



Established 1961

ISSUE NO: 18965
16 PAGES, 150 FILLS

The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

RAJAB 24, 1444 AH
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023



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Crown Prince honors KFAS and Al-Sumait prizewinners



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honored the winners of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Prize for 2020 and 2021 and winners of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development on Feb 14, 2023. — KUNA (See Page 2)

GAZIANTEP, Turkey: Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli expressed Kuwait's solidarity and sympathy with Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquake. Upon her arrival in Gaziantep in southern Turkey, Baghli said: "Today we convey a message that Kuwait stands by the people of Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquake that struck the two countries last week," expressing condolences to the families of the victims and wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Baghli also affirmed that Kuwait is closely following the unfortunate events, noting that her visit aims to follow up on the progress of relief operations in conjunction with the Kuwait by Your Side campaign, which was launched in implementation of the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Baghli flew to Turkey on a Kuwait Air Force plane, accompanied by Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Sonmez.

Turkish Deputy Minister of Family and Social Services Ridvan Duran expressed his country's appreciation for Kuwait's stance, thanking the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people for standing by the Turkish people in this



GAZIANTEP, Turkey: Children welcome Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli on Feb 14, 2023. — KUNA

difficult time. The Kuwaiti "airbridge" includes the participation of Kuwait Fire Force, which takes the initiative to deal with the effects of the earthquake and contribute to search and rescue operations. The Kuwaiti health ministry and

Kuwait Red Crescent Society are also taking part in providing medical, pharmaceutical support and the necessary urgent healthcare, as Kuwaiti charities continue their relief work.

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Kuwait, West slam Zionist settlements

KUWAIT: Kuwait expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of the Zionist occupation's approval of a bill aimed at legalizing settlement outposts and building new settlements in the occupied West Bank, the foreign ministry said on Monday. The move is a "violation of the principles of international law and undermines all international efforts aimed at reaching a just and comprehensive solution that resumes the Middle East peace process on the basis of a two-state solution," read a ministry statement.

The ministry reiterated Kuwait's "principled and firm" stance against the Zionist entity's ongoing "violations", calling on the international community to take swift action to stop these actions and provide full protection to the Palestinian people and their property. It also called on the international community to work to stop this unilateral decision in order to reach a final solution based on international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The chief of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also condemned on Tuesday the Zionist plan. It is imperative for the international community to ramp up pressure on the Zionist government in a bid to halt such activities that "contravene international laws and principles", the Riyadh-based bloc quoted Jassem Al-Budaiwi as saying in a statement. Gulf Arab states will remain by the Palestinians' side until their statehood aspirations, based on 1967 borderlines, come to fruition, added the statement.

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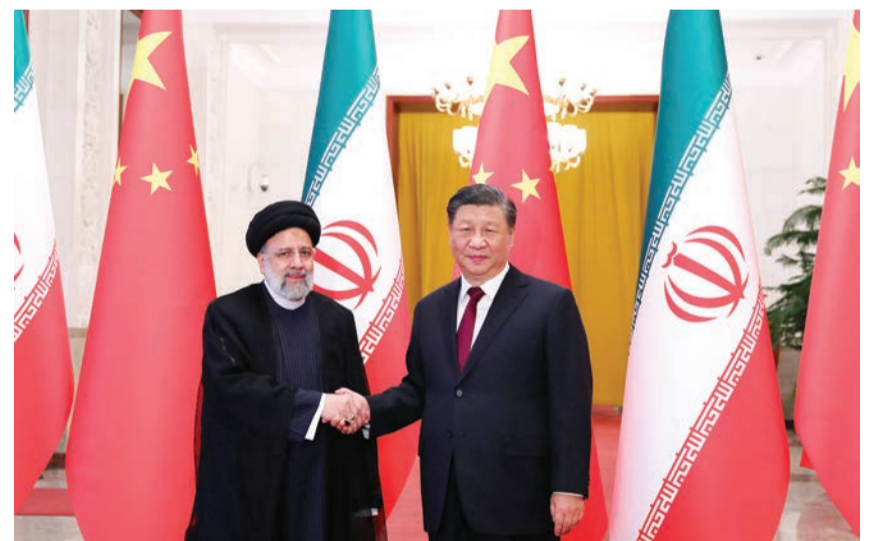
Xi meets Raisi, hails 'solidarity'

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping hailed Beijing's "solidarity" with Iran on Tuesday as he hosted the Islamic republic's President Ebrahim Raisi at the start of a three-day trip. For the first state visit by an Iranian president to China in more than 20 years, Raisi has brought a large trade and finance delegation to Beijing and was earlier greeted by Xi on a red carpet. "In the face of the current complex changes in the world, times, and history, China and Iran have supported each other (and) worked together in solidarity and cooperation," Xi said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Both countries face pressure from Western nations over their positions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while Iran is already under strict US sanctions due to its nuclear program. Iran has emerged as one of Russia's few remaining allies as Moscow has been pushed deeper into international isolation over the invasion. Western countries have accused Tehran of supplying armed drones to Russia for use in the war in Ukraine, a charge it denies.

In December, Washington outlined what it said was an extensive relationship between Iran and Russia involving equipment such as helicopters, fighter jets and drones. Moscow's offensive in Ukraine is a sensitive issue for Beijing, which has sought to position itself as neutral while offering diplomatic backing to its strategic ally Russia.

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BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomes Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi during his visit on Feb 14, 2023. — AFP

India tax officials raid BBC offices

NEW DELHI: Indian tax authorities raided the BBC's New Delhi and Mumbai offices on Tuesday, weeks after the broadcaster aired a documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions during deadly sectarian riots in 2002. Press freedom in the world's biggest democracy has suffered during

Modi's tenure, rights activists say, and the opposition Congress party condemned the raids, saying there was an "undeclared emergency" in the country.

A spokesman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the broadcaster of engaging in "anti-India propaganda", but said the raids were lawful and the timing had nothing to do with the government. "India is a country which gives an opportunity to every organization," Gaurav Bhatia told reporters. "as long as you don't spew venom". "If you have been following the law of the country, if you have nothing to hide, why be afraid of an

action that is according to the law?"

In a statement on Twitter, the broadcaster said it was "fully cooperating" with authorities. "The Income Tax Authorities are currently at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai," it said. "We hope to have this situation resolved as soon as possible." Police sealed off the BBC's New Delhi office, which occupies two floors of a high-rise on a leafy avenue in the capital's commercial heart. A New Delhi-based BBC employee said that officials had been "confiscating all phones" during the tax raid.

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Nikki Haley announces 2024 presidential bid

CHARLESTON: Former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley announced Tuesday she is running for president in 2024, challenging fellow Republican candidate Donald Trump by proposing a "new generation" of leadership in Washington. "I'm Nikki Haley and I'm running for president," the 51-year-old former governor of South Carolina and

the child of Indian immigrants said in a video statement. "It's time for a new generation of leadership - to rediscover fiscal responsibility, secure our border, and strengthen our country, our pride and our purpose," she said in the video shot in Bamberg, the South Carolina town of her birth. Casting herself as a younger, fresher alternative to the 76-year-old former president Trump, Haley had been hinting at a possible run for weeks and teasing a "big announcement" on Feb 15. In the end, she made her presidential aims official a day early, on Valentine's Day.

Haley is positioning herself as a changemaker who can reinvigorate a party and country she says have lost their way in recent years, and she played

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Nikki Haley



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Crown Prince patronizes KFAS prizes ceremony



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honored the winners of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Prize for 2020 and 2021 and winners of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development on Feb 14, 2023. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Under the auspices and attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Director-General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) organized on Tuesday its prizes Award ceremony for the years 2020-2021, as well as Al-Sumait Prize for African Development in the fields of education and health at Bayan Palace.

His Highness the Crown Prince arrived to the

ceremony location, and received with warmth and hospitality by KFAS Director-General Dr Khaled Mohammad Al-Fadhel, and board members. In a speech Al-Fadhel gave during the ceremony, he hailed the wise leadership and continuous support of His Highness the Crown Prince to KFAS, expressing his deepest thanks and gratitude to his attendance and patronage of this ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by the Head of

the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Director of the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince, retired Lieutenant General Jamal Mohammad Al-Theyab, and the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs at the Office of His Highness the Crown

Prince Mazen Essa Al-Issa.

His Highness the Crown Prince distributed the prizes to the winners of the KFAS prizes, and winners of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development. Later, a documentary film was shown about the inclusion KFAS among the historical buildings in the State of Kuwait. Al-Fadhel handed His Highness the Crown Prince a gift representing a model of the institution's building. — KUNA

Kuwaiti author awarded French badge of honor

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The French Embassy in Kuwait awarded on Monday renowned Kuwaiti novelist Taleb Al-Refai the rank of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters for his great contributions to building cultural bridges between the two countries. Refai, who carries the badge of honor for French literature and arts, is one of the most well-known authors representing Kuwait in international and regional literary conferences and summits.

Refai's journey, which began in the mid-70s, was mostly dedicated to highlighting social activism among the Kuwaiti community and the struggles of Arab and foreign workers in Kuwait, in addition to discussing women's issues and gender relations. He is one of the few Arab authors who write according to the school of autofiction, in which writers use their own names and memoirs in their works. This became one of the main reasons behind translating many of his works to multiple languages such as French, English, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Turkish and Urdu.

Refai has become a household name in France since 2016, where he is described as the one of the most important Arab writers connecting French people to Arab and Kuwaiti culture. All of Refai's novels were published by the French publishing house Actes Sud, which has great interest in Arab contemporary literature. Some of his works include: "Ici Meme" (published in 2016), "L'Ombre du Soleil" (2018), "Al-Najdi le Marin" (2020), "Hapy" (2022), "Kidnapping" (2023) and "Taupe" (still in production).

Before the ceremony, Refai received letters from the French minister of culture and the country's envoy in Kuwait, recognizing the role his works play in bringing Kuwaiti and Arab culture closer to French readers. In 2021, the Kuwaiti author was crowned as the "Cultural Personality of the Year" at the Sharjah International Book Fair, as well as win-



French Ambassador hands certificate to Taleb Al-Refai



French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher

ning the country's encouragement award twice. He was also honored among talented personalities in GCC countries and was awarded in Egypt for his literary achievements.

During the ceremony, French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher warmly welcomed Refai and his family and friends and said that this ceremony is in honor of Refai's translated works and the role he played in cultural exchange between France and Kuwait. "Born in 1958, you completed your bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Kuwait University, and a master's in fine arts in creative writing from Kingston University in London," she said. Flecher added Refai is the only Kuwaiti novelist to have his work translated to French.

Refai said the Arabic language played a major role in his journey up to the moment he received the award. He also expressed his gratitude for being honored by the ambassador as well as the French Counselor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs Benoit Cathala, in the presence of his family, friends and colleagues. His daughter, Fadia Al-Refai, who is also the vice president of Kuwait International Law School, said she is proud of her father being awarded such a title.

Kuwait, Japan enjoy strong friendship: Envoy

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Japan held a press meeting on Monday at the residence of the Japanese ambassador on the occasion of the birthday of the Emperor of Japan on February 23. During his meeting with the Kuwaiti press, Ambassador Morino Yasunari expressed his deepest condolences for the tragic loss of lives in the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, hoping people stand up firmly to this unanticipated historic challenge.

In his remarks, he said Japan and Kuwait both support international peace and prosperity and firmly uphold the rule of law among nations. "The rule of law enables countries to overcome their divisions by talks, not force. As a UN Security Council member, Japan will promote the rule of law and would like to cooperate with Kuwait," he said.

Morino revealed Japan and Kuwait enjoy strong friendship, including a very cordial relationship between the Japanese imperial family and the Kuwaiti ruling family, affirming Japan's appreciation for the enormous support extended to Japan when a major earthquake struck Japan in 2011. "Kuwait is an important supplier of oil for Japan, and we appreciate the role played by Kuwait for a stable international oil market. Still, I would like to develop bilateral cooperation beyond oil trading in the most practical way," he pointed out.

"Earlier this year, Takagi Kei, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, visited Kuwait and discussed the potential for bilateral cooperation, especially in the area of infrastructure development. Japan has technologies that can be applied to developing infrastructure in Kuwait, in areas like electricity, energy, water, waste management, environment, etc, but they have to be modified to be more appropriate to Kuwaiti environment and conditions," Morino said.

He commented that such adaptation of Japanese



Ambassador of Japan Morino Yasunari

technologies to Kuwaiti conditions could be developed through cooperation between Japanese and Kuwaiti experts. "I would like to help to create a kind of expert-level, shoulder-to-shoulder collaboration," he added.

The Japanese ambassador said that the embassy will exert efforts to increase people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. "I would like to see more Kuwaitis visiting Japan for tourism. Japan is proud of its abundance of natural beauty, unique culture and tradition," he said. He revealed that the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) visits Kuwait from time to time to facilitate collaboration with Kuwaiti travel companies.

On education, Morino said Many Japanese universities have recently become more eager to admit students from Middle Eastern countries. "A project called J-MENA, which is a platform linking universities in Japan with those in the MENA region, aims to double the number of students from regional countries in five years," he said.

"I would also like to see more Kuwaiti people learn Japanese. The embassy held its annual Japanese speech contest in December. I would like to encourage more people to participate in the Japanese language course at the Continuing Education Center of Kuwait University. I am keen to foster this kind of momentum to further develop people-to-people exchanges between the two countries," Morino added.



ASG-KU delegation visits Kuwait Times, Kuwait News offices

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A delegation from the Public Affairs Department at United States Army in Kuwait (ASG-KU), represented by Claudia LaMantia and First Lieutenant Austin May, visited Kuwait Times and Kuwait News offices on Tuesday to learn more about the first daily English newspaper in the Arabian Gulf.

The delegation was received by Kuwait Times IT Director Islam Al-Sharaa and Head of Business Department Majd Othman, who accompanied the delegation on a tour of the newspaper's departments and explained the history of the newspaper, which was first published 61 years ago. They discussed the period during the invasion of Kuwait in



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times team shows the delegation a special copy of Kuwait Times newspaper that was published on its 61st anniversary.

1990 and how the newspaper managed to restart publishing after a year. The delegation had the opportunity to get an insight into the workings of a Kuwaiti newspaper, as well as the process of publishing copies of Kuwait Times daily.

Diplomatic Women's Committee celebrates national holidays

KUWAIT: The Diplomatic Women's Committee organized a trip on the invitation of the Al-Hajeri family to the families of the diplomats accredited to Kuwait to their farmhouse, Dar Sheikh, to celebrate the National and Liberation Days of Kuwait. A program was prepared to tell the glorious history of Kuwait and some activities of the families of the diplomats were held at the farmhouse following a delicious Kuwaiti lunch buffet.

At the end of the visit, the Al-Hajeri family invited their guests for Arabic coffee with dates in the Kuwaiti traditional way. The attendees thanked the



Al-Hajeri family for this kind invitation. The committee presented them with a memorial shield to honor the hospitality and the beautiful atmosphere of Dar Sheikh and its surrounding farmlands, DWC members enjoyed this memorable excursion, congratulating Kuwait on its National and Liberation Days.



Crown Prince receives head of Saudi Audit Bureau



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday received head of the Audit Bureau in Saudi Arabia Dr Hussam Al-Angari and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his official visit to the country. The meeting was attended by the Head of the Court of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Head of the Audit Bureau Faisal Al-Shayaa and other senior officials. —KUNA photos

Zain supports Kuwaiti and Arab innovators and inventors

Company strategic partner of 13th International Invention Fair Middle East

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announces its strategic partnership with the 13th International Invention Fair in the Middle East, which comes back after a halt of two years. The event, organized by the Kuwait Science Club with support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Zain joined the event's opening ceremony, attended by HH the Amir's representative, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani, KFAS Director General Dr Khalid Al-Fadhel, Kuwait Science Club Chairman and Head of the Fair's Organizing Committee Talal Al-Kharafi, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh and many ambassadors, diplomats, academics and the local scientific community.

Zain is proud of its extended support to this unique initiative since its inception, through which the company, representing the Kuwaiti private sector, seeks to support the local scientific scene and contribute to the development of science in Kuwait and the region. This is especially true as the event

has the privilege of HH the Amir's support, which reflects the nation's keenness to support Kuwaiti scientists, innovators, and inventors.

The event's success in past years greatly contributed to highlighting Kuwait's rich cultural involvement in scientific areas across regional and international levels, proving itself to become the biggest in the Middle East and the second in the world. By supporting this event, Zain is keen on encouraging Kuwaiti and Arab talents in the fields of science and innovation, as it believes such initiatives offer a valuable opportunity for young inventors to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of international inventors who visit Kuwait to share their experiences with the local scientific community.

The 13th edition of the fair features nearly 200 inventions from 40 countries, 18 of which are Kuwaiti inventions, including 9 inventions from Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SAGCC), part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS). The event is one of the most significant and major specialized exhibitions of inventions in the Middle East region and is considered the second largest exhibition of



Dr Hamad Al-Adwani with Talal Al-Kharafi and Hamad Al-Musaibeeh at the event.

its kind in the world after the Exhibition of Geneva. It offers an opportunity for inventions from different cultures to be exhibited and for inventors to build connections with investors.

Zain will spare no efforts in offering its support and encouragement to any entity that adopts creativity and innovation within the community and contribute to the further progress of national economy.

Short workweek may push Kuwaitis to public sector

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: A four-day workweek will be difficult to adopt in Kuwait unless the lack of commitment among employees in the public sector is addressed, said a human resources expert. Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates was the first city to implement the four-day work week in the Gulf region. Since January 2022, employees have been working for four days instead of five or six days as in most Arab countries.

Kuwait Times spoke with Aref Al-Ajmi, an HR expert, about the possibility of implementing this system in Kuwait and whether the country's regulations are flexible enough to make it happen. "This working system is going to trend in the coming years, due to its contribution to a good work-life balance, which is a good thing if we think about it from a human perspective," he said. Ajmi added the



Aref Al-Ajmi

entire working system should be changed if Kuwait was to switch to a four-day workweek.

He added the country should address the poor work ethic among government employees before thinking of adopting a shorter workweek. "In the meantime, there are several options that can bring us closer to implementing this system, such as splitting the workday into two shifts or reducing annual leaves, so the employees can enjoy working only four days a week," he explained.

Ajmi stressed this system will not be compatible with the private sector due to several reasons. "Let's be honest - the private sector does not prefer to give leaves to the employees most of time due to the huge amount of work they have." Another obstacle, said Ajmi, is that if the public sector implemented this system, there will be a great migration among Kuwaitis from the private to the public sector to

reap the benefits of a shorter week.

"That will add a huge burden on the government sector to provide opportunities for all Kuwaitis, except those who have their own business," he said. "Currently, the government sector is competing with the private sector in terms of privileges, but if this system is put in place, the private sector will lose its competitive edge and will no longer be attractive for Kuwaitis."

The private and public sectors are interdependent, Ajmi added. So, the private sector will not benefit from shortening the workweek if the public sector doesn't do the same. "I totally agree with this system, which will give employees an opportunity for a balanced life, but other aspects should be taken into consideration, especially that the work system in both public and private sectors is based on governmental rules and regulations. It is not a free market where everybody can do whatever they want," he said.

There's also the labor law in Kuwait, which is "not prepared to deal with this", Ajmi said. "(This) is normal, because every major change must start with changing the law and regulations. There should be stronger government laws to maintain productivity among employees and ensure they don't abuse this new system."

Palestine ambassador congratulates Kuwait

KUWAIT: On behalf of the Palestinian community in Kuwait, I am honored to congratulate HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on this auspicious occasion, while remembering Kuwait's stands on the Palestinian cause since independence - until today, and having the Palestinian cause as a top priority in Kuwait's foreign policy, as well as the unconditional and unlimited economic support Kuwait has been giving to Palestine. I pray to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait leadership and the people, and grant Kuwait more development, prosperity and protect its soil and people from all evil.



Rami Tahboub
Palestine Ambassador



Security personnel taking part in the campaign. — KUNA photos



Citizens and residents donate blood.



Blood Bank staff

Blood donation reflects altruism, self-abnegation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Tuesday that blood donation is regarded as a great and noble human value that reflects altruism and self-abnegation. The minister made the remark while launching the country's annual blood donation campaign for the successive sixth year at the Central Blood Bank.

The Ministry of Health has always been eager to back all national services pertinent to blood trans-

fusion, to raise public awareness of the need for blood donation, and to launch donation campaigns year-round, the ministry boasted. "Today's celebration of the annual blood donation campaign coincides with our darling country's national festivals under the slogan: 'My Blood for Kuwait'. Here, we have to appreciate and commend those who have donated their blood to save many lives," he remarked.

The minister urged citizens and residents alike to donate blood in order to ensure a successful blood donation campaign this year. For her part, the ministry's blood transfusion service chief, Dr Reem Al-Radhwan underlined that Kuwaiti citizens and residents are invited to donate blood just for the love of Kuwait. Speaking to KUNA, she said this year's initiative is chiefly meant to disseminate the concept



Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi



Dr Reem Al-Radhwan

of giving and benevolence, stressing that blood donation is deemed a human and national duty for everyone. — KUNA

Kuwait joins UN farm fund talks

ROME: The International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) governing council held talks on Tuesday, attended by Kuwait, over global efforts aiming to enhance food security. The talks at the headquarters of the UN food agency FAO in the Italian capital mainly revolved around efforts to eradicate global hunger, said IFAD chief Alvaro Lario, underlining common endeavors taken by the UN farm fund and FAO to boost agricultural development.

Addressing guest of honor Somalian president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the IFAD chief heaped praise on Mogadishu for its efforts to enhance its food security, which subsequently leads to an increase in national prosperity. In his speech, the Somalian president highlighted the main objective for the talks, which is to accelerate global efforts to enhance food security at a time where the number of people facing starvation around the world has risen, he said. As a specialized UN agency, IFAD was formed with the goal of eliminating poverty and hunger in some of the world's most rural and underdeveloped regions. — KUNA

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301
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News in brief

Kuwait team heads to Kahramanmaras

ISTANBUL: Kuwait's Fire Force Colonel Ayman Al-Mufareh said that his team has ended search and rescue operations in Islahiya area and is now working in the most earthquake-affected area of Kahramanmaras province. Mufareh told KUNA that the Turkish Crisis Management administration asked them to join efforts in Kahramanmaras province, noting that other foreign teams were asked to head back home as operations will be handled by local teams. The Kuwaiti team was asked to join the most devastated area from the earthquake because of their capabilities and high-tech equipment. Mufareh added. The Kuwaiti team is still in search and rescue operation mode and will do all that it can to save lives, he said. —KUNA

Oil price up 83 cents to \$85.4 per barrel

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price went up by 83 cents to \$85.48 per barrel on Monday as opposed to \$84.65 per barrel last Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday. The Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate went up by 22 cents and 42 cents, respectively, each reaching \$86.61 per barrel and \$80.14 per barrel. — KUNA

Inspection campaign enforces power cuts

KUWAIT: A Hawally municipality inspection team, in cooperation with the electricity and interior ministries, have disconnected the power supply to an investment estate in Salmiya for violating the municipality's construction law. "It was implemented in accordance with law no. 33/2016 regarding cutting off electricity supply to a violating property, by which supply is disconnected after a violating property receives warning followed by a legally-binding deadline," Head of the Violation Committee Amshaa Al-Waalan said. The inspection is part of an ongoing campaign led by the Ministry of Interior, the Public Authority for Civil Information, the Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Kuwait Environmental Police.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Souq Mubarakia visitors browse the Youth Initiative Exhibition which is being held till the end of February. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh.

Kuwaiti lawyer: International cooperation an urgent need

Exchange of legal expertise especially important in combatting cyber crime

KUWAIT: Mohammad Al-Muthafar is a Kuwaiti lawyer and Kuwait Times columnist who is passionate about fighting injustice all across the world. Kuwait Times spoke with him to learn more about his work in this field. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: What motivates you to do what you do?

Mohammad Al-Muthafar: I took an oath to myself that I will assist any victim who is in trouble anywhere in the world, and as soon as I receive a call from any person, whether Kuwaiti or not, I will be there for them, reassuring them, preserving their rights and seeking to end their problems.

KT: Tell us about some of the cases you've worked on.

Al-Muthafar: I received several calls from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Azerbaijan about problems faced by some Kuwaiti students. It was necessary for me to go immediately to provide help to these



Lawyer Mohammad Al-Muthafar signing a number of contracts abroad.



anxious students. I went to Mansoura University in Egypt to resolve a problem a Kuwaiti student had with a faculty member. As soon as I dealt with the matter, I went to Jordan to resolve a problem there. Then I went to Lebanon, followed by Azerbaijan.

KT: Did you manage to resolve the issues?

Al-Muthafar: In every country, I resolved the problems, whether amicably or within the framework of the law of that country. I contracted the largest law firms in those countries to cooperate in resolving cases and legal matters, as most countries do not allow foreign lawyers to plead cases except through cooperation with a local office.

KT: Tell us more about this policy.

Al-Muthafar: I previously opened several branches in other countries such as the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain, and partnered with offices in other countries such as Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Oman. These agreements aim at international strategic cooperation, by which we seek to boost the exchange of legal expertise between lawyers, in addition to facilitating litigation procedures, especially in cases related to cybercrimes, as they relate to an open space in

which the parties are usually located in different countries, which makes it difficult for the right holder to sue the other party.

KT: What are your future plans?

Al-Muthafar: I have plans in the coming period to expand this cooperation as needed to include law firms in other nations, especially European countries and the US, for broader cooperation between my office and international offices with the aim of reaching global representation. This will contribute to the advancement of legal work to the highest professional level. I am still continuing this approach so that I can defend my clients anywhere in the world and protect them from any injustice they are exposed to.

KT: Any advice for our readers?

Al-Muthafar: The legal profession is a message and not just a profession. It transcends all borders and is not limited to a specific country. It is a global message to support righteous and oppressed people anywhere in the world.

NOTE: To get in touch, email Mohammad Al-Muthafar at info@almuthafargroup.com or @Mamuthafar1 on Snapchat and Instagram



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KUWAIT: Green Island Season will go on for three months, offering citizens and residents a variety of fun activities.

Green Island promises fun for all

KUWAIT: The Tourism Enterprises Company held a ceremony celebrating the start of the Green Island Season on Sunday, Feb 12. Many people were in attendance, including a number of famous media personnel and social media influencers, amid a festive atmosphere full of enthusiasm and joy in anticipation of the national holidays. The event included a variety of interesting carnival activities and shows, coinciding with the season celebrations of the 62nd National Day and 32nd Liberation Day.

The Green Island is the first fully artificial island that was established as part of the green waterfront project in Kuwait in early 1988. The island occupies

an area of more than 161,000 square meters and is connected to the mainland by a corridor of 134 meters. Among the most prominent attractions of the island is an artificial lake fed by sea water coming from the Arabian Gulf and a 35-meter-high tower. The Green Island also includes a Roman theater with a capacity of more than 500 people, a castle for children and many recreational activities.

Fadel Al-Dawsari, CEO of the Tourism Enterprises Company, said the company will provide everything necessary to develop the Green Island and turn it into a popular destination for citizens and residents alike. Citizens and residents of all ages will find something to enjoy at the Green Island season, which is expected to go on for three months. The island has been equipped with many services and entertainment facilities, such as: playgrounds, restaurants, cafes, sales outlets, shops, as well as a wide variety of games and activities for children and families. Anyone looking to book a ticket for the Green Island Season can visit www.greenisland.com.kw



Cyclone-battered N Zealand declares national emergency

'Everything changed': Ukrainians look back on year of war

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BRUSSELS: German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (C) arrives for a two-day meeting of the alliance's Defence Ministers at the NATO headquarters in Brussels on February 14, 2023. —AFP

NATO defence ministers meet on Ukraine

As Ukraine seeks jets, NATO pushes to keep ammo flowing

BRUSSELS: Ukraine's Western backers focused at a meeting on Tuesday on keeping ammunition and arms flowing to the war-torn nation, as Kyiv presses for fighter jets to push Russia back. President Volodymyr Zelensky has knuckled down on his plea for Western aircraft after securing commitments for tanks, air defence and precision missiles.

But allies insist they are scrambling to ensure his forces have the ammunition they need on the ground to push back renewed Russian offensives. Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov tweeted he was focused on building an "aviation platform", winning more promises of tank supplies and ensuring ammunition stocks.

Representatives from over 50 nations backing Kyiv were involved at the meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "This has become a grinding war of attrition and therefore it's also a battle of logistics," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"This is a huge effort by allies to actually be able to get in the ammunition, the fuel, the spare parts, which are needed," Ukraine's Western supporters-spearheaded by the United States-have

already supplied billions of dollars of arms to help Kyiv hold Moscow back.

'Hold and advance'

Now, just under a year into the war, Stoltenberg said Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to have started a long-awaited new offensive in east Ukraine. "We will support Ukraine's fight for freedom over the long haul, and help Ukraine hold and advance during the spring counter-offensive," US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin said. "We must intensify our focus. Ukraine has urgent requirements to help it meet this crucial moment." The fighting is consuming vast quantities of ammunition, straining stockpiles and industries on both sides of the confrontation.

Stoltenberg warned that Kyiv's current rate of expenditure was "many times higher" than the output in NATO countries. Allies continue to raid their shelves for the rounds-especially 155-millimetre shells-that Ukraine is firing by the thousands each day.

NATO is scrambling to get its factories to pump out more, and allies are eyeing plans for joint weapons purchases, higher defence spending and longer-term contracts. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said Berlin had signed a deal with

manufacturer Rheinmetall to restart production of ammunition for Gepard air defence guns sent to Ukraine.

Jet not 'must urgent'

Zelensky issued a powerful call during a trip to London, Paris and Brussels last week for NATO members to send fighter planes and longer-range missiles. The Ukrainian leader won a commitment from Britain to train pilots but did not get any firm promises that his forces will get Western planes.

Slovakia has said it is willing to discuss sending Soviet MIG-29 planes to help replace losses to Ukraine's current stocks. Dutch Defence Minister Kajsa Ollongren said Kyiv had requested US-made F-16 jets from the Netherlands.

"We have to debate this with our partners, also with the United States, and we have to think about feasibility," she said. "It is something that will take time and it is best done behind closed doors."

Stoltenberg insisted "the issue of aircraft is not the most urgent issue now, but it is an ongoing discussion". "The urgent need now is to deliver what has already been promised, to deliver the armoured vehicles, the infantry fighting," he said. —AFP

High-tech jets take on huge balloon in N America skies

WASHINGTON: The stealthy, highly maneuverable F-22 fighter jet raced to 58,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean and launched a missile at... a huge balloon. The balloon-allegedly sent by China to surveil secret US sites-is an unlikely first aerial "kill" for a warplane designed to dominate combat against enemy planes, and it was not the last.

F-22s were again in action in the following days, shooting down an unidentified object near Alaska and another over Canada, while a fourth object was downed by an F-16 jet over Lake Huron. The flurry of objects recently marked for destruction in American and Canadian airspace have provided rare opportunities to engage targets for both the F-22 — one of the most expensive aircraft in the US arsenal-and the military commands responsible for North American security.

"I believe this is the first time within United States or America airspace that NORAD or United States Northern Command has taken kinetic action against an airborne object," General Glen VanHerck, who leads both commands, told journalists.

NORAD-a joint US-Canada air defense command-dates to the height of the Cold War and is perhaps best known to the public for its yearly program tracking the progress of Santa Claus as he distributes presents around the world. NORTHCOM, which is responsible for the defense of the United States, is much newer and was established after the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Designed for aerial combat

While the balloon and other objects have dominated headlines this month, a more common function for North America-based fighter aircraft is intercepting Russian planes that get near American air space.

The F-22 is the supercar of American jets, fea-



VIRGINIA BEACH: Handout photo provided by the US Navy on February 13, 2023, shows sailors assigned to Assault Craft Unit 4 prepare material recovered in the Atlantic Ocean from a high-altitude balloon for transport to federal agents at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek in Virginia Beach, Virginia. —AFP

turing stealth technology to shield it from enemy radar, the ability to fly above the speed of sound without the use of afterburners and "thrust vectoring" nozzles on its engines to make it highly maneuverable.

All these features were designed to make the jet all but unbeatable in air-to-air combat with enemy warplanes, making a slow-moving object like a balloon easy prey. The jets stemmed from a 1980s-era program but did not enter initial production until 2001 and were only made in small numbers-fewer than 200 — at a cost of \$143 million apiece, according to the US Air Force.

It has been an aircraft in search of a war-large-scale air-to-air combat against enemy planes is a situation that has yet to emerge since the US plane

gained initial operating capability in 2005. The F-22 first saw combat in 2014 during the war against the Islamic State group in the Middle East, carrying out strikes against the jihadists. In the recent drama, the warplanes that shot down the balloon and the three unidentified objects all employed another piece of advanced technology: the AIM-9X, a new variant of the Sidewinder missile, which features an infrared guidance system.

VanHerck said using a missile that requires a radar track would have had a "lower probability of success" due to the difficulty of tracking smaller objects, while using a cannon on a plane would have risked flying into debris. Therefore, AIM-9Xs have been "the weapons of choice against the objects... we've been seeing." —AFP



LANSING: Lansing Interim Police Deputy Chief Chris Rozman holds a news conference following an active shooter situation on the campus of Michigan State University on February 13, 2023 in Lansing, Michigan. —AFP

Gunman kills three at US campus

WASHINGTON: A gunman who killed at least three people and wounded five on a US university campus shot himself dead Monday after a massive police manhunt. Thousands of students at Michigan State University were ordered to shelter in place after shots were fired in a campus building in the early evening, leaving two dead.

The gunman fled to the students' union, where he killed one more person, sparking a major police operation as officers swarmed the 5,000-acre campus. Gun violence is alarmingly common in the United States, a country where there are more guns than people and where attempts to clamp down on their spread are always met with stiff resistance.

Police confirmed just after midnight the suspected MSU gunman had shot himself dead a short distance from the university. "We are sad to report that there have been three confirmed fatalities," Deputy Chief Chris Rozman of the university's police force told reporters. "This is in addition to the five victims who were injured and transported to the hospital. Some of those five victims still have life-threatening injuries." Rozman said hundreds of officers from several agencies had been involved in the operation to try to find the gunman, releasing a photograph of a Black man in a baggy blue jacket, and wearing red shoes.

"The suspect in this incident was located outside of the MSU campus," he said. The "suspect has died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound". "This truly has been a nightmare that we are living tonight. We are relieved to no longer have an active threat on campus," Rozman said.

Police later said the man had no connection to the university and no motive for the shooting was immediately apparent. "We have no idea why he came to the campus to do this tonight," Rozman said. Police refused to give details of the victims, including whether they were students or faculty members of the university, one of the top institutions in the United States.

MSU officials said all campus activities would be canceled for the next 48 hours. Around 50,000 students are enrolled at MSU, the bulk of them undergraduates, according to the university's website. Tens of thousands of people die every year in the United States after being shot, and many more are wounded. —AFP

International

Charities urge UK politicians to oppose attacks on migrants

Police arrest 15 people after fireworks were thrown at officers

LONDON: Nearly 200 charities on Tuesday urged the UK's political leaders to "take a clear stand" against attacks on asylum seekers, days after an anti-immigrant protest descended into violent disorder. Clashes broke out when troublemakers disrupted a pro-refugee gathering outside a hotel housing asylum seekers near Liverpool, police said.

A far-right, anti-immigrant group had protested outside the same hotel earlier this month. The open letter, co-ordinated by coalition campaign Together With Refugees and signed by 180 charities, condemned the "horrifying" scenes on Friday outside the hotel near Liverpool, in northwest England.

Merseyside Police arrested 15 people after fireworks were thrown at officers and a police van was attacked with hammers and set alight during several hours of mayhem. One of those arrested, a 19-year-old man, appeared in court on Monday charged with violent disorder and assault for beating an emergency services worker.

"With the high risk of more premeditated extremist attacks around the country, leaders of all parties must now take a clear stand and condemn any further violence against those who come here to find safety," the charities' letter stated.

It also urged political leaders to "set out the action they will take to prevent it". Hardline interior minister Suella Braverman has faced sustained criticism for her inflammatory rhetoric over immigration,

in particular her description of the growing number of migrants crossing the Channel.

Opponents accuse her of demonising asylum seekers and fuelling hostility towards people seeking sanctuary. In November, she sparked an outcry by saying in parliament that England's south coast was facing an "invasion" of illegal migration.

Tens of thousands of people arrived in southeast England on small boats from the European mainland last year, dramatically increasing a trend that began on a large scale in 2018.

A spokesperson for the interior ministry noted that Braverman had condemned the "appalling scenes outside the hotel and violence toward police officers" seen on Friday. "The welfare of asylum seekers in our care is of the utmost importance and we will work with the police to ensure their safety," the spokesperson added.

Friday's violence in Merseyside erupted when troublemakers came to a planned demonstration by refugee advocacy groups outside the hotel, police said. The far-right group Patriotic Alternative had protested outside the hotel earlier this month, although the group denied it was the organiser of the latest rally. Police linked the protest to social media and rumours that a man had made "inappropriate advances" to a 15-year-old girl in the area, saying this was used as "an excuse to commit violence". — AFP



KNOWSLEY: A police van is seen outside the Suites Hotel in Knowsley, near Liverpool in north-west England. UK police have arrested 15 people on suspicion of violent disorder during an anti-immigration protest by far-right protesters outside a hotel used to house asylum seekers near Liverpool. — AFP

'Everything changed': Ukrainians look back on year of war

KYIV: The first went from civilian to military life. The second completely changed languages. The third bravely helped keep the country moving along its rail network lifeline. Not a single Ukrainian was left untouched by the Russian invasion, which started on February 24, 2022. Three of them spoke to AFP about what they lived through, and how the war changed them.

On the night of the invasion, then-governor Sergiy Osachuk, who had been briefed about an imminent attack, slept with one eye open. "I was woken up by explosions and messages on my phone that Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine had begun." The governor of the western Chernivtsi region traded his smart business suit for military fatigues.

Osachuk became lieutenant colonel of the State Border Guard Service, which in peacetime patrols Ukraine's borders. There, the 50-year-old coordinates work with other branches of the military-and puts himself in the line of fire. "At the moment I'm happier here than if I'd had to stay as a governor. It's a big responsibility."

Osachuk was a Ukrainian reservist when the war started and frustrated that he could not sign up straight away. "In the first half of the year, I organised the mobilisation... in Chernivtsi. Every day I urged people to join the armed forces," he says.

"When my term of office came to an end on July 14, I immediately joined up. It's a big honour for

me to be among the Border Guards working to get back Ukraine's borders." Osachuk says he plans to stay in the military for as long as it takes, viewing it as his and every citizen's duty to defend Ukraine until victory is won.

Speeding through Bakhmut, which Russian forces have tried to capture since last year, he says: "This is the place where the fate of both Ukraine and the free nations of the world is being decided."

Before the war, Odesa resident Kateryna Musienko spoke only Russian and even looked down on those using Ukrainian or "Surzhyk"—a mix of the two languages. But "everything changed" when the war started, the 24-year-old says.

In March, her grandfather was killed in a Russian attack in Odesa. "I was so overwhelmed. I didn't feel grief... only disgust and hatred for everything Russian related." "As much as I was an aggressive Russian speaker, I became an aggressive Ukrainian speaker, without compromises, and irrevocably."

Her parents and boyfriend also transitioned to Ukrainian-and so did a number of compatriots. Musienko advocates for the destruction of monuments to Russian poet Alexander Pushkin and changing street names linked to Russia. She has also created an NGO for the protection of the Ukrainian language. "Language lives and develops only when it lives in everyday life," she explains.

"If our children do not speak Ukrainian, the language will die." She wants her organisation to organise "games, debates, lectures, courses, conversation clubs, festivals" and hopes that there will be a "mass movement" of people converting to Ukrainian. "Not by force, of course, but by asking questions, reasoning," she says. — AFP

Spain struggles to curb scourge of femicide

MADRID: Eleven years ago, Ester narrowly escaped death when her partner tried to throw her off a balcony at their home in northwestern Spain. Saved by a neighbour, she went to the police. Until that point, she'd suffered years of emotional and psychological abuse but hadn't recognised the warning signs and never reported him.

Although Ester escaped with her life, hundreds more have died since then at the hands of partners or ex-partners with a recent spike in murders prompting widespread soul-searching across the country. Spain has long been seen as a frontrunner in the battle to stamp out gender violence, but in December, 11 women were killed making it the deadliest month since 2008. Another seven died in January. In many cases, the authorities have failed to detect the undercurrent of simmering violence. And women themselves often don't see the warning signs until it's too late. "There were a load of things that happened beforehand which I just didn't recognise for what they were," admits Ester, now 30, who did not want to give her family name.

Looking back, all the signs were there: how he increasingly isolated her from friends, remarks about her way of dressing, nights when he would force her to sleep on the floor... Even so, she doesn't see herself as a victim. "Victims are those who are no longer around to talk, who were murdered," she told AFP. December's bloodshed shook Spain, with Interior

Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska calling it a "social tragedy" and "not a private matter as we thought in the past".

Inside a call centre at a secret location, about a dozen operators are manning the 016 gender violence hotline. "016 hello: how can I help?" says one operator in the purple-painted room, gently trying to calm the woman on the other end of the line.

"Is he sitting next to you right now?" Set up in 2007, the hotline received its highest-ever number of calls last year, with 102,000 appeals for help. Hotline coordinator Susana Galvez told AFP the aim is to make women aware of their options.

"016 is the first step to get out of a violent situation," she said. Despite efforts by the authorities, who have prioritised the fight against gender-based violence since 2004 when Spain approved its groundbreaking law against it, women take "an average of eight years and eight months" to file a complaint, says state prosecutor Teresa Peramato.

And for women in rural areas, the figure is between 12 and 20 years, says this specialist in domestic violence cases. "Very often they are the last ones to realise that they are suffering violence," says Peramato. "They have trivialised it and are afraid of the repercussions. They don't trust the justice system and are economically and emotionally dependent (on their abuser)."

Like Esther, Noelia Miguez says she too was "in denial". In 2015, her former boyfriend tried to strangle her before stabbing her eight times. She only survived because she pretended to be dead. Now 29, she can clearly see the early signs of trouble—"the first humiliations, the insults, the threats, the spitting". Beyond the victim's awareness of what's going on, it's also important to ask if the justice system itself has "failed" to protect these women, Peramato says. — AFP

Kuwait stands with Turkey...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the first UN team arrived Tuesday in rebel-held northwestern Syria since last week's devastating Turkey-Syria earthquake, while anger simmers at the world body's slow response to the disaster that killed over 35,000 people and impacted millions of children in the region. As hopes fade of finding people alive under the debris more than a week after the 7.8-magnitude quake struck, the focus has switched to providing food and shelter to the vast numbers of survivors.

But activists and emergency teams in Syria's northwest have decried the UN's slow response to the quake in rebel-held areas, contrasting it with the planeloads of humanitarian aid that have been deliv-

ered to government-controlled airports. "I don't want to sit here and give excuses, but I wanted to share that we are all collectively in the same place," Sanjana Quazi, who heads the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Turkey, told reporters in the rebel-held town of Sarmada.

Fears have grown for survivors on both sides of the border, with the UN saying more than seven million children have been negatively impacted between Syria and Turkey, and noting fears that "many thousands" more had died. "It is tragically clear that numbers will continue to grow," said James Elder, spokesman for the UN children's agency UNICEF, adding that the final toll would be "mind-boggling".

The confirmed death toll from the quake stands at 35,662 as officials and medics said 31,974 people had died in Turkey and at least 3,688 in Syria. The count has barely changed in Syria for several days and was expected to rise. The disaster's mental strain was accompanied by the hard realities of surviving in cities turned to ruin in the middle of the winter freeze. — Agencies

as a surprise. The Washington establishment has failed us over and over again," she said.

At this point in the 2020 cycle, 10 Democrats had launched campaigns or exploratory committees, but Trump and now Haley are the only Republicans to do so officially this time around. In her announcement she blasted China over its "genocide" of ethnic minority members, warned that Russia was "on the march," and accused Iran of "murder" of its own people for challenging the government.

Haley vowed to be tough with America's rivals. "You should know this about me: I don't put up with bullies," she said. "And when you kick back, it hurts them more if you're wearing heels." Haley rose quickly in South Carolina politics, building a reputation as a plain-spoken conservative. She endorsed senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz during the 2016 Republican presidential primary, and slammed Trump as "everything a governor doesn't want in a president".

But after Trump won he tapped her as his UN envoy, and Haley became the face of diversity in a cabinet criticized for being too white. Since leaving government in 2018 with a reputation for standing up to her mercurial boss, her occasional praise of the Trump presidency has been offset by her criticism of his personal conduct, including his involvement in the 2021 attack on the US Capitol. — AFP

Kuwait, West slam Zionist...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of five Western powers said Tuesday they were "deeply troubled" by the Zionist government's decision to legalize nine West Bank settlements and build thousands of new units. The ministers from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States said: "We strongly oppose these unilateral actions which will only serve to exacerbate tensions between (Zionists) and Palestinians and undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution".

Xi meets Raisi, hails 'solidarity...'

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China "supports Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national dignity... and in resisting unilateralism and hegemony", CCTV reported Xi as saying. Beijing also "opposes external forces interfering in Iran's internal affairs and undermining Iran's security and stability", and will continue to "promote the early and proper resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue", the Chinese leader said.

"No matter how the international and regional situa-

Indian tax officials raid...

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Last month, the BBC aired a two-part documentary alleging that Hindu nationalist Modi ordered police to turn a blind eye to sectarian riots in Gujarat state, where he was premier at the time. The violence left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims. India's government blocked videos and tweets sharing links to the documentary - which was not aired in India - using emergency powers under its information technology laws.

Government adviser Kanchan Gupta had slammed the documentary as "hostile propaganda

They underlined their backing for a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which must be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties". "We continue to closely monitor developments on the ground which impact the viability of the two-state solution and stability in the region at large," they added.

The Zionist entity's security cabinet had announced on Sunday that it would legalize nine settlements in the occupied West Bank. These so-called "wild" settlements were built without authorization from the Zionist government. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who signed up to Tuesday's statement, had on Monday already criticized the Zionist entity's plans on advancing settlements. The Zionist entity's moves came on the heels of a visit by Blinken to the region in which he explicitly warned against settlement activity as he sought to ease tensions following violence. — AFP

tion changes, China will unswervingly develop friendly cooperation with Iran", Xi added. According to CCTV, the two sides signed a number of bilateral cooperation documents in the fields of agriculture, trade, tourism, environmental protection, health, disaster relief, culture and sport.

Raisi and Xi met for the first time last September at a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Uzbekistan, where the Iranian president called for expanded ties. According to Iranian state news agency IRNA, Raisi will take part in meetings with Chinese businessmen and Iranians living in the country. China is Iran's largest trading partner, IRNA said, citing the 10-month statistics of Iranian customs authorities. Tehran's exports to Beijing stood at \$12.6 billion, while it imported \$12.7 billion worth of goods from China. — AFP

and anti-India garbage". University student groups later organized viewings of the documentary despite campus bans, defying government efforts to stop its spread. Police arrested two dozen students at the prestigious Delhi University after stopping a screening there in late January. "First came the BBC documentary, that was banned," the opposition Congress party said on Twitter. "Now IT has raided BBC," it continued, referring to the Income Tax Department. "Undeclared emergency."

Press freedom in the world's biggest democracy has suffered during Modi's tenure, rights activists and opposition lawmakers say. India has fallen 10 spots to 150 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders, since Modi took office in 2014. Critical reporters, particularly women, say they are subjected to relentless campaigns of online abuse. — AFP

Nikki Haley announces 2024...

Continued from Page 1

up her personal background as a way to unite a nation strained by racial tensions. "I was the proud daughter of Indian immigrants. Not black, not white. I was different," she said in the clip. "But my mom would always say, 'Your job is not to focus on the differences, but the similarities.'"

"Some look at our past as evidence that America's founding principles are bad," she went on. "They say the promise of freedom is just made up. Some think our ideas are not just wrong, but racist, and evil. Nothing could be further from the truth." Haley is unlikely to be the last Republican to throw their hat in the ring. Some Washington watchers speculated that her announcement might prompt a stampede from rivals such as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Trump's vice president Mike Pence.

Haley also took a swipe at the current president - who has not formally announced his re-election campaign but is expected to run again - saying "Joe Biden's record is abysmal". "But that shouldn't come

International

Cyclone-battered New Zealand declares national emergency

More than 600 flights cancelled and 35,000 customers affected

AUCKLAND: Cyclone Gabrielle swept away roads, inundated homes and left 225,000 people without power in New Zealand Tuesday, as a national state of emergency was declared. High winds and driving rain lashed the country's populous North Island, in what Prime Minister Chris Hipkins called the "most significant weather event New Zealand has seen in this century".

"The impact is significant and it is widespread," he said. "The severity and the damage that we are seeing has not been experienced in a generation." Daylight Tuesday revealed the severity of the disaster: roads eaten away by landslips and collapsed homes buried in mud, silt and a slew of storm detritus.

Falling trees smashed power lines and floodwaters blocked several major roads, leaving communities stranded. Local media reported some people were forced to swim from their homes to safety. Others waded through stormwaters on foot. Some were forced to shelter in place.

"During the night a huge tree came down in front of our house, just missing my Ute. It blocked the road and we couldn't get out," 53-year-old Whangamata resident Brendon Pugh told AFP. "It's been scary. I am an ex-coastguard but I have never seen anything like it in 20 years living here," he said.

"The water in our road was up to my shins, then waist deep in places. We were without power from 10:00 pm last night until about 3:00 pm today and we had no internet." An estimated 2,500 people have been displaced from their homes, but that number looks certain to rise.

More than three-quarters of New Zealand's five million residents live on the North Island, where the brunt of the storm is being felt. Some areas are still inaccessible

by road and without power or telecommunications.

The main road between the capital Wellington and the country's largest city Auckland is closed. New Zealand's three main mobile phone networks said a total of 455 cell sites were offline. International and domestic flights were grounded, with Air New Zealand alone reporting more than 600 flights cancelled and 35,000 customers affected, although airports are gradually reopening. The military has been deployed to help with evacuations.

'Cascading' crises

Cyclone Gabrielle formed off the northeastern coast of Australia in the Coral Sea on February 8, before barreling across the South Pacific. It bore down on New Zealand's northern coast on Sunday, bringing gusts of 140 kilometres (87 miles) an hour.

In the next 24 hours, coastal communities were doused with 20 centimetres (almost eight inches) of rain and pounded by 11-metre (36-foot) waves. Many parts of northern New Zealand were already waterlogged when Cyclone Gabrielle hit, having been drenched by record rainfall two weeks ago. The national MetService said Auckland Airport received 48 percent of its annual average rainfall in just the past 45 days. Cape Reinga on the northern tip of the North Island recorded 30 consecutive hours of gale-force winds.

Massey University Professor Christine Kenney warned that New Zealand is living in the age of "cascading" natural disasters—where the impacts of repeated severe weather events build up over time.

"Cascading natural hazard events fuelled by climate change are the new norm for Auckland," she said ahead of Tuesday's emergency. Climate scientist Daithi Stone



NAPIER: Photo taken on February 14, 2023 shows a group of wheelchair-bound people being rescued from a flooded area in the North Island city of Napier. New Zealand declared a national state of emergency on February 14 as Cyclone Gabrielle swept away roads, inundated homes and left more than 100,000 people without power. — AFP

said Cyclone Gabrielle had been feeding off unusually warm seas, driven by a combination of climate change and La Nina weather patterns.

"Gabrielle is very much part of the story this summer of a warm nearby ocean using a warm atmosphere to pump rain onto Aotearoa," he said Tuesday, using the Maori-language name for New Zealand.

"It is also part of the global story of tropical

cyclones becoming more intense under human-induced climate change." "The emergency services are working night and day, but the unstable ground, floodwaters and closed roads are making things hard," said Minister for Emergency Management Kieran McNulty. Fire and Emergency New Zealand said one firefighter was injured and another disappeared when a house collapsed west of Auckland. A search is underway. — AFP

Cambodian leader says 'no chance' for news outlet to reopen

PHNOM PENH: There is "no chance" one of Cambodia's last independent media outlets will be allowed to reopen, leader Hun Sen said Tuesday, after officials hit back at Western governments' concerns over press freedoms ahead of national elections. Online Khmer- and English-language outlet Voice of Democracy (VOD) stopped broadcasting on Monday. Prime Minister Hun Sen had ordered its licence revoked over what he said was an erroneous report about his eldest son.

Late Monday night the United States said it was "deeply concerned" by the "abrupt" closure of the broadcaster, adding to a chorus of criticism from rights groups and western missions over Phnom Penh's actions. "Foreigners have no right to order us to do this or that to fulfil their wishes because this is our internal affairs," Hun Sen wrote in a Facebook post on Tuesday afternoon, reiterating the media outlet "has no chance to reopen".

"The shutting down of an unethical radio station won't kill press freedom in Cambodia at all," he said, adding that he would offer the affected reporters state jobs. Earlier Tuesday a Cambodian foreign ministry spokesman rejected "the politically-driven, prejudiced and biased concerns" of some embassies.

"An administrative action against a rule-breaking entity does not merit any worry at all," the spokesman said in a statement. VOD, broadcasting since 2003, published a February 9 story alleging that Hun Sen's son, Lieutenant General Hun Manet, had signed off on funds to help earthquake-hit Turkey.

Hun Manet, who has been backed to succeed his father, has denied the claim, with Hun Sen stating he authorised the \$100,000 relief package. Hun Sen demanded an apology from VOD, but refused to reconsider his decision to revoke its licence even after the outlet later complied. One of the world's longest-serving leaders, Hun Sen has increasingly cracked down on dissent as he prepares for polls in July, according to observers. Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said on Tuesday the shuttering of VOD "may spell the end for the media environment necessary for credible elections". — AFP



PHNOM PENH: An employee is seen outside the office of online media outlet Voice of Democracy (VOD) in Phnom Penh, after Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said VOD would have its operating licence revoked. — AFP

HK mandates national security law promotion on free TV, radio

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's free television and radio broadcasters must air weekly programmes that promote Chinese "national identity" as well as a national security law, according to licensing requirements announced by the government on Tuesday.

The stipulations come as Beijing works to remould

the territory, cracking down on a protest movement that had championed a Hong Kong identity that was distinct from the rest of China. Similar clauses have been woven into various city regulations since Beijing imposed the far-reaching national security law in 2020 to stamp out dissent after the huge and often violent pro-democracy demonstrations.

Once the crucible of Cantonese cinema and a bastion of free speech, Hong Kong is being transformed after those protests, with censorship powers strengthened and independent local media outlets fading.

John Lee, the city's former security chief who is now its leader, rubber-stamped new licence terms on Tuesday that apply to three free-to-air television

Asian country. US State Department spokesman Ned Price on Monday criticised the Chinese Coast Guard's actions as "provocative and unsafe". "The United States stands with our Philippine allies in the face of the People's Republic of China Coast Guard's reported use of laser devices against the crew of a Philippine Coast Guard ship," Price said.

The Philippine patrol boat was supporting a "rotation and resupply mission" for the marines in Second Thomas Shoal when the Chinese vessel pointed the laser light at them twice, the Philippine Coast Guard said Monday. The Chinese boat also issued illegal radio challenges and undertook dangerous manoeuvres, which "constituted a threat to Philippine sovereignty and security as a state", the Philippine foreign ministry said.

"These acts of aggression by China are disturbing and disappointing as it closely follows the state visit to China of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.," foreign ministry spokeswoman Teresita Daza said. Marcos and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agreed last month to "manage maritime differences through diplomacy and dialogue, without resorting to force and intimidation", Daza said. Price said that China's "dangerous operational behaviour directly threatens regional peace and stability, infringes upon freedom of navigation in the South China Sea... and undermines the rules-based international order".

Previous laser incident

It was not the first time that a Chinese coastguard boat had pointed a laser light at a Philippine vessel, said Commodore Jay Tarruela, a maritime security adviser in the Philippine Coast Guard. Last June, a Philippine Coast Guard boat was exposed to a blue light for almost 20 minutes, causing "temporary blindness and skin itchiness" among crew members, Tarruela told reporters Tuesday.

The US-Philippine deal earlier this month brings to nine the total number of Philippine bases accessible to US forces. It comes as the long-time allies seek to counter China's military activity in the region. Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei also have overlapping claims to parts of the South China Sea. — AFP



MANILA: Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos Jr (C) meets with Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian (2nd L) at the Malacanang Palace in Manila on February 14, 2023, to address the incident between Chinese Coast Guard and Philippine Coast Guard in South China Sea. — AFP

Philippines' Marcos summons Chinese envoy over laser incident

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos summoned Beijing's ambassador Tuesday to express "serious concern" after a Chinese security vessel was accused of using a military-grade laser light against a Philippine patrol boat in the disputed South China Sea.

The confrontation marks an escalation in the diplomatic row, after the Philippine foreign ministry earlier filed a protest to the Chinese embassy condemning the "aggressive" actions of the Chinese coastguard vessel that it said left Filipino crew members temporarily blinded. Marcos confronted Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian on Tuesday "over the increasing frequency and intensity of actions by China against Philippine Coast Guard and our Filipino fishermen", spokeswoman Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil said.

The Chinese embassy said the men had discussed, among other things, how to "properly manage maritime differences between China and the Philippines". The laser incident happened on February 6 nearly 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, where Philippine marines are stationed in a derelict navy ship grounded to assert Manila's territorial claim in the waters.

It is the latest in a series of maritime incidents between the Philippines and China, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea and has ignored an international court ruling that its claims have no legal basis. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin insisted Tuesday that the Chinese Coast Guard personnel had "operated with professionalism and restraint". Wang said the countries had been in contact via a hotline set up between their respective foreign ministries to discuss maritime issues. Days before the latest incident, the United States and the Philippines agreed to resume joint patrols in the sea, and struck a deal to give US troops access to another four military bases in the Southeast

channels and two radio stations. One of the provisions requires the licensed stations to "broadcast no less than 30 minutes of programmes on national education, national identity and (the) National Security Law per week", in addition to the hour of current affairs they are already required to air.

For the television stations, the programming no longer needs to be "wholly of Hong Kong origin", which means the national security segments could be produced outside of the city. Other changes include doubling the weekly hours of programming for young people, while halving those aimed at children to 14 hours per week. The licence terms will be effective for the next six years. As part of a raft of recent changes,

News in brief

S Africa floods kill 12

JOHANNESBURG: Floods triggered by heavy rains have killed at least 12 people in South Africa, authorities said Tuesday, after the presidency declared a national state of disaster. The bad weather—which is expected to last for the rest of the week—struck the east, north and south, claiming lives in four of South Africa's nine provinces, said the department in charge of disaster management, COGTA. The famed Kruger National Park, a tourist magnet bordering Mozambique and the largest reserve in South Africa, was badly affected, COGTA spokesman Lungi Mtshali told AFP. Mpumalanga province, in northeast South Africa, "seems to be hardest hit so far. Kruger is really bad," said Mtshali. — AFP

Tunisia crackdown

GENEVA: The UN rights chief on Tuesday expressed alarm over a deepening crackdown in Tunisia, as Tunisian police detained a senior opposition politician and the head of an independent radio station. The arrests of former justice minister Nouredine Bhiri, a senior figure in the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, and Mosaïque FM director Nouredine Boutar late Monday were the latest in a crackdown that has targeted activists, former lawyers and a prominent businessman. "UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk today expressed his concern over the deepening crackdown against perceived political opponents and civil society in Tunisia, including attacks on the independence of the judiciary," Turk's spokesman Jeremy Laurence told reporters in Geneva. — AFP

Japanese wartime labour case

SEOUL: A South Korean court on Tuesday ruled against the family of a man who was enslaved during World War II in a damages suit filed against a Japanese company. The ruling comes as the South seeks closer ties with Tokyo to counter North Korea, and about a month after Seoul said it was considering compensating victims of Japan's forced wartime labour without the direct participation of Japanese companies. Japan and South Korea are both democracies, market economies and US allies, but their relationship has been strained for decades over Tokyo's brutal 1910-45 colonial rule. Around 780,000 Koreans were conscripted into forced labour by Japan during its 35-year occupation, according to official data from Seoul, not including women forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops. In 2019, five family members of a victim — surnamed Kim — filed a civil suit against Japanese company Nishimatsu seeking about 70 million won (\$55,239) in compensation. The family members said the man died two years after first being pressed into labour for the company, and that he had suffered mental anguish due to Japan's "illegal colonial rule". — AFP

China has also revamped the semiautonomous city's education system with a curriculum that now includes teaching the national security law from kindergarten.

At a press briefing on Tuesday, Lee said he supported the preparation of additional national security legislation by next year. Critics say that Beijing's security law has leached Hong Kong of its civil liberties and boisterous political culture, while authorities say it is necessary to restore order and stability.

More than 230 people have been arrested and more than 140 prosecuted on national security grounds under the new law, with many of the city's most prominent dissidents now facing up to life in prison over such charges. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023

COP28 host UAE vows 'inclusive roadmap' for UN climate talks

World Government Summit 2023 grapples with energy transition issue



DUBAI: This handout image provided by the UAE Ministry Of Presidential Affairs shows the Managing Director of Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and Abu Dhabi Executive Council Member Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (center) attending the 2023 World Government Summit in Al-Jumeirah in the Gulf emirate of Dubai on February 13, 2023. — AFP



DUBAI: This handout image provided by the UAE Ministry Of Presidential Affairs shows (right to left) the Prime Minister of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government Masrour Barzani, UAE President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, UAE Vice President, Defense Minister, and Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, attending the 2023 World Government Summit in Al-Jumeirah in the Gulf emirate of Dubai on February 13, 2023. — AFP

DUBAI: The Emirati oil chief leading this year's UN climate talks said Tuesday he will introduce an "inclusive" plan for the meeting in Dubai, amid criticism by activists over his appointment.

Rights group Amnesty International has said Sultan Al-Jaber is "unfit" for the COP28 presidency, being the CEO of state-owned oil giant ADNOC, while Western officials have defended his role in the crucial talks set for November and December. Al-Jaber told the annual World Government Summit event in Dubai that as "president, I will lay out a roadmap for COP28 that is inclusive, results-oriented and... very far from business as usual". The 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the UNFCCC will convene from 30 November to 12 December 2023. It will take place in the United Arab Emirates.

"We will capitalize on our experience and our network of partners to engage with governments, civil society, youth, the financial community, industry and technology companies," added Al-Jaber, the oil-rich United Arab Emirates' special envoy for climate change. In a statement on Monday, Amnesty's climate director Marta Schaaf said Al-Jaber's role at ADNOC made him "unfit to lead COP28".

"Sultan Al-Jaber cannot be an honest broker for climate talks when the company he leads is planning

to cause more climate damage," she said. Al-Jaber, 49, is also the UAE's minister of industry and advanced technology and head of a leading renewable energy firm. A veteran of COP meetings, he is the first CEO to lead the summit. His appointment last month was welcomed by US climate envoy John Kerry and French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire, who urged the world to get behind Al-Jaber and focus on "concrete decisions".

The last round of UN climate talks, hosted by Egypt, concluded in November with a deal to create a "loss and damage" fund to cover the costs that developing countries face from climate-linked natural disasters and impacts like rising sea levels. But observers were left disappointed that little progress had been made on reducing planet-heating emissions from fossil fuels.

The UAE, one of the world's biggest oil producers, argues that crude remains indispensable to the global economy and is needed to finance the energy transition. The Gulf state is pushing the merits of carbon capture-removing carbon dioxide as fuel is burned, or from the air. It is also spending billions on a green transition, aiming to cover half of its energy needs with renewables by 2050.

The World Government Summit 2023 is taking place in Dubai from Feb 13 to Feb 15 with over

10,000 government officials, presidents, ministers, leaders, and experts attending under the main theme "Shaping Future Governments".

Discussions at the summit cover topics such as global policies, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the impact of climate change, the evolution of employment, the progression of society, and urban planning. The agenda includes more than 300 sessions, where more than 200 speakers from global



Sultan Al-Jaber

me, this very important contract and this achievement today is one of the milestones of the in-depth strategic and friendly partnership we have between India and France," he said.

Strengthening civil aviation was an important aspect of national infrastructure, said Modi, citing estimates that India will need more than 2,000 aircraft in the next 15 years. The announcement coincided with the Aero India show in India's tech capital Bengaluru, where leading global aviation companies are exhibiting their wares. —AFP



NEW DELHI: This file photo taken on January 20, 2023 shows an Air India aircraft on the tarmac at the Indira Gandhi International airport in New Delhi. —AFP

Combined, the two deals could represent the single biggest fleet purchase in aviation history. "We are going through a massive transformation," said Air India chairman N Chandrasekaran, announcing the Airbus agreement with French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in virtual attendance.

"One of the most important things is a modern fleet which can perform for all routes."

Air India was founded by tea-to-steel conglomerate Tata Group in 1932 and the Indian government bought a majority stake after independence. But by the end of the century, the venture was struggling to compete with Gulf carriers and no-frills airlines, starved of investment and racking up billions of dollars in losses that dragged on the public purse.

Tata-also chaired by Chandrasekaran-finally bought it back in a \$2.4 billion deal a year ago.

According to Airbus forecasts, India's air traffic is expected to grow 6.6 per cent a year over the next two decades, almost twice the global average. "Today is a historic moment for India, for Air India and for Airbus," said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury, saying the size of the order "demonstrates the appetite for growth in the Indian aviation industry".

The European aircraft manufacturer already has an engineering centre in the country and sources some components from Indian suppliers. Macron said the deal highlighted the bond between Paris and New Delhi. "I want to tell everybody that for

MEPs, the parliament's biggest group.

Supporters of the bill had argued that it would give European carmakers a clear timeframe in which to switch production to zero-emission electric vehicles, and spur investment to counter competition from China and the United States. This, in turn, will also support the European Union's ambitious plan to become a "climate neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

"Let me remind you that between last year and the end of this year China will bring 80 models of electric cars to the international market," EU vice president Frans Timmermans warned MEPs.

"These are good cars. These are cars that will be more and more affordable, and we need to compete with that. We don't want to give up this essential

leaders, decision-makers, and International, Regional, and Intergovernmental Organizations will take part in talks discussing strategies and key points that will shape the future of societies and governments.

Presidents of Turkey and Egypt were set to deliver keynote addresses. Also, the founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, and the director-general of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attend the vent as key speakers.

Masrour Barzani, Iraq's Prime Minister, Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, Macky Sall, President of Senegal, Mario Abdo Benitez, President of Paraguay, and other leaders will also take part in the summit.

The World Government Summit also features a lineup of notable public figures, including the celebrated futurist Will.i.am and the CEO of Twitter, Elon Musk. The summit underlines the importance of international cooperation in addressing global challenges. It aims to provide a space for dialogue and collaboration between leaders, with the goal of finding solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues. —Agencies

Kuwait's annual inflation rate up to 4% in 2022

KUWAIT: Kuwait's annual inflation rate in the consumer price index recorded about 4 percent during January-December period in 2022. In its quarterly bulletin, Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) revealed that the inflation rate had recorded a slight increase of about 3.15 percent on an annualized basis by the end of December 2022. On a monthly basis, the inflation rate during last December increased by 0.7 percent compared to the previous month.

The statement attributed the annual rise in the inflation rate to the prices of the food and beverage group, as a result of the increase in the prices of meat, poultry, fish and seafood.

The bulletin indicated that through the developments of the inflation rate in Kuwait, it confirms the relative stability of prices brought about by the effectiveness of government support policies for foodstuffs and ensuring food security in the country with its four elements of availability, access, use, and stability."

The EPP group warned of what it said would be the "Havana effect"-Europeans continuing to drive vintage fuel-burning cars after new sales are banned because they can't find or afford an electric.

Opponents also argue car batteries are produced abroad by Europe's competitors like the United States, but Timmermans argued that thanks to EU-backed investment European production would increase. Green MEPs stressed the importance of the ban in reducing emissions and pollution. Karima Delli, president of the transport committee, declared: "Today's vote is a historic vote for the ecological transition. "We will no longer, or almost no longer, have petrol or diesel cars on our roads in 2050 ... it is a victory for our planet and our populations" —AFP

Air India to buy 250 Airbus, 220 Boeing planes

BENGALURU/NEW YORK: Air India will buy 250 Airbus planes and 220 Boeing planes in deals aimed at transforming the former national carrier, it said Tuesday, after decades as a monumental burden on the public purse. It has signed a letter of intent to buy 210 narrow-body A320neo jets and 40 long-haul A350 aircraft—with an unspecified number of options for more—as it plots to capture domestic market share and turn Indian airports into global travel hubs.

Air India will also purchase 220 planes from Boeing under a deal announced by a White House official Tuesday as part of an historic expansion by the former national carrier. The Indian airline also has options for an additional 70 Boeing aircraft, for a potential total of 290 jets, the White House official said. The announcement came hours after Air India announced a similar order with European aerospace titan Airbus. The airline's first new aircraft purchase since 2006 is part of an ambitious plan to return to profitability in the world's third-biggest air transport market.

EU approves 2035 ban on new fossil fuel car sales

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament on Tuesday gave its final approval to a ban on new sales of carbon-emitting petrol and diesel cars by 2035, with a view to getting them off the continent's roads by mid-century. European Union member states have already approved the legislation and will now formally nod it into law at an upcoming ministerial meeting, despite opposition from conservative

Business

Al-Rushood: KFH's Q4 2022 witnessed record growth in profits attributable to shareholders

Zahran: Key financial ratios reflect improvement in profitability • Al-Mukhaizeem: Credit rating positive with stable outlook

KUWAIT: AbdulWahab Al-Rushood, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH highlighted the Bank's financial performance during full year 2022 during an earnings webcast. Al-Rushood said, "By the grace of Allah, KFH has reported net profit of KD 357.7 million attributable to the shareholders of the bank for the year ended 2022; an increase of 47.0 percent compared to 2021. Ahli United Bank - Bahrain contributed to the profit with an amount of KD 62.5 million equivalent to 17.5 percent. The KD 62.5 million represents the results of AUB for the period from the date of the acquisition on October 2, 2022, until the year end of 2022, following the successful completion of the acquisition of 100 percent of Bahrain's Ahli United Bank by KFH, and the listing and trading of its shares on Bahrain Boursa on October 6, 2022."

Al-Rushood added that the fourth quarter of 2022 witnessed a record growth of 101.7 percent in profits attributable to the shareholders of KFH compared to the same period of 2021. This came as a result of combining profits of AUB-Bahrain after the successful 100 percent acquisition of its shares, and the earnings per share for Q4 of 2022 increased from 7.74 fils to 10.70 fils, an increase of 38.2 percent compared to the same period last year. He explained that earnings per share for the year ended 2022 reached 33.58 fils compared to 25.99 fils for last year; an increase of 29.2 percent.

Net financing income for the year ended 2022 reached KD 800.5 million; an increase of 36.7 percent compared to last year. Total operating income for the year ended 2022 reached KD 1.1 billion, an increase of 32.2 percent compared to 2021. Net operating income for the year ended 2022 reached KD 723.3 million, an increase of 43.8 percent compared to 2021.

Total assets increased to reach KD 37.0 billion, an increase of KD 15.2 billion or 69.7 percent compared to last year.



AbdulWahab Al-Rushood



Shadi Zahran



Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

Financing receivables increased to reach KD 18.8 billion, an increase of KD 7.5 billion or 65.9 percent compared to 2021. Depositors accounts reached KD 22.5 billion, an increase of KD 6.6 billion or 41.7 percent compared to 2021. Shareholders' equity reached KD 5.4 billion, an increase of 177.4 percent compared to 2021.

Al-Rushood pointed out that KFH successfully maintained its sustainable approach in achieving growth and profits in all main financial indicators. Also, KFH achieved positive ratios in terms of profitability, ROAA, ROAE, improving asset quality ratios as well as the coverage ratio of provisions for non-performing debt. Also, KFH maintained good ratios in terms of cost to income which confirms the flexible business model of KFH and its successful plans and strategy.

Al-Rushood explained that KFH enjoys strong liquidity ratios and solid capital base that support its business growth, in addition to strong operational performance resulting in growth in operating income, profits, financing portfolio, and customer deposits. He added that KFH successfully completed the acquisition of Bahrain's AUB in 2022, which represents a promising strategic project and historic and pivotal stage in KFH's journey. The acquisition turns KFH into the largest bank in Kuwait, and the second largest

Islamic bank in the world, and increases its market capitalization to KD 11 billion.

Al-Rushood pointed out that KFH maintains its distinction in providing financial solutions according to the highest quality standards, while moving forward in adopting the latest financial technology (fintech) innovations, employing artificial intelligence in banking transactions and increasing investment in technology to solidify KFH's leading position and bring customer experience to new levels.

Group Chief Financial Officer Shadi Zahran

Meanwhile, Group Chief Financial Officer, Shadi Zahran presented the financial performance of KFH Group for the year ended 31 December 2022. Zahran said that the Group has achieved net profit after tax attributable to shareholders for the year-ended 31st December 2022 of KD 357.7 million higher by KD 114.3 million or 47 percent compared to previous year of KD 243.4 million.

He indicated the group consolidated results includes the contribution from AUB group for only last three months starting from 2nd October 2022 (being the date of acquisition) amounting to KD 62.5 million. Zahran pointed out that the higher profits are mainly from increase in total operating income and lower provi-

sions partly offset by the net monetary loss that resulted from the application of IAS-29 "Financial reporting in Hyperinflationary Economies" on the financial statements of Kuwait Turkish Participation Bank (KTPB). Financing income has increased by KD 450.8 million or 51.7 percent compared to last year due to increase in yield and average profit earning assets.

Net financing income at KD 800.5 million increased by KD 214.8 million or 36.7 percent compared to last year mainly due to increase in financing income by KD 450.8 million partly offset by increase in finance cost and distribution to depositors by KD 236 million.

Group Chief Strategy Officer Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer, covered highlights of the Kuwait operating environment with an overview on KFH. He also shared KFH's strategy, as well as FY-2022 results.

Al-Mukhaizeem said that inflation rates during 2022 reached record levels not witnessed since 2008. The causes of inflation are due to the repercussions of the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine, logistics backlogs and energy prices globally which led to a rise of food and other goods.

Al-Mukhaizeem added: "In 2022 the Federal Reserve along with other central banks around the world were trying to defeat inflation by rapidly raising interest rates. The FED raised the target rate for the fed funds rate by 25bps to 4.5 percent-4.75 percent in its February 2023 meeting pushing borrowing costs to the highest level since 2007, the last Federal Reserve raised in 2022 was in December when the fed funds rate increased by 50bps which was its eighth consecutive rate hike."

Al-Mukhaizeem pointed out that the Central Bank of Kuwait raised its key discount rate by 50 bps to 4 percent on Jan 25, 2023, bringing borrowing costs to the highest since September 2019. The Central bank of Kuwait raised the interest rate four

times during 2022.

He indicated despite the economic slow-down globally, the latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) October 2022 forecasts Kuwait to register 8.7 percent GDP growth in 2022, the highest growth among all the GCC countries, and better than their forecast in April 2022 which was 8.2 percent. The notable expected growth is supported by the high oil prices and large reserve funds.

Al-Mukhaizeem explained that Standard & Poor's credit rating for Kuwait stands at A+ with stable outlook. Moody's credit rating for Kuwait was last set at A1 with stable outlook. Fitch's credit rating for Kuwait was last reported at AA- with stable outlook. He added that KFH's long term credit rating stands at "A" by Fitch with Stable Outlook, and at A2 by Moody's with Stable Outlook. In addition, KFH Group was recently named as the Best Islamic Financial Institution in the World and in the Middle East by Global Finance Magazine, and Best Treasury & Cash Management Bank in Kuwait by Global Finance Magazine. Al-Mukhaizeem pointed out that KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of a market capitalization reaching KD 11 billion.

Earning webcast attendees are:

- CI Capital
- EFG Hermes
- Franklin Templeton
- Abu Dhabi Investment Authority ADIA
- HSBC
- SICO Bank
- Citi Group
- Ajeel Capital
- Al-Rayan Investment
- Arqam Capital
- Boubyan Bank
- Burgan Bank
- NBK Capital
- Markaz

'Cautious' Ueda nominated next BoJ governor

TOKYO: Economics professor Kazuo Ueda was nominated Tuesday as the Bank of Japan's next governor, tasked with navigating a way forward after a decade of extraordinary monetary easing. The respected economist, described as careful and cautious, was a surprise pick for the change of guard after the outgoing governor's deputy reportedly turned down the job. The position will likely be tough going, with Ueda facing pressure to join international peers in tightening while avoiding panic by suddenly unwinding the bank's longstanding ultra-loose policies.

In an example of the economic headwinds facing Japan, data released Tuesday showed that GDP expanded just 0.2 percent in the last quarter of 2022, a smaller rebound than expected despite a long-awaited reopening to tourists. "We sought someone who would manage monetary policy appropriately while considering the status of the economy, prices and financial trends," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters after Ueda's nomination.

The government's decision will likely be easily approved in parliament, where the ruling coalition commands a healthy majority. Matsuno described Ueda as "an internationally acclaimed economist with profound insight in the field of finance", emphasizing the need for a good communicator in the job. BoJ official Shinichi Uchida and

former bureaucrat Ryozyo Himino were nominated as deputy governors, completing another all-male line-up at the top of the institution.

Ueda, a former BoJ policy board member, will take the reins from Haruhiko Kuroda—the central bank's longest-serving leader and the architect of its easing policies. Since Kuroda became governor in 2013, his attempts to boost Japan's moribund economy have ranged from a negative interest rate to spending vast sums on government bonds. In the past year, he has held firm, even as other central banks hiked rates to tackle inflation, with the resulting policy gap causing the yen to slump against the dollar.

'Very brave to accept'

Kuroda, 78, is due to step down on April 8 when his second term ends. He leaves 71-year-old Ueda the challenge of working out the bank's next steps, said Saori N Katada, an international relations professor at the University of Southern California. "This is probably the hardest job at the worst time to take up. Professor Ueda is very brave to accept it," she told AFP, describing him as "relatively cautious". Japan's easy money policies have become "extreme... and no one knows how to get out", as sudden pivots could "jeopardize fiscal sustainability", Katada said.

"In the next five years, though, the BoJ has to change course" as inflation, the weak yen and high government spending make easing unsustainable, she said. The yen tumbled from around 115 against the dollar in February 2022 to a three-decade low of 151 yen in October.

It has since recovered to about 132 yen, and briefly strengthened when Japanese media first reported Ueda would be nominated instead of Kuroda's dovish deputy

Masayoshi Amamiya.

Amamiya had been seen as a continuity candidate likely to keep the BoJ's stimulus policies.

But that does not mean Ueda—who has a PhD in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served on the BoJ's policy board between 1998 and 2005—should be viewed as a hawk, analysts said. "The current BoJ policy is appropriate, and I think it's important to maintain monetary easing policy for now," Ueda told reporters on Friday.

The bank's approach dates to the era of former prime minister Shinzo Abe, whose "Abenomics" plan aimed to stimulate growth and banish the deflation that plagued Japan from the end of the 1980s boom. Inflation hit a multi-decade high of four percent in Japan in December—above the BoJ's longstanding two-percent target—fuelled partly by soaring energy bills.

But because the trend is not driven by demand or steady wage increases, the BoJ has said it sees no reason to abandon its policies. Kazuo Momma, executive economist at Mizuho Research and Technologies, told AFP that Ueda had "never been hawkish with regard to the BoJ's monetary policy". So he "will assess very carefully whether the two-percent inflation target will be achieved in any reasonable time horizon, and take a cautious position in terms of possible policy changes," Momma said. —AFP



Kazuo Ueda

Hungary enters recession as energy prices soar

BUDAPEST: Hungary's economy entered recession in 2022 according to official data published Tuesday, as soaring energy prices drove inflation higher. Hungarian GDP shrank by 0.4 percent in the last three months of 2022, after a fall of 0.7 percent during the third quarter, said the national statistics office KSH. Hungary's last technical recession—defined as at least two successive quarters of contraction—occurred in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the economy. The latest recession comes as Hungary reels from soaring inflation which reached an EU-high of almost 26 percent in January, the highest in the central European country since the mid-1990s. Prime Minister Viktor Orban has blamed EU sanctions against Russia for the sky-high inflation which also saw energy and food prices jump by 52 percent and 44 percent in January respectively.

But experts point to the distorting effect created by government price caps on food and fuel, and fiscal austerity measures like cuts to household energy bill subsidies. "As both households and corporates were forced to cope with crippling energy prices, domestic economic activity markedly slowed down," said a bulletin by ING Bank analysts. Economy Minister Mihaly Varga, quoted by the Hungarian MTI news agency, said Tuesday that the recession is "a slight and temporary decrease" and that growth should quickly resume in 2023. Over the whole of 2022, economic activity grew by 4.6 percent, compared to 7.1 percent in 2021. "Despite a protracted war (in Ukraine) and sanctions, Hungary was still able to post annual growth in 2022," said Varga, adding that unemployment remained low at around four percent. —AFP

EU adds Russia to its tax haven blacklist

BRUSSELS: The European Union added Russia to its tax haven blacklist on Tuesday, the latest in a series of economic and diplomatic measures taken against Moscow since its invasion of Ukraine. In a statement, the bloc said Russia's 2022 tax legislation had failed to allay concerns over its opaque treatment of the tax affairs of international holding companies.

"In addition, dialogue with Russia on matters related to taxation came to a standstill following the Russian aggression against Ukraine," the European Council said. Three more jurisdictions, the British Virgin Islands, Costa Rica and the Marshall Islands were also added to the now 16-strong "EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes".

And four countries which the EU sees as having cleaned up their act were taken off an annexed list of countries under scrutiny: North Macedonia, Barbados, Jamaica and Uruguay.

"We ask all listed countries to improve their legal framework and to work towards compliance with international standards in taxation," Sweden's finance minister Elisabeth Svantesson said. —AFP

Japan GDP rebounds less than expected in fourth quarter

TOKYO: Japan's economy expanded just 0.2 percent in the last quarter of 2022, a smaller rebound than expected despite the long-awaited reopening of the country to tourists, government data showed Tuesday. The figure for the three months to December fell short of the 0.5 percent growth forecast by analysts surveyed by Bloomberg, with the world's third-largest economy growing 1.1 percent for the calendar year.

Japan reopened its doors to tourists in October after two-and-a-half years of tough COVID-19 restrictions, lifting a cap on the number of arrivals and ending a rule requiring visitors to come on package tours. In 2019, a record 31.9 million foreign visitors came to Japan, putting the country on track for its goal of 40 million by 2020, when Tokyo was supposed to host the Summer Olympics.

But in 2021, the figure plummeted to just 250,000. "Japan saw moderate growth in Q4 2022," Hiroyuki Ueno, senior economist at SuMi TRUST, said in a note before the data was released. "Consumer services benefitted from an increase in domestic travel and a rise in inbound tourists," he wrote. "Exports were resilient, reflecting the easing of supply constraints on automotive-related goods and moves to restore inventories overseas." A cheaper yen in the last year may have encouraged foreign visitors to spend more in Japan, though it also weighed on the spending power of Japanese households and the bottom line of some firms.

"Enterprises dependent on domestic demand enjoyed cheap imports and could reduce costs," wrote Ueno. "However, export industries did not fare as well. Overall, a strong yen is still negative for the Japanese economy as a



KAWASAKI: In this file photo taken on May 18, 2022, cars bound for shipment are seen parked at Kawasaki Port. —AFP

whole but not to the extent it was in previous decades." External trade was positive for the quarter, compared to the preceding period, as exports improved and imports were tamed with the slight recovery in the yen and the cost of fuel.

However, inflation hit four percent in December, a figure not seen in Japan for more than four decades. Despite the price pressure, Japan's central bank has declined to shift gears on its ultra-easy monetary policy, convinced that inflation is being driven by temporary factors like fuel costs.

It wants to see sustained two-percent price growth to help turbocharge the economy, particularly through wage increases. A new Bank of Japan governor will be nominated later Tuesday, with economics professor Kazuo Ueda widely expected to replace Haruhiko Kuroda after his decade-long tenure ends in April. Analyst Ueno said the outlook for the first half of 2023 "is positive", with the rise in import prices expected to taper off as inflation stabilises in Europe and the United States. —AFP

Business

Rental costs, gasoline prices keep US inflation elevated

People shift spending away from services amid soaring prices

WASHINGTON: Rising rents, a gasoline price rebound and vehicle costs helped keep US inflation elevated in January, analysts say, amid signs that policymakers have some way to go in bringing prices down.

The US central bank has hiked interest rates rapidly in the past year to raise borrowing costs and cool demand in the world's biggest economy, as inflation skyrocketed. But even as the consumer price index (CPI), an important inflation gauge due to be released Tuesday, eases from last year's decades-high levels, analysts warn of some stickier areas.

Overall, the CPI rose 6.5 percent in December compared with a year ago, furthering a steady decline from June's blistering 9.1 percent reading. The so-called core figure excluding the volatile food and energy components, however, has fluctuated over the same period. It fell to 5.9 percent in June, rose to 6.6 percent in September and then slipped again.

"The area that I'm concerned about is services inflation, which is more related to the strength of the domestic economy, particularly the labor market, and nominal wage growth," said Ryan Sweet, chief US economist at Oxford Economics. Rental costs "won't peak until the second half of this year," while wage growth remains robust and there is still pent-up demand for services spending, he told AFP.

"During the pandemic, people shifted their spending away from services because they couldn't go out to restaurants, bars, sporting events," he said.

With COVID-19 restrictions easing, people are

now turning back to services, which make up the bulk of consumer spending, Sweet said. Economists expect overall inflation to have cooled further in January on an annual basis. But they forecast the CPI to have risen 0.5 percent from December to January, picking up from a prior 0.1 percent pace.

'Uneven'

"While overall prices have been slowing on a sustained basis, the easing in core inflation has been more uneven," said Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in a recent note. Prices of goods have eased as supply chains untangle but a strong labor market supports incomes and, in turn, demand. "We're going to see a lot of goods disinflation over the next several months," said Sweet of Oxford Economics.

But it will take a significant amount of this to offset services inflation expected in the pipeline.

Farooqi told AFP the Federal Reserve is closely eyeing the cost of services excluding housing, food and energy. "We do think inflation peaked in June. But getting back to two percent is not imminent," she said, referring to policymakers' long-term inflation target.

"From a policy perspective, the Fed's message on rates closely aligns with these developments: to lower inflation... rates will have to move higher and policy will have to remain restrictive for some time," she said. Should inflation fail to cool between December and January, analysts expect the Fed will press on with further hikes to the benchmark lending rate.



WASHINGTON: Rising rents, a gasoline price rebound and vehicle costs helped keep US inflation elevated in January, analysts say. —AFP

On Monday, Fed Governor Michelle Bowman warned in a speech that it would likely be "necessary to further tighten monetary policy to bring inflation down toward our goal." She added that,

with the economic outlook remaining uncertain, "I expect that we will continue to be surprised by economic and geopolitical developments and by the incoming data." —AFP

Fowz Mohammed wins ABK's Alfouz prize of KD 10,000

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Fowz Mohammed Shukry Mohammed as the winner of KD 10,000 in the Alfouz weekly draw. The winner was announced on Feb 13. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Alfouz draw account offers ABK customers the chance to win life-changing rewards. With Alfouz, ABK customers will get a chance to win KD 10,000 in the weekly draw and the ultimate grand prize of KD 5,000 monthly additional income for 10 years. Both new and existing ABK customers can benefit from this opportunity, with a minimum account balance of KD 100 only.

ABK encourages everyone to open Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming draw which will happen on Feb 20, 2023. The higher the deposits are, the higher the chances to win.

UK unemployment stable; inflation hits wages again

LONDON: British unemployment held close to its historical low but wages continue to be outstripped by rampant inflation, official data showed on Tuesday. The unemployment rate was unchanged at 3.7 percent in the three months to the end of December compared with the three months to the end of November, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

Wages excluding bonuses rose 6.7 percent in the same period-but sank 2.5 percent when inflation is taken into account. "Overall pay ... continues to be outstripped by rising prices," said ONS economic statistics director Darren Morgan.

In recent months, strikes have multiplied across Britain-particularly in the communication, education, transport and health sectors-as workers protest at pay that has fallen in value. A total of 843,000 working days were lost to walkouts in December, which was the highest since November 2011, the ONS added on Tuesday. The news comes on the eve of official UK inflation data for January.

Inflation had slowed slightly to 10.5 percent in December. However, the rate remains close to a four-decade high, propelled by surging energy bills after key gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine almost one year ago. Britain's economy narrowly avoided recession with zero growth in the fourth quarter, recent data showed. But finance minister Jeremy Hunt has warned it is "not out of the woods yet", particularly where inflation is concerned. —AFP

Ford to cut 3,800 jobs in Europe, mostly Germany, UK

PARIS: US automaker Ford said Tuesday it would cut 3,800 jobs in Europe, mostly in Britain and Germany, as competition in the electric car sector intensifies. The company said 2,300 positions in product development and administrative functions would be slashed in Germany, 1,300 in Britain and another 200 elsewhere in

Burgan Bank honors its retail banking employees for 2022

KUWAIT: In recognition of their achievements throughout the year of 2022, Burgan Bank honored a group of its most distinguished retail banking employees in a prestigious ceremony. The event, which took place at the Salwa Sabah Hall, was attended by Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Burgan Bank, Masoud M J Hayat, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer & CEO-Burgan Bank Raed Abdullah Al-Haqhaq, Group Chief Human Resources and Development Officer at Burgan Bank, Halah El Sherbini, in addition to many leaders and senior executives from across various departments.

During the ceremony, the Bank's executive management distributed a number of awards across several departments. The awards included Best Sales Team, Best Branches and Outstanding Employee. Other awards were also handed to different departments, such as cards, products and segments and call center.

On this special occasion, Naser Mohammed Al-Qaisi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Burgan Bank, said: "I would like to thank all Burgan Bank employees for their efforts, dedication and commitment. The team spirit embraced by all our employees remains our core pillar and the main driver of the bank's success, enabling us to constantly offer an elevated banking experience. Hard work and commitment have always been among the characteristics of Burgan Bank's employees, and these characteristics have clearly reflected over the years on the Bank's achievements and contributed to its success. We are always keen to develop and hone the skills of our employees and invest in their talents. This includes team members at all levels and all departments, as we offer expansive



development initiatives and the best professional training programs through the Burgan Bank Academy. This has continued to be a main component in improving the Bank's overall performance and strengthening its leading position".

Al-Qaisi added: "Investing in human resources and preparing a professional team is one of the foundational elements of Burgan Bank's strategy. Enhancing the efficiency of our employees, developing their skills in various fields, and training them to embrace innova-

tion and excellence, remains among our top priorities as we seek to empower these young banking leaders for the future. We are driven by our employees, and they are our most important asset. They are the main reason we continue to excel in our offerings and are able to expand our services to meet the needs of all our customers. Through this recognition today, we hope to reaffirm our appreciation for our hard-working and dedicated employees who spare no effort in embodying and realizing our long-standing values."



Philippines trade delegation visits LuLu Hypermarket

KUWAIT: A trade delegation from the Philippines Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), accompanied by Philippine embassy staff, visited the LuLu Hypermarket in Al-Rai on Feb 13. The visiting delegation, led by Charmaine Yalong and Bianca Skyimte, was met on arrival by top management officials of the hypermarket in Kuwait.

Europe over the next three years.

"These are difficult decisions, not taken lightly," said Martin Sander, general manager of Ford Model e in Europe. "We recognize the uncertainty it creates for our team, and I assure them we will be offering them our full support in the months ahead," Sander said. The company said the decision was aimed at revitalising its business in Europe and competing profitably with a new line-up of passenger vehicles. "The company is taking action to restructure its business in Europe, creating a leaner, more competitive cost structure," Ford said.

The company said it was "responding to rapidly changing market conditions and a growing field of electric vehicle competitors entering the market".



The trade delegation, which also included Nesreen A Navarro Sabtain, trade assistant at the Philippine Trade and Investment Center in Dubai, and Rudolph Jay D Velasco, trade and industry development specialist at the Export Marketing Bureau of the DTI, arrived in Kuwait as part of their wider trip to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to promote bilateral trade. The visit supports the broader initiative by the Philippines government to increase the global mindshare of the country's brands, to expand the range of its export products, and to diversify export destinations.

During discussions, the two sides exchanged ideas on further boosting import of Philippine foods and other products to LuLu Hypermarket shelves. For their part, the hypermarket officials

stressed on their specific import requirements, and added that LuLu Hypermarket currently stocks over 300 brands and more than 2,000 product ranges from the Philippines, besides having their own sourcing office in the Philippines. During a familiarization tour of the hypermarket's Al-Rai outlet, the trade delegation expressed their pleasure at seeing the wide range of food products from the Philippines on the shelves of the hypermarket. Following the discussion, it was announced that LuLu Hypermarket would hold a mega promotion of Philippine products, with amazing offers and discounts on a wide range of Philippine brands. The promotion is slated to take place from 17 to 26 February at all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait.



Philippine mayor gives singles extra pay on Valentine's Day



A life-long bachelor mayor in the Philippines is giving single staff extra pay on Tuesday for Valentine's Day, to show gratitude for the extra hours they work and show that "someone loves them". Lonely hearts at General Luna town hall in Quezon province will receive three times their normal daily wage if they have been single for more than five years, Mayor Matt Florido told AFP.

Other footloose and fancy-free staff will get double pay-or the option to take a paid day off. "I know what they're going through today, I feel for them," said Florido, 42, who says he has been single "since birth". "On Valentine's Day no one will give them chocolates, flowers... so we thought of giving them this kind of incentive so they can also feel someone cares for them, someone loves them."

It is the third year in a row that Florido has handed out bonus payments to singletons in local government. Of the 289 town hall employees, 37 qualified for the compensation after passing a stringent vetting process to confirm their claimed single status. Eligible staff were asked questions about when they were last in a relationship, the reasons they broke up,

and why they are still single. The eldest recipient was 64.

"We are just a small town so everyone knows everyone. You can't hide anything," said Florido of the pineapple-growing municipality. Florido said he would finance the 28,000 peso (\$511) handout from his own pocket, adding that the money was also an acknowledgement of the demands placed on single staff to work additional hours when needed. "They have light responsibilities at home so every time we need them to work overtime, when we have relief operations, or lose sleep to serve the town, we can always count on them," he said.

Florido said staff already romantically attached did not seem to object to their single colleagues getting extra pay. "Maybe they understand what the single people are going through," he said. The payments will be given to singletons at a Valentine's Day party for all staff on Tuesday evening. Activities on the night will include dating games. "Who knows, they might end up getting together," Florido said. "Maybe they are already hitting on each other." — AFP



An Afghan vendor sells flowers along the flower street on the occasion of Valentine's Day.



Afghan vendors selling roses wait for customers along the flower street on the occasion of Valentine's Day in the Shar-e-Naw area of Kabul. — AFP photos



A poster pasted on the window of a shop reading "Avoid celebrating lovers' day!" by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, is pictured along the flower street on the occasion of Valentine's Day.

Kabul florists heartbroken over Taliban Valentine's Day ban



An Afghan vendor arranges roses in a gift shop along the flower street on the occasion of Valentine's Day.

Florists with wilting bouquets of red roses and street vendors clutching unsold balloons were heartbroken in the Afghan capital on Tuesday after the Taliban's morality police banned Valentine's Day celebrations. While Valentine's Day has never been widely celebrated in Afghanistan, some well-off residents in cities have developed a tradition of marking the lovers' day in recent years. In Kabul's famed Flower Street, shops were full of heart-shaped garlands and red stuffed animals, but hopelessly empty of customers.

In the window of one outlet, a poster signed off by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice warned shoppers: "Avoid celebrating lovers' day!" The poster said Valentine's Day "is not Islamic and is not part of the Afghan culture but a sloganeering day of the infidels". "Celebrating the day of lovers is showing sympathy to the Christian Pope," it read.

Officers from the ministry patrolled the area in their white uniforms, trailed by an armed escort, an AFP correspondent reported. Kneeling in front of his shop, Omar—who did not share his surname—pruned thorns and withered petals from his stock of flowers. "[The Taliban authorities] published and distributed their order to every shop," he told AFP. "I don't think I could sell these flowers today, people aren't buying," he said.

"You can see we have no customers—the situation is very bad." An AFP



Afghan men are reflected on the glass of a gift shop along the flower street on the occasion of Valentine's Day in the Shar-e-Naw area of Kabul.

reporter saw a young couple furtively buy flowers and quickly leave the scene when they saw the morality police patrol. "The situation has changed—we can't celebrate it like other years," said browsing shopper Zahrah, married for seven years. "But we do celebrate it. There are some restrictions and the situation is not good, but we celebrate it at home."

The vice ministry could not be reached for comment on the exact nature of the ban. The Taliban authori-

ties have issued various restrictions on social life in the country since they came to power in August 2021. Music, social media apps and video games have all come under scrutiny by the ultra-conservative government. The authorities have particularly cracked down on Afghan women, effectively squeezing them out of public life. — AFP



An Afghan burqa-clad woman buys gifts at a shop on the occasion of Valentine's Day in Jalalabad.

Banksy unveils new 'Valentine's Day Mascara' artwork

British graffiti artist Banksy on Tuesday unveiled his latest UK street artwork, which appears to take aim at domestic violence against women as the world celebrates Valentine's Day. The mural, which has appeared in Margate in southeast England, depicts a 1950s-style housewife with a swollen eye and a missing tooth seemingly shoving her male partner into a chest freezer.

The elusive Banksy, whose true identity remains unconfirmed, posted three

images of his latest work—which he entitled "Valentine's Day Mascara"—on his Instagram account. Two of the images were close-ups showing the woman, wearing a blue pinafore and yellow washing up gloves, smiling but seemingly with a battered face. The street artist, known to hail from Bristol in southwest England, has been busy producing and selling dozens of limited edition screen prints to raise funds to support civilians affected by the war in Ukraine.

The 50 prints, which show a mouse

sliding down the side of a box with "FRAGILE" printed on it, were sold in December for £5,000 (\$6,100) each, through the charity Legacy of War Foundation. Their online auction attracted thousands of "hostile" web attacks launched from Russian internet addresses, the charity said at the time. The artist also confirmed last month that he was behind seven murals that appeared on destroyed buildings around Kyiv last year. — AFP



An artwork, acknowledged by street artist Banksy, is pictured on the side of a house in Margate, south east England on Tuesday. — AFP



Belgian designer Pierre Gerondal works at the Atelier Gerondal ski factory in Malmedy. — AFP photos



Belgian designer Pierre Gerondal works at the Atelier Gerondal ski factory.

IN A LOW COUNTRY, SKI MAKING IS A HIGH ART

In a land with no mountains and scarcely ever any snow, ski craftsmanship might not seem a priority.

But Pierre Gerondal has put the limits of Belgium's geography and climate aside and carved out a respected place in the industry. His durable made-to-measure wooden skis have attained a peak of quality and are climbing towards the summit of success. Gerondal's workshop in Malmedy lies in Belgium's eastern fenland. What it lacks in crisp Alpine air it gains in the smell of Douglas fir,

Gerondal's speciality helps him stand out, especially in a flat country not known for downhill racing. "The goal is to find the eight tree species we use as close to us as possible, so that we can go and inspect the timber when it's still growing in the ground," he said.

"We choose the trees to have the most perfect wood for the construction of our skis." The craftsman, aged in his forties, finds promising trees in the Belgian Ardennes, and also across the nearby border in the forests of France's Lorraine

used this expertise in luxury woodworking when he turned towards his real passion, skiing-on water and, especially, on snow.

Hi-tech but artisanal

A craftsman with an environmentalist bent, and a skier since childhood, Gerondal decided to build himself a set of classic wooden skis. His friends were impressed with the outcome and he decided to turn it into a business. Things went downhill for two years as the COVID pandemic shut Europe's ski resorts, but the reopening coincided with a jump in interest. He has made a hundred pairs of skis over the last 12 months and plans to make 300 more over the next year—each pair needing 30 hours of painstaking work.

Gerondal and his two assistants regard themselves as high-tech workers but with an artisanal spirit. "We are artists, because without the refined appearance, without the visual aspect that attracts people, we wouldn't have succeeded," he said. "But it's also cutting-edge technology because if the finished product didn't perform at least as well as the mass-produced skis in the stores, I wouldn't have made them." The response has been positive. Gerondal is also helped by his partner Justine Corman, a trained graphic designer; Belgium's best Alpine skier Armand Marchant and former world champion slopestyle snowboarder Seppe Smits. One of their products is a "splitboard", a snowboard that can be divided into two cross-country skis when a boarder goes off-piste.

'Each wood skis different'

Whether for pros like Marchant or Smits, or ski tourists getting away from the Low Countries to find themselves some altitude, each set is unique. "Of



Belgian designer Pierre Gerondal and his wife Justine Corman pose at the Atelier Gerondal ski factory.

ash and poplar ... the raw material of his craft.

"Most skis have a wooden core, but the big brands cover them in plastic. With us, everything that can be wood, stays wood," he told AFP. Few European ski-makers still take this approach, and

and of Germany's Eifel national park. "For skis you need the heart of the tree, otherwise the blades do not offer enough resistance," he explained. Gerondal's ski journey began barely four years ago. Before that he had worked in advertising and then in yacht design. He



Belgian designer Pierre Gerondal works at the Atelier Gerondal ski factory.



Belgian designer Pierre Gerondal poses at the Atelier Gerondal ski factory.

course, before we make a pair of skis we measure and weigh the client, and try to learn about his style, his preferences," Gerondal said. "And knowing timber is a crucial aspect in making skis, because different types of wood ski differently," he explained.

"Some skiers have weak or sensitive knees; some prefer to explore the mountains, others to carve a precise racing line down the fastest downhill slopes." For a top end artisan, ski-making can be a lucrative business. An off-the-shelf pair can cost 2,300 euros (\$2,460) and a made-to-measure set 3,800.

"Skis are like suits, they need to be adjusted. We give clients a creation to

test out. They try it then come back with feedback that will allow us to make the ski that suits them best," the craftsman said. And if that seems like a lot of trouble to go to, in a country without slopes and where ski enthusiasts need to travel to find snow, the wooden ski is built to last. If stored and treated well, they can last for ten winter seasons. "And there's no waste," he promised. "I ask each client never to throw out their skis. They either finish their life on the wall as decor, or they come back to Gerondal to be recycled." — AFP

Cartel torture victim could be 'America's Favorite Pet'

An elderly dog whose front paws were cut off by Mexican drug cartel members is in the running for the title of pet of the year in the United States. Pay de Limon (Lemon Pie) is already a star among the roughly 500 residents of an animal shelter on the

outskirts of Mexico City. He has made multiple international television appearances, including on The Oprah Winfrey Show.

Pay de Limon's fame could now reach new heights thanks to a nomination for the prize of "America's Favorite Pet"—the winner of which appears in Dogster Magazine and receives \$5,000. The award would be another remarkable chapter in the life of a dog whose toes were cut off by gang members as practice for torturing kidnap victims. "Milagros Caninos received a call 14 years ago saying that a dog's front

paws had been cut off and thrown in the trash," said Patricia Ruiz, founder of the Milagros Caninos (Canine Miracles) shelter.

Pay de Limon was rescued and now walks and runs with prostheses from the United States. He is currently first in the dog category of "America's Favorite Pet" based on votes received from the public so far, according to organizers. "His life is an example of courage," according to a short biography on the competition website that describes him as a "hero." "The case of Pay de Limon has moved Mexicans, perhaps because it is a simple, brutal and moving proof of the cruelty of the drug cartels," it adds.

Ruiz created the shelter after the death of her own dog, Salchicha, who died of suffocation. "From that moment, I said to myself: I will help all the dogs who are suffering," she said. "Milagros Caninos only takes in dogs in extreme situations. Dogs with cancer, without legs, blind, deaf, burnt, tortured, paralyzed, raped, drugged, beaten, mutilated," she said.

The other residents include Fresa (Strawberry), who underwent reconstructive surgery after her face was bashed in when she tried to steal meat from a butcher. Chocolata also lost both her front paws and has prostheses after being tied up and dragged behind a truck. She was brought to the shelter by the police on the verge of death and needed amputation.

Milagros Caninos has taken in some 3,000 to 4,000 dogs over 18 years, according to Ruiz. The shelter uses four tons of dog food per month, at a cost of more than \$30,000, for which it relies on donations. — AFP



A worker at "Milagros Caninos", the first sanctuary in Latin America for dogs in extreme situation, poses with a dog called "Almibar", in Xohimilco neighborhood.



"Pay de Limon" (Lemon Pie), a dog that had its front legs cut off by the drug trafficking group Los Zetas some 10 years ago, rests at "Milagros Caninos", the first sanctuary in Latin America for dogs.



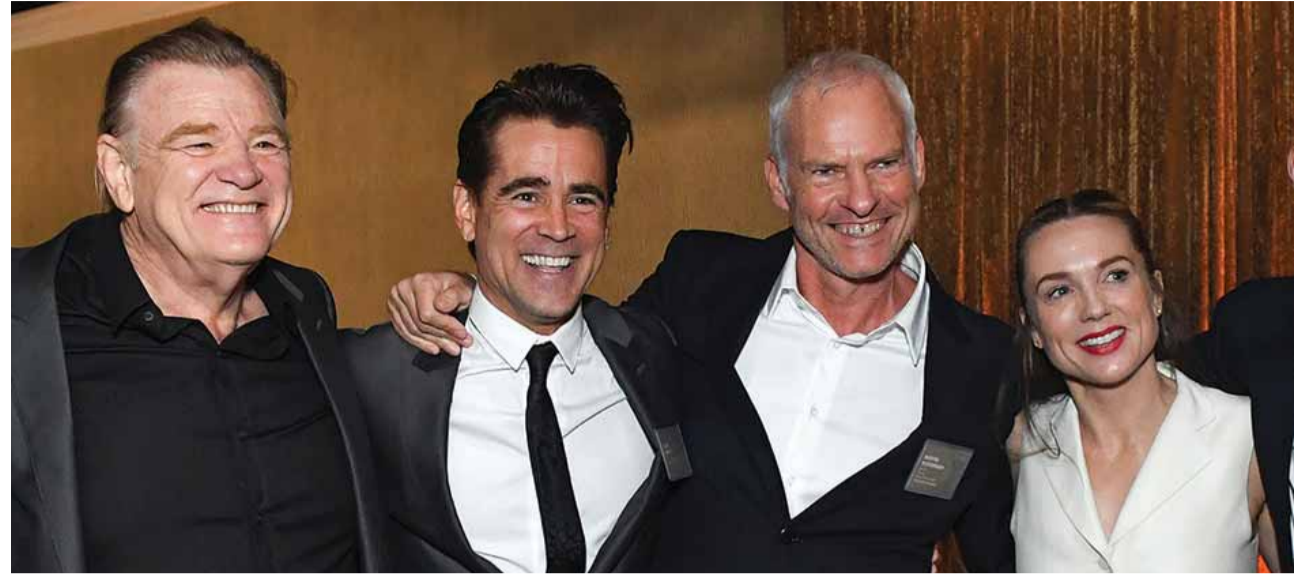
Patricia Ruiz, president and owner of the 'Milagros Caninos' civil association, plays with dogs at the sanctuary in Xohimilco neighbourhood, Mexico City.



Patricia Ruiz, president and owner of the 'Milagros Caninos' civil association, the first sanctuary in Latin America for dogs in extreme situations, plays with 'Croqueta' in her makeshift wheelchair, in the Xochimilco neighborhood. — AFP photos



(From left to right) Actor Tom Cruise, producer Jerry Bruckheimer and director Guillermo Del Toro attend the 95th Annual Oscars Nominees Luncheon at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.



(From left to right) Actors Brendan Gleeson, Colin Farrell director Martin McDonagh and actress Kerry Condon arrive at the 95th Annual Oscars Nominees Luncheon. — AFP photos

CRUISE OUTSHINES OSCARS RIVALS AS ACADEMY READIES FOR AWARD SHOW

Tom Cruise lived up to his billing as the "last true movie star" as nearly 200 of this year's Oscar nominees gathered to celebrate—and size up their competition—at the Academy's boozy annual luncheon Monday. In a room packed with A-listers such as Steven Spielberg and Cate Blanchett, there was no doubt Cruise remained the biggest draw, with a crowd of well-wishers from Hollywood moguls to Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai lining up to greet him throughout the event.

Cruise is nominated this year as a producer of "Top Gun: Maverick," in which he also starred. The film is considered a growing frontrunner for the best picture Oscar—Hollywood's most prestigious prize. "It's been incredible... I just want to get people into theaters," Cruise told AFP. "But this is lovely," he admitted, motioning to the Beverly Hills ballroom, packed with Oscar nominees and Academy voters, and kitted out with giant golden statuettes and open champagne bars.

The 95th Academy Awards will be held on March 12. Academy voters this year



Former Academy president Cheryl Boone Isaacs (left) and actress Angela Bassett.

handed out various nominations for box office smash hits such as "Maverick," "Avatar: The Way of Water" and "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"—raising hopes that Oscars TV audiences will pick

back up. "The awards gods have smiled on us—there's nothing we can do about that," joked Glenn Weiss, who is returning to produce next month's Oscars telecast ceremony.

During her luncheon speech, Academy president Janet Yang also reiterated her wish to leave behind the "unprecedented" controversy of last year, when Will Smith famously slapped Chris Rock live on the Oscars stage before being banned. "What happened on stage was totally unacceptable. And the response from our organization was inadequate," she said. Smith was allowed to remain at the Oscars and accept his best actor prize after striking Rock, and was only later banned from attending the Academy Awards for a decade.

The Academy "must actively compassionately and decisively" in times of crisis, said Yang, to applause. After lunch, the names of all 182 attending nominees, plus directors representing their countries in the international feature film category, were read out, and the nominees posed for the traditional, giant-sized "class photo."

"Everything Everywhere All At Once," a quirky sci-fi with a predominantly Asian cast which is many pundits' tip for best picture winner, earned the most nominations this year with 11, and its cast received many of the loudest cheers on Monday. "We paid them a lot of money to do that!" joked best actress nominee Michelle Yeoh, describing the indie film's giant success as "a dream come true." Colin Farrell and Austin Butler, best actor nominees and stars of best picture rivals "The Banshees



Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai (left) and US actor Tom Cruise.

of Inisherin" and "Elvis," also drew raucous cheers from the luncheon crowd.

'American dream'

Notable by her absence Monday was Andrea Riseborough, who controversially earned a coveted best actress nomination after an intense, last-minute social media campaign mounted by prominent celebrities. But among the nominees present was Kazuo Ishiguro, nominated for writing the screenplay of British drama "Living," some five years after he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in Stockholm.

"This is very different... This is like some version of the American dream. So many

people dream about being here," he said. "The Oscars are more like an election—there's a lot more campaigning" than for other famous awards, he added.

His fellow Nobel prizewinner, Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, attended as an executive producer of "Stranger at the Gate," a short documentary about a US Marine veteran who plotted to blow up a mosque in his hometown. "It's surreal," she told AFP after meeting Cruise. "I've seen him on the screen and now I'm seeing him in person." — AFP



British actress Cate Blanchett.



US actress Michelle Williams



Actor Austin Butler

Mexico hails 'heroic' rescue dog that died in Turkey

Mexico on Monday paid tribute to a military rescue dog that died while searching for survivors buried under the rubble of the earthquake in Turkey. Defense Minister Luis Cresencio

Sandoval announced the death of the German shepherd called Proteo at President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's daily news conference.

"You accomplished your mission... thank you for your heroic work," the military said on Twitter. Proteo was one of more than a dozen rescue dogs dispatched by Mexico along with 130 military personnel following the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that killed more than 35,000 people in Turkey and Syria. "You were always a strong, hard-working dog who never gave up. I will always remember you," one rescuer who served alongside Proteo said in a video. — AFP



A handout image released by the Mexican Foreign Ministry shows rescue dog Proteo of the National Defense Ministry (SEDENA), upon arrival at the airport in Adana, Turkey. — AFP

App allows Mexicans to reach out after death

Providing a welcome voice from beyond the grave, a Mexican app has been launched to store messages and last wishes for users to share with loved ones after their death. "Mexicans laugh at death, but it's hard for them to talk about it," said Miguel Farrell, the creator of Past Post. The app "allows you to leave your things in order for this moment that will arrive when you least expect it," he told AFP.

While Mexicans happily accept a gift of a sugar skull with their name on it for the annual Day of the Dead festival, they are often less comfortable discussing the issue, in particular inheritance. The app allows a father in good health for example to record congratulatory messages for his children to hear several years later when they graduate, in case he dies in the meantime.

It enables users to leave instructions such as preferences for their funeral or administration of bank accounts and social media accounts. Past Post keeps this content in the form of a non-fungible token (NFT) — a digital certificate of ownership that uses the blockchain tech-



A woman looks at her smartphone while sitting in a restaurant.

nology behind cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Its creator emphasizes that the app, which costs \$19 a year, cannot replace a will, which the vast majority of Mexicans do not have, according to the Mexico City notaries association. The content "has no legal value but it has a very important symbolic value," Farrell said. — AFP



A woman explores in her smartphone the Past Post app, in Mexico City. — AFP photos

Sports

Nuggets overcome Heat; Cavaliers go 7th straight

NBA fines Wizards guard Beal \$25K for knocking ref into seat

LOS ANGELES: Nikola Jokic narrowly missed out on his 21st triple double of the season as the Denver Nuggets battled to a 112-108 road victory over the Miami Heat on Monday. Two-time NBA MVP Jokic finished with 27 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists as Denver stretched their lead at the top of the Western Conference to five games. Denver, who improved to 40-18, trailed by nine points after a shaky first quarter but roared back in the second to outscore Miami 38-26 for a 65-62 lead at the break.

The Nuggets held on to the advantage for most of the second half and although Miami got within three points in the final minute, Denver held on for victory. While Jokic led the scoring, Denver's balanced offense spread the points around with seven players finishing in double figures and sharing 34 assists between them. Michael Porter Jr scored 17 points while Bruce Brown had 16.

"I think we like to play for each other," Jokic said. "We try to find open guys and we're just going to work for the best shot possible. The team buys into that and that's why I think we have so many assists," the Serbian star said. Jimmy Butler led Miami's scorers with 24 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists while Max Strus had 23 points and Bam Adebayo 19.

Mitchell eyes Philly test

Donovan Mitchell erupted for 41 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers bagged their seventh straight win with a gritty 117-109 victory over the San Antonio Spurs. Mitchell's sixth 40-point game of

the season helped the Cavs tighten their grip on fourth place in the Eastern Conference. Cleveland are now 38-22 for the season, leading fifth-placed Brooklyn, who were thumped 124-106 by the New York Knicks earlier Monday.

Jarrett Allen (17 points) and Darius Garland (16) were Cleveland's other principal scorers while Keldon Johnson led the scoring for San Antonio with 25 points. "The biggest thing is just continuing to fight," Mitchell said. "We didn't play our best basketball. Regardless of how San Antonio's been playing, they made it tough on us. You've got to give the credit for their performance but at the end of the day we found a way to execute and that's big time."

Cleveland will now look ahead to their final game before this weekend's All-Star break, with a road clash against Eastern Conference rivals Philadelphia on Wednesday. Mitchell believes the 76ers will have added motivation after the Philadelphia Eagles' Super Bowl defeat to Kansas City on Sunday. "That's going to be a playoff game in a hostile environment," Mitchell said. "They just lost the Super Bowl so they'll probably be a little bit fired up over there. We've got to go out there and hold our own and play the basketball we've been playing."

Portland pummel Lakers

The Sixers warmed up for their date with the Cavs with a 123-104 blowout over the Houston Rockets. James Harden led the Sixers scoring against his former club with 28 points and 10 assists

while Tyrese Maxey impressed with 26 points off the bench after making 4-of-8 from beyond the arc. Sixers talisman Joel Embiid added 23 points while Jalen Green led the Rockets with 29 points. The Sixers are just one game ahead of the in-form Cavaliers heading into Wednesday's game.

Elsewhere, a Los Angeles Lakers side missing LeBron James were swept aside by a rampant Portland Trail Blazers led by another 40-point gem from Damian Lillard. James, who is nursing a nig-gling foot/ankle injury, has not played since passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the NBA's all-time leading scorer last week. James' absence was all too obvious as a new-look Lakers were pummeled by Portland, who led by 27 points at one stage as they romped to victory 127-115.

Lillard's 40-point performance included eight three-pointers in 13-23 shooting from the field. Portland improved to 28-29 with the win and are just outside the play-in places in 11th in the West. The Lakers fell to 26-32 and are third from bottom of the standings. In San Francisco, 29 points from Andrew Wiggins and 27 from Klay Thompson propelled the Golden State Warriors to a 135-126 victory over the Washington Wizards.

NBA fines Beal

In another development, Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal was fined \$25,000 by the NBA on Monday for making contact with a game official after knocking a referee into an empty front-row seat. Beal made a leaping deflection of a long pass



Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets

attempt with 8:26 remaining in the third quarter of Washington's 127-113 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday. When Beal landed near the sideline, he bumped into referee John Butler, sending the official into a vacant front-row chair.

Three-time NBA All-Star Beal, in his 11th season in the league and with the Wizards, is averaging 22.5 points, 5.2 assists and 3.5 rebounds a game this season. The 29-year-old backcourt standout, selected third overall in the 2012 NBA Draft, has helped the Wizards reach the playoffs in five of the past nine seasons, but Washington has not gone past the second round since losing the 1979 NBA Finals. At 26-29, the Wizards rank ninth in the Eastern Conference. —AFP



New Zealand's captain Tim Southee

England look to ride 'Bazball' wave against depleted N Zealand

WELLINGTON: A depleted New Zealand under new captain Tim Southee face the daunting prospect of trying to halt in-form England when a two-Test series begins with a day-night encounter in Mount Maunganui on Thursday. England have won nine of 10 Tests since New Zealander Brendon McCullum took charge as head coach, with the Black Caps the first to suffer under his attacking "Bazball" revolution last year.

England will be favorites to inflict similar treatment on Southee's side in the fast bowler's maiden home series as skipper. Preparations for both sides have been disrupted by a cyclone which hit New Zealand and triggered a state of emergency on Tuesday, but the Test is expected to go ahead.

England, with Ben Stokes taking charge, swept the home series 3-0 against New Zealand in June as the new skipper-coach regime signaled their attacking intent by easily chasing down more than 275 in the final innings of all three Tests. The New Zealand-born Stokes then led England to a Test victory over India and a 2-1 series win against South Africa. His side enter this series with confidence sky-high after an unprecedented 3-0 sweep in Pakistan, while New Zealand have failed to win in their last five Tests, beginning with the three in England.

New Zealand drew both of their most recent Tests in Pakistan and Southee will have to lead an inexperienced attack without pace bowling partner Kyle Jamieson, ruled out with a stress fracture of the back, an injury he first suffered on the tour to England. Seamer Matt Henry, who is expecting the birth of his first child, will also miss out. "It does look like a bad bit of news," coach Gary Stead said of Jamieson's injury. "We've tried to be reasonably conservative with Kyle right through his rehab process, to make sure we gave him the best chance of coming back. He was tracking beautifully and it came as a real surprise to us."

Brook's history bid

England's bowling line-up will have experience to burn in seam spearheads James Anderson and Stuart Broad, who have 1,241 Test wickets between them, as they look to win a series in New Zealand for the first time since 2008. Southee, who took over when leading batsman Kane Williamson relinquished the Test captaincy before the Pakistan series, will be partnered by Neil Wagner and Blair Tickner.

Stead said that he would be "very surprised" if one of the uncapped late seam bowling call-ups, Jacob Duffy or Scott Kugeleijn, did not make a debut. England showed their buccaneering intent last week in their only warm-up fixture, blasting 465 off 69.2 overs against a New Zealand XI, with Harry Brook hitting five consecutive sixes in one over on his way to 97. Brook made hundreds in all three Pakistan Tests and will become just the second England batsman after Ken Barrington in the 1960s to achieve centuries in four consecutive Tests if he repeats the feat at the Bay Oval. —AFP

New face of NFL, Mahomes eyes Brady's record

GLENDALE: The Kansas City Chiefs' thrilling victory over the Philadelphia Eagles in Sunday's Super Bowl was not just a fine advertisement for the modern NFL but it also signposted the future of the Patrick Mahomes era. Mahomes cemented his status as the elite quarterback of the post-Tom Brady era after leading the Chiefs to their second Super Bowl win in four years, showing composure as well as resilience as he shrugged off an ankle injury to deliver a game-winning performance. Many things will change in the league in the coming years but it is hard to envisage a future that doesn't feature Mahomes as a central protagonist. Whether Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts can maintain his presence in the elite is a more open question, but on Sunday he more than contributed to the spectacle with his ability to run with the ball, delivering three rushing touchdowns as well as a touchdown pass.

And while the 27-year-old Mahomes and Hurts, three years his junior, are very different quarterbacks in many aspects, they both have one quality that is likely to continue to grow in importance for quar-

terbacks-mobility. Brady, like his contemporary Peyton Manning, was a master of passing from the pocket, a quarterback who could read defenses, spot his opportunity and then deliver a perfectly weighted and directed pass.

Those qualities remain absolutely essential for any quarterback, but what made Sunday's game such compelling viewing, with barely a dull moment, was the willingness of both Mahomes and Hurts to move out of the pocket and make things happen. The pair did so in significantly different ways. Hurts rushed like a running back, surging forward with intent, strength and speed and his 70 yards on the ground were a record for a quarterback in the Super Bowl.

But unlike some other dual-threat quarterbacks of the past, Hurts is astute enough to know when to slide and avoid the crunchy tackles that increase risk of injuries. Mahomes is nimble on his feet and has extraordinary awareness, using those gifts to scramble, finding himself space for a pass on the run or to make the yardage needed for a first down.

Those approaches make defenses second-guess, provide uncertainty and open up possibilities across the field-all of which adds to the unpredictability fans love. There are no signs of NFL teams moving away from the trend towards mobile quarterbacks as this year's playoff contenders-illustrated with Buffalo's Josh Allen,



Kansas City Chiefs' quarterback Patrick Mahomes

Cincinnati's Joe Burrow, San Francisco 49ers rookie Brock Purdy and Daniel Jones of the New York Giants-are all able to scramble effectively. It remains to be seen whether Hurts, for all his ability and impressive mindset, can build on his breakout season and become a consistent winner. But Mahomes, now a two-time Most Valuable Player, is firmly at the top and has taken Brady's mantle as the face of the NFL. Chiefs coach Andy Reid doesn't believe Mahomes will settle with what he

has achieved so far. "He strives to be the greatest. Without (him) saying anything, that is the way he works. He wants to be the greatest player ever," Reid said. Taking that title from Brady, however, will require many more nights such as the one at State Farm Stadium. Brady retired earlier this month at the age of 45 after stacking up a record seven Super Bowl wins during his record-shredding career with the New England Patriots and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. —AFP

Shooting Federation organizes course for shotgun referees

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Federation in cooperation with International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) is holding a course for shotgun referees. International lecturer Mohammad Medhat Wahdan, Chairman of the technical committee for shotguns at ISSF lectured during the event. There are 16 Kuwaiti referees, in addition to referees from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and UAE. At the end of the five-day program, those who pass successfully will be granted international licenses.

In his opening speech, secretary general of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi welcomed participants and thanked ISSF, Public Authority for Sport (PAS) and Sheikh Abdallah Al-Salem leadership center and lecturer Mohammad Wahdan. He said KSSF is always keen on the development of the technical cadre including referees who shoulder the responsibility of running competitions according to international rules.

ITF's Juniors Tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait 21st International Tennis Federation (ITF) Juniors Tournament for boys and girls (J30 ALZAHRA) was concluded under the patronage of President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis



Al-Osaimi said the course is part of KSSF preparations for HII the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Shooting Grand Prix to be held on February 20-March 2, 2023 - with more than 40 countries participating. Al-Osaimi urged all participating referees to get the maximum benefit and qualify for the international license.

Mohammad Wahdan on his part, thanked President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, secretary general Obaid Al-Osaimi and KSSF for their support. He said courses, like the current ones, adds to referees experience.

Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The tournament was held from 6th until 12th February 2023 at Kuwait Tennis Federation courts at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. 19 girls from 13 countries and 48 boys from 20 countries participated in the event.

The final match was attended by the Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Tiziano Balmelli and Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Faleh Al-Otaibi. Results of the tourna-



ment were as follows: Girls Singles - Winner: Mariella Gelbke (Germany); Runner up: Nawal Youssef (Canada).

Boys Singles - Winner: Massimo Pizzigoni (Italy); Runner up: Oscar Rashed (Switzerland). Girls Doubles - Winners: Lea Lebo (Croatia) + Zara Stipevic (Croatia); Runner up: Jannat Chirpal (India) and Nawal Youssef (Canada). Boys Doubles - Winners: Maxwell Lindstedt (Sweden) and Massimo Pizzigoni (Italy); Runner up: Alex Bergomi (Switzerland) and Oscar Rashed (Switzerland).



Sports

Inter fall further behind as Napoli pull 15 points clear

Sampdoria hold Inter Milan to a goalless draw

GENOA: Inter Milan allowed Napoli to pull 15 points clear at the top of Serie A after being held to a goalless draw at struggling Sampdoria on Monday. Simone Inzaghi's side already had little hope of recapturing the league title conceded to local rivals AC Milan last season and the yawning gap between them and Napoli widened following an underwhelming display in Genoa.

Napoli cruised past Cremonese 3-0 on Sunday and look with each passing week more likely to claim a first league crown since 1990. Second-placed Inter are three points ahead of Atalanta, Roma and Milan in the race for next season's Champions League. Lazio are five points back in sixth after being beaten by Atalanta in Rome on Saturday night. When asked if the title was beyond his team, Inzaghi said "I keep saying we can only look at ourselves".

"We're not satisfied with the result, in fact we're very disappointed as we should be." Inzaghi picked Romelu Lukaku alongside in-form Lautaro Martinez, the powerful strike partnership which won Inter the 2021 Scudetto. But Lukaku is nowhere near the form which led to Chelsea paying a club-record fee for his services the following summer and the Belgian forward was replaced by Edin Dzeko midway through the second half having made little impact.

Turkey midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu went close with distance efforts in either half on a night in which the Inter fans in the stands at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris honored the victims of the devastating recent earthquake which hit his country and Syria. Over 35,000 people have been killed by the earthquake and Calhanoglu appeared to be in tears when supporters unfurled banners which read "close to Turkey and Syria, Calha one of us". The 29-year-old Calhanoglu wore a T-shirt with the message "Pray for Turkiye" during the pre-match warm-up. "I thank my teammates, fans and club for



GENOA: Sampdoria's Venezuelan defender Tomas Rincon (left) and Inter Milan's Argentinean forward Lautaro Martinez go for a header during the Italian Serie A football match between Sampdoria and Inter on February 13, 2023. —AFP

being close to me at tis time," Calhanoglu said to Sky after the match.

"We're trying to help our country in any way we can... The images we have seen hurt, but life goes on and I hope the people get out of that situation as soon as possible." Monday's draw is a good result for troubled Samp but a point does little for the survival

hopes of a team firmly ensconced in the relegation zone. Dejan Stankovic's side have collected 11 points from their 22 matches and are eight behind Spezia, who sit just outside the drop zone and drew at Empoli on Saturday. Verona are two points behind Spezia following their 1-0 win over Salernitana earlier on Monday.—AFP

Italian Serie A Table

Italian Serie A table after Monday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Napoli	22	19	2	1	54	15	59
Inter Milan	22	14	2	6	41	26	44
Atalanta	22	12	5	5	41	24	41
Roma	22	12	5	5	29	19	41
AC Milan	22	12	5	5	38	30	41
Lazio	22	11	6	5	37	19	39
Torino	22	8	6	8	22	23	30
Udinese	22	7	9	6	30	25	30
Juventus	22	13	5	4	34	17	29*
Monza	22	8	5	9	28	30	29
Bologna	22	8	5	9	28	32	29
Empoli	22	6	9	7	21	28	27
Lecce	22	5	9	8	22	25	24
Fiorentina	22	6	6	10	23	29	24
Sassuolo	22	6	6	10	26	33	24
Salernitana	22	5	6	11	25	42	21
Spezia	22	4	7	11	19	37	19
Hellas Verona	22	4	5	13	20	33	17
Sampdoria	22	2	5	15	10	36	11
Cremonese	22	0	8	14	15	40	8

*Juventus docked 15 points by the Italian Football Federation

Benfica looking within to fill Enzo Fernandez's void

BARCELONA: Benfica sold Enzo Fernandez for a British record transfer fee in January but are looking within their ranks to fill the gap in their midfield as the Champions League returns. The Portuguese side have always shown an impressive capacity for recovery after losing star players and are already finding their feet without the Argentine World Cup winner.

Benfica, five points clear of Porto at the top of the Portuguese league, visit surprise package Club Brugge in the last 16 of Europe's premier club competition on Wednesday with high hopes despite Fernandez's departure. Handed a tough group featuring Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus, Benfica went unbeaten and finished top to reach the knock-out rounds, with the Italian giants - the two-time winners of the competition - eliminated.

Fernandez played a key role in that progress but

departed for Stamford Bridge in exchange for a stratospheric fee of 121 million euros (\$129 million) on the last day of the January transfer window, just six months after making his debut for Benfica. The Lisbon-based side made a huge profit on the 10-million-euro fee they paid Argentinean club River Plate in the summer of 2022, in yet another demonstration of the club's knack for finding bargains and developing players.

Joao Felix and Darwin Nunez are two other high-profile big money sales Benfica have made in the past few seasons, the latter replacing the former after his departure to Atletico Madrid. When Liverpool signed Nunez last summer, Goncalo Ramos stepped up a level to help replace the Uruguayan striker's goals, and is enjoying the best season of his career. Benfica's plan to replace Fernandez has been to promote from within. Midfielder Chiquinho, 27, largely used as a squad player in the first half of the season, has started each of the three games since Fernandez's departure.

Although accustomed to playing further forward, he has adapted well to playing in Fernandez's deep-lying position alongside Florentino Luis. "I think he has already confirmed that he is capable of playing great games," said Benfica's German coach Roger

been missing for a long time," said sporting director Sebastian Kehl on Monday. "A fit Sebastian Haller not only enriches our team with his profile, but also with his personality. "We have waited longingly for him, he has been working towards this for a long time... we're happy that he's back, and so is he." Haller, 28, was signed to channel the club's array of young, attacking talent - each of Youssoufa Moukoko, Karim Adeyemi, Jamie Bynoe-Gittens, Gio Reyna and Jude Bellingham are 21 or under - into goals.

While the Ivory Coast striker, who underwent two operations and four bouts of chemotherapy, admits he is not back to full fitness just yet, Haller has already demonstrated his maturity and vision up front. There was no better example of this than in his Dortmund starting debut at Leverkusen in late January, where he expertly let a cross run through his legs to an unmarked Karim Adeyemi to score his first league goal for Dortmund.



KNOKKE-HEIST: (From left) Club Brugge's Belgian defender Clinton Mata, Club Brugge's Ukrainian forward Roman Yaremchuk and Club Brugge's Belgian midfielder Hans Vanaken attend a training session at the club's training camp in Knokke on February 14, 2023. —AFP

Schmidt. "He showed all his qualities, with the ball, his versatility, his physical capacity. I think he has done a very good job. "He is a always a very positive player, even when he wasn't playing he trained at a top level. "He's adapting very well to his new position.—AFP

Europe 'is his stage'

Dortmund know all too well the damage Haller can do on European nights. The former Ajax striker scored two and assisted two more against Dortmund in the clubs' group stage fixtures in last season's Champions League, on his way to chalking up 11 goals in eight appearances. "The Champions League is his stage," Kehl said on Monday, recalling "the games against Ajax where he hurt us a lot."

"I hope that he can put in a really good performance again on Wednesday and, above all, I hope he stays healthy in the long run." Manager Edin Terzic on Saturday sought to emphasize the quality of the squad at his disposal, including those who may be straddling the bench. "There are guys who start the game for us, guys who finish the game for us and guys who decide the game for us," Terzic said.—AFP

Liverpool urge UEFA action to guarantee supporter safety

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool called on UEFA to do the "right thing" in implementing a series of recommendations after a damning report found European football's governing body responsible for the chaos that surrounded last year's Champions League final in Paris. The independent report, commissioned by UEFA, found that they bore "primary responsibility for failures which almost led to disaster."

French police and authorities were also criticized for a lack of planning and a heavy-handed response to supporters, based on incorrect assumptions that fans posed a threat to public order. Real Madrid's 1-0 win at the Stade de France on May 28 was overshadowed by events surrounding European football's showpiece event.

Kick-off was delayed by 37 minutes as fans struggled to access the stadium after being funnelled into overcrowded bottlenecks on approach. Police then fired tear gas towards thousands of supporters locked behind metal fences on the perimeter to the stadium. UEFA then tried to pin the blame on Liverpool fans arriving late despite thousands having been held for hours outside the stadium before kick-off. In a statement on Monday, UEFA apologized to Liverpool fans for "unjustly blaming them for the situation leading to the delayed kick-off."

The report found there has been "a clear and immediate danger of a fatal crush" and that the action of Liverpool supporters had in fact saved lives. "We call on UEFA and others at the top of the football regulation pyramid to come together and take positive and transparent action to ensure there are no more 'near misses'," Liverpool said in a statement on Tuesday.—AFP

Dortmund host Chelsea in Champions League tie

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund host Chelsea in the first leg of their Champions League tie on Wednesday hoping to have recaptured the elusive stability that has hampered their title chances in recent years. Dortmund, who limped into the winter break with two straight losses to fall nine points behind leaders Bayern Munich, come into the clash with six wins on the trot, having cut Bayern's lead to just three. Crucial to this resurgence has been the return of several of the club's key players from injury, not least star summer signing Sebastian Haller, who missed the first half of the season battling testicular cancer.

"He's a piece of the puzzle that we've unfortunately

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, **Vivek Kumar**, and Kumari Ekta have changed our daughter's name from Lavanya (current name in passport number: T2811082) to Lavanya Esha having permanent address as, Vidyvanagar, near Sanjay Gandhi Memorial College, Pandra, Ranchi - 835222, Jharkhand, India residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth Lavanya name will be read as given name Lavanya Esha. **(C#3159) - 15-02-2023**

I, **Abizer**, holder of Indian passport No. M6715946 having permanent Address: Najmpura Po, Sagwara Dist., Dungarpur, Rajasthan, Pin - 314025. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name: Abizer and Surname: Ghaslet. **(C#3158) - 14-02-2023**

I, **AJAY**, holder of Passport No. N2713384 do hereby change my name to AJAY (as Given name) KUMAR ARYA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name AJAY KUMAR ARYA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#3152)**

I, **Lambani Rajesh** (Old Name) Mother (Old Name) Lambani Lakky, holder of Indian Passport No: V7774427, H.No. 3-100/1, Koratpally (Vill), Dichpally (Mdl), Nizamabad (Dist), Telangana, India 503175, Change my given name as Sri Ram, Surname as Gugloth, Mother Given name as Ammi. **(C#3153)**

I, **Jose Francisco Cruz**, holder of Passport

No. Z4824892, resident of Castelvaddo, Nagoa, South Goa, India, do hereby change my name to JOSE FRANCISCO and Surname to DA CRUZ for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name JOSE FRANCISCO DA CRUZ and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, **Jayden Simon Cruz**, holder of Passport No. U0614482, resident of Castelvaddo, Nagoa, South Goa, India, do hereby change my name to JAYDEN SIMON and Surname to DA CRUZ for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name JAYDEN SIMON DA CRUZ and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, **Deodita Cruz**, holder of Passport No. T4010092, resident of Castelvaddo, Nagoa,

South Goa, India, do hereby change my name to DEODITA and Surname to RODRIGUES for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name DEODITA RODRIGUES and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#3154)**

I, **Pooja Sharma**, holder of Indian Passport No. U6096088 having permanent address RZF-773/19, Street No. 14, Raj Nagar Part II, Palam Colony Delhi-77, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given Name Pooja Milind and Surname Saraswala. **(C#3155)**

I, **have** changed my name from MOHAMMED KHALID NOOR MOHAMED to MOHAMMED KHALID NOOR MOHAMMED SHEIKH as per documents.

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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
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Liverpool blank Everton 2-0

Mohamed Salah sees fresh start in derby win



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Dutch striker Cody Gakpo (right) scores the team's second goal past Everton's English goalkeeper Jordan Pickford during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Everton on February 13, 2023. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah said Liverpool's 2-0 win over Everton in the Merseyside derby on Monday is just the start of a revival for the Reds. Salah scored for the first time in the Premier League since Boxing Day as Jurgen Klopp's men snapped a four-game winless streak. Cody Gakpo then grabbed his first goal for the club in the second half.

A positive night for Liverpool was rounded off by the return of Diogo Jota and Roberto Firmino from injury, while Virgil van Dijk made the bench after six weeks on the sidelines. "It's a huge win for us," said Salah. "We had a perfect week to train and the players were so excited and we couldn't wait for the game to turn everything around. Hopefully it was a start." Liverpool are still nine points off the top four in ninth. But that gap to fourth-placed Newcastle could be cut to six points when they travel to St. James' Park next weekend.

That clash comes just days before Real Madrid's trip to Anfield in the Champions League last 16 and Klopp will be hoping he has finally stumbled upon a solution to some of his side's woes in time for another tilt at the European Cup. "Tonight we were there and that has to be the sign now for us for what we have to do," said Klopp. "The performance for the

full 96 minutes was the best for a while." Liverpool's optimism has to be put in the context of facing an Everton side with just one win in 12 games. That victory came last weekend in Sean Dyche's first match in charge as league leaders Arsenal were shocked 1-0 at Goodison Park.

But Dyche was given a better understanding of the problems he has inherited with the Toffees languishing in the relegation zone. Everton were still left to rue what might have been had James Tarkowski's header gone in rather than come off the post just seconds before Liverpool took the lead. Instead, the hosts collected the loose ball and freed Nunez down the left, who squared for Salah to prod into an unguarded net with Jordan Pickford caught in no man's land.

Everton were undone by another swift counter-attack at the start of the second period. Andy Robertson charged through midfield and found Trent Alexander-Arnold, whose inviting ball across the face of the goal just required a simple finish from Gakpo. The Dutch international will hope a derby goal proves the turning point after a difficult start to life in the Premier League following his January move from PSV Eindhoven. "It was a great game from our side," said Gakpo. "We really needed this." — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah (R) is man-handled by Everton's Ukrainian defender Vitaliy Mykolenko (C) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Everton at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on February 13, 2023. — AFP

English Premier League table

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

Arsenal	21	16	3	2	46	18	51
Man City	22	15	3	4	56	22	48
Man Utd	23	14	4	5	38	28	46
Newcastle	22	10	11	1	35	13	41
Tottenham	23	12	3	8	42	35	39
Brighton	21	10	5	6	39	28	35
Fulham	23	10	5	8	34	30	35
Brentford	22	8	10	4	36	29	34
Liverpool	21	9	5	7	36	28	32
Chelsea	22	8	7	7	23	22	31
AstonVilla	22	8	4	10	26	34	28
Crystal Palace	22	6	7	9	20	30	25
Leicester	22	7	3	12	36	38	24
Nottm Forest	22	6	6	10	17	37	24
Wolves	22	6	5	11	17	31	23
West Ham	22	5	5	12	19	27	20
Leeds	22	4	7	11	28	38	19
Everton	22	4	6	12	16	30	18
Bournemouth	22	4	6	12	20	44	18
Southampton	22	4	3	15	18	40	15

Ferrari unveils new SF-23 car

MARANELLO: Ferrari unveiled their new SF-23 car for the upcoming Formula One season at their Maranello headquarters on Tuesday, the Scuderia gunning for Red Bull and world champion Max Verstappen. The Scuderia finished second in the drivers and constructors championships last time out after an error-strewn campaign, way behind Red Bull whose top driver Verstappen comfortably retained his title.

"The goal is to win, clearly," said driver Charles Leclerc, who took the SF-23 for a spin around the Maranello track in front of some of the team's passionate supporters. "The feeling of winning is what motivates me, motivates all the team too. I'm really looking forward to getting back in the car and trying to win the championship."

The coming season is the first for team principal Frederic Vasseur, who took charge in December following the resignation of Mattia Binotto the month before. Binotto was considered culpable for last season's frequent missteps, including pitlane errors and reliability issues which damaged Leclerc's attempt to keep up with



MARANELLO: This handout photograph shows Ferrari's new single-seater SF-23 for the 2023 season. — AFP

Verstappen. Ferrari began with two wins in the opening three Grands Prix but were then swept aside by Red Bull and Verstappen, who won the drivers title with three races remaining and eventually finished 146 points ahead of Leclerc.

The new car is designed with the aim of improving aerodynamics and the reliability of the engine, the latter being one of the key problems last time out. "You can feel the responsibility for the team, it's a great honor but at the end of the day the important thing is to be successful," said Frenchman Vasseur. — AFP

Real Sociedad close in on Real Madrid

CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT: Real Sociedad cut the gap on second-place Real Madrid to three points with a 3-2 win at Espanyol in La Liga on Monday. The champions have played a game fewer and host Elche on Wednesday, with Real Sociedad third, hot on their tail, although they were left holding on at the end against struggling Espanyol. Takefusa Kubo and Alexander Sorloth's goals gave Real Sociedad a commanding lead at the RCDE Stadium as Imanol Alguacil's side bounced back from three games without a win across all competitions.

Espanyol defender Leandro Cabrera headed a Kubo cross into his own net to further sink his side, before Sergi Darder netted a consolation goal from close range. Brian Olivan smashed in another for Espanyol with three minutes remaining, setting up a tense finale, before Cabrera was sent off in stoppage time. Real Sociedad are 14 points behind leaders Barcelona, who are 11 clear of Real Madrid after their 1-0 win over Villarreal on Sunday. Espanyol, missing injured striker Joselu, languish 17th, only a point above the relegation zone.

The Basques were still without creative midfielder David Silva, who they have missed, but Mikel Merino made his return from injury as a substitute. After a tight opening period, albeit one in which the visitors had more of the ball,



Real Sociedad's Norwegian forward Alexander Sorloth prepares to score his team's second goal during the Spanish League football match between RCD Espanyol and Real Sociedad on February 13, 2023. — AFP

Kubo broke the deadlock with a bolt from the blue. The Japan international fired Real Sociedad ahead with a sharp near-post strike from the edge of the box after a cross was cleared into his path.

It was his fourth league goal of the season, a mark of his improved form for Real Sociedad after seasons of flattering to deceive. The former Barcelona and Real

Spanish La Liga table

Spanish La Liga table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	21	18	2	1	43	7	56
Real Madrid	20	14	3	3	40	17	45
Real Sociedad	21	13	3	5	31	21	42
Atletico Madrid	21	11	5	5	30	17	38
Real Betis	21	10	4	7	27	22	34
Rayo Vallecano	21	9	6	6	28	23	33
Athletic Bilbao	21	9	5	7	31	22	32
Villarreal	21	9	4	8	22	18	31
Osasuna	21	8	6	7	19	19	30
Real Mallorca	21	8	4	9	16	20	28
Girona	21	6	6	9	27	31	24
Sevilla	21	6	6	9	23	29	24
Real Valladolid	21	7	3	11	15	28	24
Celta Vigo	21	6	5	10	22	33	23
Almeria	21	6	4	11	25	34	22
Cadiz	21	5	7	9	17	33	22
Espanyol	21	4	9	8	26	33	21
Valencia	21	5	5	11	26	26	20
Getafe	21	4	7	10	18	28	19
Elche	20	1	6	13	15	40	9

Madrid youth player netted only six goals across three seasons prior, amid spells at Real Mallorca, Villarreal and Getafe. Espanyol brought former Barcelona midfielder Denis Suarez on at the break to try and gain some control, but Sorloth quickly pounced. The Norwegian forward doubled La Real's lead early in the second half with a simple finish from Mikel Oyarzabal's inch-perfect pass. — AFP