

3 DHAMAN completes hospital building in Jahra governorate



6 Scotland's leader Sturgeon announces shock resignation



12 Archaeologists uncover remains of 5,000-year-old tavern in Iraq



16 Holiday scores 40 as Bucks down Celtics in thriller



Egypt selling state assets to Gulf

Attractive investment for GCC states eager to diversify their economies

Crown Prince visits Azayez farm



KUWAIT: In the presence of Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family members, a luncheon was held by Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Azayez farm in Kuwait's northern Abdaly area on Wednesday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

CAIRO: Egypt, sapped dry of dollars despite a \$3 billion International Monetary Fund bailout loan, is seeking to boost its coffers by selling state assets to wealthy Gulf nations. Experts say the deals could be a win-win for all sides, but unlike old Gulf largesse of unconditional aid, the new deals will require reforms. Cairo hopes the cash injection will plug what the IMF warns is "a financing gap of about \$17 billion over the next four years".

For Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, eager to diversify their oil and gas-based economies, it provides a swift route to snap up assets, land and stakes in state enterprises in the North African nation. "The investments by Gulf states into Egypt last year helped to alleviate some of the immediate financing concerns that Egypt encountered, prior to securing further funds from the IMF," said James Swanston, an emerging markets economist at Capital Economics in London. "At the same time, it has allowed the Gulf states to continue to have a sphere of influence in the region."

For Gulf nations, a steep devaluation of Egypt's currency and incentives offered by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi make it an attractive investment. But Sisi's Gulf allies - on whose support he relied after deposing Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 - are done writing blank cheques, and now demand economic reform and greater transparency.

In under a year, the Egyptian pound has lost half of its value, propelling annual inflation in the im-

port-dependent country to 26.5 percent in January. Of the \$34.2 billion in Cairo's foreign reserves - a 20 percent drop from Feb 2022 - some \$28 billion are deposits from wealthy Gulf allies. The country's foreign debt has more than tripled in a decade to \$155 billion.

"A country like Egypt needs a trillion-dollar budget each year. Do we have that money? No. Do we have half of it? No. Do we have a quarter of it? No," Sisi said at the World Government Summit in Dubai this week, noting the importance of "help from friends, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait". But the days of unconditional aid are over, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jaadani has warned. "We used to give direct grants and deposits without strings attached, and we are changing that," Jaadani said at Davos in January, explaining the kingdom will be demanding "to see reforms".

As part of the IMF loan agreement, Cairo pledged to privatize key state assets, with a view to increase the private sector's share of the economy from 30 percent to 65 percent by 2025. Gulf nations swooped in. In 2022, 66 mergers and acquisitions were completed in Egypt, more than double the transactions in 2021, Egyptian business news publication Enterprise calculated in December.

With stakes in 40 deals, Emirati and Saudi companies had the bulk of transactions. Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth fund ADQ, and Saudi Arabia's

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait, UAE to link traffic violations

KUWAIT: Kuwait and UAE will link their traffic violations system as per a GCC ministerial meeting decision, Kuwait's interior minister confirmed on Tuesday. The move will be the first step of many aimed at unifying all security violations between the two countries, Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh said in a statement. — KUNA

Saudi to host 2023 Club World Cup

PARIS: Saudi Arabia will host the 2023 Club World Cup, FIFA said on Tuesday. Saudi club Al-Hilal reached the final of the 2022 edition in Morocco last week, losing 5-3 to European champions Real Madrid. The seven-team event will take place on Dec 12-22. Saudi Arabia is also believed to be building towards a bid to host the 2030 World Cup, having seen neighbors Qatar host last year's tournament. — AFP

Thai cave football captain dies

LONDON: One of 12 boys dramatically rescued from a Thai cave in 2018 has died at a school in Britain, authorities said on Wednesday. Duangpetch Promthep, 17, was captain of the Wild Boars football team that was stranded in floodwaters in the cave in Thailand in June 2018. He was awarded a football scholarship to study at Brooke House College in Leicestershire last year. Reports in Thailand said Duangpetch had slipped over and suffered a head injury, and was in hospital on a respirator for two days before he died. — AFP

Zionist firm meddled in 30+ elections

PARIS: A Zionist firm sought to influence more than 30 elections around the world for clients by hacking, sabotage and spreading disinformation, according to an undercover media investigation

published Wednesday. It adds to a growing body of evidence that shadowy private firms across the world are profiting from invasive hacking tools and the power of social media platforms to manipulate public opinion.

The firm was dubbed "Team Jorge" by investigating journalists who posed as potential clients in order to gather information on its methods and capabilities. Its boss, Tal Hanan, is a former Zionist special forces operative who boasted of being able to control supposedly secure Telegram accounts and thousands of fake social media profiles, as well as planting news stories, the reports say.

The investigation was carried out by a consortium of journalists from 30 outlets, including the Guardian in Britain, Le Monde in France, Der Spiegel in Germany and El Pais in Spain, under the direction of the France-based non-profit Forbidden Stories. "The methods and techniques described by Team Jorge raise new challenges for big tech platforms," the Guardian wrote. "Evidence of a global private market in disinformation aimed at elections will also ring alarm bells for democracies around the world." Hanan did not respond to detailed questions, saying only: "I deny any wrongdoing."

Continued on Page 6

Mini robots tackle gut disorders

WASHINGTON: A pill that vibrates to relieve constipation, a sensor that can be tracked in the gut - medical researchers are turning to tiny robots to treat or diagnose gastrointestinal disorders. "This is a very booming field," said Saransh Sharma, a doctoral student at the California Institute

of Technology (Caltech) involved in the development of the ingestible diagnostic sensor. "You have medical robots that are so small you can just send them inside a person using the oral passage and they can do a lot of sensing and actuation inside the gut," Sharma told AFP.

About 16 of every 100 adults in the United States suffer from symptoms of constipation, according to the US health authorities, and the number doubles for Americans over the age of 60. Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of

Continued on Page 6

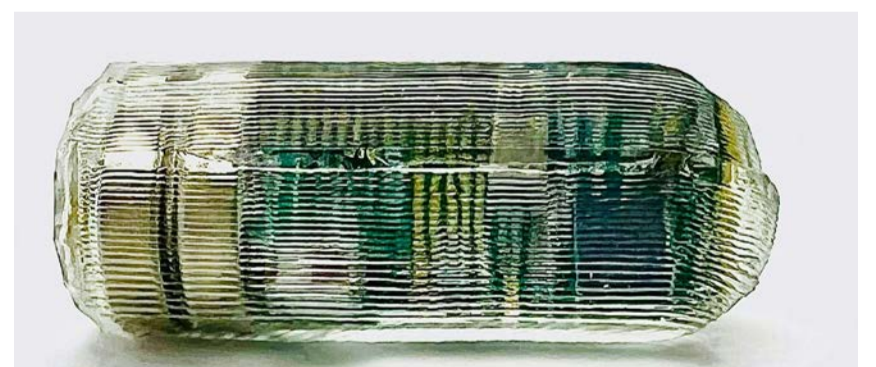
Self-drilling seeders break new ground

PARIS: Dropped over their target by drone, dozens of tiny wooden "robots" twirl through the air in a balletic freefall before hitting the ground, where the work begins for these experimental self-burying seeds on an aerial replanting mission. Inspired by natural seeds that have a curved tail to help them burrow into the soil, a study pub-

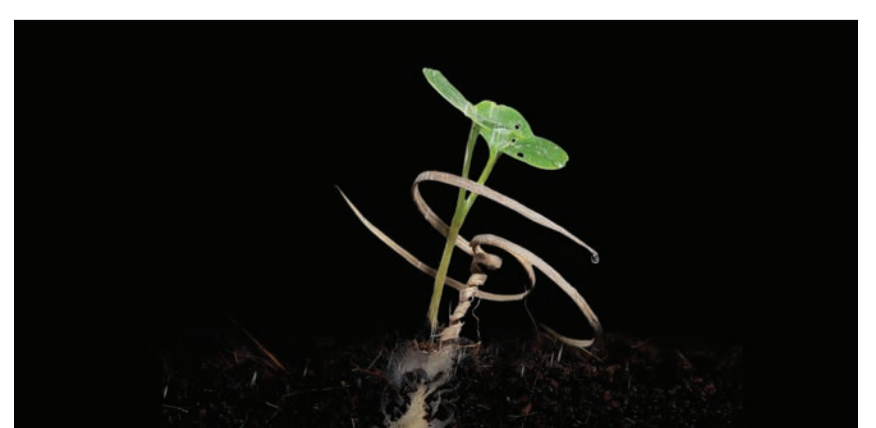
lished Wednesday unveiled prototype human-designed seed carriers that can be sprayed from above and coil and uncoil depending on the humidity in the air, helping them to corkscrew into the ground.

While the technology is still in its early stages, researchers said the biodegradable wooden carriers performed significantly better than their natural competitors in tests and could ultimately be used to boost reforestation after wildfires, in restoring degraded land and in agriculture. "We wanted to design and engineer a self-burying system for aerial seeding that works robustly on both flat and

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Handout picture shows an ingestible smart pill for wireless GI tract monitoring. — AFP



Handout image shows a biodegradable seed carrier with a seed growing at an undisclosed location. — AFP



Crown Prince attends luncheon at Azayez farm



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Representative, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with Al-Sabah family members.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah interacts with a child at Azayez farm.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with former Prime Minister HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with Prime Minister HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with former Prime Minister HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

in my view

Ugly journalism

By Fadia Alrefai

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Over the past couple of weeks, the world has been witnessing one of the worst natural disasters of our time. Thousands in Syria and Turkey have been killed due to these earthquakes, many have been displaced, homes have been wrecked and the damage continues to increase. Not only have these earthquakes resulted in damages, but have readjusted the global ambience to be one of sadness and true loss. Therefore, my deep and sincere condolences go out to those who have been affected and I pray that their souls rest in peace.

In times like these, where a natural disaster turns into a global case of public opinion, it was compensatory to see that the world has unified into one global village and stood hand in hand to deliver the needed aid, whether from international organizations, public charitable associations or even small independent efforts such as the youth groups we have seen in Kuwait.

Despite these very humane gestures, the entire time I was following the news of the disaster, a question kept popping up with every post I found on Instagram, every tweet I read and every news report I saw: Where are the ethical boundaries of journalism drawn in our day and age? Journalism and mass media are the reason why an incident in Syria or Turkey can reach China or the US within seconds, but when should a foot be put down to say these posts, pictures and news reports are not only invading the privacy but publicizing the vulnerabilities of many?

Videos of children screaming, women bleeding, men having nervous breakdowns and pulling the injured and dead out of the rubble have surfaced in the world at a pace so fast, that no one has stopped and thought: Did these news reporters or social media characters have the permission from these people to circulate these videos on the web in a matter of seconds? And if they did, should we hold their choices of being put on the media in that state of mind accountable?

Legally speaking, do they have the mental capacity and eligibility in that situation to decide if they are willing to allow people into their private suffering? And the answer quite simply is no. Even though many do have this eligibility when they willingly go up to a news reporter and choose to speak, there are many being filmed throughout this disaster whether when harmed or being given donations without their permission.

In addition to that, many have been taking videos of themselves and sharing them while handing out those donations, which not only humiliates but insults the acceptors, being in the weakest phases of their lives. If we truly care about the people we are helping, we should also care about their dignity and self-respect.

Thus I conclude with the words of our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: "Seven people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His... and a man who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given."



Moderator Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah speaks at the session at 'Art and Diplomacy' conference. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Attendees at the event.

DAI hosts 'Art and Diplomacy: Kuwait's Shared Language'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (DAI) celebrated the 40th anniversary of its establishment on Wednesday by hosting the 'Art and Diplomacy: Kuwait's Shared Language' conference at the Amricani Cultural Centre. In his speech, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed that culture and art are essential to the foundations of states and diplomacy, adding art is not only integral to diplomacy, but also complementary to it.

"An artist's brush strokes are beyond the limits of a diplomat's pen. Art in its purest form is an expression of that which cannot be expressed. It is the potent evocation of our feelings. When America confronted the devastating terrorist attack in 2001, Sheikh Hessa and the late Sheikh Nasser launched the Dar Al-Athar exhibition in New York, not far from Ground Zero. Sheikh Hessa affirmed that the exhibition shows Islam's truth of tolerance, affection and culture. That exhibition brought us together when our American friends were in pain; that exhibition sought to console them," Sheikh Salem said.

He added the exhibition in 2001 was a true tes-

Social Affairs Ministry to cooperate with OIC Women Organization

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development, and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs Mai Al-Baghli stressed the Ministry's keenness on cooperating with the Women Development Organization in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s Member States. There is a protocol that organizes the cooperation between both bodies, she told reporters on Wednesday after receiving the Executive Director of OIC member states' Women Development Organization Dr Afnan Al-Shuaibi, who is currently visiting Kuwait.

The Women and children affairs is considered a new specialty at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Al-



Dr Mohammad Khaled Al-Jassar, Acting Secretary General for the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

timony of the intersection of art and diplomacy, praising the role of the late Sheikh Nasser and Sheikh Hessa for establishing DAI and making it an Islamic reference for the next generation. Dr Mohammad Khaled Al-Jassar, Acting Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and Assistant Secretary-General for Antiquities and Museums, said the late Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah began gathering the Al-Sabah archaeological collection with Sheikh Hessa Al-Sabah in 1973, before the establishment of DAI in 1983.

He indicated since then, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah has played an essential role in Kuwait's diplomatic role around the world, especially during

Baghli added. Meanwhile, Al-Shuaibi added in press remarks that the Women Development Organization is a new body that got into action between years 2020-2021, and is considered an independent one, affiliated the OIC that represents the membership of 56 countries. Al-Shuaibi's visit to Kuwait comes as the first one among other tours of the organization abroad, coming to boost cooperation with a number of governments and private sector, considering Kuwait as a key supporter of this organization.

For his part, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi said in press remarks that the ministry welcomed the cooperation and protocol with the organization according to the legal procedures followed regarding memorandums of understanding between the parties in charge. The cooperation with the organization according to the protocol of understanding is conducted through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic chan-

the Iraqi invasion in 1990, noting that during this period, Kuwait's voice was heard around the globe, defending its legitimacy, represented by DAI, which continued to hold international exhibitions.

Jassar stressed DAI's cultural and artistic diplomacy did not stop after that. It continued to be an ambassador of Kuwait and the Islamic world, pointing out participation of DAI in many international art exhibitions and forums. A documentary film showed the history of Kuwait and DAI, then Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah moderated a session where several ambassadors of Kuwait spoke about their experience in the field of the art of diplomacy and its important role in supporting Kuwaiti diplomacy around the world.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development, and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs receives the Executive Director of OIC member states' Women Development Organization. —KUNA

nels in cooperation with the ministry's external relations department he affirmed. —KUNA

Local

DHAMAN completes hospital building in Jahra governorate

Health Assurance Hospitals Company to offer new and advanced model in healthcare



KUWAIT: (From left) Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, Ahmad Al-Furaih and Thamer Arab attend the event.



Officials pose for a group photo during the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: In the presence of a number of government officials and members of the National Assembly, the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) celebrated the completion of the DHAMAN Hospital building in Jahra governorate, less than two months after the opening of Ahmadi Hospital. Chairman of DHAMAN Mutlaq Al-Sanea confirmed in a press statement that DHAMAN has completed the construction and technical system according to the bid brochure. What remains are the issuance of licenses related to medical staff and approvals for medical examinations by the ministry of health, and enabling the company to collect the prescribed fees directly.

Sanea called on the ministry of health to redouble efforts in the next period and complete the required procedures to mark the start of the company's work and sign the framework agreement stipulated in the bid brochure so that the company can receive the target population. CEO of DHAMAN Thamer Arab said DHAMAN's operation, which offers a new and advanced model in healthcare through its multiple facilities, is a step in the right direction to reduce the burden on the government's budget and give the private sector the opportunity to be an active partner with it, explaining that after DHAMAN starts receiving its target segment of the population of residents, in addition to any other society groups, it will relieve pressure on the ministry of health and thus will be reflected in the quality of health services for Kuwaiti citizens.

"We hope during the coming period, and through cooperation with the ministry of health, especially on the issue of employing specialized and advisory medical staff and others for hospitals, to complete the competencies necessary to operate all hospital departments, provide full medical services in them, and complete all licenses and procedures required to start operating and achieve the vision behind this project, which is considered the largest development plan projects and one of the most important pillars of healthcare projects," Arab said.

Khaled Al-Hassoun, Executive

Director of the General Reserve Sector at Kuwait Investment Authority, said the health assurance hospitals project is one of the development plan projects, and perhaps it is unique in that it is directed towards improving the level of services of the healthcare sector, which is considered one of the most important sectors of the national economy, and very large financial resources are directed to it annually from the general budget of the state.

"The Kuwait Investment Authority has provided all possible support to the company since the start of its business by contributing to its capital and playing an important role in the work of the company's board of directors, up to the current stage, when it is about to complete its system. Kuwaiti citizens are main partners in the company's capital, as 50 percent of the company's capital amounting to 230 million dinars has been allocated to them," Hassoun said.

Representative of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Faleh Al-Dosari said DHAMAN is one of the strategic projects within the development plan of the country and the New Kuwait 2035 vision, where it was established based on an Amiri decree as part of partnership projects between the private and public sectors (PPP). Dosari stressed that while governments, especially in the Arab Gulf region, are struggling to develop healthcare for their communities, many of them tend to invest in strategic partnerships with the private sector to improve the health sector.

"In Kuwait, we find the numbers of residents are huge relative to citizens, which prompted the Kuwaiti government to adopt advanced healthcare systems through partnership between the public and private sectors, which works to reduce and rationalize government spending in the field of healthcare, as well as improve the operation of public health services and facilities and expand access to high quality healthcare services. It also seeks to improve and raise the indicators of healthcare in Kuwait and provide job opportunities in this field," Dosari said.

Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Miguel Aguilar expressed his admiration for the health assurance system, expect-

ing it to achieve a qualitative leap in the health sector in Kuwait with its distinguished health model, which is applied for the first time in cooperation with the Spanish international operator Ribera Salud. "The Spanish side has the desire and close capabilities capable of enhancing cooperation in the field of health, and is working with the Kuwaiti side to explore new opportunities and inject new momentum for cooperation between the two countries, which provides greater contributions to enhancing the development of Kuwait and consolidating the relationship between the two countries," he said.

MP Abdullah Al-Anbaei called on government agencies to cooperate with the DHAMAN hospitals project and speed up the necessary procedures to start operations as soon as possible, due to the many benefits this has on public funds and the quality of health services provided to citizens and residents in Kuwait.

Anbaei explained that the operation of DHAMAN hospitals will provide a solution to the health situation in Kuwait by easing the burden on the government health sector, which has been suffering during the recent period, noting that what is required in the coming period is the cooperation of



Miguel Aguilar



Mutlaq Al-Sanea



Faleh Al-Dosari

the ministry of health with the project, which will save a lot of public funds and reduce pressure on government spending on health services, as it will begin to provide services to about 1.8 million residents.

"This requires the ministry of health to expedite the granting of the necessary licenses to mark the start of its work," he said, denouncing at the same time the absence of any representative of the ministry of health in the process of opening the hospital, despite the presence of representatives from other government authorities. "It is unac-

ceptable to not care, pay attention or interact with this development project and disrupt it by not meeting the requirement of the necessary medical staff to start the operation process. The ministry of public works must expedite the completion of roads for the hospital," he added.

Anbaei pointed out that supporting and enabling the project is a duty in preparation for offering the company for public subscription to citizens, especially since disrupting its work is considered a waste of public funds paid for this institution.



DHAMAN Hospital building

Kuwait parliamentary experience 'genuine, deep': Jordan's PM

AMMAN: Kuwait's experience in parliamentary work is "genuine and deep," and is an example to be followed in the Arab region, Jordan's top lawmaker said on Wednesday. "Kuwait parliamentary experience is genuine and deep, and represents a leading example in the Arab region, and we are proud of it," Ahmad Al-Safadi said in an interview with KUNA. "We make sure hand-in-hand with Kuwait National Assembly to coordinate efforts for the service of the two countries and serve major causes of our nation," he said.

Al-Safadi, who said a Jordan-Kuwait fraternal committee would soon be formed within Jordan's parliament, commended Kuwait's "nationalist position and support for Jordan as well as defense of the Palestinian cause. Kuwait and Jordan share common history and destiny." Talking about domestic development, Al-Safadi said King Abdullah II formed a committee with a mandate of updating the political system which ultimately resulted in constitutional amendments, as well as changes in electoral and political parties' laws.

"These changes aim at expanding popular participation in the decision-making process, empowering of women and youth ... with the objective of having new leaders who give life to state institutions and have influence in the parliament and future governments," he said. Al-Safadi, talking about the Jordanian House of Representatives, said it sought to play a leading

political and diplomatic role through supporting major causes like the Palestinian issue or economic cooperation files. Countries, he added, could not face the challenges alone so parliaments have a role to play.

"No country has faced crises alone. Since the coronavirus pandemic and then the war in Ukraine as well as relevant economic repercussions, we believe countries of the world must work towards food and medicine security," he added. Meanwhile, speakers of Arab parliaments are set to meet in Baghdad end of February and Al-Safadi said the top lawmakers would show support to Iraq's efforts to honor aspirations of its people.

"Security and stability of Iraq is key to regional security and stability," he said. Al-Safadi, on the other hand, said the Jordanian parliament was supporting the state's guardianship over the holy places in the city of Al-Quds "which, for the Hashemites and Jordanians, not only a political cause but an existential issue." The Jordanian people and parliament were united behind King Abdullah II over the "Hashemite guardianship" over Islamic and Christian places in Al-Quds, he said. Jordan, alongside Arab and Islamic countries, will always support the Palestinians until the establishment of their independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, he concluded. —KUNA



Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament Ahmad Al-Safadi

KUNA to launch environmental journalism course

DUBAI: Kuwait's state news agency (KUNA) plans to launch a specialized training course on environmental journalism at its media development centre, its director-general confirmed on Tuesday, calling on news agencies to benefit from the experience. "Kuwait is hugely committed to environmental issues, particularly climate change, wildlife and the marine environment - especially as it falls within (United Nations) sustainable development goals," Dr Fatima AlSalem told a World Government Summit roundtable in Dubai on the future of state-run news agencies.

The KUNA chief highlighted the role of the media and official news agencies on environmental issues as "important at all stages when public opinion is formed." "It begins with a group that embraces the issue, and in parallel, the media and official news agencies, who have a role in raising awareness and providing meaningful media content," she said. "It is the duty of the media to present solutions and recommendations and educate people (on the topic)," she explained.

Dr. Fatima said any content on the matter should be "humanistic, in order to touch a larger segment of people, and not be purely scientific." She also outlined the importance of "involving the community in environmental issues and ways to preserve the environment," while "highlighting the role of youth initiatives and the private sector." Encouraging a "proactive press before crises occur" and "proposing solutions, recommendations and initiatives" are other factors that should be taken into consideration, she said. —KUNA



Participants attend World Government Summit roundtable in Dubai.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
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ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
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Effect of earthquakes in Kuwait limited to coastal areas: Experts

Time and location of an earthquake impossible to detect

KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Environmental Training at the Kuwaiti Environmental Protection Society, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Society for Geosciences, organized a panel discussion titled "Turkey earthquake and its consequences for Kuwait", presented by Dr Alham Al-Langawi, Dr Hussain Naqi and Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi. Jenan Bahzad, director of programs and member of the board of directors of KEPS, said the seminar discussed three main subjects — the history of earthquakes in Kuwait, earthquake causes based on available data, the extent to which Kuwait was affected by regional earthquakes, and the earthquake in Turkey and the reasons behind it.

Dr Langawi explained the distribution of earthquake hotspots around the world, with the most vulnerable cities situated on the fault lines. But she said it is impossible to detect the time an earthquake will occur or how strong it will be. "Science, no matter how advanced, cannot determine a specific date for the occurrence of earthquakes, but there are some factors that help in predicting earthquakes, such as relative calm before an earthquake, jumping of fish from ponds, wild animals and marine organisms fleeing from sites near the epicenter of the earthquake, and cases where headaches have been observed among some people in areas where

earthquakes occur," Langawi said.

"Kuwait was previously affected in November 2017 by an earthquake that struck Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran with a magnitude of 7.2. Kuwait can be affected by the movement of the tectonic plate of the Arabian Peninsula towards the northeast, which could lead to pressure on the plates approaching it," she added. Dr Enezi said: "One of the objectives of this workshop is to clarify scientific facts in earthquake science, spread awareness of the reasons behind the earthquake in Turkey and reject rumors and false information. Earthquakes are natural and they cannot be reduced or prevented, but their negative effects and risks can be avoided. Earthquakes do not kill or cause destruction - it is the buildings that kill, and here we must pay attention to the infrastructure and rehabilitate it so it can handle earthquakes and put in place construction requirements that adhere to global seismic standards of building."

"There are two sources of earthquakes that affect Kuwait, one of which is a group of earthquakes in the southern regions of Al-Manaqish, Umm Qadeer and the northern regions of Al-Rawdatain and Al-Sabriya. The other is from the Zagros Mountains as a result of tectonic activities. The effect of earthquakes in Kuwait is limited to coastal areas for two reasons - the feeling of vibra-

tions in tall buildings due to its inability to withstand earthquakes and the nature of the coastal clay soil in Kuwait. The largest earthquake, which struck the Burgan region with magnitude 5, did not have a devastating effect and its impact was very limited in the Sabah Al-Ahmad region," he explained.

"Turkey lies on the Anatolian plate and is bound to the south by the Arabian plate and to the north by the Eurasian plate. It has been in constant motion for about 10 million years because this movement is the result of the collision of the Arabian plate from the south and the Eurasian plate from the north, as the Arabian plate moves towards the north and northeast at a distance of 2 cm annually. Meanwhile, the Eurasian plate above the Anatolian plate moves, causing pressure on it and resulting in its movement towards the west," Dr Al-Naqi said.

"The Anatolian plate is bordered from the north by a very large crack of 1,500 km, extending from eastern Turkey to the Aegean Sea, and it is similar to the famous California fault. It constitutes a seismically active area and has seen a large number of earthquakes since 1939. Since then, earthquakes have continued successively on the fault line. Scientists expect the next earthquake will be towards the Sea of Marmara, south of Istanbul, where approximately 15 million people live," he added.



KUWAIT: Guests tour the art exhibit held as part of Palestinian Cultural Week in Kuwait.



Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and IWG members cut a cake depicting the Kuwaiti flag.



KUWAIT: Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah (center) with IWG members.

Art exhibit highlights Palestinian cause

KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub inaugurated a Palestinian art exhibition showcasing pieces by artists, Bana Abdulrahman and Tamara Qatous. Part of the Palestinian Cultural Week in Kuwait, the exhibit was held in cooperation with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). It was organized by Reem Al-Jabsha attended by many international ambassadors and representatives of the NCCAL.

The attendees toured the exhibition and listened to an explanation about the paintings, which highlighted the Palestinian cause and the city of Jerusalem, in particular and were painted in colors that reflect the Palestinian people's optimism and their love for life.

Ambassador Tahboub delivered a speech in which he thanked the two creative artists for their "wonderful work". He also thanked NCCAL for "its constant support for all Palestinian events". He also thanked Reem Al-Jabsha for the "wonderful organization which reflects great interest in the message of Palestinian art which keeps the Palestinian cause top of mind".

IWG celebrates Kuwait's National, Liberation Days

KUWAIT: The International Women's Group (IWG) marked the Kuwait National and Liberation Days on Monday, Feb 13, 2023, with a celebration at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya. The event was held in the presence of the guest of honor Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Indonesian Ambassador Lena Maryana and the Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana Neera Dukhi and other distinguished guests were also present.

The celebration began with the national anthem of

Kuwait and other Kuwaiti national songs played by the Kuwait Army music band. The celebration included a special welcome with the scent of bukhoor and a spray of rose water as a gesture of Kuwaiti hospitality. Attendees came dressed in traditional Kuwaiti clothes or the colors of the Kuwaiti flag.

In her opening speech, IWG President Ghada Shawky congratulated the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion. She highlighted the vision and wisdom of the Kuwaiti leadership that led Kuwait to great progress since its independence and stressed the great achievements of the country on the regional and international levels. Shawky, who is also the wife of the Egyptian ambassador, took a minute of silence for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Sheikha Intisar praised the efforts of the IWG in spreading cultural awareness. She spoke with pride about Kuwait's good relations with the rest of the world and the great confidence the world has placed in Kuwaiti merchants. Sheikha Intisar urged the attendees to enjoy the seasonal beauty of the delicate Nuwair wildflowers, after which she named her non-profit initiative that's dedicated to promoting a positive attitude among citizens and residents. The flowers, she said, grow against all odds in the most unexpected places - a symbol of resilience, beauty and positivity.

After cutting the cake depicting the National flag of Kuwait, the group watched a video about Kuwait and enjoyed a traditional performance, Kuwaiti food and a display of handmade crafts. The celebration also featured a showcase of Kuwaiti marriage customs with its joyful and distinctive rituals.



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The Indian Community School, Kuwait and the Indian ambassador honored the academic achievements of class 12 students.

ICSK celebrates 60th Aashirvaad blessing ceremony

KUWAIT: The Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICSK) celebrated AASHIRVAAD 2023, the blessing ceremony of class XII (Batch 2022-23), on Feb 9, 2023. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, was the chief guest on the occasion. The atrium was decorated with dazzling lights, colorful balloons and vibrant colored decorations. Swaika, was received by the members of the board of trustees and the principal.

The gathering rose and honored the national anthems of Kuwait and India. V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, delivered the welcome address. In his address he quoted the words by Sir Edmund Hillary: "It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves." He also urged the students to develop self-confidence to be successful in their life. The ability to speak one's mind, staying positive even in adverse situations and to keep trying even though one is failing are the three important qualities that he asked the students to have.

Ambassador Swaika said that Aashirvaad 2023 was the first public function he attended outside the Indian Embassy in Kuwait since he had taken charge. He advised the students to follow their inner sense and not to move with the trend. He also urged the students to keep cool, work hard, come out with good results in their examination and make their parents and teachers proud. He asked the students to have a rational outlook, a balanced mind and contribute something to the society. He concluded his speech by wishing them success in the forthcoming CBSE board examination.

The school and ambassador honored the academic achievements of class 12 students by distributing aca-



KUWAIT: Principal V. Binumon blesses a student.

ademic excellence awards. Taha Rafik Chikte of the science stream, Bhasma Sabah Thakur of the commerce stream and Irene Mary Kuruvilla of the humanities stream were the toppers of the forenoon session. Taha Hamim Mohammed of the science stream, Ditzza Ann Shibu of the commerce stream and Dillon Francis Lewis of the humanities stream were the toppers of the afternoon session. Taha Rafik Chikte was awarded with a special memento for securing 99.7 percentile, the highest score in the Middle East, in the JEE mains of January 2023.

Special recognition awards were given to the ICSK Senior staff members for their complete attendance. The school honored the chief guest Ambassador Swaika by presenting a token of love. Students representing science, commerce, humanities and NIOS batches shared the experiences of their life at ICSK. They remembered the fun they had in the classrooms, how they enjoyed the special assemblies and many other activities. The school presented mementos for all students of class 12 as token of blessing. All the students, parents and staff of ICSK lit candles, which symbolizes light in the darkness of life. Principal Binumon blessed each student and wished them to come out with flying colours and make themselves, their parents, teachers and the school proud. They took the oath which was administered by Susan Rajesh Pothen, Vice Principal of ICSK Senior.



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BRUSSELS: NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (C) poses with NATO defence ministers for a family picture on the second day of a meeting of the alliance's defence ministers at the NATO headquarter in Brussels on February 15, 2023. — AFP

NATO debates raising defence spending

NATO pushes to replenish depleted weapon stockpiles

BRUSSELS: NATO members relaunched debate Wednesday on the thorny issue of ramping up national defence spending targets after Russia's war on Ukraine upended security. Moscow's nearly year-long all-out invasion of its neighbour has seen a string of European allies commit to spending billions more on their armed forces.

Some at the US-led Western military alliance are now pushing to enshrine the increases by using an upcoming summit in Vilnius in July to raise NATO's current target of two percent of GDP. Most NATO members appear to agree that Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression means that two percent should become a "floor, not a ceiling" for national spending.

"I believe that simply wanting to approach the two percent target will not be enough. It must be the basis for everything else," German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius told a meeting of NATO counterparts in Brussels on Wednesday. But some

nations are reluctant to make the target too ambitious or the commitment too concrete.

"The two percent is okay, but we must also guarantee that we have some flexibility because the countries are different," said Luxembourg's Defence Minister Francois Bausch. The alliance set the two-percent guideline around 16 years ago, but the 2007-2008 economic crisis saw many cut budgets.

Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014 led allies to promise to halt years of decline and "move towards" two percent by 2024. Across the alliance spending has increased, but despite pressure from the United States for European members to spend more, as of last year only nine of the 30 allies were estimated to have made the grade.

'Increasers' vs 'deniers'

A senior US official said the alliance was split

into several camps

At one end were the "increasers", such as the Baltic states and Poland, closer in proximity to Russia and pushing for a more ambitious level such as 2.5 percent.

At the other were the "deniers", such as Canada, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain, which argue they are too small or that contributions such as overseas operations should be taken into account. The official said the United States did not have a specific new figure in mind, but there was a lot to do as NATO pushes to restructure its forces, replenish depleted weapon stockpiles and modernise equipment.

"Taken together, I think the obvious conclusion is two percent is not enough," the official said. "I'd say that's where the majority of the allies are." Washington is by far the biggest military spender, representing approximately two thirds of the alliance's defence spending.

NATO diplomats say the wrangling over any new defence investment pledge—which requires the consensus of all allies—was expected to run right up to the summit in mid-July. European heavyweight France also backed the two-percent minimum but said additional spending must be well focused.

"What counts is two percent of useful and effective spending," said Defence Minister Sebastian Lecornu. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said: "What is obvious is that if it was right to commit to spend two percent in 2014, it is even more right now we live in a more dangerous world."

"There is a full-fledged war going on in, in Ukraine in Europe, and then we see the persistent threat of terrorism and we see also the challenges that China is posing." He insisted NATO members "should move from regarding the two percent as a ceiling to regarding the two percent as a floor of GDP". — AFP

Berlusconi acquitted in bribery trial

MILAN: An Italian court on Wednesday acquitted billionaire former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi of bribing witnesses to lie about his notorious "bunga bunga" parties, bringing closure to a years-long sex scandal. The media mogul, 86, stood accused of paying young starlets and others for "silence and lies" about his notoriously hedonistic soirees, which he has always insisted were elegant dinners.

Berlusconi, whose Forza Italia party is part of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's governing coalition, has long been dogged by legal battles, most of which he has won. The senator, who did not attend Wednesday's hearing in Milan, had already been acquitted in two other related cases of alleged bribery, in Siena in 2021 and Rome in 2022.

His lawyer Federico Cecconi said he was "enormously pleased", although prosecutors could still appeal. A guilty verdict would have been embarrassing for the government, and Berlusconi's political allies were quick to congratulate him.

Meloni said the decision "puts an end to a long judicial affair that also had important repercussions on Italian political and institutional life". The verdict is the culmination of a legal battle which began in 2010 when Berlusconi—then prime minister—was accused of

abusing his power to protect a young Moroccan nightclub dancer, Karima El-Mahroug.

Known by her stage name "Ruby the Heart Stealer", she had been detained by police for theft, but was released after Berlusconi claimed she was the niece of then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Berlusconi was charged with paying for sex with Ruby in 2010 when she was just 17.

Hush money

He was initially found guilty, but acquitted in 2014 after an appeals court found there was no proof he knew El-Mahroug was a minor. Judges believed however that numerous people had lied during the trial, including El-Mahroug, who was caught on tape bragging about sex with Berlusconi. She described orgiastic scenes at his parties, before later saying she made it all up.

Prosecutors launched an investigation that led to the Milan trial, which opened in 2017. Berlusconi, who was prime minister three times between 1994 and 2011, was accused of doling out millions of euros in hush money in the form of houses, cars and monthly payouts. However, his defence lawyers say the money was compensation for reputational damage for those involved in the case, and insist he was being tried "for the crime of generosity".

Prosecutor Tiziana Siciliano had earlier described Berlusconi as "a sultan" who used to "liven up his evenings with a group of concubines, in the sense of sex slaves, who entertained him for a fee". Some of those involved say nothing untoward happened in Berlusconi's villa, which has a private



MILAN: Karima El-Mahroug, a.k.a. Ruby (C), reacts as members of the media approach at a Milan special courthouse, following a court decision whether media mogul and senator Silvio Berlusconi bribed witnesses to lie about his "bunga bunga" parties in an underage prostitution case. — AFP

nightclub. But others described orgies and female guests dressing up as nuns to perform erotic dances.

Prosecutors had called for six years in jail for Berlusconi and between one and six years for the 27 other defendants in this case, including five years for El-Mahroug. All were acquitted on Wednesday. The judges have another 90 days to publish their reasoning for the verdict, at which point prosecutors could decide to appeal. Prosecutor Siciliano said Wednesday she still believed the defendants lied, but said there was a legal question mark over whether or not they were technically witnesses when they did so. El-

Mahroug said the trial had been "very scary", adding: "Now I can live again". Former model Marysthell Polanco, another party guest put on trial, had told journalists her life had been "a nightmare" since the trial began. "They cannot find guilty someone who has done nothing, where there's no evidence, neither videos nor photos, nothing but gossip," she said.

Prosecutors had also asked the court to confiscate 10.8 million euros (\$11.5 million) from Berlusconi. Despite multiple court cases—he claimed in 2021 to have gone through 86 trials—the former premier has never spent time behind bars. — AFP

Several of the injured were taken by ambulance to a hospital in the Chiriqui provincial capital city David, according to local media. The bus was transporting migrants from Darien, a jungle area in Panama's east bordering Colombia, westward toward Costa Rica from where the passengers aimed to continue their journey through Central America and Mexico, and ultimately to the United States.

The number of irregular migrants arriving in Panama en route to the United States nearly doubled in 2022 to a record 248,000, and more than half were Venezuelan, the immigration authority reported on January 1. — AFP

Telemetro broadcaster: "for now, we have information of 33 people dead."

President Laurentino Cortizo earlier announced that 15 people had lost their lives in the early-morning crash in Gualaca, Chiriqui. The bus had 66 occupants including the driver and an assistant when it crashed some 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of the capital Panama City, police transit operations commissioner Emiliano Otero told journalists.

Authorities have yet to report the nationalities of the victims, or the number of people injured. Cortizo said the government was providing medical care for survivors. Gozaine told AFP by phone there were three critically injured people at the crash site.

33 dead in Panama migrant bus crash

PANAMA: At least 33 people died Wednesday when a bus transporting migrants bound for the United States crashed with a minibus in Panama, an official in the Central American country said. Updating the death toll from 15, Panama's national director of migration Samira Gozaine told the

UN appeals for \$5.6bn for aid to Ukraine

GENEVA: The United Nations said Wednesday that \$5.6 billion was needed this year to provide humanitarian aid in Ukraine and to the millions who have fled the war-ravaged country. Nearly a year after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion, the need for aid was "enormous," with some 21.8 million Ukrainians requiring assistance, it said.

"The war continues to cause death, destruction and displacement daily, and on a staggering scale," said UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths. More than 7,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine in the past year, and around 12,000 injured, according to UN estimates, which were "almost certainly low," he said launching the appeal in Geneva.

"The suffering of the Ukrainian people is far from over. They continue to need international support." The needs are so great that aid organisations cannot reach everyone, but the UN said the requested \$5.6 billion would allow it to reach the 15.3 million people in most dire need this year.

'Massive' displacement

A full \$1.7 billion of that amount was needed for assistance to the more than four million Ukrainian refugees hosted in 10 eastern European countries. Most of that would go to Poland, which is hosting more than 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees, and Moldova, the main transit country for Ukrainians making their way further into Europe.

Women and children account for around 86 percent of the overall refugee population, according to the UN. There are nearly six million people displaced inside Ukraine in addition to the some 4.8 million registered refugees, UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said, adding that there were also many who had not registered.

The Ukraine "displacement crises remains the largest in the world," he told reporters. "The scale of displacement continues to be quite massive." Grandi hailed that Europe had proven "capable of bold, collective action to help refugees," stressing though that "continued international support and solidarity is needed, until refugees are able to return to their homes in safety and dignity, which must also remain a priority." — AFP

International

Scotland's leader Sturgeon announces shock resignation

'I am a human being as well as a politician'

EDINBURGH: Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced her resignation Wednesday after more than eight years leading its devolved government, in a shock move jolting UK politics on both sides of the border.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) leader said in "my head and in my heart" she knew the time was right to quit, after approaching a decade in power pushing for Scottish independence. The 52-year-old confirmed she would remain first minister until the SNP elects a new leader, and also stay on as a member of the Scottish Parliament until at least the next election, due in 2026.

She departs after facing mounting pressure over her tactics for independence and over transgender rights. But in a hastily arranged news conference, Sturgeon insisted that her decision to step down was "not a reaction to short-term pressures" and "comes from a deeper and longer-term assessment".

"I know it may seem sudden, but I have been wrestling with it-albeit with oscillating levels of intensity-for some weeks," she said. "I am a human being as well as a politician," she added. "Giving absolutely everything of yourself to this job is the only way to do it. The country deserves nothing less. But in truth that can only be done by anyone for so long."

'Formidable'

Political allies and opponents across the UK paid tribute, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak praising her "long-standing service" and wishing Sturgeon "all the best for her next steps". The UK government's secretary of state for Scotland, Alister Jack, called her "a formidable politician", while also urging her eventual successor at the SNP to "drop its divisive obsession with independence".

Northern Ireland's first minister-elect Michelle O'Neill, vice president of the pro-Irish party Sinn

Fein, also lauded her "friend", adding that Sturgeon "leaves a legacy for which anyone in politics or public life would be rightly proud".

Sturgeon, who became the first woman to lead Scotland when she took power in 2014, vowed to continue pushing for Scottish independence while defending her record on the touchstone issue. "I firmly believe that my successor, whoever he or she may be, will lead Scotland to independence and I'll be there cheering him or her on every single step of the way," she said.

Sturgeon has overseen unprecedented electoral success for the SNP as she pushed for another referendum. She took over in the aftermath of the last vote, which saw Scots reject breaking away from the rest of the UK by more than 10 percentage points, and has been doggedly pushing for another vote.

But she has been recently stymied by the UK government, which must approve the holding of another referendum. It insists that the September 2014 vote was a once-in-a-generation event and has refused to allow another, despite Scotland voting against Brexit in 2016.

Backtrack

In 2021, the SNP won a fourth consecutive term in power in Edinburgh on a platform of holding a new independence referendum after Brexit, recording the largest share of the popular vote. But it fell one short of an outright majority, and allied with the Greens to stay in power.

Scotland's parliament and its ruling executive were formed in 1999 under devolution reforms created by the Labour government in London at the time. But since 2021, the push for independence has stalled, with a flurry of recent opinion polls showing declining support in Scotland for breaking away.

home for Lam, whose parents knew some of the victims in Monterey Park.

That, coupled with a rise in racist attacks over recent years which coincided with the spread of the coronavirus, means Lam is now reconsidering his attitude to guns. "My parents have always told me it's bad luck to have one," he said. "But it's a great tool for self-defense. I'd rather have protection than rely on good luck."

Pandemic

Around 6.6 percent of the US population identifies as ethnically Asian, and, while no precise national statistics exist, gun industry watchers say the community has traditionally been less involved with guns than other groups. Alex Nguyen of the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence says growing security concerns, many of them linked to the pandemic and the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, have seen a surge in gun-buying among minorities.

"Gun ownership is up among everybody since the start of the pandemic, but particularly among communities of color, including Asian Americans," he said. More than 27 percent of gun shops reported having more Asian customers in 2021, according to the latest data from the National Shooting Sports

owns 25 percent of state-founded digital payments company eFinance, and is negotiating the purchase of United Bank of Egypt. To encourage more deals, Cairo is slashing its notorious red tape, with

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli earlier this month announcing stake sales in 32 public companies. But the vast asset portfolio of Egypt's hugely powerful military - which has played a key but secretive role in the economy for decades - remains largely off the table for deals, the Carnegie Middle East Center's Yezid Sayigh said. Military-owned companies are "so financially opaque they cannot be put on the market", Sayigh said. Only two of the 32 up for sale are military companies. One of them is the army's Wataniya Petroleum, which Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) had in 2021 considered purchasing, Sayigh said that deal stumbled "apparently because the internal financial management of the military company would scare off any serious investor from risking his capital". — AFP

Analytica - since shut down - was allegedly used to develop software steering voters towards Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election. The group collected and exploited the personal data of 87 million Facebook users to which the platform had given it access, leading to major fines and lawsuits.

On Tuesday, the chief of Russian mercenary group Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, admitted creating an infamous troll farm that is also suspected of interfering in Western elections. Sanctioned by Washington and Brussels, the Saint Petersburg-based "Internet Research Agency" had for years been linked to Prigozhin, a 61-year-old ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Following the latest revelations, the Zionist entity might also face increased pressure to rein in its cutting-edge cyberware and technology sector which was spotlighted in another media investigation led by Forbidden Stories in 2021. It highlighted how the powerful Zionist-made Pegasus spyware had been sold by the cyber intelligence company NSO Group Technologies to governments and used against at least 50,000 people around the world.

Pegasus software can be used to access a phone's messages and emails, look through photos, eavesdrop on calls, track the owner's location and even film them with the camera.

Some of the alleged targets included human rights defenders and religious leaders, as well as politicians such as French President Emmanuel Macron. Forbidden Stories is a collaborative platform set up in 2017 at the initiative of French documentary maker Laurent Border, with the support of Reporters Without Borders, and brings together more than 30 different media from around the world. — AFP



EDINBURGH: Scotland's First Minister, and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Nicola Sturgeon, speaks during a press conference at Bute House in Edinburgh where she announced to stand down as First Minister, in Edinburgh. — AFP

Some critics, even within the SNP, have blamed Sturgeon for failing to deliver a winning strategy on the issue after the Supreme Court in November sided with the UK government in blocking a fresh vote. She has also faced a backlash over her support for transgender rights, after becoming embroiled in a row over whether transgender women can be housed in all-female prisons.

Despite that, as recently as last month she insisted she would remain first minister, telling the BBC she was "nowhere near" ready to quit after Jacinda Ardern's shock departure as New Zealand prime minister. Sturgeon said Wednesday that she would not publicly back her preferred successor, with finance secretary Kate Forbes among the leading names to stand. — AFP

Mass shootings spur Asian-Americans to take up guns

AZUSA: Ricky Lam has always stayed away from guns. But since two mass killings in the space of a couple of days rocked California's Asian community, this 35-year-old Chinese-American is thinking again. "I'm still on the fence. I don't know if I want to purchase a gun. But the last shootings reminded me that I need to decide," he told AFP.

Lam lives with his family in the suburbs of Los Angeles just a few miles (kilometers) from Monterey Park, where last month an elderly Asian gunman killed 11 Lunar New Year revellers at a dance studio. Two days later in the north of California, seven farmworkers, most of them Asian, were gunned down in what prosecutors say was a workplace shooting carried out by a 66-year-old Chinese man.

In that case, Zhao Chunli is due to appear in court near Half Moon Bay on Thursday. The assaults on- and by-members of the Asian community have hit

Foundation, a major industry association.

"Asian Americans are afraid and buying guns because of this feeling of lack of safety and racial prejudice," said Nguyen. Tim Tran is a case in point. The 30-year-old member of the queer community has a mop of green hair and in late 2021 bought their first gun-a Beretta pistol. Tran, an American of Vietnamese descent, also bought a shotgun recently.

"The pandemic made me aware that I could be a possible target without even really having to do anything," Tran said. "With all the incidents of anti-Asian hate that I've heard about over the past two years, it kind of got me into the mindset of getting something to defend myself."

'Another mass shooting'

Kelly Siu began his collection in the summer of 2020 because of fears the Black Lives Matter movement would degenerate into the kind of pitched inter-ethnic battles that have riven Los Angeles in the past, particularly in the Rodney King riots in 1992.

Siu, who now has four handguns, two semi-automatic rifles and a shotgun, said his Vietnamese father and Chinese mother were very disappointed with his new passion. But, the 31-year-old nurse says, the mass shooting in Monterey Park vindicated his deci-



AZUSA: Gun instructor Tom Nguyen (C) teaches students during a Defensive Pistol Class at Burro Canyon Shooting Park in Azusa, California. — AFP

sion-hours before the shooting he was celebrating Lunar New Year with his family at a market nearby. "Another mass shooting could happen," said Siu, who has applied for a permit to carry his weapon in public. "Knowing that I have this just in case and that I can respond to that situation puts my heart at rest." — AFP

Egypt selling state assets...

Continued from Page 1

Public Investment Fund "spent some \$3.1 bn to acquire significant minority stakes" in some of the "strongest companies", Enterprise wrote in December. They snapped up key shares of Egypt's two largest fertilizer producers - 41.5 percent of Abu Qir Fertilizers Company, and 45 percent of MOPCO.

ADQ is also the largest private shareholder in Egypt's Commercial International Bank (CIB), purchasing a 17.5 percent stake for \$911.5 million. The Saudi fund now

Zionist firm meddled in...

Continued from Page 1

The 50-year-old told three undercover reporters that his services, often called "black ops" in the industry, were available to intelligence agencies, political campaigns and private companies. Most of the campaigns - two-thirds - were in Africa, he claimed. While demonstrating his technology to reporters, he appeared to hack into the Gmail inbox and Telegram account of political operatives in Kenya days before a presidential election there. Forbidden Stories named the targets as two aides to William Ruto, who ended up winning the August 2022 ballot.

Online public influence campaigns were carried out via a software platform, known as Advanced Impact Media Solutions, that allegedly controlled nearly 40,000 social media profiles across Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, the reports say. Hanan also claimed that his firm had planted a report on France's biggest television news channel BFM about the impact of sanctions against Russia on the yachting industry in Monaco. A senior presenter on the channel, Rachid M'Barki, 54, has been suspended and is being investigated. Other similar companies have been named in media reports or sanctioned by Western governments in recent years over their role in trying to influence elections and public opinion. Notorious British consulting firm Cambridge

Mini robots tackle gut

Continued from Page 1

Technology (MIT) and Caltech have developed an ingestible sensor that can be monitored as it travels through the digestive tract.

The device, 20 millimeters in length and eight mm in diameter, could help physicians diagnose gastrointestinal motility disorders that prevent food from moving normally through the digestive tract. The capsule's location reveals where a slowdown is taking place. "That gives the doctor a lot of the essential information to do a better job in the curing and the diagnosis and the treatment plan," Sharma said.

The sensor could also provide an alternative to invasive procedures such as endoscopy or other diagnostic techniques such as nuclear imaging, X-rays or catheters. It has been tested on pigs and the team behind the research hopes to eventually obtain the approval of the US Food and Drug Administration for human clinical trials. "If we can demonstrate a device

Self-drilling seeders break...

Continued from Page 1

rough terrains," said Lining Yao of Carnegie Mellon University, co-author on the study, published in the journal Nature.

Aerial seeding can access vast and remote areas by spraying seeds from aircrafts or drones, but germination rates can be low because of bad weather or animals eating the seeds. Self-burying Erodium grass seeds that inspired the research have a single whip-like appendage to help them push into the earth. Researchers gave that natural design a technological update using engineered white oak wood veneer to create a carrier with three rotor blade tails.

The engineered seed carriers can be tailored to carry a wide variety of crop and plant seeds as

inside large animals like pigs up to a very high confidence, we can say that it will scale very well in human anatomy as well," Sharma said.

The authors published the results of their research on Monday in the journal Nature Electronics. They said the sensor works by detecting a magnetic field produced by an electromagnetic coil located outside of the body. The strength of the magnetic field varies with distance from the coil and the sensor's position within the digestive tract can be calculated to within millimeters based on measurement of the magnetic field. While the ingestible sensor is still in the development phase, a Zionist company called Vibrant Gastro recently began marketing a vibrating capsule in the United States designed to relieve chronic constipation. The drug-free Vibrant capsule is intended for constipation sufferers who have not received bowel relief after a month of laxative treatments. It has been FDA-approved.

In a Phase 3 clinical trial of 300 people, participants who took Vibrant had bowel movements significantly more frequently than those who took a placebo. The Vibrant capsule produces gentle vibrations to stimulate the colon and increases the number and frequency of bowel movements, according to the manufacturer. — AFP

large as those of a whitebark pine, which are a little over a centimeter long. When tested, the carriers could drill into the soil 80 percent of the time, compared to the self-burying grass seeds, which had a success rate of as low as zero on some terrain, according to the study.

But the carriers were significantly impacted by stormy conditions and will need more work to be used in weather-beaten remote locations, said Samuel Mason and Naomi Nakayama, both from Imperial College London, who were not involved in the research but published a comment piece alongside the study. "Although these wooden robots have potential, they are not flawless," they said, adding the fiddly manual manufacturing process would also "need to be refined if it is to be scaled up". But they said the design was "impressive and shows that wood is still a state-of-the-art material". Yao told AFP that the researchers have patented the technology and are looking for investors to develop it further. — AFP

International

Survivors plucked from rooftops as New Zealand cyclone kills four

Devastation is widespread and has taken a toll beyond property, livelihoods

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Military helicopters winched stranded storm survivors to safety in New Zealand on Wednesday, after Cyclone Gabrielle killed four people and displaced 10,500 more. With the storm now fading into the South Pacific, rescue teams are finally reaching regions cut off by days of torrential rain and gale-force winds.

The New Zealand military deployed three NH90 helicopters on reconnaissance and rescue flights to the hard-hit Hawke's Bay area, finding families, pets and workmates clustered on sodden zinc rooftops surrounded by a sea of murky, debris-filled floodwater.

"In some cases, floodwaters were up to the second storey of homes where people were being rescued," a military spokesperson said. The disaster has severed roads, collapsed houses and cut power across a swathe of New Zealand's North Island, home to more than three-quarters of the country's five million residents.

The human toll continues to rise. Police said the body of a child was found in a town on the remote east coast, with the youngster "believed to have been caught in rising floodwater". Three other bodies have also been recovered, including a woman killed when her house was crushed by a landslide and a victim believed to be a volunteer firefighter trapped by a collapsing home.

"The devastation is widespread and has taken a toll beyond property and livelihoods to people," New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said. "There have been four confirmed fatalities and the grief must be unimaginable." With the cellphone network disrupted, police have received over 1,400 reports of people who are still "uncontactable". "We expect the vast majority of these people will be accounted for," Hipkins said, "but there are several people missing for whom police hold grave concerns."

At an evacuation centre in Whangarei in the far north, Margaret, 66 — who asked for her surname not to be published—said she fled her property when floodwater poured in and the power went out. Her daughter, who lives 600 kilometres (373 miles) away in Napier on the east coast, was also forced out of her home when a landslide hit the area.

"She'd been calling me earlier, checking I was okay and then she's had this happen; it's unbelievable, really," she told AFP. "She's young, so it's a big setback for her and her husband. I'll be ok, I've got people up here I can stay with and things will dry out eventually."



NAPIER: Photo shows people wading through flood waters in the city of Napier, situated on the North Island's east coast. Authorities on February 15 confirmed four deaths after Cyclone Gabrielle cut a trail of destruction across northern New Zealand. — AFP

"The long haul"

Emergency minister Kieran McNulty indicated that around 10,500 people had been displaced. Officials estimate 160,000 households are still without power. McNulty hailed the "phenomenal" efforts of rescue workers and military personnel who plucked "roughly 300 people from rooftops" in Hawke's Bay—a sprawling expanse of lush farmland, rugged mountains and hard-to-reach towns.

He said a group of 60 people were rescued from one large building marooned by floodwaters. Aerial images from the area showed a once-bucolic landscape riven with torrents of floodwater, latticed with crumbling roads and scarred by massive landslides. Authorities on Tuesday announced a national state of emergency for

only the third time in the country's history. The other two were for the 2019 Christchurch attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic. 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. Over 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. Scientists say Gabrielle had fed off unusually warm seas, driven by a combination of climate change and La Nina weather patterns. — AFP

Philippine police officers surrender over killing of Spaniard

MANILA: Three Philippine police officers wanted for the alleged murder of a Spanish businessman in 2020 have turned themselves in to the authorities, the justice ministry said Wednesday. Diego Lafuente was shot dead during a police drug operation in General Luna municipality on the southern island of Siargao, a popular surfing and holiday destination.

He was among the many thousands of people killed during the drug war launched by former president Rodrigo Duterte and continued by his successor Ferdinand Marcos. Most victims were poor, Filipino men, according to rights groups. The International Criminal Court is investigating the brutal crackdown for possible crimes against humanity.

Arrest warrants had been issued for the three officers, but they were "nowhere to be found", the justice ministry said in a statement issued Wednesday. The officers handed themselves in to authorities on February 9. State prosecutors had filed charges of murder and planting of evidence against them last March after a review of the case cast doubt on their version of events.

The officers claimed they shot Lafuente in self-defence after he fired a gun at them during a buy-bust operation. They were initially given a 60-day suspension from duty over the killing, according to the justice department's review panel.

The drug war has been widely condemned, but so far only three policemen have been convicted for killing a drug suspect. Under pressure from the UN Human Rights Council and the ICC, the government has examined more than 300 cases of drug operations that led to deaths. Lafuente's killing was among the first batch of 52 cases to be reviewed. Former justice secretary Menardo Guevarra previously told AFP the review of those cases had cast doubt on police officers' common claim of self-defence. The review effort is still underway and 25 officers have been charged, the current Justice Secretary Crispin Remulla said in November. — AFP

to show local officials meeting with some of those demonstrators for negotiations.

'Compromise'

The insurance reforms, gradually introduced since 2021, come as local government finances are strained following years of strict and costly zero-COVID policies. The protests in Wuhan—a city of 11 million people where the coronavirus first emerged in late 2019 — have been exacerbated by the fact that officials are largely unaffected by the reforms, analysts have said.

"Civil servants and public institution staff are still entitled to subsidised medical assistance insurance on top of the employee health insurance scheme," political risk consultancy SinoInsider said in a note.

"Senior and retired CCP (Chinese Communist Party) cadres have long had access to generous medical treatments at public expense and without having to pay for basic healthcare insurance."

Local governments could "compromise and meet protester demands early" rather than engage in a drawn-out dispute, the firm added. — AFP

Former Nigeria VP rolls dice for sixth presidential run

KANO: The first time Atiku Abubakar ran for Nigeria's presidency, his country was still under military rule and Nelson Mandela was about to win a Nobel prize for ending apartheid. Three decades later, Abubakar is attempting his sixth run for the presidency, touting his experience as vice president and his business acumen to "rescue" Africa's most populous democracy. Nearly 100 million Nigerians are registered to vote for the successor to President Muhammadu Buhari on February 25, with the country struggling with insecurity from jihadists and criminal gangs, increasing poverty and economic fallout from the Ukraine war.

Commonly known as "Atiku", Abubakar, 76, is running for the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in a tight race against the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party hopeful Bola Tinubu and Labour Party's Peter Obi.

As the PDP candidate arrived in an open-air bus at a rally last week in the northern city of Kano, salesman Oladipbo Abodunmin said Abubakar was the man to put Nigeria on track.

"I have seen what he has done, when he was the vice president," he said. Chants of "Goodbye APC, Goodbye APC" rang out in the stadium where some waved the PDP's flags or banners saying: "Just a few steps more father Atiku." Can one of the country's most experienced politicians finally snatch the presidency after multiple failed attempts?

Abubakar is a political veteran with a strong, national party network, analysts and supporters say. Next week's three-way race offers him a better chance than in 2019 when he faced off against incumbent Buhari. "He has a lot of advantages this time round," said Kabiru Sufi, a public affairs lecturer at Kano State College. "Instead of facing one strong candidate, he is facing two or three."



KANO: Candidate of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Atiku Abubakar speaks during a campaign rally in Kano, northwest Nigeria, ahead of the February 25 presidential election. — AFP

Graft allegations

As a Muslim from northeastern Adamawa state he could appeal to parts of the predominantly Muslim north, where the largest blocks of voters reside. Eight years of Buhari's government has also offered the PDP a chance to present itself as a renewed force, party leaders say.

But experts said Abubakar may struggle to capture the younger electorate — most of the nearly 10 million newly registered voters this year are under the age of 34. Dogged by accusations of corruption, which he repeatedly denies, and with decades in politics, Abubakar must shake off an image as an oldguard politician with little new to offer. The PDP governed Nigeria for a decade and a half from the end of military rule in 1999 until 2015 when the new alliance APC succeeded in getting Buhari elected.

This time, the PDP chief campaigned on a programme of security, economic revival, national unity and to devolve more power — a popular but sensitive theme in a country where ethnic tensions often flare. "Today we have a disunited country, today we have the gravest economic challenges as well as security challenges," he said during a speech. "We need people who have the experience, who have the competence, and who have the record."

Party disunity

APC rivals have been quick to link Atiku's name to graft accusations from the past. While he was vice president, he oversaw the privatisation of badly managed state firms, but critics accused him of profiting on the side. He has always denied any charges and was never convicted. His campaign portrays him as a "rags to riches" success with investments in oil and gas and port services. But Labour Party's Obi, who is challenging APC and PDP's long dominance, will likely drain votes from PDP's strongholds in the south of the country, analysts said.

More damaging though maybe is the split with the powerful PDP governor of southern Rivers State, one of the top four states by number of voters. Choosing northerner Abubakar, the PDP broke with an informal agreement that the presidency should rotate between the north and the south, in an unofficial power-sharing deal. After northerner Buhari, many southerners expected a candidate from their region. Some PDP southerners feel Abubakar upset the party balance. "This sentiment favours two other contenders, Bola Ahmed (Tinubu) and Peter Obi," SBM Intelligence said in a recent analysis. — AFP



AT SEA, FRANCE: A picture taken on February 9, 2023 shows the French Navy (Marine Nationale) ship BSAM Rhone patrolling off the coast of Boulogne-sur-Mer, as migrants attempt to illegally cross the English Channel from France to Britain. — AFP

At least 73 migrants presumed dead

GENEVA: Dozens of migrants are believed to have died in a shipwreck off Libya, with only seven survivors found so far, the United Nations said Wednesday. "At least 73 migrants are reported missing and presumed dead following a tragic shipwreck off the Libyan coast yesterday (Tuesday)," the UN's International Organization for Migration said.

The boat carrying 80 people had departed Qasr Al-Akhyar, some 75 kilometres (46 miles) east of the capital, Tripoli, and was heading to Europe. So far, 11 bodies have been retrieved by the Libyan Red Crescent and the local police, IOM said.

Hundreds protest in China over health insurance reforms

BEIJING: Hundreds of retirees staged protests in the Chinese cities of Wuhan and Dalian on Wednesday against reforms to the public health insurance system, according to witnesses and images on social media.

Protests are rare in China, where authorities strictly enforce public order laws and opposition is quickly snuffed out. But expressions of public anger do sometimes emerge, including widespread protests last year against strict COVID-19 rules, which have since been rescinded. The latest outpouring of frustration has been sparked by reforms to China's vast public health insurance system that have reduced allowances paid monthly to retirees.

On Wednesday a crowd of demonstrators rallied in

front of a park in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in the second such gathering in a week. Video posted on social media showed security guards by the entrance to popular scenic spot Zhongshan Park forming a human chain to prevent more demonstrators from entering.

Four witnesses confirmed the rally took place and AFP was able to geolocate footage online to areas around the park. In the northeastern city of Dalian, a witness confirmed to AFP that hundreds also took to the streets against the health insurance reforms.

Elderly demonstrators began gathering around 9 am on Wednesday, the witness said, but were gone by the afternoon. "Give me back my medical insurance money," they can be heard chanting in one video, which AFP geolocated to the city's Renmin Square, where a number of local government buildings are situated. In another video, a large column of police are seen guarding the city government. Changes to the health insurance system prompted a separate rally by hundreds of retirees in front of Wuhan's city hall last Wednesday. Pictures shared on social media appeared

Business

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2023

‘Someone else’ could be running Twitter by year-end, says Musk

Twitter boss says Tesla was ‘really on the verge of bankruptcy’

DUBAI: Twitter boss Elon Musk said Wednesday that a new CEO might be running the online platform by the end of 2023, after a “rollercoaster” since he took full ownership last year.

“I’m guessing probably towards the end of this year should be good timing to find someone else to run the company,” he told the World Government Summit conference in Dubai via video.

“I need to stabilize the organization and make sure it’s in a healthy place and that the product roadmap is clearly laid out... I think it should be in a stable position around the end of this year.”

Musk was speaking at Dubai’s WGS in the session ‘A Conversation with Elon Musk 2.0’, which was moderated by Mohammed Abdullah Al-Gergawi, the UAE’s Minister of Cabinet Affairs and WGS chairman. It was almost six years after he first spoke at Dubai’s World Government Summit. About 20 heads of state, ministers, CEOs, thought leaders and celebrities have addressed this year’s World Government Summit in Dubai.

Musk paid \$44 billion for his favorite social media platform and exiting day-to-day operations would allow him to deflect criticism that he is neglecting his other ventures, especially car company Tesla, which has seen its share price plummet since he took over Twitter. Musk has given few clues to what type of leader he is looking for. On December 21, when he first announced he planned to step down as CEO, he said only that he would limit his own duties to software and server engineering once “someone foolish enough” had taken his place.

Since Musk took full ownership of Twitter on October 27, the platform has been riven by chaos, with mass layoffs, the return of banned accounts

and the suspension of journalists critical of the South African-born billionaire. Musk’s takeover also saw a surge in racist or hateful tweets, drawing scrutiny from regulators and chasing away big advertisers, Twitter’s primary source of revenue.

“It has been a rollercoaster,” Musk told the Dubai conference.

Last week, thousands of Twitter users reported problems using the platform as the social network began letting paying users post tweets as long as 4,000 characters. US tech media reported that Musk put out word to Twitter staff to put aside work on new features to focus on troubleshooting.

Tesla was “really on the verge of bankruptcy for quite a while,” Musk explained to the attendees at the summit during his virtual talk. Despite the difficulties, the Twitter boss encouraged more communication.

“As a forum for communication, it’s great. And I would just encourage more communication... to sort of speak in an authentic voice. “Sometimes, people will have someone else be their sort of Twitter manager or something like that. People should just do their own tweets... I think that’s the way to do it.”

“If you think I was a little worried about the direction about the effect of social media on the world, and especially Twitter, and I thought it was very important for there to be a maximally trusted, sort of digital public square, where people work within countries and internationally to communicate with the least amount of censorship allowed by law,” he said. “But I think in general, social media companies should adhere to the laws of our countries and not try to put a thumb on the scale beyond the laws of countries...and more accurately reflect the (needs of) the people.”



DUBAI: UAE Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Gergawi (left on stage) speaks with Elon Musk attending the World Government Summit virtually in Dubai on February 15, 2023. —AFP

He said while this might invite criticism, he acknowledged that “I am constantly attacked on Twitter and frankly I don’t mind.” “AI has great, great promise...but also with that comes danger. The challenge here is that the government regulatory authorities tend to be set up in reaction to something bad that happened.”

“So, I think we should be quite concerned about it, and we should have some regulation of what it is fundamentally of the interests of the public Because think of any technology which is potentially a risk to people like if it’s an aircraft or cars or medicine, we have regulatory bodies that oversee the public safety of cars and planes and medicines.” —AFP



The new Al-Khomra logistics zone will be linked to Jeddah Islamic Port.

Saudi launches ME’s biggest logistics zone at Jeddah Port

RIYADH: The Saudi Ports Authority (Mawani) and Maersk have laid the cornerstone of the company’s biggest comprehensive logistics zone in the Middle East at Jeddah Islamic port, with investments of SAR1.3 billion (\$346 million).

Providing over 2,500 direct and indirect jobs, the project aims at developing and providing investment opportunities in logistics zones for the private sector, and to increase the number of logistics zones that deal with re-exports to 30 by 2030, Saudi Press Agency said. It comes in line with the goals of the National Transport and Logistics Strategy to enhance the Kingdom’s position as a global logistics center and a hub for three continents.

The new zone, established on an area of 225,000 square meters, provides several logistics solutions that connect and facilitate the movement of supply chains, and deal with annual volumes of up to 200,000 containers of different products. Works are expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024, the agency said. The zone will include storage and distribution areas that accommodate merchan-

dise intended for export and import, warehouses to accommodate refrigerated food products, as well as a reshipping area, air shipping, LCL cargo shipping, and an e-commerce execution center, with high-storage intensity designs, and leading mechanical solutions, it added. It will use renewable energy and will apply decarbonization solutions to achieve zero-carbon rates by 2040, according to the report. Thus, the zone will be 100 percent powered by solar power generated by solar panels on rooftops, spread over 65,000 square meters, and trucks used for transport will be electric, to effectively reduce emissions. The zone will operate according to an advanced warehouse management system that applies modern technologies and digital solutions to manage inventory efficiently, and provides unit level tracking.

An advanced dashboard will be provided for improving competencies and giving a competitive advantage to importers, exporters and navigational agents, and an in-house women’s academy will offer training programs dedicated to women.

Mawani and Maersk signed the agreement at the end of 2021. The comprehensive logistics zone at the Islamic port of Jeddah will support the growth of the logistics industry, contribute significantly to the economy and increase the volume of the Kingdom’s non-oil export share by 50 percent, creating growing career opportunities in the logistics sector. — KUNA

White House unveils deal with Musk on EV chargers

WASHINGTON: Tesla’s US charging network will be available to other electric vehicle brands for the first time following White House negotiations with Elon Musk, the Biden administration announced Wednesday. Tesla has agreed to make at least 7,500 chargers nationwide open to non-Tesla EVs by the end of 2024, according to a White House fact sheet laying out its latest efforts to add 500,000 EV chargers by 2030. The White House has frequently had prickly relations with Musk but Biden administration staff said Tuesday the billionaire had been responsive when officials contacted major EV

players to extend the charging network.

A lack of sufficient charging capacity has been seen as a major hurdle for the EV transition in the United States, with driver fear at the lack of available chargers called “range anxiety.” Currently, Tesla owners can purchase an adapter to charge at non-Tesla EV stations but other brands are not able to do the same at Tesla’s network. Tesla’s network of “Superchargers” is widely viewed as constituting a head start over those being built by other companies.

Bipartisan 2021 legislation backed by Biden included \$7.5 billion in funding for EV chargers. Tesla’s shift to allow charging of other brands with an adapter allows Musk’s company to qualify for US subsidies, Biden administration officials said Tuesday. The Biden administration’s policy update also listed charging commitments from other leading companies, including a joint venture between Hertz and BP and initiatives by General Motors, ChargePoint and others. —AFP

Gulf states score highest in ESCWA Maturity Index

BEIRUT: UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) launched on Wednesday the second edition of the Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index. In a statement, ESCWA said that for the second consecutive year, Gulf States scored highest, with Saudi Arabia coming first, followed by Qatar and UAE with the same index value. It also said that the reliance on e-government services generally increased in the Arab region compared to 2021, especially in educational and financial institutions, noting that more efforts must be exerted to digitize services in other sectors such as justice and tourism.

UAE, Saudi drive GCC’s economic diversification

DUBAI: Gulf nations have made “significant improvement” in the diversification of their economies and have hastened their economic transformation policies in the aftermath of COVID-19, according to a study.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia led the region over the past two decades, thanks to policy measures to develop their non-oil sectors, the latest global Economic Diversification Index (EDI) report released by the Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government said on Tuesday. Since the start of the pandemic, which affected non-oil sectors ranging from tourism to infrastructure, GCC nations introduced policies to drive economic transformation. The policies include the development of the digital economy, the privatization of state-owned assets, the introduction of new taxes to increase non-oil revenue and other structural reforms, the report said.

While commodity-dependent nations have benefited from the recent increase in commodity prices, the pandemic reinforced the efforts of GCC countries to diversify into new sectors, the report found.

This has ranged from a shift in manufacturing to produce more high-tech products, a growing focus on fintech, artificial intelligence and virtual assets, as well as opening up markets to new investors - as characterized by the recent spate of initial public offerings in the GCC, in both the oil and non-oil sectors.

International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday that Gulf economies were performing well due to the “relentless” pursuit of reforms. “There is this impression that the only reason the Gulf countries are doing well is high oil and gas prices - this is not true,” Georgieva said at the World Government Summit in Dubai.

“They have been opening up more space for private investments and for jobs being generated by competitive businesses.” The Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government released the study at the World

The report added that 18 Arab countries participated in this year’s index, which measures the maturity of government electronic and mobile services based on three criteria, namely service availability and development, service usage and user satisfaction, and government outreach efforts. ESCWA GEMS Regional Advisor Nawar Al-Awa stressed the need to promote the maturity of these services at national level, even in high-assessment States, by keeping pace with the use of new digital technologies such as virtual reality. He also highlighted the importance of cooperation and shared experiences among countries in order to avoid duplication of effort, particularly since the report indicates that there is a widening gap between Arab countries, causing results to range between 1 percent and 87 percent. The report also highlights the role of digital government services in increasing efficiency, reducing waste and corruption, promoting transparency, providing accountability, and achieving economic growth, as well as the key role of digital governments in promoting equality among citizens. —KUNA



Kristalina Georgieva

Government Summit in Dubai.

The index, now in its second year of publication, has expanded to cover 105 countries in 2023, up from 83 last year. It covers all regions, resource and non-resource-based economies over a period of 22 years. The index quantifies the economic diversification process of different countries by focusing on three aspects - output diversification, trade diversification and government revenue diversification.

The UAE’s EDI score, measured out of 100, jumped to 94.6 in 2021, from 90.9 in 2000, while Saudi Arabia’s score climbed to 89.9, from 81.8, in the same periods under review. The Emirates has introduced a series of policies, from allowing 100 per cent foreign ownership of companies to more flexible visa programs, to attract more capital and talent to the country.

Tracking the progress of economic diversification in commodity-dependent nations, the report found that while the Mena region had a relatively low score, its EDI score had increased at the fastest pace on the index. The region’s EDI score rose to 97.4 to 2021, from 92.3 in 2000. “In the Mena region, the uptick has picked up pace in the last few years (2016 to 2019), not surprising since a conscious effort has been placed on increasing private sector non-oil share in GDP (plus the introduction of revenue enhancing measures like the introduction of value-added tax and excise taxes),” the report said. — Agencies

Business

US retail sales rebound in January on auto sector boost

Inflation eases but policymakers' battle not over

WASHINGTON: Retail sales in the United States rebounded in January, said government data released Wednesday, on improving auto supply while policymakers watch for signs that consumer demand is cooling in the longer run. The US central bank has been working to ease demand as policymakers try to rein in stubborn inflation, raising interest rates rapidly over the past year.

While there have been signals that the effects of policy are rippling across sectors including previously resilient consumer spending, the latest data could spark concern. Sales bounced by three percent last month to \$697.0 billion after two months of contraction, said a Commerce Department report Wednesday, markedly higher than analysts expected.

Sales at auto and other vehicle dealers provided a boost, jumping 6.4 percent from December to January. Also robust were sales at department stores, which surged 17.5 percent, while that at restaurants and bars spiked 7.2 percent, the report said. Officials are looking for indications that consumers are pulling back, as they consider when to halt their campaign of rate increases.

Rising rent and a gasoline price rebound helped keep US consumer prices elevated in January, according to government data released Tuesday, signaling that policymakers' battle against inflation is not over. 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 econ-

omy, as inflation skyrocketed.

But even as the consumer price index (CPI), an important inflation gauge, eases from decades-high levels, the numbers point to some stickier areas. With the effects of policy rippling through the economy, the CPI rose 6.4 percent in January from a year ago, according to Labor Department data. This was a touch below December's figure and the smallest annual increase since October 2021.

But it remains significantly above policymakers' two percent target.

From December to January, the CPI rose 0.5 percent, picking up from 0.1 percent in December and indicating the Federal Reserve has some way to go in lowering costs.

"The index for shelter was by far the largest contributor... accounting for nearly half of the monthly all items increase," said the report. The indices for food, gasoline and natural gas also contributed.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, so-called core CPI rose 5.6 percent from January 2022, also the smallest increase in around a year. "There is still more work to do as we make this transition to more steady, stable growth, and there could be setbacks along the way," said President Joe Biden in a statement. He added that latest data "reinforces that we have made historic progress and are on the right track, and now we need to finish the job."

There was only modest improvement in annual inflation, as well as in services inflation excluding volatile components and housing, said Rubeela



ARCADIA, US: In this file photo taken on November 25, 2022, people shop during Black Friday in Santa Anita within the city of Arcadia, California. Retail sales in the US rebounded in January, according to government data released on February 15, 2023, on improving auto supply as policymakers watch for signs that consumer demand is reliably cooling. — AFP

Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

This measure of underlying services costs is closely eyed by the Fed. "For Fed officials, a slow grind down in inflation only supports the higher-for-longer view on interest rates," Farooqi warned.

While higher interest rates may typically be associated with an uptick in unemployment and demand slowdown, the economy's resilience lends hope to the possibility that the United States can avoid a major downturn. — AFP

British inflation drops, remains above 10%

LONDON: British annual inflation dropped further last month on easing transport costs, official data showed Wednesday, but remains above 10 percent, prolonging a cost-of-living crisis that has sparked massive strikes. Inflation around the world is easing after striking the highest levels in decades last year as the invasion of Ukraine by Russia fuelled energy and food prices.

The UK Consumer Prices Index (CPI) fell to 10.1 percent in January compared with a rate of 10.5 percent in December, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

UK inflation has dropped in recent months from a peak of above 11 percent in October, which was reached also on shortages of supplies of goods and services as economies reopened from COVID lockdowns. With elevated inflation eroding the value of wages, Britain is facing its biggest strikes by public and private sector workers in more than a decade. "These latest figures show the cost-of-living crisis is still pummeling workers' pay packets," said Sharon Graham, general secretary at major British union Unite. "Unite will continue to fight for and win better wages in the face of this crisis," she added in a statement.

A separate measure of UK inflation—the retail prices index—was unchanged at 13.4 percent in January, the ONS said. The RPI includes mortgage interest payments and is used by unions and employers when negotiating wage increases.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt welcomed the easing CPI inflation figure but cautioned that "the fight is far from over". He added in a statement: "High inflation strangles growth and causes pain for fami-



LONDON: British annual inflation dropped further last month on easing transport costs, official data showed Wednesday. — AFP

lies and businesses—that's why we must stick to the plan (to) halve inflation this year, reduce debt and grow the economy."

Official data last week showed Britain narrowly avoided recession in 2022, but the risk of a prolonged contraction remains for this year according to analysts.

'Still at high level'

Across the Atlantic, rising rent and rebound in gasoline prices helped keep US consumer prices elevated in January, government data showed Tuesday. The CPI in the United States rose 6.4 percent in January from a year ago. This was a touch below December's figure and the smallest annual increase since October 2021. But it remains significantly above the Federal Reserve's two percent target, a level sought also by the Bank of England.

Barclays bank shares sink as bad loans surge

NEW YORK: Shares in Barclays slumped 10 percent Wednesday after the British bank announced a surge in bad loans alongside a drop in annual profits linked to US litigation charges.

Barclays booked a charge of £500 million (\$605 million) in the final quarter on soured loans linked to "macroeconomic deterioration". AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould noted that "fourth quarter profits were depressed by a... credit impairment charge linked to a worsening economic outlook".

"On a full year basis, earnings were also hit by £1.6 billion of litigation and conduct charges from over-issuance of securities in the US." Net profit slid 19 percent to £5 billion last year, Barclays said in its earnings statement. "2022 was a year of almost unprecedented challenges for Barclays and for society more broadly," added chairman Nigel Higgins.

"As a bank, we continued to demonstrate our resilience, our ability and commitment to support customers, clients and wider stakeholders in ever-changing economic conditions."

While banks are benefitting from higher interest rates, they are having to put money aside to cover anticipated bad loans caused by a cost-of-living-crisis. Mould said Barclays shares were hit also by a smaller-than-expected share buyback program.

"In an environment where banks are one of the few beneficiaries of rising interest rates, one might have expected Barclays to dig deep and buy back a lot more shares, which would in turn boost shareholder returns."

Climate policy

Also Wednesday, Barclays updated its climate policy by restricting finance for companies involved in extraction of oil from tar sands. "Barclays has tak-



LONDON, UK: A customer uses an ATM machine outside a branch of British bank Barclays, in central London, February 14, 2023. — AFP

en an encouraging step forward today in tightening its restrictions around oil sands finance, after years of investors pushing for change on the issue," noted Jeanne Martin at lobby group ShareAction.

But she expressed disappointment that the bank's fracking policy was unchanged and hit out over its failure to announce restrictions on the financing of new oil and gas projects. "Barclays should step up and act swiftly to update its oil and gas policy," Martin demanded. Regarding Wednesday's earnings update, Hargreaves Lansdown lead equity analyst Sophie Lund-Yates said the bank "has bitterly disappointed the market".

She added that the shares slump reflected several factors, including a tough trading environment for its investment banking unit. In 2022, a total "£1.2 billion has also been squirreled away to help prepare for an increase in bad debt as the macro-economic environment remains shaky and question marks remain about consumer spending, or rather repayment, power", Lund-Yates said. — AFP

Tech firm ASML probes info leak in China

AMSTERDAM: Key Dutch semiconductor tech supplier ASML said Wednesday it was probing the embezzlement of confidential information about protected technology by a former employee in China. ASML, which is one of the world's leading makers of machines that help make microchips, however added that the leak was "not material" to its business.

"ASML recently discovered misappropriation of confidential information by a (now) former employee in China relating to its proprietary technology," the company said.

"We are investigating the matter. Based on our initial findings, we do not believe that the misappropriation is material to our business," ASML said in a statement to AFP. ASML's announcement comes as a chip war between the United States and China heats up, with the company being at the centre of a recent push by Washington to get the Netherlands and other allies on board with export restrictions. The United States restricted exports of semiconductor technology to China last year and wants the Netherlands and Japan to follow suit over concerns about its potential military use.

Based in Veldhoven, near the southern Dutch city of Eindhoven, ASML said that "as a result of the security incident, certain export control regulations may have been violated."

It "has reported the incident to relevant authorities... and implementing additional remedial measures in the light of this incident." The company that "as our industry is becoming more and more strategic, we continue to invest in strengthening our protections against cyberattacks and misappropriation of confidential and proprietary information."

ASML last month urged governments to be "careful" with export controls which could also affect microchips used for everyday purposes such as cars, washing machines, PCs or smartphones.

The company makes the bus-sized Extreme Ultraviolet (EU) machine that prints circuits on microchips at the smallest possible level permitted by current miniaturization technology. The technology is listed on a multilateral agreement signed by around 40 countries including the United States and the Netherlands governing export controls on dual use civilian-military technology. The issue came up when Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte visited US President Joe Biden at the White House in mid-January. — AFP

South Africa's inflation dips below 7%

CAPE TOWN: Inflation in South Africa slowed for a third consecutive month in January, dipping below seven percent after hitting a 13-year peak last year, data showed Wednesday. Consumer prices rose 6.9 percent last month compared to January 2022, after a year-on-year increase of 7.2 percent in December, the national statistics agency StatSA said.

Inflation around the world is easing after striking the highest levels in decades last year as Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove up energy and food prices. Inflation in South Africa reached 7.8 percent in July last year, its highest in 13 years. Monetary chiefs in South Africa, the continent's most industrialized economy, have been raising interest rates for more than a year to tame rising prices.

The latest hike, last month, took the benchmark rate to 7.25 percent, hitting the appetite for investment. The central bank expects inflation to slow to 5.4 percent in 2023, compared to 6.9 percent last year. — AFP

Markets diverge as traders react to inflation numbers

LONDON: Europe stock markets climbed Wednesday after Asian counterparts finished lower, with traders digesting news of cooler UK and US inflation. The dollar jumped on expectations of more rises to US interest rates as the pace of price rises in the world's biggest economy was less than hoped.

Analysts said the bigger-than-expected drop in UK inflation could see the Bank of England pause its rate-tightening cycle. "After a US inflation number which proved a mild disappointment to the market... the UK's own inflation reading came in lower than expected," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

The much-anticipated US inflation update Tuesday showed a slight slowdown in January from the previous month — but the 6.4-percent reading was higher than forecast.

On Wednesday, official data showed UK annual inflation has eased to 10.1 percent last month from 10.5 percent to December. Central banks have massively hiked interest rates over the past year in a bid to cool decades-high inflation.

"Investors are trying to work out how the US Federal Reserve might react as they desperately look towards the milestone of the final rate hike in this cycle," said Mould. "For now, markets are retaining some confidence that this pivot isn't too far away." Focus now turns to the release of US retail sales figures on Wednesday. Wall Street ended mixed Tuesday, having fluctuated after the data release. — AFP

Business

'Like James Bond,' Argentine price spies fight inflation

Argentina records its highest inflation rate in 3 decades at 94.8% in 2022

BUENOS AIRES: Like a veritable undercover agent, Monica Schenone tries to pass unnoticed through the aisles of a supermarket in Buenos Aires, sneaking photographs of price tags. The 52-year-old homemaker is part of a group of ordinary Argentines who volunteer their time to police stores' adherence to price limits suggested by the government to curtail spiraling inflation.

She feels "like James Bond," Schenone says, as she tries to blend in with shoppers in the capital of Argentina-which in 2022 recorded its highest inflation rate in three decades at 94.8 percent-one of the highest in the world. Prices for daily staples rose monthly, even weekly in 2022, with milk prices climbing more than four-fold and those for cooking oil and sugar more than five-fold, according to the Abeceb economic consultancy.

In a bid to rein in galloping price rises, the government's "Precios Justos" (Fair Prices) program applies a 3.2-percent monthly price hike limit to some 2,000 essential products including flour, rice, milk and sunflower oil. "I am in shock," Schenone told AFP as she exited a supermarket in the San Cristobal neighborhood where she had executed a covert price check she said left her horrified.

"A bar of soap that went from 231.40 pesos to 496 pesos, that does not seem to me to be a three percent increase," she said. "It seems to me that we are still being taken for fools." Precios Justos runs from February to the end of June, and covers food and medicines but also soap, clothing, shoes, and school gear, among other items.

Joining is voluntary, but producers and vendors who do sign up to the price agreement risk fines for non-compliance of up to 71 million pesos (some \$370,000 at Tuesday's exchange rate) from

Argentina's ministry of commerce. Precios Justos, states the government, "aims to reduce inflationary expectations and... recover the purchasing power of the population's income." All major supermarket chains as well as Argentina's massive COPAL food and drinks producers' group have signed up to the program. But most smaller, independent stores which serve millions of Argentines remain outside of the framework, sometimes charging prices double the suggested rate, according to consulting firm Nielsen IQ.

'Impotence'

Schenone and about two dozen others members of an activist group called "La Dignidad" (Dignity) have taken it upon themselves to check up on Precios Justos compliance in Buenos Aires.

She said they regularly observe serious breaches. Most often, price-controlled products are simply not stocked, but there are also many cases of prices above the agreed limit, she said. "What I feel is a lot of impotence, a lot of anger. I feel that, as always, those of us in the lower classes continue to be screwed," Schenone told AFP. The price checker and her peers submit their findings to La Dignidad, which publishes periodic reports. There is also a government-sponsored app for consumers to report violations. But opponents of the government's plan question the efficacy of price freezes, calling instead for macro-economic measures such as slashing money printing and public spending. Argentina has been grappling with an economic crisis for years, registering double-digit inflation in each of the last 12 years.

The causes are multiple, including persistent deficit spending, constant currency devaluation, successive droughts and external factors like



BUENOS AIRES: People buy fruits and vegetables at a retail stall in the Central Market of Buenos Aires on February 10, 2023, some days before the announcement of the monthly inflation index. —AFP

the war in Ukraine that affected energy and grain prices.

Economy Minister Sergio Massa has said inflation is the "biggest poverty factor" in Argentina and "one of the main issues to fight." For the month of January, inflation came in at 6.0 percent

from December, and at 98.8 percent compared to the same month a year ago, according to data released Tuesday by the INDEC statistics institute. For food and non-alcoholic drinks, prices rose 6.8 percent from December to January, and by 98.4 percent from a year earlier. —AFP

Warba Bank announces weekly 'Sunbula' winners

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, the best bank in banking services for the corporate sector and banking services for the investment sector in Kuwait, announced the winners of the weekly Sunbula draw. The bank will continue to make weekly draws for 10 winners for the Sunbula account in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees.

As for the lucky customers for the weekly Sunbula draw, 10 winners were chosen from Warba Bank's customers, each of whom received KD 1,000. The winners are: Munira Rumaih Shabab Al-Muwaizri, Hussain Ali Khalil Al-Arabi, Ahmed Abdulaziz Ismail, Emad Abdulrahman Al-Fraih, Ahmed Hamid Muhammad Mahmoud, Manea Fahid Abdullah Al-Ajmi, Abdulaziz Mufreh Bader Mufreh, Abdulwahab Ahmed Al-Duwaisan, Muhammad Saad Mufreh Al-Dosari and Nader Jamaan Znifer Al-Azmi.

The Sunbula account is the perfect choice for all those who wish to save money and achieve great financial returns on their balances at the same time; in addition to multiple opportunities to win cash prizes throughout the year. With regards to the conditions for winning the Sunbula, Ahmed M Al-Mutawa, Area Manager Retail Banking Group states: "Only KD 100 is required to enter the weekly Sunbula draws and other major draws, whereby the customer still gets one chance per every KD 10 in the account, and the chances are calculated according to the lowest balance in the account during a month. Therefore, a full month must have passed in the account to qualify for the weekly draw, and two full months for the major draws to calculate the opportunities. There are no restrictions or limits for withdrawal and deposit, the higher the deposited amount, the greater the customer's chances of winning".

Notably, Warba Bank launched its latest Customer Onboarding banking solution in accordance with the terms of its ambitious five-year strategy, this will enable non-Warba Bank customers to apply for opening an account in an easy digital way through the bank's website without the need to visit any of the bank's branches, and within only five minutes - through the new and unique automated system used to enable this service - new customers will be able to complete the request to open an account at any time and any place.

It is also worth mentioning that after a short period of its establishment, Warba Bank has succeeded in establishing its position in the banking sector; it occupies a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals and is considered to have the highest number of shareholder base between local banks. Thus, establishing Warba's place to customers by providing the best banking services. Warba Bank has managed to meet the aspirations of the Kuwaiti society and deservedly, earned their trust in a short period.



Ahmed M Al-Mutawa

Gulf Bank continues to raise awareness on risks of cyber fraud

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibilities and its keenness to protect and educate customers and the community, Gulf Bank continues to educate customers, and any entities that deal with banks, about the risks posed by cybercrime on their information and bank accounts.

For the third consecutive year, Gulf Bank is playing a major role in supporting the Diraya "Let's Be Aware" awareness campaign; initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait in cooperation with the Kuwait Banking Association. Echoing the campaign's message, Gulf Bank's Corporate Communications Officer, Abdul Mohsen Al-Nassar, has been reminding customers and employees to cautiously handle any emails, text messages and phone calls that they receive from unknown parties, as they might be scammers impersonating another bank employee.

Al-Nassar stressed the importance of preserving their account information and data, and to completely avoid dealing with these messages and calls; to deter any cybertheft from occurring by unknown parties. He noted that banks will never ask cus-

tomers for their personal information via email, text messages or phone calls; hence, this would be a clear indication of attempted theft aimed at obtaining banking information in order to steal money or personal data. Al-Nassar added that it sometimes takes just one click, on a foreign link, to expose someone's confidential banking information to theft.

Al-Nassar further mentioned that it is also important to consider the increase of fraudulent activity through fake donation pages - following any disasters - as scammers may take advantage of the opportunity to mislead people and steal their money by asking them to support the needy and those affected by the disasters. Al-Nassar advised all bank employees with the following:

- To avoid saving confidential information such as debit card, credit card or PIN numbers on the mobile phone.
- To avoid writing the PIN on the credit card, and to avoid sharing the one-time passport (OTP) number with anyone.
- To ensure logging out of the Bank's mobile application or website immediately upon completion of transactions.
- To ensure that the antivirus software and associated files are updated.
- To type the URL into the browser instead of directly clicking or opening links in emails.
- To be careful when opening attachments and links within emails.

but no arrests were made.

"Normalcy has since returned as the Command has taken all necessary action to forestall breakdown of law and order." Local residents said the unrest started at Dupe, Mokola, Ogunpa, Apata and Iwo Road areas when angry bank customers began protesting because they could not access their money or change old notes to new ones. "Major roads were blocked while banks, shops and other businesses were shut," local journalist Remi Feyisipo told AFP. He said the protesters were also angry because traders, petrol stations and transporters were rejecting the old notes for transactions.

"The protesters made bonfires of used tires... to disrupt traffic and movements." The protest on Wednesday followed riots last week in the city where two people were killed in clashes, according to local media. Tensions have flared in Nigeria since the central bank set a February deadline for depositors to change their old notes to new ones, leaving many people cashless and frustrated.

Many people working in the informal economy and in transport in Nigeria use cash for transactions rather than banking apps. The central bank said the policy was aimed at mopping up excess and counterfeit naira from the system as well as discouraging cash ransom payments to kidnappers and bandits. The policy was also to promote cashless transactions by limiting the use of cash for businesses.

extra special "thank you" to riders for their exceptional work throughout the year and aims to keep them warm during the winter season. It is part of a series of initiatives Deliveroo has spearheaded for rider wellness and satisfaction throughout the years, including ongoing training, the provision of rider kits, resting stations and so much more.

Seham Al-Husaini, general manager of Deliveroo Kuwait, said: "We would like to thank Khaneen for partnering with us to thank our riders for their dedication and commitment. We are proud to partner with a local restaurant like Khaneen that specializes in Kuwaiti cuisine, especially in light of the upcoming national holidays. We hope our riders enjoy a taste of Kuwait and we can't wait to reward their efforts with even more 'Champions' initiatives in the future." Since launching its "Deliveroo Champions" initiative

- To download software from known and legitimate sources only.
- To keep all systems such as security systems, applications, and operating systems updated with the latest security updates.

Al-Nassar mentioned that customer awareness is vital in preserving banking data, especially with the significant increase and usage of electronic services lately. He advises customers to always deal with the verified, original websites and licensed institutions when donating funds.

The Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association, has launched the Diraya "Let's Be Aware" campaign in 2021, to acquaint bank customers with the most important banking services provided to them. This is to ensure the safety of transactions and to enhance financial inclusion, as well as monetary and economic stability - through comprehensive awareness of customers' rights and obligations. The Diraya campaign also aims to introduce the advantages of electronic financial transactions and ways to avoid the risks arising from them to achieve cybersecurity.



Abdul Mohsen Al-Nassar

Protests break out in Nigerian city over cash shortages

LAGOS: Angry bank customers burned tyres and blocked streets in a southwest Nigerian city on Wednesday in protests over scarcity of naira cash, police and residents said. The protests in Ibadan, 130 km (80 miles) north of Lagos, were the latest in Africa's most populous nation over the central bank's push to replace old naira notes with redesigned new ones.

Banks have limited access to cash and ATM withdrawals because of a scarcity of new notes, and some businesses refuse to accept old naira, causing huge lines, angering customers and disrupting businesses. The cash crunch comes as Nigeria prepares for a presidential election on February 25 when voters will chose the successor to President Muhammadu Buhari.

Oyo State police said protests broke out in some parts of Ibadan, the state capital, early Wednesday, but were soon brought under control. "There were pockets of protest this morning by some aggrieved bank customers," spokesman Adewale Osifeso told AFP.

He said police were deployed to restore order

Deliveroo, Khaneen collaborate to offer riders free karak

KUWAIT: As part of its latest "Deliveroo Champions" initiative, Deliveroo has partnered with Khaneen to offer riders complimentary Karak drinks every day throughout the month of February from Khaneen, a beloved local restaurant that specializes in traditional Kuwaiti cuisine. With both Deliveroo and Khaneen collaborating to treat riders, the initiative is set to be a memorable way for riders to celebrate the national holidays during the month of February.

The partnership with Khaneen extends an



LAGOS: Angry bank customers burned tires and blocked streets in a southwest Nigerian city on Wednesday in protests over scarcity of naira cash.

But some state governments have taken the central bank to court, seeking an order to suspend the policy and allow Nigerians to use both the old and new notes until the banks are able to provide enough cash.

Riots broke out in Sango, near Lagos on Tuesday and in Abeokuta last week where a young man was hit by a stray bullet. Two weeks ago, riots also erupted in northern Nigeria's largest city of Kano during a visit by President Buhari who has promised to look into both the cash and petrol shortages. —AFP



The partnership is a gesture of thanks to riders for their exceptional work throughout the year.

four years ago, Deliveroo Kuwait has partnered with various local restaurants and cafes to give back to riders.

Lifestyle | Fashion



Models walk the runway for Tory Burch during New York Fashion Week. — AFP photos



VELEZ, BURCH AND PALOMO: HIGHLIGHTS FROM NEW YORK FASHION WEEK



From designs inspired by America's industrial Midwest to evocations of a childhood in Spain, AFP looks at some of the highlights from New York Fashion Week so far.

Ship captain

Elena Velez wowed with designs evoking the Rust Belt image of her home city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, including a pleated gold dress that incorporated two stained-glass discs. Her collection alternated between the elegant-a beige jumpsuit in

brushed cotton with long gloves and matching boots-and the less classic: a dress held together by a multitude of cords.

"I'm from the Midwest. It's not New York, it's not Los Angeles, it's not Paris, and is kind of not really considered in American fashion," said the 28-year-old designer, named emerging talent of the year in 2022 by the American fashion union (CFDA).

She told AFP she was inspired by her mother, a ship captain on the Great Lakes. "She's somebody who is assertive and prioritizes functionality over perfection, and just really lives with the urgency to live life, in a way that feels very romantic and very feral in a way," said Velez.

Celebrating 'imperfection'

American Tory Burch pushed on with the reinvention she began a few seasons ago. Her new collection, presented in a former bank branch, was made up of imposing silhouettes, far from the bohemian lightness that usually characterizes her designs. They featured lots of satin, wool and leather.

She told AFP she wanted to celebrate "imperfection" and women not having to be "restricted" by rules. "I wanted to think about challenging the concept of traditional femininity and beauty," said Burch, who will celebrate the 20th anniversary of her fashion house next year.

Sheets and shirts

Young designer Alejandro Gomez Palomo channeled his childhood memories in Spain for his Fall/Winter 2023 collection, using sheets and his father's large shirts. He made colorful, embroidered coats from the towels he wrapped himself in as a child and turned tracksuit fabrics into a sophisticated suit.

A coat in the shape of a duvet, or rather a duvet in the shape of a coat, was the star of the 30-year-old's show. "We don't live in the 19th century anymore, where it was decided that men had to wear suits. Why can't men wear a skirt or a dress?" he said. - AFP



Models present designs by Palomo Spain during New York Fashion Week.

Luxury giant Kering says profit up despite Gucci slide

French luxury giant Kering on Wednesday reported a rise in annual profit despite poor performances at its flagship brand Gucci and Balenciaga. Kering, whose empire includes Yves Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta and Alexander McQueen, said net profit climbed 14 percent to 3.6 billion euros (\$3.9 billion) in 2022. Sales jumped 15 percent to 20 billion euros.

"We have reason to be satisfied about the global performances of all our houses except Gucci," group chairman Francois-Henri Pinault said at the company results presentation. Kering sales fell two percent in the fourth quarter, dragged down by an 11 percent drop at Gucci and three percent at its "other houses", which include Balenciaga, in the last three months of the year.

"Gucci is obviously our priority because it is our greatest asset," Pinault said. "The brand didn't have its best performances lately," he said, adding that he was determined to get it "back on track". The results were weighed down by China which still had Covid restrictions most of last year.

The world's second biggest economy, a major market for luxury brands, lifted its zero-Covid policy in December. "The year 2022 is clearly not up to our expectations (for Gucci) and what we think about the brand's potential," said Jean-Marc Duplaix, the group's chief financial officer.

The departure of renowned Italian fashion designer Alessandro Michele as Gucci's creative director, which was announced in November, "did not have an impact as such on sales", Duplaix said. Michele was replaced by another Italian designer, Sabato De Sarno, in January.

Gucci sales were up eight percent at 10.5 billion euros for the full year in 2022. Sales at Yves Saint Laurent soared by 31 percent to reach 3.3 billion euros. Other houses were up 16 percent for the year at 3.9 billion euros.

Balenciaga faced controversy last year over an ad campaign that appeared to reference child abuse. The ads, published late last year, featured children holding bags designed to look like teddy bears, but with studs and harnesses, and surrounded by adult items including wine glasses.

It sparked huge condemnation online, including from celebrities such as Kim Kardashian. "I take full responsibility for this episode," Pinault said. "We will work to regain the trust of customers." Balenciaga's creative director Demna, who goes by one name, had also apologized last week. — AFP

PHARRELL WILLIAMS TAKES OVER MENSWEAR AT LOUIS VUITTON

Luxury fashion house Louis Vuitton announced Tuesday the appointment of hip-hop artist Pharrell Williams as its new head of menswear. "Louis Vuitton is delighted to welcome Pharrell as its new Men's Creative Director with immediate effect," the storied brand said in a statement.

Williams fills the spot left vacant since the death of Virgil Abloh from cancer in November 2021. The 49-year-old is an established superstar in the music world, with 13 Grammys and two Oscar nominations, and has been a fixture in the front row of fashion shows for years.

"Pharrell Williams is a visionary whose creative universe spans from music to art to fashion-establishing himself as a universal cultural icon over the past 20 years," said the fashion house, part of the LVMH luxury conglomerate. His first collection for Louis Vuitton will be presented in June during Men's Fashion Week in Paris, it added.

"I'm delighted to see Pharrell come back to the house as the new creative director for men, after our collaborations in 2004 and 2008 for Louis Vuitton," said the fashion house's chief executive,



In this file photo US singer Pharrell Williams speaks as he takes part in the "Le Grand Journal" TV show at the headquarters of the French television channel Canal Plus in Paris. — AFP

Pietro Beccari. "His creative vision beyond fashion will without a doubt lead Louis Vuitton towards a new, very exciting chapter," he said. Louis Vuitton's sales have soared since the Covid-19 pandemic, with the company now worth more than \$20 billion-helping to turn the owner of its parent company LVMH, Bernard Arnault, into the world's richest person.

Millennial appeal

The French brand had been happy to keep coasting on the hype generated by Abloh's three-year tenure, using his team and guest designers for recent shows. Abloh, who died aged 41, became a star among millennials as he astutely combined luxury fashion with streetwear.

Last month, Louis Vuitton put on one of the most talked-about shows of menswear week in Paris with a performance by pop star Rosalia and overseen by a collective of strongly hyped young designers. Williams, who came to fame in the 1990s as part of hip-hop group The Neptunes, was not often mentioned in speculation surrounding the job.

But he fits with the label's recent moves to attract a younger, streetwear-focused audience, and the interests he shares with Abloh include skateboarding, art and music. He was also a fan of Abloh's: "Virgil you were a kind, generous, thoughtful creative genius your work as a human and your work as a spiritual being will live forever," he wrote upon the designer's death. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone and Crackland residents take part in the 'Radio Time' activity, in which they can request songs and sing, as part of the project 'Teto, Trampo e Tratamento' (Roof, Work and Treatment), in Cracolândia (Crackland) an area in downtown of Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone puts on makeup as he prepares to act as a clown in Cracolândia (Crackland).



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone poses after putting on makeup to act as a clown in Cracolândia (Crackland). — AFP photos

Digital video viewing to top traditional TV in US: Forecast

For the first time ever, US adults will spend more time this year watching digital video on platforms such as Netflix, TikTok and YouTube than viewing traditional television, Insider Intelligence forecast on Wednesday.

In the historic first, the market tracker expects "linear TV" to account for less than half of daily viewing, dropping to under three hours while average daily digital video watching climbs to 52.3 percent with 3 hours and 11 minutes.

"This milestone is driven by people spending more and more time watching video on their biggest and smallest screens, whether it's an immersive drama on a connected TV or a viral clip on a smartphone," Insider Intelligence principal analyst Paul Verna said in a release. "Given teens' preferences for social and streaming video over TV, we can expect these trends to continue to shift in favor of digital."

Netflix and YouTube are "neck and neck" leaders when it comes to digital video audience attention, with US adults tuning in for about 33 minutes daily on average at each platform, according to Insider Intelligence.

Live sporting events becoming available on video streaming platforms is also helping power the shift away from traditional television, as is the popularity of shared video clips on apps, the market tracker said. TikTok is a key driver with the average amount of time spent there daily by US adults climbing sharply, according to Insider Intelligence.

"TikTok versus Netflix will be a major trend to watch this year," said Insider Intelligence principal analyst Jasmine Enberg. "The lines between social and entertainment have blurred, and TikTok is now coming for the bigger-screen video players." TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew will testify in March before US lawmakers in Washington, where the Chinese social media app faces accusations that it is beholden to the Communist Party in Beijing. TikTok, whose parent company ByteDance is Chinese, is fighting for survival in the United States with rising calls from mainly Republican lawmakers that the company should be outright banned because of its alleged links to Beijing. — AFP



'CRACKLAND' CLOWN SEEKS TO BRING HOPE TO BRAZIL ADDICTS

Every Thursday, Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone trades his white lab coat for a red clown nose and heads to a decidedly unfunny place: a squalid Sao Paulo neighborhood known as "Crackland." Wearing a baggy red-and-black outfit with a floppy hat and make-up to match, the 43-year-old doctor dances a goofy routine through the sordid streets of the downtown neighborhood, which is known as Brazil's biggest open-air narcotics market.



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone, poses for picture, in Cracolândia (Crackland) an area in downtown of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"Good morning, Crackland!" he shouts to the strung-out addicts meandering through the trash and decaying buildings that line the district's streets, where authorities have tried in vain for years to restore law and order.

"Crackland is where people who have failed in the capitalist system seek refuge," says Falcone. "And clowns represent hope in the face of failure: we laugh when they stumble, and people

here can relate to that." Falcone's goal is to build a relationship of trust with addicts, many of whom fear being forced into treatment facilities by the authorities. It is a first step, he says, in helping them get off the street.

There are around 800 to 1,700 addicts in Crackland, 39 percent of whom have lived in or frequented the neighborhood for more than a decade, according to a study by the Federal University of Sao Paulo published last year. The number was previously as high as 4,000, before a series of police operations dispersed the addict population. But the operations also had the side-effect of dispersing Crackland, which went from a clearly delimited district to a hazier area covering much of the city center in this sprawling economic capital of 12 million people.

Funky beats

Falcone arrives in the neighborhood jamming to the beats of Brazilian funk music pouring from a sound system wheeled in by his volunteer assistants. At first, most of the addicts ignore him. But then a few curious onlookers gather and Falcone talks them into participating in a singing contest.

The first to take the mic is Peterson P.P.-his stage name-a 29-year-old homeless man who has been living in Crackland for three years. He says his dream is to become a funk singer. "It's almost like being on stage," he beams.

As he sings, another man lights a metal pipe and smokes a crack rock, for an intense but fleeting high that costs around 20 reais (\$3.85). The idea of the singing contest, says Falcone, is to "reawaken a life force" in participants, in order to start steering them toward a treatment program. It is a three-step

process, he says. "First, we help them get housing. After that, jobs"-often as cleaners, garment workers or in municipal work-placement programs. "Then and only then, we help them get treatment for their addictions," he says.



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone (center) and Crackland residents take part in the "Radio Time" activity, in which they can request songs and sing, as part of the project "Teto, Trampo e Tratamento" (Roof, Work and Treatment), in Cracolândia (Crackland).

The project, which he started around 10 years ago, has helped dozens of people overcome addiction, Falcone says. He started the project with government funding, but now relies on corporate donations to keep it going.

One beneficiary, Vanilson Santos Conceicao, says the program helped him find a roof over his head and begin rebuilding his life. "I suffered a lot on the street. I took a lot of drugs. But I've been clean for three years now," says Conceicao, 35, who now helps prepare free meals for addicts.

'Pulling in different directions'

The clown show comes to an abrupt halt with every police raid. Charitable organizations that work in the neighborhood accuse the police of brutal tactics.

Local residents and businesses meanwhile complain the district is a security nightmare.

The administration of newly installed Sao Paulo Governor Tarcisio de Freitas has just launched a Crackland action



Brazilian psychiatrist Flavio Falcone (center) and Crackland residents take part in the "Radio Time" activity, in which they can request songs and sing, as part of the project "Teto, Trampo e Tratamento" (Roof, Work and Treatment), in Cracolândia (Crackland).

plan with the mayor's office-the latest in a long line of efforts to address the area's problems. Officials admit the government has struggled to organize effective policies for the zone. "Charitable organizations are more present than the state in Crackland right now, and we're all pulling in different directions," says Deputy Governor Felicio Ramuth.

Ramuth, who is leading the administration's initiative, says it includes "hiring specialists to work on-site" and "more treatment options, including self-help groups." Authorities also plan to install 500 security cameras and offer 1,000 spots in treatment facilities. Forced hospitalization will be a "last resort," Ramuth says. — AFP

Iraq dig uncovers 5,000-year-old pub restaurant

Archaeologists in southern Iraq have uncovered the remains of a tavern dating back nearly 5,000 years they hope will illuminate the lives of ordinary people in the world's first cities. The US-Italian team made the find in the ruins of ancient Lagash, northeast of the modern city of Nasiriyah, which was already known to have been one of the first urban centers of the Sumerian civilization of ancient Iraq.

The joint team from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Pisa discovered the remains of a primitive refrigeration system, a large oven,



A broken pottery jar is seen at the newly-excavated trench at the site of the ancient city-state of Lagash.

benches for diners and around 150 serving bowls. Fish and animal bones were found in the bowls, alongside evidence of beer drinking, which was widespread among the Sumerians.

"So we've got the refrigerator, we've got the hundreds of vessels ready to be served, benches where people would sit... and behind the refrigerator is an



Shred pottery fragments are seen at the site of the newly-excavated trench at the site of the ancient city-state of Lagash.

oven that would have been used... for cooking food," project director Holly Pittman told AFP.

"What we understand this thing to be is a place where people-regular people-could come to eat and that is not domestic," she said. "We call it a tavern because beer is by far the most common drink, even more than water, for the

Sumerians", she said, noting that in one of the temples excavated in the area "there was a beer recipe that was found on a cuneiform tablet".

'Regular people'

The world's first cities developed in what is now southern Iraq, after agricultural surpluses from the domestication of the first crops allowed the emergence of new social classes not engaged directly in food production.

The Lagash area, close to the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, was dubbed the "garden of the gods" by the ancients for its fertility and gave rise to a string of Sumerian cities dating back to the early dynastic period.

"Lagash was one of the important cities of southern Iraq," Iraqi archaeologist Baker Azab Wali told AFP, after working with the US-Italian team on the site. "Its inhabitants depended on agriculture, livestock, fishing, but also on the

exchange of goods," he said.

Pittman said the team was eager to learn more about the occupations of the people who used the tavern in its heyday in around 2700 BC to throw new light on the social structure of the first cities. Detailed analysis would need to be carried out on the samples taken during the excavations the team completed in November.

"There is so much that we do not know about this early period of the emergence of cities and that is what we are investigating," she said. "We hope to be able to characterize the neighborhoods and the kinds of occupation... of the people that lived in this big city who were not the elite," she added. "Most of the work done at the other sites focuses on kings and priests. And that is all very important but the regular people are also important." — AFP



Shards of pottery are seen at the newly-excavated trench at the site of the ancient city-state of Lagash.



An aerial picture shows a general view of the newly-excavated trench which may have contained an inn with a cooling area for food storage, at the site of the ancient city-state of Lagash, in Iraq's al-Shatra district of the southern Dhi Qar province. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Afghan refugee and activist for women's rights Fatima Haidari reads a book at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy. — AFP photos



Afghan refugee and activist for women's rights Fatima Haidari gives an online virtual tour of Herat, Afghanistan, from her home in Milan, Italy.



Afghan refugee and activist for women's rights Fatima Haidari poses for a photo riding a bicycle in a park in Milan, Italy.

REFUGEE FROM TALEBAN OFFERS VIRTUAL TOURS OF HER HOMELAND

Forced to flee by the Taliban, Fatima Haidari now offers virtual tours of Afghanistan from her new home in Italy—with the proceeds funding secret English classes for women there. From her student flatshare in Milan, Haidari leads cyber-tourists around the western Afghan city of Herat, using Zoom to show them the grand mosque with its glazed tiles, the citadel and the bustling bazaar.

The 24-year-old worked as a tour guide in Herat before fleeing when the Taliban took power in August 2021, and is now studying international politics at Milan's Bocconi university. But she remains passionate about showing outsiders the beauty of her country, even if few tourists currently dare visit.

"When you hear about Afghanistan, you think of war, terror and bombs,"

Haidari told AFP in the little kitchen she shares with four other students. "I want to show the world the beauty of the country, its culture and its history."

Organized through British tour operator Untamed Borders, the events draw people from Britain to Australia, Germany and India. A third of the money goes towards secret English classes for young women back in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on women since returning to power, including closing secondary schools and universities for girls and women. Haidari herself faced insults after becoming the first female tourist guide in Afghanistan. Local religious leaders accused her of "doing the devil's work", particularly when accompanying men, while boys threw stones at her in the street.

'The power of our pens'

Haidari is passionate about education, after battling her whole life for access to books. Growing up in the mountains in the central region of Ghor, the youngest of seven children, her parents made her look after the sheep. "I would take the sheep out to graze by the river where the boys had school and secretly listen to their lessons," she recalled. "As I didn't have a pen, I would write in the sand or in clay."

When she was 10, her impoverished family moved to Herat, where they could not afford to send her to school. For three years she worked at night on home-made items such as traditional clothes, to raise enough money to pay for classes and text books.

She managed to persuade her parents to allow her to go to university in Milan, where she began studying journalism in

2019. "They wanted me to become a perfect housewife. But I didn't want to follow the same path as my two sisters and face an arranged marriage," Haidari said. In September last year, she joined around 20 refugee students welcomed by Bocconi University in Milan.

'Buried alive'

Wearing a black headscarf and leather gilet, jeans tucked into her boots and her laptop in a bag on her back, she looks like any other student on campus. But she never forgets the plight of women back home. "They are confined to the house, it is as if they are locked in a prison or in a grave where they are buried alive," she said.

Haidari is a member of Afghanistan's minority Hazara community, Shiites in a majority Sunni nation who have been targeted by the Islamic State (IS) group.

When the Taliban arrived, she was warned by the local tour operator she worked for that she might be a target, and fled.

Leaving Afghanistan was traumatic. At Kabul airport, there were desperate scenes as thousands of people tried to get a flight out. "The Taliban were hitting the crowd with Kalashnikovs, bullets were whizzing by my ears and a young girl collapsed dead next to me. I thought I was in a horror movie, but it was real," she recalled.

She was unable to get onto flights to the United States and Poland, but got on a plane to Rome. She still dreams of returning home "to set up my own travel agency and hire women as guides". But "as long as the Taliban are in Afghanistan, it is no longer my home," she said. — AFP

Bad omen? Valentines tie the knot at Vasa shipwreck



Bizzy Klein (right) and Robert Djurberg present their wedding rings following their wedding ceremony at The Vasa Museum in Stockholm.

Marriage: a disaster waiting to happen or a historic odyssey? Couples tied the knot Tuesday in front of Sweden's 17th century royal warship Vasa that sank on its maiden voyage. The resplendent vessel, a national treasure housed in a museum in central Stockholm, is one of Sweden's biggest failures, sailing for just 15 minutes before sinking pitifully in the Stockholm harbor due to faulty construction design. But several couples who showed up for the museum's Valentine's Day drop-in wedding offer didn't see the disaster as a bad omen as they embarked on their new journey together.

"It's a unique place and a fun setting for a wedding I think", Bizzy Klein, a 28-

year-old project manager who exchanged rings with her fiance Robert Djurberg, told AFP. The museum had put out large bouquets of flowers and candles for the occasion. "I follow them on Facebook and I saw they were doing this drop-in thing today on Valentine's Day", Klein said. "We just thought that a big, traditional wedding is not for us, but this is the perfect set-up. To get married here, just the two of us", she said, ditching the traditional white dress for casual trousers and a shirt. Museum guide Hans-Lennart Ohlsson served as officiant.

"Museums are a place to meet history. And when you are getting into marriage you are creating a new part of your history. It's a very good place to look back into his-

tory and then look forward to a new marriage", he said. The Vasa, whose 1628 sinking claimed the lives of around 30 people, was also home to love stories, he said. "Many people lost their loves inside this ship. So (to get married in front of the ship) is also a sign of love you could say".

Meant to be the crown jewel of the Swedish navy when it was built, the Vasa was raised nearly intact in 1961 off the Baltic sea bed. Well preserved for more than 300 years by Stockholm's cold, brackish waters, it is now housed in a special museum built over an old dry dock. Opened in 1990, Vasa Museum is one of Sweden's most visited attractions. — AFP



Visitors walk in front of Vasa Ship at the The Vasa Museum in Stockholm, Sweden on Valentine's Day. — AFP photos



Museum historian Hans-Lennart Ohlsson officiates the wedding of Bizzy Klein (right) and Robert Djurberg at The Vasa Museum in Stockholm.

UK council unamused as Banksy unveils Valentine's Day mural

British street artist Banksy marked Valentine's Day Tuesday with an inimitable statement about violence against women—but local politicians saw only a nuisance. A Banksy mural appeared in Margate in southeast England, depicting a 1950s-style housewife with a swollen eye and a missing tooth seemingly shoving her male partner into a real chest freezer. "Certainly we will be looking at how we can protect this and preserve it because we're really proud to have it here," Margate mayor Heather Keen told AFP.

But minutes later, council workers turned up to throw the freezer into a van, despite protests from locals taking pictures of the mural, at the end of a terrace of houses in a rundown part of the seaside town. Thanet District Council, which administers Margate, said the freezer was removed "on the grounds of safety as it was on public land".

"The fridge freezer is now in storage and will be returned once it has been made safe to the public," the council said in a statement, adding it would discuss preserving

the artwork with the owner of the house. The elusive Banksy, whose true identity remains unconfirmed, posted three images of the 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 removal of the freezer prompted bemusement—and even conspiracy theories — among bystanders. "People were sort of like, 'Stop, stop, you know, this is a Banksy,

right?" local resident Laura Holden, 35, told AFP. "And they (the workers) were like, 'Yeah, no, we've got permission to take everything away'," she said. "It felt like it was part of the piece, and perhaps Banksy intended that all along, because we all know how hard it is to get Thanet District Council to come and collect our rubbish."

From Bristol to Borodianska

Others commended the apparent theme of the now-altered work. "I think it's amazing," said Amanda Barden, 56. "It's a real

topic that people can talk about, domestic abuse. I think the reference to Valentine's Day as well, it's bringing people in, it's going to open up that dialogue." Banksy, 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.

Belying its origins on the streets of Bristol in the 1990s, Banksy art now commands serious money. A version of his iconic "Girl with Balloon" sold at auction for just over £1 million in 2018 — only to start self-destructing due to a shredder hidden by Banksy in the frame. The renamed "Love is in the Bin" then sold for a staggering £18.6 million in 2021 — a record for a Banksy. — AFP



Workers remove a chest freezer that had formed part of an artwork, acknowledge by street artist Banksy, from the side of a house in Margate, south east England. — AFP



In this file photo Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort reacts during her visit to Coram Beanstalk in London, where she met with staff, volunteers and young readers for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the charity. — AFP

UK's Camilla to wear Queen Mary's Crown at May coronation

British Queen Consort Camilla will wear Queen Mary's Crown at her and King Charles III's coronation in early May, Buckingham Palace said on Tuesday. The crown is more than a century old and was commissioned by Queen Mary for her 1911 coronation alongside King George V. It will be modified for the landmark ceremony on May 6.

This is the first time in recent history that an existing crown will be used for the coronation of a consort instead of a new commission being made, according to the palace. It said the move was being made "in the interests of sustainability and efficiency".

The crown will be reset with several Cullinan diamonds-cut from what was the largest diamond ever mined when it was discovered in South Africa in 1905 — in tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II. The diamonds were part of her personal jewelry collection for many years and she often wore them as brooches.

Some of the diamonds were set into Queen Mary's Crown for the 1911 coronation and for King George VI's coronation in 1937, when it was worn as a regal circlet. It has been removed from its usual display at the Tower of London for the modification, which will also include some other minor changes and additions by the crown jeweler.

Four of its eight detachable arches will be removed to create a new impression, different from that of 1911. King Charles will wear the St Edward's Crown for the coronation service in Westminster Abbey. It has already been modified and returned to public display in the Tower of London.

Concert ballot

Preparations for the May 6 crowning, set to be attended by dignitaries from around the world and watched by billions, continue to gather pace. The palace announced last month that the weekend-long celebrations will feature a star-studded concert, nationwide "big lunch" and volunteering initiative, as well as the traditional ceremony and royal processions.

Last week it unveiled a "coronation emblem", which will feature throughout. The emblem pays tribute to Charles's love of the natural world, depicting the floral symbols of the UK's four nations—the rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock—in the shape of St Edward's Crown. — AFP

Sports

PGA Tour 'evolving' in wake of LIV challenge

Woods eyes Riviera win despite injury uncertainties

LOS ANGELES: Golf's establishment is still redefining itself 12 months after the emergence of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit rocked the game globally and pitted longtime friends and colleagues against each other. Tiger Woods, who came down hard on the side of the US PGA Tour and the DP World Tour, said those circuits are seeking the best means to engage fans, honor history and reward players in golf's changed landscape.

"If you go back to this week at Genesis last year to where it's at now, we all have to say it's been very turbulent," Woods said Tuesday as he prepared to play in the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club. "We never would have expected the game of golf to be in this situation, but it is, that's the reality."

That reality includes back-and-forth lawsuits, a ban on LIV Golf players teeing it up on the PGA Tour—and similar attempted suspensions by the DP World Tour thwarted in court. In the year since Phil Mickelson declared that LIV Golf offered a chance to "reshape" how the PGA Tour does business, significant changes have indeed been made, notably the addition of designated events in which top players must play and which carry beefed-up purses—including this week's \$20 million in prize money.

With other changes reportedly under consideration, including the creation of limited-field no-cut events on the PGA Tour, Woods said lots of options are under discussion. "We are in the process of figuring all that out and it's been a variety of different models, different opinions, trying to figure out what is the best product and competitive environment and what we should do going forward," Woods said.

"Yes, limited fields, what's the number. Cuts? Yes or no. What's the number, what do we go to. How many players are playing the event? OK, what is the

ability to get into the designated events?" LIV Golf's limited fields with no cuts was a major knock for golf traditionalists, who fear they undercut competitive drive and limit opportunities for golfers to rise through the ranks. Woods acknowledged that the debate has "been difficult" but necessary as "we're trying to create the best product that we think (is) the future of golf, how it should be played."

Difficult dinner?

Masters champion Scottie Scheffler, who regained the world number one ranking with a victory at the Phoenix Open on Sunday, said even the introduction of some limited field events would offer opportunities for newcomers and mid-range tour pros. "If we do go to those smaller fields it's not going to be an unaccessible event," Scheffler said. "Just because you go down from 120 guys, let's say you go to 70, there's still going to be avenues for people to get into those tournaments. The eligibility to get into those events is still going to reward good golf."

Amid the changes, and with LIV Golf lobbying strenuously for world rankings recognition as it prepares to kick off its second season, Scheffler could find himself at the center of the tension when he hosts the annual Masters champions dinner in April. Woods, who has hosted five champions dinners, said he didn't know what the gathering of LIV golfers and PGA Tour stalwarts will be like.

Woods targets Riviera

Tiger Woods returns from a seven-month injury absence this week amid plenty of uncertainty, but his goal at the Genesis Invitational remains clear: to win. "I would not have put myself out here if I didn't



CALIFORNIA: Tiger Woods of the United States and Rob McNamara, Executive Vice President at TGR, ride in a cart prior to The Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club on February 14, 2023. —AFP

think I could beat these guys and win the event," the 15-time major champion said Tuesday as he prepared to tee it up at Riviera Country Club. "That's my mentality."

Woods hosts the tournament for the benefit of his charitable foundation, but it wasn't until Friday that he confirmed he would actually make his first tour-level start since the British Open in July. Since then, he has continued his recovery from the severe leg injuries he suffered in a February 2021 car crash, his biggest problem now the "intricate little balance" of building stamina in his damaged ankle so that he can walk 72 holes for four straight days.

"I can still hit shots, but it's the walking endurance that's hard," Woods said. "That's something that we've had to work on, walking distances on the beach, just basically stress it out but also be able to recover by the next day and see how it is inflammation-wise and then keep practicing. "I may have overdone it a couple times here or there, but here I am," he said. After several surgeries in the wake of his accident, Woods made a stunning comeback at the 2022 Masters, finishing in 47th place. He withdrew from the PGA Championship in May after 54 holes, and missed the cut at the Open Championship at St. Andrews. —AFP

News in brief

Valencia appoint Baraja

VALENCIA: La Liga strugglers Valencia appointed former midfielder Ruben Baraja as coach on Tuesday tasking him with saving them from relegation. Los Che sacked Gennaro Gattuso in January before appointing staff member Voro for the eighth time as an interim coach. Although Voro confirmed the plan was for him to stay in place until the end of the season, three consecutive defeats led Valencia to make a change. The east coast club are 18th, a point from safety, having suffered 11 defeats in 21 league games. "One of the most successful and illustrious players in the history of Valencia, (Baraja) knows the idiosyncrasies of the club and returns home as a coach to contribute his professionalism and commitment," said Valencia in a statement. "(He) forged his legend in the 2000s, contributing to win two La Liga titles, a UEFA Cup, a European Super Cup and a Copa del Rey." Thousands of supporters protested against businessman Peter Lim's ownership of the club on Saturday, not entering Mestalla until the 19th minute of their 2-1 defeat by Athletic Bilbao. — AFP

Cardinals hire Gannon

WASHINGTON: Philadelphia Eagles defensive coordinator Jonathan Gannon, whose team lost Sunday's Super Bowl, has agreed to terms to become the head coach of the NFL's Arizona Cardinals, the team announced Tuesday. Gannon has spent the past two years guiding the defenders for the Eagles, who squandered a 10-point halftime lead on the way to a 38-35 loss to Kansas City in the NFL title showdown at the Cardinals' home stadium in Glendale, Arizona. Gannon was interviewed by Arizona on Monday to replace Kliff Kingsbury, who was fired after Arizona finished a 4-13 campaign last month, and has agreed on a five-year contract, the Cardinals said. Philadelphia's offensive coordinator, Shane Steichen, was hired on Tuesday as the new head coach of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. Gannon's departure as well makes the Eagles the first Super Bowl team since San Francisco won the 1995 edition to then lose both coordinators to head coaching jobs. — AFP

NFL Colts name coach

WASHINGTON: Shane Steichen, the offensive coordinator who helped the Philadelphia Eagles reach this year's Super Bowl, was named Tuesday as the new head coach of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. The team announced 37-year-old Steichen would take full command of an NFL club for the first time, replacing Frank Reich who was fired midway into his fifth season as coach of the Colts. Reich was hired in 2018 after serving two years as offensive coordinator for the Eagles, culminating with a Super Bowl triumph. Former Colts lineman Jeff Saturday had served as interim coach for Indianapolis following Reich's dismissal, and was among those who received a second interview in the team's search for a full-time replacement for the 2023 campaign. The Colts went 4-12 with one drawn this past season, their fewest wins since 2011, and missed the playoffs for the sixth time in eight seasons. — AFP

Shooting Grand Prix to begin February 21

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Shooting Grand Prix Kuwait Asian Shotgun Cup 2023 will start on Tuesday February 21, with the participation of 400 shooters and officials from 40 Arab and foreign countries Eng Duaj Al-Otaibi, the President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations said in a press conference on Wednesday.

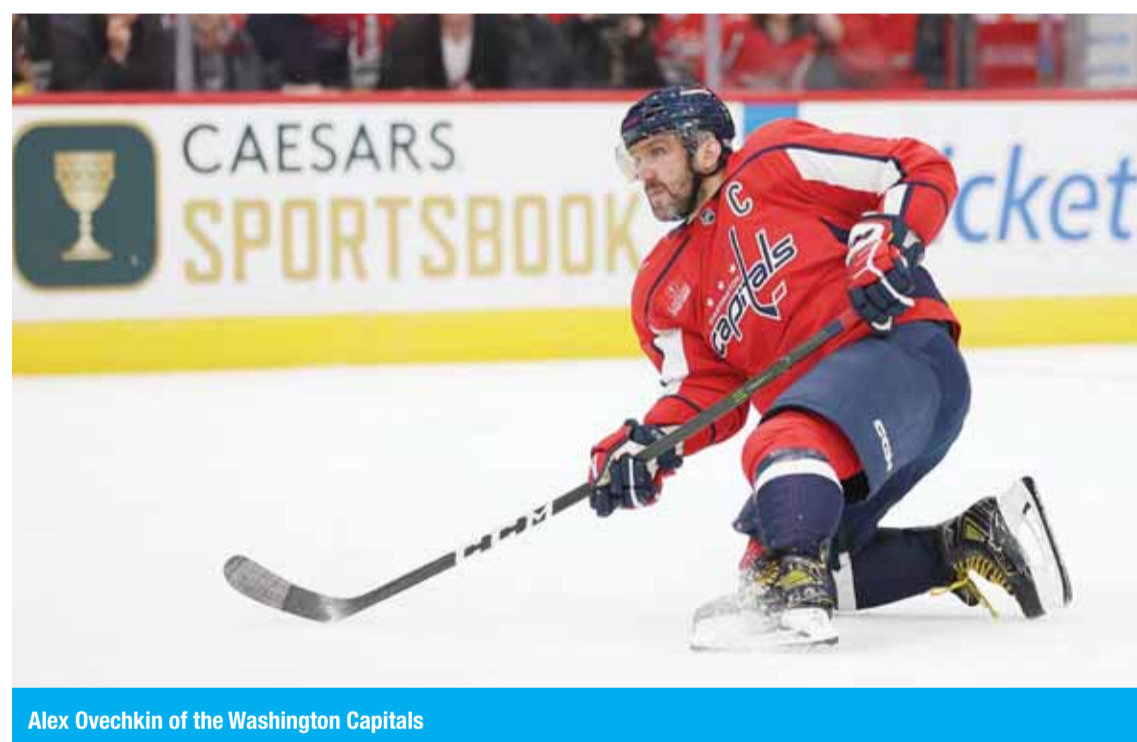
Al-Otaibi appreciated the fatherly care of HH

the Amir. Eng. Al-Otaibi said the tournament will be in the Olympic skeet and trap games for men and women and will continue until March 2nd, adding that the Asian Cup Championship will be held at the same time with the participation of 17 Asian countries. He said there will be other activities to go along with championship such as specialized referees course as well as workshops and training camps for Arab and Asian shooters.

The championship is an important event as shooters prepare for international and continental events to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics. Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi said the organizing committee has been preparing for the two championships for a long time, adding that ranges are prepared and ready for competition.



Engineer Duaj Al-Otaibi and Obaid Al-Osaimi



Alex Ovechkin of the Washington Capitals

Ovechkin out for 'foreseeable future' over family matter

WASHINGTON: Alex Ovechkin, chasing Wayne Gretzky for the all-time National Hockey League goals record, will be absent for "the foreseeable future" over a family matter, Washington Capitals coach Peter Laviolette said Tuesday. Ovechkin, a 37-year-old Russian left wing, leads the Capitals with 32 goals in 54 games and passed Gordie Howe in December for second on the NHL career goals list.

The Capitals' captain has 812 NHL career goals, 82 shy of matching Gretzky's all-time mark. Capitals general manager Brian MacLellan said Ovechkin was stepping away to attend to the health of a loved one. Laviolette said Ovechkin was not expected to return this week and will likely miss Saturday's NHL Stadium Series outdoor game against Carolina at Raleigh, North Carolina.

"Listen, it's tough sometimes," Laviolette said. "Life is tough. When it comes to your family and parents, that's what matters. He's going to deal with some things right now and we're going to be supportive. "I don't see him back in the foreseeable future." The Capitals also play host to Carolina on Tuesday and Florida on Thursday. Laviolette would not disclose if Ovechkin's plans include flying to Russia. "We're just keeping everything internal with regard to what's going on," Laviolette

said. "It's a personal matter. But he was here this morning."

Ovechkin spoke with his teammates at a morning workout before departing. "We're here supporting him. We're on his side and hope everything goes well," Capitals center Nicklas Backstrom said. "First of all the most important thing is family. I understand what Ovi's going through. As a team we're all aware of the situation." The Capitals also play host to Carolina on Tuesday and Florida on Thursday. "We're in a tough stretch here coming up," Backstrom said. "Teams are winning so we have to do that, too. We've got to chip in for each other and make sure we really start playing as a team here."

The Capitals own the top wild card playoff position in the Eastern Conference with 28 wins and 62 points from 55 games. Pittsburgh is only one point back with Florida and the New York Islanders two points adrift. "He came and talked to the boys," Capitals forward TJ Oshie said. "Definitely, it's nice to get to see him and give him a hug and let him know that we're here for him in person rather than over text. "We're thinking about him and we're missing him and wishing him all the best, for sure." The Capitals are 23-22 with three overtime losses in regular-season games Ovechkin has missed over his 18 NHL campaigns.

"It's different when you lose really any player for injury as opposed to a family matter, and especially the big man, who's created a lot of success not only for the organization but for individuals in the room, me being definitely one of them," Oshie said. "You play a little bit harder in moments like this." —AFP

India reach No 1 in all three cricket formats

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma's India have toppled Australia to take top spot in the world Test rankings, making them the number one team in all three international cricket formats as of Wednesday. The hosts will need to win the second match against Australia starting Friday in New Delhi to stay at the top after they hammered the tourists by an innings and 132 runs in the opener.

India will have history on their side at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium - previously Feroz Shah Kotla - where they haven't lost a Test since 1987. But coach Rahul Dravid said they will not get carried away by records and focus on the coming five days of action. "We don't look at previous history and go back in time," Dravid told reporters. "We cannot get carried away by that. Australia are an experienced team and have good players who know they want to come back."

India hammered Pat Cummins' Australia inside three days during the first match to move closer to securing their berth in June's World Test Championship final at The Oval in London. They need to win the series 3-1 or 3-0 to make the final. India became the top-ranked one-day team in January after their 3-0 whitewash of New Zealand, to go with their number one T20 ranking. Returning batsman Shreyas Iyer has joined the squad for the second Test after a back injury made him miss the opener. Dravid said a completely fit Iyer will walk into the XI.

"We will assess it and tomorrow as well, when he comes in for a light hit and see how he feels," said Dravid. "But certainly if he is ready to take the load of a five-day Test match, then without doubt, with his performances in the past, he will walk straight into the side." Rohit led from the front in Nagpur with his 120 in India's 400, followed by key knocks from left-handed all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel. "Ability to put pressure back on bowlers made the difference and that's what Rohit did," Dravid said. "That's what Axar and Jadeja did very well during that partnership. It is not the only way you can play but in these conditions, being able to put pressure back is important." —AFP

Sports

J-League propels Japan to World Cup regulars

'Football culture has taken root in Japan'

TOKYO: Japan was a football backwater when the J-League kicked off 30 years ago but its success has helped the sport thrive in the country and turned the national team into World Cup regulars. The J-League starts its new season on Friday and has come a long way since it launched in 1993 in a blaze of flashing lights, rock guitars and fireworks at Tokyo's National Stadium. The league's inaugural season featured 10 teams but there are now 60 from all over Japan playing in three divisions. Clubs have become an important part of their local communities and J-League chairman Yoshikazu Nonomura says "football culture has taken root in Japan".

"When the league began I think a lot of people thought of it as just flashy entertainment," he said. "Now 30 years have passed and I think we are getting close to the real J-League that we were aiming for." The J-League brought professional football to Japan and replaced the company teams of the old corporate league with clubs representing their local areas. Big-name signings such as Zico and Gary Lineker helped boost the new league's profile, while local players like Kazuyoshi Miura became huge stars.

The improved standard helped Japan's national team, who had never qualified for a World Cup at the time. They made their debut appearance in France in 1998 and have never missed a World Cup since. They have also been crowned Asian champions a record four times. The J-League is seen in China as a model to follow in how it churns out homegrown players, helps build the national side and has clubs that are run on a mostly sound financial footing.

Kengo Nakamura, who played at the 2010

World Cup, says the J-League has been "the foundation" for the national team's improved fortunes. "The J-League started and we became professional, and with that the awareness, motivation and quality of the players increased," he told AFP. European clubs began taking an interest in Japanese players soon after the J-League began, with Miura and Hidetoshi Nakata signing for Italian clubs.

'The next Mitoma'

The flow of players moving overseas has increased over the years—only seven of Japan's squad at last year's World Cup in Qatar were with J-League clubs. The trend has helped Japan on the international stage, but left a void in the J-League. "I personally want to see more J-League players in the national team because that would get people excited about the J-League," said Nakamura, who made almost 700 appearances for Kawasaki Frontale. "If the national team play and then you say to people, 'Ok, let's watch the J-League now,' they say, 'Well, who can we watch?'" Frontale have won the J-League four times in the last six seasons but have seen five Japan internationals, including Brighton winger Kaoru Mitoma, leave over the past two years.

Nakamura thinks it will be difficult to stop players moving to Europe and believes the trend "might even accelerate" in the years to come. But he also says J-League clubs need to make sure they "bring in money so they can produce the next Mitoma" when players depart. "There are still cases where players complete their contract and leave for Europe without the club getting anything for them, which is very damaging," he said. "The chal-



KAWASAKI: Fans attend the J-League football match between Kawasaki Frontale and Urawa Reds at Todoroki stadium in Kawasaki, Kanagawa prefecture in this file photo. — AFP

lenge for J-League clubs is to make sure they are properly compensated for transfers."

Life-changing

The league still attracts a small number of well-known players, albeit usually past their prime. World Cup winners Andres Iniesta, Fernando Torres, David Villa and Lukas Podolski have all played in Japan in recent years. Iniesta is still at Vissel Kobe and preparing to begin his sixth J-League season aged 38. Defender Tomoaki

Makino, who played with Iniesta at Kobe last season before retiring, says the league needs those big names because it raises the overall quality.

"It also puts a good kind of pressure on the whole club, for example with medical facilities, publicity and recruitment," he said. Nakamura was 13 when he watched the J-League's opening game on television. "It made me want to play in the J-League," he said. "I think it gave a lot of children that dream. In a way, it was a moment that changed my life." — AFP

Motie spins Windies to series victory 1-0

BULAWAYO: Gudakesh Motie took 13 wickets in the match as West Indies beat Zimbabwe by an innings and four runs in the second Test in Bulawayo on Tuesday to win the two-match series 1-0. Left-arm spinner Motie followed his seven for 37 in the first innings with six for 62 as Zimbabwe slipped to 173 all out in their second innings. The 27-year-old's haul of 13-99 was the best ever by a West Indian spinner in Test cricket, improving on Sonny Ramadhin's 11-152 against England at Lord's in 1950. Captain Craig Ervine provided the only sustained resistance for the hosts, making a stubborn 72 before being the ninth wicket to fall, leg-before to Motie.

It was the fourth tour of the southern Africa country by the West Indies, and each time they have won a two-match Test series 1-0. In a post-match interview, West Indies captain Kraigg Braithwaite said he was "very proud of the team". "Good to see an all-round performance," he added. "The pressure the pacers created was good to see. The bowlers did a fantastic job." The tourists now head to South Africa, where they will play two Tests, three one-day internationals and three Twenty20 internationals.

'Back foot'

Zimbabwe's problems began on the opening day when, after winning the toss and choosing to bat, they were dismissed for a paltry 115. "Winning the toss, we needed to bat well on the first day," said Ervine, deputising as captain for the injured Sean Williams. "We didn't. And that put us on the back foot from the start." Zimbabwe had also been hit by other changes courtesy of illness, injuries and franchise commitments—with former England batter Gary Ballance, who made a century in the drawn first Test, among that absentees. "Gary Ballance is such an experienced player, he brought stability. He left a big hole in the middle order," said Ervine.

A West Indies reply that spanned three days, partly due to rain delays, ended quickly on Tuesday as they were bowled out for 292, losing their last two wickets for just two more runs to take a lead of



Gudakesh Motie of West Indies

177. Batting a second time, Zimbabwe were two wickets down with only 15 on the board, Tanunurwa Makoni and Chamu Chibhabha making a single each before being returned to the pavilion. Opener Innocent Kaia fared better, reaching 43 before being caught by Joshua Da Silva after getting a faint edge to a Motie delivery that moved through the air.

It was left to Ervine, deputizing as captain for injured Sean Williams, to hold up the West Indies' surge toward a series success. His runs came off 105 deliveries and included four fours, but Ervine was unable to build any partnerships as Motie worked his way through the line-up. Brandon Mavuta was the only other batter to reach double figures, making 16 before being eighth man out, caught at short leg of Roston Chase. Zimbabwe return to white-ball cricket during March, hosting the Netherlands in a three-match ODI series. —AFP

Tebas: More English 'super-debt' clubs breaching rules

MADRID: La Liga president Javier Tebas believes other Premier League clubs in addition to Manchester City are guilty of breaching financial regulations. The outspoken Spanish football chief continued to rail against a potential European Super League, insisting it was a way for a select few clubs to control football. English champions Man City were charged earlier in February with more than 100 breaches of the Premier League's financial rules after a four-year investigation.

City said they were "surprised" by the league's charges, with potential punishments including a possible expulsion from the top-flight. Tebas considers other sides in the Premier League are also guilty of similar offences, speaking after a January transfer window in which English clubs spent heavily. Chelsea broke the British transfer record by signing Enzo Fernandez from Benfica for 121 million euros (\$130 million), while English teams' spending accounted for nearly 80 percent of all the top five European leagues' January business.

"I criticized Manchester City (in 2017), saying everything that now it looks like they are going to continue to investigate," Tebas told AFP in Madrid. "I said it then in 2017, so what surprises me is that it takes so long to make this kind of decision, because we are talking about facts from as far back as 2010. "This is the problem you have in football, that when you detect a problem, some cheating, in this economic case it takes so long to react."

Tebas does not think the charges will herald a new era of financial control in England. "I am sceptical because I know that it is not only Manchester City that have similar problems," he said. "There are other Premier League clubs that have also breached their financial regulations and the league is not acting as it should have been acting for years in this respect." La Liga's chief criticized the English top flight and insisted that a potential European Super League would not be a clever way of competing with its riches.

Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus attempted to launch a Super League project in April 2021 with nine other clubs, including six Premier League sides, but the project fell apart in a few days amid heavy criticism from fans, football governing bodies and governments. Last week A22 Sports Management, a company promoting the Super League, published a statement after talks with football stakeholders, suggesting a multi-division Super League could be created. A22 said feedback they received suggested 60 to 80 clubs should be included in an open format based on "sporting merit". "They aren't transparent and they aren't transparent because they don't want a transparent football, they want a football run only by big clubs," said Tebas.

The 60-year-old dismissed the idea that the Premier League is a de facto Super League, an argument used by some in favour of a European Super League to rival it. — AFP

Today's matches on TV

UEFA Europa League	
Barcelona v Man United	20:45
beIN Sports HD 1 English	
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium	
Shakhtar Donetsk v Stade Rennais	20:45
beIN Sports 3 HD Premium	
Ajax v Union Berlin	20:45
beIN Sports HD Xtra 1	
Red Bull Salzburg v Roma	20:45
beIN Sports 2 HD Premium	
Juventus v Nantes	23:00
beIN Sports HD 1 English	
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium	
Sporting v Midtjylland	23:00
beIN Sports 3 HD Premium	
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v Monaco	23:00
beIN Sports HD Xtra 1	
Sevilla v PSV Eindhoven	23:00
beIN Sports 2 HD Premium	

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, SHIVA, holder of Indian Passport No. T9188939 having permanent address Punjab, India, 143521 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will read as under Given Name: SHIVA and Surname: MADAN LAL.

I, LOVE PREET SINGH, holder of Indian Passport No. P5084914 having permanent address Punjab, India, 143602 resid-

ing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given Name: LOVE PREET and Surname: BALKAR SINGH (C#3160) — 16-02-2023

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, Vidyanagar, 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

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Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadisiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
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		Sharq	22465401
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Bucks down Celtics in thriller

Holiday produces a scintillating 40-point performance

LOS ANGELES: Jrue Holiday produced a scintillating 40-point performance as the Milwaukee Bucks snatched a 131-125 overtime victory against the Boston Celtics in a pulsating clash between the Eastern Conference heavyweights on Tuesday. Holiday's virtuoso display included seven points in overtime - including a crucial three-pointer to give Milwaukee the lead - as the Bucks stretched their unbeaten streak to 11 games.

The 32-year-old two-time All-Star also conjured the moment of the game in the third quarter, launching a remarkable 41-foot bucket to get Milwaukee within five points after Boston had led by 14 just minutes earlier. It was one of eight three-pointers nailed by Holiday, who was given heavy scoring support from Giannis Antetokounmpo. Antetokounmpo finished with 36 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.

"I don't really, I guess, care for how I'm playing as long as we're winning," Holiday said afterwards. "As long as we get the win, I'm okay. The only stat I look at is turnovers. That's kind of how I determine if I had a good or bad game. "Tonight, what did I have, five turnovers? To me, I'm like - that hurts my soul. "For me it doesn't matter if I score: I want to make plays on defense when I'm on the court." The Bucks improved to 40-17 with the win and are now just half a game behind Eastern Conference leaders Boston, who fell to 41-17 following the loss.

The Celtics however will take heart from a gutsy performance from what amounted to a second-string starting line-up. Boston went into the game missing several key players including Marcus Smart, Al Horford, Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown. Yet for long periods the depleted Celtics threatened to end the Bucks' winning streak in front of their home crowd at Milwaukee's Fiserv Forum. Milwaukee reached half-time with a slender one-point advantage, leading 64-63. But an inspired Boston performance

in the third quarter saw the Celtics go 14 points clear before Milwaukee engineered a 9-0 run to cut the deficit to five points. Boston appeared to have stopped the bleeding with a Payton Pritchard layup and a free throw, but Holiday's monster 41-footer on the buzzer left the game finely balanced at 95-90 heading into the fourth. There was more drama to come in the final period. Holiday looked to have given the

Bucks a decisive lead after back-to-back three pointers made it 113-107. However Boston refused to roll over and forced overtime when Sam Hauser sank a 28-footer to tie the game at 116-116 with three seconds remaining.

Boston took charge early in overtime with Derrick White's three-pointer putting the Celtics five points clear. But another Bucks rally ended with Holiday's go-ahead three-pointer with 25.2 seconds remaining before Antetokounmpo reeled off four unanswered points to close out the win. White led Boston's scorers with 27 points while Malcolm Brogdon finished with 26 off the bench. All five Boston starters finished in double figures, with Mike Muscala chipping in with 18 and Blake Griffin and Hauser adding 15 apiece.

Clippers, Suns win

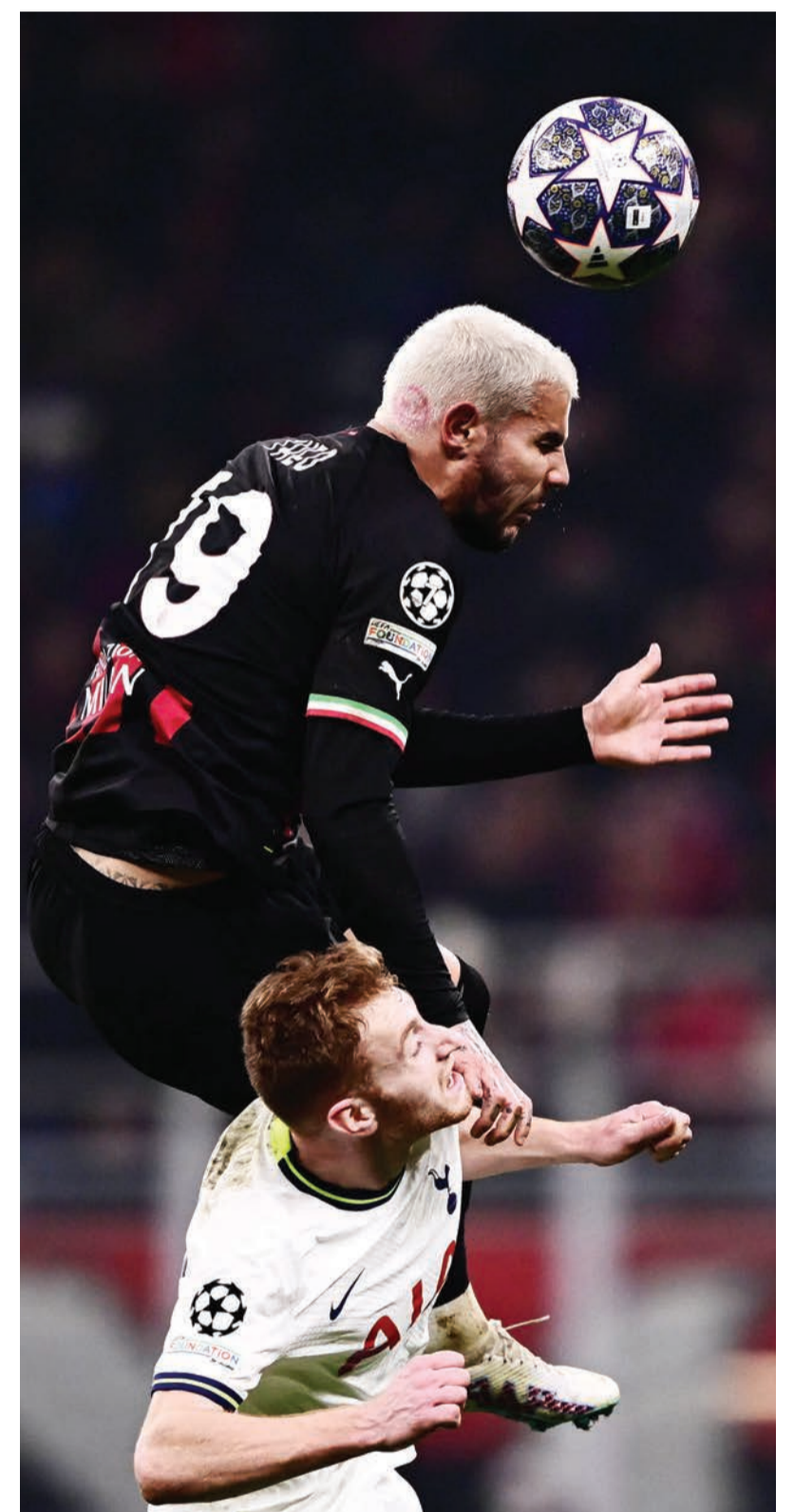
Elsewhere, 33 points from Kawhi Leonard sparked the Los Angeles Clippers to a 134-124 win over the NBA champion Golden State Warriors. Leonard's points tally included seven-of-nine from three-point range. Norman Powell added 24 from the bench with Paul George 20. The Warriors scoring was led by Jordan Poole with 28 points.

In Portland, Damian Lillard came within a whisker of another 40-point game but it was not enough to stop the Trail Blazers suffering a comprehensive 126-101 loss to the Washington Wizards. Lillard finished with 39 points, 10 rebounds and six assists. The Wizards proved too strong however with Kyle Kuzma (33) and Kristaps Porzingis (28) combining for 61 points. In Phoenix, the Suns warmed up for the imminent arrival of new signing Kevin Durant with a 120-109 defeat of the Sacramento Kings. Devin Booker led the Phoenix scoring with 32 points while Deandre Ayton added 29 points. — AFP



MILWAUKEE: Jrue Holiday #21 of the Milwaukee Bucks reacts to a three point shot in overtime against the Boston Celtics on February 14, 2023. — AFP

Diaz lifts AC Milan



MILAN: AC Milan's French defender Theo Hernandez (top) and Tottenham Hotspur's Swedish midfielder Dejan Kulusevski go for a header during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 on February 14, 2023. — AFP

MILAN: Brahim Diaz shot AC Milan to a 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur on Tuesday which gave the seven-time European kings control of their Champions League last-16 tie. Diaz bundled in the only goal of the game in the seventh minute at a packed San Siro to give Milan the advantage before next month's second leg in London. The Spaniard's strike was the first and one of very few real chances of a scrappy game which highlighted the far from sparkling form of both teams heading into match. "It's really happy for the team, because we did great work all week," Diaz told Mediaset.

"We've been through some difficult situations but now we need to look forward... now we need to think about Serie A and then we can think about the game in London." Milan came into their first knockout in the competition since 2014 with their season in the balance after a horrible run of results in the past month which left their Serie A title defense in tatters. But the Italians have a decent chance of reaching the quarter-finals for the first time since 2012 after restricting injury-hit Spurs to very little on Antonio Conte's return to Milan.

Conte, in the Spurs dugout two weeks after undergoing gallbladder surgery, handed the midfield reins to youngsters Oliver Skipp and Pape Matar Sarr after losing Rodrigo Bentancur and Yves Bissouma to injury last week. And his team failed to supply their record scorer Harry Kane with any service, Milan having great chances in quick succession late in the second half to extend their aggregate

lead which were fluffed by Charles De Ketelaere and Malick Thiaw.

Milan triumph

"We could have scored two more goals, but the game was hard-fought, they caused us problems," Milan coach Stefano Pioli said to Mediaset. "It's only the first leg, the second will be even harder." Pioli said on Monday that Italian teams can't compete with the financial might of the Premier League clubs. But Diaz had an already loud San Siro roaring with joy when he pounced on Theo Hernandez's saved shot, first forcing a superb stop from Fraser Forster before bundling home the opener.

The closest Spurs came in a stodgy first half was when Kane clipped the bar on the rebound from Son Heung-min's saved shot, but it was futile as the Korean was offside in the build-up. There was very little goalmouth action from that point on until De Ketelaere came on in the 77th minute, the Belgian attacker nearly doubling the hosts' lead almost straight after coming on.

De Ketelaere met Oliver Giroud's perfect knockdown with a header which he couldn't direct on target from close range. And seconds later Thiaw had his head in his hands after missing an even better chance to secure the win, somehow heading Rafael Leao's inch-perfect cross wide with the goal at his mercy. However Spurs couldn't break through a backline well marshaled by Simon Kjaer which helped inflict a second career defeat to Milan for coach Conte. — AFP

Bayern edge PSG

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain were deservedly beaten by Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday, but Kylian Mbappe's cameo on his return from injury gives them reason to believe they can still prevent another premature exit from Europe's elite club competition. Mbappe did not look like a player who had been brought back much earlier than expected following a thigh injury as his electrifying pace caused panic in the Bayern defence when he came on for the final half-hour.

The France superstar could not inspire a comeback as Bayern left the Parc des Princes with a 1-0 win, but only a brave Yann Sommer save and then a marginal offside call denied him an equalizer. "We only lost 1-0, there are no more away goals, and if we play our attacking game, cause them problems and score once, we'll be level," Mbappe said as he looked ahead to the return leg in Germany on March 8. "We are not beaten, not at all. We still have every chance." However, what Tuesday's game confirmed was the extent to which PSG are dependent on Mbappe, despite the presence of Lionel Messi and Neymar in their attack as well.

Messi and Neymar struggled to have any

real influence on the game in the first 57 minutes before Mbappe came off the bench, by which time Kingsley Coman had put the away side ahead. The Argentine may have just inspired his country to World Cup glory and Neymar may still be the world's most costly footballer, but there was a reason why PSG were so desperate to keep Mbappe last year when it seemed certain he would join Real Madrid.

"When he came on Mbappe completely lifted the atmosphere in the stadium and that also gave the other players a lift," admitted Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann. "It is clear that Kylian Mbappe can change any game." The 24-year-old, scorer of seven goals in six matches during the group stage, now has three weeks to get back to full fitness and try to lead PSG into the quarter-finals. Failure is almost unthinkable for a club who have never won the Champions League despite all the investment of their Qatari owners over the last 12 years, and who have gone out of the Champions League in the last 16 in four of the past six seasons.

Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, was in attendance at the Parc des Princes to watch PSG suffer a third consecutive defeat, the first time that has happened since 2011, just after the Gulf state's takeover of the club. His presence came amid inten-

sifying speculation that Qatari investors are looking to buy Manchester United. Whether such a move could have any impact on PSG remains to be seen, but the French champions need to turn things around in Munich next month to avoid the sense that the Qatari project is seriously stalling.

After all, they may be five points clear of Marseille at the top of Ligue 1 despite a recent slump but domestic success alone is not enough. Nevertheless, the emir cannot have failed to notice that neither Messi nor Neymar could make a serious impact on Tuesday's match-both were given a rating of three out of 10 by sports daily L'Equipe, as was midfield lynchpin Marco Verratti. Messi and Neymar create another problem-their lack of running and tracking back needs to be compensated by their teammates.

According to UEFA, Bayern's team ran nearly eight kilometers more than PSG, almost as if they had an extra player despite the Bundesliga leaders finishing the match a man down after Benjamin Pavard was sent off.

"Obviously we have identified that problem but we can't change the characteristics of the players," acknowledged Paris coach Christophe Galtier. "We have players who like to get the ball to feet and create. — AFP



PARIS: Bayern Munich's Canadian midfielder Alphonso Davies (left) fights for the ball with Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish defender Sergio Ramos during first leg of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 football on February 14, 2023. — AFP