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Arab MPs reject European statements against Kuwait

Lawmaker points out 24 nations exempt from Schengen visas apply the death penalty

CAIRO: Members of the Arab Parliament expressed rejection of offensive European statements and interferences in the internal affairs of Kuwait. This came in a statement by Mohammad Al-Huwailah, a Kuwaiti MP and member of the political, foreign affairs and national security committee of the Arab Parliament at the end of the committee meeting on Thursday.

"There is a statement by the committee that fully supports measures taken by the Kuwaiti govern-

ment to address these interferences and respect the independence of the Kuwaiti judiciary," Huwailah told KUNA. He was responding to a question about the support of the Arab Parliament for Kuwait's positions in the field of human rights and response to the statements made by the Vice President of the European Commission about his interference in Kuwait's internal affairs.

Huwailah added that the statement of the committee would certainly receive the approval and

support of MPs of the Arab Parliament in their plenary session on Saturday, which confirms the correct position of the Kuwaiti judiciary and the necessity of respecting its independence, impartiality and non-interference in the internal affairs of Kuwait.

Huwailah affirmed the support of the Arab Parliament and Arab parliamentary diplomacy for the honorable stances of Kuwait in the field of human rights. He pointed out that the European Union has agreements for exemption from the

Schengen visa with 36 countries in the world, 24 of which apply the death penalty. He expressed "surprise" at these anti-Kuwait statements, stressing his "pride" in Kuwait's honorable human rights record, as well as its good relations with everyone.

In this context, Huwailah stressed the role of the Arab Parliament, which complements national parliaments in light of the existence of broad coordination in this field, praising the "serious stance" of the Arab Parliament. — KUNA

News in brief

Algeria sentences scores to death

ALGIERS: An Algerian court Thursday sentenced 49 people to death over the lynching of a man falsely accused of starting deadly forest fires during an extended heatwave last year. Onlookers had beaten 38-year-old Djamel Ben Ismail to death after he turned himself in at a police station in the Tizi Ouzou region. He had gone there upon hearing that he was suspected of arson, at the height of blazes which killed at least 90 people nationwide. It later emerged that Ben Ismail had headed to the region as a volunteer to help put out the fires. — AFP

Saudi to host China-Arab summit

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia will host the first-ever Chinese-Arab summit in early December, Beijing's consul in Dubai has said, as the oil-rich kingdom shores up ties with Asia. Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to visit Saudi Arabia that same month, according to Riyadh's foreign minister, but the consul statement did not specify whether the trip will coincide with the summit. — AFP

Boy rescued from quake rubble

CIANJUR, Indonesia: A six-year-old boy has been pulled from the rubble of a deadly Indonesia earthquake after spending two days trapped under debris without food or water, in a "miracle" rescue. Video showed rescue workers pulling the boy Azka free from a destroyed home in the West Java town of Cianjur's worst-hit district of Cugenang, wearing the blue shirt and trousers he had on when he became trapped. — AFP

Net migration to UK swells

LONDON: "Unprecedented" world events including the war in Ukraine are driving record numbers of people to move to Britain, statisticians said Thursday. Net migration into the UK stood at 504,000 in the 12 months to June, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said. That was up sharply from 173,000 in the previous year, and was also driven by the resettlement of Afghan refugees, plus a new visa route for UK passport holders living in Hong Kong. — AFP

Defense minister vows to upgrade Kuwait air force

KUWAIT: Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah pledged steady efforts for upgrading defense aviation capabilities related to equipment and personnel. The military said in a statement on Thursday that the minister, who made the vow during an inspection of Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base accompanied by top brass, expressed satisfaction with the dedication and sincere efforts exerted by the air force personnel for serving the homeland, singling out their sacrifices during peak of the coronavirus pandemic by supporting state institutions and participating in relief operations. — KUNA (See Page 3)

Amnesty commission holds first meeting

KUWAIT: The special amnesty commission formed by Amiri Decree 218 for the year 2022 held its first meeting Thursday at Seif Palace, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Sheetan. Official government spokesperson and head of the Center of Government Communications Tareq Al-Mezrem told the press that members of the committee include General Prosecutor Saad Al-Safran, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Anwar Al-Barjes and

Continued on Page 6

Anwar sworn in as Malaysia's prime minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's perennial opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was sworn in as prime minister before the king in Kuala Lumpur Thursday, ending a five-day political impasse after inconclusive polls. The ceremony at the National Palace closed the chapter on one of the most dramatic elections in Malaysia's history, after no party managed to secure a majority to form a government for the first time since independence in 1957.

Anwar's ascension to the premiership caps a turbulent political life, which has not only propelled him into



Malaysia's newly appointed prime minister Anwar Ibrahim.— AFP

the corridors of power but also landed him inside a jail cell. "I will not tolerate corruption and abuses ... None should be marginalized under my administration," Anwar told a news conference. He said his focus would be on the economy. "This is a national unity government. All are welcome, on condition you accept the

Continued on Page 6

2 dead as storm shuts schools, cuts road to Makkah

RIYADH: At least two people died on Thursday as heavy rains hit western Saudi Arabia, including the coastal city of Jeddah, delaying flights and forcing schools to close, officials said. "Two deaths have been recorded so far, and we call on everyone not to go out unless necessary," the Makkah regional government said on its Twitter page. The Makkah region includes Jeddah, the kingdom's second-largest city of roughly four million people, and Makkah city, the holiest city in Islam where millions perform the hajj and umrah pilgrimages

each year.

The road connecting the two, which many pilgrims use to reach Makkah, was closed on Thursday once the rains began, state media reported, although it was later reopened, authorities said. The state-affiliated Al-Ekhbariya channel showed footage of worshippers at the Grand Mosque in Makkah circling the Kaaba - the cubic structure that is the focal point of Islam - under a heavy downpour.

In Jeddah, images posted to social media showed standing water snarling traffic and partially submerging some vehicles. The city's King Abdulaziz International Airport said that "due to weather conditions, the departure of some flights has been delayed" and urged passengers to contact carriers for up-to-date schedules.

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Local

Minister, MPs, KES and residents discuss solutions to housing crisis

‘We must devise new solutions’

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Volunteer Committee of the People of South Saad Al-Abdullah on Wednesday held its third seminar in cooperation with Kuwait Economic Society titled “Housing crisis, challenges and solutions”, in the presence of the housing minister and a number of Kuwaiti personalities. Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Ammar Al-Ajmi stressed the housing issue faces many challenges and will be a crisis for the Kuwaiti family if efforts are not combined to resolve it, indicating that if the current policy continues, implementation processes will be hindered.

“Therefore, we must devise new solutions without detracting from citizens’ right to decent housing,” he said. Ajmi said the political leadership has taken the housing issue into consideration and supports all new solutions to address the housing issue realistically and tangibly, stressing efforts made to take decisions that contribute to resolving the housing issue and establishing a team to develop short, medium and long-term plans to address the issue radically.

He added that the South Saad Al-Abdullah City project has six suburbs and contains 24,000 housing units distributed over five suburbs, for which 4,591 vouchers were distributed, indicating that approval was taken from concerned authorities to send a tender for the infrastructure of the city, as the standards and conditions that must be met by the companies are currently being prepared and expected to be completed by Dec 2022.

Head of Kuwait Economic Society Khaled Al-Mutairi said that the society is keen to raise issues of interest for the citizen, and there is no doubt that the challenges of housing are exacerbating, and the legislative and executive authorities must address

this crisis and develop appropriate solutions for it. General Coordinator of the Volunteer Committee of the People of South Saad Al-Abdullah Fahaid Al-Mulhim said the committee exerted strenuous efforts to meet officials and representatives to present the concerns of the people of the city and keep up with the requirements of the city’s completion, calling on Minister Ajmi to develop a clear time plan for offering infrastructure contracts for the city.

Head of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mahri said the housing issue is a priority for members of the Municipal Council, as it is a continuity and sustainability for every Kuwaiti family, while he referred to the issue of high rents faced by 92,000 existing housing applications, stressing the need to find solutions to this problem. He added the issue is not a land issue, but rather an issue of firm decisions, referring to the role of the Municipal Council in freeing many plots and allocating them for housing, and contributing to removing obstacles in South Saad Al-Abdullah.

Rapporteur of the Housing Committee in the National Assembly, MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi, stressed words are not enough over this issue, and clear practical steps must be taken by the two authorities so that a bold political decision is issued to resolve the housing issue. “We are optimistic about the reform approach that exists in the government and its cooperation to address existing issues, and accordingly there must be an actual decision to implement the proposed solutions,” he said.

Saqabi pointed out the solution to the issue proceeds through three stages, as 90 percent of the treatment of the housing issue is to increase the housing supply in light of increasing housing demand and promote real estate developers. “But we have had negative experiences with this in Kuwait and the victim is the citizen,



KUWAIT: Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Ammar Al-Ajmi, Kuwait MPs and other top officials are pictured during the seminar.

so accordingly we sought to establish joint stock companies that would be for the government while the citizen has a share in it, in addition to a share for a strategic partner.

Through this company, the real estate developer enters with us for land reclamation,” he said, adding, “We are in the process of finalizing this law, and it will be presented in three weeks.” Regarding resolving the housing crisis, Saqabi said: “There must be a real estate authority that organizes everything related to real estate to organize the current chaos and follow up and monitor the real estate market in Kuwait and issue reports, statistics, etc, in addition to controlling the chaos in the real estate documentary cycle so that payment of fees, real estate registration, issuance of licenses, etc is not repeated.”

“We tried in the budgets committee to overcome all obstacles to pass the current budget, as everything related to the budget is a precedent with which many projects were stalled,” Head of the Budgets Committee at the National Assembly, MP Adel Al-Damkhi, said, indicating the state does not have priorities in

determining budgets. Damkhi pointed out the budget allocated KD 2.5 billion for infrastructure, wondering why it was not used in building new cities.

Chairman of the Priorities Committee in the National Assembly, MP Abdullah Fahad Al-Enezi, said the housing problem is a problem of will and decision, stressing the continuation of obstacles will not contribute to resolving the crisis. He added a lack of transparency has made citizens hesitate in their choices of housing cities. MP Hamad Al-Obaid said the people’s voluntary committees have a positive role in urging a solution to the housing issue.

“The administrative regulations at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare must be developed and the decision to deprive those who received an inheritance of 200 square meters of their right to housing care should be amended. The issue of withdrawing the deceased’s house and not issuing a document must also be overcome. Obstacles in contracting with international companies, delaying distributions and preparing infrastructure must be addressed, along with the Kuwait Credit Bank’s budget problems,” he said.

Taking stand against domestic violence

CAIRO: Protecting the Arab household, and taking a stand against domestic violence are issues of great importance, said Ahmad Lari, a Kuwaiti MP and member of the social, educational, cultural, woman and youth affairs committee of the Arab Parliament. This came in Lari’s statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), following conclusion of committee meeting on Thursday.

The committee concluded discussions of its work plan in preparation of submitting a host of recommendations, proposed by its members, to the Arab Parliament’s public session on Saturday. Main axis of committee discussions revolved around the Arab family and mechanisms of protecting it, the Kuwaiti MP indicated, adding that the discussions culminated in draft law regarding domestic violence.

He also noted that the committee tackled issue of foreign phenomena, commending what transpired in Qatar’s 2022 World Cup, saying that reaffirmed principles benefiting societies and humanity as a whole. Modes of reinforcing athleticism in Arab world were also a focal point of committee discussions, especially considering its vitality to the fabric of society and to the youth specifically. Further on the committee’s agenda were topics of rising divorce rates, Arab World social status report of 2021, as well as recommendations reinvigorating the Arabic language. —KUNA



> Protesters flee tear gas during an opposition rally (2012).

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Local

Defense Minister pledges to upgrade aviation equipments

Kuwait eyes excellence in educational process



KUWAIT: Defense minister inspects Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah has pledged steady efforts for upgrading the defense aviation capabilities in equipment and personnel. The military said in a statement on Thursday that the minister, who made the vow during an inspection of Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base accompanied by top brass, expressed satisfaction with the dedication and sincere efforts, exerted by the air force personnel for serving the homeland, singling out their sacrifices during peak of the coronavirus by backing up state institutions and participating in relief operations.

He conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to the personnel at the air force base.

The minister urged the air force personnel to double their efforts and maintain constant coordination with the other military divisions. Officers carried out a presentation about the Caracal helicopters, a number of which have been recently delivered to Kuwait. They also shed light on specifications and advantages of other aircraft, namely the C-130 transport and Sikorsky planes.

In another development, Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani on Thursday affirmed necessity and keenness of benefiting from experience of advanced nations in the teaching sector. The minister, who made the affirmation during a meeting with ambassadors of sisterly and friendly states to discuss a host of issues concerning the key field, affirmed Kuwait is seeking to study other nations' experience and stay abreast of latest qualitative steps at this level.

During the meeting, Kuwaiti officials and Canadian

diplomats, namely the Ambassador Aliya Mawani, discussed a (proposed) memo for educational cooperation and prospects of transferring Canadian expertise to the country. The memo is designed to attain the political leadership vision with respect of reforming the educational system and attaining Kuwait development vision 2035, minister Al-Adwani said, noting the particular objective of preparing the youth to be much competitive and productive.

It is also in line with the ministry objectives, attaining excellence in the educational process, upgrading works and elevating the level of competence among scholastic and administrative staff. Minister Al-Adwani also received the deputy head of the US mission and the charge d'affaires, James Holtsnider, the Canadian ambassador, the Omani ambassador Amer AlKhrousi, the Jordanian envoy Sagr Bou-Shtal and his Tunisian peer Al-Hashemi Al-Ojaili to discuss various issues in the educational realm. — KUNA

Zain 'strategic partner' of NUKS USA 38th annual conference

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced its strategic partnership with the 38th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA). The event is set to run from 24-27 November in Los Angeles, California under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Zain participated in a press conference held at Intercontinental Downtown LA hotel to unveil its programs and activities. The conference was attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, NUKS USA Director Yousef Ashkanani, Zain and NUKS teams, and representatives from sponsors.

During his speech, Waleed Al Khashti said: "We're proud to be in LA today to announce Zain's strategic partnership with the 38th annual NUKS USA conference, which we've proudly been a main supporter of since 2002." Al Khashti added: "Every year, Zain strives to bring the best programs for Kuwait's students in the US, and this year we're excited to present several new activities throughout the conference's three-day period. First off, we'll start with our popular sports seminar, through which we'll host many

Kuwaiti sports figures who travel to the US to speak and meet up with the students."

Al Khashti continued: "Zain also sponsors a special talk named "Create Your Own Opportunity", which features a number of prominent young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who have launched their own startups and worked at some of the world's biggest tech companies like Microsoft and Amazon. The speakers will share their success stories, experiences, and leadership and entrepreneurship tips with the students."

Al Khashti further explained: "In addition to our special talks, NUKS students always wait for Zain's sports tournaments in the US every year, usually football competitions filled with excitement and thrill. This year, we thought of bringing something entirely new, and so we're organizing an all-new padel tournament for the students, especially since this emerging sport has been so popular among youth in Kuwait and the world. In addition to all this, we'll also host special on-stage entertainment segments with valuable prizes for the students during the conference."

Zain is proud to continue its strategic partnership with NUKS USA, as it is considered a main supporter of the union for nearly 20 years. NUKS USA is considered the largest gathering of Kuwaiti students abroad, and Zain's support comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the youth and education sectors. The company is proud to have become an integral part of the union's success, through which it connects with the country's youth abroad.



Al Khashti and Ashkanani during the press conference in LA.

The National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA) serves nearly 14,000 Kuwaiti students studying in the United States. The union aims, through its events and programs, to connect Kuwaiti students with each other on one level, and with their nation and the latest updates of the Kuwaiti community on another.

NUKS USA was publicized in the USA and was granted the recognition of the United States government. The achievement is considered a proud milestone for Kuwait's youth and is a direct result of the great relations between the State of Kuwait and United States. Such a recognition is a clear reflection of the strategic relations between the two nations.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher honors French language teachers in Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Embassy marks Int'l Day of French Language Teachers

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of France held a reception on Wednesday in honor of the International Day of French Language Teachers. Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher honored French language teachers in Kuwait, saying this reception comes within the framework of the International Day of French Language Teachers at the initiative of President Emmanuel Macron as part of a plan for the French language and multilingualism.

"This day is an opportunity to thank the 1,000 French teachers in Kuwait whose mission is to create meaning for generations by opening up to the French-speaking world and dreaming of the French language," she said. Flecher revealed that at the initiative of the French Embassy and Institut Français in Kuwait, a regional training course in French as a foreign language will be held in February in Kuwait, where 70 participants from five countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait) will be there.

The ambassador affirmed the reception honors the continued and growing momentum of cooperation between the two countries, with commitment from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, public and private institutions, as well as the Institut Français in Kuwait, confirming that the signing in March 2022 of a Declaration of Understanding to enhance educational cooperation is an important outcome.

On the sidelines of the event, Anwar Al-Kandari, director-general for French language at the ministry of education, told Kuwait Times that the celebration of World Teachers' Day is considered an artistic and social day when teachers in Kuwait of all nationalities meet, noting that as the representative of the ministry of education, he is proud to be a part of it. "It is joyful to see teachers, fellow professors and students whom I taught gathered on this celebration," he said.

Kandari revealed that the ministry will introduce French to tenth-grade students in the coming three years, explaining the ministry will seek the opinion of parents and the concerned authority before this subject is introduced in the curriculum. He noted there is a plan to develop and improve the curricula. "Over the next three years, there will be an advanced French curriculum that is completely different from the current one. It will be introduced in the tenth grade of public schools with the approval of parents," he said.

"We are always keen to take the opinion of parents in our activities. This week, we held a workshop in Ahmadi, and we were keen to have parents take part in community participation. We will present the idea to the parents, and if the matter is accepted, it will be implemented," Kandari added.

French is the fifth most spoken language in the world (after Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic). More than 235 million people speak French daily, and nearly 300 million people can express themselves in French. French has been taught in Kuwait since 1966, when it was introduced to the Kuwaiti school system. A community of nearly 1,000 French teachers who teach in public and private schools, secondary schools, institutes and universities were invited.

French is the third language that is taught in Kuwait, after Arabic and English, an indication of the permanent relations between the two countries. Nearly 30,000 learners choose the French language every year, public and private systems combined, including 10,000 students who study French at the baccalaureate level every year. The Council for the Promotion of Francophonie in Kuwait was established in 2021 to provide a space for dialogue and exchange on issues and challenges of Francophonie residents of Kuwait. It brings together French-speaking ambassadors, and the honorary presidency was unanimously attributed to HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

In my view

Restructuring of administrative responsibility-V

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi



Local@kuwaittimes.com

You cannot tackle hunger, disease and poverty unless you can also provide people with a healthy ecosystem in which their economies can grow." - Gro Harlem Brundtland

No doubt the health sector in any country is considered the most important backbone of administrative development. In Kuwait, the government is exerting much appreciated efforts by all to show the health structure at its best, and like any job, there should be objective observations and valuable suggestions in general efforts in managing and directing the health sector in the country. This column is only for these efforts that are to be evaluated, observed and be objective.

When we speak about the health sector, we mean health ministry, and particularly the public health sector, not the private one, which is out of the focus of the column. Everybody knows that the two sides of the health sector are the patient and doctor. So all the abilities and efforts of the health sector are destined for those two sides. They are the essence of the health sector's development.

Any health facility built in the world must be at the service of the patient and doctor, and because of this, it is important to focus our attention where the defect, if it exists, lies. Many are those who know that the largest financial budgets are pumped into the health sector, so we are talking about billions of dinars, not just millions. Maybe the most important noticeable impurities are a lack of balanced financial payments for this sector, as money goes up in the air and is not spent according to scientific bases. You will find many forms of defects that are clear and noticeable:

- Although treatment and medicine in the health sector is free or semi-free, we see an increased number of pharmacies. Rather there are chains of pharmacies spread in a way that draws ones attention, and this calls for a quick and objective look into this phenomenon which seems to have things that may be illegal!

- It is important to consider the feasibility of the decision to allow a public sector doctor to work in the private sector, and evaluate the experience fairly and naturally, and have solutions that safeguard the rights of all.

- The issue of giving health insurance to all citizens in a way that suits public interest, as this is expected to stop unrealistic squandering and is possible to bring financial returns to the state, at least by covering hospital's expenses. Also, it will show the truth of the patient's health condition and evaluate the relationship between the patient and doctor, to discover malingerers getting certain gains, like being allowed to be absent from work or have favorable advantages due to the illness they claim. Based on the above, it is very important to have a system that makes sure about the claims, whether the patient is actually sick or not.

- Reconsider the salaries of doctors in a way that makes them motivated and not in need for extra income, such as working in the private sector, which may affect their productivity. Besides following the doctors scientifically and providing them with the most modern development and an attractive and comfortable environment so they can be dedicated to their job and care for patients.

- Stop administrative jobs for doctors, as it is not realistic for a doctor to study and qualify technically and medically, then when time comes to benefit from their knowledge and competence, they are appointed as an official responsible for administrative affairs (as an example and not exclusively)!

- Bringing in the best qualified medical staff to run and operate new hospitals. In fact there is no harm to have international companies that are competent and trusted to manage and operate hospitals in a way that maintains the state's rights. The above is just very few of many things. They are just ideas regarding the health sector, which is one of the most important sectors of the country.

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News in brief

OPEC basket price down

VIENNA: The price of OPEC basket of crudes went down \$1.1 cents to \$85.19 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday, from \$86.20 pb Tuesday, the OPEC Secretariat said on Thursday. The organization's bulletin added that the overall annual average of the cartel was \$69.89 pb. The OPEC+ coalition decided on October 5 to decrease the rates of oil production by two million barrels on a daily basis, starting this November. The coalition's oil ministers said the decision was due to uncertainty over the global economic outlook and the oil market. In its recent periodic report, OPEC expected an increase in global demand for oil by 2.7 million barrels per day (bpd) to 103 million bpd next year, compared to 100.3 million bpd this year.

Sports day for disabled

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of the Disabled (PADA), in partnership with Integrated Care Association for Special Needs and Down Syndrome Mothers' Association, inaugurated on Thursday the sports day event for the mentally disabled entitled, "You are in our hearts," under the patronage of Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and State Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs May Al-Baghly, head of the supreme council for disability affairs, Deputy Director General of the Medical, Psychological and Social Services Sector at PADA Amer Al-Anzi confirmed to KUNA on the sidelines of the event that the authority is striving to support and encourage all kinds of disabilities in various fields, especially with regard to sports due to the physical and health benefits it has. PADA is keen to cooperate and participate with organizations and relevant authorities concerned with the service, care and rehabilitation of disabled people, he clarified.

Dollar stabilizes at KD 0.307

KUWAIT: The US dollar stabilized on Thursday trading at KD 0.307 and the euro rose by 0.96 percent to settle at KD 0.320, compared with Wednesday's prices, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily bulletin. The sterling pound climbed by 1.58 percent to KD 0.371, the Swiss franc moved up by 1.08 percent to reach KD 0.326, but the Japanese yen firmed, trading at KD 0.002. The CBK publishes daily average exchange rates that do not necessarily reflect actual prices of the currencies' trade for the day. — From KUNA

Int'l Day for Elimination of Violence against Women

Kuwait commits to implementing international treaties

KUWAIT: Marking International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Kuwait commits to implementing international treaties and agreements on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Kuwait has thus enacted a law banning domestic violence just as part of its endeavors to protect Kuwaiti families and reduce violence against women in particular.

Under Amiri Decree 24/1994, Kuwait joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promotes women's and girls' equal rights. The convention does not run counter to the Kuwaiti constitution, which ensures women's rights and incriminates domestic violence.

The United Nations (UN) set November 25 as a day for marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, urging governments, international organizations as well as NGOs to join together and organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the issue every year on that date. Chairwoman of the Union of Kuwaiti Women's Associations Sheikh Fadya

Saad Al-Sabah slammed violence against women as being one of the most common human rights violations across the world.

Speaking to KUNA, Sheikh Fadya boasted that the Kuwaiti constitution and law safeguard women's dignity and protect them against psychological and physical violations. In this context, she spoke highly of the great efforts exerted by the State of Kuwait to protect women's human rights, citing the 2005 legislation that grants Kuwaiti women election rights involving voting and contesting.

Nevertheless, Sheikh Fadya, also speaking to KUNA, underlined that further preventive programs need to be put in place in order to respond to breaches of women's human rights, and even to promote their rights in general. She lamented that violence against women is still a stumbling block to efforts and endeavors to ensure gender equity, development and peace worldwide, stressing that sustainable development goals could not be attained unless violence against women and girls was wiped out.

For her part, Vice-President of the National Diwan of Human Rights Dr Siham Al-Furaih said

violence against women takes place everywhere across the world mainly due to drug addiction. As part of its efforts to mitigate the ramifications of this serious phenomenon on the family, specifically women and children, the State of Kuwait has adopted necessary pieces of legislation, she said, citing Law 16/2020.

However, Al-Furaih boasted that Kuwaiti women are held in high esteem in the Kuwaiti society and have a remarkably effective role to play. Dr Siham Al-Qabandi, a professor of social planning at Kuwait University, regretted that violence against women still hinders and blocks gender equality, justice and development so the only way out of this is to capitalize on the entire human capital in achieving sustainable development.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and endorsement of all relevant conventions would unquestionably contribute to attaining social justice and peace in societies, she emphasized in remarks to KUNA. Building a future free of violence against women is not impossible, but basic services involving education, justice, health and social services should be revamped first and foremost, Al-Qabandi concluded. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group photo during the signing ceremony. —KUNA

DGCA signs SLA deal with Kuwait Airways and NAS

KUWAIT: Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday inked a service

level agreement (SLA) with Kuwait Airways and National Aviation Services (NAS) to develop services provided to passengers at Kuwait International Airport. Acting Director-General of DGCA Saleh Al-Fadaghi expressed to KUNA keenness to ensure that Kuwait Airport's services and operations meet international standards.

Al-Fadaghi added that the SLA agreement

guarantees DGCA to maintain service level and achieve maximum safety and security, noting that the agreement allows punishing or rewarding the service provider. He also explained that ground service provider's companies offer services at the baggage weighing areas, gate entry, baggage claim, flight passenger's welcoming, bags transportation, aircraft cleaning and fueling as well as other services. —KUNA



Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai

Kuwait committed to dialogue, coexistence

FEZ: Kuwait is keen to uphold dialogue and coexistence that achieve development for the good and well-being of people, Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations said on Wednesday. Kuwait's attendance of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Global

Forum "comes from the belief in the importance of coexistence and openness to the other, and from the standpoint of its responsibility is to the United Nations as well," Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai told KUNA.

This, along with international law and the rule of law, remain the best way to build societies, achieve peace, security, stability and sustainable development, he added, mentioning that this is an integral part of the UN's principles, values and goals. Ambassador Al-Bannai headed Kuwait's delegation at the talks, which also saw the attendance of several countries, alongside UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. —KUNA

PAAET launches job opportunity exhibition

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training will hold the 5th annual career opportunity exhibition on 28th-30th November at their headquarters. "The Authority ensures that every year, this event is organized to create more communication opportunities," General organizer, Fatima Al-Sayegh said. The event will

include the participation of a number of government, private and educational institutions in Kuwait and international institutions as well. "The working team assigned to organize the event is working hard to achieve the goals of the exhibition, which is considered one of the biggest of its kind in Kuwait," she added, expressing her appreciation to those supporting and organizing the event.



Fatima Al-Sayegh



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Serb women in Kosovo protest 'ghettoisation'

Pakistan names ex-spymaster as army chief



TAIPEI: Independent Taipei mayoral candidate Huang Shan-shan (center) poses with a basket of 'lucky vegetables' received by supporters during an election campaign at the Huannan Market in Taipei. — AFP

Taiwan politicians flaunt good luck veggies on campaign trail

Political culture infused with symbols and superstition

TAIPEI: In many parts of the world, a politician might hope for a picture-perfect moment with a voter's baby to boost their poll numbers. But in Taiwan, vegetables are the kings of the campaign trail. Whenever the democratic island of 23 million people goes into election mode, prospective candidates race to pose with smorgasbords of vegetables - large white radishes are a favorite - gifted by voters hoping to show their approval.

The reason is Taiwan's love of homonyms: words that sound identical or similar but can carry multiple meanings. In a political culture infused with good luck symbols and superstition - where candidates often seek advice from feng-shui masters when deciding the location or opening date of their campaign headquarters - photo-ops with the right vegetable are routine. Garlic (suan) is immensely popular because when pronounced in Taiwanese it also sounds like the word for "chosen".

The daikon radish (tsai-tao) is a winner because it is pronounced nearly the same as "good luck", while pineapple (ong-lai) is a homonym for "prosperity comes". Ke Chiong-shu, 60, has been selling vegetables at the Wuxing Street Market in the capital Taipei

for more than a decade. Many of her district's candidates have visited the market in recent weeks as Taiwan gears up to hold island-wide local elections on Saturday.

When AFP visited recently, it was former health minister Chen Shih-chung's turn to press the flesh as he campaigned for the Taipei mayoralty, one of the most important posts up for grabs this weekend. Ke grabbed some radish and garlic greens from her stall. "Hope you get elected," she beamed as Chen proudly turned around to display the gifted veggies to the chanting crowd behind. "I give to all candidates regardless of their party affiliation," Ke added. "I hope they all get elected so that they can serve us folks and strive for our benefit."

Progressive democracy

After shaking off decades of martial law, Taiwan has evolved into one of Asia's most vibrant and progressive democracies - a stark contrast to Communist Party-run China, which claims the island as its own and has vowed to one day take it, by force if necessary. It can feel like Taiwan is in near-constant campaign mode. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every

four years and are often dominated by relations with Beijing. In between are local elections held for a variety of positions, from mayoral posts in big cities to indigenous administrators and village chiefs. Taiwan also has referendum laws that allow voters to regularly decide on a host of constitutional issues. Saturday's local election, for example, includes a referendum on whether to lower the voting age from 20 to 18.

Bread-and-butter issues

Local polls tend to be much less focused on geopolitics and centre more on bread-and-butter issues like bad roads, stagnant wages and recent rising inflation. "Something that is very special about Taiwanese local elections is how personable things get," political scientist Lev Nachman, who studies Taiwanese electoral politics, told AFP.

Face-to-face greetings and a handshake or slight bow can go a long way in garnering support for a candidate. "Older voters like to see their politicians in markets and early in the morning out on the streets," Nachman explained. Under President Xi Jinping, China has become much more bellicose towards Taiwan, and Beijing has cut official communications

with the island since President Tsai Ing-wen was first elected in 2016.

Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party, which has won the last two elections, sees Taiwan as a de facto sovereign nation. The opposition is dominated by the Kuomintang party, which favors warmer ties with China. Relations with Beijing plunged in August when it conducted huge military drills around Taiwan to protest a visit to the island by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. But despite the very real threat of conflict, the drama has received minimal attention in the lead-up to this Saturday's polls.

"Even though we just went through these very high-tension military drills in August, those aren't really being talked about by local candidates," Nachman said. "Instead, it is much more about attacking opponents based on the quality of their character," he added. Nonetheless, Lin Pei-ying, 36, a DPP candidate who is running for councilor in the north-eastern county of Yilan, says she believes her party's commitment to maintaining Taiwan's democratic way of life will still feed into voters' decisions. "We are sending a message to China," she told AFP. "Taiwan is Taiwan, China is China." —AFP

Malaysia new PM: From jail to power, a dream fulfilled

KUALA LUMPUR: It has been a bumpy road to the pinnacle of power for Anwar Ibrahim, who on Thursday achieved his dream of the Malaysian premiership. In his decades-long quest for the top job, the 75-year-old has tasted political triumph and defeat, led street protests for democratic reforms and strung together a multi-ethnic opposition coalition while behind bars. He was named prime minister by Malaysia's king after days of political deadlock resulting from an inconclusive election.

Impatient firebrand

Anwar was born into a political family in August 1947. His father, Ibrahim Abdul Rahman, was a former member of parliament and his mother, Che Yan Hussein, was a political organiser in the northern state of Penang, in what was then part of the British empire. A firebrand youth activist during his student days, Anwar has spoken of his admiration for Philippine revolutionary hero Jose Rizal, describing him as "a true Asian renaissance man". In 1982, Anwar was recruited into the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the party then in the middle of its 60-year domination of Malaysian politics.

His star rose, and the suave young politician became finance minister and then deputy prime minister in the early 1990s under then-premier Mahathir Mohamad, bringing a youthful counterbalance to the wily political veteran. They were considered one of the most dynamic duos in Southeast Asian politics, but their relationship soured over how to handle the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis. Some observers say Anwar had been too impatient to become prime minister, slighting his patron. Mahathir sacked Anwar, who was also expelled from UMNO and charged with corruption and sodomy.

He was sentenced to six years in jail for corruption



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's newly appointed Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail leave after the swearing-in ceremony at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur on November 24, 2022. —AFP

Palestinians return body of Zionist teen

JERUSALEM: The body of a Zionist teenager snatched by Palestinian militants in the occupied West Bank was returned to his relatives Thursday, following intense talks to avoid an escalation of violence. Prime Minister Yair Lapid had on Wednesday threatened tough reprisals against those who had taken the body of Tiran Fero, a 17-year-old Druze who was critically wounded in a car accident a day earlier. The Zionist military said his body was released "as a result of the efforts of the security forces and in coordination with the Palestinian authorities."

The abduction from a Jenin hospital was not immediately claimed by any particular group, but local sources told AFP that Palestinian militants were holding the body in the city's refugee camp where various factions are present. Zionists, or their mortal remains, have previously been abducted to be used as bargaining chips to secure the release of Palestinian pris-

oners or the return of the bodies of Palestinians seized by Zionist entity. "There were two ways to have this body returned," a military official told journalists. "One, through the Palestinian Authority.

And two, was going in for a military operation in the city, in the camp, that's probably... very, very violent," he added. Zionist forces frequently launch deadly raids in Jenin in pursuit of militants, although civilians including American-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh have also been killed in such operations. The Zionist official said the militants had wrongly thought Fero was a soldier and negotiations were handled through the Palestinian Authority.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz thanked Palestinian officials on Twitter for "this humanitarian gesture that comes after a miserable and inhumane act". The PA nominally controls urban centers across the West Bank, which has been occupied by Zionists since the Six-Day War of 1967. On Thursday, the army reopened two checkpoints between Jenin and Zionist entity which were closed after the teenager's body was seized. The crossings are an economic lifeline for Palestinians, as well as Arabs in Zionist entity, including members of the Druze minority, who visit the northern West Bank frequently. — AFP



DALIYAT AL KARMEL: Druze men carry the coffin of 17-year-old Tiran Fero, on November 24, 2022, during his funeral procession in Daliyat Al Karmel, around 20 kms southeast of Haifa. — AFP

International

UK-led police operation busts phone scammers

International criminal network target thousands of victims

LONDON: UK police on Thursday said their biggest ever counter-fraud operation had disrupted an international criminal network targeting hundreds of thousands of victims in millions of spam phone calls. The Metropolitan Police spearheaded the 18-month global probe into the iSpooof.cc website, working with Europol, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies worldwide. A total of 142 people have been arrested, including one of its alleged London-based administrators. Suspects were nabbed in Australia, France, Ireland and the Netherlands, while servers were shuttered in the Netherlands and Ukraine.

UK police believe organized crime groups are linked to the website and its tens of thousands of users. The site enables users to access software tools to illicitly obtain victims' bank account funds and commit other fraud. Met Commissioner Mark Rowley said the investigation signaled "a different approach" to criminals exploiting technology. "This is about starting from the organized criminals that actually drive and create the fraud that we see in the

world around us," he told reporters.

The London force-the UK's largest-said in the year to August, suspects paid to access the website and make more than 10 million fraudulent calls worldwide. Around 40 percent were in the United States. More than a third were in the UK, targeting 200,000 potential victims there alone. Fraud detection agencies have so far recorded £48 million (\$58 million) in losses in the UK alone. Victims lost an average £10,000. The largest single theft was worth three million pounds. Losses to victims worldwide are estimated at over £100 million. "Because fraud is vastly under-reported, the full amount is believed to be much higher," the Met said. Those behind the site earned almost £3.2 million from it, the force added.

Only around 5,000 British victims have so far been identified. However, the Met's investigation has yielded the phone numbers of more than 70,000 potential victims, who have yet to be contacted. The force will attempt to reach them over the next two days, sending text messages directing those contacted to its website, where details can be safely

logged. "What we're doing here is trying to industrialize our response to the organized criminals' industrialization of the problem," Rowley added.

'Operation Elaborate'

The iSpooof website-described as "an international one-stop spoofing shop"-was created in December 2020 and at its peak had 59,000 users paying between £150 and £5,000 for its services, according to the Met. It enabled subscribers, who could pay in Bitcoin, to access so-called spoofing tools which made their phone numbers appear as if they were calling from banks, tax offices and other official bodies.

The mostly commonly imitated organizations include some of the UK's biggest consumer banks-including Barclays, Halifax, HSBC, Lloyds and Santander. Combined with customers' bank and login details, illegally obtained elsewhere online, the criminals were then able to defraud their victims. "They would worry them (about) fraudulent activity on their bank accounts and tricked them," explained

Detective Superintendent Helen Rance, who leads on cyber crime for the Met.

She noted that people contacted would typically be instructed to share six-digit banking passcodes allowing their accounts to be emptied. The Met launched "Operation Elaborate" in June 2021, partnering with Dutch police, who had already started their own probe after an iSpooof server was based there. A subsequent server operating in Kyiv was shuttered in September and the site was permanently disabled on November 8.

The previous day the Met had charged Teejai Fletcher, 34, of east London, with fraud and organized crime group offences. He remains in custody and will next appear in a London court on December 6. "It's fair to say that he was living a lavish lifestyle," Rance said, noting that the investigation remained ongoing. "Instead of just taking down the website and arresting the administrator, we have gone after the users of iSpooof," she added. Two other suspected administrators outside the UK remain at large, the Met noted. —AFP

Spain PM sets sights on international role

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will on Sunday become president of an international socialist grouping, a potential springboard to a major post on the world stage. A year before a general election in Spain, which polls suggest he will struggle to win, Sanchez is the only candidate to head the Socialist International (SI) - an umbrella group of 132 centre-left parties from around the world.

The telegenic 50-year-old will take over the reins of the SI, which is gathering in Madrid this weekend, from former Greek prime minister George Papandreu. "While symbolic... this post could be a way (for Sanchez) to regain credit among voters by presenting himself as influential on the world stage," said Pablo Simon, political science professor at the Carlos III University.

"But it also could be that he plans on capitalizing on this network of international contacts" which the post offers to "play a prominent role later" in a top global body, he added. Former Portuguese prime minister Antonio Guterres led the International Socialist before he went on to head the United Nations refugee agency in 2005 and then become UN secretary general in 2017. "All prime ministers who love foreign affairs have a tendency to look for an international post to secure a post-governmental career," said Teneo Intelligence analyst Antonio Barroso.

'More weight'

Sanchez has made international affairs a priority since he came to power in June 2018, in contrast to his conservative predecessor Mariano Rajoy, and has sought to boost Spain's influence in the European Union. Within days of taking office, Sanchez made international headlines by agreeing to take in migrants from the Aquarius rescue ship who were rejected by

other European nations.

The first modern Spanish premier to speak English fluently, Sanchez served as chief of staff to the UN high representative to Bosnia during the Kosovo conflict. He has fostered good relations with France and Germany, which has made Spain "one of the engines of European politics", said Simon, citing as an example Madrid's lead in talks over the energy crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine. Sanchez successfully lobbied to have his foreign minister, Josep Borrell, appointed as European Union foreign policy chief in 2019.

"Spain has much more weight in the European Union debate than 10 years ago," said Barroso, adding the premier had "boosted Spain's credibility" with its "European partners". Beyond the EU, Sanchez hosted a crucial NATO summit in Madrid in June, just four months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and has "reconnected" with Latin America, which has shifted to the left in recent years, said Simon, Sanchez visited four Latin American countries in August 2018, his first official trip outside Europe, in what was seen as an effort to underscore the region as a priority of his foreign policy.

With Biden and Macron

During the recent G20 summit in Indonesia, Sanchez posted a photo of himself meeting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and US President Joe Biden. Seen as an attempt to burnish his credentials on international affairs, the photo was much mocked on social media. But Ignacio Molina, a senior analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute think tank, said he believes Sanchez's priority is to remain Spanish prime minister after the general election, which is expected at the end of 2023.

The speculation about a possible senior role for Sanchez at a global body comes from Spain's opposition parties, which have "spread the idea that he uses international meetings to prepare his future in case of an electoral defeat next year", Molina said. "I don't think he's deliberately developing an international network for personal reasons." — AFP

years of jail terms for violating freedom of speech laws. The decree stipulates to grant an amnesty to a number of Kuwaiti citizens jailed for committing crimes from Nov 16, 2011 until the end of 2021.

Based on the decree, the amnesty will cover prisoners who were convicted for carrying out acts of aggression against a foreign country that could threaten Kuwait's security. It also includes those jailed for spreading false news about the internal situation of Kuwait that could undermine the position of the country. The amnesty will also include prisoners jailed for publicly insulting the authority of HH the Amir by any means, whether in writing or in speech. It will also include those convicted for misusing their phones to threaten others or the security of the state. —Agencies

Schools were also closed in the nearby towns of Rabigh and Khulais "to preserve the safety of male and female students", SPA said. The kingdom is in the middle of final exams, yet schools had already been closed nationwide on Wednesday after King Salman declared a holiday following Saudi Arabia's shock defeat of Argentina in the World Cup. Winter rainstorms and flooding occur almost every year in Jeddah, where residents have long decried poor infrastructure. Floods killed 123 people in the city in 2009 and 10 more two years later. — AFP



CASTELLON DE LA PLANA: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez flanked by Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Manuel Albares, Spain's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labor and Social Economy Yolanda Diaz and Spain's Minister of Defense Margarita Robles attend a Romania-Spain summit in Castellon de la Plana, eastern Spain on November 23, 2022. — AFP

Serb women in Kosovo protest 'ghettoisation'

MITROVICA: Hundreds of Serbian women demonstrated in Kosovo on Wednesday, in protest against ethnic-Albanian authorities who they accused of seeking to "ghettoise" the Serb minority. The protest in the north of Mitrovica-long a flashpoint between Serbs and ethnic Albanians-took place as Serbian and Kosovar officials try to find a solution to a row over number plates. The dispute erupted after Kosovo said the country's ethnic Serbs would be fined if they did not swap vehicle licence plates issued by Serbia for registration numbers issued by Pristina.

The underlying source of tension is Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia. The latter does not recognize the move and has encouraged Kosovo's Serb minority to remain loyal to Belgrade.

The dispute has sounded alarm bells in the European Union, which has been seeking to normalise ties between Serbia and Kosovo and wants both to refrain from provocative gestures.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said late Wednesday that Kosovo and Serbia had agreed to steps to take some of the heat out of a long-running dispute. "Very pleased to announce that (the) chief negotiators of Kosovo and Serbia under EU-facilitation have agreed to measures to avoid further escalation," he tweeted. Borrell said the deal reached by both sides entailed Serbia ceasing to issue licence plates with markings indicating Kosovo cities, and Kosovo "will cease further actions related to re-registration of vehicles".

He tweeted after hosting Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Brussels for negotiations. Earlier in the day, protesters in the city of Mitrovica accused Kurti of "terror" and "inhuman treatment" as they marched through the streets of the northern city. Some held up placards that read "women united to liberate the ghetto" and "I want peace". — AFP

Amnesty commission holds first...

Continued from Page 1

number of public prosecution and interior ministry officials. The committee commenced its work by providing lists of names of convicted citizens whose cases are applicable to article one of the decree.

An Amiri decree was issued on Monday granting a special amnesty to an unspecified number of mainly Kuwaiti political prisoners who had been convicted to

2 dead as storm shuts schools...

Continued from Page 1

The official Saudi Press Agency reported before dawn that schools in the city would temporarily be closed as rains were forecast to continue throughout the day.



JEDDAH: Youths walk in a flooded street following heavy rains in this Saudi coastal city on Nov 24, 2022. —AFP

Anwar sworn in as Malaysia's...

Continued from Page 1

fundamental rules of good governance, no corruption and Malaysia for all Malaysians," Anwar said.

He said his multiethnic Pakatan Harapan coalition had been able to secure a majority after gaining seats from old foes in the former ruling bloc Barisan Nasional and another party in Sarawak state on Borneo island. Anwar's coalition campaigned on an anti-graft message and won the most seats in the election with 82. That was ahead of the 73 won by former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin's Malay-centric Perikatan Nasional bloc but still well short of the 112 needed for a majority.

Both leaders were by the king this week in an attempt to break the deadlock but no deal could be struck. The king then held a special meeting with other royals on Thursday before the palace announced Anwar as the new premier. Seeking to boost the legitimacy of his appointment, Anwar said his coalition would propose a vote of confidence in parliament on Dec 19.

Anwar's supporters were in a celebratory mood in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. "I got goosebumps, seriously," said 36-year-old Norhafizah Ashruff Hassan. "He fought hard to be given the chance to be PM. I hope he performs well and proves his worth." Muhammad Taufiq Zamri, a 37-year-old product manager said: "I cannot express in words the ecstatic feeling I have." Anwar said he had received a congratulatory phone call from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan just before his news conference.

The premiership is the culmination of a 25-year rollercoaster for Anwar. The firebrand former student activist was first poised to take the reins in the late 1990s, after serving as finance chief and deputy prime minister under Malaysia's political patriarch Mahathir Mohamad. But the two had a bitter

falling-out over how to handle the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Mahathir sacked his former protege, who was also expelled from their then-party the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), and charged with corruption and sodomy. Anwar said the charges were politically motivated. Anwar was sentenced to six years in jail for corruption in 1999 and then given an additional nine on a sodomy charge the following year. Street protests erupted and evolved into a movement for democratic reforms, with Anwar stringing together an opposition coalition from behind bars.

The Mahathir-Anwar tussle has dominated and shaped Malaysian politics over the past four decades, "alternately bringing despair and hope, progress and regress to the country's polity", according to Oh Ei Sun of the Pacific Research Center of Malaysia. The Malaysian Supreme Court overturned Anwar's sodomy conviction in 2004 and ordered him freed.

Anwar re-aligned with Mahathir during the 2018 elections, when his nonagenarian foe came out of retirement to challenge incumbent Najib Razak, who was mired in the billion-dollar 1MDB financial scandal. Their detente scored a historic victory against UMNO and Najib, who is now serving a 12-year jail term for corruption. Mahathir became prime minister for the second time, with an agreement to eventually hand the premiership to Anwar. He never fulfilled that pact and their alliance collapsed after 22 months.

In his most recent bid to lead Southeast Asia's third-largest economy, Anwar once again pledged to end corruption and cultivate multi-ethnic harmony. "This is a long time coming for Anwar Ibrahim," Asrul Hadi Abdullah Sani, deputy managing director at strategic advisory firm Bower Group Asia, told AFP. James Chin, a professor of Asian studies at the University of Tasmania, told AFP the palace's announcement "will be welcomed internationally since Anwar is known as a Muslim democrat worldwide". "His biggest challenge will be to lead Malaysia out of the economic malaise following the pandemic." — AFP

International

China 'iPhone city' tightens COVID rules after protests

Beijing orders six million people into lockdown

BEIJING: China has ordered six million people into lockdown in a city where violent protests broke out at an iPhone factory over COVID isolation policies and working conditions. Hundreds of workers took to the streets around the vast iPhone factory in Zhengzhou on Wednesday, confronting hazmat-clad personnel wielding batons in a rare display of public anger in China.

In the wake of the unrest, Zhengzhou authorities ordered mass testing and an effective lockdown for several districts in the central Chinese city starting Friday. City centre residents cannot leave the area unless they have a negative Covid test and permission from local authorities, and are advised not to leave their homes "unless necessary".

The restrictions will affect more than six million people but do not cover the iPhone factory, where workers have already been under COVID restrictions for weeks. One worker told AFP the protests had begun over a dispute over promised bonuses at the factory, run by Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn. Many workers were also incensed by "chaotic" living conditions, said the worker, who wished to remain anonymous.

Foxconn on Thursday issued an apology, blaming a "technical error" in its payment systems for the salary issues and saying it "fully understands" the concerns of employees. "The company will also try its best to actively solve the concerns and reasonable demands of employees," it said. Apple told AFP it had representatives on the ground at the factory and was "reviewing the situation and working closely with Foxconn to ensure their employees' concerns are addressed".

Zero-COVID fatigue

The curbs in Zhengzhou are part of China's national zero-tolerance approach to COVID, which involves gru-

elling lockdowns, travel restrictions and mass testing. However, nearly three years into the pandemic, COVID cases are now higher than they have ever been in China. There were 31,444 domestic infections on Wednesday, the National Health Commission reported, the highest since the pandemic began.

The numbers are relatively small when compared with China's vast population of 1.4 billion or global caseloads at the height of the pandemic. But under the zero-COVID policy, even small outbreaks can shut down entire cities and land the contacts of infected patients in strict quarantine. The unrelenting zero-COVID push has given rise to fatigue and resentment among swathes of the population, sparking sporadic protests and hitting productivity in the world's second-largest economy.

The Foxconn protests have been among the highest-profile bouts of unrest. Several cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing have tightened COVID restrictions as cases have climbed. The capital now requires a negative PCR test result within 48 hours for those seeking to enter public places such as shopping malls, hotels and government buildings. Schools across the city have moved to online classes.

The southern manufacturing hub of Guangzhou - where nearly a third of the latest COVID cases were found - has built thousands of temporary hospital rooms to accommodate patients. A series of new rules announced by the central government this month appeared to signal a shift away from zero-COVID, easing quarantine requirements for entering the country and simplifying a system for designating high-risk areas.

But China has yet to approve more effective mRNA vaccines for public use and only 85 percent of adults over 60 had received two doses of domestic vaccines by mid-



BEIJING: Health workers in personal protective equipments (PPE) carrying COVID-19 coronavirus testing swabs and tubes are seen on bicycles along a street in Beijing on November 24, 2022. —AFP

August, according to health authorities. Shijiazhuang, a city near Beijing that was seen as a pilot for testing reopening strategies, reversed most of its easing measures

this week. "The path to reopening may be slow, costly and bumpy," Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura, said in a note. —AFP

Indonesia rescuers race to find dozens missing after quake

CIANJUR: Indonesian authorities deployed heavy machinery, helicopters and thousands of personnel Thursday in a desperate effort to locate dozens trapped in rubble by an earthquake that killed 272 people, as hopes of finding survivors faded. Some have been pulled alive from the hulk of twisted metal and concrete in dramatic rescues in the town of Cianjur in West Java, including a six-year-old boy who spent two days under the wreckage without food or water.

Officials said 39 people were still missing and believed trapped, including a seven-year-old girl, as rescue efforts were delayed by hammering rains and aftershocks. But the rescue of the young boy Azka alive, captured on video, gave relatives and rescuers some hope. "Once we realized Azka was alive everybody broke into tears, including me," 28-year-old local volunteer Jeksen Kolibu told AFP on Thursday. "It was very moving, it felt like a miracle."

In the worst-hit district of Cugenang, scores of rescue workers drilled on Thursday through big slabs of concrete and removed roof tiles at a destroyed house where they believed a young girl was buried. Her dis-

traught mother watched on as they worked. Other rescuers used digging tools, hammers and their bare hands to clear the debris in the delicate mission to find seven-year-old Cika. "She was playing outside, I was cooking in the kitchen, suddenly the earthquake happened, so fast, only two seconds, my house collapsed," her mother Imas Masfahitah, 34, told AFP at the scene.

"My instinct tells me she is here because she liked playing here," she said, referring to the house of the girl's grandmother where the search is focused. "Whatever happens I will try to accept it." Authorities later suspended the search for Cika for the evening, saying they would resume the rescue effort on Friday. "We still hope that there are survivors. The proof is that Azka survived yesterday," Suharyanto, the head of the national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB), who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told a news conference Thursday.

'Pray for us'

The death toll from Monday's earthquake was expected to rise further with around 2,000 people wounded, some of them critically, and at least two villages still cut off. It rose by one on Thursday after the body of a 64-year-old was found, Suharyanto said. Thousands of emergency workers were using excavators to break through blocked roads to get to the villages and deploying helicopters to drop vital aid to people still trapped there.



CIANJUR: Imas Masfahitah walks past as rescue personnel work to find her missing child believed to be trapped in the rubble of a collapsed house at Cugenang in Cianjur, West Java on November 24, 2022, following a 5.6-magnitude earthquake. —AFP

But the BNPB chief said it was too dangerous to use heavy machinery digging for victims because of fears of collapsing structures or more landslides. The rescue operation is expected to continue beyond the 72-hour window viewed as the best period to find victims alive. "Hopefully, in one or two days, after the weather is good, (we can) deploy heavy equipment (and) more victims are found," Suharyanto said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo visit-

ed Cianjur again on Thursday, and said 39 people were believed missing in the district of Cugenang alone. "This afternoon, we will concentrate on this spot," he told reporters. Widodo said only 24 patients remained at the town's Sayang hospital, down from 741. Residents of the district said they had never experienced anything like it before. "I don't know why the impact in Cugenang is especially bad. It's probably fate, God has decided," Adek, 52, told AFP. —AFP

TV host's party makes breakthrough in Nepal

KATHMANDU: An anti-establishment television host will win a seat in Nepal's parliament after his new party tapped into voter discontent towards the Himalayan republic's elderly leadership, partial election results showed Thursday. Rabi Lamichhane, 48, made his name through combative interviews with public officials and hidden-camera stings on corrupt bureaucrats - populist credentials that channeled anxieties over a teetering economy.

A revolving door of prime ministers - most serving less than a year - and a culture of horse-trading fuelled perceptions before the vote that established leaders were out of touch with Nepal's most pressing problems. Lamichhane won nearly 60 percent of all ballots cast in his Chitwan constituency, ousting a minister from the ruling Nepali Congress. At least five other candidates from his National Independent Party (NIP) - formed just five months before the election - have won their seats, with four others on track to win.

The party is expected to be allocated more seats in the proportional representation section of the vote - Nepal has a mixed first-past-the-post and party-list system - which could make it the fourth or even third-largest party in parliament. Among its winning candidates is lawyer

Sobita Gautam, 27, who told AFP that voters were "fed up" with established parties and leaders ignoring their concerns. "This is a mandate for a younger generation in the driving seat," she added. "I will become a bridge between the people and the parliament."

The NIP campaigned on a pledge to tackle the cost of living and widespread graft, both of which emerged as key campaign issues with the economy still in the doldrums from the coronavirus pandemic. The government has banned imports of liquor and other goods to shore up its foreign exchange reserves after COVID devastated the vital tourism industry and dried up remittances from the huge number of Nepalis working abroad.

'Vented frustrations'

Political analyst Jeevan Baniya told AFP that the NIP and several candidates from other minor parties had fared well in urban areas where "the public vented their frustration over the non-performance of their previous representatives". Incumbent Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, 76, who has been serving for the fifth time, was safely re-elected in his constituency. Also re-elected were the leaders of Nepal's two other main parties - aged 70 and 67 - who have themselves both held office as premier twice.

Though Nepal's entrenched political veterans are still expected to dominate the 275-seat assembly, Baniya said new anti-establishment lawmakers could play a key role in forming the next government. "Initial results show that they will have a significant presence in the parliament that would require the dominant parties to at least approach them or work with them," he added.

Sunday's elections were the second since a new consti-

undue influence over the nation and has staged at least three coups since independence in 1947, ruling for more than three decades. Even during periods of civilian rule, the army chief has long been considered the real kingmaker and the appointment is freighted with huge political significance. The army chief also has to handle multiple domestic security threats from rising militancy, as well as the delicate balance of power with arch-rival India, against who Pakistan has fought three wars.

Munir, the most senior of six officers considered for the top job, previously served as head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) spy bureau. He takes over at a time when Pakistan is riven by political strife, with former prime minister Imran Khan rallying supporters to stage mass protests pressing the government to call a snap election. "The political process is very weak and democratic institutions are almost at a collapse," analyst Zahid Hussain told AFP. "In this situation, the army automatically becomes an arbiter of power."



PADAMPUR: Former television host and Independent Party's candidate in Nepal's general election Rabi Lamichhane (right) meets residents during a door-to-door election campaign event in Padampur. —AFP

tuition was installed in 2015, ushering in a new political order after the conclusion of Nepal's traumatic Maoist insurgency. The decade-old civil war ended in 2006, having claimed more than 17,000 lives and prompting the abolition of the monarchy, bringing former rebels into the government fold. Since then the ex-guerrillas have alternated in power with another communist party and Deuba's Nepali Congress in various coalitions. —AFP

Capital showdown

Khan was ousted by Shehbaz Sharif in a no-confidence vote in April after the economy went into a tailspin and he lost the support of the top military brass. Pundits have suggested Sharif's coalition picked that moment to secure the right to select the next army chief, who will steer elections due no later than next October.

Munir served as ISI chief under Khan, but his stint ended in June 2019 after just eight months following a reported falling out with the former cricket star. Since leaving office Khan has held a series of mass rallies, frequently making unfounded claims that he was ousted by a US-led foreign conspiracy, and questioning the military's role in politics. Earlier this month he ramped the rhetoric higher still, accusing Sharif and an army officer of plotting an assassination attempt that saw him shot at a rally in eastern Punjab province. —AFP

Grace follows tragedy with birth of babies

CIANJUR: Death descended on Cianjur when an earthquake struck the central Indonesian town this week, but several new mothers also provided some joy for grief-stricken residents. At least three babies were born in the same evacuation tent just a day after the magnitude 5.6 tremor killed 271 people, according to West Java's governor Ridwan Kamil. The provincial official gave one of the babies her name after she was born on Tuesday evening: Gempita Shalihah Kamil. The name Gempita was inspired by the Indonesian word for earthquake, he said, before giving her his own last name.

"Behind this disaster, and the many who passed away, Allah also gave his grace with the birth of babies who would continue this journey of human civilisation," the governor said Wednesday in an Instagram post liked nearly 300,000 times. Indonesian media reported her birth widely because of Kamil's intervention, calling it "a gift". A video of him holding the newborn baby, as her mother Dewi lay on the floor, accompanied Kamil's post. Dewi said she feared for the baby's condition in her womb as she fell down when the tremor hit. She ran to the nearest community health centre for checks.

"It was difficult to find the heartbeat. Local midwives helped to stimulate (it)," Dewi said in an interview broadcast on Kompas TV Thursday as she held her fourth child in her arms. She took only around 30 minutes to give birth to her new daughter. Nova Dwiyanto, a doctor from the Social Affairs Ministry, said he received reports that at least two babies were born in the tent, including one prematurely at eight months. "Thank God ... (they) were helped to safely give birth," Dwiyanto told Kompas TV. He said the two babies and their mothers were "in good health" after checkups.

The quake could also affect infants, even though they were safely in their mothers' wombs when it struck. A US study published in September showed that pre-natal babies during a natural disaster are at a higher risk of developing psychological and behavioural disorders. But for these mothers whatever comes next mattered little as their births were a ray of light amid the darkness, at least for a moment. Dewi and Kamil were shown surrounded by friends and relatives, happy despite the carnage outside. As the governor uttered the child's name, they shouted in jubilation - "Praise be to God!" —AFP

Pakistan names ex-spymaster as army chief

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's government nominated a former spymaster Thursday to be the next military chief, a position long considered the real power in the nuclear-armed Islamic nation of 220 million people. Syed Asim Munir, currently quartermaster general, will replace General Qamar Javed Bajwa, who is retiring this month after serving as chief of army staff since November 2016. "The process has completed in accordance with the law and constitution," Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told reporters, adding the nomination had been sent to the president for confirmation.

Pakistan's military, the world's sixth largest, holds



KARACHI: A man watches a news television broadcast of the nomination of the next Pakistan's army Chief General Syed Asim Munir (on television 2nd right), at a market in Karachi on November 24, 2022. —AFP

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2022

Business

Grinding inflation clouds ‘Black Friday’ shopping bonanza in US

Retailers vulnerable to oversupply at a time when consumers are cutting back

NEW YORK: The Black Friday kickoff of the holiday shopping season is expected to bring especially deep discounts in 2022, but one challenge will be finding consumers confident enough to spend. Grinding inflation in the world's biggest economy in recent months has cast uncertainty over this year's festive season, which kicks off the day after Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday.

A year ago, retailers faced product shortfalls in the wake of shipping backlogs and COVID-19-related factory closures. To avert a repeat, the industry front-loaded its holiday imports this year, leaving it vulnerable to oversupply at a time when consumers are cutting back. "Supply shortages was yesterday's problem," said Neil Saunders, managing director for GlobalData Retail, a consultancy. "Today's problem is having too much stuff."

Saunders said retailers have made progress in recent months in reducing excess inventories but that oversupply created banner conditions for bargain-hunters in many categories, including electronics, home improvement and apparel. Juameelah Henderson always checks for sales, "but more so now," she said while exiting an Old Navy store in New York with four bags of items. The clothing chain's prices were "pretty good," she said. "If it's not on sale, I really don't need it."

Higher costs for gasoline and household staples like meat and cereal are an economy-wide issue, but do not burden everyone equally. "The lower incomes are definitely hit worst by the higher inflation," said Claire Li, a senior analyst at Moody's. "People have to spend on the essential items."

Diminishing savings

Leading forecasts from Deloitte and the National Retail Federation project a single-digit percentage increase, but it likely won't exceed the inflation rate. The consumer price index has been up about eight

percent on an annual basis, which means that a similar size increase in holiday sales would equate with lower volumes. US shoppers have remained resilient throughout the myriad stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, often spending more than expected, even when consumer sentiment surveys suggest they are in a gloomy mood.

Part of the reason has been the unusually robust state of savings, with many households banking government pandemic aid payments at a time of reduced consumption due to COVID-19 restrictions. But that cushion is starting to whittle away. After hitting \$2.5 trillion in excess savings in mid-2021, the benchmark fell to \$1.7 trillion in the second quarter, according to Moody's.

Consumers with incomes below \$35,000 were affected the most, with their excess savings falling nearly 39 percent between the fourth quarter of 2021 and mid-2022, according to Moody's. Accompanying this drop has been a rise in credit card debt visible in Federal Reserve data and anecdotally described by chains that also report more purchases made with food stamps.

"We're seeing continued pressure," said Michael Witynski, chief executive of Dollar Tree, a discount retailer that has seen "shifts" in shoppers, "where they're very consumable and needs-based focused to try and make that budget work and stretch it over the month."

Mixed picture

Earnings reports from retailers in recent days have painted a mixed picture on consumer health. Target stood on the downcast side of the ledger, pointing to a sharp decline in shopping activity in late October, potentially portending a weak holiday season. The big-box chain expects a "very promotional" holiday season, said Chief Executive Brian Cornell. "We've had a consumer who has been deal-

keeping a close look at Musk's handling of hateful speech since he bought the influential platform for \$44 billion. It could also spook Apple and Google, tech titans that have the power to ban Twitter from their mobile app stores over content concerns. Trump was banned from the platform early last year for his role in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

'No mercy'

Musk's reinstatement of Trump followed that of other banned accounts including a conservative parody site and a psychologist who had violated Twitter's rules on language identifying transgender people. The CEO of Tesla and SpaceX has said that conspiracy theorist Alex Jones will not be returning to Twitter and will remain banned from the platform. Musk on Sunday said he had "no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame" due to his own experience with the death of his first child.

Jones has been ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for his lies about the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that killed 26 people, mostly children. Musk, who closed his buyout of Twitter in late October, did not make clear whether the bans to be covered by the poll were permanent suspensions or temporary ones.

after the government initially said it would not need to go to the multilateral lender.

"The challenges we face are daunting," the minister said in a statement to lawmakers. "I, therefore, ask all of us to play a constructive role in getting our nation back on track." To increase revenues, the 2023 budget will raise value-added tax by 2.5 percent to 15 percent. The so-called E-levy on electronic transactions will be reduced from 1.5 percent to 1.0 percent in a bid to encourage more transactions. The government will also freeze hiring of public workers for next year.

Ghana, a top cocoa and gold producer, also has oil and gas reserves but its debt service payments are high and its revenues low. Like the rest of Africa, it has been hit hard by economic fallout from the global pandemic and the Ukraine war. Since the start of the year, the cedi currency has depreciated

European Environment Agency said in a new report.

That was slightly more than those recorded in 2019 in the EU, despite a fall in emissions due to Covid curbs. Fine particulate matter, or PM2.5, is a term for fine particulates that are typically the by-product of car exhausts or coal-fired power plants. Their tiny size enables them to travel deep into the respiratory tract, worsening the risk of bronchitis, asthma and lung disease. Also in 2020, exposure to nitrogen dioxide (NO2) above the WHO's recommended threshold led to 49,000 premature deaths in the EU, the EEA said.

Acute exposure to ozone (O3) caused 24,000 people to die early. "When comparing 2020 to 2019, the number of premature deaths attributable to air pollution increased for PM2.5 but decreased



ROSEMEAD, California: A woman shops for toys at a Walmart store on Nov 22, 2022. — AFP

ing with very stubborn inflation for quarter after quarter now," Cornell said on a conference call with analysts. "They're shopping very carefully on a budget, and I think they're looking at discretionary categories and saying, 'All right, if I'm going to buy, I'm looking for a great deal and a great value.'"

But Lowe's, another big US chain specializing in home-improvement, offered a very different view, describing the same late-October period as "strong" and seeing no evidence of consumer deterioration. "We are not seeing anything that feels or

looks like a trade down or consumer pullback," said Lowe's Chief Executive Marvin Ellison.

Consumers like Charmaine Taylor, who checks airline websites frequently, are staying vigilant. Taylor thus far has been thwarted in her travel aspirations due to exorbitant plane ticket prices. Taylor, who works in childcare, isn't sure how much she'll be able to spend on family this year. "I'm trying to give them some little gifts," Taylor said at a park in Harlem earlier this week. "I don't know if I'll be able to. Inflation is hitting pretty hard." — AFP

Musk floats 'general amnesty' of suspended Twitter accounts

SAN FRANCISCO: New Twitter owner Elon Musk on Wednesday polled users on whether the site should offer a general amnesty to suspended accounts, using the same method he used to handle the case of Donald Trump. The move comes as Musk has faced pushback that his criteria for content moderation is subject to his personal whim, with reinstatements decided for certain accounts and not others. "Should Twitter offer a general amnesty to suspended accounts, provided that they have not broken the law or engaged in egregious spam?" Musk asked in a tweet.

The poll was open until 17:46 GMT on Thursday and mimicked the strategy used just days ago for the former US president Trump. Trump's Twitter account was reinstated Saturday after a narrow majority of respondents supported the move. Polls on Twitter are open to all users and are unscientific and potentially targeted by fake accounts and bots.

A blanket decision on suspended accounts could potentially alarm government authorities that are

For activists, Twitter packs vital punch

PARIS: From the Arab Spring uprisings to the MeToo movement in which women spoke up about sexual assaults, Twitter has proven itself a formidable ally for political activists and opposition groups, one whose reach and impact would be difficult to replace. Other social media platforms may have more users, but the network now owned by the billionaire Elon Musk dominates the global conversation - even as Twitter's future is being called into doubt.

"Twitter is clearly very influential in getting the media and officials to pay attention. So it has a very special and unique place in that way," said Mahsa Alimardani, a senior researcher at the human rights NGO Article 19. During the anti-government protests that have rocked Iran in recent months, tweets are "helping Iranians bear witness to the pain and struggles of their fellow countrymen, helping the world bear witness to what's happening," she told AFP.

Especially in countries that have clamped down on independent journalism or foreign correspondents, Twitter provides a crucial lifeline to the outside world. This week, posts from inside the Chinese iPhone factory operated by Foxconn showed workers rebelling against a total COVID lockdown, shattering the government's attempts to portray a veneer of calm amid its draconian efforts to contain the virus. "It's very important to get information out to the international media but also to document human rights violations and atrocities," said Marcus Michaelsen, a researcher specialized in digital activism under authoritarian regimes.

'Protest identity'

Twitter had some 237 million daily users at end-June, well below the nearly two billion Facebook or one billion TikTok users. But its pithy, at-a-glance format allows the network to punch far above its weight for opposition groups, since anyone can become a "citizen journalist" who instantly shares images that government authorities don't want to be seen.

For Nadia Idle, an Egyptian-British activist who took part in the Tahrir Square uprising in Egypt in 2011, tweets of anti-regime protests across the Middle East also encouraged people by showing that they were not alone. "Its capacity to broadcast this event, and the amount of activists that were tweeting in English, made it a spectacle for people from the outside," she said. Faced with viral tweets provoking global outrage, outside governments can also feel domestic pressure to take action or at least condemn repressive governments. — AFP

Ghana plans tax rise, debt swap to secure IMF aid

ACCRA: Ghana's finance minister, Kenneth Ofori-Atta, presented the 2023 budget to parliament on Thursday, hiking tax and planning a debt swap as the country's negotiates an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan. Ofori-Atta is facing calls for his dismissal as the West African state battles an economic crisis, with inflation at more than 40 percent and the cedi currency falling sharply. Ghana hopes to secure up to \$3 billion in IMF credit this year to shore up public finances

Air pollution killed 238,000 Europeans prematurely in 2020

COPENHAGEN: Fine particle air pollution led to 238,000 premature deaths in the European Union in 2020, the bloc's environmental watchdog said Thursday, a slight rise from the previous year. Across the 27-nation bloc that year, "exposure to concentrations of fine particulate matter above the 2021 World Health Organization guideline level resulted in 238,000 premature deaths," the

Stocks rise, dollar slips as Fed signals softer rate hike pace

Oil prices extend sharp losses • Worries over China's COVID outbreaks

"Equities are reveling in the wake of the... minutes after the Fed telegraphed a downshift from jumbo to extra-large rate hikes," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. "A commitment to moving toward restrictive monetary policy."

The developments allowed Wall Street traders to head off to their Thanksgiving break with a spring in their step, the S&P 500 ending at a two-month high as they finally see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel after a painful year. Asia and Europe mostly followed suit. Kuala Lumpur surged more than three percent and the ringgit held gains after opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was named prime minister, ending a days-long leadership impasse after inconclusive polls that had rattled Malaysia's markets.

While officials are trying more targeted measures to contain the disease, concerns remain that they will resort to the painful city-wide shutdowns seen in Shanghai earlier this year as part of the zero-COVID strategy, which hammered the economy. However, that worry has been tempered somewhat after China signaled fresh support measures aimed at boosting growth, with the State Council saying tools would be used to ensure liquidity in markets. The comments led to talk of another cut in the amount of cash that banks must keep in reserve, freeing them to lend more. —AFP

Foxconn apologizes after protests over pay and conditions


“Our team has been looking into the matter and discovered a technical error occurred during the onboarding process,” a Foxconn statement said without going into detail. “We apologize for an input error in the computer system and guarantee that the actual pay is the same as agreed.” The statement added: “At present, the park is continuing to actively communicate with the employees affected by the wrong information, explaining that the salaries and bonuses of all employees are paid in accordance with company policies.” — AFP

South Korea truckers strike again, threaten supply chains

With fuel prices rising, the drivers have been demanding the government make permanent the “safe freight rate” minimum pay scheme, which is

The move has again triggered concerns about the impact on global supply chains, already

But truckers say that without the minimum wage guarantee becoming permanent, more workers will become vulnerable to overwork and safety risks, such as driving when tired. They also demand the scheme be applied to truckers in other industries, including oil, cement and containers, an idea the government has previously rejected. South Korea has one of the highest industrial fatality rates for a rich economy, with more than 4,000 work-related deaths reported from 2020 to last year, according to Seoul's labor ministry. —AFP

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,118	1,120	1,125	1,100	25	13,890,745	3	0.27%	17.95%	1,113	1,131	18.4	2.14	2.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	341	343	343	336	7	9,746,031	4	1.18%	29.09%	338	346	17.8	1.54	2.0%	1.26
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	205	201	205	199	6	36,151,697	-3	-1.47%	-4.11%	194	203	35.9	0.63	1.9%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	229	229	233	226	7	3,648,431	1	0.44%	-4.20%	227	233	22.8	0.83	2.1%	1.29
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	863	864	864	857	7	36,828,728	2	0.23%	14.23%	855	874	29.1	3.56	1.3%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	843	844	847	839	8	4,531,401	1	0.12%	18.48%	840	847	54.7	3.33	0.5%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	270	270	275	268	7	1,695,665	1	0.37%	23.29%	267	274	19.9	1.10	16.7%	1.84
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	146	124	147	123	24	78,692,006	-21.0	-14.48%	-12.68%	122	132	20.5	0.63	4.1%	0.96
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	81	80.7	84	80	3	3,947,627	0.6	0.75%	-31.61%	78	82.9	-	0.48	11.1%	1.26
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	111	112	112	108	4	34,976,942	2	1.82%	-35.55%	108	119	15.9	0.80	2.7%	1.10
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	896	883	896	871	25	1,695,967	-13	-1.45%	18.03%	882	889	18.2	1.94	1.5%	1.03
501	National Industries	Financial Services	246	245	250	245	5	16,204,681	-1	-0.41%	1.68%	232	247	12.3	1.08	4.5%	1.50
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,288	1,302	1,334	1,275	59	491,044	27	2.12%	49.48%	1,290	1,319	12.6	1.26	4.6%	0.99
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	815	820	828	811	17	2,260,967	7	0.86%	-3.76%	813	820	8.6	1.61	7.3%	0.94
603	Agility	Industrials	789	775	790	764	26	14,313,432	-12	-1.52%	-1.59%	769	788	50.4	1.41	2.2%	1.55
605	Zain	Telecommunications	617	593	617	589	28	43,987,954	-24	-3.89%	-0.34%	589	595	13.7	2.14	5.5%	0.78
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,439	3,400	3,439	3,399	40	282,733	-22	-0.64%	5.46%	3,400	3,440	7.2	3.42	11.7%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	170	171	172	169	3	1,973,672	1	0.59%	-21.56%	171	178	-	0.63	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,785	1,795	1,845	1,762	83	737,349	10	0.56%	39.15%	1,780	1,820	13.8	10.65	2.6%	1.45
821	Warba Bank	Banking	252	255	258	252	6	25,372,724	3	1.19%	-6.93%	249	258	25.8	1.40	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	366	378	400	366	34	7,294,798	12	3							

Business

EU fails to agree gas price cap amid deep divisions

Many still want some form of workable ceiling on wholesale gas prices

BRUSSELS: EU energy ministers failed Thursday to agree a cap on gas prices to mitigate the energy crunch in Europe amid deep divisions over an initial proposal slammed by many as a “joke”. The ministers will now meet in the first half of December to try to bridge differences, said Czech Industry Minister Jozef Sikela, whose country holds the current presidency of the EU.

He added that the ministers did manage to adopt a couple of other “important measures”, including joint gas purchases to avoid intra-EU competition driving up prices, supply solidarity in times of need, and hastening authorization of renewable energy sources. Several ministers going into Thursday’s meeting complained that the gas price cap proposal on the table, unveiled by the European Commission just two days earlier, was clearly designed to never be used.

The Polish and Spanish energy ministers called the proposal a “joke”. Greek Energy Minister Kostas Skrekas said the cap “is not actually a ceiling” on gas prices, and “we are losing valuable time without results”. The price cap plan - which the commission was never keen on - sets a maximum threshold of 275 euros per megawatt hour. But it comes with so many conditions attached that it would not even have been activated back in August, when the gas price briefly soared above 300 euros, alarming Europe used to historic prices around 10 percent of that.

Drop in Russian gas

The cap proposal would only be triggered if the

275-euro limit was breached continuously for at least two weeks, and then only if the price for liquified natural gas (LNG) rose above 58 euros for 10 days within that same two-week period. The price of wholesale gas in Europe on Thursday was around 124 euros, according to the main TTF benchmark.

The commission’s proposed price cap was seen as neutered under pressure from members including Germany and the Netherlands, which feared a cap could divert gas supplies to more lucrative markets, especially Asia. Yet at least 15 EU countries - more than half the bloc - want some form of workable ceiling on wholesale gas prices to tackle a crunch in supply forced by Russia’s war in Ukraine.

While the European Union hasn’t banned Russian gas, the Kremlin has been turning off the taps in retaliation for sanctions imposed by Brussels in the wake of Moscow’s invasion. Before the war, Russian gas supplies accounted for more than 40 percent of all imported gas into the European Union, with export powerhouse Germany particularly needy. That has now dropped to less than 10 percent.

But alternative sources-such as LNG shipped from the United States and the Gulf - cannot make up the shortfall, and Europe faces a pricey heating bill for winter. EU energy commissioner Kadri Simson acknowledged the divisions over the price cap as she went into the meeting. She noted that the ministers have “a right to calibrate the different parameters” if they wished - something that may



BRUSSELS: Czech Minister of Industry and Trade Jozef Sikela speaks with Polish Minister of Climate and Environment Anna Moskwa and Greek Energy Minister Konstantinos Skrekas before an extraordinary European Union energy ministers meeting at the EU headquarters on Nov 24, 2022. —AFP

happen in time for their next meeting, likely to be called for Dec 13. The price cap plan, if adopted, would start in January. It would run alongside a

voluntary initiative for EU member states to cut natural gas use by 15 percent over the northern hemisphere winter. —AFP

CBK regulatory sandbox adopts sustainable fintech products and services

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to support fintech and keep pace with international best practices on sustainability to achieve social and climate-related goals, and in conjunction with the recently circulated guidelines issued by Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) regarding Environmental Social Governance (ESG) considerations, the CBK announced priority will be given in its regulatory sandbox to test products and services that support sustainability standards.

This came in a statement in which CBK highlighted its support to the modern financial technologies, and its keenness to encourage innovative FinTech products and services that support ESG by giving them priority for testing within the CBK regulatory sandbox.

The statement added that CBK launched the regulatory sandbox framework in 2018 to test innovative fintech products and services without exposing the financial and banking system to risk, and continued to update the framework for further development and to improve the quality of outputs.

The CBK also referred to the ongoing progress of the services adopted for the banking sector and the national economy and asserted that it will continue to adopt products and services of added value.

UK downturn puts boot into Dr Martens

LONDON: Shares in Dr Martens skidded Thursday after a cost-of-living crisis put the boot into the iconic British shoemaker, its latest results showed. Dr Martens stock slumped 20 percent to 227.80 pence in morning deals on the London stock market. Net profit slid eight percent to £45 million (\$53 million) in the six months to September compared with a year earlier, it said in a statement. The performance was marred by the souring UK climate, as consumers tightened their belts in the face of decades-high inflation.

Group revenues, however, rallied 13 percent to £418.6 million on rising prices in the UK and a strong dollar that made Dr Martens cheaper for US customers. The group gained also from an increased focus on direct sales via its own stores and website. At the same time, the stronger dollar increased the cost of raw materials priced in the US unit.

Dr Martens also benefitted from easing coronavirus restrictions. “The iconic British boots brand seemed to defy the doom and gloom over the summer,” noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor. “However, the macroeconomic pressures from inflation and the consumer slowdown appear to be catching up with it now.”

The group warned this would weigh on its profitability in the current financial year. Dr Martens began life in 1959 as a tiny German company making orthopedic boots. It became a publicly-listed company nearly two years ago when it floated on the London stock market. Its initial public offering came in at 370 pence. —AFP



LuLu Hypermarket launches Super Friday promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and the destination of choice for discerning shoppers, launched the ‘LuLu Super Friday’ promotion that runs from November 23 to December 3 across all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait.

The week-long event was inaugurated on 23 November at the Al-Qurain branch by the popular social media sensation dr_kholodii, in the presence of the top management of LuLu Hypermarket, along with a large gathering of customers and well-wishers of the brand.

The ‘Super Friday’ promotion features an amazing range of offers and discounts on an array of world-class products for shoppers to choose from, including super-special deals of up to 75 percent discount on select items in all categories, such as electronics, mobile phones, IT equipment, home appliances, fashion, footwear, luggage, toys, household, fragrance, eyewear, and cosmetics among others.



“Buy Hisense & win” contest grand raffle draw winners awarded Qatar World Cup 2022 semifinal tickets. The ‘Super Friday’ promotion reiterates LuLu Hypermarket’s continued commitment to

provide shoppers with an unrivaled shopping experience, while offering high-quality products from around the world at exceedingly competitive prices.

EU lawmakers back €18bn Ukraine aid stalled by Hungary

STRASBOURG, France: The European Parliament on Thursday approved an 18-billion-euro (\$18.7-billion) EU financial support package to get Ukraine through 2023, but the plan remains blocked by opposition from Hungary. Kyiv is urgently seeking billions in emergency funding for next year as it struggles to weather the economic fallout of Russia’s devastating invasion.

Hungary - which has the closest ties to Moscow of the European Union’s 27 members - says it opposes joint borrowing by the bloc to fund the aid package. Instead, it plans to provide support bilaterally to Ukraine. On Wednesday, Hungary said it would send 187 million euros in financial aid to Ukraine—just one percent of the sum the EU wants to mobilize.

The EU’s top budget official accuses Hungary of barring the bloc’s financial plan in a bid to blackmail Brussels into releasing billions of euros of EU funds to Budapest. The funds are held up by concerns over corruption and judicial independence. The EU has stalled on disbursing 5.8 billion euros in post-Covid recovery funds to Hungary’s right-wing government and is threatening to hold back another 7.5 billion euros.

In a resolution approved Thursday, MEPs urged the European’s executive arm to stand firm in the face of the pressure from Budapest. The EU has

already sent Ukraine over 6.5 billion euros in macro-financial assistance to Ukraine this year.

But the International Monetary Fund estimates that Kyiv will need between three billion and four billion euros per month next year as it struggles to maintain government services while fighting off a Russian invasion that has occupied almost a fifth of its territory. Brussels hopes that its contribution will be matched by Washington and other major international donors to bring the support to the required level.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban opposed a joint loan-financed 18-billion-euro EU support package for Ukraine for 2023, drawing fresh accusations that he is undermining unity in the 27-member bloc. During 12 straight years in power, the staunch nationalist has regularly vetoed, or threatened to veto, EU undertakings on issues from migration to Russia sanctions.

Orban insists that Hungary wants to pay its “equitable” share of Ukraine aid, but on a bilateral basis rather than as part of an EU bloc loan. “We will provide the 187 million euros to Ukraine that would be Hungary’s share of the planned 18-billion-euro joint EU loan, through bilateral means from the national budget but not through another joint EU loan,” the premier’s political director Balazs Orban wrote on Twitter.

A decree signed by Orban and published in the government’s official gazette stipulates the finance ministry should secure the money, as Budapest “remains committed to providing financial support to Ukraine as a result of the war”. Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto should start talks with Ukraine to agree on the framework required for the financial aid, it added.



KYIV: Local residents queue in line for access to a water pump in a park to fill plastic bottles on Nov 24, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

The EU’s mammoth support package is aimed at keeping Kyiv’s government operating in the face of the Russian invasion. Hungary’s opposition to the loan plan, which requires unanimity across the bloc’s members, was described as “blackmail” by Brussels. Budapest’s announcement of the bilateral aid comes as Brussels nears a decision on the fate of billions of EU funds allocated to Hungary from the bloc’s 2021-2027 budget and its COVID recovery fund.

Brussels has not signed off on Budapest’s spending plan for the monies due to corruption concerns. The hold-up in EU payments arrives at a bad time for Hungary. The economy is under increasing pressure from a weakening local currency and fast-rising inflation. Both have hit new records this year. —AFP



BTS star to begin S Korea military service next month

The oldest member of K-pop phenomenon BTS will begin his military service on December 13, becoming the first in the band to enlist, local media reported Thursday. All able-bodied South Korean men under the age of 30 must perform about two years of military service, mainly because the country remains technically at war with nuclear-armed North Korea. That means the age cut-off is approaching for 29-year-old Jin, senior member of the hugely popular septet. He will begin his mandatory five-week training at Yeoncheon in Gyeonggi province before being deployed to a "frontline unit", the Yonhap news agency reported, citing military and industry

sources. The singer had previously hinted on social media that he had been assigned to the front line.

The news left fans overwhelmed and emotional, with some even expressing concern about Jin's safety. "My heart literally dropped when I read that he will be deployed to the front line," one fan tweeted, adding: "This military thing that surround BTS for years NEVER really concerns me until now. Why front line?? Why??"

Another fan said: "I can't help but think they're sending him to the hardest scariest place as punishment." BTS are credited with generating billions for the South Korean economy, and their label enjoyed a surge in profits despite holding fewer

concerts during the coronavirus pandemic. But the prospect of mandatory military service has long hovered over the K-Pop superstars, and has triggered years-long debate in South Korea over whether they deserved exemptions—which are given to classical musicians and Olympic medalists, for example. Their agency announced last month that band members would carry out their mandatory military service, starting with Jin. Seoul's defense minister had said in August that BTS might be allowed to continue performing and preparing for international concerts even while undertaking military duties. —AFP

Interactive play gives Spain teens insight into gender violence

The row started with something minor: 'Edu' was laughing at something on his phone but refused to show it to his girlfriend 'Ali'. She got upset and they started arguing. Angry words turned into shouting and insults and suddenly a furious 'Edu' grabs her phone and hurls it to the classroom floor where it shatters, the violent gesture shocking the group of watching teenagers. The confrontation between the two characters, played by actors, is part of a play by Teatro Que Cura (The Healing Theatre) visiting a high school in the town of Parla near Madrid to raise awareness about domestic violence.

November 25 is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and in Spain, which passed Europe's first law against it in 2004,

experts agree education is key to reducing the problem. In May, official figures showed gender violence was growing fastest among the under-18s, with the number of female victims up nearly 30 percent from 514 in 2020 to 661 in 2021. It was unclear if this was due to an increase in violence or a rise in the number of incidents reported.

The play at El Olivo high school starts with the couple getting ready for their first date, Edu winning over the 15- and 16-year-olds with a humorous monologue worrying over his looks, what to wear and his chances of getting laid. But the laughter dies as their relationship develops and the teenagers are encouraged to reflect on their arguments and what they would do differently. "The aim is to help adolescents build relationships based on equality



Susana Martin Cuezva, a therapist who directs El Teatro Que Cura (The Healing Theatre) reacts in an interview after an interactive play to raise awareness about domestic violence among teens.

and prevent domestic violence," says Susana Martin Cuezva, a therapist who directs Teatro que Cura and moderates the discussions. "The idea is that the students experience a situation of tension or conflict in the here and now and that they resolve it in a different way to how the actors are approaching it, which is always through violence."

'Pretty realistic'

"It's good to show it like this. If you see it in the street, it's just a couple fighting. But seeing it in this context you realize it is actually violence and that you can do something about it," says 15-year-old Patricia Garcia. As the plot develops, the audience is invited to voice their thoughts directly to Edu or Ali, with each actor improvising a response. "I lost my head, I'm not really like that," Edu explains to a student after the phone-smashing incident.

"Yeah right. First, give me some



Spanish actors Ana Merchante (left) and Manu Chacon play a scene during interactive theatre by El Teatro Que Cura (The Healing Theatre) to raise awareness about domestic violence among teens, at El Olivo high school in Parla, south of Madrid. —AFP photos

space and don't try to intimidate me," she says calmly. As he starts arguing, she walks off to cheers and applause from the students. What affected Mario Carmona, 16, most was the insults and the pushing and shoving. "Unfortunately, it was pretty realistic, and it happens more often than you'd expect," he told AFP. "It's not easy to understand what's happening even though these arguments are pretty normal. But it's good to have someone to support you, who can give you a wake-up call if things get a bit out of hand."

Set up in 2017, Teatro que Cura uses interactive theatre to immerse teens in dramatised scenarios of inequality and violence to raise awareness about conflict and gender-based violence. Over the past five years, they have worked with some 9,000 teenagers aged 14-19, mostly in the Madrid region. Studies show education is crucial, with a 2021 Spanish government report finding sex

education classes focused on equality and violence "reduce the risk of resorting to gender-based violence in boys, and of suffering it in girls".

'Detecting cases of risk'

"Adolescents who are taught about gender-based violence are at less risk," educational psychologist Maria Jose Diaz-Aguado told El Pais newspaper. "If you get this sort of education at school, you can become aware of such things much earlier," agreed 16-year-old Maryam Calderon. Silvia Serrano Martin, El Olivo's school psychologist, said the sessions were very effective. "It's really helped raise awareness about domestic violence because seeing it in such an experiential way reaches them more directly," she told AFP. "This is a useful prevention tool but it's also good for detecting cases of risk." —AFP



Teenagers play during interactive theatre by El Teatro Que Cura (The Healing Theatre) to raise awareness about domestic violence among teens.

Swiss look to trains to get ski tourism on track



Switzerland is banking on the train to bring young European holidaymakers into the Alpine country during the forthcoming ski season, the national tourism agency said Wednesday. Switzerland Tourism is hoping to lure in winter sports enthusiasts in their 20s and early 30s through targeted train offers. "The emphasis is on train travel from European cities," with ski lift passes at reduced prices for "those who take the train", the agency said, calling it the "most sustainable way possible to get to the slopes".

During this year's summer season, landlocked Switzerland benefited from the return of foreign tourists thanks to the lifting

of COVID-19 restrictions. Hotel night bookings, however, were six percent below their pre-pandemic levels for January to October this year.

But for the 2022-23 winter season, Switzerland Tourism expects the number of hotel nights to exceed the 2018-19 season by one percent. The agency is counting on foreign tourists returning to the slopes, but acknowledged that the ski season was opening up facing "major challenges". These include energy costs, inflation, the strength of the Swiss franc, recession worries, and broader fears about climate change shortening the winter season in the mountains. —AFP





A British Gas engineer services a gas-powered lamp near Westminster Abbey in central London. —AFP photos



A British Gas engineer attaches a stepladder to a gas-powered lamp before servicing it, near Westminster Abbey in central London.

Shine on: Campaigners save London's historic gas lamps

Intrigued tourists watch as Paul Doy climbs a ladder outside London's Westminster Abbey and lifts the globe of a gas street lamp. Winding its timer, he then ignites a small cloth mesh, creating a distinctive soft warm light that illuminates the darkness. "I like the historical aspect of it," said Doy, even if it means getting up at 5:00 am to tend to the lamps in the fashionable district of Covent Garden. "It's mainly winding the 100-year-old mechanical clocks" in the lamps "and setting the times for those, especially now as well, because we're losing light much earlier," he told AFP.

The 200-year-old nightly ritual nearly became history, however, over local authority plans to replace 174 gas-powered lamps protected by a heritage order with eco-friendly LED bulbs. The plan by the City of Westminster council caused uproar among some residents and heritage lovers, and even sparked a question in parliament. But on Tuesday, the council said it had decided to scrap the move. Instead, it will convert 94 other gas lamps which are not protected.

Tim Bryars, who owns a small bookshop in Covent Garden, stumbled across the plan by chance just over a year ago. "One morning, I went out of my shop, there are a couple of guys from the council digging a hole in front of my bookshop," he said. "I said, 'what are you doing?' And they said, 'Don't worry, we're just looking to see how easy it will be to convert your gas lamps to electricity'. He fronted a campaign to save them and on Wednesday called the council's U-turn 'a good first step'. "Basically they are admitting we were right but they have to do more," he told AFP. "We actually need a firm policy commitment to positively preserving the gas lamps, not just keeping a few until they become troublesome."

'London's DNA'

London has more than 1,000 gas street lamps,

which were installed at the beginning of the 19th century. At the time, they were considered a major innovation in a city with dark, dirty and often dangerous streets. In central London, they still light up parts of The Mall avenue leading to Buckingham Palace, the back streets of Covent Garden, and around Westminster Abbey. The atmospheric light they give out is evocative of Charles Dickens novels, Mary Poppins and Sherlock Holmes.

"They are an incredibly important part of the fabric of London's history. They are in London's DNA," said Luke Honey, an antiques writer who was also involved in the campaign. "They are just beautiful things. The quality of light is incredibly natural," he said in Goodwin's Court near Covent

Garden, said to be the inspiration for Diagon Alley in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

"I am afraid reproduction LEDs just don't replicate the beauty of original lamps and also the quality of that particular gas light," Joe Fuller, head of the maintenance team for old street lamps at British Gas, accepted that some of the replacements "look very nice". "But they're still different from the originals," he said. "I think it's really key that we maintain that heritage and keep as many as we possibly can."

Consultation

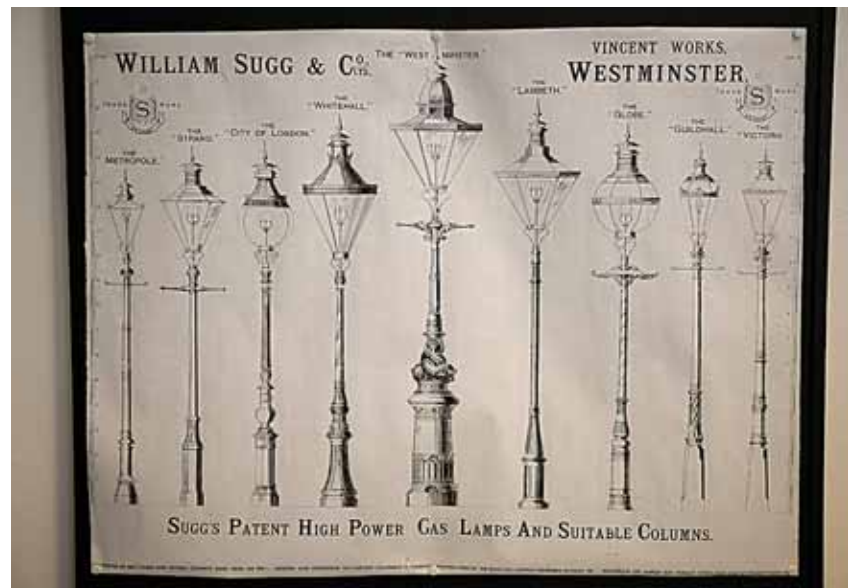
Previous attempts to replace the gas lamps caused a similar outcry and forced the council to abandon its plans. But a change of leadership

revived the project, as part of an overall aim to reduce carbon emissions-and improve public safety. The council had been trying to convince naysayers in a public consultation exercise, which ended on Sunday.

Paul Dimoldenberg, the council's cabinet member for city management and air quality, said the lamps were "increasingly difficult to maintain and repair". "In a street where gas lamps break down... the streets are in darkness for longer, and therefore they are not as safe as they should be for pedestrians or anybody using the streets in the dark," he added. But in abandoning the move, he said the council acknowledged "the strong heritage issues at stake". —AFP



Gas-lamp covers are seen as engineers gather at their workshop in London.



A poster displaying different types of gas-powered lamps is pictured at the British Gas repair centre in London.

Taiwan's newest party wants to make mahjong great again

As Taiwan hurtles towards becoming a "super-aged" society, a new political party has emerged with an unusual and somewhat singular platform-making mahjong great again. The centuries-old Chinese tile game is popular in Taiwan, especially among the elderly, but thanks to a quirk of legal history from the island's martial law era, it inhabits something of a grey space. While playing mahjong is legal, the game is treated with suspicion by authorities as gambling in public places is prohibited.

Organized crime groups have long maintained a lucrative side hustle by hosting illegal betting matches, while gaming parlors, both legitimate businesses and more shady ones, often find themselves raided or inspected by police. Step forward Kuo Hsi, the 65-year-old owner of a parlor in the southern city of Kaohsiung who has decided it is high time to allow betting on mahjong games and has launched a new political party to achieve that goal.

The niche Mahjong the Greatest party wants the game declared a "legitimate recreation" and for gambling and prize money to be allowed. "Let's be frank. You can put a bet on anything if you want to gamble. Even rock, paper, scissors. Why do we insist on branding mahjong as a form of gambling?" he told AFP from his parlor, the unmistakable clatter of mahjong tiles creating a hypnotic soundtrack. "Any form of competition, gaming, golf, tennis, badminton, they all have some form of prize in the end. They all do. When there are prizes, competitors will do their best to train themselves physically and mentally. Mahjong playing is exactly the same," he added.

'Ridiculous'

Max Chang, 31, a gaming consultant who has been playing mahjong with his family since he was young, is among the party's first members. "I identify very much with Kuo's ideals. As a young man who plays mahjong frequently, I am always wary about people calling the police on us," he told AFP.

Echoing that sentiment, 62-year-old housewife and party member Amy Huang said: "I look forward to playing mahjong openly and not having to hide."

Huang said her mother-in-law, who taught her how to play, was taken to a police station once for betting in a game with friends, an incident she described as "ridiculous". Kuo knows he has some way to go to break into Taiwan's political mainstream. The current membership of the Mahjong the Greatest party—which was founded last month—is 120 people, but he is "optimistic" that he can get 10,000 registered party members by the end of this year. Kuo has applied to authorities to register the party and is hopeful that it will be approved soon. He aims to get enough political momentum going to secure a referendum next year to amend the law. Taiwan's vibrant democratic system allows for regular referendums to decide key decisions. On November 26, Taiwan holds local elections and one of the referendum questions on the ballot is whether to lower the voting age from 20 to 18. Kuo also hopes to secure at least one lawmaker-at-large seat in 2024 when Taiwan will elect a new president and parliament.

Ageing society

As a parlor owner, Kuo has strong business reasons to see mahjong gambling allowed and regulated. But he also has a more altruistic goal, believing that bringing mahjong out of the grey space will help Taiwan's elderly live happier, more sociable lives. Nearly 17 percent of Taiwan's 23.5 million-strong population is over 65.

The island is projected to join Japan and reach "super-aged" status in 2025 when that proportion reaches 20 percent. "Taiwan is an ageing society with more and more senior citizens, especially in remote areas, and they mostly stay at home watching TV," Kuo said. "If they can get together with people of their age to play mahjong, to chat with others, it will help improve their quality of life and bring happiness. This is a good activity for them." —AFP



Fench-Malian singer Aya Coco Danioko aka Aya Nakamura (center) answers hosts' questions upon her arrival to attend the 24th edition of the NRJ Music Awards ceremony. —AFP

Afropop star Aya Nakamura faces court over domestic violence

Franco-Malian singer Aya Nakamura will appear in court on Thursday in Paris along with her former partner after they were charged with domestic violence following a row at their home in August. The singer behind the 2018 sensation "Djadja"—which has nearly 900 million views on YouTube—is one of the biggest-selling francophone artists worldwide.

The court appearance for the 27-year-old star, whose real name is Aya Danioko, came after police were called several times in the early hours of August 7 to the Paris home she shared with partner Vladimir Boudnikoff, a music video producer. They have both been charged with domestic violence.

"We did stupid things that night but that's life too," Boudnikoff wrote on Instagram after the fight with Nakamura, with whom he has a daughter. Nakamura, one of few francophone pop artists to break into English-speaking markets, was born in Mali but grew up in the Paris suburbs. She has been hailed for rapping and singing about female empowerment and black identity, mixing French, the capital's distinctive slang, Arabic and her family's native Bambara language. —AFP



Mahjong players moving their tiles during a round of the game at a parlor in Kaohsiung. —AFP photos



This picture shows Kuo Hsi (center), founder of Taiwan's Mahjong the Greatest party, posing with his party flag at his parlor in Kaohsiung.



An employee wearing a vest showing the logo of the Mahjong the Greatest party, at a mahjong parlor in Kaohsiung.

Lifestyle | Features

Battle to save Panama turtle at center of aphrodisiac superstition



Lora turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) are pictured before being released on the beach of Punta Chame, some 100 km south of Panama City. —AFP photos



A member of the Tortuguías Foundation carries Lora turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) before being released on the beach of Punta Chame.



A Lora turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) heads to the sea after being released on the beach of Punta Chame.

The sea turtles of Punta Chame, a peninsula of Panama that juts into the Pacific Ocean, face an existential threat similar to the rhino and pangolin: human superstition. The eggs of the protected olive ridley turtle, illegally harvested from the beach, are sold door to door in town for 75 cents to \$1 each for their purported aphrodisiac qualities. “Especially men think that by eating turtle eggs they will have more sexual pleasure,” said Jorge Padilla, a conservationist with the NGO Fundacion Tortuguías which collects and hatches the precious eggs. “The eggs won’t help you. They are not an aphrodisiac,” he insisted.

The olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is listed as “vulnerable” on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with its numbers declining. Its survival relies heavily on people like Padilla, who with village volunteers collect freshly laid eggs and bury them in sand at the nursery. Hundreds hatch here each year between July and February. Within hours they are brought to the beach and released near the water’s edge by volunteers who look on with parent-like pride as the tiny critters make a frantic dash for the ocean. “We cannot just put them (in the water) because they have to go through a process called ‘imprinting’ (along the

beach) that will bring them back in 18-20 years to the same beach where they were born” to lay their own eggs.

Used for combs, clothes

Day and night, Padilla patrols the beach to scare off poachers. Other threats include stray dogs roaming the beaches for food, and eagles. Padilla repels the dogs but leaves the eagles as they are natural turtle predators and part of the circle of life. The turtles also end up as by-catch from fishing, and face threats to their nesting beaches from human encroachment and climate change. “There are many threats to sea turtles, both in

the Pacific and in the Caribbean: illegal egg harvesting, overconsumption of their meat, their shells... They are used for combs... clothing,” said Padilla.

Marine turtles and their uncertain fate are on the agenda of a global wildlife summit taking place in Panama City, not far from Punta Chame with its 500 human inhabitants. The gathering of countries under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will consider ways to combat egg theft and trafficking. A working document on the CITES website states “the illegal harvest and trade continues to threaten marine turtles.” —AFP



Lora turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) head to the sea after being released on the beach of Punta Chame.



This undated file image released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows a mother and calf vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) surfacing in the waters off San Felipe, Baja California, Mexico. —AFP photos

Wildlife summit to vote on ‘historic’ shark protections

A summit on the international trade in endangered species will decide Thursday whether to ratify a “historic” proposal to protect sharks, a move that would drastically restrict the lucrative global shark fin trade. The proposal would place dozens of species of the requiem shark and the hammerhead shark families on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). That appendix lists species that may not yet be threatened with extinction but may become so unless their trade is closely controlled.

The initiative was one of the most discussed at this year’s CITES summit in Panama, with the proposal co-sponsored by the European Union and 15 countries. The meeting began on November 14, and ends on Friday. If Thursday’s plenary meeting gives the green light, “it would be a historic decision, since for the first time CITES would be handling a very large number of shark species, which would be approximately 90 percent of the market,” Panamanian delegate Shirley Binder told AFP.

Shark fins—which represent a market of about \$500 million per year—can sell for about \$1,000 a kilogram in East Asia for use in shark fin soup, a delicacy. The vote follows a hectic debate that lasted nearly three hours, with Japan and Peru seeking to reduce the number of shark species that would be protected. “We hope that all of this will (now) be adopted in plenary,” said Binder. The plenary will also vote on ratifying a proposal to protect guitarfish, a species of ray.

Heated debate

Several delegations, including hosts Panama, displayed stuffed toy sharks on



In this file a white rhino calf strolls with its mother in the African Grassland, at the National Zoo of Cuba in Havana.

their tables during the earlier Committee I debate. After the heated debate, the request to protect requiem sharks went to a vote, garnering above the needed threshold and calming the waters for the subsequent hammerhead shark debate. Delegates and direc-

tors of conservation organizations, who are observers at the summit, are confident that both proposals will be ratified. “We hope that nothing extraordinary happens and that these entire families of sharks are ratified for inclusion in Annex II,” Chilean delegate Ricardo Saez told AFP.

‘Extinction crisis’

The world is currently in the middle of a major shark extinction crisis, Luke Warwick, director of shark protection for the NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), told AFP at the beginning of the summit. During the committee debate, Japan had proposed that the trade restriction be reduced to 19 species of requiem sharks and Peru called for the blue shark to be removed from the list. However, both suggestions were rejected. Participants at the summit considered 52 proposals to change species protection levels. CITES, which came into force in 1975, has set international trade rules for more than 36,000 wild species. Its signatories include 183 countries and the European Union. —AFP



This undated file image released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows a mother and calf vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) surfacing in the waters off San Felipe, Baja California, Mexico. —AFP photos

Musicians in French-speaking Africa eye global market through streaming

The wildfire popularity of streaming platforms has hoisted Nigerian and other artists from English-speaking Africa to unprecedented popularity around the world. Musicians from the continent’s francophone countries are now looking to cash in on the boom. Africa’s streaming leader is Boomplay, whose library of 80 million tracks is almost in the same ballpark as those of Deezer and Spotify.

But Boomplay’s big difference with the global giants is a catalogue that focuses intensively on African music rather than a broader range of genres. The app was created in Nigeria in 2015 and is now present in six African countries, said Paola Audrey, manager of Boomplay’s Ivory Coast branch. “We offer a very large library which helps you to discover many local artists,” she said.

Funded by advertising and free for the user, Boomplay has blazed a trail internationally for Nigerian Afro-pop and now hopes to do the same for francophone African stars. “At the moment it’s much easier to highlight Nigerian artists in the French-speaking world, but we’re doing some experiments in the reverse direction, such as the Ivorian rapper Didi B,” said Audrey. “There are small niche markets, and our role is to promote artists so that they can find an audience on a bigger scale.”

For industry experts who met last week in Abidjan at the African Music Industry Fair, the digital revolution promises glittering opportunities for West African artists. Revenue from African music streaming is expected to more than triple in five years, from \$92.9 million in 2021 to \$314.6 million in 2026, according to research firm Dataxis.

Digital dawn

“Everything began with digital platforms,” said Akotchaye Okio, in charge of international development for Africa at Sacem, a rights group representing artists. “Look at the success of the South African song ‘Jerusalem’ or ‘Calm Down’ by Rema,” a Nigerian singer whose hit

has notched up 50 million streams in France alone, he said. Magali Palmira Wora, a francophone Africa specialist at US distributor The Orchard, pointed however to a learning curve.

“Artists in French-speaking Africa have to learn to put themselves forward on platforms,” she said. “Spotify for example has got an Afro-pop playlist—you have to explain to artists why it’s important to be on it.” Good exposure on the platforms smashes down the barriers to bigger markets, and opens the way to a career that is far more international than would have been previously possible.

“Wherever you are, you can listen to my songs in one click. With digital technology, access to information is much more extensive. It allows local music industries to develop and as an artist it gives us exposure,” said Ivorian rapper Suspect 95. “We no longer need to go through networks which made it hard to get my CD to this or that country.”

Copyright issue

Five countries—South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Algeria and Morocco—account for 86 percent of African streaming revenues today, according to Dataxis. But the 400 million potential listeners in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, two-thirds of whom are under the age of 25, are a promising untapped market. Ensuring that up-and-coming independent artists can make money from the dominant platforms will be a key challenge.

“Obviously, if you’re signed up with a major (music company), it’s easier—you are using an established network” for getting copyright payments, said Suspect 95, who is signed to Universal. “For independent artists, it’s harder, for now.” “The big platforms which use massively use our songs aren’t yet paying the rights they should in Ivory Coast,” said Karim Ouattara, director general of the Ivorian Copyright Office. “But we are in negotiations and should see progress by the end of the year.” —AFP

Sports

NBA-best Celtics overpower Mavs as Hawks thump Kings

Williamson powers New Orleans Pelicans to victory

WASHINGTON: Jayson Tatum scored 37 points and grabbed 13 rebounds Wednesday to spark the NBA-leading Boston Celtics to a 125-112 victory over visiting Dallas despite 42 points from Luka Doncic. The Celtics, whose nine-game win streak was snapped Monday at Chicago, bounced back by dominating the Mavericks, improving to 7-1 in Boston and an NBA-best 14-4 overall.

"I think we were locked in from the beginning," Tatum said. "Losing to Chicago made us regroup and refocus. We just knew they were a really talented team. Luka is the head of the snake. It was good to come home and get back in the win column." It was Tatum's 10th career game with 35 points and 10 rebounds. He made 11-of-24 from the floor and 13-of-15 from the free throw line.

In a showdown of early season NBA Most Valuable Player candidates, league scoring leader Doncic countered with a game-high point total on 17-of-28 shooting and five-of-9 from the line. The Slovenian guard also had nine assists and eight rebounds. "Everybody knows how talented and special he is," Tatum said. "He can do so many things on the court. He's somebody I respect and like competing against."

The Celtics led 70-49 at halftime and by double figures from late in the first quarter until Doncic sparked a late rally to pull Dallas within 114-105 with 3:43 remaining. Al Horford answered with a 3-pointer to ignite a 10-2 Boston run and Dallas never came within 13 again. The Sacramento Kings saw their seven-game win streak snapped as Trae Young scored 35 points to lead the host Atlanta Hawks to a 115-106 victory. Domantas Sabonis had 15 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists to spark Sacramento (10-7). Clint Capela pulled down 14 rebounds for the Hawks (11-7).

Donovan Mitchell scored 34 points to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers over Portland 114-96 and stretch their win streak to four games. The Cavs improved to 8-1 at home and 12-6 overall as Darius Garland had 24 points and 12 assists while Jarrett Allen added 24 points and 13 rebounds. DeMar DeRozan scored 36 points and added eight assists to lead the Chicago Bulls over host Milwaukee 118-113, dropping the Bucks to 12-5 despite 36 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists from Giannis Antetokounmpo.

T-Wolves defeat Pacers

Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists while Rudy Gobert contributed 21 points and 16 rebounds in Minnesota's 115-101 victory at Indiana. Myles Turner scored a game-high 31 points for the Pacers, whose five-game win streak ended. Zion Williamson scored 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to power the New Orleans Pelicans to a 129-110 victory at San Antonio. He shot 14-of-18 from the floor and 4-of-8 from the free throw line.

The Brooklyn Nets, humbled by a loss Tuesday to a Philadelphia team lacking three top starters, bounced back by winning at Toronto 112-98. Kyrie Irving scored 29 points, Ben Simmons and Nic Claxton each added 14 points and Kevin Durant had 12 points, seven rebounds and five assists for Brooklyn. The Denver Nuggets rallied from 13 points down in the fourth quarter to win in overtime at Oklahoma City 131-126. Nikola Jokic had a game-high 39 points plus 10 rebounds and nine assists for Denver and sank two clinching free throws with 8.3 seconds remaining in overtime. Bruce Brown had a triple-double with 17 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for the Nuggets while



BOSTON: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics tries to get between Spencer Dinwiddie #26 of the Dallas Mavericks and Josh Green during the second quarter at TD Garden on November 23, 2022. —AFP

Aaron Gordon had 30 points for Denver. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 31 points.

Terry Rozier scored 22 points and PJ Washington added 19 to spark the Charlotte Hornets over visiting Philadelphia 107-101. At Miami, Kyle Lowry scored 28 points and Caleb Martin had 24 to power the host Heat over

Washington 113-105. Kyle Kuzma had a game-high 33 points for the Wizards. Croatian Bojan Bogdanovic scored 23 points to lead Detroit over host Utah 125-116 while Andrew Wiggins scored a season-high 31 to lead the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors over the visiting Los Angeles Clippers 124-107. —AFP

George, Vunipola in revamped England front row

LONDON: Eddie Jones has overhauled his front row for England's Autumn Nations Series finale against South Africa at Twickenham on Saturday. The experienced pair of prop Mako Vunipola and hooker Jamie George have replaced Ellis Genge and Luke Cowan-Dickie in the starting XV, with England anticipating a huge challenge up front from the ever physical world champion Springboks. Vunipola and George impressed off the bench as England staged a remarkable rally to come from 19 points behind late on in a 25-25 draw with New Zealand last weekend and are among four changes to head coach Jones' run-on side.

Tommy Freeman has been selected for his first appearance since the tour of Australia in July, replacing Jack Nowell on the wing, while Alex Coles takes over from Sam Simmonds at blindside flanker. Powerful centre Manu Tuilagi is set to make the 50th appearance of an injury-plagued England career that started in 2011, with midfield colleague Owen Farrell again captaining the team. Jack van Poortvliet, an international novice, has retained his place at scrum-half despite struggling against the All Blacks, with Ben Youngs-England's most-capped player-on the bench.

Will Stuart remains among the replacements after coming off the bench to become the first England prop to score two tries with his extraordinary late double in the closing nine minutes against the All Blacks.

South Africa overwhelmed Jones' men 32-12 in the 2019 World Cup final in Yokohama but the most recent meeting between the teams was a much closer affair, with England edging out the Springboks 27-26 at Twickenham last year.

'Test ourselves'

England started their November campaign with a 30-29 defeat by Argentina before thrashing Japan 52-13 and Jones, after naming his team on Thursday, said: "This is our last game of the autumn and our chance to continue building on the improvements we have made throughout the matches."

"We have made steady progress from game-to-game, culminating in a pulsating draw against New Zealand." The veteran Australian coach added: "Now we have the chance to test ourselves against the might of the world champions." South Africa named their team on Tuesday, with coach Jacques Nienaber making four changes and the starting XV that thrashed Italy 63-21 in Genoa last weekend. With the game taking place outside World Rugby's official window for Test matches, the Springboks will be without Cheslin Kolbe, Andre Esterhuizen, Cobus Reinach, Jasper Wiese and Vincent Koch, who have all returned to their respective English and French clubs. But wing Makazole Mapimpi, one of the try-scoring heroes of their 2019 World Cup final triumph, has been recalled along with centre Jesse Kriel and forwards Evan Roos and Eben Etzebeth.

England (15-1). Freddie Steward; Tommy Freeman, Manu Tuilagi, Owen Farrell (capt), Jonny May; Marcus Smith, Jack van Poortvliet; Billy Vunipola, Tom Curry, Alex Coles; Jonny Hill, Maro Itoje; Kyle Sinckler, Jamie George, Mako Vunipola. - Replacements: Luke Cowan-Dickie, Ellis Genge, Will Stuart, David Ribbans, Sam Simmonds, Ben Youngs, Henry Slade, Jack Nowell. Coach: Eddie Jones (AUS). —AFP



19th straight win for ICSK

KUWAIT: 24th CBSE Kuwait Cluster Athletic Meet, hosted by The Indian Community School - Kuwait, was conducted with great zeal, excitement and enthusiasm at Shaabab Sporting Club, Ahmadi on 13th, 14th & 15th November 2022. More than 1,300 athletes from 22 different schools across Kuwait participated in the event.

The opening ceremony commenced with the recitation of Holy Quran by Shifa Mariam followed by the prayer song. This was followed by the Flag Hoisting. The National Flag of Kuwait was hoisted by Asha Sharma, Principal of Indian Learners Own Academy and T Premkumar, Principal of Indian Educational School. The National Flag of India was hoisted by Dr Anis Ahmed,

Principal of Salmiya Indian Model School and Dr Achuthan Madhav, Principal of Jabriya Indian School.

The crowd stood in attention position when the national anthems of Kuwait and India were sung. The CBSE flag was hoisted by Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK. It was indeed honorable to behold the March Past which included all the participating schools and the school band of ICSK. Rinkle Kalpesh administered the oath taking ceremony. Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK delivered the welcome address.

T Premkumar, Principal of Indian Educational School and Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, inaugurated the meet by releasing the balloons. The Indian Community School, Kuwait were the overall champions in the CBSE Kuwait Cluster Athletic Meet for the record 19th straight year

with a lead score of 341 points.

The second position was secured by United Indian School with 307 points and the third position was won by Fahaaheel Al Wataniya Indian Private School with 247 points. ICSK bagged the Championships in Under 14 Boys Category, Under 17 Boys Category and Under 17 Girls Category. Master Anand Arjun of Class 8 for Under 14 boys, Master Mohamed Sheeraz of Class 10 for Under 17 boys and Miss Saniya Shajanof Class 10 for Under 17 girls won the prestigious individual championships.

ICSK secured 13 Gold Medals, 19 Silver Medals and 12 Bronze Medals. We emerged victorious with the sheer commitment of the students along with the sincere efforts of the physical education teachers and supporting staff. The board of trustees, principals, vice principals and staff of ICSK family congratulated the athletes and

appreciated the efforts of the physical education teachers and the supporting staff, who worked vehemently for bringing this laurel to the school.

The closing ceremony was conducted on 15th November 2022. Maria Christy, Principal of Carmel School, delivered the welcome address. The prizes for the winners were distributed by the principals of different schools. Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK said the felicitation speech and also gave away the trophies for the overall winners. Dr Prashanth Vasudev, Principal of Gulf Indian School, delivered the vote of thanks. After the national anthem, the flags were lowered and were handed over to Dr Murugaiyan, Observer and HOD of Physical Education at Indian Educational School. Every championship victory has been an inspiration and the quest for the next one never stops.



Third round of URC Women Futsal League

KUWAIT: The third round of URC Women Futsal League will start on Saturday at Kuwait Club Hall. The first meeting will be between pointless Fatayat Al-Oyoun and Tadhamon (third place with 3 points) at 4:00 pm, followed by the leading Fatat Club (6 points) against second place Kuwait (with 3 points on goal difference). In the first match, coach Nouran Labeeb will attempt to get her team's first win after losing to Fatat and Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani held a dinner in honor of Kuwait Women's Volleyball team members who are participating in the first West Asia Championship, hosted by Jordan. The dinner was also attended by President of Arab and Kuwait Volleyball Federations Dr Abdellhadi Al-Shabeeb. Meanwhile, Dr Al-Shabeeb appreciated the ambassador's gesture and his efforts.

Belgium squeeze to a 1-0 win over Canada

Goalkeeper Courtois saves Davies' penalty

DOHA: Michy Batshuayi's first-half goal proved enough for a below-par Belgium to squeeze to a 1-0 win over a Canada side playing their first World Cup match for 36 years on Wednesday. Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois saved Alphonso Davies' early penalty and Batshuayi opened the scoring against the run of play in the 44th minute. John Herdman's Canada, roared on by their vocal support, also had another strong penalty appeal turned down and dominated the second half to no avail. Belgium were without injured record goalscorer Romelu Lukaku and struggled throughout with the pace of Canada's forwards.

But the 2018 semi-finalists clung on to move top of what could prove a hotly-contested Group F after Croatia and Morocco's goalless draw earlier on Wednesday. "Was it technically our 'worst game', yes, when you measure the performance," admitted Belgium coach Roberto Martinez. "Was it the 'worst game', no, because we won. "We defended well and we needed our goalkeeper." Canada will head into their game against Croatia on Sunday still full of confidence after more than matching the team ranked second in the world, who next face Morocco.

"They showed tonight that they do belong here. It's been a long time since we've been back," said Herdman, the first coach to lead teams at women's and men's World Cups. "I'm sure they (the fans) walked away proud and feeling like we are a football nation. "I think this group stage is wide open now after the Croatia-Morocco result." The North Americans, matching Belgium in formation by playing three at the back, made a bright start and Jonathan David's low effort was deflected wide.

From the resulting corner, Tajon Buchanan's strike was blocked by Yannick Carrasco with his arm and a penalty was awarded after a VAR check in the 11th minute. But Davies produced a weak effort which was saved low to his right by Courtois, before David lashed the rebound over the crossbar. Belgium's ageing defense were struggling with the pace of the Canada attackers and Junior Hoilett got in behind before firing a shot wide. The underdogs kept coming, as Courtois palmed away right wing-back Alistair Johnston's fierce drive and David headed off target.

VAR controversy

Canada had a big penalty appeal turned down despite a VAR review when Axel Witsel was outpaced by Richie Laryea inside the area and then tripped his opponent. Belgium grabbed the lead out of nothing when a simple long ball over the top from Toby Alderweireld found the run of Batshuayi who hammered home left-footed. There was still time for Canada to create, and waste, another glorious opportunity before the break, as Laryea's low cross was fired over on the slide by Buchanan from six yards out.

Martínez made a double substitution at half-time to try and stem the tide, with Thomas Meunier replacing Carrasco and Everton youngster Amadou Onana coming into the midfield. Canada could have leveled just minutes after the restart, though, as David headed wide from Stephen Eustaquio's delicious cross after the Porto midfielder had nutmegged Kevin De Bruyne. Herdman's men continued to flood forward, but could not find the finishing touch required, with Buchanan miskicking horribly from the edge of the box.

The more men Canada committed, the more danger-



DOHA: Canada's forward #11 Tajon Buchanan fights for the ball with Belgium's midfielder #11 Yannick Carrasco during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Belgium and Canada on November 23, 2022. —AFP

ous Belgium looked on the break and Laryea made a wonderful last-ditch tackle to deny Batshuayi a second goal. Substitute Cyle Larin, the top scorer in CONCACAF qualifying for the tournament, headed too close to

Courtois in a frantic finale. De Bruyne could have put the game to bed but blazed into the crowd, while Larin sent another header spinning over Courtois' bar as Belgium fell over the line. —AFP

Fans pay homage to Maradona with shirts and chants

DOHA: Javier Maluf will quietly put on a shirt worn by Diego Maradona against England, but other fans at the World Cup have more noisy plans for Friday's second anniversary of the death of the flawed genius. Argentina's legion of supporters may also be praying to the sporting gods that the late football great can still inspire his country to victory over Mexico on Saturday to keep their hopes in Qatar alive.

Maluf is like many Argentina fans who have never fully recovered from Maradona's death from a heart attack at the age of 60. The shirt that Maradona wore during a game against England at Wembley in 1980 is the prized item in Maluf's collection of 1,000 game-worn football jerseys that he estimates is worth \$1 million. "I will put it on for a while as a sign of respect," he told AFP at his Doha home, where the shirts and other souvenirs are kept. "We all know his story but we all know his impact on the game."

A respected memorabilia sleuth, Maluf, 56, also has a blood-stained Argentina shirt worn by Mario Kempes in the 1978 World Cup game against France. That is folded near a River Plate shirt worn in 1931 by Carlos Peucelle, who played in the first World Cup a year earlier. Memorabilia is now big business, with Maradona items much sought after. In May, a shirt worn by the Argentina forward when he scored his infamous 1986 World Cup "Hand of God" goal against England sold at auction for \$9.3 million.

The ball that he fisted into the England net sold this

month for £2 million (\$2.4 million). The shirt is on display at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum during the World Cup but Maluf is among fans who believe that it belongs in Argentina. "It would be good if it goes to Argentina one day, so that all the public can see it and feel the importance," he said. More than 30,000 Argentina fans are in Qatar for this year's tournament and while many worship current number 10 Lionel Messi, Maradona's name still carries an almost mystical force.

Pilgrimage

Many have been on a pilgrimage to a giant Maradona mural near the Khalifa stadium in Doha. At Argentina's first game—a shock 2-1 defeat by Saudi Arabia—there were Maradona masks, banners and shirts on display in the stadium. And aficionados say there will be many public tributes to Maradona on Friday. One group plans a march to the Maradona FanFest at Doha's international airport.

The main attraction there is a hologram of the player plus a "tribute jet" bearing images of Maradona that will be auctioned, with a chunk of the proceeds going to charity. Diego and Churi Veliz went to Monday's game wearing headgear emblazoned with Maradona sitting on a camel. They took countless selfies with Arab football fans. Gonzalo, a 32-year-old Buenos Aires lawyer, recalled the shock of finding out about Maradona's death.

"I was on the beach, my girlfriend told me and I said we had to grab our things and go straight back to Buenos Aires." They were among thousands who waited outside Maradona's house. Claudio carried a flag showing Maradona embracing Messi, which will be seen again when Argentina take on Mexico. Laura Valero, who borrowed \$8,000 to make the trip to Qatar, said she was "recovering" from the defeat. "I will be wearing a Maradona shirt because you have to believe in something," she said of the looming anniversary and game. —AFP



LUSAIL: Argentina's supporters pose for pictures holding a flag depicting Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi (left) and football legend Diego Maradona outside the stadium in Lusail. —AFP

Saudi's Al-Shahrani undergoes surgery

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia defender Yasser Al-Shahrani underwent successful surgery on his pancreas on Wednesday after a collision during his team's shock World Cup win over Argentina, the national team said. Medical examinations conducted in Doha revealed Al-Shahrani to be in a "stable condition" after "suffering a strong clash in the head, chest and abdomen", said a statement posted on the team's Twitter account. He was then "transferred by medical evacuation to the National Guard Hospital in Riyadh" for the operation. A follow-up statement on Wednesday night said the operation had been completed "with success".

Al-Shahrani collided with Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais in stoppage time at the end of the match against Argentina, which ended in an upset 2-1 victory for the Green Falcons. Al-Owais's left knee connected squarely with Al-

Shahrani's face. "I would like to ensure you that I am OK, pray for me and congratulations on winning," Al-Shahrani said in a video clip from his hospital bed posted on social media. Saudi Arabia were propelled to victory by a stunning goal from Salem Al-Dawsari, bringing Argentina's 36-match unbeaten run to a shuddering halt. The Saudis' next match is on Saturday against Poland. —AFP

Today's matches

FIFA World Cup 2022	
Wales v Iran	13:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
Qatar v Senegal	16:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
Netherlands v Ecuador	19:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
England v United States	22:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	

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
Shuwalkh	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
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Portugal squeeze past Ghana 3-2 in their World Cup opener

Ronaldo breaks records, first man to score in 5 World Cups



DOHA: Portugal's forward #15 Rafael Leao (left) scores his team's third goal past Ghana's goalkeeper #01 Lawrence Ati Zigi (right) during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between Portugal and Ghana on November 24, 2022. — AFP photos

DOHA: Cristiano Ronaldo became the first man to score at five World Cups on Thursday when he scored the opening goal from the penalty spot in Portugal's 3-2 win over Ghana. The 37-year-old set the record when he smashed home his spot-kick in the 65th minute at the 974 Stadium in Doha to send Fernando Santos' team to a victory which moved them top of Group H, two points ahead of Uruguay and South Korea.

Joao Felix and rising star Rafael Leao made sure of the win after Ayew's leveller had briefly threatened to ruin Ronaldo's party. Osman Bukari netted in the final minute for Ghana but the tournament's lowest-ranked side couldn't pull off a shock and sit bottom of the group. Ronaldo overtakes Pele and Germans Uwe Seeler and Miroslav Klose, who all scored in four World Cups, after being brought down by Mohammed Salisu and taking the penalty himself.

Manchester United announced this week that Ronaldo will leave with immediate effect after he criticized the club and manager Erik ten Hag in a TV interview, but he has showed no signs of strain from the bitter end to his time at Old Trafford. All the attention pre-match was on Ronaldo and whether he could break the record and he had the perfect chance to do so in the



Cristiano Ronaldo

10th minute.

Mohammed Kudus gave the ball away sloppily in midfield and Otavio slipped Ronaldo through, only for the once clinical finisher to miscontrol the pass and clatter into Ghana goalkeeper Lawrence Ati-Zigi as he tried to poke home. And shortly afterwards Ronaldo headed Raphael Guerreiro's deep cross wide from close range, a chance that in his prime he would have been almost guaranteed to score. He did have the ball in the net just after the half-hour mark when it dropped to him in the

area, but he was harshly judged by referee Ismail Elfath to have pushed Alexander Djiku before turning and stroking home a classy finish.

Ronaldo was in fact Portugal's only real goal threat against what on paper is Group H's weakest team, who were backed by an enthusiastic set of supporters who put on more of a show in the stands than their workaday players initially did on the pitch. Ajax midfielder Kudus had the crowd briefly off their feet 10 minutes after the break when he burst forward against an exposed Portugal defence and let off a powerful shot which in the end sailed comfortably wide of Diogo Costa's left-hand post.

Ronaldo then crashed in his record-breaking penalty but as the chorus of cheers and chants of his name started to die down a previously dull game sparked into life, Ayew stunning the crowd by tapping in Kudus' pull-back in the 73rd minute. However Felix and Leao made sure Portugal would take the points with two lovely finishes in as many minutes, both strikes set up by Ronaldo's former United teammate Bruno Fernandes. Bukari then imitated Ronaldo with his goal celebration after heading home completely unmarked, but Portugal held out for a big win on a historic day. — AFP



Cameroon's defender #25 Nouhou Tolo (right) heads the ball next to Switzerland's forward #19 Noah Okafor during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match on November 24, 2022.



Cameroon's midfielder #08 Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa fights for the ball with Switzerland's midfielder #10 Granit Xhaka during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match on November 24, 2022.



Cameroon fans take their selfie ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match between Switzerland and Cameroon at the Al-Janoub Stadium on November 24, 2022.



Uruguay's forward #09 Luis Suarez (center) fights for the ball with South Korea's midfielder #10 Lee Jae-sung (left) and South Korea's defender #04 Kim Min-jae (right) during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match on November 24, 2022.



Uruguay supporters arrive to attend the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between Uruguay and South Korea at the Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan on November 24, 2022.



People wave Qatari and South Korea flags during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between Uruguay and South Korea on November 24, 2022.

Switzerland beat Cameroon

DOHA: Breel Embolo scored against the country of his birth as Switzerland defeated Cameroon 1-0 to make a winning start to their World Cup campaign on Thursday. Embolo struck three minutes into the second half at Al Janoub Stadium as Switzerland secured a vital three points in a group that includes tournament favourites Brazil and Serbia. Cameroon have now lost their last eight World Cup matches going back to 2002. Roger Milla was presented with an award before kick-off as the oldest goalscorer in World Cup history, a reminder of past glories for Cameroon who have won just one game since reaching the quarter-finals 32 years ago.

Cameroon coach Rigobert Song, who played at four World Cups including with a 42-year-old Milla in 1994, opted for the in-form Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting to lead the attack in place of usual captain Vincent Aboubakar. African teams had made an encouraging start in Qatar after all five failed to get past the group stage in 2018, but Cameroon will regret not making more of a first half they controlled.

Bryan Mbeumo fired at Yann Sommer after a superb ball through

from Martin Hongla before Karl Toko Ekambi lashed over the rebound. Sommer then got down low to save from Choupo-Moting after he pinched the ball away from Manuel Akanji, although a questionable foul was given against the Bayern Munich striker. Silvan Widmer made a vital challenge to stop Toko Ekambi turning in a cross from Collins Fai and Sommer pushed away a weak effort by Hongla.

Akanji glanced wide at a corner as Cameroon switched off on the stroke of half-time but there was no such escape when they were again caught napping at the start the second half. Granit Xhaka and Remo Freuler worked the ball out wide on the right to Xherdan Shaqiri whose low cross into the area was swept home by an unmarked Embolo, who chose not to celebrate against his birth country. Choupo-Moting neatly weaved his way past a couple of defenders in the box but couldn't beat Sommer from a tight angle.

Andre Onana kept Cameroon in the game with a brilliant stop to deny Ruben Vargas who found himself completely free in an almost carbon copy of Embolo's goal. Only a desperate block prevented Haris Seferovic from adding a late second. Song said the rankings meant nothing coming into the tournament, but Cameroon's eighth World Cup appearance risks being brief with games to come against Serbia and Brazil. — AFP

Uruguay and South Korea in stalemate

DOHA: The returning Son Heung-min could not inspire South Korea as the Tigers of Asia started their World Cup Group H campaign with a 0-0 draw against Uruguay in Qatar on Thursday. Uruguay captain Diego Godin and Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde came closest to breaking the deadlock when hitting the woodwork in each half, while Hwang Ui-jo wasted Korea's best chance, skying a shot from 10 yards out with only the goalkeeper to beat.

It was a game of few chances as neither Son on one side nor Uruguay's fearsome strikers Luis Suarez, Darwin Nunez and Edinson Cavani could find a clear opening. With matches against Ghana and group favorites Portugal, both sides seemed to be more intent on not losing than pushing for the win at the Education City stadium in Doha. Both coaches were satisfied with the point. "This was a very good match from our side, we were better in the first half, we had many moments where we controlled the match," said Korea's Portuguese coach Paulo Bento.

"After half-time we were not at our best, we suffered a bit because they are high quality players but we also did well in that situation and conced-

ed very little," Uruguay's Diego Alonso added: "It was a good game, a tight game with two competitive nations. "The first half, especially the first 20 minutes we struggled, we couldn't get the ball off them. "But it was good that we were able to adjust afterwards and we dominated the second half."

The early part of the match settled into a predictable pattern as Korea made a fast start and Uruguay sat deep, soaking up the pressure without giving anything away. In particular, the South Americans kept Korean danger man Son quiet. Uruguay created the first clear chances as two raking crossfield balls from centre-back Jose Maria Gimenez picked out runners coming in at an angle.

Valverde clipped the first over the bar, while Nunez failed to make proper contact on the second from just eight yards out with the goal at his mercy. Just past the hour mark, Korea should have been in front after a slick passing move opened up the Uruguay defence but unmarked 10 yards out, Hwang fired the ball high over the bar. Godin then went closest to scoring when he hit the inside of the post with a header from Valverde's outswinging corner.

Neither side could get their game changers into the match, with Son clearly not fully fit, playing his first match since surgery on a broken bone around his eye suffered at the beginning of the month against Marseille in the Champions League. — AFP