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2 13 Kuwait National Guard officers graduate in Qatar



5 Hailed as hero, Ukraine's leader seeks for weapons



12 'Kingdom of Saba', ancient civilization on brink of ruin



16 Malinovskyi fires Marseille to historic first home win



KUWAIT PLEDGES \$30 MILLION AS QUAKE DEATH TOLL NEARS 20,000

KUWAITI TEAM BEGINS SEARCH, RESCUE OPERATIONS IN TURKEY



KUWAIT: At the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the direction of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti Cabinet pledged \$30 million in aid of the earthquake-struck people in Turkey and Syria. The funding includes \$15 million for the disaster relief in Syria and an equal sum for Turkey, the Cabinet said in a press release on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Fire Force Colonel Ayman Al-Mufareh said that his team has started search and rescue operations in the earthquake-affected areas in Turkey. Al-Mufareh, who is also head of Kuwait Fire Force delegation there, said in a statement to KUNA that the Kuwaiti team is currently in Islaheya area, one of the areas severely affected by earthquake that struck Turkey recently.

He explained that the Kuwaiti search and rescue team consists of 45 members, including 40 rescuers, three medics, and two people from the Ministry of Information (a reporter and a photographer) to document and publish information on an up-to-date basis. "Search and rescue teams are currently being dispatched to collapsed buildings," he added.

He said that the Kuwaiti search and rescue team is currently conducting search operations in one of the buildings consisting of eight floors,



Kuwait's Fire Force Colonel Ayman Al-Mufareh indicating that according to the information, the building contains 60 people under the rubble. "There is no information yet that there are survivors in the building," Colonel Al-Mufareh added, stressing that they are making great efforts to penetrate the collapsed roofs and go into the delicate parts inside the building.

Continued on Page 6

N KOREA UNVEILS 'RECORD' NUMBER OF ICBMS

SEOUL: North Korea's Kim Jong Un oversaw a major military parade showcasing a record number of nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missiles, state media reported Thursday, including what analysts said was possibly a new solid-fuelled ICBM. The parade on Wednesday to mark the 75th founding anniversary of North Korea's armed forces featured fireworks, military bands and uniformed soldiers marching in unison to spell out "2.8" - the date of the celebration - and "75", the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

Kim attended the parade with his wife, Ri Sol Ju, and daughter Ju Ae, video on state media showed. He wore the black coat and fedora combination favored by his grandfather, North Korea's founding leader Kim Il Sung. Images showed Kim flanked by his top generals in Pyongyang's central Kim Il Sung Square, saluting as troops and missile units paraded past while patriotic music played. The weapons on show included at least 10 of the

Continued on Page 6



PYONGYANG: Photo shows an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) during a military parade. — AFP

FOUNDATION LAID FOR AASU

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Marking a significant milestone in Kuwait's higher education sector, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani on Thursday announced the laying of the foundation stone for Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU).

Addressing a press conference, Dr Al-Adwani stated that the opening of the new

public university of Abdullah Al-Salem (AASU) is a historic event. Officially announcing the laying of the foundation stone of AASU, he also said that the first batch of students will be admitted in the beginning of the academic year 2023-2024 next September. He pointed out that the opening of Abdullah Al-Salem University is a significant achievement as it is one of the pillars of the government's work program to become a strategic partner in the higher education sector in Kuwait along with other educational institutions in order to prepare qualified and skilled citizens to contribute to the labor market. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani on Thursday announced the laying of the foundation stone for Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU).

NUWAIR AND MALVA BLOSSOM IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: With spring falling early this year in Kuwait, Nuwair and Malva flowers are now beginning to blossom out everywhere in the country, adorning streets, roads and even the desert in a naturally-shaped eye-catching image that brings serenity, joy and delight. Speaking to KUNA on Nuwair-growing in Kuwait, Dr Sara Al-Ateeqi, a voluntary environment protection team member, said the fact that Nuwair and Malva flowers are now widespread in all Kuwaiti areas

actually gives a feeling of calmness and pleasure thanks to their bright yellow and green colors.

Nuwair, in fact, is a group of yellow, orange and white spring plants and called Nuwair since it looks like the sun in view of its brilliance and splendor, she said, adding that its name differs from one species to another and even according to the time it grows up. Blossoming out in desert and along roads during winter and spring, Nuwair is locally renowned as "Al-Hanwa", "Al-Houthan", "Al-Zamlouk", "Al-Marar", "Al-Adheed" and "Al-Hambzan", Al-Ateeqi elaborated. With regards to Malva, she said it does not belong to the species of Nuwair. — KUNA (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Nuwair flowers begin to blossom across Kuwait. — KUNA

MAN UNITED 'IN TALKS' WITH QATARI INVESTORS

LONDON: Manchester United have reportedly opened talks with Qatari investors as speculation intensifies over the future ownership of the Premier League giants ahead of a deadline for bids. The American Glazer family, who completed their takeover of the 20-times English champions in 2005, announced in November that they were open

to a sale or investment. British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's Ineos company officially joined the race to buy the club last month-the only bidder to publicly declare an interest so far.

Potential buyers are understood to have until February 17 to table offers. The Daily Mail said a group of private investors from Qatar want to buy United and talks have taken place with the club's hierarchy, confident that theirs would be the strongest bid. But the Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) bought French champions Paris Saint-Germain in 2011 - meaning a full buyout of United would not be permitted under current UEFA

Continued on Page 6



MANCHESTER: A Manchester United flag is pictured on the corner of the pitch prior to the start of the English Premier League football match on February 8, 2023. — AFP



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Local

KUWAIT DISPATCHES MORE RELIEF AID TO QUAKE-ROCKED TURKEY

KUWAITI ARMY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND KRCS JOIN HANDS TO AID THE QUAKE-HIT



KUWAIT: The second air bridge mission by the Kuwait Air Force in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) at its headquarters in Abdullah Al-Mubarak air base on Thursday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait has sent two more military planes carrying 80 tons of relief, medical and food supplies to Turkey in the aftermath of a magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck the country on Monday. This was the second air bridge mission by the Kuwait Air Force which was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) at its headquarters in Abdullah Al-Mubarak air base on Thursday.

The fresh Kuwaiti aid comes at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who had instructed creating an air bridge to dispatch humanitarian and relief

aid to Turkey's quake-affected people, said the Ministry of Defense in a statement.

Kuwait on Monday sent two military planes carrying rescuers and eight tons of relief supplies to quake-hit areas in Turkey on the same day the powerful earthquake struck southern Turkey and northern Syria, leaving thousands of people dead or injured.

Kuwait's relief aid is being sent to Turkey as part of cooperation and coordination among the Kuwaiti military, ministries of defense, foreign affairs and health, Kuwait Red Crescent Society and charities, the ministry said.

The commander of the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base, Brigadier General Pilot Abdulaziz Al-Loughani, and a number of senior air force

commanders flagged off relief flights along with volunteers from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Abdulaziz Al-Loughani said: "This morning, two Kuwaiti Air Force planes departed, heading to the friendly Republic of Turkey. These flights are considered the second of the air bridge missions dedicated to transporting emergency needs and relief materials, as an embodiment of the spirit of brotherhood and joint cooperation between the two friendly countries."

"These flights come in cooperation and coordination between the Kuwaiti Army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. It is worth noting that the two planes sent on Thursday were loaded with approxi-

mately 80 tons of relief material as well as food and medical supplies," Brigadier General Al-Loughani said.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development has approved applications from 30 charities and agencies to contribute to a nationwide campaign to raise donations for quake-affected people in Turkey. The Social Affairs Ministry has asked the Ministry of Defense to help secure a plane to transport the emergency aid to Turkey, the Ministry spokesperson Ahmad Al-Enezi said in a press statement Tuesday. Al-Enezi added that the Minister Mai Al-Baghlil ordered full cooperation and integration with relevant government agencies to accelerate the aid dispatching.

13 NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS GRADUATE IN QATAR

DOHA: Major General Hamad Salem Ahmad attended the graduation ceremony of the 18th batch of cadets of Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College, at the College's headquarters in Qatar on Thursday morning. The graduates included 13 Kuwait National Guard officers.

Ahmad, who is also the protection and reinforcement commander at the National Guard, relayed congratulatory messages to the graduates from HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, commander of the National Guard, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, deputy National Guard commander, and Lieutenant General Hashim Abdul Razzaq Al Rifai, the National Guard's undersecretary. He urged the fresh graduates to maintain high academic and technical standards and continue expanding their knowledge to achieve their ambitions.



News in brief

KUWAIT FM REASSESSES KFAED STRATEGY

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said on Thursday that the latest international developments require Kuwait to reassess the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) mechanism to assure interests abroad. This came in a statement on the sidelines of the annual ceremony of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, as he said that the political leadership in Kuwait is keen on maintaining the country's humanitarian heritage, which was built over 60 years. He noted that the strategy must attain two approaches, preserving the humanitarian heritage, and developing new strategies that guarantee Kuwait's interests internationally. —KUNA



FM RECEIVED CAMBODIA ENVOY'S CREDENTIALS

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the credentials of the Cambodian Ambassador to Kuwait Saman Manan during their meeting at the Minister's office on Thursday. Sheikh Salem wished the newly-appointed ambassador success in his mission, hoping to see further elevation of the Kuwait-Cambodia relations. —KUNA

KUWAITI, US OFFICIALS MEET ON DEFENSE COOPERATION

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah received at his office on Thursday Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost, commander of US Joint Operation Command (USTRANSCOM), now leading a delegation on an official visit to Kuwait. They discussed a range of topics relating to the defense cooperation, according to a statement from the General Staff of Kuwait Army.

DIASPORAS MOURN LOSSES FOLLOWING DEVASTATING QUAKE

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Ameer Al-Samman is used to waking up to messages from his siblings and cousins on their family's WhatsApp group. But the conversation on Monday morning was unlike any he's ever seen - the comforting "good morning" the family exchanged was replaced with "Thank Allah you're safe." A few seconds of scrolling later, Samman was shocked to hear that a 7.8-magnitude earthquake had struck Syria and Turkey, bringing down whole apartment buildings and leaving thousands injured or homeless. As of Thursday, nearly 20,000 people have died from the catastrophic earthquake. Many still remain missing. "I was so anxious to the point that I couldn't work. I'd check on them every minute and ask them to keep me updated whatever happens," he said. "My heart was there with them."

'They saw death'

At first, Samman didn't expect the extent of the damage to be so huge, especially that smaller earthquakes have struck the region over the years. But that quickly changed as the day went by and news trickled in. Buildings in Hama, where his family lived, were destroyed. Syria's Directorate-General for Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) reported on Facebook the destruction of some of the city's historical buildings and mosques, such as the partial collapse of the minaret of the Imam Ismail Mosque. "My immediate family is safe, thanks to Allah. But they're very nervous and exhausted. They all say that they saw death with their own eyes." Samman's family evacuated their apartment and waited outside in the freezing cold, afraid the building might collapse. Rumors of aftershocks circulating on social media, he said, kept people on edge. "The rumors were so detailed, specifying the magnitude and time of the expected tremors. The situation was extremely nerve-wrecking and people unfortunately couldn't help but believe everything they heard."

Search ongoing

Hulya and her husband, a Turkish couple living in Kuwait, were on vacation in Turkey when the earthquake first hit on Monday. The couple wasn't directly affected because they stayed far from the center of the earthquake, some of their family and friends, however, weren't as fortunate. "They were so afraid ... Some of them just took a few clothes and escaped from Kahramanmaraş ... and went to other cities." Others have passed away or are still missing. Turkey has deployed more than 63,000 search-and-rescue personnel to the quake area, including about 3,000 personnel who arrived from all over the world over the past couple of days, according to Turkish state-media TRT. But there are two main obstacles the teams are facing: the cold and snowy weather and the devastat-



Turkish and Syrian communities in Kuwait are checking on loved ones after a devastating earthquake struck the two countries on Monday. — AFP

ing aftermath, which led Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to declare a three-month state of emergency in the 10 quake-hit provinces. Aid from about 20 countries, added Hulya, couldn't reach some areas earlier this week "because of the destruction of the roads by earthquake." Hatay, one of the hardest-hit cities, was rendered completely inaccessible, with the airport runway split into two. The Istanbul Airport operator IGA has dispatched teams to repair the runway and building in order restore traffic, reported the Daily Sabah Wednesday.

'Disaster after disaster'

Rasha Mohamed was getting her daughter ready for school when she first heard the news. She immediately thought of her sister, who left Syria to live in Gaziantep with her husband and kids. One of southern Turkey's major cities, Gaziantep has a population of almost two million people and between one-quarter and one-third of them are Syrian. "I really want to cry,

My heart is crying," said Mohamed. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said the quake was an "absolute hammer blow" for displaced Syrians. Philippe Leclerc, UNHCR's representative in Turkey, told AFP that most Syrians in Turkey are living among local populations "in the same buildings which have collapsed. They are participating in the rescue as volunteers." Mohamed said her sister's apartment was severely damaged. She joined thousands of others taking refuge in shelters set up by local authorities inside mosques. Her husband, who was on a business trip in Istanbul, hasn't been able to reunite with his family, yet. "The roads are dangerous and many are closed. It's safer to stay in Istanbul and (my sister) doesn't want to put his life at risk." Mohamed is full of hope that the crisis "will encourage the world to speak up and help Syria so that the people, who have no fault in this, would be able to live." "It's been disaster after disaster. Those who passed away were barely surviving ... from the war to the economic crisis that has only harmed the people."

DISASTER COULD LEAD TO PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA, ANXIETY

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Clinical Psychologist Hassan Al-Mousawi said the earthquake could have adverse mental health effects not only on those who lived through the earthquake but also on anyone following the crisis. People with family in hard-hit areas are among the worst-affected, he expects, because they are only hearing about the earthquake second-hand.

"The experience of living through the earth-

quake will be difficult to digest and could lead to post-traumatic stress and a relentless feeling of helplessness. There's also the fear of an aftershock," he said. Such a catastrophic natural disaster could also lead to anxiety and a persistent fear of getting hit by an earthquake any second. "It's also natural for anyone hearing of the news, regardless of whether they have ties to the devastated areas or not, to feel compassion for the victims, and feel a strong urge to help in any way they can," he said.

For those outside the affected areas, such as the residents of Kuwait, one way to alleviate the sense of helplessness is to contribute to the aid efforts, if possible. Praying for the victims and connecting with Syrian and Turkish diasporas and offering them support could also help.

Local

KUWAIT MARKS A MILESTONE: FOUNDATION LAID FOR ABDULLAH AL-SALEM UNIVERSITY

AASU TO HELP KUWAIT BECOME A DIVERSIFIED AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY



KUWAIT: Dr Hamad Al-Adwani announcing the laying of foundation stone for Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU). — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Prof Moudi A Al-Humoud speaks on the occasion.



Dignitaries during the event.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Marking a significant milestone in Kuwait's higher education sector, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani on Thursday announced the laying of the foundation stone for Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU).

Addressing a press conference, Dr Al-Adwani stated that the opening of the new public university of Abdullah Al-Salem (AASU) is a historic event. Officially announcing the laying of the foundation stone of AASU, he also said that the first batch of students will be admitted in the beginning of the academic year 2023-2024 next September.

He pointed out that the opening of Abdullah Al-Salem University is a significant achievement as it is one of the pillars of the government's work program to become a strategic partner in the higher

education sector in Kuwait along with other educational institutions in order to prepare qualified and skilled citizens to contribute to the labor market.

Adwani affirmed political leaders' keenness in opening new educational horizons to contribute effectively to the implementation of the country's development plan in all its aspects, explaining that AASU to be a fourth generation university as its academic programs integrate with scientific research centers in the field of creativity as well as digitization and artificial intelligence fields, especially in the field of modern medicine and in the field of hydrocarbon and renewable energy research.

Prof Moudi A Al-Humoud, chairperson of the Founding Administrative Board of Abdullah Al-Salem University, said, "AASU comes as a complementary link to the educational system in Kuwait," noting that the board is studying the needs of the



labor market and the requirements of various economic sectors in country to provide qualified manpower in accordance with Kuwait's Vision 2035.

The university aims to transfer the Kuwait economy from a single-resource to a diversified and knowledge-based economy that keeps pace with the renewed and rapidly developing world of digitization, she said. "The establishment of a university

with these specifications is not an easy task and cannot be completed in a short span of time as the implementation will take several levels", she added.

"There will be nine research centers. The centers will be for cybersecurity, digital transformation, data science, artificial intelligence research, resources, energy and sustainability, advanced science and engineering, marine and coastal research, finance, and risk management, research in entrepreneurship and innovation, health and wellbeing and inventive learning center," she added.

Four faculties were named and three of them will be in the first stage. They are: the faculty of management and entrepreneurship, computing systems, and engineering and energy. The last faculty it will be for Medicine and Health Sciences. She revealed that the university to be located in Shuwaikh initially and then it will branch into other areas of Kuwait later.

'SPECULATIVE HORIZONS' BUILDS LINKS BETWEEN KUWAIT AND AUSTRALIA

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Australian street photographers came together to celebrate their works at an exhibition titled 'the Speculative Horizons' organized by the Australian Embassy in collaboration with Polestar and Contemporary Art Platform (CAP). The exhibition was inaugurated on Wednesday displaying works of cross-cultural street photography. The exhibition will last for two weeks until Feb 22. With great enthusiasm and joy, Kuwaiti and Australian artists joined hands to display their works and share their talents and experiences in photography.

At the opening of the exhibition, Gallery Coordinator Lillian Mascarenhas said that this exhibition is the outcome of a collaboration between Australian and Kuwait-based street photographers where the artists share their ideas and techniques in photography. They will also conduct symposium in the presence of the Australian photographer Dr Kristian Haggblom, Dr Saad Al-Sharrah and many others on Saturday (Feb 11) where lectures, talks and workshops. There will also be a photo walk in Friday Market which will be held in order to learn more about photography.

Highlighting the purpose of the 'Speculative Horizons' exhibition, higher education course director, Dr Kristian Haggblom told Kuwait Times: "The exhibition is an exchange program initiative and we hope that this will help us in the future in moving forward to creating a dialogue between Kuwait and Australia through photography."

In approval and encouragement of this event, the Australian Ambassador Melissa Kelly expressed her pride and satisfaction about the collaboration between Australian and Kuwaiti street photographers. She told Kuwait Times: "It is wonderful to see creatives from both Australia and Kuwait come together in a beautifully coherent exhibition that explores people and place, and multiculturalism and identity." She also said that the 'Speculative Horizons' exhibition is a statement of the talented creatives across both countries and underscores the importance of connection and exchange between the thriving arts communities across continents.



KUWAIT: (From left) Eman Al-Shawaf and Australian Ambassador Mellisa Kelly.



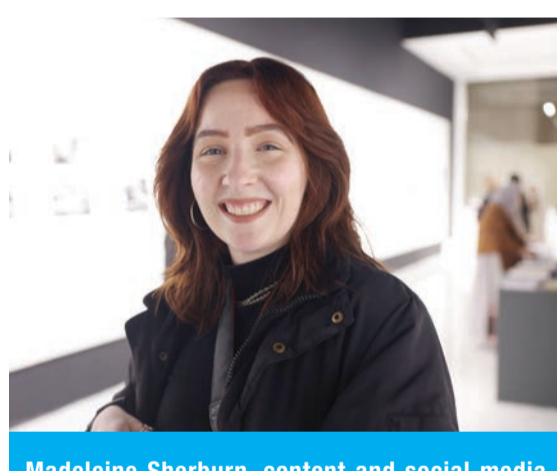
Kuwaiti artist Mariam Al-Ghanim at 'Speculative Horizons' exhibition. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Australian Ambassador Mellisa Kelly.



Kuwaiti artist Deema Al-Ghunaim.



Madeleine Sherburn, content and social media manager of 'Speculative Horizons' project.



Australian Embassy, Polestar and Contemporary Art Platform are the sponsors of 'the Speculative Horizons' exhibition.

Both Australian and Kuwait are largely urbanized societies with multicultural communities. She praised and congratulated both of Dr Saad Al-Sharrah and Dr Kristian Haggblom for making the exhibition a success. She also congratulated all the photographers who are part of 'Speculative Horizons'. To further show her support to the exhibition, she said that the Australian Embassy is very proud to be able to play a role in supporting this initiative and that it is hoping for many more such programs between Kuwait and Australia.

The exhibition created a link between Australians

and Kuwaitis as it introduced two cultures to each other through photography. Australian Artist Madeleine Sherburn, who is also the content and social media manager for this project told Kuwait Times, "With this exhibition, I have got to know more of the community here in Kuwait and getting to really see what is involved in their project and what photography can be like across the two countries." Holding this exhibition gave Sherburn and other Australians an opportunity to learn more about Kuwaiti culture and vice versa.

Additionally, Kuwaiti Artist Eman Al-Shawaf

shared her thoughts about the importance of the exhibition. She told Kuwait Times, "This exhibition is important because there haven't been enough local exhibitions that speak about photography. Photography has always been in the culture but to look at it as an art is something new and much-needed. So, creatives are craving for exhibitions that happen around this topic." Al-Shawaf also added that 'Speculative Horizons' offered a wonderful opportunity for her and other artists to exhibit. "It was an open call that offers everybody a chance to participate."

AS SPRING ARRIVES, 'NUWAIR', 'MALVA' BLOOM EVERYWHERE

KUWAIT: With spring falling early this year in Kuwait, Nuwair and Malva flowers are now beginning to blossom out everywhere in the country, adorning streets, roads and even the desert in a naturally-shaped eye-catching image that brings serenity, joy and delight.

Speaking to KUNA on Nuwair-growing in Kuwait, Dr Sara Al-Ateeqi, a voluntary environment protection team member, said the fact that Nuwair and Malva flowers are now widespread in all Kuwaiti areas actually gives a feeling of calmness and pleasure thanks to their bright yellow and green colors. Nuwair, in fact, is a group of yellow, orange and white spring plants and called Nuwair since it looks like the sun in view of its brilliance and splendor, she said, adding that its name differs from one species to another and even according to the time it grows up. Blossoming out in desert and along roads during winter and spring, Nuwair is locally renowned as "Al-Hanwa", "Al-Houthan", "Al-Zamlouk", "Al-Marar", "Al-Adheed" and "Al-Hambzan", Al-Ateeqi elaborated. With regards to Malva, she said it does not belong to the species of

Nuwair. Rather, it is a totally different plant that thrives during the months of January and February.

For his part, Ouda Al-Bathali, a researcher, said that Hamlouq is widespread during this period of the year, with its flowers blooming at sunrise but closing at sunset. Al-Zamlouq is a pure Kuwaiti word that literally means "early" since this species in particular is the first plant to bloom immediately following rainfall, he added. Al-Houthan is a species of flowers that contains five round petals that are fragmented into three parts, Al-Bathali pointed out. — KUNA



Seasonal plants bring serenity, joy and delight.



Nuwair flowers beginning to blossom across Kuwait. —KUNA photos



Purple Nuwair flowers

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FM MEETS USTRANSCOM COMMANDER

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Thursday Gen Jacqueline Van Ovost, commander of US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), who is leading a delegation on an official visit to Kuwait. The meeting reviewed the deep-rooted ties between Kuwait and the United States and the prospects of cooperation in all areas, notably the defense field. — KUNA



NANCY AJRAM DONATES CONCERT PROCEEDS TO SYRIA

KUWAIT: Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram said she would donate proceeds from her highly-anticipated concert in Kuwait to people affected by the earthquake in Syria. The sold-out concert, where she will perform alongside Majed Al-Mohandes, will be held Friday as part of the "Kuwait's February" festival. Ajram retweeted a tweet from "ET Arabic" that claimed she would be making the donation. Ajram will also donate a large portion of the profits from her upcoming American-Canadian tour. Producer Yousef Harb reportedly said. A public auction will be held at every concert in the tour, of which all proceeds will go to humanitarian aid.

SRI LANKAN EMBASSY CELEBRATES 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE HAILS OVER 5 DECADES OF KUWAIT-SRI LANKA RELATIONS



KUWAIT: Amani Sulaiman Bugamaz and Ambassador-designate Kaandeeban Balasubramaniam cut the ceremonial cake to officially inaugurate the anniversary celebration.



Amani Sulaiman Bugamaz and Ambassador-designate Kaandeeban Balasubramaniam light the traditional lamp.

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Sri Lankan Embassy in Kuwait celebrated the 75th anniversary of the country's independence on Wednesday with great enthusiasm and fervor at an impressive event at the Regency Hotel in Kuwait. Amani Sulaiman Bugamaz, Minister of Public Works and Electricity and Water, attended the event as the chief guest. The minister joined Sri Lankan Ambassador-designate Kaandeeban Balasubramaniam to cut the ceremonial cake and officially kicked off the celebration. The event also witnessed a dazzling cultural show, demonstrating the rich heritage and legacy of Sri Lanka. The show was presented by renowned Rasika and Nisha Cultural troupe, Colombo, reflecting the country's multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual society. Several ambassadors, Kuwaiti dignitaries, Sri Lankan nationals and special invitees were among those who attended the celebration.

In his welcome address, Ambassador Balasubramaniam, expressed his government's sincere appreciation to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister for their continued support to strengthen Kuwait-Sri Lanka bilateral relations, which were first established more than 50 years ago in 1971. "Kuwait is home for over 100,000 Sri Lankan expatriates and the presence and contribution of our people over the past years has become a driving force of our multifaceted ties with the State of Kuwait," he said. He added that the country has been successful in diversifying deployment of migrant workers from the traditional sectors to many fields of professional and skilled employments in Kuwait.

Talking about the Joint Ministerial Committee, he said it is one of the key bilateral engagements where Kuwaiti and Sri Lankan authorities meet and deliberate on matters of mutual interest. "Bilateral



The celebration included a dazzling cultural show, demonstrating the rich heritage and legacy of Sri Lanka.

trade and tourism have registered respectable figures in the recent years, showing clear signs of recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Air connectivity has improved with both Sri Lankan Airlines and Jazeera Airways operating increased number of frequencies on a daily basis. Kuwait Fund has been one of the important sources that supports a number of important infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka, contributing to the socio-economic development of our society," he said.

Earlier, the ambassador also congratulated fellow Sri Lankans in Kuwait and wished them a happy cel-

ebratory season. "I also recognize that this season is very special for our friends in Kuwait as the month of February marks the national celebrations in the country. I take this opportunity to extend warm congratulations to all our friends in Kuwait," he said.

"Today's event marks the 75th anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka emerged as a sovereign nation in 1948, having experienced around five centuries of colonial rule. The Sri Lankan community today is endowed with very high literacy levels, healthcare and reasonable living standards in the region," he said.



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KUWAIT: IWG members tour the KCST campus during their first visit to a university in Kuwait since the organization's foundation.

IWG EXAMINE TECH DEVELOPMENTS IN KCST TOUR

KUWAIT: A delegation from the International Women's Group (IWG) visited the Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST), in the first visit to a Kuwaiti university made by the group since its foundation in 1989. The IWG delegation included wives of ambassadors and prominent Kuwaiti and expatriate personalities. It was headed by Ghada Shawky, president of the group and received by Professor Khalid Al-Begain, KCST president, and a number of the college's employees.

"We thank Professor Khalid Al-Begain and all those in charge of the university for the cordial reception. It was enlightening to hear about all the various developments in the scientific laboratories at KCST and we wish it more progress and know it will surely prosper academically and educationally," said Shawky, who is also wife of the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The group were given an overview of the university and its most important scientific, research, academic and student achievements. The tour included visiting the auditorium, which has a capacity of more than 520 people, the student learning center and library, the Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, the MIT-Accredited FabLab and the Cybersecurity Center, which is the first specialized center of its kind in the Middle East, offering courses and workshops in cybersecurity for university students.

Finally, the visitors viewed numerous innovative final year project demos and talked to the students about their work, expressing their admiration for their scientific perspectives. Professor Al-Begain expressed his happiness at hosting the IWG members, especially since it was the first time that they visited a university in Kuwait. He said this visit opened



KUWAIT: Ghada Shawky poses with Khalid Al-Begain, president of KCST, during a visit from the IWG delegation.



KUWAIT: KCST Students pictured with their invention, "The Solar Scooter".

up other horizons for learning about education in the country and the extent of the technological advancement and development among new generations.

Rima Al-Khalidi, IWG presidential advisor and wife of the Ambassador of the State of Palestine, said that the development witnessed by the university is a source of pride for Kuwait and the Middle East. The achievements made by the university in such a short period, in general, and student graduation projects, in particular, are a testament to the extent of Kuwait's care for education, which gives hope for the youth of Kuwait today and prepares them to be the leaders of the future.



PHILIPPINES MARCOS STRIKES DEFENCE AND OTHER DEALS IN TOKYO

ROW OVER WEST BANK OUTPOST EXPOSES ZIONIST ENTITY'S CABINET SPLIT

Page 6

Page 7



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron (C) speaks during a joint statement with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) and Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz (R) at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris. —AFP

ZELENSKY RALLIES EUROPEAN ALLIES

'UKRAINE IS EUROPE AND YOUR NATION'S FUTURE IS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION'

BRUSSELS: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky received a hero's welcome to Brussels on Thursday as he lobbied star-struck EU leaders for help to repel a renewed Russian offensive. Two weeks ahead of the first anniversary of Europe's most brutal conflict since the 1940s, Zelensky has embarked on only his second foreign trip since Moscow launched a full-scale invasion.

After Wednesday's visits to London and Paris to lobby Britain, France and Germany for modern fighter jets and long-range missiles, the former actor turned war leader came to Brussels to address EU leaders and MEPs.

The European Parliament treated Zelensky to cheers and a standing ovation as he arrived to press Ukraine's case-as the country that sees itself as fighting to defend Europe's eastern borders-for a rapid welcome into the EU fold.

"We are defending against the most anti-European force of the modern world-we are defending ourselves, we Ukrainians on the battlefield, along with you," Zelensky told MEPs. Parliamentary speaker Roberta Metsola, reflecting the warm response of other senior EU officials, declared: "Ukraine is Europe and your nation's future is in the European Union."

"States must consider, quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems and the jets you need to protect the liberty too many have taken for granted," she said. After the parliamentary address, Zelensky was to join the 27 leaders of the EU member states as the special guest at their regular European Council summit.

UN URGES NO 'POLITICISATION' OF AID TO SYRIA

GENEVA: The UN insisted Thursday on the need to avoid "politicisation" of aid to earthquake victims in Syria, which faces international sanctions, and urged Washington and Brussels to ensure there were "no impediments".

"Emergency response must not be politicised," Geir Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, told reporters in Geneva, saying aid needed to get to areas controlled by Damascus as well as those held by rebels. Monday's massive earthquake flattened entire sections of major cities in Turkey and Syria, killing more than 17,100 people, injuring thousands more and leaving many more without shelter in the winter cold.

The situation is of particular concern in Syria, which has been ravaged by more than a decade of civil war and where at least 3,162 people have been killed in the quake. "We need to do everything to make sure that there are no impediments whatsoever to the life-saving support that is needed in Syria," Pedersen said.

Damascus has been hit by more than a decade of economic sanctions, and there have been calls for them to be temporarily lifted to facilitate the arrival of aid. Others meanwhile highlight that sanctions are not designed to impede aid.

When asked about this, Pedersen said he had been "discussing the issue, in particular with representatives from the United States and from the European Union". "They assure me that they will do whatever they can to make sure that there are no impediments to assistance coming to Syria to help in this operation," he said.

Kremlin warning

Arriving at the talks, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said: "It's very important that we speed up military aid to Ukraine. I think all of us looked in the warehouses at what we have. But we should do more." But the Kremlin reacted with its usual grim warning.

"We see this as a growing engagement of Germany, UK, France in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The boundary between indirect and direct engagement is gradually disappearing. We can only regret it," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "The actions of these countries lead to an escalation of tensions... make this conflict more painful... and these actions will not change the objectives of our country within the framework of the special military operation."

The NATO and EU powers of Europe have been, along with the United States, the main backers of Ukraine's beleaguered defenders since President Vladimir Putin's Russia unleashed a full-scale invasion on February 24 last year.

Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was proud to show Zelensky the Challenger tanks London is dispatching to Ukraine alongside German-built Leopards from several countries to reinforce Kiev's forces.

The EU leaders will also tout the 67 billion euros (\$72 billion) they have spent on military and financial aid to Kyiv, including funds spent on hosting four million Ukrainian refugees. But Zelensky has more to ask. Ukraine's army is facing a renewed Russian offensive and its commanders want modern

western fighter jets and long-range missiles to strike back deep into Russian-held Ukrainian territory. Macron and Scholz pledged that Europe would back Ukraine until its eventual victory.

'Wings for freedom'

Arriving at the Brussels summit, Scholz told reporters: "We are gathered here today to give a sign of solidarity and unity. We can send out this signal once again and show that we will continue our support for Ukraine in defending its independence and integrity for as long as necessary."

Britain has promised to train Ukrainian pilots and has said it will consider the proposal for combat aircraft in the "long term". The United States and other NATO allies are nevertheless wary of provoking Russia into an uncontrolled escalation that could draw in western forces.

In frontline eastern Ukraine, the Lugansk regional governor warned that Russia was attacking Ukrainian forces near the town of Kreminna and "systematically destroying" three nearby communities. "For the offensive, we need more armoured vehicles and ammunition," the statement said.

Moscow says Russian forces were advancing on Bakhmut and Vugledar-two key centres of fighting in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine, now the flashpoint of the war. Updated maps of Russia have gone on sale in Moscow bookstores that include four annexed Ukrainian regions: Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Lugansk and Donetsk. Putin regularly refers to them as "our historical lands". —AFP

CHINA SLAMS BIDEN'S 'IRRESPONSIBLE' REMARKS ON XI

BEIJING: Beijing condemned on Thursday US President Joe Biden's comments that Xi Jinping faced "enormous problems", saying the remarks were "extremely irresponsible". The latest rhetorical skirmish between the United States and China came after last week's downing of a Chinese balloon that Washington said was part of a spy fleet spanning five continents.

Following a brief warming after a November G20 meeting between Biden and Xi, US-China relations have once again nosedived, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week calling off a visit to Beijing over the balloon fracas. The US has alleged the high-altitude device-which crossed directly over at least one sensitive US military site-was intended for espionage. China has angrily denied the claims, arguing it was a weather observation craft that blew off course. On Thursday, Beijing confirmed it had refused the offer of a call between the two countries' defence chiefs after Washington shot down the inflatable aircraft.

"This irresponsible and seriously mistaken approach by the US did not create a proper atmosphere for dialogue and exchanges between the two militaries," China's defence ministry said in a statement. The previous day, Washington said the balloon was part of a "fleet", adding they had been spotted around the world for several years and urged allies to step up vigilance.

In an interview with PBS NewsHour the same day, Biden defended the decision to shoot it down and stressed that the US is not looking for conflict with China. He also said Xi had "enormous problems", including "an economy that is not functioning very well". "Can you think of any other world leader who'd trade places with Xi Jinping? I can't think of one," Biden said. China hit back at the remarks Thursday, with foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning telling a regular briefing that Beijing was "strongly dissatisfied". "This type of rhetoric from the US is extremely irresponsible and runs counter to basic diplomatic etiquette," Mao said, adding that Beijing "firmly opposed this". It also doubled down on its position that the balloon shot down last week was for civilian purposes, saying claims it was part of a fleet were part of an "information war" against China.

"The US disregard for China's repeated explanations and communications, excessive reaction, and misuse of force are irresponsible," Mao said. "The international community can see very clearly what the world's biggest country of espionage, monitoring and surveillance is."

'Be vigilant'

But in the face of mounting concern over Chinese espionage in the skies, Japan said Thursday it was coordinating with Washington as it analysed unidentified aerial objects spotted over the country in past years. A mysterious balloon-like object was seen over northern Japan in June 2020, with locals posting pictures on social media.

Authorities said then that they were baffled by the object, which in close-up images by residents and media appeared to be composed of a balloon attached to crossed sticks with propellers. In a visit to Washington this week, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the device shot down by the US showed the need for countries across the alliance to protect themselves. —AFP



BAB EL-HAWA: This aerial view shows a United Nations aid convoy that entered rebel-held northwestern Syria from Turkey through the Bab el-Hawa crossing on February 9, 2023, the first since a devastating earthquake that killed thousands. —AFP

The rebel-held areas of Syria near Turkey's border are in a particularly dire situation since they cannot receive aid from government-held parts of Syria without Damascus's authorisation.

Access and resources

At the same time, the sole border crossing used to shuttle life-saving aid from Turkey into conflict-ravaged Syria has seen its operations disrupted by the deadly earthquake. A first aid convoy managed to cross there Thursday, and Pedersen voiced confidence that "there will be obviously more assistance coming".

"Our immediate asks are two: access and resources. We need life-saving aid. It's desperately needed by civilians, wherever they are, irrespective of borders and boundaries," he said. "We need it

urgently, through the fastest, most direct and most effective routes," he said.

Humanitarian aid in rebel-held areas usually arrives through Turkey via a cross-border mechanism created in 2014 by a UN Security Council resolution. But it is contested by Damascus and its ally Moscow, and under pressure, the number of crossing points has been reduced over time to just one from four.

Asked whether it would be possible to open more border crossings to get aid through, Pedersen told AFP that "the Turks are in the process of opening more crossings". But "those are not border crossings that have been approved by the UN, via the Security Council, so that means that it is difficult for the UN to use them", he said. He suggested though that countries might be able to do so. —AFP

International

'OPPORTUNITY' FOR SYRIA'S ASSAD IN QUAKE OUTREACH

POLITICALLY ISOLATED PRESIDENT RECEIVES CALLS, AID FROM ARAB LEADERS

DUBAI: Syria's politically isolated President Bashar Al-Assad has received calls and aid from Arab leaders since a devastating earthquake Monday, a momentum analysts say he could leverage to bolster regional support. The 7.8-magnitude pre-dawn quake has killed more than 16,000 people in Turkey and neighboring Syria, already reeling from over a decade of conflict and years of economic sanctions.

Nicholas Heras of the New Lines Institute of Strategy and Policy said mobilization to help quake victims offers Assad an opportunity to restore ties with some Arab countries, but "this humanitarian crisis will not exonerate his regime in Western states." "The horrible tragedy that has struck Syria and Turkey is a clear opportunity for Bashar al-Assad to try to advance the slow-moving... process of normalizing his regime again with the rest of the Arab world," Heras told AFP.

The Syrian president on Tuesday received a call from his Egyptian counterpart offering support, their first official exchange since Abdel Fattah el-Sisi assumed office in 2014. While Cairo and Damascus have maintained relations during the 12-year war, the Arab League suspended Syria in 2011 and some other Arab countries have severed ties with it.

The ruler of Bahrain, which re-established diplomatic relations with Syria in 2018, called Assad on Monday, their first official conversation in more than a decade.

The United Arab Emirates—the first Gulf country to normalize ties with the Assad regime after years of boycott—is spearheading regional relief efforts. Abu Dhabi has already pledged at least \$50 million in assistance and sent several aid planes a day since the quake. Lebanon, which has adopted a policy of dissociation, sent on Wednesday its first high-level official delegation

to Damascus since the start of the conflict.

'Use the moment'

Relief efforts could pave the way for "a clear and open channel for sustained diplomatic engagement", Heras said. But Aron Lund of Century International think tank said the messages of support were "routine... after a major natural disaster".

"We'll have to wait and see," the Syria expert told AFP. "Will there be more of these contacts, and will they be sustained beyond the immediate crisis?" "The crisis may lower the threshold for bilateral contacts" between Damascus and Arab states that have so far been reluctant to normalize ties, he added. "Assad will try to use the moment." Saudi Arabia, which severed ties with the Assad regime in 2012 and had backed Syrian rebels in earlier stages of the war, has pledged aid to both rebel-held and government-controlled parts of the country.

Saudi aid will go directly to Aleppo's government-controlled international airport as well as the Damascus-based Syrian Red Crescent, but there was no direct contact with the Assad government, an official at King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre told AFP. Qatar, accused of funding rebels, has also swiftly pledged assistance despite no formal ties. The earthquake could particularly strengthen Syria's ties with rebel-backer Ankara, which have warmed in the months leading up to the quake, Lund said. "Both countries now share a problem that goes beyond borders and political disagreements."

Western aid

The Assad government has long branded the bloody conflict as a ploy by Western states, and



DAMASCUS: Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad (left) meets with Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib in Damascus on February 8, 2023. — AFP

blames crippling Western sanctions for a spiraling economic crisis. But that has not stopped Syria's outreach efforts after the earthquake. Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said on Monday his government was ready "to provide all the required facilities" for international organizations to send aid. And Bassam Sabbagh, Syria's UN envoy, announced it would accept assistance from any country. The Syrian Red Crescent has called on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to help, and an EU official said Syria has even made an official plea to the bloc.

Janez Lenarcic, the EU's commissioner for crisis management, said on Wednesday the European Commission is "encouraging" member states to respond to Syria's request for medical supplies and food, but would also closely monitor aid to ensure "it is not diverted" by the sanctioned government in Damascus. For its part, the United States said Tuesday it was working with partners to provide relief but would stand firm against working with the Damascus government. "Funds, of course, go to the Syrian people—not to the regime. That won't change," Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters. — AFP

TWO HONG KONGERS GIVEN 5 YEARS FOR INCITING SUBVERSION

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong judge sentenced two members of a pro-independence group to five years in prison on Thursday, insisting there would be zero tolerance for advocating violent resistance to China. Choi Wing-kit, 21, and Chris Chan, 26, belonged to the little-known, mostly student-led group Returning Valiant, which used social media and street booths to call for the overthrow of the city's Beijing rulers.

They had pleaded guilty to "conspiracy to incite subversion", under a sweeping national security law which Beijing imposed after huge and sometimes violent democracy demonstrations in 2019. The law has transformed the city, all but ending its boisterous culture of protest and packing courtrooms with dissidents.

The Returning Valiant case is the second-largest under the security law. Among 13 members charged with either subversion or terrorism, 11 were secondary school students. On Thursday, judge Kwok Wai-kin said the group had "promoted bloody resistance without any bottom line to overthrow the current regime".

"This idea ... is absolutely not allowed to emerge in any society," Kwok said. Choi and Chan's sentencing comes after a higher court ruled serious national security crimes must be punished with a minimum of five years imprisonment.

Kwok found the pair's offences particularly serious as the former was the group's founder, and the latter the English interpreter who tried "to promote their ideas to international members". In a separate case, Choi was given six months in prison for "possession of an offensive weapon", a collapsible baton. — AFP



CALIFORNIA: Chris Chan and David Chan during the Watch Party for NBC's Quantum Leap, Episode 112 "Let Them Play" at Harlowe on February 06, 2023 in West Hollywood, California. — AFP

TRAGEDY CUTS SHORT TURKEY TRIP FOR CYPRIOT STUDENTS

ADIYAMAN: Two dozen children from northern Cyprus and some of their parents were on a school trip to join a volleyball tournament in Turkey when a massive earthquake hit their hotel. The only thing that remains of it now is a flagpole. Located on the main boulevard of Adiyaman in Turkey's devastated southeast, the hotel was completely flattened. Dozens of other buildings on both sides of the long road have suffered the same fate.

The death toll from the quake that struck Turkey and parts of Syria on Monday has passed 17,500 and been rising by the thousands every day, leaving both countries in a state of shock, grief and profound national trauma.

But the sheer agony wrought by the disaster is hard to fully grasp without looking at the faces of rescuers shouting the Cypriot children's names into the Adiyaman hotel ruins, hoping against hope that someone will respond.

"I have never seen such a thing, such destruction," said Ilhami Bilgen, whose brother Hasan was on the



TOKYO: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos (L) walks with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (R) before a meeting at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. — AFP

PHILIPPINES MARCOS STRIKES DEFENCE AND OTHER DEALS IN TOKYO

TOKYO: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos hailed new defence and other deals signed with Japan in Tokyo on Thursday, as the nations seek to deepen ties, including on security in response to growing Chinese military pressure.

The countries agreed on measures to speed up military deployments for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. They also signed several other deals, ranging from infrastructure loans to cooperation on agriculture and technology.

"After our meeting, I can confidently say that our strategic partnership is stronger than ever, as we navigate together the rough waters buffeting our region," Marcos said following talks with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Japan is "one of the Philippines' closest neighbours and closest friends", Marcos told reporters.

His trip comes a week after the Philippines announced a deal giving US troops access to another four bases in the country. Tokyo and Manila are also in preliminary discussions over a key defence pact that would allow them to deploy troops on each others' territory for training and other operations.

Japan, which invaded and occupied the Philippines during World War II, has recently inked similar deals with Britain and Australia. But for now, the leaders are taking an incremental approach to defence cooperation, probably to avoid provoking Beijing, said Renato

volleyball team. Bilgen looked at the frightening pile of concrete slabs and heavy bricks hiding his brother. They were far too heavy to be lifted by hand. And still, he refused to believe that his brother was dead. "There's a hollow over there. The children may have crawled into it," Bilgen said. "We still haven't given up hope."

Huddled around fires

The 24 students, aged 11 to 14, were staying at the hotel along with 10 parents, four teachers and a trainer, officials told AFP — 39 Turkish Cypriots in all. Nazim Cavusoglu, Turkish Cypriot education minister, said one teacher and three parents were rescued when the quake first struck.

The bodies of two teachers were pulled out of the rubble late Wednesday. "Thirt-three people are still trapped," the minister told AFP. "The students were on a tour to join a school volleyball tournament." Athletes from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a breakaway region of the Mediterranean island recognised only by Ankara, are excluded from international tournaments.

The region's government has declared a national mobilisation, hiring a private plane so they can join the search-and-rescue effort for the children. Their 200-member delegation spent the night huddling around an

DeCastro, distinguished professor in the International Studies department at De La Salle University in Manila.

"Both countries are still very much aware that they have touched a sensitive nerve in China (by) creating the possibility of an Asian encirclement of China," DeCastro told AFP. In Beijing's view, "this might be the beginning of an Asian NATO. Because you really have Asian countries strengthening and enhancing their security partnerships."

Worried about Beijing's growing assertiveness on Taiwan and bases in the disputed South China Sea, Manila has been repairing ties with Washington that were fractured in recent years. Given its proximity to Taiwan and surrounding waters, cooperation from the Philippines would be key in the event of a conflict with China.

Japan last year announced a major defence overhaul, pledging to double defence spending to the NATO standard of two percent of GDP by 2027 and designating China the "greatest strategic challenge ever" to its security.

Japanese PM Kishida said the countries would continue to review "cooperation regarding defence equipment, technology and strengthening cooperation between Japan, the US and the Philippines". Japan is also the Philippines' biggest diplomatic source of active development assistance, according to Manila, and its second-largest trading partner.

It is the only country to have a bilateral free trade agreement with the Philippines. On Thursday, the countries also agreed loan agreements and extensions for Philippine infrastructure projects, including \$3 billion to finance major commuter rail projects. — AFP

open fire outside the hotel to stay warm in the winter cold. Similar fires have been burning at night across the affected region, which covers 13.5 million people in Turkey alone.

Looking for bodies

"We've been here since Monday, with families. We are here with our volunteers. We will wait until this debris is removed, until we get our children out of here," the education minister said. "I saw suitcases filled with gifts-Turkish delights-that were scattered around the rubble," another official from the Turkish Cypriot health ministry said, declining to give her name.

"We don't expect to find any more survivors, but we cannot find the bodies either," she said. Remains of the children's tour bus peeked out of the rubble where the parking lot once stood. The president of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, whose relations with the rebel government are extremely strained, sent a message of support. "We reiterate our readiness to contribute and offer our assistance to the humanitarian, rescue and recovery efforts currently taking place," Anastasiades tweeted. "Our hearts and thoughts are with the families and friends of" the missing students, said the United Nations mission in Cyprus. — AFP

AUSTRALIA TO REMOVE CHINESE-MADE CAMERAS FROM DEFENCE SITES

SYDNEY: Australia's defence department will strip its buildings of Chinese-made security cameras to ensure they are "completely secure", the government said on Thursday. It follows similar moves in the United States and Britain, which have taken measures to stop government departments installing Chinese-made cameras at sensitive sites.

Both countries have expressed fears that Chinese companies could be forced to share intelligence collected by the cameras with Beijing's security services. Beijing accused Australia of "misusing national might to discriminate against and suppress Chinese enterprises", calling on Canberra to ensure "fair" treatment for its businesses in the country.

At least 913 Chinese-made cameras have been installed across more than 250 Australian government buildings, according to official figures compiled by opposition politician James Paterson. This includes offices and facilities belonging to the departments of defence, foreign affairs and finance, as well as the attorney-general's department.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said officials would hunt down and remove all Chinese-made security cameras within the department's buildings. "It's a significant thing that's been brought to our attention and we're going to fix it," he told national broadcaster ABC. "It's important that we go through this exercise and make sure that our facilities are completely secure." The government-funded national War Memorial—a sprawling 14-hectare (35 acres) complex in Canberra—also confirmed it would remove a small number of Chinese-made cameras, out of an "abundance of caution".

Other government agencies declined to comment, or referred back to Marles' statements. Paterson, a vocal critic of the Chinese government, had said Australian government buildings were "riddled" with "spyware", and that every Chinese-made camera should be urgently ripped out.

'Unacceptable risk'

The cameras were made by companies Hikvision and Dahua, which have been blacklisted in the United States for allegedly helping the Chinese government carry out a "campaign of repression". According to the US Department of Commerce, Hikvision and Dahua have been implicated in the "high-technology surveillance" of the Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang region.

The US banned the import of surveillance equipment made by the two companies in November last year, saying it posed "an unacceptable risk to national security". In Britain, a group of 67 MPs and lords called for the government to ban Hikvision and Dahua in July last year, following reports their equipment had been used to track Uyghurs.

It was a Hikvision CCTV camera that caught former health secretary Matt Hancock kissing an aide in violation of Covid rules in June 2021, leading to his resignation. Hikvision said it was "categorically false" to paint the company as "a threat to national security". — AFP



MELBOURNE: People walk past a security camera in Melbourne on February 9, 2023. Australia's defence department will strip its buildings of Chinese-made security cameras to ensure they are "completely secure", the government said. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2023



KUWAIT: (From Left) Hala El-Said, Mohammed Al-Sager and Osama Shaltout during the meeting. —Photos by Yasser Zayyat



KUWAIT IS OPEN TO EGYPTIAN INVESTMENTS, SAYS AL-SAGER

KCCI CHIEF RECEIVES EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC DELEGATION

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Arab Republic of Egypt never closed its door in the face of Kuwaiti investments, said Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Mohammed Al-Sager. Kuwait was the pioneer of Arab investments in the country, he said, and "today ranks fourth among the countries with direct investments in Egypt." Sager added that due to the main role of Kuwaiti foreign investments in the country's economic future, it's important to look at the safety of capital and high economic and financial return when choosing investments to achieve a fair return for the guest and the host. The remarks came on the sidelines of an Egyptian delegation's visit to the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Thursday. The delegation was headed by the Minister of Planning and Economic Development and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Sovereign Fund of Egypt, Hala El-Said, and a number of high-profile governmental Egyptian officials.

"The Kuwaiti private sector does not require special incentives or exceptional support for its investments. All that it requires, rather, is an encouraging investment environment based on sound economic standards and advanced infrastructure and institu-

tions and to be on equal footing with Egyptian partners," he added. Sager also emphasized the role played by that the stability of legislation and the respect for the rights, duties and legal positions established by previous legislation in attracting investments. He said he has deep appreciation for the broad and courageous steps Egypt has taken since 2016 so far within the framework of Vision 2030. He pointed out the Egyptian efforts in terms of preparing a "State Ownership Policy Document" which outlines Egypt's approach and policies clearly and transparently regarding its ownership of public assets and strengthening partnership between the public and private sectors. Sager highlighted the role of the Sovereign Fund of Egypt in attracting foreign investment and introducing available investment projects. The presence of Minister El-Said and Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout, he added, is a special opportunity to learn about investment opportunities in Egypt from specialists and decision-making partners.

"We detected a great appetite from investors to enter the Egyptian market, by targeting several sectors, including tourism, agriculture, renewable energy, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industries, and others," El-Said said on the side line of the meeting. "Egypt is in the process of exiting from 32

companies with diversified activities" she indicated. She explained that the state's entry, through the Sovereign Fund, into partnerships with the local and foreign private sector aims to reassure the owners of capital and thus achieve common benefits. "The state ownership document confirms competitive neutrality and equality between investors, within the framework of the availability of promising investment opportunities in various sectors, in light of the Egyptian state's seriousness in opening up to investment and establishing long-term partnerships," she said. "We are working to provide added value to the Egyptian economy, whether through exiting some companies, selling some shares to strategic investors, offering usufruct rights, management rights, or capital increases." She added.

On the fluctuation of the currency exchange rate, El-Said said: "Emerging economies are facing a fluctuation in their monetary currencies. The diversity of portfolios provides returns that will have an impact on stability in the future." She said that this does not represent the slightest danger or concern for long-term investors. "Egypt has adopted an economic policy represented in liberalizing the exchange rate to ensure its progress in the right direction," she added. El-Said said what happened to the currency is temporary and that the Central

Bank of Egypt has taken the necessary corrective steps regarding the exchange rate and hedging in a way that provides reassurance to the investment community. Regarding the total size of the sovereign fund, she said: "We monitored a positive reading of the role of economic policy, as the total size of the sovereign fund, between assets and cash, amounts to £48 billion." Al-Said emphasized the depth of the historical relationship between Egypt and Kuwait, which cannot be affected by some individual practices, as they work within an institutional framework that supports these solid relations.

During her presentation on the infrastructure developments in Egypt, El-Said confirmed that the state has spent about \$400 billion on developing infrastructure, including roads, electricity, water, sanitation and other services, which provided an attractive climate for investment in many sectors. Meanwhile, she stressed that the concerned authorities in Egypt were mainly focused on improving legislation and enacting many important bylaws included in the investment law within the framework of reform." El-Said affirmed that there are no restrictions on investors transferring money from Egypt to anywhere according to their needs, noting that developments in the global scene, including the Russian-Ukrainian war, required special measures.



CHERBOURG: Activists of the environmental NGO Greenpeace arrive by boat to participate in an action on a Shell platform off the coast of Cherbourg, northwestern France. —AFP

SHAREHOLDER SUES SHELL BOSSES OVER CLIMATE RISKS

LONDON: British energy giant Shell has been hit with a new lawsuit over climate change, with activist investors accusing the company's leadership of mismanaging risks to the company. Corporations have faced a growing number of climate-related lawsuits in recent years as they come under pressure to step up efforts to curb global warming. Shell was already ordered by a Dutch court in 2021 to slash its greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent by the end of the decade after it was sued by environmental groups.

This time, ClientEarth, a minor Shell shareholder, has filed a lawsuit in the High Court of England and Wales against Shell bosses "for failing to manage the material and foreseeable risks posed to the company by climate change". Shell, which reported recorded annual profits last week, denies the allegations. The group's current plan "will tie the company to projects and investments that are likely to become unprofitable as the world cleans up its energy systems", Client Earth said in a statement on Thursday. "That puts the company's long-term commercial viability at risk, and also threatens efforts to protect the planet, further increasing the risk to the company."

ClientEarth alleges the Shell board "breached legal duties" by "failing to adopt and implement an energy transition strategy that aligns with the Paris Agreement". Under the landmark 2015 Paris deal, nations pledged to reach net-zero carbon emissions

by the middle of the century to try and limit the increase in global temperatures to two degrees Celsius, and preferably to 1.5C.

'No merit'

Shell said in response that it does "not accept ClientEarth's allegations", insisting the claims had "no merit". "We believe our climate targets are aligned with the more ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement: to limit the increase in the global average temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels," it added in a separate statement. The giant is facing criticism over its net-zero plans from the wider environmental lobby, which accuses it of "greenwashing", or marketing a company as overly climate-friendly.

ClientEarth said its legal action had the support of institutional investors holding more than 12 million shares. Shell stressed such investors were not claimants but had sent ClientEarth letters of support, and accounted for less than 0.2 percent of its total shareholder base. It added that ClientEarth held a "very small" number of Shell shares. Thursday's legal claim was lodged one week after Shell posted spectacular annual net profit of \$42.3 billion thanks to surging oil and gas prices.

The post-tax figure, fuelled by the invasion of Ukraine by major energy producer Russia, was more than double the amount achieved in 2021. The energy sector has faced growing calls to step up efforts to transition away from fossil fuels as the world scrambles to become a net-zero emissions economy by 2050. But British oil giant BP on Tuesday reduced its target for cutting carbon emissions after reporting that its underlying profit had more than doubled last year to \$27.7 billion. — AFP

WORLD BANK REVAMP TO START BY APRIL: YELLEN

WASHINGTON: The first stages of a World Bank revamp are set to begin by April, amid a push for lenders to evolve and meet global challenges like climate change, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday. While development lenders need to further their main mission of poverty reduction and inclusive growth, it is also key that they tackle global problems, she said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"(Their) core model involves countries borrowing to make specific investments aimed at addressing development constraints in their own countries," Yellen said.

"That model is insufficient to meet the moment," she added. This is because it tends to underinvest in battling global challenges that go beyond a country's borders. "We have begun the evolution of the World Bank. Next, we expect to take this agenda to the regional development banks," she said.

"It's time for these banks to address global challenges head-on—with the urgency and scale that is required," she added. Last October, before the

BANK OF ENGLAND CHIEF CONCERNED ABOUT INFLATION

LONDON: Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey on Thursday expressed concern over persistent high inflation even if the rate of price increases shows signs of cooling. The remarks to a cross-party committee of MPs boosted the pound on raised expectations of more hikes to British interest rates, analysts said. Bailey spoke on the eve of data Friday that could show Britain officially in recession should it be confirmed that the economy contracted in the final quarter of last year. "We are concerned about persistence (of high inflation). This is why we (again) raised interest rates," Bailey told the Treasury Committee.

At its most recent regular monetary policy meeting a week ago, the Bank of England hiked its inter-

annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, Yellen said she and other leaders would call on the bank's management to develop an evolution roadmap by December.

The United States is the World Bank's largest shareholder. Outlining ongoing work at the World Bank, Yellen said it must create incentives for countries to fight global challenges such as by lowering investment costs for certain projects to be more viable.

For example, the bank could identify "concessional resources" that go towards incentivizing the decommissioning of coal plants and protecting displaced workers during a clean energy transition.

The bank could also make it easier for cities to gain access to funding for climate-smart infrastructure, she said. "The first phase of implementation should begin by the World Bank and IMF spring meetings in April," according to Yellen.

Shareholders are working on updates to the bank's vision and mission, and there are discussions on ways to boost financial headroom. "We are asking for additional reforms to be decided and implementation to begin by the... annual meetings in October," she added. An initial paper from bank management dated December still calls for a roadmap to respond to poverty reduction, shared prosperity and global challenges are "welcome." It added that progress to tackle these issues will take a "concerted global effort." — AFP

est rate for a tenth time in a row as global authorities race to combat sky-high inflation. The BoE lifted UK borrowing costs by a half-point to four percent, the highest level since late 2008, or height of the global financial crisis. UK inflation slowed to 10.5 percent in December—still around 40-year highs and more than five times the BoE's official target-level of two percent.

Central banks the world over are seeking to cool high energy and food prices, fuelled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine one year ago, by hiking interest rates. Sweden's central bank on Thursday announced a half-point rate increase to three percent, the highest level since 2008. And "the next (BoE) move is still likely to be another hike as we look to tomorrow's fourth-quarter GDP numbers, where we'll find out if the UK economy entered a technical recession", noted Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK. Britain's economy shrank 0.3 percent in the third quarter of last year. Another contraction would mean the UK is in a technical recession, or two quarters of negative growth in a row. —AFP

Business

IMF AND PAKISTAN IN LAST-DITCH TALKS AS LENDER WINDS UP VISIT

FOCUS ON BOOSTING LOW TAX BASE AND ENDING TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR EXPORT SECTOR

KARACHI: Pakistan's government on Thursday remained locked in crunch talks with the IMF over the release of a crucial financial bailout on the last scheduled day of the global lender's visit. An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation landed in Islamabad last week to thrash out tough conditions that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called "beyond imagination".

Pakistan's economy is in dire straits, stricken by a balance of payments crisis as it attempts to service high levels of external debt amid political chaos and deteriorating security. "The IMF is clearly asking for much more than what the government is willing to do, even with a little bit of arm twisting," said economic analyst Abid Hasan, a former adviser to the World Bank, in the capital Islamabad.

"Both sides are waiting for the other to blink." Finance Minister Ishaq Dar told reporters on Thursday that "a final round of talks is going on". The IMF wants a boost to the pitifully low tax base, an end to tax exemptions for the export sector, and further hikes to artificially low petrol, electricity and gas prices meant to help low-income families.

It is also pushing for Pakistan to keep a sustainable amount of US dollars in the bank through guarantees of further support from friendly nations Saudi Arabia, China and the UAE, as well as the World Bank.

"There is no deadlock," Pakistan Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan told local media on Wednesday. "Detailed and vigorous discussions have

been held in the past 10 days." "I have full hope that these talks will be concluded successfully."

Bowing to pressure

Years of financial mismanagement and political instability have damaged Pakistan's economy—damage exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that submerged a third of the country. With the prospect of national bankruptcy looming, Islamabad in recent weeks began to bow to pressure, prompting the IMF's last-minute visit.

The government loosened controls on the rupee to rein in a rampant black market in US dollars—a step that caused the currency to plunge to a record low—and hiked petrol prices by 16 percent. A government official, who asked not to be named, told AFP that the "IMF is not satisfied with the current prices of petroleum and energy". Fears of a further price hike have seen hoarding in the country's largest province of Punjab, pushing the state minister Musadik Malik to report that the government had "no plans to increase the fuel price".

Meanwhile, struggling industries are battling for the government to unblock imports, with thousands of shipping containers held up at Karachi port.

The steel industry has warned the government that unless scrap metal imports are restarted, there will be a cascading effect on employment. Pakistan had sketched out a \$6.5 billion loan package with the IMF, which has so far paid out roughly half that amount. —AFP



KARACHI: Stockbrokers look at the latest share prices at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSE) in Karachi on February 9, 2023. —AFP

ECB WARNS UNIONS AGAINST 'EXCESSIVE' PAY DEMANDS

FRANKFURT: Labour unions should avoid making excessively high wage demands that could further fuel inflation, a senior European Central Bank official said Thursday. Although workers were justified in seeking higher salaries to compensate for soaring consumer prices, "a wage-price spiral must be avoided", ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos said. "Inflation will abate in the course of the year; we expect an average inflation rate of around six percent this year, with 3.6 percent in the last quarter," he said in an interview with Germany's Sueddeutsche newspaper.

"The trade unions may, however, be inclined to ask for excessive pay rises. We need to be careful," he said. In a wage-price spiral, where higher salaries push up business costs that in turn lead to further price increases, "no one wins", De Guindos said.

Instead, he said, eurozone governments need to offer targeted support to help those hit hardest by inflation. "People could then reduce their wage demands and the ECB would not have to tighten its monetary policy so much," he said.

The European Central Bank has raised interest rates by three percentage points since July to cool inflation, which has soared in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine. Eurozone inflation has eased somewhat after reaching a peak of 10.6 percent in October, in part thanks to a drop in sky-high energy costs. Consumer price growth in the 20-nation currency slowed to 8.5 percent in January, still well above the ECB's target of two percent.

In Germany, Europe's biggest economy, inflation reached 8.7 percent in January, figures released on Thursday showed. The country's largest union, IG Metall, staged a series of warning strikes late last year as it sought higher wages for almost four million workers in industrial sectors. It eventually agreed to a below-inflation pay increase totaling 8.5 percent over two years. Germany's powerful Verdi union is currently demanding a 15 percent salary increase for Deutsche Post employees, which the company has dismissed as unrealistic. —AFP

EU RECYCLES GREEN INVESTMENT PLANS TO OFFSET US SUBSIDIES

BRUSSELS: Confronted by competition from Washington's vast green tech investment plan, European leaders are scrambling to loosen their own subsidy rules and redeploy an array of investment funds.

Thursday's summit of the 27 EU heads of state or government is expected to be overshadowed by the first war-time visit of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky. But, after their special guest has asked for more weapons, the leaders will turn to their own differences over how to respond to the vast financial firepower of the US Inflation Reduction Act. European capitals fear the US subsidies for clean tech will lure investment across the Atlantic, and torpedo the bloc's recovery plans.

The EU executive, Ursula von der Leyen's European Commission, has prepared a suggested response—but member states are divided over how far to go and how to fund the plan. Von der Leyen's plan would see Europe's tight controls on state subsidies loosened, allow member states to give grants or tax breaks to their own firms building renewable energy and cutting carbon emissions.

But some members fear this could trigger a subsidy war with Washington or undermine their own single market, with big players like

'OPERATION EXODUS': BRAZIL MINERS FLEE YANOMAMI LAND

BOA VISTA, Brazil: Wearing broken flip-flops held together by a frayed cord, Joao Batista, an illegal gold miner in the Brazilian Amazon, has been walking for days to escape the jungle, fleeing a looming security-force crackdown.

The wiry 61-year-old with deep creases in his leathery skin is one of thousands of mine workers rushing to leave the Yanomami Indigenous reservation, as Brazil sends in the police and army to wrest back control of the remote territory from invaders accused of sparking a humanitarian crisis. Indigenous leaders say illegal miners have poisoned the water with mercury, destroyed the rainforest, raped and killed inhabitants, and triggered a food emergency that is devastating the reservation's 30,000 Yanomami.

Batista, who spent the last seven months working at an illegal mine, does not see himself as a criminal. But he says life left him few options other than "garimpo"—wildcat mining. "Look, I never went to school. At my age, what else am I going to do to survive?" he told AFP as he walked down a dirt road outside the town of Alto Alegre, in the northern state of Roraima. He still had around 85 kilometers (53 miles) to go before returning to his home in the state capital, Boa Vista. Up the road, a family fleeing a mine camp was trying to hitch a ride to the capital—a 23-year-old mother, 15-year-old father and their three small children. They caught malaria in the rainforest, and were too sick to walk, they said.

"Our kids are sick, too. I need to get to Boa Vista," said the young father.

WARBA APPOINTS AL-QATAMI AS CHIEF RETAIL BANKING OFFICER

KUWAIT: As part of the bank's strategy that aims and contributes to strengthening its leadership in the growth and prosperity of the bank's business, and empowering Kuwaiti staff, Warba Bank appointed Ahmed Faisal Al-Qatami as the Chief Retail Banking Officer, after obtaining the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait.

In a press release, the Bank pointed out that this appointment reflects Warba's initiatives and vision in strengthening its human resources with national manpower, foremost of which are leader-

ship positions. The bank stated that attracting successful leaders is one of the main strategies pursued by Warba Bank, as Al-Qatami, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Portland, and who has a variety of banking experience for more than 22 years, is well-versed in the banking and financial sectors. Al-Qatami obtained many courses in the banking sector. He started his career in a local bank in 2001 and held many positions in the banking and financing sector - private banking services. He also worked in 2010 as a manager of private banking services. Moreover he held the position of Executive Vice President in an investment company, and Al-Qatami held many memberships in the board of directors of several companies.

France and Germany already stepping up their own state aid. The anti-subsidy straight-jacket was already loosened as part of the response to the COVID pandemic, and countries such as Italy, Austria, Denmark and Finland oppose making it meaningless. "On this topic, there'll always be two for and 25 against," one European diplomat joked—referring to Germany and France's ability to exploit looser EU rules with bigger national subsidies.

Sparing Europe's blushes

France and Germany are not in agreement, however, about new joint financing schemes. Here, Paris sides with Rome and others in promoting new shared investment funds to pool European investment to boost industry and fight off US and Chinese competitors. Von der Leyen has promised to draw up a blueprint within the next five months for a so-called "Sovereignty Fund" to fund joint investment in strategic businesses.

But the member states are already fighting over whether to even mention this upcoming idea in Thursday's post-summit joint statement—and some are trying to kill the plan. Germany will oppose any joint borrowing to finance the fund and with other net contributors to EU funds, such as Sweden or Austria, oppose increased EU membership contributions to pay for it.

This leaves the Commission's rough menu of existing funds such as the 800-billion-euro NextGenerationEU, which one diplomat from a net contributing country said should be used up

Reverse gold rush

There has been an exodus of mine workers from the Yanomami reservation since President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva ordered Brazil's military to establish a no-fly zone there last week, cracking down on the bush planes the mines rely on for food and supplies. Some are making the gruelling trek out on foot. Others are fleeing down the Urucicoera river, crowding more than 30 people onto long, narrow boats.

Justice Minister Flavio Dino said Monday the government had begun deploying more than 500 police and soldiers for an operation to evict the miners, along with the mine-camp cooks, prostitutes and others drawn to the rainforest gold rush. Dino said the government expected at least 80 percent of the estimated 15,000 people who have invaded the Yanomami reservation would leave on their own before authorities began "coercive" measures, which he said would come this week.

As a first step, environmental agency IBAMA said Wednesday it had started destroying heavy equipment seized at the mines, including a helicopter, plane and bulldozer. The Yanomami territory, Brazil's biggest Indigenous reservation, is one of several to suffer a massive influx of illegal miners under far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), whom activists accuse of encouraging the incursions.

'Real criminals'

The crackdown is stoking tension in the region, where an entire economy has developed around the illegal gold industry. Gold sells for 280 reais (around \$55) a gram on the black market in Roraima. AFP met miners carrying up to 30 grams.

But the money risks running out fast. At a local truck stop, an illegal bush pilot flashed a handful of gold—his payment for a recent flight. He said he worried it would be his last: he has had to stop working



BOA VISTA, Brazil: Brazil's Defense Minister Jose Mucio (center) delivers a speech next to the president of the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI), Joenia Wapichana (right), during an inter-ministerial visit to address the humanitarian and health crisis involving the Yanomami indigenous people, in Boa Vista, Roraima State, Brazil, on February 8, 2023. —AFP

because of the no-fly zone. Locals fear the impact of a massive influx of newly jobless workers.

Military police in Roraima launched what they called "Operation Exodus" to "intensify" their presence in the region and "preempt disturbances."

Authorities have encouraged the miners to leave the reservation voluntarily—though Dino vowed to prosecute "all those who committed crimes such as genocide, environmental crimes, financing illegal gold mining and money laundering." One 58-year-old miner, who asked to be identified only as "Parmalat," his nickname, said he resented being treated like a criminal, when crimes like corruption often go unpunished. "We're treated like we're worthless," he said. "All we want to do is work, and we're called criminals. The real criminals aren't treated that way." —AFP

Shortly after its founding, Warba Bank succeeded in establishing its position in the banking sector, and occupied a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals, as the Bank's shareholder base is considered the largest among local banks. This makes it the closest bank to the members of society, as it lives up to the aspirations of the Kuwaiti society and deservedly earned their trust in a short period.



Ahmed Faisal Al-Qatami



before creating something new. Some 250 billion euros from the fund could be moved to finance European industry's green transition.

Bringing together other EU investment funds already assigned to investment, innovation and energy would leave Europe not far short of the \$370 billion that Washington is looking to spend.

"Europe need not blush," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Wednesday. Paris is undeterred. An official in President Emmanuel Macron's office insisted the sovereignty fund plan would indeed be in the final summit statement. A diplomat from a country opposed to increased spending conceded it would be "noted" but that many countries did not see why it should be talked about before von der Leyen's formal proposal. —AFP

GERMAN INFLATION EDGES HIGHER IN JANUARY

BERLIN: German inflation picked up slightly in January, preliminary data showed Thursday, as the impact of a one-off energy subsidy the month before wore off. Consumer prices accelerated by 8.7 percent year-on-year, federal statistics agency Destatis said, up from 8.6 percent in December.

The increase was smaller than expected, with analysts surveyed by FactSet predicting price growth of 8.9 percent. Destatis was initially scheduled to release its January data last week, but delayed the publication over an "unexpected technical problem".

As a result, the EU's statistics office Eurostat was forced to use an estimate for Germany when it released the eurozone inflation rate. Eurostat calculated that inflation in the 20-nation currency club had eased for a third straight month, to 8.5 percent, but uncertainty hung over the figure.

"The increase published today is the missing piece of the puzzle," said KfW chief economist Fritz Koehler-Geib. "Although the peak has probably been passed, it is premature to sound the all-clear," she said. "While pressures from energy prices will decline in perspective, service and industrial goods prices are gaining in importance this year." —AFP



Palestinian Jamal Hemmou shows vinyl records in his shop in the occupied-West Bank city of Nablus. — AFP photos



Palestinian Jamal Hemmou checks a portable record player as he sits in front of his shop in the occupied-West Bank city of Nablus.



Palestinian Jamal Hemmou checks an antique gramophone (phonograph) record player in front of his shop in the occupied-West Bank city of Nablus.

IN WEST BANK, LAST VINYL REPAIRMAN PRESERVES MUSICAL HERITAGE

From Jamal Hemmou's ramshackle workshop in Nablus's Old City in the occupied West Bank, classic Arabic songs blare into the surrounding cobbled streets. The 58-year-old is the last of his kind in the city—he runs the only shop in Nablus repairing and selling vinyl records and players. Like much of the world, Nablus is attuned to digital music, but Hemmou told AFP working with vinyl was about preserving Palestinian "heritage". Elderly people regularly pass by at the end of the day and, "when I turn on the record player, they start crying," he said.

Hemmou began learning how to repair record players when he was 17, listening to the great Arab artists of the time as he worked. "I have more experience than the people with the certificates," he joked, adding that he is entirely self-taught, and acquired his passion for music from his father. "My father was a singer, he used to sing because he loved those old singers... almost everyone in my family is a musician," he said.

He said he enjoys Lebanon's Fairuz and Egyptian superstar Abdel Halim Hafez, but his favorite is Shadia, an Egyptian diva who released a string of hits between the 1940s and 1980s. "She sang from the heart, she sang with emotion, she told a story," he said. Strewn throughout his workshop, in various stages of repair, are record players from

the 1960s and 1970s. There are even several gramophones from the 1940s. He estimated that he sells an average of five record players per month.

'You're transported back'

Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War in 1967. A surge in violence in 2022 made it the deadliest year in the West Bank since United Nations records began in 2005 — with Nablus having been at the forefront of the bloodshed. But Hemmou said it's not the military raids that hurt business—it's the strikes regularly called by local authorities in response to Zionist operations.

"We close all the shops when the Zionist raids kill someone in Nablus, especially the Old City," he told AFP. For Hemmou, the machines and the music they play are more than just songs, they are an essential part of Palestinian and Arab heritage. "When you play the record, you're transported back 50 years," he said.

"You listen to this music, and you remember what it means to be an Arab or a Palestinian," he added. Hemmou said that today's artists don't match the emotion of the great Arab singers of the 20th century. "The modern singers do not know what they sing. The old singers, they summon what is deep within us and



Palestinian Jamal Hemmou displays old record players in front of his shop.

they revive our heritage," he said.

Music as resistance

Known throughout the old city as Abu Shaadi, he has developed a reputation beyond Nablus. Music enthusiasts will travel from afar to buy from him. "My customers are from all over the West Bank, from Jerusalem, from Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jenin, Qalqiliya," he said. "They come from all of Palestine to buy

from me." Hemmou said he has tried to bring his two sons, aged 26 and 27, into the business.

"They aren't interested," he told AFP. "They tell me to turn it off, they don't want to listen." The street on which his shop sits has seen fierce battles during the last year, as Zionist forces conducted raids targeting a nascent militant group called "The Lions' Den", based in Nablus's Old City.

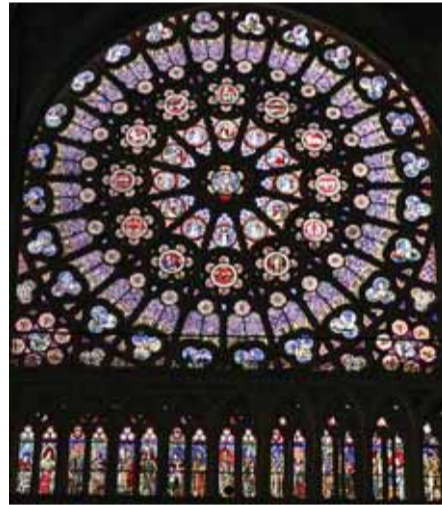
The shop bears reminders of the conflict-plastered on its shutters are the images of Palestinian fighters killed in recent months. "When there are clashes we have to close the shop, of course, but what can I say, I am still alive, thank God," he said. "I play some national songs, that is my way of resisting." — AFP

LIGHT RETURNS TO THE STAINED GLASS OF THE SAINT-DENIS BASILICA

The Basilica of Saint-Denis on the northern outskirts of Paris may be less famous than Notre-Dame, but when Emmanuel Putanier was asked to restore the historic monument's stained glass windows to their former glory, he jumped at the chance. "This is something that you only do once in a lifetime," the master glassmaker told AFP.

For a year now, his team has been working in the Basilica to restore the windows, which date back to the 12th century, to their former, distant splendor. Just down the road from that cathedral to sporting excellence, the national Stade de France, the Basilica is nestled in a Paris suburb with more of a reputation for crime, religious sectarianism and poverty than for medieval architecture.

However its architectural splendor, and the fact that it is the resting place of no fewer than 43 French monarchs, attracts 130,000 visitors each year. The major renovation works have been underway for



This picture shows renovated stained glass windows at the Basilique de Saint-Denis, in Paris' northern suburb of Saint-Denis.

several years already. Since last year, the building's stained glass windows have been the focus of the work at the Basilica, the culmination of 25 years of preparation work costing more than 2 million euros (\$2.2 million). "All things heritage take time," said Laurent Roturier, head of the Paris region branch of the office of cultural affairs (DRAC), which is in charge of the works. The project began to take shape a quarter of a century ago when the Basilica's oldest glass windows went

under the care of France's research laboratory for historical monuments (LRMH). "We're just the final stage of the journey," said Guillaume Uvroas, a glassmaker working in the Basilica.

Dating back to 12th century

When the project kicked off in 1997, the windows dating back to the middle of the 12th century and considered a milestone in the history of stained-glassmaking, were worn down by time and dulled by the elements. Duplicates made of polycarbonate were installed in their place. That move started a new conversation: should the original stained glass art be restored and reinstalled, or should perfect copies be put in their place? Experts decided to go with the latter option: more than 20 copies have been produced in total.

But getting it right has required deep research in the archives, going back to the French Revolution during which they were dismantled, said Thomas Clouet, an architect specializing in historic buildings. Some windows had been vandalized, and there were various bits and pieces scattered about.

"We needed to find the pieces and retrace their history and journey before we could proceed to the duplication phase," said Roturier. "What we do here requires insane precision, from the colour range to the composition," said Putanier. Because his team was not allowed to remove the

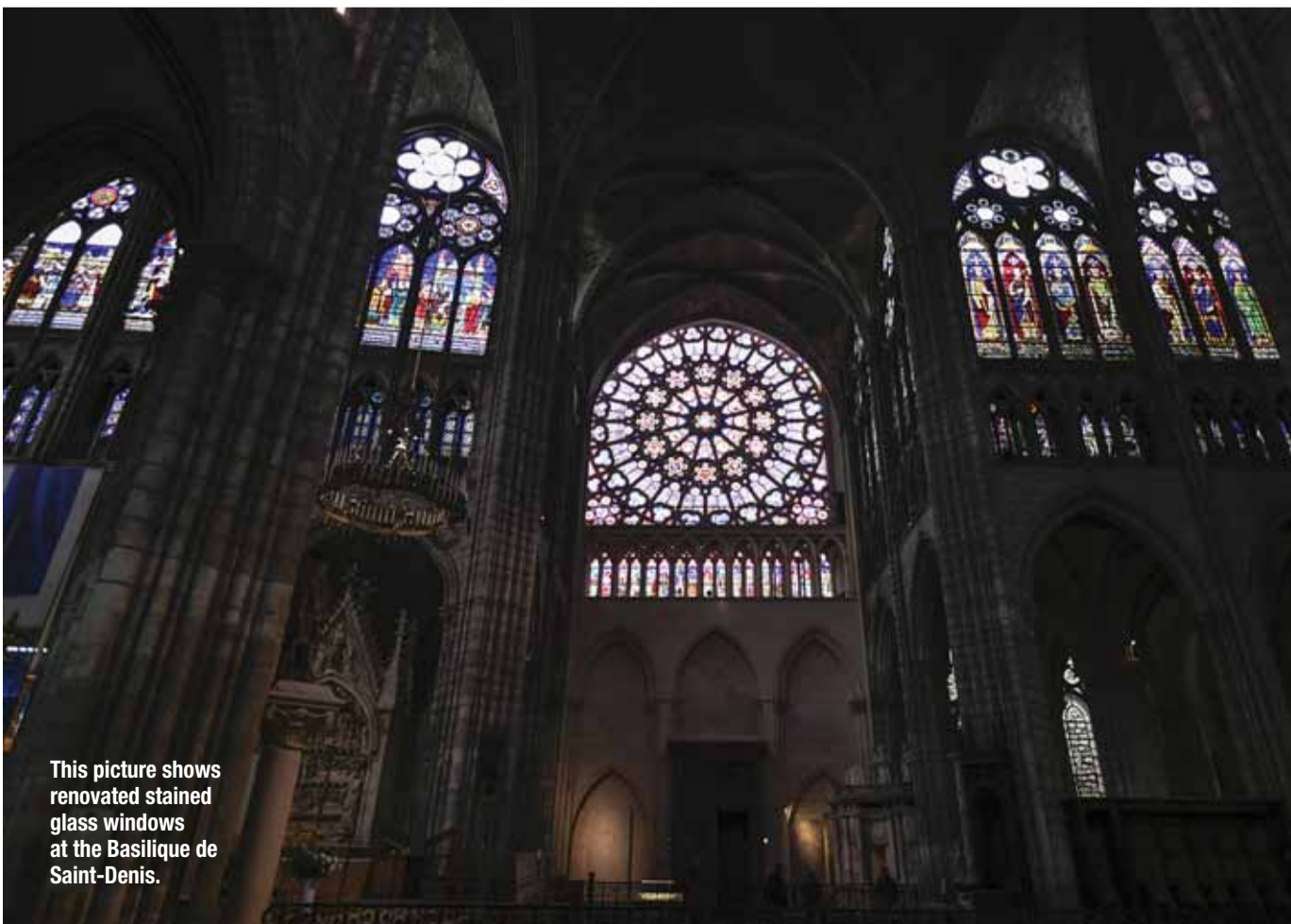


This picture shows the renovation site at the "Basilique de Saint-Denis" (Basilica Cathedral of Saint-Denis), in Paris' northern suburb of Saint-Denis.—AFP photos

originals from the laboratory, "we set up an operation plan to take measurements on site," he said. The most important task was to achieve consistency across the entire structure, a job made hard by the several restoration efforts the Basilica had undergone over the centuries.

"To make the copies, we took into account distortions that happened over time," he said, "They couldn't appear too new or modern-looking." The final step will be to fit the copies into glass panes that

date back to the 19th century. "The most important thing for us was to recover this relationship to light, because that's the spirit behind the construction of this basilica," insisted Roturier. "It's what the founders would've wanted. More restoration projects are planned over the next five years, including of the Basilica's tabernacles and its spire." — AFP



This picture shows renovated stained glass windows at the Basilique de Saint-Denis.



This picture shows a partial view of the "Basilique de Saint-Denis" (Basilica Cathedral of Saint-Denis).



This picture shows renovated stained glass windows at the Basilique de Saint-Denis.



YEMENI KINGDOM OF SABA', ANCIENT CIVILIZATION ON BRINK OF RUIN

The Kingdom of Saba', an ancient civilization once home to a highly advanced prosperous nation now standing on the brink of ruin, was put on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger, a resolution protecting it from the woes of crises. On the 25th of January, during a UNESCO meeting in Paris and chaired by Saudi Arabia, the congregation decided on protecting the ancient civilization from the detriments of a war-torn country.

Yemeni Minister of Information and Culture Muammar Al-Eryan commented in a press statement that this underscores the individual and authentic nature of the Yemeni civilization. The decision, he added, urged Yemeni government to invite specialists to examine the sites, submit reports and provide necessary materials. Permanent Yemeni delegation

to UNESCO mentioned in a statement that this monumental achievement not only holds exceptional global significance but is also an appreciation of the Yemeni civilization.

The sites of Saba' sprawl across Marib governorate, comprised of seven sites bearing witness to the architectural and technological advancements of a civilization dating back to the first millennia BC and extending all the way to the Islamic era. These sites tell the story of highly intricate centralized management of a trading nation that reigned over Bakhour (Arabian Incense) road across the Arabian peninsula, and contributed to a wide range of cultural exchange prompted by trade with Mediterranean and north Africa.

Standing in the midst of barren lands, rocky mountain and steep valleys, the

sites display an advanced irrigation system, unrivaled by any in the area, contributed to establishing the largest man-made oasis in the region. Queen Balkees' throne, is perhaps the most famed archaeological site, was built during her reign in the 10th century BC. The temple was enshrined in sands until 1988 when the sands were swept away unveiling geometric harmonized shapes; six adorned pillars standing 12 meters high and weighing around 17 tons, a front yard with a well in its midst, alabaster seats and a clay wall with towers and a north-facing gate surrounding it.

As for the temple of Awwam, one of the oldest temples in the Arabian peninsula where pilgrims from all over the peninsula flocked to worship the lunar deity, is enclosed by a wall inlaid with stones and carrying ancient Arabian inscriptions, the

Musnad script. The Great Dam of Marib, an architectural wonder built in first millennium BC, was erected to capture monsoonal rains and serve around 98,000 square kilometers of farming lands.

The complex design stands 15 meters high extends for about 650 meters with many entryways opening and closing to manage the accumulated waters. The Yemeni war threatening to demolish all the stands in its way, coupled with natural factors, had the Yemeni government determined on protecting its valuable heritage, especially as much of it remains undiscovered. The recent UNESCO resolution, which facilitates international technical and financial aid, could perhaps save history from blowing away into the wind. — KUNA

UK CLIMATE ACTIVISTS FINED FOR DA VINCI GLUE STUNT

Five environmental protesters from the "Just Stop Oil" group who glued themselves to the frame of a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" were each fined £486 (\$588) on Wednesday. The activists, who caused disruption at the Royal Academy in London last July, were fined by City of London Magistrates' Court for criminal damage. District Judge William Nelson said their "primary intention ... was to gain media attention and not to cause damage to a work of art", but they were "reckless" and knew it would be a "by-

product" of their actions.

The stunt was one of a flurry of so-called "direct action" protests last year by environmental activists, which also included tomato soup being thrown over one of Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" paintings at London's National Gallery. Protest group Just Stop Oil, which was behind many of the stunts, wants to end UK government approval for exploring, developing and producing fossil fuels.

The group says since its campaign began last April, there have been over 2,000 arrests and 138 people have spent

time in prison. Jessica Agar, 22, an art student from western England and one of the five fined Wednesday, said she took part "to highlight the responsibility that cultural institutions have to the public". "The concept of a 'last supper' is a reality for millions around the world, as crop failures from climate breakdown force us into widespread famine," she said in a statement released by the group. — AFP



Residents and visitors arrive to Machu Picchu, Peru on the first train after the service from Ollantaytambo was renewed. — AFP photos

PERU REOPENS TRAIN SERVICE TO MACHU PICCHU

Train services to Peru's historic Machu Picchu partially resumed on Wednesday following nearly three weeks of suspension caused by anti-government protests. The service to the jewel in Peru's vital tourism industry resumed with locals looking to return to the small town at the foot of the ancient Inca site. The Machu Picchu citadel itself remains closed. Peru has been shaken by two months of protests by supporters of former president Pedro Castillo, who was impeached and arrested on December 7 after attempting to dissolve parliament and rule by decree.

At least 48 people have been killed since then in clashes between security forces and demonstrators. Protesters have blocked dozens of roads and placed rocks on the train tracks serving Machu Picchu. The first train arrived at the small town just after dawn Wednesday with around 80 people on board, including a handful of tourists, AFP reporters saw.

The train left again with about 280 passengers. The town had been suffering from shortages after it was cut off for 18 days. The train is the only way to reach the town other than by foot and takes an hour and a half from the tourist town of Ollantaytambo. On Tuesday, the Machu Picchu municipality said there was "a shortage of food, medicines,

health personnel and emergency supplies."

For now the train will make two journeys a day on Wednesdays and Sundays. Tourism is crucial to the Peruvian economy with the country attracting 4.5 million visitors a year. Some 4,000 visitors a day pass through the Andean city of Cusco, a UNESCO World Heritage site and gateway for exploring Machu Picchu and other surrounding Inca ruins. The tourism ministry estimated in late January that the sector had lost \$6.2 million due to the political crisis. There is still no fixed plan for the reopening of Machu Picchu. — AFP



Residents and visitors arrive to Machu Picchu, Peru on the first train after the service from Ollantaytambo was renewed.



In this file photo Spanish matador Enrique Ponce performs a pass on a bull during a bullfight in Osuna on August 1, 2020. — AFP

SPAIN COURT RULES CULTURE VOUCHER MUST INCLUDE BULLFIGHTS

A Spanish court has ruled that a government scheme that grants youths a voucher to spend on cultural activities must be extended to include tickets for bullfights. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's coalition government in 2022 began offering a 400-euro (\$430) voucher to young people after they have turned 18 to spend on books or tickets to the theatre, concerts or

cinema.

The goal is to help Spain's culture-related business recover from the loss of revenue during Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. The scheme was modeled after similar initiatives in France and Italy. Bullfighting businesses wanted to be included in the scheme too but the government ultimately decided that recipients could not use the voucher to buy tickets for bullfights.

The Fundacion del Toro de Lidia, an NGO that promotes bullfighting in Spain, took the government to court and on Tuesday Spain's Supreme Court ruled that there was "no justification" for excluding bullfights from the cultural voucher scheme for youths. Spain's cultural min-

istry said Wednesday that in the wake of the court ruling it was opening "the possibility of including" companies that organize bullfighting events or sell tickets to them in the voucher scheme.

Bullfighting retains a passionate following in Spain and leading matadors are treated as celebrities. But the practice's mass appeal has faded, with polls showing a rising disinterest across Spain, especially among the young. In 2021, the last year statistics are available, 279 bullfights were held in Spain, down from 387 in 2017 and 810 in 2008, according to culture ministry figures. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



JACK COULD HAVE SURVIVED, SAYS CAMERON AS 'TITANIC' RE-RELEASED 25 YEARS ON

James Cameron doesn't have many regrets-after all, he has now directed three of the four highest-grossing films of all time. But if he could go back and remake "Titanic," the film that started his record streak 25 years ago and is being re-released in theaters Friday, there is one thing he would change. "Based on what I know today, I would have made the raft smaller, so there's no doubt!" said Cameron.

liner sank, if only he had shared an improvised raft with Kate Winslet's Rose. Instead, Jack gallantly gave Rose an entire wooden door to float on, condemning himself to a freezing death but ensuring she survived.

It is just one example of how the story of the Titanic "never seems to end for people," Cameron told a press conference held for the anniversary re-release. "There have been much greater

"The men who stepped back from the lifeboats so that the women and the children could survive."

'Final verdict'

Cameron put Jack's individual sacrifice to the test in a new National Geographic documentary, running experiments featuring two stunt performers and an exact replica of the film's door in a cold water tank. In "Titanic: 25 Years Later with James Cameron," the stunt actors were fitted with internal thermometers to chart how quickly their bodies plunged toward hypothermia.

While the first test confirmed Jack would have died if he had acted according to the film's plot, a second found the pair could have both balanced on the door and kept their upper bodies out of the water. "He got into a place where if we projected that out, he just might have made it until the lifeboat got there," admitted Cameron. "Final verdict? Jack might have lived. But there's a lot of variables."

Epic love story

"Titanic" was first released in December 1997, and held the number one box office spot for 15 consecutive weekends. While today most films earn their biggest profits on opening weekend, "Titanic" peaked on its eighth weekend-Valentine's Day. The epic love story is now being re-released ahead of this year's Valentine's Day weekend, where it will hope to add to its \$2.2 billion total haul. "I'll grant you \$100 million of our box office (was) for Leonardo DiCaprio's appeal to 14-year-old," girls, joked Cameron. "Titanic" is currently behind

only "Avengers: Endgame" and Cameron's "Avatar," but is expected to soon be surpassed by "Avatar: The Way of Water"-again, by Cameron-which has made \$2.18 billion and is still drawing crowds.



US director James Cameron (left) and his wife Suzie Amis arrive at the world premiere of Titanic 3D in central London.

Collectively, Cameron's three monster hits have collected \$7.25 billion-roughly the entire annual GDP of Bermuda. Besides making him an extraordinarily wealthy man, the three-hour-long "Titanic" has left another important if divisive legacy. "Historically before 'Titanic,' the wisdom-which proved not to be true-was that a long movie can't make money," said Cameron. The first "Avatar" ran for 162 minutes and again "people said they wanted more," he said. "We took that to heart and we made a three-hour-and-12-minute movie for the new 'Avatar.'" "And it's doing very well."-AFP



File photo shows Director James Cameron (center) and actress Kate Winslet (left) and actor Leonardo DiCaprio (right) pose for photographers after Cameron won the award for Best Director for "Titanic" at the 55th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. — AFP photos

Such is the film's enduring popularity, even a quarter of a century later debates and theories continue to swirl around the fate of Leonardo DiCaprio's lead character. Fans insist Jack could have survived the icy Atlantic waters after the ocean

tragedies since the Titanic-I mean, World War One, tens of millions of people died. World War Two..." "But the Titanic has this kind of enduring, almost mythic, novelistic quality. And it has to do with, I think, love and sacrifice and mortality.



GEORGE CLOONEY TO REMAKE HIT FRENCH SPY SHOW 'THE BUREAU'

Hollywood star George Clooney is to direct an English-language remake of hit French spy series "The Bureau". The new version of the thriller that originally starred Mathieu Kassovitz will be called "The Department", and will begin production this year, US station Showtime announced on Monday. It compared it to "Homeland", another successful spy show that mixed espionage and geopolitics.

"Just as 'Homeland' elevated global espionage to new heights, 'The Department' will take viewers even deeper into a world of intrigue and subterfuge with complicated characters who struggle with their own demons," said Chris McCarthy, head of Showtime and Paramount Media.

"The Bureau" was a huge international hit for French producer Canal+, sold to more than 100 countries and praised even by France's real-life spy agency, the DGSE, for its realism. Launched in 2015 by showrunner Eric Rochant, its fifth and final season was overseen by award-winning director Jacques Audiard, known for films including "A Prophet" and "The Sisters Brothers". Clooney has previously directed the limited series adaptation of "Catch-22" in 2019. He has also directed several films including "The Monuments Men" (2014) and "The Midnight Sky" (2020).-AFP

WISH YOU WERE (NOT) HERE: PINK FLOYD'S WATERS SLAMMED FOR UN SPEECH ON UKRAINE

Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters was denounced by Ukraine Wednesday after he told the United Nations Security Council that Russia's invasion of its neighbor was "not unprovoked." The 79-year-old, who has sparked controversy before this with his stance on the war, was invited by Moscow to address the 15-member Council.

"The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation was illegal. I condemn it in the strongest possible terms," the British musician said via video. But Waters then implied that Kyiv was to blame as well. "Also the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not unprovoked. So I also condemn the provocateurs in the strongest possible terms," he said, calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Ukraine's UN ambassador hit back, playing on the title of one of Pink Floyd's most famous songs. "How sad for his former fans to see him accepting the role of just a brick in the wall, a wall of Russian disinformation and propaganda," said Sergiy Kyslytsya.

Kyiv's representative even referenced the giant inflatable pink pig that featured in many of the progressive rock band's shows. He said he was surprised the bassist had not arranged to have it floating in the Security Council chamber.

"What could it have been this time Mr Waters? Pigs with swastikas and the hammer and sickle?" Kyslytsya asked during the surreal discussion. The Council has held numerous debates on the war but has failed to take any action due to Russia's veto.

"If this is a toothless chamber, I can open my big mouth on behalf of the voices without fear of getting my head bitten off," Waters said. Russia requested the meeting to discuss arms supplied to Ukraine by the West.

US deputy ambassador Richard Mills said of Waters: "While I certainly acknowledge his impressive credentials as a recording artist, his qualifications to speak to us as an expert briefer on arms control or European security issues, are less evident to me." Russian Ambassador Vasily

Nebenzia welcomed the participation of a man he called "one of the most prominent activists of the contemporary anti-war movement."

Last September, Waters was declared persona non grata by the Polish city of Krakow after his concerts were scrapped there over his war stance. Waters had written an open letter that month saying the West should stop providing arms to Kyiv, accusing President Volodymyr Zelensky of allowing "extreme nationalism" in Ukraine and urging him to "put an end to this deadly war."

This week, Pink Floyd songwriter Polly Samson, wife of band member David Gilmour, called Waters "anti-Semitic" and "a Putin apologist" in a tweet. Waters responded by posting a statement on Twitter that said he "refutes entirely" Samson's accusation. Pink Floyd reunited last year, without Waters, to release a single in support of Ukraine. — AFP



British musician Roger Waters is displayed on a screen during an address to a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine, at UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

NOBEL WINNER MARIO VARGAS LLOSA JOINS ACADEMIE FRANCAISE

Peruvian Nobel-winning author Mario Vargas Llosa was set to join the fabled Academie Francaise in Paris on Thursday, the first member never to have written a book in French. The 86-year-old novelist, who also has Spanish citizenship, controversially invited the former king of Spain, Juan Carlos, to his inauguration ceremony. The ex-monarch has lived in exile since 2020 in the United Arab Emirates after a series of scandals, including claims that he harassed a former mistress and revelations about his lavish lifestyle and an elephant hunt in Botswana.



In this file photo Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize winner for Literature Mario Vargas Llosa smiles during a public interview at Buenos Aires' International Book Fair. — AFP

Established under King Louis XIII in 1635, the Academie Francaise is meant to guard "pure" French, which in recent decades has faced a constant onslaught from English. Last year, it bemoaned the widespread use of imported phrases like "big data" and "drive-in" and took umbrage with the common practice by French businesses of using English-sounding brand names, such as train operator SNCF's low-cost service Ouigo (pronounced "we go"). Vargas Llosa won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2010, and is the first holder of the award at the Academie Francaise since Francois Mauriac, who won the prize in 1952.

MICHAEL JACKSON ESTATE EYEING NEAR-\$1BN SALE OF MUSIC RIGHTS

The estate of Michael Jackson is closing in on a deal to sell half its interests in the megastar's music catalogue, in a deal worth up to \$900 million, Variety reported. The sale, to Sony and a possible financial partner, could include a slice of the singer's publishing and recorded-music revenues, as well as Broadway show "MJ: The Musical" and as-yet-unmade biopic "Michael," the trade title said. If it goes ahead, the deal would be the biggest yet in the burgeoning music catalogue market, which has already seen some eye-popping transactions.



In this file photo US popstar Michael Jackson addresses a press conference at the O2 arena in London. — AFP

They have included the sale of Bruce Springsteen's publishing and recorded music back catalogue for \$600 million-also to Sony-and \$400 million that Universal Music paid to buy Bob Dylan's recorded music. Last month, pop juggernaut Justin Bieber sold his music publishing and recording catalogue shares to the Blackstone-backed Hipgnosis Songs Capital for \$200 million.

Variety, which cited three unnamed sources for its report, said the identity of Sony's partner in the blockbuster deal-or even the existence of one-was not clear. Previous deals in the sector have involved investment outfits like Eldridge Industries, owned by Todd Boehly, who is chairman of Premier League football club Chelsea, and who also has a stake in the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team. Michael Jackson, who died in 2009 after decades of performing and recording, has one of the most financially lucrative back catalogues of any artist. —AFP

Sports

IRVING MAKES A WINNING DEBUT AS BROWN HURT IN CELTICS WIN

CELTICS SHAKE OFF THE ABSENCE OF 3 STARTERS, BEAT 76ERS 106-99

LOS ANGELES: Kyrie Irving shook off some new-team nerves Wednesday, scoring 24 points in his Dallas debut to lead the Mavericks to a 110-104 NBA victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. Irving, a former NBA champion and eight-time All-Star who was traded to Dallas on Sunday after a sometimes controversial tenure with the Brooklyn Nets, added four rebounds and five assists and the Mavs led all the way despite the absence of star Luka Doncic, who remained sidelined with a foot injury.

"Incredible," Irving said of his first game since the trade he requested from Brooklyn, where, he said this week, he "felt very disrespected." "I had natural nerves out there, so I was just trying to play well," he added. "I got to play the game that I love with some guys that were selfless out there and it just feels good." Irving made nine of his 17 shots from the field and delivered four three-pointers against a Clippers team that was among those reportedly courting him once his trade request became public.

Dallas coach Jason Kidd said Irving's contribution went beyond scoring for a Mavs team that has floundered without Doncic on the floor. "His leadership down the stretch of getting everyone organized... a lot of great stuff on this new journey with him. It's going to be fun."

The Mavericks shot out of the gate, fueled by five three-pointers in the first quarter from Reggie Bullock. Irving found his range in the second period to help them push their lead to as many as 19. Clippers star Kawhi Leonard scored 13 of his 18 points in the third quarter as Los Angeles closed the gap, but Irving and the Mavs

had more than enough to keep them at bay. In Boston, the league-leading Celtics shook off the absence of three starters and the early exit of Jaylen Brown with a facial injury to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 106-99.

Brown took an accidental elbow from teammate Jayson Tatum as they both went for a rebound with less than two minutes left in the first half and Brown was knocked out of the game. The Athletic website later reported he had a facial fracture that would likely sideline him through the February 19 All-Star Game, although the Celtics did not immediately confirm that. His departure was a potentially crushing blow for a Celtics team already without Marcus Smart, Robert Williams and Al Horford, but the Eastern Conference leaders didn't miss a beat.

"Tonight was the definition of a team win," Tatum told broadcaster ESPN after the Celtics shot 52.6 percent from the floor, draining 19 of their 35 three-point attempts. Tatum himself had a quiet night with just 12 points, eight rebounds and nine assists, connecting on just five of his 15 shots from the field. But his unheralded teammates did more than enough to hold off the Sixers and their MVP candidate Joel Embiid, who led all scorers with 28 points. James Harden scored 20 for Philadelphia, who never led after the first quarter.

Lillard fuels Portland

In Portland, Damian Lillard had a triple double of 33 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists as the Trail Blazers rallied to beat the Golden State Warriors 125-122. Jordan Poole scored 38 points and Klay Thompson added 31 for the Warriors,



LOS ANGELES: Kyrie Irving #2 of the Dallas Mavericks struggles for the ball at Crypto.com Arena on February 08, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

who were again without injured Stephen Curry. The Sacramento Kings edged the Rockets 130-128 in Houston, where De'Aaron Fox made three free throws with three-tenths of a second left to seal it after Eric Gordon was charged with a

debatable shooting foul. Fox scored 13 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter as the Kings withstood 41 points from Houston's Jalen Green to win a tight back-and-forth battle that featured 22 lead changes. —AFP

PHOENIX SUNS TARGET DURANT

LOS ANGELES: NBA superstar forward Kevin Durant is headed to the Phoenix Suns in a blockbuster trade from the Brooklyn Nets, US media reported on Wednesday. The Nets were trading Durant and TJ Warren in exchange for Mikal Bridges, Cam Johnson, Jae Crowder and four first-round draft picks, according to US outlets, including ESPN, which cited unnamed sources.

The move, on the eve of the NBA's trade deadline on Thursday, follows Brooklyn's trade of Kyrie Irving to the Dallas Mavericks on Sunday, after Irving requested a move. It also comes on the same day that US billionaire mortgage lender Mat Ishbia made his debut as the new owner of the Suns, promising that he was "not going to be sitting here counting the dollars. I'm going to look at how can we improve our team."

Durant—a two-time NBA champion, two-time Finals MVP and a former NBA regular-season MVP—had requested a trade in June, less than a year after he inked a four-year, \$198 million contract extension with the Nets. The 34-year-old had reportedly grown frustrated with the direction of the franchise, who were swept in the first round of last season's playoffs despite having the star duo of Durant and Irving.

In August it became clear that Durant would remain in Brooklyn, but the club got off to a chaotic start this season. They sacked head coach Steve Nash in November after a 1-5 start to the season. Then Irving was suspended for eight games after a social media post publicizing a movie with anti-Semitic themes and declining to apologize. Although the Nets fortunes had turned around under new coach Jacques Vaughn, Durant has been sidelined since January 8 because of a sprained ligament in his right knee.

On Tuesday, Vaughn told reporters that Durant "had a really good report" in his latest medical evaluation, although the team had offered no timeline on when he would return to the court. Durant was averaging 29.7 points per game on 55.9 percent shooting, 6.7 rebounds, 5.3 assists and 1.5 blocks per game this season. He was named an All-Star Game team captain as the top vote-getter in the Eastern Conference but will not be able to play in the game on February 19.

Conference rivals

The mercurial Irving, who reportedly asked out of Brooklyn after failing to agree on a contract extension, made his Mavericks debut on Wednesday, scoring 24 points in a victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. Irving, asked about the Durant trade after the Mavs game, said he was looking forward to taking on his good friend as a Western Conference rival.

"I love the competition now that we can be in the same conference," Irving said. "That's what I'm looking forward to. Everything else and in the in-between, I'm just glad that he got out of there." Durant and Irving both arrived in Brooklyn in 2019 aiming to form a "super team" along with James Harden—who was traded to the Philadelphia 76ers shortly before the trade deadline last year. Amid injuries, controversies and simple lack of chemistry, Brooklyn's "Big Three" never advanced past the second round of the playoffs together.

Durant will now join veteran star Chris Paul and Devin Booker in Phoenix in a bid to claim the third championship ring of his career, after he won two with the Golden State Warriors in 2017 and 2018. Irving's move to Dallas started the trade dominos falling in earnest. In addition to the Durant trade, the Los Angeles Lakers are reportedly poised to trade Russell Westbrook to the Utah Jazz in a three-team deal that will bring Minnesota's D'Angelo Russell to the Lakers, US media reported on Wednesday. —AFP

CRICKETERS TO WATCH AT WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

PARIS: As the women's T20 World Cup gets ready to start in South Africa on Friday, AFP Sport picks out five cricketers to watch.

India: Shafali Verma

At the end of January, Shafali Verma led India to victory in the Under-19 World Cup. Barely two weeks later, the 19-year-old batter is back in South Africa to help India in their bid to win the women's T20. As a child she disguised herself as a boy in order to play but after breaking into the senior women's game, there has been no stopping her.

Youngest international, youngest to score 50 which she did against West Indies in her first series and the youngest to play in all three formats for India. Her aggressive batting style has resulted in the nickname "Lady Schwag", after explosive Indian men's opener Virinder Sehwa, but it was seeing Sachin Tendulkar batting when she was just nine that inspired her to chase the game. Ahead of the 2020 edition, when India were runners-up to Australia, Verma ranked as number one T20 batter in the world. She has now played 51 T20Is, racking up over 1200 runs at an impressive strike rate of 134.5.

England: Alice Capsey

If England are to unseat defending champions

INDIA DOMINATE AUSTRALIA IN TEST OPENER

NAGPUR: Indian spinner Ravindra Jadeja grabbed a five-wicket haul on his international return as India ruled the opening day of the first Test against Australia on Thursday. Jadeja returned figures of 5-47 and fellow spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took three wickets to bowl out Australia for 177 in the final session on a turning Nagpur pitch. In reply, India were 77 for one at stumps, with skipper Rohit Sharma on 56 and Ashwin, yet to score, at the crease. The hosts still trail Australia by 100 runs.

Rohit began by hitting three boundaries off Australian skipper Pat Cummins' first over, and put on 76 runs with opening partner KL Rahul, who made a labored 20. The Indian captain reached his fifty with a four off Nathan Lyon and remained sharp to see off the day's play. Rahul fell caught and bowled off debutant spinner Todd Murphy, who celebrated his first

AUSTRALIA THE TEAM TO BEAT IN WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

CAPE TOWN: Defending champions Australia have undergone significant changes in their squad but remain the team to beat in the Women's T20 World Cup which starts in Cape Town on Friday. Meg Lanning's team slipped to a surprise loss to Ireland in a warm-up game on Wednesday but prior to that they had lost just once in 27 T20 internationals since March 2021. That defeat came in a super over after a tied match against India last December - they won all the other four matches in the series.

"Our squad has gone through a period of change since the last World Cup but I think that is a positive," said Lanning. "We are constantly evolving and we have great flexibility in our team both with bat and ball." Seven of the team that beat India in front

Australia they will need their 18-year-old all-rounder Alice Capsey to live up to and exceed her already remarkable progress. First, though, they need her to be fit - she broke her collarbone during England's tour of the West Indies in December. But if she is firing on all cylinders the batting all-rounder will be crucial. She made her international debut last summer and was England's highest scorer at the Commonwealth Games. A two-time winner of The Hundred with Oval Invincibles, she has also starred for Melbourne Stars in the women's Big Bash in Australia.

Australia: Kim Garth

Kim Garth was only 14 when she made her international debut in an ODI against New Zealand in 2010. That, however, was in the green shirt of her native Ireland with whom she won 114 caps in total as well as being vice-captain. She was named Ireland cricketer of the decade in 2021 but by then had decided to try for a pro career in Australia. It worked. The 26-year-old all-rounder did well enough to qualify for her new country, making her debut in a T20 in Mumbai in December. Defending champions Australia have a side packed with big names so Garth's opportunities may be limited but if she should get some time in the spotlight, expect her to make the most of it. One thing she will be glad, however, is that Ireland are in the other group.

Pakistan: Nida Dar

Amid the young guns, an old-stager in the shape of Pakistan's 36-year-old off-spinner Nida Dar. After making her international debut against Ireland in 2010, she has gone on to play 84 ODIs and over 100

Test wicket. Jadeja, a left-arm orthodox bowler who came back into the Indian side after a knee injury, stood out with his guile, taking key wickets including those of Marnus Labuschagne (49) and Steve Smith (37). Both Australians had launched a fightback with their third-wicket 82-run stand after losing openers Usman Khawaja and David Warner early in the day.

Peter Handscomb (31) and wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey (36) also put on a partnership of 53 before Ashwin ended Carey's spell at the crease to record his 450th Test wicket. Jadeja's double strike on successive balls soon after lunch rocked the tourists as he sent back Labuschagne and then trapped Matt Renshaw for a first-ball duck. He later bowled Smith with a delivery that went through his bat and pad. Ashwin and Jadeja kept up the charge to get into the Australian tail when the tourists took tea at 174-8, and added just three runs in the final session.

Earlier, seamer Mohammed Siraj struck on his first ball to get Khawaja trapped lbw for one with a delivery that swung in to the left-hander, after the tourists elected to bat at the start of the one-match series. An appeal was turned down by the on-field umpire but India successfully reviewed the decision. Mohammed

of a world record crowd of 86,174 in the 2020 final in Melbourne are in the squad in South Africa, including stars such as Lanning, Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner and Megan Schutt.

If anything, Australia have been strengthened by the inclusion of Ellyse Perry, one of women cricket's all-time greats, who was injured in the early stages of the 2020 tournament, while Tablia McGrath has emerged as one of the game's leading all-rounders. They have also unearthed an exciting fast bowler in Darcie Brown, 19, and introduced former Ireland all-rounder Kim Garth.

From the cauldron of a packed Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia will start the defence of their title in quieter surroundings when they meet New Zealand in Paarl on Saturday, where they are likely to have to contend with a slow pitch. They will also be up against arch-rivals New Zealand, the only team to have beaten them since the 2020 World Cup, other than in a super over. The White Ferns' two wins, though, were countered by four victories by Australia.



Pakistan's Nida Dar

T20Is. She was named Pakistan's player of the tournament at the 2018 T20 World Cup and featured again in 2020. She is now just five short of West Indies' Anisa Mohammed's record of 125 T20 wickets. Her nickname "Lady Boom Boom" is a reminder that she is also a useful slugger with the bat.

S Africa: Marizanne Kapp

When Dane van Niekerk was cut from the squad there was a fear that her wife Marizanne Kapp might also step away. But the 33-year-old stayed with the team which, realistically, is only likely to progress from a group that includes Australia and New Zealand, if she delivers. Kapp has had her problems, not least four bouts of COVID, but she is a class all-rounder with a Test hundred under her belt as well as a lorryload of wickets. She was South Africa's standout performer in last year's ODI World Cup with 203 runs and 12 wickets. —AFP



NAGPUR: India's Ravindra Jadeja celebrates his fifth wicket, after the dismissal of Australia's Peter Handscomb (not pictured) during the first day of the first Test cricket match between India and Australia on February 9, 2023. —AFP

Shami raised the noise in the next over when the seamer bowled the left-handed Warner for one. Australia controversially left out in-form left-hand batsman Travis Head, while India handed Test caps to Twenty20 sensation Suryakumar Yadav and wicket-keeper Srikar Bharat. —AFP



Australia's Meg Lanning

Competing attractions

Women's cricket reached a high point in Australia in 2020 which is unlikely to be challenged in terms of crowd attendances in South Africa, where tickets for all matches remain available. Advance sales for some matches have been promising, however, notably for the opening match between South Africa and Sri Lanka at Newlands on Friday and the final at the same ground on February 26. —AFP

Sports

DORTMUND DEFEAT BOCHUM, BOOK GERMAN CUP QUARTERS

LONG-RANGE CAN, REUS SEE DORTMUND INTO QUARTERS

BERLIN: Emre Can scored from the halfway line while skipper Marco Reus grabbed a late winner as Borussia Dortmund defeated neighboring Bochum 2-1 on Wednesday to qualify for the German Cup quarter-finals. The five-time German Cup winners were made to work for their victory, taking on a team who had won five from five at home since manager Thomas Letsch took over in late September. Dortmund took the lead thanks to Can's quick thinking on the stroke of half-time.

Bochum goalkeeper Manuel Riemann ran well outside his box to thwart a Dortmund attack, but his clearance fell to Can inside the centre circle. The former Liverpool and Juventus midfielder took one touch to control the ball before punting a long-range effort past the retreating Riemann and into the net for a 1-0 lead at the break. "I actually didn't hit it that well" Can told Sky Germany. "But in the end it was in. It was a beautiful goal."

English teenager Jamie Bynoe-Gittens, handed a rare start by Dortmund manager Edin Terzic, leapt to meet a cross in the 59th minute but the ball connected with his elbow. After a VAR review which took several minutes, Bochum were awarded a penalty and Austrian midfielder Kevin Stoger rifled his shot down the middle to level the scores. Terzic brought on captain Reus just three minutes later and the two-time German Cup winner scored three minutes after that, guiding a perfect pass from Jude Bellingham into an empty net.

Terzic, who won the Cup as Dortmund's caretaker manager in 2020-21, praised his side for emerging victorious in a "huge Cup fight, it was intense, as (we) expected." "Bochum made our lives difficult." After losing his first home game as

Bochum manager, Letsch told German TV "we have to put a line through that one now, but we can leave the pitch with our heads held high." Dortmund join Bayern Munich, RB Leipzig, Stuttgart, Union Berlin, Freiburg, Eintracht Frankfurt and second division Nuremberg, who won earlier on Wednesday, in the quarter finals.

Nuremberg through on pens

Nuremberg also qualified for the last-eight by beating Fortuna Duesseldorf on penalties after scoring an injury-time equaliser in a 1-1 draw. Duesseldorf took the lead in the 33rd minute through David Kownacki and looked in complete control of the tie, only for Nuremberg's Taylan Duman to score in the third minute of stoppage time to force the game into extra time. Duesseldorf striker Jona Niemiec had his side's fourth penalty saved by Nuremberg goalkeeper Peter Vindahl. Home forward Erik Shuranov stepped up to score the decisive kick, sending his side through as the only second-division club to reach the last eight with a 5-3 shootout victory. Duesseldorf scored from their first chance, Kownacki heading in a cross from Emmanuel Iyoha.

The visitors almost made it 2-0 in the 69th minute through Kownacki, but Vindahl made a fingertip save. Nuremberg took advantage late on through midfielder Duman, whose shot was deflected into the goal by Austrian defender Christoph Klarer. Only five teams - Bayern Munich, Werder Bremen, Schalke, Borussia Dortmund and Eintracht Frankfurt - have won more German Cup titles than Nuremberg's four. The draw for the next round will take place on Sunday. —AFP



BOCHUM: Bochum's Brazilian defender Danilo Soares (left) and Dortmund's English midfielder Jude Bellingham vie for the ball during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) football match VfL Bochum v BVB Borussia Dortmund on February 8, 2023. — AFP

IRELAND'S FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR FARRELL

DUBLIN: Ireland going into Saturday's Six Nations blockbuster against France as favorites is a testament to head coach Andy Farrell having allowed the players the freedom to express themselves, Irish rugby great Tony Ward told AFP. Ireland rugby icon Johnny Sexton may have been the on the field general who has inspired them to top the world rankings. However, Ward insists Farrell has been a revelation since he took over after the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

The former English rugby league superstar succeeded Joe Schmidt, the man he had served as assistant for several years and together had brought the Irish a 2018 Six Nations Grand Slam. He had to pick up the pieces after another disappointing World Cup and when results failed to improve in his first year in charge the knives were sharpened. Former Ireland international turned journalist Neil Francis said Farrell was not cut out for being a Test coach and Ward himself admits "I could not see anything happening short term at the time."

However, Ward is now without reservation a Farrell admirer after the 47-year-old guided the Irish to last year's Triple Crown and later in 2022 a historic series win in New Zealand. "What I really like about Farrell is he has given the players a licence for freedom of expression," Ward told AFP by phone on Wednesday.

"Albeit in the controlled environment that has to be the case in professional sport."

Ward, a dashing fly-half in his pomp for Ireland winning 19 caps between 1978-87, says that is a huge difference to the Schmidt era where the New Zealander had a strict gameplan. Ward says the players are clearly enjoying themselves with the more relaxed atmosphere and being able to express themselves. Tellingly Sexton reflected that after winning the Triple Crown when talking about Farrell and his coaching staff. "A different approach to previous management that I've worked under which I think is the right way to do it," said Sexton.

'Real enjoyable place'

Ward believes Farrell chimes with the Irish mentality more than Schmidt. "Farrell being from the north of England suits our mindset," said Ward, who was born in Ireland but brought up in Yorkshire. "I think it is similar based on passion and a bit of a chip on the shoulder, in his case the north and south of England. There is an element of that." Former Ireland international full-back Hugo MacNeill hailed Farrell's lack of ego and his "integrity." "He has brought in people like Mike Catt and Paul O'Connell which was really courageous and wise on his part," MacNeill told AFP.

"Farrell does not bring ego, he brings the best characteristics of a human to the team." Veteran flanker Peter O'Mahony and fellow Munster team-mate Dave Kilcoyne believe the squad environment is a happier place. "I was chatting to Pete (O'Mahony) the other



Ireland's head coach Andy Farrell

day at dinner, everyone talks about how good an environment it is here, and it's not rubbish," Kilcoyne said. "It actually is a real enjoyable place to be, but that comes from the top down. Faz (Farrell) has got great people in, and it filters down to the players."

Ward says there is no longer "a fear factor and looking over their shoulder which all makes for a happier environment." He credits Farrell too for raising the sport's image to heights it had never seen before. "Never before has the game been more popular," said the 68-year-old. "I am not being egotistical here but walking round Dublin today so many people were chatting to me about rugby." "Rugby is very much in the spotlight and for me that all traces back to Farrell and where he has taken us in the last four years." —AFP

JUVE, FIORENTINA IN FIERY RIVALRIES

MILAN: Juventus host Fiorentina in one of Italian football's most enduring and fiery rivalries on Sunday but once again the focus is on the off-field matters looming over their troubled campaign. Juve are back in the top half of the Serie A table after Tuesday's 3-0 cruise past Salernitana, boosted by star striker Dusan Vlahovic putting his injury problems behind him with a nicely taken brace, his first goals for the Turin giants since mid-October.

But their season has been severely compromised by the 15-point penalty inflicted last month for what the Italian Football Federation ruled was illicit transfer activity designed to artificially boost their accounts, with the 'Old Lady' 13 points away from the Champions League positions.

Juve are appealing the judgment at Italy's highest sporting court - the Olympic Committee (CONI) - while also awaiting a preliminary hearing next month which will decide whether the club and its former leadership will face a separate criminal trial for accounting offences. Both probes are in supporters' crosshairs after a video from 2019 was released on Monday in which one of the three Turin prosecutors heading the criminal investigation, Ciro Santoriello, said he was a Napoli fan and "hated Juventus".

Also unearthed was a 2021 social media post from a member of CONI's court - who will likely not be ruling on Juve's appeal against their points deduction - criticizing the club and former chairman Andrea Agnelli after the aborted launch of the European Super League. Before Tuesday's Salernitana stroll Juve's new chief football officer Francesco Calvo demanded "respect" for the club but did not call for the head of Santoriello, a respected financial crimes expert in Turin's anti-mafia investigative unit.

"Comments removed from their proper context can take on a different meaning to what they had in the correct context," Calvo told DAZN. "This is also true for Juventus and all the people involved in the investigation." Rather than supporting Santoriello, Calvo's message was that the extensive wiretap evidence from the criminal investigation which was leaked all over the Italian media is partial and does not tell the whole story. Napoli host Cremonese on Sunday with a chance to both gain revenge for their Italian Cup exit at the hands of Serie A's bottom team and increase their 13-point league lead on Inter Milan.

Inter however are on the up after last weekend's Milan derby triumph and are heavy favourites at struggling Sampdoria, another club with huge off-field issues. Samp have until February 16 to make 11 million euros of salary payments due for the last three months of 2022, or risk being docked two points. That would be a hammer blow to a club already in deep financial trouble, whose majority shareholder Massimo Ferrero was forced to step down as chairman in 2021 after he was charged with fraudulent bankruptcy and spent time in prison.

Dejan Stankovic's Samp side are second from bottom and eight points from safety, and need a bank loan to come through so that their survival bid is not further compro-



ROME: Lazio's Italian coach Maurizio Sarri reacts during the Italian Serie A football match at the Olympic Stadium in Rome. —AFP

mised. Crumbling champions AC Milan start the action against Torino on Friday night, 18 points behind Napoli and outside the Champions League places. Stefano Pioli's side have lost their last three in the league and desperately need a kick-start with the home leg of their last-16 Champions League tie with Tottenham coming on Tuesday.

Player to watch

The Serbia forward looked in fine fettle in scoring twice at Salernitana, not a good sign for his former team Fiorentina whose fans might have two "traitors" lining up against them on Sunday evening. Both Vlahovic and Federico Chiesa are expected to play at the Allianz Stadium in Turin and the former will be keen to increase his league tally of eight goals with the help of his fellow ex-Viola. —AFP

News in brief

FULHAM BEAT SUNDERLAND

LONDON: Fulham set up a FA Cup fifth round clash with Leeds after holding on for a 3-2 win at Sunderland on Wednesday. The Premier League side looked to be heading through comfortably at the Stadium of Light as goals from Harry Wilson and Andreas Pereira early in each half put Fulham in command. Jack Clarke's curled effort appeared to have set up a grandstand finish. But Layvin Kurzawa quickly restored Fulham's two-goal cushion. Jevison Bennette again reduced the arrears for the Championship side in stoppage time. But dreams of a reunion with Leeds, who Sunderland beat to win the FA Cup 50 years ago, were dashed. "We've been working hard to reach this level and create a winning mentality," said Fulham boss Marco Silva, who watched the game from the stands as he served a touchline ban. "I knew before the game that it wouldn't be the best, I made nine changes, but we are pleased." —AFP

KUWAIT JOINS COMMITTEE

KUWAIT: The Arab Federation of Sports Pioneers' Executive Committee agreed to add Kuwait as a new official member of the federation, represented by the President of the Kuwaiti Athletes Association, Nawaf Al-Bghaili. This came in the committee's 14th meeting on Wednesday, via video conference, headed by Dr Mohammad Al-Ruwaisah from Saudi Arabia, with the participation of vice-presidents and members of the committee from Arab countries. In a statement to KUNA on Thursday, the head of the Kuwaiti Athletes Association, Nawaf Al-Bghaili, expressed his appreciation to the Executive Committee of Arab Federation of Sports Pioneers for Kuwait's official approval as a member of the federation. Al-Bghaili added that the meeting discussed various issues such as financial reports for the ending period, as well as reviewing and approving the activities and programs in 2023. —KUNA

ITALIAN SKIER FANCHINI DIES

MILAN: Italian alpine skier Elena Fanchini has died after a long battle with cancer, Italian ski federation FISU said on Wednesday, as US superstar Mikaela Shiffrin said the 37-year-old "will never be forgotten". "At the end of a serious illness, Elena Fanchini passed away in her home in Solato (near Brescia)," the FISU said in a short statement. FISU confirmed to AFP that Fanchini, a World Championship downhill silver medalist in 2005, had died from an unspecified cancer which she had been battling since 2018. Fanchini made four World Cup podiums, all in downhill, including two victories in Lake Louise, Canada in December 2005 and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy in 2015. But she was plagued by injuries throughout her career, above all with her knees which she said were like "glass". Fanchini missed the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang due to her illness, and suffered serious injury on her return later that year following an operation on the tumor. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

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

Change of Name

I, Gulam Farooque holder of Indian Passport No. L-1165525 issued at Kuwait on 30-06-2013. Permanent resident of room No. F N H B 80, Mehfil E Jahangirya, S.M.Road, Antop Hill,

Mumbai-400037 presently resident of Salmiya, Zone-11, Street-Moosa Abdur Razzaq-4, Building-7, Flat-101, Kuwait will henceforth be known as Gulam Farooque (Given Name) Shaikh (Surname) as per documents. Objection(s), if any, may be forwarded to Embassy of India, State of Kuwait. (C #2850) 8-2-2023

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MANAGERLESS LEEDS HOLD UNITED

MAN UNITED'S MANAGER FUMES AFTER 2-2 DRAW



MANCHESTER: Leeds United's Austrian defender Maximilian Wober (rear) fights for the ball with Manchester United's Dutch striker Wout Weghorst during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Leeds United on February 8, 2023. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag criticized his side's "unacceptable" start to Wednesday's 2-2 draw with managerless Leeds, despite battling back from 2-0 down. Leeds sacked Jesse Marsch on Monday following a run of seven league games without a win. Caretaker manager Michael Skubala had just one 20-minute training session to prepare for the trip across The Pennines, but the visitors had been on course for a first victory over United since 2010.

Wilfried Gnonto gave Leeds the perfect start after just a minute and Raphael Varane's own goal doubled their advantage early in the second half. Marcus Rashford's 20th goal of the season sparked the United fightback before Jadon Sancho's first goal since September stretched the Red Devils unbeaten run at home to 16 games.

"You can say we won a point because when you are in a derby and come back from 2-0 down it is good," said Ten Hag after the first of two Premier League clashes in five days between the sides. "But on the other hand when you start a derby like we did it's unacceptable. You have to be ready to fight and we weren't ready for the battle." A point leaves third-placed United still seven

points adrift of leaders Arsenal, having played two games more. The draw is more valuable to Leeds, who edge one point clear of the relegation zone.

Casemiro missed

United badly missed the presence of the suspended Casemiro in midfield, which allowed Leeds to counter-attack at will. Gnonto has been a consistent bright spark of an otherwise sad season for Leeds and exploded the game into life after just 60 seconds as he found the bottom corner for his fourth goal in seven games. United should have been level by half-time as Alejandro Garnacho fired just wide and then saw a shot cleared off the line by Max Woeber after the Argentine had rounded Illan Meslier.

However, the home side were slow out of the blocks after the break and were punished. Gnonto was at the heart of the move again as he released Crysencio Summerville down the left and his cross was turned into his own net by Raphael Varane. "I think it instills belief in the players that they are good enough at this level," said Skubala, who remains unsure if he will be in charge for the visit of United to Elland Road on

Sunday. "They know that and we know that and we just need to go after every game between now and the end of the season."

Ten Hag turned to his bench for solutions and found them in Sancho and Facundo Pellistri to replace the ineffectual Wout Weghorst and Garnacho. Weghorst's withdrawal put Rashford through the middle and within minutes he rose highest to meet Diogo Dalot's cross for his 12th goal in 14 games since the World Cup. Leeds were inches away from restoring their two-goal lead almost immediately when Brenden Aaronson's free-kick came back off the post.

But their advantage was soon wiped out completely 20 minutes from time. Sancho's fitness struggles have sidelined him for most of the season, but his return to action has been a timely boost with United still involved in four competitions and short on attacking options. The England international collected Luke Shaw's deflected cross and his low strike caught out Meslier low to his left. "He's all the way back," added Ten Hag. "We know he's a magnificent player. I think consistently he can have a big impact. But he has to work hard. It will motivate him to get more." — AFP

EPL TABLE

English Premier League table after Wednesday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Arsenal	20	16	2	2	45	17	50
Man City	21	14	3	4	53	21	45
Man Utd	22	13	4	5	36	28	43
Newcastle	21	10	10	1	34	12	40
Tottenham	22	12	3	7	41	31	39
Brighton	20	10	4	6	38	27	34
Brentford	21	8	9	4	35	28	33
Fulham	22	9	5	8	32	30	32
Chelsea	21	8	6	7	22	21	30
Liverpool	20	8	5	7	34	28	29
Aston Villa	21	8	4	9	25	31	28
Crystal Palace	21	6	6	9	19	29	24
Nottm Forest	21	6	6	9	17	35	24
Leicester	21	6	3	12	32	37	21
Wolves	21	5	5	11	15	30	20
Leeds	21	4	7	10	28	36	19
West Ham	21	5	4	12	18	26	19
Everton	21	4	6	11	16	28	18
Bournemouth	21	4	5	12	19	43	17
Southampton	21	4	3	14	17	38	15

MARSEILLE STUN PSG, THE FIRST IN 12 YEARS

PARIS: Ruslan Malinovskyi scored an excellent second-half winner as Marseille beat rivals Paris Saint-Germain at home for the first time since 2011 on Wednesday, winning 2-1 to reach the French Cup quarter-finals. Alexis Sanchez gave Marseille the lead just after the half-hour mark from the penalty spot, before Sergio Ramos equalized on the stroke of half-time.

But Ukraine international Malinovskyi blasted the hosts back in front and they held on to end their long wait for a victory over PSG at Stade Velodrome. "We know that our supporters have been waiting for that victory for a long time. We are happy to share this with them," Marseille captain Valentin Rongier told France 3 after only his side's second win in their last 27 meetings with PSG.

It was a second straight early Cup exit for record 14-time winners PSG after last season's last-16 loss to Nice. "We made a few mistakes that cost us dearly," said PSG skipper Marquinhos. "It's a defeat that hurts because it's a Cup match against our great rivals. We wanted to come back to Paris with victory and qualification. "We have to do better, keep working and move forward." Igor Tudor's Marseille will now be among the favorites to lift the trophy for an 11th time but first since 1989.

Marseille, who slipped eight points behind leaders PSG on Sunday after a 3-1 home loss to Nice, started slowly. But they grew into the game after goalkeeper Pau Lopez had denied Nuno Mendes an



MARSEILLE: Marseille's players celebrate winning the French Cup round of 16 football match between Olympique Marseille (OM) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on February 8, 2023. — AFP

early opener, with Matteo Guendouzi's shot excellently saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma. Ramos was the culprit as Marseille forged ahead, clumsily fouling Cengiz Under just inside the area. Sanchez stepped up to send Donnarumma the wrong way and score his 11th goal of a productive first season since joining OM from Inter Milan.

Lionel Messi, with a free-kick, and Neymar both came close to levelling, before Ramos did just that by steering a header into the far corner from a Neymar set-piece in first-half stoppage time. Marseille restored their lead in the 57th minute as a loose ball broke to Malinovskyi on the edge of the box and the on-loan Atalanta midfielder hammered a left-footed strike into the top corner. PSG rarely carried a threat but almost forced a penalty shootout when Neymar set Messi in the clear, only for the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner to fire off target. — AFP

CRAWFORD WINS WORLD SUPER-G

COURCHEVEL: Canada's James Crawford upset a loaded field to snatch a surprise super-G gold at the World Ski Championships in Courchevel on Thursday. Crawford, who won alpine combined bronze at last year's Beijing Olympics, clocked 1min 07.22sec down L'Eclipse piste in the French resort. "It's been a long time since I've dreamed of being on the top step at a world stage. I've been teasing myself with it the last couple of years with a couple of World Cup podiums and Olympic Games bronze," said Crawford. "To be able to come out today and put down a run worthy of winning was an amazing experience. I'm going to cherish this day for a long time."

That time was enough to edge fancied Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde into silver by just one-hundredth of a second - that translates into 27 centimeters. France's Alexis Pinturault, fresh from winning alpine combined gold on Tuesday, again thrilled his home Courchevel crowd by taking bronze, at 0.26sec. "I'm super satisfied to take my first world champs medal," said Kilde, one part of alpine skiing's glamour couple alongside US star Mikaela Shiffrin, who claimed silver in the women's super-G Wednesday with the same bib number nine.

"It's been a weight on my shoulders for many, many years. It's been one of my biggest goals. It would have been even better if it was in gold, but I feel like I won the silver medal and didn't lose the gold medal today and that's what I have to think about and continue to fight for that gold." Pinturault said a second medal on home snow, just 10 minutes on skis from the hotel which his parents run and

where he grew up, was "extraordinary".

"I could dream about it for sure, but it's something else to achieve," he said. "Being able to get two medals in two races including one gold is incredible. "Bringing everything else together at the right moment, especially when the world champs are in France, is something special." Pinturault also played down any fears that he is enjoying home advantage on the slope, which was only modified into a race track for last year's World Cup Finals. "Everyone thinks I trained here before, but no!" he joked.

Crawford the outsider

With just three World Cup podiums to his name, albeit two in December of this season, Crawford was a rank outsider coming into the race. His gold was Canada's first since Erik Guay claimed the super-G title in the 2017 worlds in St Moritz.

Starting with bib number 10, Crawford could only look on as first in-form Swiss Marco Odermatt, the runaway World Cup overall leader, streaked into the lead. Odermatt was hot favorite, having notched up 13 podium finishes in his last 16 participations in World Cup super-G events, including seven victories - four of which have come this season. Pinturault was next down, the flag-waving crowd going wild in a cacophony of sound mixing cowbells, airhorns, a sole trumpeter and bass-heavy dance music.

French hopes of a second gold in as many days were shortlived as Kilde next descended the course in bib number nine. Pinturault was left shaking his head and grimacing in the knowledge that the Norwegian, winner of two World Cup super-G races this season, had taken the lead. No one had bet on Crawford, however, the 25-year-old Canadian superbly negotiating speeds of 115km/h (71mph) and jumps of up to 45 metres down a course that demanded both technical and gliding ability. — AFP