explorer Abu Hamid Al-Gharnati and Ibn Said Al-Maghribi, a historian, geographer and poet famed for his book, "Geography", among many others, both of whom lived between the 11th and 13th centuries. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Ali Al-Asfar with the team.

Daiya area now under medical area network

KUWAIT: Acting Hawally Governor Ali Al-Asfar has announced that Daiya area has now been officially designated within the network of medical zones.

"Medical cities are very important in achieving the new Kuwait Vision, which is accomplished by adopting the standards of a medical city specified by the World Health organization," Al-Asfar said during the signing of registration of Daiya area in the governorates general Diwan on Wednesday.

The governor assured through the meeting that support will be provided to medical areas and will review its affairs in order to ensure the wellbeing of



the residents of the area. He also expressed the importance of supporting efforts to provide more assistance to all medical areas in Hawally and Asimah in cooperation with institutions and families of the areas.

News in brief

Kuwait-UNICEF cooperation

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and State Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli stressed, on Tuesday, Kuwait's keenness on strengthening cooperation with UN's International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). In a press release after meeting with UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa Adele Khodr, Al-Baghli said that the goal of this cooperation is to benefit the children in Kuwait in various educational, social and cultural fields. Khodr affirmed the importance of Kuwait's role to the UN, based on its active participation and support in various events. —AFP

Hungary eyes closer bilateral ties

KUWAIT: Hungary is eager to boost bilateral relations with Kuwait across various fields, with emphasis on trade, healthcare and education, the European Union's Ambassador to the country Eszter Torda said on Tuesday. More bilateral cooperation would be instrumental in enhancing the already "exceptional" ties between Kuwait and Budapest, the envoy said as she led a Hungarian delegation on a visit to Kuwait's Chamber of Commerce, holding talks on matters running the gamut from food security to healthcare. The talks come amid mounting global concerns over food security and the need to ensure resilient healthcare systems in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the chamber's assistant director general Emad Al-Zaid. —KUNA

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times management and staff convey our deepest condolences to our colleague

Mohammed Parvez

and his family members on the sad demise of his

Uncle

May Allah the Almighty bestow His mercy on his soul



Fears of retaliation in just-liberated Kherson

'Sick of everything': Beijingers fed up with restrictions

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Foreign university students sold 'dreams' in north Cyprus

Universities pay recruiters \$1,040 in commission per student

NICOSIA: Foreign students are big business in northern Cyprus, a tiny, breakaway statelet only recognized by Turkey, but some warn university recruiters are selling "dreams" in the internationally and economically isolated territory. One Nigerian student, who requested anonymity, said he expected to arrive in the country whose football teams compete in European tournaments. Instead, when he saw the currency was the embattled Turkish lira, he realized this was "not the Cyprus I thought it was".

Turkey. International students pay tuition in euros or US dollars, and sometimes also for accommodation - a windfall for the territory's isolated economy.

The Republic of Cyprus, an EU member, is facing record numbers of new asylum-seekers, most arriving from across the UN-patrolled buffer zone, and accuses Turkey of encouraging the influx. Almost half of the north's more than 108,000 "active" tertiary students were from outside the TRNC or Turkey in the 2021-22 academic year, official figures showed, with about

national embargo. Relatively low tuition fees - sometimes less than \$3,000 per year - are a major selling point, and are often presented as if marked down by "scholarships" of up to 75 percent. But a university official who requested anonymity told AFP this was a "trick". "It is not like we are giving these scholarships" to international students, he said, explaining that the marked-down price is the actual tuition cost.

Real international tuition waivers were few, he added. Universities pay recruiters between several hundred and 1,000 euros (\$1,040) in commission per student, sources told AFP. While many are companies, the number of informal agents - often current or former students - has reportedly ballooned. Some students said they had been misled about study or work opportunities, or were not told they were coming to a divided island.

Cameroonian Rictus Franck Ngongang, 28, said he wanted "the magic" of easy entry but was duped by a recruiter. The business student's "first shock" was finding "there were 10 of us in a two-room flat", after he paid 300 euros for a month's accommodation. He was also not enrolled in the course he expected. He has since started a support association - also involving agents - to try to help other students in difficulty. Some recruiters "sell dreams", he cautioned.

At northern Nicosia's small American University of Cyprus - which officials said currently has no stand-alone US university accreditation - foreign students were learning Turkish in a classroom with Ottoman-style windows as the Muslim call to prayer rang out over the divided city. But Hazan Sherifli, head of student affairs, said half the institution's 200 international students were not attending.

Some "lose their (financial) sponsors... or some other things happen", said public relations and marketing director Engin Sirvan, adding it was not the university's role to police attendance. A report by the north's Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies said impoverished foreign students risked falling "into the hands of criminal elements", and that the situation "facilitates human trafficking and exploitation".—AFP

Chad opposition in shock and disarray

N'DJAMENA: Some have fled or gone into hiding while for others, just to walk in front of their party's now abandoned headquarters stirs dread. More than a month after a crackdown on anti-junta protestors that left scores dead and spurred an international outcry, dissidents in Chad remain in shock and disarray.

"People are traumatized," said Gabin, a 30-year-old member of the Transformers party that co-staged the demonstration that was bloodily suppressed on October 20. "They are still being hunted. They're afraid of even walking in front of the Transformers (building), afraid of being arrested." The head of the Transformers, Succes Masra, told AFP on November 10 that he had fled to an unnamed country, saying he was being sought by the presidential guard—the elite force of Chadian leader General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno.

The same day, Max Loangar of the Wakit Tamma opposition group said that he was hiding "somewhere" in Chad to avoid arrest. Opposition groups had encouraged demonstrations on October 20 to mark the date when the ruling military had initially promised to cede power—a timeline that Deby has now extended by two years. The 38-year-old succeeded his iron-fisted father, Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled for 30 years before dying in an operation against rebels in April 2021. According to the official version of events, around 50 people died, including a dozen members of the security forces, after the opposition mounted an "insurrection" in the capital N'Djamena and several other cities. But Transformers and Wakit Tamma say dozens more people were killed and at least 300 wounded when security forces opened fire on protestors.—AFP



NICOSIA: Students sit together at the American University Of Cyprus, which officials said currently has no stand-alone US university accreditation, in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), north of the divided Cypriot capital Nicosia.— AFP

The Mediterranean island is divided between the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and a northern statelet established after Turkey launched a 1974 invasion in response to a Greek-sponsored coup. The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is home to just several hundred thousand people yet hosts a whopping 21 universities officially recognized by the breakaway authorities and by

17,400 from Nigeria alone in the spring semester. Education minister Nazim Cavusoglu estimated the university sector and its indirect revenues fuelled some 35 percent of the north's GDP - "far ahead of tourism".

'A trick'

Many foreign students can enter the TRNC without pre-issued visas. All must fly via Turkey due to an inter-

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times management and staff convey our deepest condolences to our colleague

Antonio Coelho

and his family members on the sad demise of his

Brother

May his soul rest in peace

International

Moscow on red alert after Crimea hit by 'drone attack'

Ukraine recaptures almost entire region of isolated peninsula

KYIV: Ukraine's Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula was targeted by a drone attack, Kremlin-installed authorities said, adding that Moscow's forces there were "on alert". The strike came as Kyiv claimed another territorial victory and just days after Moscow said it was strengthening its position on the Crimean peninsula. "There is an attack with drones," the governor of the Sevastopol administrative region in Crimea, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said on Telegram. "Our air defense forces are working right now." He said two drones had "already been shot down". Razvozhayev said no civilian infrastructure had been damaged and called on residents to "remain calm."

Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014 after nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations that led to the ouster of Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly president. It used the peninsula, which hosts several important Russian military bases, as a launching pad for its February invasion of Ukraine. But in recent months Ukrainian forces have been pushing a counter-offensive in the south towards Crimea and earlier this month reclaimed Kherson, the capital of the region bordering the annexed peninsula.

There have been several explosions at or near Russian military installations in Crimea since February, including a coordinated drone attack on a key Russian naval port at Sevastopol in October. Last week the Moscow-aligned governor of the territory, Sergei Aksyonov, said authorities were strengthening positions on the peninsula. "Fortification work is being carried out... with the aim of guaranteeing the security of all Crimeans," he said.

Fears of retaliation in just-liberated Kherson

KHERSON: The Ukrainian welder pondered the afterlife while whispering wedding vows to the nurse with whom he had three children in just-liberated Kherson. Andriy Krivov was bracing for Russia's retaliation following its retreat from the city on which it underpinned its campaign along Ukraine's entire southern front. The booms of Ukrainian artillery echoed inside the empty cathedral as the humbly-dressed couple bowed before the Orthodox priest.

The retreating Russians fired back salvos from the east bank of the Dniro River running down the slope from the singing church choir. The rockets raised dust over the ruined roads and mined fields encircling the city Russia held from the war's start until last week. Krivov was fairly certain they would soon start hitting Kherson itself. "We could die tomorrow," the 49-year-old said after finally marrying the woman with whom he had spent most of his life. "Kherson is now part of the front. And when they start bombing, we want to stand before God as man and wife."

Retreat and retaliation

Russia's retreat from the city it hoped to make its central base in Ukraine's occupied south has reshaped the nearly ninth-month war. Kherson's importance to the Kremlin-both because of its link to Russian-annexed Crimea and Ukraine's Odessa port to the west-spared it from destruction. Its carefully-staged recapture in the third month of Kyiv's broader counterassault stymied President Vladimir Putin's plans to seize Ukraine's entire southern coast. Kherson now stands in the crossfire of a Ukrainian push into the eastern parts of its eponymous region-

'Not tired'

Ukraine said Tuesday it had recaptured almost the entire region of an isolated peninsula off the Black Sea, where fighting is ongoing. "We are restoring full control over the region. We have three settlements left on the Kinburn Spit to officially no longer be a region at war," said Mykolaiv regional governor Vitaly Kim on social media.

The southern spit jutting into the Black Sea is divided in two: in the west, as part of the Mykolaiv region and to the east as part of the Kherson region. It is cut off from territory controlled by Ukraine's forces by the Dniro river, which flows through the Kherson region. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told the European Union in an online press conference that its support was crucial, warning against "fatigue" towards the war. "If we Ukrainians are not tired, the rest of Europe has neither moral nor political right to be tired," he said.

Aid and gas

Kuleba called on the EU to implement a fresh round of sanctions against Russia, urging particular attention to measures that slow down and stop Russia's missile industry. "I call on my colleagues in the EU... to put aside any doubts or, as the fashionable phrase goes, 'fatigue' and to start and quickly conclude the ninth sanctions package," he said.

The US government said Tuesday it would provide another \$4.5 billion in financial backing for "supporting core government services." As much of Ukraine's energy grid is pounded by Russian strikes, the World Bank has warned the country faces severe

and possibly even Crimea itself. The danger will linger because most think Ukraine wants to strike before the Russians have a chance to regroup.

"Russia gains more from a pause, which is why Ukraine has an incentive to keep pushing," said Rob Lee of the US-based Foreign Policy Research Institute. Western officials say Russia still managed to pull out most of its forces and set up defensive lines on the Dniro's east bank. Fears of Russia's retaliation on a city it no longer has strategic incentive to save played on the welder's mind on his way to church. "The chances are very high that they will start bombing us now," he said while holding nurse Natalia's hand.

Two different fronts

Lydia Belova was ready to suffer. The 81-year-old former poultry farmer patiently waited her turn to fill up plastic jugs from a hose running from a local spring. The Russians cut off Kherson's power and destroyed most of its infrastructure on their way out. Belova spent eight-and-a-half months watching Russian soldiers ransack stores and hunt down those who stood up to their rule. She figured that hardship was worth the price for pushing the Russians a little further back. "Freedom is always more important," she said. "Water is not a big deal. We can stand in line. But Ukraine—we must defend it." This determination highlights the main distinction of Ukraine's southern front from the battles being waged across its east.

Neither Kherson nor its neighboring Zaporizhzhia region were under Russian control prior to the war. But Russia imposed indirect rule over parts of eastern Lugansk and Donetsk during an insurgency its proxies launched in 2014. Those opposed to Putin there-many of them younger Ukrainian speakers from birth-had eight years to relocate further west. The largely Ukrainian-speaking south is confronting Putin's forces for the first time.

munications and housing, whose ministries employ the overwhelming majority of expats.

The lawmaker inquired in his questions about the number of expat employees in each ministry and the strategy of each ministry to implement the Kuwaitization of jobs in their ministries. He also asked about the reasons for not replacing expat employees with Kuwaitis and the nature of jobs taken by expats.

Following a meeting by the priorities committee with the government on Wednesday, MP Fahhad said the government and MPs are in agreement over three key legislations covering conflict of interests, raising salaries of retired Kuwaitis and financial aid to housewives. He said the three legislations will be sent to the Assembly for approval in December. The lawmaker said the government also informed them that its program for the next four years will be approved by the Cabinet next week and sent to the Assembly for debate.

issued a statement early Wednesday saying: "We are shocked at this tragic event." The company added that it was "praying for those impacted, the community and our associates. We're working closely with law enforcement, and we are focused on supporting our associates."

Virginia state Senator Louise Lucas, who represents the Chesapeake region, said she was "heartbroken that America's latest mass shooting took place... in my district". "I will not rest until we find the solutions to end this gun violence epidemic in our country that has taken so many lives," she wrote on Twitter. Congressman Bobby Scott of Virginia tweeted: "Tragically, our community is suffering from yet another incident of senseless gun violence just as families are gathering for Thanksgiving."

The incident occurred three nights after a gunman opened fire inside an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and injuring at least 18, in what is being investigated as a possible hate crime. Authorities said that suspect, identified as 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, had used a long rifle at the club, where partygoers were marking the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which pays tribute to trans people targeted in violent attacks. So far in 2022, the Gun Violence Archive website has tracked more than 600 mass shootings in the United States - defined as an incident with four or more people shot or killed, not including the shooter. —AFP



CRIMEA: This aerial picture shows restoring works on damaged parts of the Kerch Bridge that links Crimea to Russia, which was hit by a blast. —AFP

energy supply disruption amid frigid weather. "The Kremlin wants to transform the cold this winter into a weapon of mass destruction," Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky told a meeting of French mayors in a video message. Meanwhile Russian energy giant Gazprom accused Ukraine of diverting natural gas supplies transiting to Moldova, and threatened to curtail deliveries through a key pipeline to Europe in response. —AFP



KHERSON: A woman takes water from Dniro river in Kherson, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Kherson hospital director Iryna Starodumova watched the invasion expose fundamental rifts among her staff. The exhausted doctor lost half her workers prior to the Kremlin's annexation of all four battle-torn regions in late September. A portion of those who stayed once the borders were effectively sealed appeared to accept Russian rule.

"I never suspected in my 42 years here that I was working with people whose views differed from those we all thought we shared," she said. "The (pro-Russians) came in, did their job and took their views home with them," she said during one of her rare breaks. "We tried to be tolerant." The church pastor was less forgiving. Protodeacon Andriy's Kherson cathedral housed the remains Grigory Potemkin—a storied commander under Catherine the Great. His name is now broadly associated with fake villages built to please the tsarina during a tour of her new holdings along the Dniro. —AFP

Americans urged to get vaccinated

WASHINGTON: True to form, America's outgoing top infectious disease official, Anthony Fauci, used what may be his final White House appearance Tuesday to convey a simple message. "Please for your own safety and for that of your family, get your updated COVID-19 shot as soon as you're eligible," said the 81-year-old, hammering home a public health mantra in the face of slow booster uptake.

Vaccines targeting Omicron's sublineages BA.4 and BA.5 have been widely available since summer, but so far only 11 percent of the eligible over-five population in the United States have received them. Boosting the case, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study that showed the new shots reduced the risk of infection by around 30 percent among people who had the last of their doses two or three months earlier.

President Joe Biden's Covid coordinator Ashish Jha also announced a "six-week sprint" to increase shots in arms by the end of the year and blunt the impact of an expected winter wave. Influenza and RSV, which are rebounding after two years of containment during lockdowns, are already adding to the burden on the health care system and could get worse.

But Fauci offered a hopeful assessment about prospects as cold weather settles in. Between the vaccinated and those with prior infections, he said he hoped "there's enough community protection that we're not going to see a repeat of what we saw last year at this time," even as newer variants emerge. Fauci will step down next month from his roles in government as Biden's chief medical advisor, as well as director of the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases, which he has headed since 1984. —AFP

Top court endorses elections; MPs...

Continued from Page 1

The lawmaker revealed no further details on the content of the draft law, which will affect close to 80,000 expat employees in government jobs. MPs have been pressing the government to accelerate the replacement of expat employees with Kuwaitis.

MP Essa Al-Kandari sent a series of questions to nine ministers asking about obstacles that prevent them from replacing expat employees in public jobs with Kuwaiti nationals. The ministers include those of information, finance, health, education, public works and electricity, municipality, commerce and industry, com-

Employee kills 6 in US Walmart...

Continued from Page 1

In the hours afterwards, news footage showed a major police presence around the Walmart, which is located about 240 km southeast of the US capital Washington.

Gun attacks in grocery stores in America have become increasingly common in recent years. A teenage gunman killed 10 people, most of them black, at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York in May. Last year a shooting at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado also left 10 dead. And in a particularly gruesome attack in 2019, a young gunman killed 23 and wounded 26 as he stalked shoppers at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas.

An advocacy group called Guns Down America has reported that from Jan 1, 2020 to May 14 of this year there were 448 "gun incidents" and 137 deaths at 12 large national retailers. In Chesapeake, local resident Edna Dunham told CBS news after the shooting, "That could have been me." "It could've been any of us because we go there so much. It could've been any of us," Dunham said.

Walmart, the largest retailer in the United States,

Saudi win sparks rare Arab...

Continued from Page 1

"This is a historic victory for Saudi Arabia and a great victory for all Arabs," 24-year-old Jordanian Ahmed Al-Qasim, his country's flag draped around his shoulders, told AFP at a Doha fan zone. The triumph was Saudi's biggest since its World Cup debut in 1994 and the first for a Middle Eastern country in this year's tournament, which is making its debut on Arab soil.

The outpouring of joy followed a series of bitter human rights disputes that drew angry responses from the Qatari organizers, including accusations of anti-Arab racism. Some Qatari fans raised the conservative kingdom's flag alongside their own, and even Qatar's Amir watched the game draped in a Saudi scarf - days after the Saudi Crown Prince donned Qatari colors.

"There was a political dispute between the two governments, but it has ended and at the end of the day, we are one people," said Anoud, a Qatari who asked to be identified only by her first name. "We have turned the page and the blockade is behind us,"

she told AFP outside a Doha shopping mall.

Tributes were paid around the region, with many Arab leaders voicing their congratulations on Twitter. Two Doha skyscrapers lit up their glass facades with the green colors of the Saudi flag, as did Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. Celebrations were seen in Gaza and there were even fireworks in Yemen, whose powerful neighbor Saudi Arabia has led a military coalition since 2015 to prop up the international-recognized government.

On social media networks, Saudi Arabia's victory topped regional trending lists and inspired a flurry of congratulatory posts as well as satirical memes mocking Argentina. Nevin Massad, a professor of political science at Cairo University, called Saudi's football win an "exceptionally emotional moment". "Political Arabism may no longer be possible, but there are different forms of Arabism among the people," including "an athletic Arabism", she told AFP.

Emirati political science professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla called the Saudi team "Arab heroes", in a post on Twitter. Saudi Arabia's success was followed by creditable performances by Tunisia and Morocco, who fought out 0-0 draws with Denmark and Croatia respectively, both strong European teams. "We feel that all the Arabs are here behind us," said 23-year-old Saudi fan Khaled Abdullah, who was part of the celebrations in Doha. "Our joy is one." —AFP



DOHA: A Saudi supporter poses for a picture in Souq Waqif during the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament on Nov 22, 2022. — AFP

International

Iran protest crackdown 'kills over 70' in a week

Iran launches new strikes on Kurdish groups in Iraq

PARIS: Iranian security forces have killed 72 people, including 56 in Kurdish-populated areas, in the past week alone in their crackdown on the protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death, a rights group said. The protests, sparked in mid-September by the death of Amini, 22, in morality police custody, have cut across ethnicities, social classes and provincial boundaries and turned into the biggest challenge to Iran's clerical leadership since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Authorities have responded with an intensifying crackdown that has sparked an international outcry. Iran has also launched repeated cross-border missile and drone strikes, most recently on Tuesday, against exiled Kurdish opposition groups it accuses of stoking the protests from their bases in neighboring Iraq.

Norway-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) said that 416 people had been killed by security forces nationwide in Iran itself, including 51 children and 21 women. It said 72 people had lost their lives in the past week alone, including 56 in western Kurdish-populated areas where there has been an upsurge in protest activity in recent days. Several towns in Kurdish-populated western Iran, including Mahabad, Javanroud and Piranshahr, have seen large protests, often starting at the funerals of those previously slain in demonstrations.

Ahead of a special session of the UN Human Rights Council Thursday in Geneva devoted to Iran, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk described the situation as "critical" amid a "hardening of the response by security forces", spokesman Jeremy Laurence said. Laurence voiced particular concern at the authorities' "apparent refusal to release the bodies of those killed to their families," and deplored them for making such releases "conditional on the families not speaking to the media or agreeing to give a false narrative on the cause of death".

Internet blackout

The Norway-based Hengaw rights group, which focuses on Iran's Kurdish areas, has accused Iranian security forces of directly firing on protesters with machine guns and shelling residential areas. Hengaw said that five people were killed in Javanroud on Monday alone after thousands gathered for funerals for victims of the crackdown who were killed at the weekend. The group said it had confirmed the killing of 42 Kurdish citizens of Iran in nine cities over the last week, almost all killed by direct fire. Monitors also accused Iran of imposing a nationwide mobile internet blackout on Monday at the height of protest activity.

Monitor Netblocks said Tuesday that the mobile internet had been restored after a "3.5 hour cellular data blackout" on Monday that also coincided with Iran's football team refusing to sing the national anthem at their opening World Cup game. Freedom of expression group Article 19 expressed alarm that "reports of extreme state brutality continue out of Kurdistan alongside nationwide internet disruptions and shutdown". Hengaw meanwhile posted a video of protesters trying to remove birdshot pellets from the body of a protester with a knife, saying people were afraid to go to hospital for fear of being arrested.

'Systematic killing'

The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran on Monday urged the international community to act to prevent a massacre in Kurdish populated areas. "Unless Islamic republic authorities decide the costs of massacring civilians to crush the ongoing protests in Iran are too high, they will continue to slaughter children, women and men with impunity in a desperate attempt to reassert control," said CHRI

director Hadi Ghaemi.

According to figures collated by IHR, over half of those killed by the Iranian security forces in the crackdown have died in provinces populated by ethnic minorities. It said 126 people had been killed in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, largely populated by the Sunni Baluch minority, where the protests had a separate spark but fed into the nationwide anger.

Meanwhile 48 people have been killed in Kurdistan, 45 in West Azerbaijan and 23 in Kermanshah, it said. "Systematic killing of civilian protesters belonging to the Kurdish and Baluch minorities amounts to crimes against humanity," said IHR director Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam. The mainly Sunni Kurds, often described as one of the world's largest stateless peoples, make up one of Iran's most important non-Persian ethnic minority groups and also have significant minorities in neighboring Iraq and Turkey as well as Syria.

New strikes

Meanwhile, Iran launched new cross-border missile and drone strikes against Iranian-Kurdish opposition groups based in northern Iraq whom it accuses of stoking a wave of protests in the Islamic republic. Iran has been shaken by more than two months of civil unrest which authorities in the country describe as "riots" - sparked by the death of Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest for allegedly breaching the strict dress code for women.

Iran's Tasnim news agency said the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had "launched a new round of attacks against terrorist groups based in the Iraqi Kurdistan region", the second such strikes in two days. The report said the headquarters of the



LONDON: People hold a placard during a protest following the death of Mahsa Amini who died in custody of Iran's morality police, in central London. — AFP

Kurdistan Freedom Party "was targeted by missiles and suicide drones" near Kirkuk. An Iraqi Kurdish military official, a local police officer and a party spokesman confirmed the renewed strikes on the region.

"We had taken our precautions and emptied the premises, there were no casualties," Kurdistan Freedom Party spokesman Khalil Nadri said. IRGC General Mohammad Pakpour also confirmed the strikes, saying the Kurdish group had "given support to the recent riots" in northwest Iran. Attacks against "anti-Iranian separatist-terrorist groups in northern Iraq will continue until the threat is eliminated and they are disarmed", the Guards' website quoted Pakpour as saying.— AFP

Climate change will fuel diseases, Global Fund warns

GENEVA: Climate change will end up killing people by fuelling infectious diseases, the head of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria said Tuesday. Executive director Peter Sands said that in 2022, the fund had witnessed the "escalating impact" of

climate change on health. While upsurges in malaria had hitherto been seen due to the increasing frequency and devastation of tropical storms, "with the flooding in Pakistan it was taken to a completely different scale", he said.

"What we are seeing is that the mechanism by which climate change will end up killing people is through its impact on infectious disease," Sands said that parts of Africa which previously were unaffected by malaria are now becoming at risk as temperatures rise and allow mosquitos to thrive, notably at higher altitudes. However, the population in such areas will not have immunity, with the resulting risk of a higher mor-

ality rate. "It's quite alarming," Sands told a briefing with the UN correspondents' association. Other threats include tuberculosis spreading among the increasing number of displaced people around the world. "TB is a disease that thrives on having concentrations of highly-stressed people in close confines with inadequate food and shelter," he said.

"The more that we see climate change-driven displacement of people, the more I think that will translate into the conditions that will at least make it more likely," Sands also said food insecurity would make people more vulnerable to disease. As for whether the world was better prepared for the next pandemic than it was

for COVID-19, Sands said it was, but added: "That doesn't mean we are well prepared: we're just not as badly prepared as we were before."

By the end of 2022, Sands said the Global Fund will have invested around \$5.4 billion, which is significantly more than it has ever done before. The Geneva-based organization's largest donors are G7 governments, led by the United States and France. "For the people we serve in the poorest, most marginalized, most vulnerable communities in the world, 2022 was a brutal year," said Sands. "In the poorest communities in the world, HIV, TB and malaria are killing many more people than COVID-19." — AFP

CIANJUR: Survivors of an Indonesian earthquake that killed at least 271 people, many of them children, appealed for food and water Wednesday as heavy rain and aftershocks hampered rescue efforts among the rubble of devastated villages. The calls for help came as authorities warned that debris from landslides caused by the strong quake near the town of Cianjur in West Java needed to be cleared as rains forecast for the coming weeks threatened a second disaster.

Two days after the quake flattened their homes, residents were still trying to retrieve priceless belongings including family photos, religious books and marriage certificates. "Although some supplies have arrived, it is not enough. We got rice, instant noodles, mineral water but it's not enough," Mustafa, a 23-year-old resident of Gasol village, told AFP.

Mustafa had just dug through the rubble of an elderly neighbor's house at her request, appearing from the destroyed facade carrying a pile of clothes before returning to collect rice, a gas stove, canisters and frying pans. In Talaga village, some residents put signs on the windows of damaged houses and the front of tents that read "We need help!" In the streets, at least three people held up cardboard boxes, asking for donations. Evacuees crammed under flimsy tents, unable to move inside from the rain in case buildings collapse from an aftershock. A shallow 3.9-magnitude aftershock sent panicked evacuees running from shelters on Wednesday, according to an AFP reporter at the scene. Authorities had recorded 171 aftershocks as of Wednesday evening. More than

61,000 people have been displaced by the quake, around 2,000 are injured and 40 missing, the national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) said Wednesday.

Around a third of those found dead so far are believed to be children, BNPB chief Suharyanto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told a press conference, without providing an exact figure. The government has dispatched tents and other supplies to Cianjur for the displaced, and the military deployed 12,000 personnel on Wednesday, officials said. Heavy rain was hampering those efforts in about a dozen villages where more than 22,000 houses had been destroyed. "For the refugees... their basic life necessities must be guaranteed - water, food, that's non-negotiable," Suharyanto said.

Two villages remain isolated, said Henri Alfandi, head of Indonesia's search and rescue authority Basamas, in a video posted to social media. He said he had received reports of villagers trapped without food and water, and some forced to sleep alongside dead bodies. "The people there can't even ask for help," he said, adding that three helicopters were being sent to drop aid. — AFP

Another hamlet in Cugenang district, the worst-hit by the quake, was buried by a landslide, Muhammad Wachyudin, an official from the Cianjur disaster mitigation agency, told AFP. Rescuers believed some bodies were buried in Kampung Pos but they have not been able to reach them. Indonesia is vulnerable to landslides and flash floods in the rainy season, which has already begun and peaks in December in West Java.

The country's meteorology agency warned that



BEIJING: People wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) walk along a street in Beijing on November 23, 2022, amid a lockdown due to COVID-19 coronavirus restrictions. — AFP

'Sick of everything': Beijingers fed up with restrictions

BEIJING: Schools and businesses closed, restaurants empty, and the fear of being locked down at any moment - the Chinese capital is a cauldron of dread and fatigue as COVID curbs tighten nearly three years into the pandemic. As infections in Beijing surge, residents are increasingly fed up with navigating vague, shifting restrictions and exhausted by the uncertainty of how long they might last. "I'm sick of everything now, there is no one on the street," Elaine, an office worker in her twenties, said.

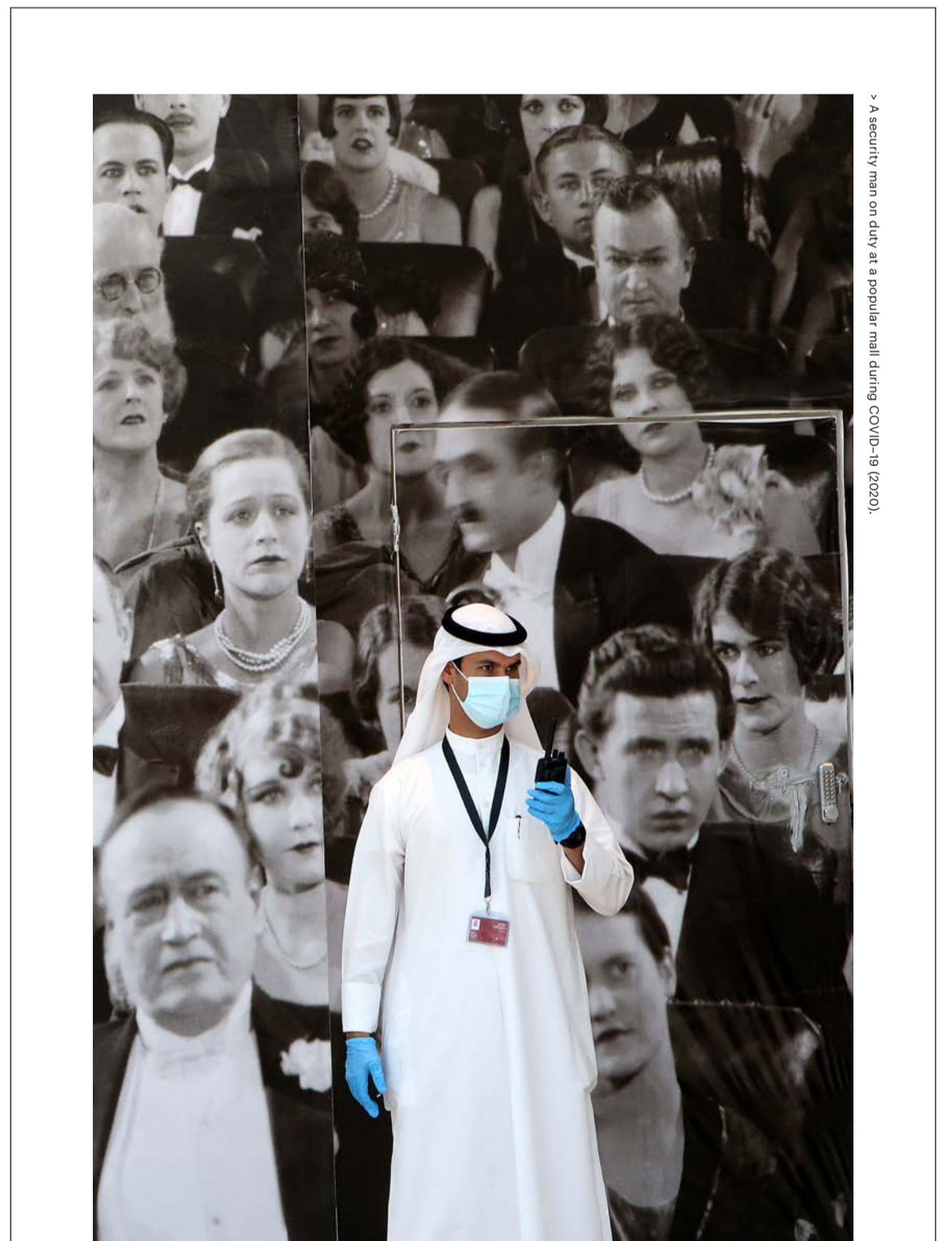
"I want to eat out and socialize with friends, but it's impossible," she told AFP. One French expat living in Beijing was unexpectedly locked down in her boyfriend's apartment Monday morning after staying the night - one of his neighbors got infected, causing the entire building to be sealed for five days. "Every time we go to sleep, we're not sure whether the next morning we'll be trapped in our own apartment," the woman, who asked to remain anonymous, said.

"The only thing we have left is the freedom to walk down the street and breathe fresh air." Testing queues now routinely stretch around blocks, while businesses struggle to manage often unclear red lines. The fact that information often comes by word of mouth - oral instructions to close restaurants and businesses that are filtered through the sub-district or neighborhood committee level - has only compounded the misery.

Beijing's tightening restrictions come as the city is reporting its highest-ever number of daily infections, but at around 1,500 cases, the figures remain low by international standards. And almost three years into the pandem-

ic, the reaction by health officials appears out of proportion as the rest of the world has learned to live with the virus.

Residents fear a similar shutdown to the one that was imposed on China's biggest city, Shanghai, in the spring, which led to food shortages, protests and scenes of chaos as people fled snap lockdowns. Beijing's downtown shopping hub of Sanlitun, with its now-closed malls and Western boutiques, and the densely populated central business district of Chaoyang are deserted. Hairdressers, spas and other services deemed not essential for daily living have also been closed. One former staffer at a Chaoyang gym left Beijing after her workplace closed down during an outbreak in May, the last time restrictions were this strict. "The latest COVID wave has had a big impact on people's lives, especially those working in the service sector and fitness enthusiasts," the woman surnamed Xu told AFP. — AFP



> A security man on duty at a popular mall during COVID-19 (2020).

Go ahead. Share it.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2022

Business

'Hardcore' Musk drives into a culture clash at Twitter

Musk again delays launch of paid verification on Twitter

SAN FRANCISCO: After snapping up Twitter, one of Silicon Valley's most iconic companies, Elon Musk swiftly introduced his no-holds-barred work ethic, setting up a bitter culture clash with thousands of workers who still believed in the platform's higher mission. In less than a month, Musk sacked half the company's 7,500 employees, axed executives and engineers who disagreed with him and finally imposed an ultimatum: work "extremely hardcore" or leave.

The style is reminiscent of what Musk pushed through at Tesla, SpaceX and his other companies, where the multi-billionaire drove his teams hard, seeing their personal sacrifice as the key to success.

After an initial willingness to wait and see, Musk's style has proved disconcerting in a company culture that valued ethics and a strong sense of community, even when worked hard. "I have the impression that Musk really likes humanity but not so much humans," said Emmanuel Cornet, a software engineer who was among the first to be fired from the social media company after the acquisition on October 27. Before that, he'd been one of the many employees genuinely curious to see the successful entrepreneur at work, despite his propensity for provocation that has delighted so many of his fans.

"I think we had blinkers on. Most of the employees tried to give him the benefit of the doubt for as long as possible, and also because finding another job is not necessarily easy," he said. But Musk, beyond the big smiles and enthusiastic declarations, has lived up to his reputation, with those remaining having no choice but to give their job their all. "His behavior is still of the bully on the playground, firing anyone who tells him he's wrong," said Sarah Roberts, a social media professor at UCLA. "Any kind of criticism with his wildly inaccurate ... statements gets you fired."

US tech giant HP plans up to 6,000 job cuts

WASHINGTON: PC-maker Hewlett Packard on Tuesday said it would lay off as many as 6,000 employees over the next three years as the slumping world economy continues to embroil the US tech sector. HP, which has a payroll of about 61,000 people, said it aimed to secure \$1.4 billion in annual savings through 2025 as it followed the cost-cutting path of other tech giants such as Facebook-owner Meta, Amazon and Twitter.

The plan "will enable us to better serve our customers and drive long-term value creation by reducing our costs and reinvesting in key growth initiatives to position our business for the future," HP CEO Enrique Loes said in a statement. Meta said earlier this month it will lay off more than 11,000 of its staff and Twitter saw half of its 7,500-strong employees culled just days after the company was taken over by billionaire Elon Musk in late October.

"These are the toughest decisions we have to make, because they impact colleagues we care

deeply about. We are committed to treating people with care and respect..." an HP spokesperson said in an email to AFP. HP, which makes computer hardware and printers, announced the layoff plan as it announced an 11.2 percent fall in revenues to \$14.8 billion for the final fiscal quarter of 2022. —AFP

Cornet was particularly shocked by what he called a lack of respect from the richest man in the world. "In the long term, objectively, he seems to be trying to help the planet, with electric cars, in particular," he said. "But the people around him seem disposable."

Musk brings "this kind of swashbuckling bravado from being an entrepreneur interested in things like rockets and cars and big hardware that has impressive performance and really wows people," said John Wihbey, a media professor at Northeastern University. "The Twitter culture is much more low key. It has a politically progressive, geeky, pro-social vibe," he said. The libertarian entrepreneur has long had close ties with Silicon Valley, where he co-founded Tesla. But he has since disavowed politically liberal California, railing against health restrictions during the pandemic and becoming a hero to conservative libertarians online. At the end of 2021, he moved the headquarters of his flagship company to Texas, a majority conservative state.

Twitter was founded by Jack Dorsey, who "is very much this kind of Zen guru, sort of a spiritual seeker vibe," said Wihbey. Employees of the network were "proud to work there", he said. "They really believed in the product." Cornet worked 14 years at Google before going to Twitter, two groups which, at the time, did not seem "obsessed with profits." "The sense of community at Twitter is so strong it continues after" the layoffs, he said with admiration. Ex-employees gather on Discord, WhatsApp, signal and other platforms to support each other and be nostalgic.

Meanwhile, Musk has postponed the relaunch of paid verification on the platform, extending a suspension he previously said would end this month. Adding a verification option for subscribers of Twitter Blue, open to all users for eight dollars a month, has been a major focus for Musk since he



NEW YORK: In this file photo, the Twitter logo at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York. —AFP

bought the platform in late October.

"Holding off relaunch of Blue Verified until there is high confidence of stopping impersonation," Musk tweeted on Monday. "Will probably use different color check for organizations than individuals."

Musk did not give a date for the relaunch, which was previously scheduled for November 29. Early this month, Musk said the relaunch of Twitter's paid subscription service would include account authentication, arguing the plan would upend the platform's "current lords & peasants system" and create a new revenue stream for the company.

A first attempt at launching the feature on iPhone

saw an embarrassing spate of fake accounts that scared advertisers. Verified accounts with millions of followers were banned after their user name was changed to "Elon Musk."

Twitter suspended paid verification and reinstated the gray "official" badge on accounts belonging to public figures and major organizations. Musk has since reinstated some of the banned accounts that impersonated him, including that of comedian Kathy Griffin. Before Musk acquired Twitter, the platform offered free identity verification for organizations and public figures, while Twitter Blue offered unrelated customization features. —AFP



PALO ALTO: In this file photo taken on May 23, 2014, a sign is posted outside of the Hewlett-Packard headquarters in Palo Alto, California. — AFP

deeply about. We are committed to treating people with care and respect..." an HP spokesperson said in an email to AFP. HP, which makes computer hardware and printers, announced the layoff plan as it announced an 11.2 percent fall in revenues to \$14.8 billion for the final fiscal quarter of 2022. —AFP



Boeing 787 Dreamliners are shown in final production at widebody factory of Boeing in North Charleston, South Carolina, in this file photo.

High Frequency Economics. But she added that this will likely slow "on softening demand in response to higher interest rates." As inflation in the US hit its highest level in decades, the central bank has embarked on an aggressive campaign to cool demand and tamp down price increases.

Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics cautioned in a recent report that the "outlook for equipment and software investment is bleak," citing gloomy survey results on capital expenditure plans. "The deterioration in the surveys began earlier in

the year as energy prices surged in the wake of the war in Ukraine, and businesses then cut back their plans further as the (US Federal Reserve) stepped up its pace of rate hikes," he said. Meanwhile, new home sales in the US defied expectations and rose in October, government data showed Wednesday, despite mortgage rates remaining high. Although sales surged during the pandemic, the sector cooled with the central bank raising the benchmark lending rate multiple times this year to ease demand and tamp down soaring inflation. —AFP

Uniper rescue to cost Germany an extra €25 billion

GERMANY: Troubled gas giant Uniper on Wednesday said the German government would need to spend an additional €25 billion euros under a planned nationalization to stave off the firm's collapse in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine. The German government agreed in September to nationalize the debt-laden company after Moscow's closure of a key gas pipeline and sky-high energy prices left Uniper facing bankruptcy.

But the initial €8-billion-euro cash injection from the government "will not be sufficient to stabilize Uniper", the company said in a statement. Another capital increase to the tune of €25 billion (\$26 billion) will be needed to help cover "the enormous additional costs of the Russian gas cuts that continue to be primarily borne by Uniper", CEO Klaus-Dieter Maubach said.

The revised figure comes after Berlin scrapped a controversial plan to make German consumers pay a gas levy to help importers cope with rising prices, which would have covered some of Uniper's costs.

The government will finance the rescue out of a €200 billion "special fund" designed to cushion the impact of the energy crisis on households and businesses. Uniper said it would ask shareholders to formally approve the rescue deal on December 19. As Germany's biggest gas importer, Uniper has been hit especially hard by the fallout from the Ukraine war, which forced it to buy gas at significantly higher prices on the open market.

It has reported a €40 billion net loss for the first nine months of the year, one of the biggest losses in German corporate history. Germany's government stepped in to save the company on fears that its collapse could endanger gas supplies and wreak havoc on Europe's biggest economy. Germany, which was heavily reliant on Russian gas imports before the war, has raced to find alternative suppliers and fill reserves before the colder winter weather arrives. The country announced last week that its gas storage facilities were 100 percent full. —AFP



Aircraft orders drive US factory goods demand

WASHINGTON: A pick-up in aircraft orders boosted demand for big-ticket US manufactured goods in October, with numbers rising more than expected, government data showed Wednesday. Durable goods orders rose one percent to \$277.4 billion last month, up from a revised 0.3 percent bump in September, the Commerce Department reported.

Transportation equipment led the increase, with orders for nondefense aircraft and components growing 7.4 percent. Analysts expected the figures were likely boosted by civilian aircraft orders thanks to Boeing. Meanwhile, orders for defense aircraft and parts soared 21.7 percent from September to October. Surging inflation in the United States and supply chain problems have proven a challenge to industry and consumers, causing a pullback in spending and investment.

But while observers braced for a further drop in demand for nondefense goods—seen as a guide to equipment and software investment—this number picked up in October, pointing to resilient demand.

In October, orders for computers and related products rose 4.7 percent, data showed. Without the boost from transportation, durable goods orders still increased 0.5 percent. "The data point to still-positive momentum in business investment and equipment spending," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of

Business

S&P awards Boubyan Bank the highest credit rating in Kuwait

Agency upgrades bank's long-term issuer credit rating to 'A' and revises outlook to 'Stable'

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank took a new step towards further achievements as it approached the end of this year by receiving a new upgrade of its credit rating from Standard & Poor's Ratings, which upgraded the bank's long-term issuer credit rating to "A", and revised its Outlook to "Stable", while upgrading its SACP rating to "bbb+".

Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer, Adel Al-Majed, stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, we have made a new achievement in our journey as we come closer to the end of this year. This major step confirms our success in striking the needed balance between expansion and growth of our business locally and internationally on the one hand, and good profits on the other hand."

He added: "Upgrading our credit rating despite the uncertainty of international economic expectations, owing to geopolitical factors and inflation rates, reflects the strength of our banking services and our ability to achieve balanced growth, while maintaining the quality of our assets, the thing which was highlighted by the prestigious rating agency which believes that this helps the bank maintain strong capitalization. The latest upgrade places Boubyan Bank in the lead of local banks rated by Standard & Poor's, as well as being ahead of all Islamic banks in Kuwait, while ranking second at the level of all local banks rated by Moody's and Fitch. This actually increases our chal-



Adel Al-Majed

Rating Boubyan atop local banks confirms our successful ongoing balance between growth, expansion and profits

lenges and makes us more persistent to continue our achievements."

The agency expected that the combination of balanced growth, decent earnings, and a manageable dividend payout ratio is likely to help the bank maintain strong capitalization, and that the bank can keep asset quality indicators at current levels, despite expected growth locally and abroad.

Second upgrade of credit ratings in 2022

The upgrade of Boubyan Bank's credit rating by international credit rating agencies is the second during 2022, following Moody's decision to upgrade Boubyan's Long Term Deposit Rating from "A3" to

"A2", while upgrading the bank's Baseline Credit Assessment from "ba1" to "baa3" in the second quarter of this year, reflecting their view on the bank's growing domestic retail and corporate franchise, which supports its solid recurring profitability, strong asset quality and capital buffers in light of the capital raising, as well as a stable funding profile.

Boubyan Bank... a role model to follow in Islamic banks' stories

Furthermore, in its report on Islamic finance in Kuwait during Q3 of this year, Moody's cited Boubyan Bank's successes as a proof of the excellent performance of Islamic banks in Kuwait and the Middle East,

while stressing that numbers show that the bank is now ranked the third largest bank in Kuwait in terms of its major market share, which exceeds 11 percent.

The safest bank

Boubyan Bank managed to make a new accomplishment that adds to its recent achievements by advancing to the 4th rank in Global Finance's list for the Safest Islamic Banks in the GCC. This confirms the success of the bank's strategy and its robustness and resilience in the face of various crises.

More than 15 awards

It is worth-noting that Boubyan Bank received a record number of international awards in 2022 from distinct and prestigious institutions such as Euromoney, MEED, and Global Finance. The bank received more than 15 awards in various areas such as digital services, creativity and innovation, CSR, and SMEs' support. The bank was also named the World's Best Islamic Digital Bank for the eighth consecutive year by Global Finance.

Al-Majed was also recognized this year as he was named "Arab Banker of the Year 2021", making him the first Kuwaiti banker ever to receive the highest recognition given by the Union of Arab Banks for excellent achievers in the Arab financial and banking business.



ABUJA: The ground-breaking ceremony of the Kolmani Oil Prospecting Lease (OPL) at the Kolmani field site, the first oil drilling in Northern Nigeria that took place in Bauchi and Gombe states on Wednesday.

Nigeria inaugurates first oil and gas project in north

ABUJA: Nigeria began drilling for oil and gas in the northeast on Tuesday, a first for the African oil giant which has exploited large deposits in the south for decades and whose production is declining. President Muhammadu Buhari visited the Kolmani field, located in Gombe and Bauchi states and with estimated reserves of over one million barrels, to inaugurate the drilling site.

"The successful discovery of the Kolmani Oil and Gas field by NNPC (Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited) and her partners has finally broken the jinx" after long efforts to find commercial oil and gas outside the established Niger Delta Basin, Buhari said in a statement. In addition to drilling, the project which has attracted \$3 billion in investment-aims to open an oil refinery, a gas processing unit, a power plant and a fertilizer factory, according to the presidential statement.

Buhari in his comments also urged the oil company and partners "to ensure all lessons learnt from our years of experience as an oil-producing nation are utilized to ensure harmonious relationship with the local

communities". Oil exploitation in Nigeria began in the 1960s in the southeastern Niger Delta region.

Decades of production have enriched government officials and generated huge profits for large foreign companies in particular, but the majority of Nigerians, especially in the oil-rich Delta region, continue to live in poverty. The region suffers badly from pollution, and tens of thousands of people now make a living from stealing crude oil from pipelines or at sea, from illegal refineries that have sprung up in swampy and forested areas, and from selling fuel on the black market, causing ecological disasters.

This insecurity in the sector has significantly increased the cost of producing Nigerian oil, and major foreign oil companies are now ceding their share of onshore oil fields to focus on offshore operations. In September, Nigeria lost its position as the largest oil producer on the African continent to Angola as its oil production continued to decline despite rising prices linked to the Russian offensive in Ukraine. In addition to a severe economic crisis, Africa's most populous country also faces widespread insecurity, with attacks by criminal groups and a jihadist insurgency in the north, and separatist unrest in the southeast. In the face of these problems, Nigerian voters will go to the polls in February to elect a successor to Buhari, who is stepping down after two terms. On Tuesday Buhari also reiterated Nigeria's goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060. — AFP

Biden weighing in to flex his political muscle.

Too soon?

The risk of a major labor dispute actually has existed for months, with the White House narrowly averting a strike in September. In a self-congratulatory move, the president welcomed labor leaders to the Oval Office on September 15 to celebrate an agreement in principle, after hours of intense negotiations that had stalled in particular on the issue of sick leave.

Biden at the time went as far as to hail "a big win for America" during a speech in the Rose Garden. The presidential celebration now appears premature. That agreement still required the ratification from members of the 12 unions in question, but four of the labor groups do not support it. There are still two weeks to reach a deal. In the end, if only one of the unions goes on strike, the others will follow suit.

The impasse is a difficult one for Biden. He is a huge supporter of rail transportation who as a US senator traveled by train daily between Washington and his family living in the state of Delaware, and throughout his career has rarely missed an opportunity to express support for labor unions. But with US inflation sky high, and holidays fast approaching, he can hardly afford such transport woes.

As the 79-year-old Democrat mulls a re-election bid in 2024, a rail strike could jeopardize the political momentum he has earned since the November 8 midterm elections, when his party averted major losses to Republicans. One possibility is the intervention of Congress, which has the power under the 1926 Railway Labor Act to keep the railroads operating. — AFP

Moldova denies Russian gas supplies diverted in Ukraine

CHISINAU, Moldova: Moldova on Wednesday dismissed allegations from Gazprom that Ukraine was diverting supplies intended for Moldova, after the Russian energy giant accused Kyiv of withholding deliveries and threatened to cut supplies. Ukraine is a key transit artery for Russian gas supplies to Europe and Gazprom's threat to slash flows comes as Moldova, Ukraine and many other European countries face an energy crisis. Moscow has dramatically reduced consignments to Europe in response to Western sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

Gazprom this week accused Ukraine of preventing around 52.52 million cubic meters from being delivered to Moldova and threatened to reduce volumes starting next week if the "imbalance" was not corrected. "To be clear, all the gas delivered to Moldova ends up in our country," Moldova's Prime Minister Andrei Spinu said on social media Wednesday. "The volumes of gas that Gazprom refers to as remaining in Ukraine are our savings and reserves stored in warehouses in Ukraine," he added.

"Let it also be clear that these volumes were and will be fully paid for by our country," Spinu explained that Moldova has "over 200 million cubic meters of gas in storage". Ukraine earlier denied Gazprom's allegations, saying that all gas volumes destined to Moldovan consumers have been transferred "in the full amount".

It also accused Russia of "manipulating facts" to justify reducing deliveries to Europe. Wedged between Ukraine and Romania, Moldova has seen its Russian gas deliveries slashed and its regular electricity imports dry up. Its pro-Western president, Maia Sandu, this week warned the country faced a "dramatic energy crisis" this winter due to the war in Ukraine.

The Saint Petersburg-based company said Ukraine had obstructed 52.52 million cubic meters from being delivered to Moldova and threatened cuts in response. "If the transit imbalance through Ukraine for Moldovan consumers persists, on November 28, from 10:00, Gazprom will begin reducing gas supply" through a key transit point for deliveries to Europe, the company said.

Ukraine denied the allegations, saying that all the gas volumes bound to Moldovan consumers have been transferred "in the full amount". "By threatening to reduce the volumes of gas transportation to Moldova, Gazprom is trying to deprive this country of the opportunity to use the Ukrainian gas transmission system (GTS)," Ukraine GTS operator official Olga Bielkova said in a statement. "This is not the first time Russia has resorted to using gas as an instrument of political pressure," she said. "It manipulates facts to justify its decision to limit further the volume of gas supplies to European countries."

The threats come at a precarious moment for energy security in Europe, which scrambled to fill gas storage sites ahead of winter. Ukraine is suffering a severe energy crisis in the wake of weeks of persistent Russian strikes on its energy grid, which has also led to blackouts in neighboring Moldova. Chisinau's pro-European president, Maia Sandu, has warned that her country of 2.6 million people nestled between Romania and conflict-scarred Ukraine risks running out of gas and electricity this winter. — AFP

Freight train strike could derail Biden political momentum

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden faces the prospect of a crippling strike by railroad unions that could stall transport of fuel, corn and drinking water, dramatically complicate holiday season train travel, and dent the US president's political standing. If an agreement is not reached by December 9 at the latest, the world's largest economy could see nearly 7,000 freight trains grind to a halt, at a cost of more than \$2 billion a day, according to the American Association of Railroads.

Biden himself has got "involved directly" in the negotiations aimed at averting a work stoppage, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday. "I don't want to get into details at this time, but he has been involved," she said. In a country where some 28 percent of all goods are transported by rail, according to 2019 statistics, "a shutdown is unacceptable because of the harm... imposed on jobs, families, farms, businesses, and communities" nationwide, Jean-Pierre added.

A large-scale strike would affect multiple sectors, even the supply of drinking water, given that many of the chemicals used in treatment plants are transported by train. A freight freeze would also impact passenger service, because some passenger trains run on tracks owned by freight companies. The stoppage threat is the result of a complex negotiation involving members of 12 unions and their employers, with



Singapore warns slower economic growth in 2023

SINGAPORE: Singapore warned on Wednesday that economic growth could slow to a trickle next year owing to weakness in key export markets including the United States, Europe and China, as rising interest rates and the Ukraine war cause headwinds. The city-state's economic performance is often seen as a useful barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on trade with the rest of the world.

The trade ministry said it expected growth to come in at 3.5 percent this year-inside its forecasts for 3-4 percent-but then drop sharply in 2023 to just 0.5-2.5 percent as weaker global demand offsets a strong recovery in air travel after the pandemic. Officials warned that "significant uncertainties and downside risks in the global economy remain" including the war in Ukraine and central bank moves to fight decades-

high inflation with multiple interest rate hikes.

"Singapore's external demand outlook has softened further due to the weaker outlook for the eurozone economy amidst an energy crunch, as well as for China as it continues to grapple with recurring COVID-19 outbreaks and a property market downturn," the ministry said.

China is the only major economy still attempting to stamp out the domestic spread of the virus, and a fresh outbreak has seen authorities impose strict containment measures such as shutting down parts of cities and placing contacts of infected patients into strict quarantine. A series of new rules announced by Beijing earlier this month appeared to signal a shift away from its controversial zero-COVID strategy but the latest flare-up and the first deaths in months have sparked fears of another harsh clampdown. Singapore's trade ministry said Wednesday: "Growth rates in most major economies are expected to moderate further from 2022 levels, with sharp slowdowns projected in the US and eurozone. "Global supply disruptions are likely to continue into 2023 as the war in Ukraine drags on, even though the extent and frequency of disruptions is expected to ease." — AFP

Business

Violent protests at largest iPhone factory in China

Workers clash with security personnel over pay and living conditions at plant

BEIJING: Violent protests have broken out around Foxconn's vast iPhone factory in central China, as workers clashed with security personnel over pay and living conditions at the plant. In videos shared on Weibo and Twitter that AFP has verified, hundreds of workers can be seen marching on a road in daylight. Some were confronted by riot police and people in hazmat suits.

Foxconn confirmed the unrest later on Wednesday. A night-time video showed a man with a bloodied face as someone off-camera says: "They're hitting people, hitting people. Do they have a conscience?" Another at the same scene showed dozens of workers confronting a row of police officers shouting, "Defend our rights! Defend our rights!", while another voice talks of "smoke bombs" and "tear gas".

AFP verified those videos partly through geolocation that showed distinctive features, including a building and barricades near staff living quarters on the factory compound. In a daytime video, several fire trucks surrounded by police in hazmat suits were parked near residential blocks while a voice on a loudspeaker was heard saying: "All workers please return to their accommodation, do not associate with a small minority of illegal elements." China's unrelenting zero-COVID policy has caused fatigue and resentment among wide swaths of the population, some of whom have been locked down for weeks at factories and universities or been unable to travel freely.

The Weibo hashtag "Foxconn riots" appeared to be censored by Wednesday noon but some text posts referring to large protests at the factory remained live.

Foxconn said workers had complained about

pay and conditions at the plant but denied it had housed new recruits with COVID-positive staff at the Zhengzhou factory, the world's largest producer of iPhones. "Regarding any violence, the company will continue to communicate with employees and the government to prevent similar incidents from happening again," the Taiwanese tech giant said in a statement. Apple did not respond to requests for comment.

Hotbed of unrest

Foxconn, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer, assembling gadgets for many international brands. The Taiwanese tech giant, Apple's principal subcontractor, recently saw a surge in COVID-19 cases at its Zhengzhou site, leading the company to shut the vast complex in a bid to keep the virus in check.

The huge facility of about 200,000 workers—dubbed "iPhone City"—has since been operating in a "closed loop" bubble. Footage emerged this month of panicking workers fleeing the site on foot in the wake of allegations of poor conditions at the facility.

Multiple employees later recounted to AFP scenes of chaos and disorganisation at the complex of workshops and dormitories. In the place of the fleeing workers, the firm has offered large bonuses and other incentives for employees who stayed as the local government bussed in fresh labourers in a bid to keep the factory afloat. Apple this month acknowledged the lockdown had "temporarily impacted" production ahead of the holiday season at the Zhengzhou factory, the Taiwanese company's crown jewel that churns out iPhones in quantities not seen anywhere else.



SHENZHEN, China: This file photo taken on May 27, 2010 shows Chinese workers outside the Foxconn factory in Shenzhen, southern China's Guangdong province. —AFP

Foxconn is China's biggest private sector employer, with more than a million people working across the country in about 30 factories and research institutes. China is the last major economy wedded to a strategy of extinguishing COVID outbreaks as they emerge, imposing lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines despite the wide-

spread disruption to businesses and international supply chains.

The policy has sparked sporadic protests throughout China, with residents taking to the streets in several major Chinese cities to vent their anger against snap lockdowns and business closures. —AFP

Germany to cap guarantees for investments in China

BERLIN: Germany will limit guarantees for companies doing business in China as it looks to reduce its dependence on Beijing, Economy Minister Robert Habeck said Tuesday.

The investment support program would be overhauled to create "a strong incentive for diversification", Habeck told a news conference in Paris. Policy-makers would implement a quota, "so that not all German guarantees are aimed at one country, that is to say China," Habeck said, flanked by French counterpart Bruno Le Maire.

Germany has been reevaluating its economic relationship with China amid concerns over human rights and the communist regime's ties with Russia. "There will be an upper limit for investments in a particular country," with a figure of three billion euros (\$3.1 billion) being discussed, Habeck said.

"Above that, companies can of course invest in a country but they will no longer be further secured with taxpayer money," he said. The guarantees would also be subject to an "in-depth" check, taking into account environmental and social standards, the German weekly Spiegel reported last week, citing internal government documents.

In May, Germany refused guarantees to Volkswagen in China due to concerns over human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region, where the auto giant has a facility.

Critical infrastructure

Germany could not "decouple from China, nor can we completely do without the Chinese market," Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said at an event hosted by the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily. Berlin however had the potential to "accompany" more investments with guarantees around the globe in countries other than China, she said.

Scepticism has also grown in Germany around Chinese investments in what is deemed to be critical infrastructure. "We are increasingly refusing investments from Chinese firms in these areas (critical infrastructure)," Habeck said.

By blocking Chinese buyers from taking stakes in sensitive areas, Germany was "claiming the same right that China claims for itself", he said. Earlier this month, Berlin blocked the sale of two chipmakers to Chinese investors, citing a potential threat to security. The key technology has increasingly become a zone of confrontation with China, as Germany and its European partners look to reduce their dependence on Asia and grow their domestic industry. Germany did give the green light to the sale of a stake in the Hamburg port terminal to the Chinese firm Cosco, despite internal government opposition.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz defied calls from six ministries to veto the sale, permitting Cosco to acquire a reduced stake. Scholz made a plea for "pragmatism" in relations with China ahead of a controversial trip to Beijing earlier this month. Germany should not withdraw from the key market but would look to "reduce one-sided dependencies", he said. —AFP

A greener ride: West Africans switch on to ebikes

COTONOU, Benin: Beninese hairdresser Edwige Govi makes a point these days of using electric motorbike taxis to get around Cotonou, saying she enjoys a ride that is quiet and clean. Motorcycle taxis are a popular and cheap form of transportation in West Africa. But in Benin and Togo, electric models are gaining the ascendancy over petrol-powered rivals.

Customers are plumping for environmentally-friendlier travel and taxi drivers are switching to machines that, above all, are less expensive to buy and operate. "They are very quiet and do not give off smoke," says Govi, 26, who had just completed a half-hour run across Benin's economic hub.

In African cities, road pollution is becoming a major health and environment issue, although for taxi drivers, the big attraction of electric motorcycles is the cost. "I manage to get by," said Govi's driver, Octave, wearing the green and yellow vest used by Benin's zemi-djan taxis—a word meaning "take me quickly" in the local Fon language.

"I make more money than with my fuel motorcycle," Local environmentalist Murielle Hozanhekpon said the electric motorbikes do have some disadvantages "but not on an environmental level".

Alain Tossounon, a journalist specializing in environmental issues, said electric bikes were prized by taxi drivers as they were less expensive to maintain or

run. The cost factor has become more and more important in the face of an explosion of fuel prices this year triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Credit carrot

In Benin, an electric motorcycle costs 480,000 CFA (\$737 / euros) against 490,050 CFA (\$752 / euros) for a petrol-driven equivalent. But this significant price difference is only one factor which explains the trend towards "silent motorcycles," said Tossounon. Many taxi drivers are also lured by flexible credit deals—instead of making a hefty one-off purchase, many are able to get loans that they pay off monthly, weekly or even daily.

Two companies in Cotonou have been offering electric models and say they are overwhelmed by demand. "The queue here is from morning to evening. Every hour, at least two roll out of the shop," said vendor Anicet Takalodjou. Oloufounmi Koucoi, 38, director of another company delivering the models to Cotonou, said they had put thousands of e-motorcycles in circulation. "The number is growing every day."

By assembling the motorcycles locally in Benin, his electric models are cheaper than if they had been imported. To attract customers, his company, Zed-Motors, offers solar panels to facilitate recharging for those who do not have electricity at home. For decades, Benin and its economy have struggled with power cuts. The situation has improved, but outages remain common. In rural areas, especially, electricity remains largely inaccessible.

Battery change

In Lome, capital of neighboring Togo, Octave de Souza parades proudly through the streets on his brand-new green electric motorcycle. One point in



A man rides his electric motorcycle on the roads of Cotonou. —AFP

particular makes him and his wallet happy: no more fuelling up. "All you need to do is change the battery," he smiled. "There are sales outlets, you go there and it's exchanged for you."

A recharge costs 1,000 CFA (\$1.50 / euros) and can provide three days' mobility. For the same price, Octave said, he would only be able to ride for one day using petrol, which is subsidised by the government. Local authorities also are encouraging the switch to electric in a bid to replace old, highly polluting motorcycles.

But some drivers remain wary of electric models, citing range anxiety—the worry of coming to a halt with a flat battery. Taxi driver Koffi Abotsi said he struggled with the "stress" of having to quickly find a charging station so as not to break down. "This sometimes leads us to swap (the battery) even with 10 percent or 15 percent charge remaining so as not to have any unpleasant surprises along the way." —AFP

Report lays bare Australia's sobering climate challenge

SYDNEY: Rising temperatures are fuelling widespread environmental degradation across Australia and supercharging natural disasters, according to a government report released Wednesday in the wake of flash floods on the country's east coast. The State of the Climate report found global warming was also slowly melting Australia's fragile alpine regions while contributing to ocean acidification and rising sea levels.

Climate researcher Ian Lowe said the report was a "frightening" wake-up call for Australia, which relies heavily on coal and gas exports for economic growth. "The scale of changes demonstrates that cleaning up our energy use is an urgent priority," Lowe said.

"We also need to reduce our exports of coal and gas." The report, a joint effort between the government's weather bureau and national science agency, found Australia's climate had warmed by an average of 1.47 degrees Celsius since records began in 1910.

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said it was "sobering" reading. "For our environment, for our communities, this report reinforces the urgent need for climate action," she said.

'Record-breaking extremes'

Australia has in recent years experienced a series of extreme weather events linked to rising global temperatures. Flash floods swept through parts of inland New South Wales earlier this month, tearing entire homes from their foundations in some country towns.

Tens of thousands of Sydney residents were ordered to evacuate in July when floods swamped the city's fringe. An east coast flooding disaster in March—caused by heavy storms in Queensland and New South Wales—claimed more than 20 lives.

the restructuring plan.

Chairman Axel Lehmann called it an "important step in our journey to build the new Credit Suisse".

"This vote confirms confidence in the strategy, as we presented it in October, and we are fully focused on delivering our strategic priorities to lay the foundation for future profitable growth," he said. The increase in share capital is expected to boost Credit Suisse's CET1 ratio, which compares a bank's capital to its risk-weighted assets. At 1200 GMT, the group's shares were down 4.8 percent at 3.67 Swiss francs, while the Swiss stock exchange's main SMI index was up 0.2 percent. The bank suffered a net loss of 273 million Swiss francs in the first quarter, then nearly 1.6 billion in the second quarter and four billion in the third.

The scale of fourth-quarter losses "will depend on a number of factors



including the investment bank's performance for the remainder of the quarter, the continued exit of non-core positions, any goodwill impairments, and the outcome of certain other actions, including potential real-estate sales", the Zurich-based

bank said in a statement. Credit Suisse said in October that it expected to incur restructuring charges and software and property impairments of around 250 million Swiss francs in the fourth quarter as part of its overhaul. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

BLANCHETT AND YEOH FILMS TOP INDIE SPIRIT AWARD NOMINATIONS

Michelle Yeoh's "Everything Everywhere All At Once" and Cate Blanchett's "Tar" led the Spirit Awards nominations Tuesday, underlining their credentials as the indie films to watch this awards season. The Film Independent Spirit Awards, which consider only low- and mid-budget movies, gave eight nods to Yeoh's hit sci-fi about surreal parallel universes, and seven to Blanchett's drama set in the cut-throat world of classical music. Both were nominated for best feature, along with Sarah Polley's "Women Talking," which will receive the prestigious Robert Altman Award for a film's director, casting director and overall cast.



In this file photo Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh arrives for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 13th Annual Governors Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

All three movies are widely tipped to feature at next year's Oscars, which take place in March, just one week after the Spirit Awards winners are revealed in an annual ceremony by a Los Angeles beach. "Everything Everywhere All At Once" has grossed over \$100 million worldwide, making it leading indie distributor A24's biggest hit.

The absurdist film portrays a Chinese-American immigrant family undergoing a tax audit, who are quickly drawn into an inter-dimensional battle to save the multiverse from a powerful villain. "Tar" follows the rise and fall of a fictional, globally renowned conductor who will stop at nothing to succeed in her high-flying career.

"Women Talking," a drama about women in an ultraconservative religious colony debating how to deal with systemic sexual abuse, features an ensemble cast including Claire Foy, Rooney Mara and Frances McDormand. Rounding out the Spirit Awards' best feature category were Timothee Chalamet's cannibal love story "Bones and All," and African refugee drama "Our Father, the Devil."

But Chalamet was among several eligible A-listers who notably missed out on acting nominations, along with Jennifer Lawrence ("Causeway") and Brendan Fraser, whose acclaimed film "The Whale" earned zero nominations. Double Oscar-winner Blanchett and Yeoh both received lead actor nominations, while Mark Rylance ("Bones and All") and Jamie Lee Curtis ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") earned supporting nods.



In this file photo taken on July 12, 1999, moviegoers watch the classic film "Casablanca" on a 20-by-40-foot outdoor screen on the Washington Monument grounds in Washington DC.

Films with budgets over \$30 million are not considered for the Spirit Awards, which aim to celebrate independent filmmaking. Film Independent president Josh Welsh said Tuesday the nominations had looked for "uniqueness of vision, original provocative subject matter, economy of means, and diversity both on screen and off." For the first time, the awards have opted for gender-neutral acting awards. The Spirit Awards take place in a giant tent by Santa Monica beach on March 4. Oscars voting ends three days later, and the season-capping 95th Academy Awards take place March 12. — AFP

Zimbabwe releases gospel-singing protesters

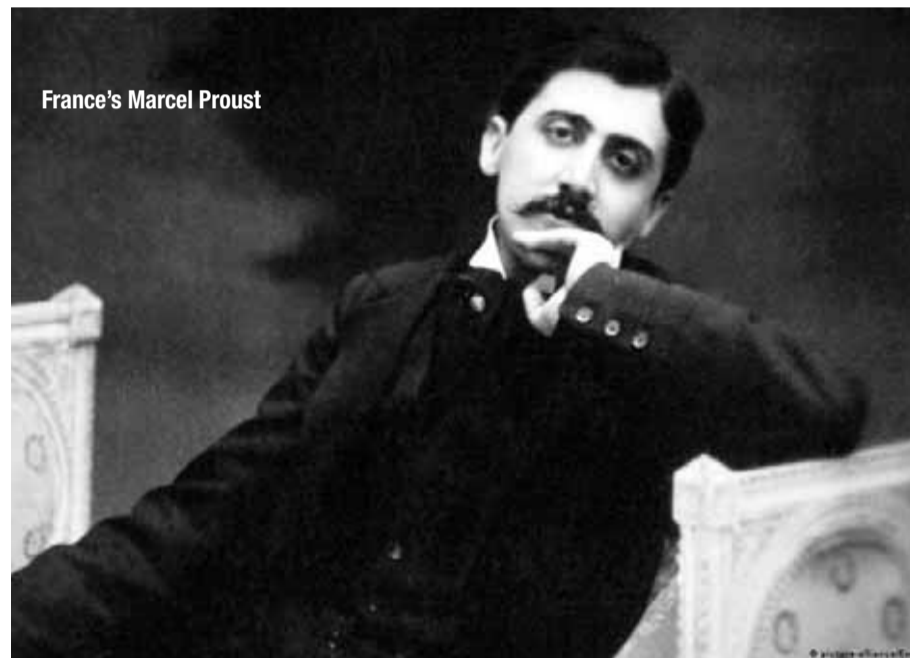
Zimbabwe has released a group of Christian sect members arrested in July for singing protest gospels after a court handed down suspended sentences, their lawyers said on Wednesday. Police arrested 34 worshippers from the apostolic sect as they walked in the centre of Harare, clad in colorful church regalia, singing "(Lord) please deliver us from our suffering", the lawyers said. Most of the group were young women linked to the small opposition Zimbabwe Transformative Party (ZTP).

A Harare court on Tuesday found the 34 guilty of criminal nuisance over the peaceful demonstration and handed each a three-month suspended sentence and a 12,000 Zimbabwean dollar (\$33) fine. Authorities said their action obstructed the passage of people and vehicles and the protesters did not comply with police orders to stop.

The group spent four months behind bars after refusing to ask for bail. "We just came out of prison and are still deliberating on our next move," ZTP's deputy head Simon Goshomi, who was among those held, told AFP on Wednesday. Lawyer Evans Moyo said his clients were "not happy" with the verdict and could appeal.

Rights groups and opposition parties have complained of an increased government clampdown on dissent as the country heads towards general elections next year. ZTP's leader Kanyenzura Parere, who was also arrested during the July protest, is being tried separately on different charges of breaching the peace and remains in jail.

Parere is a bishop with the Mirirai Jehovha Apostolic Church. There is rising discontent in Zimbabwe as President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who replaced long-time ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017, struggles to ease entrenched poverty, end the country's chronic power cuts, and rein in inflation. Rights groups have complained of repeated arbitrary detentions and often exceptionally harsh custody under Mnangagwa. — AFP



France's Marcel Proust

A bluffer's guide to Proust 100 years after his death

France's Marcel Proust, who died 100 years ago on Friday, is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of all time-but few can truthfully claim to have read his 2,400-page masterpiece "In Search of Lost Time". For those waiting for another lockdown to curl up with his magnum opus, here are five fun facts you can drop into a conversation that will make you sound like an expert.

Unwanted masterpiece

In 1909 Proust launched himself into what would become his masterpiece, a novel about memory and the essence of art. The project grew from one book to a second in 1912 and a third the following year. "In Search of Lost Time" eventually grew into seven volumes, four published in Proust's lifetime and three after his death at the age of 51 in 1922. But finding a publisher was not easy.

After receiving three rejections for the first volume "Swann's Way", Proust decided to self-publish, with the help of Grasset publishing house. Nobel-winning novelist Andre Gide, who was an editor at the time at NRF publishing house (which later became Gallimard), was among those who passed on Proust's dense prose. "The rejection of this book will remain the NRF's greatest mistake," Gide later wrote to Proust, calling it "one of the most bitter regrets of my life". Gallimard managed to lure Proust back with his second novel in 1916, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower", which won the Goncourt Prize, France's top literary award.

'Oh': on winning top prize

When the Goncourt jury announced Proust as the winner in 1919, Gallimard rushed to give the author the good news.

Arriving at his home near the Champs-Elysees, Gallimard found Proust, an inveterate snoozer, asleep in a room filled with steam treatments for his asthma.

"Oh?" said the author flatly, on hearing he had won the literary equivalent of the jackpot.

His win sparked an outcry by the French left which backed Roland Dorgeles' epic account of life in the

trenches in World War I over what they characterised as Proust's self-indulgent ruminations on the passage of time.

Proust's critics further argued he was too old-he was 48 at the time-and too rich to win the award which came with 5,000 francs in prize money.

On and on and on

"For a long time, I went to bed early...", is how "In Search of Lost Time" begins, and it's also how the story ends for many a reader, who find Proust's prose to have soporific qualities. Poetic and dreamy, sprinkled with dashes and parentheses, his sentences are exceptionally long-on average 30 words, twice that of most novelists.

The madeleine was nearly toast

The madeleine or mini sponge cake that has become the most famous detail in all seven volumes makes its appearance early in the first book. For the protagonist, Marcel, tasting the little cake releases a flurry of vivid memories, giving him access to the "lost time" he is searching for.

"As soon as I had recognized the taste of madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea that my aunt used to give me...", he swoons. And yet the mighty madeleine was nearly a humble piece of toast, as early drafts of the scene discovered in Proust's notebooks reveal.

Maternal mollycoddling

Proust suffered most of his life with severe asthma, and although he liked to socialise he also spent long stretches in bed, writing with a tray on his knees. His neurologist father urged his sickly son to get out in the fresh air and play sport, noting that asthma was not contagious.

But Proust's mother was prone to mollycoddling, and from 1906 he followed her counsel, staying cloistered inside like a hermit, with a steady supply of caffeine and aspirin. His respiratory problems would finally get the better of him. He died after pneumonia that turned into bronchitis and then an abscess on the lungs. — AFP

Netflix doubles production capacity in Spain

Online video streaming giant Netflix on Tuesday opened new film studios in Spain, doubling its production capacity in the country that has become a hub of audiovisual creation in Europe. The new facilities include five film sets and around 30 editing suites in La Ciudad de la Tele, a vast production complex in the town of Tres Cantos, north of Madrid. Netflix has now doubled its production capacity in Spain with 10 sets in total including spaces for production, make-up, hairstyling and a changing room, the US company said in a statement.

The entertainment platform inaugurated its first studios outside the United States on the same site in 2019, shortly after Spanish series "La Casa de Papel" became its first global hit in a language other than English. The Tres Cantos hub has since become Netflix's main produc-

tion site in the European Union, with more than 30 films and series shot there in 2022 including "Welcome to Eden" and "Elite".



Spanish Culture Minister Miquel Iceta welcomed the news, saying he wanted to encourage major platforms and producers to set up in the country. Audiovisual producers are increasingly choosing Spain for the filming of series, with the southern European nation's landscapes resembling the American West and attracting Hollywood from the 1960s. The Spanish government aims to increase audiovisual production in the country by 30 percent by 2025. — AFP

Grammy Awards 2023 nominations

65th annual ceremony on February 5 in Los Angeles

Major categories

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- ABBA Voyage
- ADELE 30
- BAD BUNNY Un Verano Sin Ti
- BEYONCE Renaissance
- BRANDI CARLILE In These Silent Days
- COLDPLAY Music of the Spheres
- HARRY STYLES Harry's House
- KENDRICK LAMAR Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers
- LIZZO Special
- MARY J. BLIGE Good Morning Gorgeous (Deluxe)

RECORD OF THE YEAR

- ABBA Don't Shut Me Down
- ADELE Easy on Me
- BEYONCE Break My Soul
- BRANDI CARLILE FEATURING LUCIUS You and Me on the Rock
- DOJA CAT Woman
- HARRY STYLES As It Was
- KENDRICK LAMAR The Heart Part 5
- LIZZO About Damn Time
- MARY J. BLIGE Good Morning Gorgeous
- STEVE LACY Bad Habit

SONG OF THE YEAR

- ADELE Easy on Me
- BEYONCE Break My Soul
- BONNIE RAITT Just Like That
- DJ KHALED, R. ROSS, L. WAYNE, JAY-Z, J. LEGEND & FRIDAYY - God Did
- GAYLE abcdefu
- HARRY STYLES As It Was
- KENDRICK LAMAR The Heart Part 5
- LIZZO About Damn Time
- STEVE LACY Bad Habit
- TAYLOR SWIFT - All Too Well (10 Minute Version) (The Short Film)

BEST NEW ARTIST

- ANITTA
- DOMI & JD BECK
- LATTO
- MANESKIN
- MOLLY TUTTLE
- MUNI LONG
- OMAR APOLLO
- SAMARA JOY
- TOBE NWWIGWE
- WET LEG



MOST NOMINATED

- BEYONCE 9
- KENDRICK LAMAR 8
- ADELE 7
- BRANDI CARLILE 7

Source: grammy.com AFP Photos



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi works at her home furniture workshop in Baghdad's Abu Dsheer area. — AFP photos



'But you're a woman': Iraqi furniture-maker carves up stereotypes

With hammer and saw, Nour Al-Janabi is building her latest creation, a candy-pink sofa, in the carpentry workshop she runs in male-dominated and conservative Iraq. "At the start, relatives criticized me," said the 29-year-old carpenter and furniture-maker, who is also a mother of four. "They would say: 'But you're a woman... You're an amateur... It's a men's trade'." Covered in velvet or imitation leather, the sofas and armchairs that she designs, makes and mends in her south Baghdad workshop go from rustic style to Louis XV. Her order book is full, with new lounges starting at a cool 700,000 dinars (around \$480).

Janabi has been making furniture for several years, and launched her business, Nour Carpentry, a few months ago. She recently moved operations from her home to a house turned workshop, where she has four employees—one of them her retired husband. "But it's not right to say it like that," she said with an embarrassed smile, her hijab covering her hair. In oil-rich Iraq, women make up just 13.3 percent of the labor force, according to the World Bank, while the World Economic Forum ranked



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi works at her home furniture workshop.

the country 154 out of 156 in its latest Global Gender Gap Report. A study published last year by two UN agencies noted that while most Iraqis consider tertiary education equally important for men and women, "attitudes toward equal rights in employment are discriminatory against women".

'You make Iraq proud'

Janabi attributes her success largely

to do-it-yourself tutorials that she first posted on Facebook to share her passion for carpentry and furniture-making. She uploads videos about everything from how to re-stuff an old sofa to using a sander to TikTok and Instagram too, where she has more than 94,000 followers. "I am the first Iraqi woman to do this trade and break the barrier in this field," she claimed, in a country still largely dominated by conservative attitudes

about women's role in society, and where those perceived as too independent are sometimes even considered immoral.

She said she receives comments from women and men telling her: "You make Iraq proud and you have accomplished something." "May God give you strength and health!" one user commented on a video of Janabi presenting a sofa decorated with a floral pattern. One of her clients, Abu Sajjad, dropped by to see how his sofa repairs were going—untroubled by prejudices some others might harbor against dealing with a female carpenter and business owner.

Most working women in Iraq are teachers or nurses, though a small number have entered the police or armed forces. One of them is Angham Al-Tamimi, who this year became the first woman army general. In a video broadcast by the military's press service, she said she had "faced the non-acceptance of women in the military". But she said she had succeeded thanks to her "persistence" and "passion". — AFP



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi displays a piece at her home furniture workshop.



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi walks next to pieces waiting to be renovated at her home furniture workshop.



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi is recorded as she prepares to make a social media video at her home furniture workshop.



Iraqi carpenter Nour Al-Janabi walks next to pieces waiting to be renovated at her home furniture workshop in Baghdad's Abu Dsheer area.

The art world's female revolution

It was a relatively promising start for gender equality when London's Royal Academy of Arts was set up in 1768, with two women artists included among its 40 founding members. But that was a false dawn—it would not be until the 1930s that another woman was elected a full member of the Academy.

While a few big names—Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe, Alice Neel, Tracey Emin—gave the impression that the art world has opened up since then, the Western canon remains dominated by men. Among the 18 leading museums in the United States, 87 percent of works are by men, according to the Public Library of Science. The Prado in Madrid has 335 works by women out of 35,572 — less than one percent—and only 84 are on public display.

'Historical misogyny'

Attitudes are changing. The Prado held a women-only exhibition in 2020 which highlighted its "historical misogyny", in the words of curator Carlos Navarro. Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic will be the first woman to get a solo show that takes over all the main galleries of the Royal Academy next year. Increasing the share of overall works is tougher for museums that focus on the distant past—at least, that is the excuse of the Louvre in Paris, whose paintings stop at 1848, and include just 25 women among 3,600 artists.

But at Britain's Tate, there has been scope for improvement. Only five percent of its pre-1900 collection is by women, but this rises to 20 percent for artists working after 1900, and 38 percent for those born after 1965. "With each rehang at each of Tate's four galleries, the gender balance improves," said Polly Staple, head of Tate's British Art collection.



In this file photo French art historian and curator Camille Morineau attends the traveling exhibition "Solaire Culture" in celebration of Veve Cliquot's 250th anniversary in Beverly Hills, California.—AFP

"When Tate Modern opened its new displays in 2016, half of all the solo displays were dedicated to women artists, and this balance has been maintained ever since." As for private buyers, change has also been slow. "Today, all museums pay attention to equality, the number of solo exhibitions for women artists is increasing... but in reality they remain largely under-represented in auction houses," an art market insider told AFP, requesting anonymity.

But with women increasingly welcomed into art courses from the late 20th century onwards, the tide is turning here, too. The 2022 report by market-tracker Artpulse found that women accounted for eight of the 10 best-selling artists under the age of 40.

'The whole story'

It is not enough to blame the past, argues Katy Hessel, author of the recent "The Story of Art Without Men". Women artists, such as Italy's Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656) or Flemish painter Clara Peeters, were "known during their lifetime but have been erased over the centuries", she told AFP.

Unearthing these forgotten names has been hugely popular. Her podcast, The Great Women Artists, has more than 300,000 subscribers. "Imagining that a woman could invent something remained an anthropological taboo for a very long time," said Camille Morineau, who founded research group Aware (Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions), to gather data on the topic.

As curator at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2009, she hung nothing but female artists from its collection for two years, "to prove there were enough of them in the museum reserves to tell the whole story of 20th- and 21st-century art". New avenues of (re)discovery are still to come, added Hessel, highlighting Algeria's Baya or Singapore's Georgette Chen, as the sort of non-Western names who have "never really been part of our history". — AFP

Rebel dancer suddenly quits Paris Opera

One of the best-known male dancers at the Paris Opera, who has won a big following outside ballet for working as a judge on the French equivalent of "Strictly Come Dancing", on Wednesday quit the company after months of tension. Francois Alu, 28, known for his rugged physique and virtuoso leaps, will leave the

Paris Opera so he has "complete professional freedom", both parties said in a joint statement published by the opera. The news was unexpected, coming just seven months after the Paris Opera named Alu an "etoile" ("star"), its highest-ranking title, after intense pressure from ballet fans for



the promotion.

But there has also been tension over his highly publicized role as a judge on "Danse avec les stars" ("Dance with the Stars"), the French equivalent of the smash hit BBC show in Britain "Strictly Come Dancing". "I have decided to regain my complete professional freedom in order to be able to fully realize my artistic aspirations," Alu said in the statement. The Paris Opera emphasized that the decision came after a "dialogue" between the two sides and would allow "new forms of collaboration" by Alu with the company.

"This decision is the culmination of the close dialogue we have had with Francois in recent months, said the Paris Opera

director Alexander Neef. Alu has also been touring France with a solo show. But to the chagrin of his fans he never danced at the Paris Opera since being named "etoile", which is unprecedented.

His departure comes at a turbulent time for the Paris Opera ballet, with former dancer Jose Martinez in December set to take over from Aurelie Dupont as head of the company. Such high-profile departures are relatively rare with the last such example in 1989 when superstar ballerina Sylvie Guillem walked out to focus on an international career. — AFP

Sports

76ers humble Nets; Bridges, Booker lift Suns over Lakers

Simmons endures defeat in his emotional NBA return

WASHINGTON: Brooklyn's Ben Simmons endured a defeat Tuesday in his emotional NBA return to Philadelphia as a 76ers' squad lacking three top stars humbled the Nets 115-106. The pre-game focus was on ex-Sixer Simmons playing his first game in Philadelphia since being traded to the Nets in February, but the shorthanded hosts-playing without injured starters Joel Embiid, James Harden and Tyrese Maxey-stole the show.

Tobias Harris scored 18 of his 24 points after halftime, De'Anthony Melton added 22 points and Paul Reed came off the bench to add 19 points and 10 rebounds to spark the 76ers. Shake Milton and Georges Niang each contributed 16 points. "I just needed to get into a rhythm, and once I was able to find that flow, I just stuck with it and made the right play," Harris said. "That was a huge win for us." Sixers fans loudly booed Simmons when he was introduced and every time he touched the ball, spite born of a bad breakup with the 26-year-old Australian after four seasons in Philly.

"I thought it was going to be louder," Simmons said. Simmons, taken by the 76ers with the first overall pick in the 2016 NBA Draft, played 32 minutes and scored 11 points, dished out 11 assists, grabbed seven rebounds, blocked three shots and made three steals. "I thought he did a great job of just handling it and playing his game," Nets forward Kevin Durant said. "There are a lot of emotions. You just want to play well. You know the fans are going to be involved and get excited."

Simmons, who made 4-of-7 shots from the floor and 3-of-6 from the free throw line, signed autographs for a few supportive fans. "It was nice to see I had support in Philadelphia still," Simmons said. "I don't think we had all bad times." The Sixers outre-

bounded the Nets 46-35 and made 16 of 32 from 3-point range, powered by Melton's 6-for-11 and Niang's 4-of-5 shooting from beyond the arc.

"We just said we're going to need everybody's effort and we need everybody to be as confident as ever," Harris said. "For us, it's just figuring out ways to make sure everybody has that impact." Kyrie Irving led the Nets (8-10) with 23 points while Durant had a season-low 20. "Just got to go through it and stay confident," Irving said of Simmons handling the boos. "I think he did well. It's good to hear their loud voices, hear their boos. Next time, hopefully that motivates us to go out there and get that win a little bit more."

Philadelphia began the fourth quarter with an 11-5 run for a 96-87 lead. The Nets came no closer than seven after that. "Everybody wants to see our team fail," Durant said. "It's just something we've got to deal with." The 76ers (9-8) lacked Embiid, out with a left foot strain; Harden, sidelined with a right foot sprain; and Maxey, who has a broken left foot. "Anytime we're down that many starters, it's everybody just coming together and realizing we needed each other," Harris said.

Ayton felled, Suns win

At Phoenix, Mikal Bridges and Devin Booker each scored 25 points to lead the host Suns over the Los Angeles Lakers 115-105. Anthony Davis had 37 points, 21 rebounds, five blocked shots, five steals and two assists to lead the road-winsless Lakers, who were without injured LeBron James. Lakers guard Patrick Beverley was ejected late in the game after he ran four steps and slammed into the back of Deandre Ayton, knocking the Suns center over fallen Laker Austin Reaves and onto the court. Teammates



PHILADELPHIA: Ben Simmons #10 of the Brooklyn Nets controls the ball against Tobias Harris #12 and Paul Reed #44 of the Philadelphia 76ers in the fourth quarter of the game at the Wells Fargo Center on November 22, 2022. —AFP

prevented the bodycheck from sparking a melee.

"Pat needs to stop pushing people in the back," Booker said. "Push them in the chest." At Memphis, De'Aaron Fox scored 32 points to power Sacramento over the hosts 113-109 despite 34 points by Grizzlies guard Ja Morant, making a sur-

prise return from an ankle sprain. At Denver, Bojan Bogdanovic scored 22 points, the last on two free throws with 8.2 seconds to go, as Detroit won 110-108. Reigning two-time MVP Nikola Jokic had 31 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds for the Nuggets. —AFP

Australia's coach takes aim at cricket 'cowards'

SYDNEY: Former Australia coach Justin Langer Wednesday hit out at the anonymous "cowards" who leaked against him in the lead-up to his resignation, while admitting he should have cultivated a better relationship with the sport's governing body. The 52-year-old walked away from his job in February after failing to secure the public support of key players and following acrimonious contract talks with Cricket Australia.

He was unhappy at being offered only a six-month extension despite steering Australia to a 4-0 Ashes victory over England in 2021 and then to Twenty20 World Cup glory the same year. In the run-up to his departure, disgruntled players complained anonymously to Australian media about his intense "headmaster-like" coaching style, something he still bristles about. "Everyone was being nice to my face but I was reading about this stuff, and half

of it ... I could not believe that is what was making the papers," he told Code Sports.

"A lot of journalists use the word 'source'. I would say, change that word to 'coward'. A coward says, not a source. "Because what do you mean 'a source says'? They've either got an axe to grind with someone and they won't come and say it to your face, or they're just leaking stuff for their own agenda." Langer took the job in 2018 with Australian cricket at its lowest ebb for decades in the wake of a cheating affair, and was credited with restoring pride in the beloved baggy green cap.

But grumblings about his micromanaging began to surface about 12 months out from his eventual sacking. Langer, who will commentate on TV during the Australian Test summer that starts against the West Indies next week, insisted he listened and improved his ways, but was still forced out. "The hardest thing for me of all of it was: I got the feedback (and) I did something about it," he said. "We won the T20 World Cup, we won the Ashes. We were number one in the world. I've never enjoyed coaching more and I've still got sacked. That's the hardest thing."

Langer said his biggest regret was his lack of relationship with Cricket Australia's board. "I talked to the Cricket Australia board three times in



Australian coach Justin Langer

four years. That's craziness. And that's the only thing I'd do differently," he said. "Because when you know people haven't got your back, there is no lonelier place in the world. When you do know people have got your back, there's no more powerful place in the world. And that's what I would have done differently." —AFP

Asia's Rugby chief apologizes in HK for anthem mix-up

HONG KONG: The president of Asia Rugby apologized in person in Hong Kong on Tuesday after a democracy protest song was played instead of the Chinese national anthem at a South Korean tournament, the city's government said. Hong Kong police also said they would press charges against a local man for making "seditious" online posts that included thanking South Korea for the anthem mix-up. The city's sports teams play the Chinese national anthem but the protest song was broadcast before Hong Kong played South Korea in the final of the Asia Rugby Sevens Series in Incheon on November 13.

The Hong Kong government reacted with fury, with the city's leader John Lee ordering a police probe and the number two official meeting South Korea's top diplomat to request Seoul conduct its own investigation. It said in a statement on Tuesday Qais Abdulla Al Dhalai, the president of Asia Rugby, flew to the city to apologize to Chief Secretary Chan Kwok-ki. "He said that the incident was due to a human error, entirely without any political or malicious intent, from a junior member of the local organizer concerned," the statement said.

Dhalai also undertook that all tournament organizers must obtain the national anthems of competing teams from a centralized archive managed by Asia Rugby. A statement by Asia Rugby offering the same explanation last week failed to mollify many critics, including some nationalist legislators who called for the disbanding of Hong Kong's rugby team. Two other anthem mix-ups were found in the past week at Rugby World Cup matches this month and in July, when the correct anthem was played but the protest song's title appeared on screen.

The protest song "Glory to Hong Kong", written by an anonymous composer in 2019, urges residents to strive for freedom and democracy. It became a rallying cry during huge and sometimes violent protests that year but has since been declared effectively illegal by Hong Kong authorities. Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong to quell dissent after the 2019 protests and created a new national security unit within the Hong Kong police to enforce it. —AFP

Wright named as new England cricket selector

LONDON: Luke Wright has retired from professional cricket to become the new selector for the England men's team, it was announced Tuesday. The 37-year-old batsman made 101 white-ball international appearances and was a member of the England squad that won the 2010 T20 World Cup in the Caribbean. Wright was playing for south coast club Sussex, for whom he made over 400 appearances in all formats, scoring over 16,000 runs, including 30 centuries, until the end of this year's county season.

He has also featured in overseas T20 leagues including Australia's Big Bash League and the Indian Premier League. The post of national selector was abolished by former director of cricket Ashley Giles, who sacked Ed Smith in 2021 and concentrated his power into the hands of then England head coach Chris Silverwood. Giles' replacement Rob Key, however, has repeatedly stated he want-

ed to reintroduce the position, even though he enjoyed a successful spell while temporarily in charge.

Wright, who recently had a brief spell working as a coach with New Zealand, won't have Smith's title of "national selector" but will be involved in decisions concerning squad composition and central contracts. "It's a huge honor and privilege to take on this role, one that I am incredibly excited about," said Wright in an England and Wales Cricket Board statement. "With the Ashes and ICC men's 50-over World Cup next year, I can't wait to get started and try to contribute after what has been a fantastic year for England men's cricket."

Former England batsman Key has had a dream start to his time in charge, having picked Ben Stokes as captain and Brendon McCullum as coach of a Test side that have won six out of seven matches under the pair, and appointed Matthew Mott as coach of a white-ball team that have just won the T20 World Cup. Key, explaining Wright's appointment, said: "With his significant experience of playing in England and overseas as well as his in-depth knowledge of county cricket, he will be an important voice in squad selection while also helping to identify the next generation of England stars." —AFP



England's Luke Wright

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

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CHANGE OF NAME

I Abuzar Samim Ahmad Ansari holder of Indian Passport No. T7644912 having permanent address Maharashtra, India 421302 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Abuzar Shamim Akhtar Ansari (C#2801) — 24-11-2022

Emergency

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Sports

'Betrayed' Ronaldo faces uncertain future after swift Man Utd divorce

'They are not my friends', football star blasts Neville, Rooney

LONDON: Cristiano Ronaldo's Manchester United reunion was trumpeted as the return of Old Trafford's prodigal son, but it ended Tuesday in a divorce precipitated by his stinging tirade against the club. Two days ahead of Portugal's opening game at the World Cup, United said they were severing ties immediately with a player who was once the hottest property in football.

The Portugal forward told Piers Morgan on TalkTV last week that he felt "betrayed" by the Premier League club and had no respect for manager Erik ten Hag. He also hit out at the club's US owners, the Glazer family, stating they care far more about the money-making potential of United than results on the pitch. The 37-year-old even fired a broadside against former teammates Gary Neville and Wayne Rooney, saying "they are not my friends" after recent criticism of him from the pair.

The club were cautious in their initial response, but eventually decided there was no way back for an all-time great who burned his bridges. Ten Hag reportedly told United bosses that Ronaldo should not play for the club again after his outburst, a demand met by those in charge and one that ultimately suits both parties. His immediate release means Ronaldo is free to look for a new club, but it is not certain there will be a suitable landing spot for the player, despite his status in the game.

The veteran, who recently scored his 700th club goal, had angled for a move in the summer window after United failed to qualify for this season's Champions League. But Premier League and European giants opted not to move for the five-time Ballon d'Or winner, leaving him stuck at United. They will likely be even more wary now, having wit-

nessed Ronaldo's behavior. He said he was offered a two-year deal worth 350 million euros (\$360 million) by a Saudi Arabian club and remains insistent there is interest from Europe's top clubs.

Not only is Qatar surely his last chance to win the World Cup, it is also now a prime opportunity to show he can still perform at the highest level. He has been linked with a return to Sporting Lisbon, where he came through the youth ranks, but agreeing a financial package could be a stumbling block for a player who was on a reported weekly pay packet at United of around £500,000 (\$593,000). Should a European side not come calling, a move to MLS is a possibility as well.

Fading force

While there is much uncertainty about the future, what is clear is that Ronaldo struggled to accept his reduced status in the game at a club that has fallen from the pinnacle of English football. In 2009 he left a United side who were one of the top teams in Europe, but the club he rejoined in the summer of 2021 limped to a sixth-place finish in the Premier League despite his 24 goals in all competitions. Ronaldo made his name in his first spell at Old Trafford, developing from a prodigiously gifted teenager when he arrived in 2003 into one of the deadliest attackers in world football.

He won his first Champions League trophy and first Ballon d'Or during a trophy-laden spell under Alex Ferguson. He left United after six years for Real Madrid, where he became the club's greatest-ever goalscorer, winning the Champions League four more times and scoring 450 goals in 438 games. Ronaldo spent three more prolific years at



AL SHAHANIA: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo takes part in a training session at Al Shahania SC, northwest of Doha on November 23, 2022. —AFP

Juventus from 2018 before a return to Manchester, where he proved he was still a force to reckon with. But the feverish excitement generated by his second coming is now a distant memory.

The forward was a peripheral figure this season in an improving side under Ten Hag and was recently disciplined for refusing to come on as a substitute. Ronaldo, who has scored just three goals this

season, had returned to the team in recent weeks and even captained the Red Devils in a 3-1 loss at Aston Villa, which turned out to be his final appearance for United. In 2018 he was voted by Manchester United fans as the club's best player of the Premier League era but his explosive words brought about a sad exit after his homecoming turned sour. —AFP



Zain joined in awarding the winners.



The company introduces sports fans to its latest offers.

Zain the 'strategic' sponsor of GulfRun

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, joined in awarding the winners of GulfRun, the most popular motorsport event in the GCC. The event was held at Kuwait Motor Town, and Zain was the strategic sponsor for the fifth time. Zain's support to this unique event came as part of its continuous efforts to contribute to developing the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. The company is keen on encouraging initiatives that offer the nation's youth a safe and professional setting to unleash their talents and pursue their passions.

This year, GulfRun featured a number of engaging activities at Kuwait Motor Town (KMT), attended by masses of fans and motorsports enthusiasts. Various races were held in different categories, featuring pro racers from Kuwait and the GCC. A car show was also held for fans to take a close look at their favorite sports and luxury cars. A market festival was also organized for visitors, featuring top local and global brands, cafes, and restaurants, with special social activities, children zones, and more. Zain was present in the event via its dedicated booth to introduce sports fans to its special World Cup offer.

Zain's continuous support to GulfRun comes in line with its keenness on encouraging the various efforts that contribute to developing the youth and sports sectors. The company puts the support of



Fun and engaging activities at the event.

Kuwait sports at the forefront of its priorities under the umbrella of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, and Zain's support of local champions results in many achievements that the company is proud of year after year.

GulfRun provided an ideal and safe alternative to street racing, which threatens the lives of many peo-

ple, many of them young drivers. Motorsport enthusiasts were able to showcase their talents within professional and certified grounds at the Kuwait Motor Town's race circuit, in addition to having taken advantage of the opportunity to gain valuable insights with the help of qualified trainers and experienced professional instructors.

Man Utd owners consider sale as Ronaldo exits

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's owners said Tuesday they were ready to sell the club, potentially bringing down the curtain on an acrimonious 17 years under the Glazer family. On a tumultuous day for the English giants, it was earlier revealed that star player Cristiano Ronaldo has left the club with "immediate effect."

Weeks of turbulence appeared to have come to an end when United announced Ronaldo's contract had been terminated by mutual agreement to bring to an end his second spell at Old Trafford. That dramatic announcement was eclipsed just hours later by the news the US-based Glazer family could also be on their way out. "The board will consider all strategic alternatives, including new investment into the club, a sale, or other transactions involving the company," United said in a statement.

The Glazers have been unpopular with supporters ever since a £790 million (\$934 million) leveraged takeover in 2005 burdened the club with huge debts.



MANCHESTER: An aerial view shows Old Trafford stadium, home ground of Manchester United football team, in Manchester, northern England, on November 23, 2022. —AFP

Frustration towards the Americans has only grown during a nine-year decline in results on the pitch since Alex Ferguson's retirement as manager in 2013. The Red Devils have not won the Premier League title since Ferguson's final campaign in 2012/2013 and have failed to win any trophy since 2017.

United currently sit fifth in the Premier League, 11 points behind leaders Arsenal. "We will evaluate all options to ensure that we best serve our fans

and that Manchester United maximizes the significant growth opportunities available to the club today and in the future," added Avram and Joel Glazer, the club's executive co-chairmen and directors. The statement also recognized the need for investment in stadium redevelopment. Old Trafford remains the largest club stadium in England with a capacity of 74,000 but has not had a significant upgrade since 2006. —AFP

Tomoooh Sport Club Chairwoman lauds Qatar's efforts

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Chairwoman of Kuwait Tomoooh Sport Club and UN expert on the disabled rights Rihab Buresli thanked Qatar for supporting and caring for the disabled through the World Cup Qatar 2022. Buresli said this during the opening of the hall in which World Cup matches can be watched at the club. The participation of Ghanim Al-Moftab, one of the disabled, in the opening of the Mondial, which was watched by eight billion people around the world was an unprecedented message to draw the attention to this group of people, and their creative ability. Buresli appreciates Qatar's efforts.



Rihab Buresli

Tiger tops PGA Tour bonus list again to earn \$15 million

MIAMI: Tiger Woods, who has played only nine competitive rounds in 2022, topped the PGA Tour's Player Impact Program for the second consecutive year to claim a \$15 million bonus, the tour announced Tuesday. Woods, whose 82 PGA triumphs shares the all-time record with Sam Snead, led the analysis of global media exposure with top-ranked FedEx Cup winner Rory McIlroy second and Jordan Spieth third.

McIlroy, a four-time major winner, took home \$12 million while Spieth, a three-time major champion, made \$9 million. The second-year impact program paid money to 23 players, the top 20 as planned plus three additional players who would have made the list under tweaked 2023 criteria — Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and Americans Cameron Young and Sam Burns. Each will be paid \$2 million.

The program, designed to reward those who delivered greater interest in the PGA, uses data measurement of internet searches, news article mentions, weekend television sponsor exposure, popularity measurement and social media reach and engagement. Woods, a 15-time major winner who turns 47 next month, continued to recover this year from severe leg injuries suffered in a February 2021 car crash. Woods finished 47th at the Masters in his return to competition, making the cut and battling through the walk over 72 holes at hilly Augusta National.

He made the cut in May at the PGA Championship at Southern Hills but withdrew due to leg pain after three rounds. Woods missed the cut at the British Open in July at St Andrews. Woods has announced he will play in next week's Hero World Challenge, an invitational which he hosts in the Bahamas. He also will partner with McIlroy against the US duo of Spieth and Justin Thomas, this year's PGA Championship winner, in "The Match", a 12-hole exhibition under lights next month at Pelican Golf Club in Belleaire, Florida. There is also a chance that Woods will make a third consecutive appearance with son Charlie at the father-son PNC Championship in Orlando on December 15-18. —AFP



World Cup holders France overwhelm Australia 4-1

Giroud joins Henry as France's all-time leading goalscorer

DOHA: Olivier Giroud joined Thierry Henry as France's all-time leading goalscorer with a brace as the holders roared back to beat Australia 4-1 and get their defense of the World Cup off to a flying start Tuesday. Australia took a shock lead at Al Janoub Stadium in Qatar with the game just nine minutes old when Craig Goodwin scored. France, whose build-up to the tournament was marred by injuries, saw left-back Lucas Hernandez come off hurt in the move that led to the goal. However, they recovered to equalise through Adrien Rabiot before Giroud put them ahead with an easy finish in the 32nd minute for his 50th international goal.

Kylian Mbappe got his name on the scoresheet in the second half and Giroud sealed the win to equal Henry's record tally of 51 goals for France. The win leaves them top of Group D after Denmark and Tunisia drew 0-0. "It is nice to score four goals, even if we could have had more, and it's a really good start for us," said France coach Didier Deschamps. At the age of 36, veteran AC Milan striker Giroud, who has 115 caps, is the oldest player to score for France at a World Cup. Yet he almost certainly would not have been playing here had Karim Benzema been fit.

Instead, the withdrawal of the Ballon d'Or winner with a thigh injury on the eve of the tournament has played into the hands of Giroud, who was a key player for Deschamps in France's triumphant 2018 World Cup campaign but didn't score in Russia. "He deserves respect for performing at the very highest level for so many years and delivering even when nobody seemed to believe in him," said teammate Benjamin Pavard. "I am so pleased for him because he is a great guy. I hope he keeps going and beats more records."

It is not just Benzema who is missing for Les Bleus, with Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante—their starting midfield duo four years ago—out of the tournament. Centre-back Raphael Varane was not risked having not played since suffering a leg injury playing for Manchester United a month ago. That meant Dayot Upamecano and Ibrahim Konate—with nine caps between them—played together in central defense while Rabiot joined Aurelien



AL-WAKRAH: France's midfielder #14 Adrien Rabiot (out of frame) heads the ball to score his team's first goal as Australia's goalkeeper #01 Mathew Ryan (center) fails to stop it during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between France and Australia on November 22, 2022. —AFP

Tchouameni in midfield.

Hernandez injury blow

Australia stunned the world champions by scoring an early opener. Mathew Leckie controlled the ball on the right and escaped Lucas Hernandez before delivering a low ball across the face of goal for Goodwin to finish into the roof of the net. Hernandez hurt his right knee trying to stop Leckie, and the Bayern Munich defender was helped off to be taken for tests, with his brother Theo coming on. The younger Hernandez did not have the best introduc-

tion, giving the ball away and allowing Mitch Duke to hit a shot from range that flew just wide.

Yet he played a part in the 27th-minute equaliser—Antoine Griezmann's right-wing corner was cleared but the ball came to Hernandez on the left and his cross was headed in by Rabiot. Five minutes later Rabiot was involved again as France went ahead, hounding Nathaniel Atkinson out of possession on the French left and playing a one-two with Mbappe before teeing up Giroud. A Jackson Irvine header that hit the post in first-half stoppage time was a reminder that Australia could still threaten, but

France ran away with the game after the break.

Griezmann had a shot cleared off the line just before Mbappe made it 3-1 midway through the second half, as he headed in off a post from Ousmane Dembele's cross. Mbappe then turned provider as France got their fourth in the 71st minute, crossing for Giroud to head in a historic goal. After all the injuries, and after seeing what happened to Argentina earlier, this was a good evening for France but a sobering one for the Socceroos. "Overall the boys did all they could and that's all I can ask," said their coach Graham Arnold. —AFP

Argentina, fans cry after WCup defeat

BUENOS AIRES: Gasps gave way to stony expressions of disbelief, and then tears, as Argentina fans gathered in Buenos Aires watched the humiliation of their football team unfold at the World Cup in Qatar. "It was a walloping, a bucket of ice-cold water," Carlos Cuera, 26, said of the 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia. He was still seated in front of a cafe television where fans decked out in their team's white-and-blue colors gathered from before 7:00 am for the breakfast match in the Argentine capital.

"Nobody expected this. We thought the first three matches would be easy victories, and now it has become more complicated," he said, adding the loss had ramped up pressure ahead of Saturday's duel with Mexico. It was one of the greatest upsets in World Cup history for Lionel Messi's Argentina side, ending a winning streak that included last year's Copa America championship. The proud, football-crazed nation entered the World Cup among the

favorites, eight years after they reached the final. But Buenos Aires quickly resumed its normal hustle and bustle as desolate fans headed to their offices.

In central Corrientes Street, not far from the city's towering Obelisk, one cafe had set up a screen on the sidewalk, prompting deliverymen, taxis, and even bus drivers to slow as they passed — hoping for another goal. Pilates instructor Lena Widgren, 50, said she had heard it would be "an easy game." But she had noticed that whenever Argentina is faced with a tie or a loss in a World Cup match, "their energy levels drop a bit, they lack fire."

The day started better than it ended. Fans leaped from their chairs, screaming with joy, when Messi scored from the penalty spot in the 10th minute. "I feel very sad, really. The game started with such euphoria, with so much desire to win, and suddenly the game turned around," said Llanca Salvi, a 26-year-old plastic artist, who added that she did not know much about football. But it was about "the emotion of being Argentine, of going out to celebrate".

Fans joined in with a cascade of insults when three first-half goals were canceled for being offside, with VAR involved. Norberto Protzmann told AFP he sat in "terror" during the second half. "We



LUSAIL: Argentina's supporter reacts at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Argentina and Saudi Arabia on November 22, 2022. —AFP

underestimated them a little too much and they dominated us in the second half," he said. "The players were too confident, whereas the rival team put their lives into each move, because they knew they were facing a great team. And it worked well for them." —AFP

Brazil hoping to see the best of Neymar

DOHA: Brazil are hoping a fully fit and firing Neymar, and a well-balanced squad around him, will allow the five-time winners to live up to their status as World Cup favorites in Qatar. They begin their bid to win a record-extending sixth title on Thursday when they play a dangerous Serbia side—and the world's most expensive player is coming into the tournament in ominous form.

In 2014, Neymar's World Cup ended in agony as he suffered a fractured bone in his back in the quarter-final win over Colombia before the hosts were humiliated by Germany in the semi-finals, losing 7-1. Four years later Neymar raced to recover from injury in time for the tournament in Russia, but Brazil never hit the expected heights before losing to Belgium in the last eight. This time around, a 30-year-old Neymar arrives fresh from a fantastic start to the season with Paris Saint-Germain in which he has scored 15 goals in 20 games.

"I think Neymar is coming into this competition in great form," veteran Brazil captain Thiago Silva, now with Chelsea but a former teammate of Neymar's in Paris, told reporters on Wednesday. "His preparation this time has been different. In 2014 he got injured just as he was playing so well, and in 2018 he came into

the tournament in a different way because he had a serious injury so hadn't played much. "This time is different and he has not been injured. Neymar is a lot better prepared."

With Brazil also facing Switzerland and Cameroon in Group G, Neymar will be hoping to get the two goals he needs to equal Pele's all-time record tally of 77 goals for the Selecao. But the responsibility in attack is not all his—coach Tite can also call on a raft of other exciting attackers, including Real Madrid pair Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo. "In my opinion these players will help Neymar because they can divide up the responsibility and create space for him," added Silva, who was the captain in 2014 and is still going strong aged 38.

'Pressure is inevitable'

This tournament has already seen a heavily fancied Argentina lose in their opening match while Germany have been beaten too. But Brazil are hoping for a strong start and a repeat of what happened in the only other World Cup to be held in Asia, when they won their last title in Japan two decades ago. "The atmosphere in the squad is super healthy. The mixture of young players and more experienced ones creates a great connection," said Silva. "We have players who are accustomed to the pressure, who are used to the pressure of big games in the Champions League like Vini and Rodrygo, who are among the youngest players in the squad but have already shown they can be decisive."

Silva is one of the few survivors of the



DOHA: Brazil's forward Neymar (center) takes part in a training session at Al Arabi SC stadium in Doha on November 23, 2022, on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup football match between Brazil and Serbia. —AFP

2014 team that was overwhelmed by the pressure of trying to win the World Cup on home soil. This time he is hoping to be a calming influence on the rest of the squad. "Some things change over time. I am now much better prepared for this moment, I am super calm and super determined," he said. "I am enjoying

myself at the moment and I am eager to show the best version of Thiago Silva. At the age of 38 I am enjoying one of the best spells in my career."

Coach Tite, 61, will step down at the end of the World Cup, whatever happens in Qatar. He survived in the job after the quarter-final exit in Russia in 2018 and this

time he is hoping to depart Doha as a world champion. "As Tostao said, it's good to dream, so we are dreaming of having a good World Cup and winning it," he said, citing one of the greats of Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning side. "Only one team can be the champions. Other teams want to be too. Pressure is inevitable." —AFP

Today's matches on TV

FIFA World Cup 2022

Switzerland v Cameroon	13:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
Uruguay v Korea Republic	16:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
Portugal v Ghana	19:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
Brazil v Serbia	22:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	

Morocco frustrate Modric's Croatia at Qatar World Cup

'This was an extremely difficult game': Croatia captain



AL KHOR: Croatia's midfielder #15 Mario Pasalic (2nd right) attempts a shot at goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Morocco and Croatia on November 23, 2022.— AFP

AL KHOR: Morocco held Croatia to a 0-0 draw in their opening game of the World Cup on Wednesday, producing a spirited display against the 2018 runners-up led by Luka Modric. Backed by Qatar's large Moroccan community at the Al Bayt Stadium, the Atlas Lions followed up north African rivals Tunisia's strong performance against dark horses Denmark a day earlier to frustrate Croatia. "This was an extremely difficult game," said Croatia captain Modric. "I do believe as the tournament goes on we'll be better and we'll adopt a more proactive attitude."

Modric insisted Croatia are capable of making another deep run despite a sluggish start in the early afternoon heat. "We've not come here to just play and get out the group," said Modric. "Our ambitions are a bit greater on the basis of our Russia achievement, but we need to take it one step at a time. "Even before the 2018 World Cup we said our primary goal was to make it out the group. If we manage to do that we can be a

dangerous opponent for any team." Coach Zlatko Dalic had urged Croatia to exercise caution following Saudi Arabia's shock win over Argentina, a result Morocco captain Romain Saiss said had "opened the door" for the tournament's less-fancied teams.

Morocco took the game to a Croatia side featuring four players who started the 2018 final but struggled to create genuine chances against a defense marshaled by the experienced Dejan Lovren. Azzedine Ounahi strangely opted against shooting when well placed inside the area, with Hakim Ziyech and Achraf Hakimi heavily involved down the right without ever truly threatening Croatia. Ivan Perisic fired just over from distance for Croatia after intercepting a dreadful pass from Selim Amallah, while goalkeeper Yassine Bounou blocked well with his legs to deny Nikola Vlasic from close range.

Modric, the former Ballon d'Or winner appearing at his fourth World Cup at the age of 37, then hammered over from the edge of the box. Morocco lost

Noussair Mazraoui early in the second half after his diving header was saved, the Bayern Munich full-back injuring himself when he tumbled awkwardly to the ground. Sofyan Amrabat poked Lovren's goal-bound effort away off the line after a scramble at a corner, while Hakimi's free-kick at the other end was beaten to safety by Croatian keeper Dominik Livakovic.

Only once have Morocco gone beyond the group stage, in 1986, but they will rate their chances of advancing with games to come against an ageing Belgium team and Group F outsiders Canada. Croatia pushed for a late winner but found Morocco's defense in unforgiving mood as Walid Regragui's side secured a valuable and deserved point. "I think it's a very good point for us," said Regragui, who was only appointed as Morocco coach in late August. "It keeps us alive for the next two games. I'm very proud of my players. I think this game makes us more confident!" — AFP

Torres stroked home from the penalty spot after Alba was fouled by Oscar Duarte—a soft call on a hard night for Los Ticos, who were never in the game and failed to muster a shot at goal. Barcelona forward Torres capitalized on more slack defending to fire the fourth past Navas early in the second half. Luis Enrique was able to take off the effervescent Pedri and Torres before the hour mark in order to rest them for Sunday's clash with Germany, and handed teenage Barcelona left-back Alejandro Balde his debut.

The 19-year-old roared up the pitch in the build-up to Spain's fifth goal, with substitute Morata crossing for Gavi to drill home with aplomb. Kopa Trophy winner Gavi became the third youngest goalscorer at a World Cup at 18 years and 110 days old, after Mexico's Manuel Rosas and record holder Pele. Soler and Morata then got in on the act with stoppage-time strikes to pile further misery on Costa Rica and help Spain flex their muscles in a perfect opening match in Qatar. — AFP

"We made it too easy for Japan. I don't know if an easier goal has ever been scored at a World Cup," Gundogan told Germany's ARD TV network. "This must not happen to us." Thomas Mueller told Germany's Magenta TV it was "ludicrous that we are now standing here with a defeat." Japan meanwhile are eyeing a place in the knockout round after a dramatic comeback that scarcely looked possible at half-time. The Blue Samurai made a positive start, with Daizen Maeda putting the ball in the net as early as the eighth minute only for the linesman to flag for offside.

But it was to prove a false dawn for Japan as Antonio Ruediger headed past the post from a corner, before Joshua Kimmich tested goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda, with Gundogan blasting the rebound over the bar. Gundogan peppered the Japan goal with shots, with Gonda keeping him out before Maya Yoshida threw his body in the way of another effort.

Gundogan put the Germans ahead after they were awarded a penalty when Gonda tripped David Raum, coolly slotting his kick down the middle. Jamal Musiala give a glimpse of his immense talent when he turned and flashed a shot over the bar on the stroke of half-time. Kai Havertz had the ball in the net before the interval, only for VAR to rule the goal out for offside. — AFP



Fans of the Morocco national team react as they watch on a television their Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup match against Croatia at a cafe in Morocco's capital Rabat on November 23, 2022. — AFP photos



Morocco's goalkeeper #01 Yassine Bounou (left) dives for the ball as Croatia's forward #09 Andrej Kramaric looks on during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Morocco and Croatia on November 23, 2022.



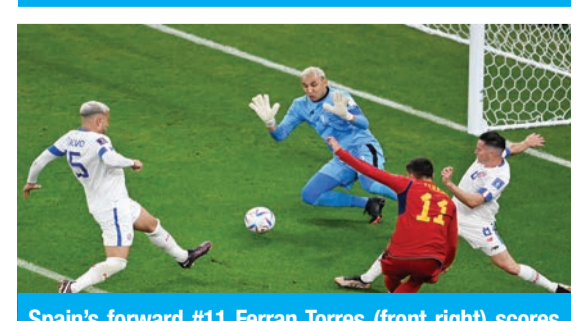
Croatia's midfielder #13 Nikola Vlasic (left) shoots but fails to score as Morocco's defender #05 Nayef Aguerd (right) defends during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Morocco and Croatia.



A fan of Morocco cheers on the stands during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Morocco and Croatia on November 23, 2022.



Japan's goalkeeper #12 Shuichi Gonda saves a shot during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group E football match between Germany and Japan on November 23, 2022.



Spain's forward #11 Ferran Torres (front right) scores his team's fourth goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group E football match between Spain and Costa Rica on November 23, 2022.

Spain humiliate Costa Rica 7-0

DOHA: Spain shredded Costa Rica 7-0 on Wednesday in a brutal destruction in their Group E opener which launched their bid to lift a second World Cup. Avoiding the fate of giants Argentina and group rivals Germany, who lost 2-1 to Japan earlier on, Luis Enrique's fancied side sparked at Doha's Al Thumama Stadium, dominating possession and taking their chances mercilessly. Ferran Torres netted twice and Marco Asensio, Dani Olmo, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Alvaro Morata were also on the scoresheet for the Euro 2020 semi-finalists in an emphatic romp.

In the past the 2010 World Cup winners have paid the price for profligacy but all three forwards Luis

Enrique selected netted in the first half to pay back his trust in them. The coach placed Asensio at false nine, flanked by Olmo and Torres, starting with Morata and Ansu Fati on the bench. The coach opted to deploy Manchester City midfielder Rodri Hernandez in central defense, alongside club teammate Aymeric Laporte, correctly anticipating his team would monopolize the ball.

It took only 11 minutes for La Roja to open the scoring, with Gavi stabbing a pass forward for Olmo to receive in the area and the RB Leipzig winger taking one sublime touch to turn and another to stroke the ball gently past Keylor Navas. Costa Rica, who were a surprise package at the 2014 World Cup, beating Italy and Uruguay and drawing with England to top their group, were sliced apart again for the second goal 10 minutes later. Jordi Alba's low drilled cross was rammed home by Real Madrid forward Asensio past his former team-mate Navas, who might have done more to keep it out.



DOHA: Japan's midfielder #08 Ritsu Doan (left) scores his team's first goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on November 23, 2022. — AFP

one team, we prepared well and we stuck in there, and that's what led to the win," said Japan manager Hajime Moriyasu. "Lots of our fans have come to Doha and they were behind us pushing us on. I want us to keep a level head after this and look at what we could have done better and look to win the next match." Germany's World Cup future is now once again on the line, with games to come in Group E against Spain and Costa Rica.

Japan shock Germany 2-1

DOHA: Japan stunned Germany 2-1 in their World Cup opener on Wednesday, punishing the four-time champions for not taking their chances after they dominated the first half. The German team covered their mouths for the team photo before the match in a powerful protest against FIFA's decision to ban rainbow-themed armbands.

Germany came to Qatar under huge pressure to avoid the disaster of 2018, when they failed to make it out of the group stage in Russia as World Cup holders. Hansi Flick's side took the lead through a first-half penalty from Ilkay Gundogan and should have been out of sight after creating a host of chances. But Japan hung on and equalized through substitute Ritsu Doan in the 75th minute. Takuma Asano then completed a remarkable turnaround eight minutes later, smashing the ball home to send the Japanese bench and their boisterous fans wild.

To add to the storyline, both Doan and Asano play in the German Bundesliga. "The players came together as